



The Big

IF

B.L. Buehler A Servant of Stewardship

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B. L. Buehler

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THE BIG IF

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If: In the event that; on condition that;
allowing the possibility that; granting that.¹

IF the Scriptures do truly associate with our lives,
which is absolutely the case; should we not both study and
pay heed to Biblical standards and warnings!

A BASIS OF CHRISTIAN UNDERSTANDING;
ALOOF THE FOOLISHNESS OF “RELIGION”!

¹ Funk & Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary; Funk & Wagnalls Publishing Co., Inc., 1976.

*In loving memory of my dad, Leonard,
whose godly wisdom and fortitude are dearly missed.*

*In loving memory of my mother, Ann, whose love, patience,
and hard work motivated me through many tough times.*

*A special notation of sincere thanks to Dr. Paul M. Davis.
Having made the statement to Paul of being “but a wretched sinner,”
I was quickly reminded by this dear brother that I am a “child of the
Most High God”! Thank you, Paul, for I shall not forget again!*

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PREFACE

The primary purpose of this book is presentation of truth; both Biblically and historically; pertaining to the Gospel, which is the revealed will of God in accordance to the kind intention of His will. Within the book it is my hope to render answers pertaining to the spiritual relational reality (actual Christianity), which is the saving relationship between individual believers and God, this completely aloof all forms of religiosity; which is explained thoroughly in the book; for the imperative unto spiritual: success, growth, and ultimate victory, is to love the Lord God with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength (His might). Although throughout the book emphasis is made for the absolute necessity for stern discipline for fulfillment of the strict instructions and standards rendered by the Lord unto all who believe, it is not my intention to insist or demand absolute obedience unto God, for devotional obedience is a matter of personal choice. Rather, my intention is to illustrate and demonstrate that spiritual strength and growth which is from God alone, comes forth only during times of devotional disciplined diligence, as our appropriate relationship with the Creator of all things must remain our highest priority! We are saved by God's grace through faith; praise God that our salvation is solely by His un-merited favor (GRACE); yet being saved is also in accordance to knowledge! Although many will indeed be saved by God's grace through faith; there is only a remnant who will abound within the relationship, for true unwavering devotion for God has been lost or denied by multitudes throughout history, because of distractions by both the world and the flesh. The emphasis of this book is to demonstrate the imperatives for success and victory within the relationship, which is available to all; yet multitudes ignore and refuse the effort necessary for spiritual wellbeing, thus multitudes refuse the imperative of walking by faith and not by sight, while being delusive both to themselves and others for their failures. The beauty of spiritual success and victory in a relationship with God is realized when individual believers are devotionally loyal; which allows God to both will and work in and through the believer all that is pleasing to Him; thus the reality for

success and deliverance is allowing God to perform the work of which He alone is capable. The journey is difficult, yet never burdensome, for loving God is the motivating factor which guides our endeavors so that God may guide our steps each and every day. I praise God that individuals will be saved, while thanking God for the devotionally diligent who will reach their potential by His grace; for true “Christians” are but a remnant of the multitudes! We must do our part to allow God to do His work, and thereby fulfill our purpose of existence; or we can refuse to do our part, and although being saved, we will accomplish nothing during our mortal existence which is: righteous, pure, undefiled and selfless! We can live for our flesh and yet be saved, as we are saved by grace; or we can live for the Lord and be blessed, both now and for all eternity! Because God has wisdom, understanding and knowledge pertaining to all things, and knows us better than we know ourselves, it is wise to live our life God’s way; for our purposeful existence now and forever is truly by the will and work of God, *if* we will devotionally and humbly submit! “Self” or God; we will all live our mortal existence for one of the two choices, for we cannot live successfully for both simultaneously! In this book the truth is rendered in love; although the reality of truth may hurt, my stewardship from the Lord is to render the truth unconditionally, without: compromise, variation, or excuse! As the spiritual relationship with God is the greatest most intense relationship possible, and as the possibilities are only limited by one’s own decisions and behavior; it is hoped that knowledge may bring forth true freedom in Christ, and fulfillment of devotional purpose of existence!

Many statements within the Gospel are pertaining to the nation of Israel alone. This also included many of the “*if*” statements. Although several of the Scriptures noted in the footnotes throughout the book are regarding the nation of Israel; they are noted for emphasis’ sake, as the Lord revealed aspects of Himself in terms which could be understood both then and now. The emphasis of the “*Big If*” is to demonstrate God’s love for us, and what our lives can be like “*If*” we truly love Him; which is both appropriate and righteous!² There is considerable “horizontal” information for all believers throughout the Bible; by referencing historical accounts and the moral standards revealed by God, we gain understanding and strength in realizing His abounding

² Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 1 John 2:1-6; 4:7-21.

mercy, lovingkindness and grace. The “*Big If*” is to demonstrate the close association between the Gospel and the lives of those chosen of God; this association is the instructional basis of our existence, therefore understanding the association is of extreme importance. The numerous Scripture references throughout the book allow this possibility.

While reading the “*Big If*,” placing it into a context of *God’s* loving embrace will truly assist understanding of the Gospel truth. Although we are no longer under the “Law” (Mosaic and Levitical) as we are saved by grace through faith; we must remember that our relationship with God by faith establishes the perfect moral law in thought, word and deed, *if* God is able to both will and work in us within the spiritual relational reality which saves us! The perfect moral law (the Bible) renders to us a means of: faith, truth, regeneration, righteousness, and the necessary understanding of submission unto progressive sanctification.³ The love of God is presented throughout the Scriptures, from Genesis to Revelation. Please consider that God’s wrath is upon the wretchedness of sin, not the sinner; thus He seeks reconciliation with those created in His image!⁴ Accounts of history within the Gospel are given to make emphasis of this fact, therefore please remember that God’s lovingkindness is present in all that He does for His creation.

Within the pages that follow, will be found aspects of that which is appropriate and inappropriate in accordance to actual Christian standards; thus correlations with Gospel truth which allow potential freedom from bondage in and of the world and flesh; for the Gospel truth alone “makes us free” by a divine work of God. Although some of that mentioned is neither for nor to the Body of Christ, the emphasis within the “*Big If*” is for the purpose of knowledge leading to a greater love and devotion to, and for our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The following books of Scripture are directed to the Body of Christ and should therefore be adhered to by all believers; with the exception of Matthew / Mark / Luke / John which hold information necessary for greater understanding, although directed to the Israelites (Matthew 10:1-6; 15:24); and Acts which emphasizes transitional changes, which must be understood. Romans, 1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philipians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians, Hebrews, James, specifics

³ John 17:14-26; Romans 3:21-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; James 1:16-27.

⁴ Romans 5:1-11; 10:1-21; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

within 1 and 2 Peter, 1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, Philemon, 1, 2, 3 John (moral ethics), Jude, and Revelation (as what must occur); must be primarily considered as holding imperative pertinence for the Body of Christ (church); this with the addition of several Old Testament passages which refer to specifics of the Tribulation Period. With the coming of the Messiah, the religion set forth and designated by God (Levitical Law) ceased; the imperative at that time become “faith,” as the Levitical Law was but a tutor which pointed to the Messiah (Christ- John 1:41)!⁵

Too many individual religious congregations and denominations attempt to claim ownership of Israel’s blessings from God, which they claim is solely for them. As we are saved by the same grace (unmerited favor) of God which called Israel to be His chosen people, there is no need whatsoever for us to covet that which is someone else’s to possess (Deuteronomy 7:6-8). The grace of God is immense and truly sufficient, therefore it is only right that we be content with what we have in Christ (1 Timothy 6:3-8)! Much of this will be reiterated within the contents of these writings, as I am hopeful to answer many commonly asked questions—for the purpose of simplicity of devotion and loyalty unto the Lord.

As by Scripture mandate to test all things via the Word, numerous Scripture references will be rendered so this may occur (1 John 4:1-6)! As our imperative is to grow spiritually within the relational reality, the importance remains—making time for Gospel study, and thus time of submission with the Lord (our only true spiritual teacher) so as to gain actual knowledge!⁶ This book was formatted for the purpose of studying (and meditating on) God’s Word! Although you may read it like any book by passing over the many noted Scriptures, please consider taking the time to delve deeply into the Scriptures and thereby receive the blessing derived there from. It is God’s inspired words which are: living, active, and powerful; as my words are not, please read the Scripture references so as to receive the blessing, always having prayed first with supplication for—“TRUTH” to be revealed! The Gospel truth is actually the truthful reality behind the written words; which is revealed to individuals by God personally, *if* disciplined devotional diligence is maintained during all Scriptural endeavors, and there is no improper

⁵ Galatians 3:1-4:11.

⁶ Matthew 23:2-10; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Ephesians 1:3-23, emphasis v.3.

motive!⁷ The beauty of the spiritual relational reality, as well as actual intimate fellowship with God, and that which is necessary to receive and achieve it is presented within these writings.

Note: Most Scriptures are listed in footnote fashion, so as not to confuse by causing the loss of reading flow. Many Scriptures are repeated in different areas as context dictates. Please remember—the New Testament Scriptures are learned through repeated reference and study under the guidance of the Holy Spirit (spiritual discernment and appraisal); therefore please remember to pray often during study, and repeatedly reference so as to realize the blessed association between the Gospel and our purpose of life. **Key note**—God blesses nothing less than disciplined devotional diligence; never lukewarm laziness and complacency!⁸

As you read and study the Gospel (yes, even repeatedly), the power of the Word will uplift and change your life always for the better; when accompanied by the seeking of “truth” and devotional prayer! If we lived to be one thousand years old having studied each and every day, we would yet have a lot to learn in regard to the words, and the truth behind the words themselves (John 17:17). Please excuse any of my personal foolishness which may be present in these writings; for although my words are generally without strength, as I (a servant of the Lord) can only instruct; the word of our Lord is extremely powerful, therefore please reference the noted Scriptures; for the Lord God of all creation—teaches, nurtures, and renders truth!

Personal Note: Let me now say that no one has made more mistakes in life than I have. Although the Apostle Paul claimed to be the foremost sinner (1 Timothy 1:15), he had believed himself to be doing a service for God (John 16:2, 3); whereas my sinfulness was intentional, as I had but a concept of God which held no priority in my life. Unlike the Apostle Paul whom persecuted the church while believing himself to be doing the right thing; prior to surrendering my life to Jesus, I walked wretchedly and foolishly in the sight of God. By God’s grace-filled work of sanctification I now walk with Him rather than against

⁷ 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17.

⁸ Revelation 3:14-22, specific vs. 15-19.

Him, as I now begin my day with willful unconditional surrender unto Him; remaining focused through continued prayer and devotion (1 Timothy 1:15-17). If the Lord can turn someone like me around from obeying the foolish desires of the flesh, He can and will do the same for anyone who devotionally submits to Him for change! I have learned to associate the Gospel into every aspect of life; this accomplished by testing all things to the Gospel, and not attempting to justify carnal desires by manipulation (adulteration) of the Gospel as by taking it out of context. Anyone who disciplines themselves to take appropriate action in this regard will in fact submit by faith unto God, so as to surrender to His will for their life; thus discovering actual purpose!⁹ Our victory while in the flesh is truly obtained—walking by faith; trusting no longer in ourselves, but rather in Him who is the author and perfecter of faith!¹⁰ “Self” is truly the instigator of many downfalls, thus denial of “self” unto humble submission is imperative, although difficult; for “self” must be denied, or the characteristics of “self”: pride, arrogance, wanton desires, laziness, complacency, comfort, ease, and self-centeredness; will continuously influence individuals, holding them in bondage away from the blessings of God!¹¹ As long as “self” is allowed to lead one’s life and endeavors, the authority of the Lord will be denied, as well as all potential for spiritual growth which the Lord seeks to bring forth in preparation for all eternity!¹²

Christianity is not as complicated as many would believe, yet is made so by inappropriate religious: teachings, doctrines, precepts, traditions, and one’s failure to devotionally submit to the One who is actually capable of teaching all things regarding spiritual matters; now and forever. As you read the “Big If,” please consider that each of us must test all things according to the Gospel, if we are to run the race in a manner so as to win and avoid being deceived. Although this is difficult until a fair knowledge of the Gospel is achieved, a potential exists with disciplined devotional prayer and study that individuals will realize that the Gospel does indeed hold the necessary answers regarding our mortal lives, and life eternal which is life indeed!¹³ Ultimately each of us is accountable

⁹ Colossians 1:1-2:10.

¹⁰ Hebrews 12:1-11.

¹¹ Proverbs 11:1-9; Matthew 16:24-27; Romans 13:1-14; James 4:1-10.

¹² Ephesians 1:3-23; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12.

to have tested all things (including ourselves); therefore there will be no excuse as to our walk according to Biblical standards, on the day we each give account.¹⁴

Too many believers have trusted leadership (pastor, minister, teacher, rabbi, etc.) to teach them the truth. Although spiritual leaders should always speak the Gospel truth in love for the sake of spiritual edification; this yet is many times not the case, as many leaders are deceived and therefore teach according to inappropriate religious doctrines or according to personal volition and motives. Please test all teachings according to the Gospel; for if all believers did so, we would not have the foolish falsehoods in our churches which have become so prevalent. Anyone who believes that they will learn all necessary in regard to Christianity by going to church is greatly mistaken; for nothing can replace personal diligent study of the Word of God. This is simple, my brothers and sisters: Pray prior to all study of Scripture (1 Corinthians 2:6-16); make supplication to God before going forward, as God leads upon the narrow path of His righteousness (Romans 10:1-4; 12:1-8); learn to listen when you pray, maintaining focus upon God, and thereby wait for an answer prior to going forth (Proverbs 4:23-27); be simplistically devoted to Christ by avoiding distractions (2 Corinthians 11:1-15; Luke 9:57-62), focus, and devotion (true sincere love) for the Lord, are the keys to spiritual success; for the relational reality which saves us is spiritual; not carnal!

Please understand—nothing in this writing is directed toward any specific individual, except statements regarding myself in proclaiming my experiences, weaknesses, and hopes. As we are all supposed to be one in Christ Jesus for the edification of all, I now apologize for any discomfort my words may bring forth; yet I do not apologize for the Gospel truth referenced, for this is the truth which allows freedom from the bondage of secular elemental principles.

NOTE—MANY REALITIES ARE REITERATED AND DISCLOSED THROUGHOUT THE BOOK; ANSWERS NOT RENDERED IN ONE AREA OR CHAPTER OF THE BOOK MAY BE PRESENT IN

¹³ 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; Hebrews 12:4-11; 1 John 4:1-6.

¹⁴ Romans 1:1-2:16; 14:1-12; 2 Corinthians 5:10-21; 13:1-10.

OTHER AREAS OR CHAPTERS. WITH COMPLETION OF THE BOOK, HOPEFULLY, FEW QUESTIONS PERTAINING TO THE SPIRITUAL REALTIONAL REALITY WHICH SAVES US; WHICH IS COMPLETELY ALOOF THE FOOLISHNESS OF “RELIGIOSITY”; SHOULD YET REMAIN, FOR THE EMPHASIS UNTO SPIRITUAL SUCCESS AND VICTORY IS—LOVE THE LORD WITH ALL DEVOTIONAL REVERANCE!

CHAPTER ONE BIBLICAL LOVE

Fruits of Love Come from Understanding and Knowledge

Two primary factors must be necessarily understood if actual knowledge is to be forthcoming, regarding the huge difference between pure and undefiled love (God's love) and the superficially impure and defiled love which is of the world and of the flesh.

1. True love is of the spirit, which is rendered by God unto those who submit; so to follow Him and learn. The love of the world is of the flesh, which always seeks to personally benefit in the physical realm.¹⁵
2. All human insecurities (as differentiated from frailties), are derived from failure to have or realize an intimate personal relationship with God! When the relationship is realized; God being the imperative; the reality of the relationship eliminates any necessity to: prove oneself, live for self, seek purpose in the world, walk by sight, have idols, and have inappropriate relationships; thus we are free to live for God, consider others as more important than ourselves, seek first His righteousness and heavenly kingdom, and understand and follow God's will; aloof the insecurities of the flesh.¹⁶

The Lord in His intimate abounding love has commanded us in the ways we are to go; as we focus upon Him, while traveling the narrow path of His righteousness.¹⁷ Nowhere in the commanded moral and appropriate standards of God mentioned throughout the Scriptures, did the Lord our God ask us for our opinion, or say "please; for He is

¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

¹⁶ Hebrews 12:6-11; Matthew 22:37-40; John 1:1-13; Romans 8:1-39; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21; 6:14-7:10; Ephesians 5:1-6:20; Philippians 2:1-4; Colossians 3:1-4:6; 1 Peter 4:7-5:11; 1 John 2:3-3:18.

¹⁷ Matthew 7:13-27; 1 John 4:1-5:5.

the Potter, we are but the clay!”¹⁸ The Lord knowing that which is best for us, rendered unto us the ability to choose whether we will: heed or not, obey or not, serve or not! Included in the Gospel is a series of “*if*” notations; denoting that which will occur, or not, “*if*” we heed the Lord’s instruction, or not; this derived from our devotional love for Him, or lack thereof. Please remember that our Lord has commanded us derived from His lovingkindness for us, knowing what is best for us; although we many times do not. Please understand right here and now—we cannot have it both ways (His way; our way), and yet maintain victory in the faith! Christian victory is found in devotion and reverence for God His way—as by loyal devotional submission; while spiritual defeat is the result of being double-minded and thereby doing things the wrong way (our own way). Aforementioned “His way,” “our way,” is really the only two choices we have; while never simultaneously (plainly stated)!¹⁹

If must be understood—the flesh and the Spirit are in opposition one to the other!²⁰ The relationship with God that saves us is spiritual, and is not of physical realm religiosity!²¹ The confession unto salvation is—“Jesus as Lord”; which is far reaching from a confession which accepts—Jesus as Savior!²² To acknowledge and confess “Jesus as Lord” is to acknowledge and confess that Jesus being God incarnate is in fact God whose authority is absolute, and therefore must be humbly and devotionally submitted unto!²³ As the flesh is diametrically opposed to the Spirit, any confession which is foundational to the “flesh” is inexcusable and unacceptable; for as God is Spirit and must be known and worshipped in the spiritual realm (by faith) in both spirit and in truth, any confession foundational to the “flesh” fails to cross the threshold into the spiritual realm, and is thus a failure which leads to deception and/or delusion of a relationship which remains foundational to physical realm assumption and conjecture (religiosity)! Please understand, our confession unto salvation is not made to human beings, but rather unto the Lord personally! From a foundation of deceptive religion, journeys

¹⁸ Isaiah 64:1-65:16; Jeremiah 18:1-23.

¹⁹ Matthew 12:25-37, emphasis v. 30; Romans 9:6-29; 1 John 1:1-2:11.

²⁰ Galatians 5:16-26, specific v. 17.

²¹ John 4:20-24.

²² Romans 10:1-17, specific vs. 8-10, implicit v. 9.

²³ Matthew 1:20-25.

are made upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction, upon which changes come forth according to the carnal whims and desires of leadership who are void of the Holy Spirit; thus changes are emotional, not spiritual!²⁴ Although the religion designated by God (Levitical Law) was righteous in God's purpose to point out the absolute precision of which He alone is capable, and point directly to the Messiah (Christ); with fulfillment of Jesus' spoken earthly ministry the Levitical Law became null and void as the imperative became "faith"!²⁵ Anyone who is void of the Holy Spirit's leadership is not a legitimate child of God, and is therefore held captive by Satan to do his will (murder spiritually), which is that individuals both deceive and be deceived; this is easily witnessed in individuals who are content with lying!²⁶ When deceived leadership is followed, those who follow are then deceived also, and generally lead others astray in accordance to the deception of religious assumption and conjecture; thus multitudes have remained spiritual destitute, while making proclamation of knowing God; although not in spiritual reality, but rather as by religious carnal deception!²⁷ All of this occurs because of fleshly insincerity when making a false confession of faith; whereas a spiritual confession from within total sincere abandonment of "self" (divine work of God) would have allowed God to begin the good work of which He being faithful could then complete unto righteous salvation!²⁸

Note—The simple truth is this—denial of "self" is the very first step in actually following the Lord; if this step is not taken, then "self" which is foundational to the flesh will lead endeavors, including worshipping God without knowledge, which is worship foundational to ignorance! When the Lord said that anyone who wishes to follow Him must first "deny self" and take up their cross and follow Him; the cross which is carried is the cross upon which the flesh is crucified each moment of each day, and by this "self" is habitually denied as an act of disciplined devotional obedience so that following the Lord would no longer be hindered by self-centeredness! As long as the flesh is allowed to lead,

²⁴ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15; Philippians 3:1-14; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Peter 2:1-22.

²⁵ Romans 4:1-15; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; Galatians 3:1-4:11.

²⁶ John 8:20-47; Romans 8:1-17; Hebrews 12:4-11; 1 John 1:1-10.

²⁷ Matthew 6:19-7:29.

²⁸ John 6:44, 45, 65; 14:6, 7; Philippians 1:1-2:13; Colossians 2:1-23.

there can be no spiritual growth; thus we must decide—are we going to live for “self” or are we going to follow the Lord and receive spiritual growth! We cannot have it both ways! Anyone who claims to love God, and yet refuses to deny “self” is deceiving themselves; for true devotion for God motivates obedience, not rebellion! Much of the delusion within carnal individuals regarding their relationship with God, is that they believe emotional response to religious stimuli constitutes spirituality; although religious stimuli is of the “flesh” and spirituality is foundational to “faith”!

The simple fact remains that God has done all that is possible so that individuals may be saved, by the rendering of a measure of faith, righteous activation of the measure of faith when individuals seek “truth,” and by: coming in human form, emptying Himself so as to be tempted in all ways as we are yet remaining without sin, and dying in our stead so that we may live!²⁹ When God commanded that we love Him with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength; this He did knowing the essence of our sinful nature and the imperative that we must deny “self” if we are to crucify the flesh, cross the threshold into the spiritual realm, and follow the Lord in accordance to the kind intention of His will, which is to train and lead us into eternity!³⁰ Because both religion henceforth the time of Jesus’ spoken ministry, and the flesh are firmly foundational to the physical realm and thereby under the influence of the evil one (Satan), both remain the primary hindrances which have kept multitudes captive to deceptive assumption and conjecture for generations! With God having loved us with such intricate intensity, is it too much to ask that we (the finite creature) submit to His (infinite Creator) authority, thus being: saved, nurtured, taught, and led forth unto eternity! The love of God can and will save us, if we will gratefully accept His love (agape—unconditional, sacrificial, and selfless) and return it back unto Him with all reverent devotion and diligent dedication; thus the desires of our flesh would have no place in our relationship with God, as our bodies are presented unto God as a living and holy sacrifice, acceptable to God, which is our spiritual service of worship (Romans 12:1)! As long as we live according to the flesh (self), we will not submit

²⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Timothy 4:1-16, specific vs. 6-11; 6:1-19; Hebrews 4:11-16.

³⁰ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 16:24-27; 22:36-40; Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 5:24, 25; Ephesians 1:1-23

our existence unto God! God's love is sure, steadfast, and has always been put forth for our benefit; does our love compare and go forth for the edification of others, or does it remain foundational to "self" which has never been denied so as to actually follow God! The confession unto salvation being—"Jesus as Lord" is absolutely righteous and appropriate for a reason; are we to deny the authority of God so as to maintain physical realm fleshly indulgences, including religiosity, or are we going to submit to the authority of God and allow Him to both will and work in us that which is in fulfillment of His good, acceptable, and perfect will, which leads us to the fulfillment of our purpose! True sincere devotion for God motivates!

"If" denotes that adherence (accountability) is necessary, *if* a righteous outcome is to occur. Too many believers today (and throughout history) have desired God's blessings with little or no emphasis placed upon disciplined submissive obedience. Progressively from this point, the imperative of strict discipline will become evident, as also will the necessity to sincerely love and trust the Lord within the preciseness of who He is: unchanging, unwavering, holy, righteous, faithful, and just; this we do with the faith of a loving child, who would never attempt to explain or fully understand the immensity of God, while yet being simply devoted!³¹ Too many believers today believe that the Lord should change to suit the times; yet He will never change to suit the times, or us for that matter; for it is our responsibility to allow Him to change our mindset to suit (be pleasing to) Him.³² Personally I praise the Lord that He cannot alter from His wonderful standards of absolute holiness and knowledge of all things, to suit us at our progressive levels of incompetence; for throughout church history, only the spiritually immature would dare proclaim religious ideologies and human intellect to be pleasing to God.³³

We have now seen individuals promoted to Bishop, who openly practice homosexuality. We now have a bible written (TNIV), which has been altered from the inspired Scriptures, so as to please men within the wretchedness of sin (homosexuality is not a lifestyle).³⁴ We have

³¹ 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; Hebrews 6:1-20; 10:19-27.

³² Romans 12:1-21; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; Hebrews 11:1-6; 13:1-21; 1 Peter 1:13-25.

³³ John 3:1-21; 1 Corinthians 1:4-2:5; Hebrews 5:11-6:20.

³⁴ Romans 1:18-32.

supposed spiritual leaders who proclaim change to the standards of God for the sake of human depravity, thereby doing the work of Satan in leading many more astray; and/or to death in sin. How greatly deceived have we become so as to allow such atrocities!³⁵ How can we be so totally deceived, so as to believe we can speak for the unique and absolute holy and righteous God, while in doing so also denying the moral standards set forth by the one true Lord who never changes? Has the prideful arrogance and cowardice within Christian religion leadership become so perverse (lacking in devotion and reverence) so as to boldly and blatantly deny the beauty of our Lord for the sake of humankind! It is truly time that each of us test ourselves (and others whom we are trusting) to see *if* we (and they) are in the faith! *If* our way must take precedence over God's way, the potential exists that we are not born again of the Holy Spirit, and therefore not children of promise!³⁶ To love the Lord Jesus is to serve the Lord Jesus with one's devotional existence! Variations from this appropriate fact and motivation are but derivatives from the temptations of the flesh, the distractions of the world, and demonic influences.³⁷

Note—Christianity has always been about individuals reaching other individuals by proclaiming the Gospel truth in love; it has never been about: changing the world, changing in accordance to the world (religiosity), conforming to the world, convicting others of their sin, judging non-believers, expectations upon others by one's own standards (prejudice), or foolish attempts to do the work of the Holy Spirit! Christianity is all about "God at work" bringing forth freedom in Christ; thus freedom from the bondage of: the flesh (self), the guile of Satan and demons, the deceptions of manmade religion (doctrines, philosophies, traditions, precepts, and rituals), and death in sin! This is why individuals must be willing to deny "self" continuously, so as to allow God to bring forth freedom in Christ!³⁸

I find it to be a terrible shame, that only a remnant of believers truly love the Lord first and foremost; evincing His fruits within them as by emphasized word and deed.³⁹ The reality of the matter is identified and

³⁵ Matthew 23:11-28.

³⁶ Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 3:21-29; Titus 3:1-11.

³⁷ Luke 6:39-49; Ephesians 4:1-6:20; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12.

³⁸ John 8:1-58, specific vs. 31-36; 15:1-27.

demonstrated (tested) by: decisive love for God, or lack thereof; disciplined conviction, or lack thereof; a demeanor of righteous living, or lack thereof; sincere concern and love for others, or lack thereof; being separated unto God or from God by one's own decisions; walking the talk of Christianity, or simply talking the walk; submitting to or demanding of God, as He is either Lord or a God of convenience. The reality of Christianity is summed up in this statement—love (with all sincerity and reverent devotion) the Lord first and foremost; that He may will and work for His own good pleasure!⁴⁰

The trouble with many believers is they refuse to love others, including the Lord, more than they love themselves; this is foundational to a refusal to deny “self.” Within this, as exuberant selfish love is emphasized, which is not the agape love which the Lord renders to those who with reverence submit unto Him, but rather the love of the world which cares primarily for that which is of the flesh.⁴¹ This type of selfish secular love is founded within idolatry; for love which goes forth for any reason aloof the sanctity of creative purpose, remains inappropriate as by the superficial nature of its being rendered. When we understand this fact, we can ascertain how we can sincerely love all others as by God's creative purpose; although we may neither like nor respect specific individuals, due to their wretched demeanor.⁴² With the love of God being intimate and abounding, intricate and immense, there is no love greater in the universe; therefore to receive His love (agape; unconditional; selfless, and sacrificial) is to walk therein and thus evidence the creative beauty of all which has life; and this without further expectation! Consider this fact—the Creator of all things (the whole universe) cares for you personally, and is very interested in your wellbeing, and spiritual soundness (righteous prosperity)! As simple as it gets—we are able to love with God's agape love, because He first loved us and thereby rendered His love, which can then be freely and sincerely given unto others, and returned back with devotion unto the Lord! Please allow Him to be your all in all; for this is the essence of one's purpose, and the greatest blessing conceivable!

Although most believers want it both ways, as they seek the things of the world with great effort and the things of God with minimal effort;

³⁹ Matthew 7:13-27; 1 Peter 4:7-19.

⁴⁰ Philippians 1:1-2:18; 1 John 5:1-21.

⁴¹ Philippians 3:11-21; 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

⁴² Proverbs 16:1-9, emphasis v. 4; Romans 12:1-21.

as you read forth please remember there are two sides to every fence. In this case we have God's side and the world's side. I am hopeful a reiterative of God's blessings gained by our devotion and submission to receive them, will allow us to choose the appropriate (God's) side, so His blessings may abound in our lives. Please remember—the first two steps to appropriate blessing, are to love the Lord our God first and foremost, and denial of “self”; for these mandates are neither debatable nor deniable!⁴³ God's love for us is never the wavering factor, for He is always faithful and true!⁴⁴ The wavering generally comes from our teetering while attempting to walk atop the post, between God's side and the secular side of the fence. No human alive can walk the fence of indecision, and yet walk with God upon the narrow path of righteousness on any regular basis; for when we fall from atop the fence of indecision, we generally land on the side which leads to: distraction, corruption, compromise, discouragement, and double-mindedness!⁴⁵ Indecision is foundational to double-mindedness, which is foundational to failing to come into the light of truth because of the darkness of our sinful nature (self)!⁴⁶

As we progress from this point, we will be confronted with Scriptural truth and choices. With the aforementioned paragraph in mind as to straddling the fence of indecision, let us journey forth in truth. I hope the journey of every believer will lead to God's side now and forever! Let us hypothesize acts of obedience or disobedience, desires and motives; so as to gain a mindset to seek appropriate Biblical truth and freedom.⁴⁷

- A group of religious leaders *vote* against the moral standards set forth by God.

Case in point: *If* those who are considered to be spiritual leaders vote against the moral standards set forth by God so as to appease human beings; they are not spiritual leaders but rather the blind leading the blind!⁴⁸ Since actions (fruits) evidence the truth and disobedience is against God, so are they!

⁴³ Matthew 16:24-27; 22:36-40.

⁴⁴ Romans 8:31-39; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5; 2 Timothy 2:1-13.

⁴⁵ James 1:2-12; 4:3-10; 1 Peter 3:13-4:6; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

⁴⁶ Matthew 6:19-24.

⁴⁷ Romans 8:1-11.

⁴⁸ Romans 2:17-29.

- Biblical scholars choose secular philosophy or doctrine, although such contradicts the wisdom of the Gospel.

Case in point: secular philosophy and/or doctrine take captive and hold in bondage. A true Biblical scholar, being such by the wisdom and grace of God, avoids forms of bondage; for the imperative remains to maintain freedom in Christ.⁴⁹ Anyone holding to secular philosophies, precepts and doctrines (religiosity) while claiming to be a humble Biblical or godly scholar (member of the Way), are but deceived into thinking more highly of themselves than they ought to think; this by failure to utilize the measure of faith allotted, so as to stay from arrogance!⁵⁰

- A Christian is harmed mentally and/or physically for standing firm spiritually in God.

Case in point: This is truth in action! Anyone hoping to live a godly life in Christ Jesus will be persecuted; for this is a reality of the faith! 51 If each of us were to stand trial for being a Christian, would there be enough evidence according to Biblical standards to convict us? Is the evidence nonexistent due to our seeking comfort over servanthood? We must all test ourselves to see if we are in the faith; finding later the answer to be “no” can be eternally fatal!⁵²

- Intellectualization is rendered to justify how God would expect us to make decisions for Him, since He is not here!

Case in point: This may seem absurd, yet this type of religious foolishness occurs daily in our world. As folks seek teachers in accordance to the whims and desires of the flesh, spiritually weak leadership steps down yet further from God’s standards, to render decisions in accordance to secular religion; within the deception, believing and saying it has been done for God. Just because we cannot see the air, nor can we see our Lord (with physical eyes); I guarantee they both exist and are present at this very moment! All believers must test the spirits to see if

⁴⁹ John 8:31-47.

⁵⁰ Mark 7:6-16; Colossians 2:8-23; Romans 10:1-4; *12:1-3*; 2 Peter 1:1-21; Titus 1:10-16.
⁵¹ 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

⁵² Matthew 7:13-27; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10; Hebrews 12:12-29.

they are from God, for it is our responsibility (accountability) to do so!⁵³ During the Dark Ages, Crusades and Inquisition, there were multitudes of true Christians being persecuted even unto death, and this being done by supposed Christians who followed individuals claiming to possess the full authority of Christ on earth (Vicar of Christ). The Lord alone possesses full authority on earth, and throughout the universe; yet individuals void of the Holy Spirit have always believed in transference of His authority to humankind.⁵⁴

The four aforementioned case points were rendered so as to demonstrate a Biblical fact. This fact being “*if*” we would pay attention to the Lord’s instructions, and “*if*” we would test all things according to the Gospel (perfect moral law—James 1:25), and test the “spirits” to witness whether they are from God (1 John 4:1-6); we would not be so easily deceived by Satan into believing the lies of secular religion (doctrines of demons)!⁵⁵ The Lord Jesus basically said—*if* you love me, obey me; this being true and correct, as sincere love for the Lord ushers devotional obedience!⁵⁶ We cannot with any realism say we love the Lord *if* we have never studied the Scriptures so as to abide within; for to abide in the Scriptures with devotion, leads to abiding in the Lord!⁵⁷ The Lord God of all creation is deserving of our highest: love, devotion, reverence, appreciation, servitude, obedience, and worship; anything less is not acceptable unto the King of kings and Lord of lords, for anything less is foundational to selfish motives!

Love Involves Discipline

The world today is badly deceived as to what “love” is. Folks believe love to be telling someone the things which they desire to hear; whereas agape (selfless; unconditional) love speaks the truth which must be heard, no matter the emotional consequence!⁵⁸ Within parts of the world today, many folks watch television seeking everything that has to do with authority and discipline, i.e. law enforcement and investigative shows. This is due to the lack of disciplined authority and disciplined

⁵³ 1 John 4:1-6.

⁵⁴ Romans 8:5-9; 10:1-4; Revelation 11:15-19; 19:11-16.

⁵⁵ 1 Peter 5:1-11; 1 Timothy 4:1-11.

⁵⁶ John 14:15-15:17; 1 John 2:3-11; 3:21-24; 5:1-3.

⁵⁷ John 8:31, 32; 15:4-10.

⁵⁸ Ephesians 4:11-16; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 5:19, 20.

individuals in the world, and people's ingrained subconscious desire to have discipline return in their lives. Folks' thinking overall discipline to be realistically impossible; as righteous discipline is a reality only within the realm of a personal relationship with God; seek it in the world of emphasis, while failing themselves to actively work for a disciplined demeanor, as through devotional submission.⁵⁹ Let me reiterate by example:

- Most folks (believers included) tend to drive in a polite, disciplined manner when a police officer is in the immediate vicinity, or they are near someone they know personally. When the officer is no longer present, neither is the polite and disciplined manner of driving in most drivers. Folks such as these who are only disciplined when in the actual physical presence of authority or someone they know; are disciplined from without. The driver, who is polite, safe, and disciplined to obey the law even when human authority is not physically present, is disciplined from within.

When the Holy Spirit is present within an individual, having sealed them for the day of redemption, the individual is blessed with conviction from within when they seek to maintain their fellowship with the Lord. This is the area where far too many believers fall prey to Satan, as they lose focus on the Lord by any or many of the world's distractions. Each step we take into the ways of the world is a step away from the Lord and His convictions (discipline). The people who maintain discipline even when alone, are the persons who realize that God sees all things at all times; therefore discipline within is a manifested trait of walking by faith! Please consider—if we act differently in public when recognized by others then we do behind closed doors, we are living delusively. In this, who are we serving?⁶⁰

The inappropriate way of seeking authority and strength which is prevalent by many, can be further witnessed by the standards of society; in falsely believing that brawn and human intellect are traits of good leadership. Because it is actually by the power and teaching of the Lord

⁵⁹ Hebrews 12:1-11.

⁶⁰ Matthew 23:11-33; John 8:39-47; 1 John 3:1-18.

given to us by grace, which allows our victory over the secular world, is it not futile to believe that the strengths of human power can deliver us.⁶¹ Even as believers, we fall prey to believing that humankind can deliver us from trouble within a sense of ultimate value, yet anyone who has studied the Gospel knows this to be incorrect.⁶² We have states voting in weight lifters and wrestlers as Governors, we have reality shows which show temporal gains by brawn and extreme selfishness, we have society standards filled with hypocrisy by those who think highly of themselves because of positions they hold; all of which place emphasis of hope upon the flesh. When will we learn that God is in control, not humankind; *if* and when the Lord is allowed to lead! When will we get past believing someone is a strong leader within, because they are strong without (physically)? Please understand—pride, arrogance and brawn are many times the result of human insecurity derived from spiritual immaturity; unless the “brawn” is derived from the devotional cleansing and strengthening of God’s temple, for the purpose of sacrificial service of worship!⁶³

The foolish philosophical thinking of society in believing outward appearance to demonstrate what lies within, goes further by stipulating the supposed characteristics of both men and women. God has given each of us certain characteristics, which when used in conjunction with others brings forth edification for all. Society says that men are to be macho and women are to be petite, and teaches this foolishness to be a standard for the existence of the genders. When a man has a meek spirit which accompanies a loving heart, as did our Lord, then society says the man is less than he should be. The same is said of women who are not the frail petite vision of loveliness which society states is the acceptable norm. When men are meek and women are not, then they are peculiar by society standards; although they are who God created them to be! When will we realize, society’s standards are far from the righteous standards of love rendered creatively by our Lord!

I personally believe that many homosexuals are not actually homosexual by trait! Although homosexuality is a reality due to man’s having trusted in and thereby worshipped and served the creation rather than

⁶¹ Ephesians 6:10-12; James 4:3-10; 1 John 2:15-17; 4:4-6.

⁶² 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 1 John 5:1-5.

⁶³ 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17; Romans 12:1-3, specific v. 1.

the Creator, and this as by primarily trusting in the conceivable accomplishments (idealism and ideology) of humankind; I believe that within the stupidity of cultural society placing stipulations on what men and women are supposed to be, many men and women begin to believe the inappropriate foolish standards; which leads them to inappropriate behavior, as they do not fit into the secular mold as set forth.⁶⁴ Within this behavior, many become confused, whereas many others make excuses as to why they are the way they are (progeny; lifestyle); when a considerable amount were never actually homosexual to begin with, but rather failing yet to trust in the Creator. Ignorance leading to confusion, leading to excuses; how absurd! If a man is meek, so be it; for the world absolutely needs more loving meek men.⁶⁵ If a woman is not petite, so be it; the world needs more physically strong yet loving women. As Christians we need not fall prey to the stipulations of cultural society; for to know who we are in Christ is to know one's purpose, as by creation.⁶⁶ What society has to say in the matter, at this point, truly no longer matters; as the imperative remains proclaiming the good news of the Gospel, so that focus may turn once again unto the Lord of all mercy, lovingkindness and grace!⁶⁷

In all circumstances of our existence, we should humbly and submissively seek to maintain discipline according to the will of our Lord, which always involves love; just as love always involves discipline.⁶⁸ We must not allow society to regulate our hearts or our minds, for our existence is regulated by our Creator; *if* we are devotionally disciplined! We cannot make excuses for failing to stand firm in our faith, for we should seek to remain disciplined and thereby free from the tyranny of secular standards and beliefs; as a Biblical mandate remains to—come out from their midst and be separate (2 Corinthians 6:17). I know that we cannot see into the hearts of others. I know that we live in a world of manipulations and convincing deceptions, yet falling prey to such things is not necessary *if* we choose to stay focused upon Jesus (the author and perfecter of our faith—Hebrews 12:1-3). Society sets standards for the genders based almost entirely on superficial observations; society

⁶⁴ Romans 1:18-32.

⁶⁵ Matthew 5:3-16; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18.

⁶⁶ Colossians 1:15-23; Ephesians 1:3-23.

⁶⁷ Romans 10:1; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

⁶⁸ Proverbs 3:11; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, 12; Hebrews 12:6-11.

being secular in nature and thereby unwilling to admit wrongdoing, remains inappropriately adamant; yet Christians having a new nature must think differently, for we have the mind of Christ!⁶⁹ Let us no longer fall prey to a carnal mindset, but instead let us realize the wrong which surrounds us, so that we may put forth maximum effort to live our lives enveloped (abiding) in the love of God, whom gives us grace for this purpose. In this, my brethren, let us remember that we hate sin yet love the sinner! Any believer who hates other individuals who have been deceived or fallen prey to sin, is an individual whom themselves have become deceived.⁷⁰ Disciplining ourselves to appropriate God's grace is the key to success in all such matters!

I notice that many public schools now have video monitoring systems, because the students are quick to act in an undisciplined manner. Although we have all acted foolishly at some point in our adolescent years, many youngsters these days are without any form of discipline not only at school but also at home. This comes from cowardice in parenting!

Someone once said that a child from a third-world country could be noticed right away by their disciplined manners. In actuality I would tend to believe this to be true, for foreign children seek to improve and gain something better, whereas many American children are complacent and couldn't care less. I wish this were not so, yet to witness the world in which we live brings reality to bear. Discipline without is a momentary action which possibly leads to discipline within; loving reproof therefore leads potentially to a blessing which endures!⁷¹

When the Scriptures stated that striking a child with a rod would not kill them, this is exactly correct in context of Biblical love! This is speaking in regard to loving discipline, not disciplining out of anger or stored aggression! Folks truly desire discipline, yet very few are willing to fight the battles which will assuredly arise from harsh love. The "truth hurts"! Sound familiar? Although it is true that some children have been abused by harsh treatment, the abounding fact remains that millions of children throughout history have been disciplined appropriately in love. Some may say that severe punishment is not deserved,

⁶⁹ Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

⁷⁰ John 8:1-12; Romans 3:21-31; 1 John 1:5-10.

⁷¹ Proverbs 10:13; 13:24; 22:6, 15; 23:13, 14; 26:3-5; 29:15.

yet severe: disobedience, lying, disrespect, disregard for living things and discord for others; must be met with severity of loving purpose (severe discipline) if appropriate change is to come forth!⁷² Some children have been abused physically by unstable or mentally insecure parents and/or guardians. Some abuses have come forth because the child refuses to conform to appropriate standards set forth by loving parents; this leading to the parents striking the child from anger.⁷³ There are many scenarios which could be construed as child abuse which in fact are not abuse at all, but rather the extent of punishment necessary to stop absolute absurdities! Many children throughout history have been struck with a “switch”; a small branch (or rod) from a tree or bush, which almost always raises a welt. These disciplines did not cause permanent harm, and were generally well deserved (speaking from experience); bringing forth the peaceful fruits of righteousness (discipline from within). Praise God for parents who deliver appropriate punishment upon the children they love, so as to stop inappropriate, disobedient and undisciplined behavior!

Never has there been a perfect human parent upon this earth. In today’s world it is said that “it should never hurt to be a child.” Hogwash! I feel blessed in not having been raised in a time period where the outright selfish disobedience of children is tolerated, out of cowardice and the following of absurd secular rules. Discipline is necessary *if* maturity is to come forth; both (Biblical discipline and maturity) being traits which parents are to teach their children, *if* a manifestation of godliness is to be forthcoming.⁷⁴ With Christian parents rejecting instruction from the perfect Father (God) by their submission and obedience to the false teaching of secular society, Satan is setting up millions of children to miss out on a tremendous personal relationship with God, because they remain rebelliously deceived and undisciplined. What then is the cause; quite simply, if a child is not taught subjection to parental authority, the child will then neither submit to the authority of God.⁷⁵

In the United States of America, far too many children are raised by pharmaceuticals. All currently diagnosed learning and behavior

⁷² Proverbs 22:10.

⁷³ Ephesians 6:1-4.

⁷⁴ Hebrews 12:7-11.

⁷⁵ 2 Timothy 2:1-26; James 4:7-10.

disabilities have probably been present throughout history. These problems within children and adolescents have been dealt with by loving discipline throughout the ages. In America today, drugs are used for every little thing, and this leads to inabilities to think clearly which allows Satan opportunity to deceive. Drugs have been used throughout history in sorcery (Greek - *pharmakeia*); this being the reason why “sorcery” is named as a deed of the flesh.⁷⁶ We know that deeds of the flesh cannot please God; therefore, why believing parents would allow or initiate this form of sin (sorcery) in the lives of their children is difficult to understand. Pharmaceuticals have appropriate uses; yet raising one’s child without discipline, instead trusting their behavior to inability to think clearly is not one of them! The world today is full of cowardice parents who serve Satan according to secular standards; thus, those held captive to do Satan’s will, teaching others to be held captive to do Satan’s will! What does the Bible say about causing a child to stumble?⁷⁷

Thousands of believing families in the present-day world are terribly deceived as to what “love” is. This confusion as to defining “real love” is understandable, considering the world in which we live.⁷⁸ The love which abounds (agape - unconditional love) is a love which is put forth unto all “just because.” The love of the world (selfish; idolatrous) or agapao (in a social sense) is a love which far too often is exhibited “because of” (i.e. what is in it for me). To love all others for who they are by creation (just because), eliminates selfish ulterior motives (because of), thereby allowing us to witness, appreciate and render loving compassion; without lustfulness, selfishness and the seeking of personal gains. Understanding these facts as to the contrast between godly love and secular love renders the knowledge necessary to take upon oneself the appropriate behavior of loving others in accordance to Scripture standard.⁷⁹

In the world today, good news crawls while bad news flies quickly. This is to say that we are too quick to criticize while refraining from rendering edification. This is one reason that self-centeredness and selfishness have become such dominant forces upon this earth. The truth edifies; whereas harsh criticisms do not! The forces of evil within the

⁷⁶ Galatians 5:19-21.

⁷⁷ Matthew 18:1-7.

⁷⁸ 1 John 2:12-17.

⁷⁹ Philippians 2:1-18.

spiritual realm bask in such emotions, feeding them with increased wickedness. Have you ever had a thought which grew to gigantic proportions within what realistically demonstrates an evil intent? The initial thought was probably and potentially ours, yet Satan and demons instigated further evil within the thought; turning it to an absurdity.⁸⁰

If we look at the behavior of gang members, we see an earnest desire to fit in and be loved; this being a trait not unlike many young folks. This in itself is but human nature; the wickedness enters in when anything will be done to achieve a sense of belonging with someone or something. We can see the meanness which comes forth from unchecked emotions; this many times derived from peers who have learned to manipulate and coerce those around them. The manipulators most times realize their intent (although sometimes not—when deceived), then lead others astray under the ruse of love or concern; the reality being self-centeredness within the group leadership. The world follows the ways set forth by gang members, i.e. droopy drawers, hand and body gestures, verbal slang, macho (insecure) behavior. Too many homes allow this behavior to invade, as also do schools. Most do not see the subconscious harm this causes, when individuals band together in acts of superficiality; destined to bring forth continued outward (superficial) belonging which lacks any form of sincere selfless intent. This is terrible, as many want others to love them sincerely, yet fail to render sincere love themselves.⁸¹ How many children would have a fighting chance at victory over the ways of the world, if they were taught the admonitions of the Lord by loving parents; which happens to be a Biblical mandate?

Parents are afraid to discipline their children under supposed penalties of law, yet the laws of our God reign true in the world today, just as much as times past. We are to lift our children up (to maturity), yet they many times are brought down by others (gang mentality, macho friends, peers, etc.); then actually drag the members of their household (mothers, fathers, siblings) down with them. A household focused upon sanctification (being set apart unto the Lord; made holy) is necessary if godliness is to prevail!⁸² We must remember, *if* from within appropriate

⁸⁰ Ephesians 6:12-16.

⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

⁸² 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

parenting we are not willing to emphasize the admonitions of God to our children, someone led by demonic influence will certainly emphasize the ways of the world to them. The ways of the world must be kept out of Christian homes, lest they become but worldly domiciles; therefore submission and reverence to and for God must be: taught, emphasized, exemplified, and maintained within the home at all times; for this is necessary if all members of a family are to abide in the Word!⁸³

Families do not dine together anymore, because within the same household everyone does their own thing. This is the starting point of loneliness although surrounded by others. Make the time to pay attention to others; with primary specific being attentiveness on God, so as to journey upon the narrow path which leads to righteousness within all relationships! Place one's own desires as secondary to the necessities of others! Love enough to speak the truth at all times! Love enough to discipline appropriately when necessary; for *if* we have all things of the secular world and have not godly love, we are but makers of noise, and condoning of troublesome foolishness!⁸⁴

Loving One Another According to God's Grace—In Perspective

1. The Lord has created each of us in accordance to His sovereign will for humankind, knowledge of all things past and present, and His will for us individually (Proverbs 16:4; John 15:10-20).
2. It is solely by God's immense grace that each of us have the blessing of goodness in our lives; therefore all things good are actually manifestations from God (Galatians 5:22, 23; Mark 10:17, 18; Romans 3:9-18; 3 John 1:11).
3. To truly understand the agape love which the Lord holds for us, and thereby love others in accordance to the standard of agape (unconditional) love, let us look to the parable of the slave's (our) indebtedness to the Master (Matthew 18:21-35). **Note:** Love is not active, until it is freely given!

⁸³ John 8:31-36; 15:1-17.

⁸⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

- **Perspective**

Ten thousand talents (1 talent = 3000 shekels / 75.6 lbs.) = \$6,000,000,000.00

One hundred denarii (1 denarii / denarius = 16 cents) = \$16.00

If so great a debt has been forgiven us, as that which came forth in accordance to the wretchedness of our sin against our Lord; who are we not to forgive the petty trespasses which have been perpetrated against us! Freely we have been given lovingkindness, mercy and grace; let us therefore deny ourselves, so as to freely give the same to others (Romans 5:1-21; 8:31-39; 12:9-21; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; Ephesians 2:1-10; 4:17-32; Colossians 3:5-17)!

4. What are the parameters of Biblical love?

- Agape love is selfless, loyal and benevolent concern for the wellbeing of another. This is not the love of the world (Luke 10:25-37; Matthew 5:43-48; 1 Peter 3:8-12); but rather that which is a blessing from the Lord (James 1:16-18).
- Other forms of Biblical love include the unselfish love of friends and the love of a brother.
- The world's rendition of love states that love will be rendered *if* personal gain can be obtained, whereas Biblical love is rendered asking nothing in return (1 John 3:4-18).

5. Biblical love is:

- A blessing from God (1 Thessalonians 3:9-13); therefore it is resolvedly learned and received when we choose submissively to love God first and foremost (Matthew 22:37-40; John 5:39-47; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5; 1 John 2:3-11).
 - Some may argue that loving the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength is in accordance to the Law; yes this is true (Matthew 22:36; Deuteronomy 6:1-9). The point to be made is not that we are forced under the Law to love the Lord, but rather that our loving acceptance (by faith) of all which the Lord has done for us, leads to establishment of the Law; for "love" regarding the Lord is the highest motivating factor which leads to our humble submission with thanksgiving, as we realize the immensity

- of His sufficient grace (2 Corinthians 3:1-4:18; 12:1-10; Romans 3:21-31; 5:1-11)!
- The Lord has always desired our humble devotional reverence (Micah 6:6-8; Hosea 6:4-6); for indeed we were created by Him and for Him (Colossians 1:15-23); thus Biblical love goes far beyond the superficial physical realm love which is of the world, as it is derived from God having first loved us (1 John 4:1-21)! True Biblical love is founded within the spirit of those who love God and are called according to His purpose.
 - Truly, loving the Lord with all sincerity and devotion is the realistic trait which distinguishes actual Christians (the remnant) from members of the Christian religion (the masses); for members of “the Way” realize that our existence is all about God (worship of the Creator), whereas members of the Christian religion generally wonder—what’s in it for them (worship of creation)! Simply put—the object of our focus is the actual object of our worship, for we will journey upon the path of our focus; whether the narrow path upon which God leads in righteousness, or the wide path which is led in accordance to the sinful nature. This is why the Bible states that we are to guard ourselves from idols and sexual immorality; for in doing so, we will do well in furtherance within our relationship with the Lord (1 John 5:18-21; Colossians 3:5-17; Hebrews 13:1-6; 1 Timothy 6:6-19). All who seek a God of convenience by choosing carnality over spirituality will never come to knowledge of this truth; thus their relationship with Him will remain foundational to basic ignorance, as the Lord does not reveal Himself to our flesh! How soon the multitudes forget that we are known by our fruits, which is the reality of our demeanor; this is the truth seen by the Lord at all times!

When we fail to love the Lord first and foremost, the blessing of true love within one’s spirit is never received from above. Many never come to realize sincere love in their lives, because they refuse to deny themselves so as to submit to the Lord! Do not be deceived, God is not fooled

nor mocked by the words from our lips (Galatians 6:1-10). The appropriate action on our part is to: love the Lord, surrender unto Him, and sincerely worship Him in spirit and in truth; being lovingly blessed, as we are instruments of God's manifested goodness unto others (2 Corinthians 5:10-21; Ephesians 3:14-21)!

Note: Marriage priority - Ephesians 5:22-33; Colossians 3:18, 19

6. Biblical love involves disciplined forgiveness! What does it mean to forgive? To forgive is to cancel your right to punish another for their indebtedness or wrong toward you; to relinquish your right of retaliation.⁸⁵ The Lord is our example (Luke 23:34; Hebrews 2:5-18; 1 John 1:8-2:2; 4:7-10).

To forgive may take time, and the one committing the offense does not necessarily have the right to demand forgiveness from the one wronged. The one wronged must however forgive according to the commandments of our Lord (Matthew 18:21-35), and should do so before the end of the day; *if* obedience to God is sought, as well as denying Satan opportunity for attack (Ephesians 4:17-27). Let us remember God's tremendous mercy for each of us, when we are angered (Hebrews 4:15, 16; 1 Peter 2:6-10), so that we may act appropriately when wronged (Ephesians 4:29-32). It is not wrong to be angry; yet forgiveness must always follow!

7. Let us put our love in perspective:

- We have all been created with the ability to love (1 John 4:19-21; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13).
- Our ability to love involves our love for others, and an appropriate love for ourselves (Philippians 2:1-4; Psalm 139:13-18). This should be kept in perspective as to our creation; according to God's intent for each of us.
- When we consider how God created each of us to be who we are; we better understand that the Lord has a wonderful plan for each of us both individually, and combined together as a whole (Romans 5:6-11; 1 Corinthians 12:4-31; 14:1-40).

⁸⁵ Matthew 5:38-48.

- To lose track of this perspective is to love “self” over abundantly (narcissistically), and others out of discord, and/or with envy from within one’s heart (2 Timothy 3:1-5; Titus 3:1-8).
 - Once an individual has lost track of the uniqueness of others, they also lose track of what it means to love others; for most emphasis placed upon others is generally derived from comparison with “self”; thus portrayed emotions, from a foundational judicator nature.
 - I have been asked how it is we are to bless those who have hurt or spitefully used us; for it is not easy to bless offenders in such a circumstance. Please remember that blessings from God are given primarily as necessary for our spiritual growth and overall edification. When we would believe that God’s blessings are always given in some fashion of riches or that which is comfortable for the flesh, let us remember the aforementioned fact and thereby we can truly bless offensive individuals from a sincere heart, understanding that God knows what they have need of (example—Isaiah 29:13, 14).
 - It should be remembered that the underlying judgmental nature of many is derived from human self-centering insecurities. With this knowledge, we avoid falling prey to the insecurities of others, as we remain secure within the surety of our personal relationship with God; thereby forgiving the trespasses against us, within the sincerity of agape love.
8. Unselfish agape love involves loving others as much *if* not more than oneself. To truly understand this is the knowledge which will open our hearts to love and observe others in the light of God’s creation of them. This then will allow us to see others as being a blessing in our life, as we do this with a servant’s heart (Matthew 20:25-28).
9. As a man thinks in his heart; so he is (Proverbs 23:6-8; 26:24-28). Let us be compassionate, and sharpen others to be the same (Proverbs 27:17); for truthful love edifies (2 Corinthians 13:1-10)!

God's Love—A Further Prospective

1. As we continue in our walk with the Lord in accordance to His leadership, a progression of events occurs which uplifts (edifies) and teaches us in the ways we should go (works together - Romans 8:18-30; upper call - Philippians 3:8-14; new creation - 2 Corinthians 5:14-21).
2. *If* we truly seek to abide in God's love, we must remember that to abide in Him is to suffer for His glory (1 Peter 4:1-19; 5:6-11; John 15:18-21; 17:14-21). Although many churches today teach that the step to success is to add Christ to one's list of friends, the truth remains that Jesus is Lord and we are called His friends by His grace in accordance to our obedience (2 Corinthians 12:7-10; John 15:10-17). The decision of friendship with the Lord is His to make; not ours!
 - Isn't it amazing how so many believers seem to be able to sin with no sense of remorse or conviction? This should not surprise us (although it is always upsetting), as the Scriptures said that supposed brethren would invade the ranks of those who seek the Lord with sincerity and devotion (Jude 1:3, 4).
3. Let's take a closer look at a Scriptural progression of a true Christian's walk (Matthew 16:24-27; Romans 5:1-6; Philippians 3:8-14; 2 Peter 1:2-11).
4. To add a further prospective, let us search the motives of the heart.
 - When Jonah was prophesying to King Jeroboam and was present at the Lord's deliverance of Israel (2 Kings 14:25-27), he was extremely happy because the tender mercy of the Lord was directed toward his (Jonah's) people.
 - When Jonah was sent to Nineveh, he rebelled to the maximum by going the opposite direction (Jonah 1:1-3). After being redirected into fulfilling his ministry, Jonah obeyed the Lord; whom brought deliverance to the repentant Assyrians (Jonah 1:17; 2:1-4; 3:1-10).
 - After the Lord relented of His anger toward the inhabitants of Nineveh, Jonah was angry because he hated the Assyrians

(65-70 years after this the Lord utilized the Assyrians to bring oppression to the Israelites because of their disobedience) (Jonah 4:1-3). Was Jonah wrong for his hatred of the Ninevites and how God had brought forth healing? Was Jonah looking at the inhabitants of this Assyrian city through his own eyes, or through the loving eyes of God (Jonah 4:4-11)?

5. How do we look at ourselves when it comes to serving the Lord? Do we look at others through the loving eyes of God, or do we look through the frail eyes of our humanity? Are we willing that others should perish in their sins, or do we speak the truth in love even when it hurts our ego? Which is more important—our current comfort, or the eternal comfort of all? Which is more important—our frail ways of thinking, or God’s infinite knowledge of all things?
6. I choose the way of the Lord (Proverbs 2:1-22; Romans 10:1; Philippians 1:21; 3:8-14; Galatians 1:10)! How about you?
 - In a like manner, when we focus forward with anticipation as to what the Lord will do in our life (Isaiah 6:1-8; Proverbs 3:5-8; 4:18, 19); do we remind ourselves of God’s immense love for us and thereby submit to His masterful leadership, or do we allow the enemy to remind us how wretched we were prior to God’s cleansing, thus allowing hindrance and stagnancy (2 Corinthians 11:1-3; Galatians 5:19-23; Romans 6:15-23; Hebrews 5:11-6:20)?
 - Heed the instruction of the Lord (Matthew 22:36-40; Proverbs 4:23-27; 5:21-23; 10:1-32). Please remember, if we refuse or neglect loving the Lord first and foremost, spiritual stagnancy will be the inevitable result; for without denial of “self” so as to follow Jesus upon the narrow path of His righteousness, the enemy will assuredly lead us upon the wide path of spiritual destructiveness and secular desire (Matthew 7:13-27; 16:24-27).
 - Walk according to God’s immense grace in your life (Proverbs 12:28; 15:24; 2 Corinthians 5:10-13; 12:1-10); without confusion as to wonderment of your unwarranted value, as our worth is in accordance to the Creator’s masterful goodness (Matthew 10:29-42; 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; Ephesians 2:1-10; Psalm 139:14-18)!

7. Speak the truth in love, even to yourself; for we worship and serve the Lord of truth (1 Corinthians 13:4-:14:4; Ephesians 4:11-16; Romans 12:1-8; 2 Timothy 2:20-26; John 14:6, 7)!
8. Let us look at ourselves, as God does. No longer are we children of wrath, but rather we are the adopted children of the Creator Himself (Romans 8:14-17; 9:6-29); if legitimate children drawn and taught by God (John 6:44, 45, 65). Shall suffering and distress stop us from being obedient to the Lord's anointing in our lives, or should we not rather come to a more strict realization of God's love; in doing so realizing that we are not who we were, but rather victorious and loved by GRACE through faith (1 John 4:11-21; 5:4, 5; 2 Corinthians 1:18-22; 4:1-6).

Love—Stated Simply

"*If*" we are truly appreciative of the Creator for having made the earth habitable, and blessing us with existence and the measure of faith so as to know, and worship our Creator, which is absolutely appropriate; we would devotionally submit with sincerity of love to obey the Lord's instruction and commandments with reverence! "*If*" we then would love the Lord first and foremost, we will understand that our existence has everything to do with Him!⁸⁶ When (*if*) we fully realize the aforementioned facts, we will realize that we are intended to be here secondarily for others with sincere concern for their salvation; for this knowledge is from the Lord!⁸⁷ When (*if*) we realize that *God* comes first, then others, then lastly ourselves; it is at this point we will begin to fully understand the narrow path of righteousness and selfless service. Servitude for and unto our Creator (the Lord God of all Creation) is Christianity! This is where God our Father will lead us, "*if*" we will submit to follow Him!⁸⁸ True sincere love for God is a motivating factor which leads to elimination of volitional "self," for the purpose of reverent devotion; "*if*" this is lacking, then so also is lacking true sincere love for our Creator, as we yet think more highly of ourselves than we ought (arrogance)! This is summed up best by the words of our Lord:

⁸⁶ Matthew 22:37, 38; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; Romans 8:33-37.

⁸⁷ John 15:9-17; Matthew 5:43-6:34; Ephesians 3:14-19; 1 Timothy 2:1-8.

⁸⁸ Romans 12:1, 2; Philippians 3:7-14.

Revelation 3:15-16—‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth.’

Personal Note—The word “spit” is from the Greek word “emew”—to vomit. What then is the rendered message?

1. To be “**hot**” is to: love the Lord,⁸⁹ deny “self,”⁹⁰ worship God in spirit and in truth,⁹¹ abstain from evil,⁹² walk the narrow path of God’s righteousness,⁹³ stay cleansed from all forms of defilement (both flesh and spirit) by taking all thoughts captive to obedience;⁹⁴ all of this accomplished by the Lord within those who with disciplined devotion, love and respect the God of all creation, thereby allowing the Lord to both will and work in them for His good pleasure; thus—God at work, as He implants the reality of the relationship into His legitimate children!⁹⁵ Simply stated—being “hot” is to realistically live the relationship of the Creator/creature distinction; thus the love of Jesus controls us!⁹⁶
2. To be “**lukewarm**” is to: live for “self,”⁹⁷ live for worldly possessions, live religiously (not relationally),⁹⁸ live according to secular standards,⁹⁹ obey the deeds of the flesh,¹⁰⁰ attempt to do the work of which God alone is capable (completely aloof God’s leadership and embrace),¹⁰¹ serve God (supposedly) in accordance to personal volition (not according to God’s will, anointing, and righteous leadership);¹⁰² this being done while also generally prideful,

⁸⁹ Matthew 22:36-40.

⁹⁰ Matthew 16:24-27.

⁹¹ John 4:20-24.

⁹² 1 Thessalonians 5:14-22.

⁹³ Matthew 7:13-20.

⁹⁴ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Corinthians 10:3-7.

⁹⁵ Romans 8:1-39, specific vs. 22-30; Hebrews 12:1-11.

⁹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

⁹⁷ Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 9:19-27.

⁹⁸ Colossians 2:20-23; Romans 8:6-17.

⁹⁹ James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

¹⁰⁰ Galatians 5:19-21.

¹⁰¹ Acts 19:11-20.

arrogant, self-centered, and complacent! Simply stated—being “lukewarm” is to realistically seek purpose and pleasure everywhere which is aloof both God’s good, acceptable and perfect will, and the kind intention of His will; thus individuals profess to love Jesus, while having no manifested traits (fruits) which indicate reality pertaining to the relationship!¹⁰³ This is both shameful and embarrassing; for it causes nothing but harm, when individuals truly wanting to know the Lord witness blatantly disgusting carnal behavior which forces a repulsive effect!

3. To be “**cold**” is to be silent regarding a relationship with God; as in silence there is no repulsion and repugnance generated against the beautiful relational reality! Because the statements are being made to the multitudes of believers which remain “lukewarm,” and by whom much leadership has been accumulated to teach according to fleshly whims and desires (ears tickled), which has led to continued forsaking the ways of God for the sake of religious traditions foundational to darkness; the statement to be cold (because not hot but only lukewarm) is harsh, for the Lord is stating that “lukewarm” individuals should be silent and not profess to know Him, thereby staying embarrassment from true Christians and actual Christianity!¹⁰⁴ Praise the Lord that He awaits patiently for the few who will awaken from slumber and repent (turn back to God); hopefully seeking that which is pure and overcome, thereby receiving blessing!¹⁰⁵

Inasmuch as the statements proclaimed are to the current-day church (A.D. 1954-present), which has closed the door so as to keep out the Lord of light and truth; the Lord remains quite gracious to seek individuals to be intimate with Him, while yet hoping individual congregations would once again open the door to allow Him access! For this to happen, all forms of darkness; heresy and apostasy aloof sound doctrine and worship in spirit and in truth, must cease; for the

¹⁰² Matthew 7:21-27.

¹⁰³ Galatians 5:22, 23; Revelation 3:17, 18.

¹⁰⁴ Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:8-15; Colossians 2:8-17; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; 2 Peter 2:1-22.

¹⁰⁵ Romans 13:8-14; Revelation 3:18-22.

Lord God cannot and will not enter into a place where darkness is intentional! Please understand, the divine work of God is necessary in order to come to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ); which has not been taught for several decades; as the darkness of pulpit proclamation completely denies the reality of God, by stating that a few choice words accepting Jesus as Savior is sufficient for salvation! This foolishness is not Biblical nor of truth; as individuals desire a relationship with God completely aloof the reality of God and of the Christ, thus a fantasy relationship!¹⁰⁶

Fearing for one's life as a believer, ought not to be. As Christians we go from life to life; therefore understanding the faithfulness and love of God, eliminates fear.¹⁰⁷ When Christians fear death (which will never occur for true legitimate children of God), they fail to present themselves a living sacrifice; instead living for "self" in the moment.¹⁰⁸ *If* the sacrifice of our life can bring the potential of eternal life for someone else, then so be it!¹⁰⁹ Thus "perfect love" (God's love manifest) casts out fear, while bringing forth the fruits of righteousness; as God's love for us is sure, our love for Him should be soundly motivational within acceptance of His righteousness!

Love within Marriage

Please pay close attention to 1 Corinthians 7:1-9; Ephesians 5:22-6:4. These Scriptures point out truth which when understood (evidenced by actions) brings forth abounding love and unity within marriage and family relationships. The actionable denial of Gospel truth brings forth division, divorce, or both; while also being a basis of accountability. It is within this fact of truth or denial thereof, that we can relate to our spouse and children, or not; in a godly context.

On many occasions, I have been asked "in what context is a wife to submit to her husband." I find in most cases the wife has a more realistic viewpoint of this, than do the husbands. The exception to this being godly men who understand God's mandate in the matter, to be in regard to the responsibilities of, and the following of—the household spiritual leader. The man is the head of the woman, as Christ is the head of the

¹⁰⁶ Romans 10:1-13, specific vs. 8-10; John 6:45-65; 14:6, 7.

¹⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 1 John 4:16-19.

¹⁰⁸ James 5:1-12; 1 Corinthians 15:31-34.

¹⁰⁹ Romans 8:33-39.

man and of the church (His Body). This does not mean (as do many men believe) that the woman is the servant of the man. Women were created as companions (helpers); not slaves, nor followers of foolishness!¹¹⁰

It should be remembered, no one has the right to cause a marriage relationship to go asunder; including the husband or wife, for marriage is a vowed covenant relationship! The word of emphasis to illustrate this fact is the word—“cleave”; as the husband is to “cleave” to his wife! The word “cleave” literally means—to glue or adhere; thus the two (husband and wife) become one flesh.¹¹¹ The context of the marriage relationship is therefore simple; for as the two become tightly glued together, there no longer exists a point of separation within which a wedge can be driven, thus—what God has joined together, let no man separate (Matthew 19:6). Within this fact, we gain understanding that “self” is denied by both the husband and wife; therefore a bonded single entity exists from what were two forms of individuality.¹¹² When “self” is denied within the covenant (glued) relationship which is marriage, then love prevails; love for each other, foundational to loving the Lord first and foremost! This is Gospel truth in action, as the husband and wife abide in the Word together!¹¹³ It is the husband’s responsibility to study the Gospel, and lovingly lead the relationship to spiritual fruition; for in this Jesus leads the husband, who then leads his wife!

Just as helping someone is assisting them, thereby not doing the task solo in their stead, so also is the marriage relationship. A husband should be edified by his wife, as a wife should be edified by her husband; thus each gives one hundred percent to the relationship! Too many people enter into relationships believing the other person will make them complete; this in reality being a farce. How can weakness (human frailty) edify weakness? Taking the aforementioned into consideration, we can see that a profound sense of purpose (in the Lord) is necessary within oneself, lest insecurity be the primary factor (baggage) carried into a relationship. *If* we enter into a relationship because of a sense of “need,” then the true purpose for a relationship (love) is missing or becomes secondary. For a relationship to start and remain sound, it must be founded upon “love,” for the strength of “agape love” is from God; made

¹¹⁰ cf. Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.

¹¹¹ Matthew 19:3-12.

¹¹² 1 Corinthians 7:3-6.

¹¹³ John 15:4-11; James 1:19-25.

manifest by the indwelling Holy Spirit!¹¹⁴ As God is the very essence of love and not simply loving; and as we love because He first loved us; God does not teach us how to love but rather leads in love, for the foundation of selfless love is a manifestation of God indwelling!¹¹⁵

If a person is not aware of who they are in Christ, they will seek purpose and understanding of “self” through other human beings, or via secular things and teachings.¹¹⁶ This is a prevalent cause behind many quick rising and quick falling relationships, for indeed confusion cannot uplift weakness. This is also the reason why superficial relationships come from superficial attractions (esthetics), thus remaining astray of sincerity. Too many folks (both male and female) enter into relationships quickly and with as little realistically sincere (selfless) effort as possible; for the foundation of many relationships is the desires of the flesh, i.e. “self” within erotic love (Eros love). How can a mature individual possibly think a relationship built upon laziness within insincerity, could endure the test of time? Could it be that “maturity” is one of the key factors missing in many relationship endeavors? Members of the opposite sex were not placed upon this earth to cause (lead) us to maturity (growth beyond mental and spiritual adolescence); our personal relationship with Jesus is foundational for this result.¹¹⁷ The fact of this matter is reiterated by Gospel emphasis that *if* our relationship with the Lord remains precedent, then we will journey upon the narrow path of His righteousness; thus being led in our loving endeavors concerning all others! Please remember—fornication (consensual sex external of marriage) is not an option for Christians entering into an ardent relationship; for as God will not and cannot bless a relationship which incorporates sin, sincere righteous discipline must be maintained!¹¹⁸

A woman is to follow her husband, when he leads her upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness. *If* a woman willfully follows her husband into lawlessness (intentional sin), then the reality of her fruits evidences that her husband has become an idol. Please remember—an idol is anything or anyone which takes precedence in our lives over the Lord our God! *If* men are willing to entice their wife and children down

¹¹⁴ 1 John 4:7-13.

¹¹⁵ Galatians 5:22, 23.

¹¹⁶ Colossians 1:15-20; Philipians 3:15-21; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

¹¹⁷ Hebrews 5:11-6:20; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; John 15:1-17.

¹¹⁸ Hebrews 12:1-11; 13:4.

the wide path leading to destruction, how can anyone possibly claim this to be done in love? When a male individual leads his wife by example to live godly in Christ Jesus, the woman (wife) should desire to follow such leading; thus the married couple maintain priority devotions for God both individually and together, as each and yet both (one flesh—Genesis 2:24) focus upon the author and perfecter of faith (Jesus; Lord). When this occurs, a Gospel priority is fulfilled as both the husband and wife walk by faith; for a spouse takes precedence, second only to God!

When a man expects his wife, or a woman expects her husband, to follow them into bold carnality, and this is claimed to be Biblical; the spouse then becomes torn between their devotion to God and their edifying capabilities to their spouse. This is where knowing one's purpose in Christ is demonstrated as being of utmost importance in a marriage relationship; for whereas a spouse cannot be trusted, our Lord is always faithful and true!¹¹⁹ When this is realized and therefore God remains the focus of individuals within a marriage relationship; no matter what direction a foolish spouse may seek to lead the other upon the broad path of spiritual destructiveness, the one devoted to God with all sincerity will maintain a firm stance upon the narrow path which leads to righteousness; making example (by temperance), while also trusting God to bring forth potential growth.¹²⁰ Within this realistic endeavor, the spouse subjecting themselves to God's righteousness will never attempt to force change upon the other, but rather by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving places all concerns before God's throne of grace; for the Lord can change both hearts and physical natures, whereas human beings cannot. Please remember—a believer should never seek a passionate relationship with a non-believer; for this violates Gospel standards, and thus would be a basis of physical and spiritual defeat, as Christ would not be the foundation of the relationship.¹²¹ To attempt a maintained sound ardent relationship with another human being, apart from being on fire (hot) within one's relationship with Jesus, would be an attempt foundational to idolatry; for the Lord must lead our endeavors of life regarding any basis of actual success which endures the test of time. The absolute priority remains therefore that the Lord

¹¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-24.

¹²⁰ Titus 2:1-8.

¹²¹ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

would have to be the precedent of both parties seeking to enter into a righteous sincere relationship, or deterrents from simplicity of devotion to Christ would lead to further distraction and potential inevitable spiritual defeat for both parties within the relationship!

When a wife is torn as to her obedience to Jesus, and her duties of submission to a husband of selfish, macho, and/or foolish motives, the general character of the woman is compromised, as also is her sound state of mental being. This is why more women in households are good Christians than are men, for the women no longer seek strength from their spiritually weak husbands, but rather from their loving Lord; for the stability of the personal relationship with Jesus must remain imperative, if soundness of demeanor is to be maintained.

If Christian husbands loved their wives in a manner as Christ loved the church (selflessly; sacrificially), most imbalances within marriages would be minimal among believers; regarding submissiveness in marriage relationships. Christ loved the church (individuals in the Body of Christ) to the point of death on a cross; this is the type of sacrificial love husbands are to show their wives, as by crucifixion (adamant denial) of “self”!

Many relationships of marriage are greatly hindered, decremented, and/or completely destroyed by the “macho” behavior of either the husband or wife. When individuals fail to realize who they are within a personal relationship with Jesus, then endeavors generally come forth in attempts to prove oneself, which leads to a precedence of self-centeredness; for one’s worth is not realized to be in accordance to the Potter’s masterful workmanship.¹²² With failure to realize one’s immense worth by and for the Lord, inappropriately emphasized attempts cause division and confusion; for “macho” is:

1. Stupid
2. The prideful foolish behavior of insecure individuals attempting to prove their maturity as by absurdity! Simple fact—God is opposed to the proud, but gives grace to the humble!¹²³

¹²² Romans 9:6-29.

¹²³ James 4:3-6.

Please remember—unwarranted (non-Christ-centered) submission unto one's spouse is generally based in fear or assorted fleshly desires; not love! Many members of marriage relationships submit unto their spouse for reasons other than loving devotion. Many marriages have with the passing of time become foundational to: secular standards of success, household financial status, family religious doctrines and precepts, personal positional stature (generally employment related), and the relationships of family members with friends and associates; thus journeying away from the only sound foundation which is Christ.¹²⁴ When children of God attest to the standards or testimonies of those outside of God's family, with surety the standards within the family as set forth by the Father (head of family) will be violated; for the standards of the secular world are set forth in accordance to demonic influence. Because this is a matter of actual fact, children of God are to: maintain focus upon the author and perfecter of our faith, maintain separateness from close bonds outside the family of God, and never adhere to supposed standards of success which are aloof of God's righteousness and work of sanctification (being set apart and made holy). When the precedence of loving devotion first and foremost for Jesus and secondly for one's spouse is not maintained, then the potential sound nature of a lasting relationship is jeopardized; many times leading to angry, self-centered and aggressive divorces. This is the reason why many believers get divorced, and why possession of "the stuff" becomes the goal of the specific individuals who were formerly a combined entity (one flesh). Believers should never return to a foundation of materialism, for this is foundational to the flesh (self); guilty individuals in addition to being liars in violation of vows will return to serving mammon and not God, for both cannot be served simultaneously!¹²⁵ Which is of greater importance—vows before God, or financial prosperity; unfortunately multitudes choose the latter!

When it comes to marriage or any close relationship with other human beings, we can either enter into the relationship in accordance to God's standards, or we must be prepared for the consequences when the relationship is tattered or fails completely; for what we choose to do is either God's way, or the wrong way!¹²⁶ The following Biblical

¹²⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:10-23.

¹²⁵ Matthew 6:19-24.

priorities can be adhered to, or havoc and confusion within endeavors will be forthcoming. Please remember—when journeying upon the wide path of destructiveness, a harmonious outcome will never actually come forth; for although we may believe enough effort will lead us to the desired destination, this belief remains delusive as long as we are on the wrong path!

Priorities According to Biblical Standards

Note—When this list of standards is compromised or offset from its appropriate stature, then further violation of priority is sure to occur. Please remember—alterations from God’s standards are not an option for “Christians,” for by definition the word “Christian” denotes being—Christ-like!¹²⁷ The foundation of all appropriate “Christian” standards is thus—“the Lord’s will be done!” Therefore, because God is preferential concerning the existence of all believers, and this as a matter of fact places Him first and foremost; crossing the line as by any form of idolatry or idolatrous behavior is neither an option nor open for debate!¹²⁸

IDOL

GOD
SPOUSE
CHILDREN
MINISTRY
SELF

Inasmuch as all endeavors by the children of God should be in accordance to the rendering of focus upon the Lord, all endeavors of a personal nature whether within family or without unto others, remains an act of servanthood (within family) or ministry (without unto others); for it is the Lord whom we serve!

Wow, think of it—husbands loving their wives more than themselves, and wives loving their husbands more than themselves. Husbands wanting the best for their families thereby motivated to lead them (by

¹²⁶ Proverbs 3:5-7.

¹²⁷ John 5:30; 8:23-29; 12:44-50; 14:8-14; 16:7-15.

¹²⁸ 1 John 5:18-21; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

example) to an always growing relationship with Jesus. Husbands, wives and children loving each other, just because, thereby having an abounding desire to spend time with each other. Imagine the potential—family members living in sincerity of love and with unity within the home; thereby learning, and carrying forth sincerity and compassion to others external of the home, thus loving their neighbor in fulfillment of commandment.¹²⁹ The potential idols called: fornication, adultery, pornography, partying, employment, secular entertainment, sports, internet, sorcery, shopping sprees, inappropriate friendships, beating the Jones, Etc.; would diminish until completely swallowed up by the power of “loving one another!”¹³⁰ WOW—LIFE IS GREAT!

Personal Note—The spiritual decline from the time of leaving one’s “first love” (Ephesus), to the blatant carnal church (Laodicea), is found in chapter five. Within the defined spiritual decline, understanding can come forth as to how and why the love of multitudes has diminished to become a love of “self”; no matter how many others are involved. All characteristics pertaining to believers whether good or bad are witnessed within the accountabilities of the seven churches. True love must remain foundational to first and foremost love for the Lord, or diminished love will assuredly become the end result. Although the Lord of tender mercy, everlasting lovingkindness, and sufficient grace desires to bless believers righteously, especially regarding pure and undefiled (selfless) love; it is always the accountability of the believer which has fallen far short, which causes negation in receiving of God’s desired blessings!

The 11th Commandment - Love One Another!
John 13:34, 35; cf. Exodus 20:1-17

¹²⁹ Matthew 22:36-40.

¹³⁰ Romans 13:8-14; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

CHAPTER TWO

GAINING PERSPECTIVE

LET US NOW evidence the attitudinal behavior of the Northern and Southern kingdoms of Israel; (Ephraim) and Judah. Although the Body of Christ (Church) is not actually synonymous with Israel, even though commonly believed that it is; the proper reverence, loving attitude, trusting God, and focusing upon Him by all believers, whether currently or in times of antiquity, should be the same; for loving submission and obedience have always been the precedent. The huge differences between Israel's worship of old and worship within the Body of Christ from the time of the founding of the church by the Lord Himself are:

1. The dispensations of “Law” (then), and “GRACE” (now).
2. Physical realm aspects of worship (religion then), and worshipping God in spirit and in truth (spiritually relational now).
 - The offering of animals (sacrificial system—then), and the offering of oneself as a living sacrifice (now).
 - The necessity of specified appropriate works (Mosaic and Levitical Law—then), and the sole primary necessities for faith, submissive devotion, and spiritual discernment (now).

The Northern kingdom continuously fell prey to false doctrine and idolatry, from the time they refused to follow King David in seeking the Lord wholeheartedly. When Solomon became king, although he sought the Lord in certain ways, he yet allowed pagan worship to become a part of everyday life within the nation. Unlike David, Solomon allowed the influence of his many wives to deter and distract him from appropriate worship of the one true God.¹³¹ As with Solomon whose compromise had a beginning then progressed one step at a time to further disobedience, so also has occurred in the lives of many throughout history; many falling away from the Lord, due their following the

¹³¹ Deuteronomy 4:34, 35; Isaiah 45:5-7; cf. 1 Kings 3:1-14; 11:1-8.

sinfulness of others.¹³² It was because of the divided devotions (double-mindedness), that the kingdom was divided by the Lord; although the kingdom would not have been divided if pure and undefiled devotion to God had been maintained.¹³³ This does not mean that we cannot love others, it simply means that we are to focus upon and love God first and foremost; thereby our paths remain straight!¹³⁴ Please remember—God wants our loyal obedience; which is derived from love!¹³⁵

Most folks know that King David was guilty of murder and adultery.¹³⁶ David was like all of us, in that we all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.¹³⁷ The difference between David and many others within the nation of Israel was the fact that David sought with sincere intent (motivation) to walk in a manner pleasing to God; whereas many others did not. Yes, we all make mistakes and sometimes fall intentionally as had David, yet our attitude is that which makes a difference; for God looks to the core motives!¹³⁸ David for the most part maintained an attitude of reverence toward God, and by God's grace so also can we; for this is a matter of sincere devotion! The choice individually is found within each of us; for it is a matter of the heart derived from love or the lack thereof! We can draw closer to God, or not; for our motives, choices and actions decide the matter at any specific time.¹³⁹

After the nation was divided in accordance to prophesy, the Northern kingdom (Ephraim) went astray continually, while the Southern kingdom (Judah) went astray much less. The condition of both nations was directly associated with the leadership at the time; for as humans we tend to follow other human beings, even when inappropriate. King Rehoboam not listening to the godly council of the elders, but rather to the ungodly council of friends, caused the northern kingdom to rebel, thereby choosing Jeroboam as their king.¹⁴⁰ Jeroboam not wanting the northern tribes to go south for the purpose of proper worship, set up

¹³² Genesis 28:1-9; Deuteronomy 12:1-4; 1 Kings 14:21-24; 15:25, 26, 33, 34; 2 Kings 3:1-3; 8:16-18, 26, 27.

¹³³ 1 Kings 11:9-13.

¹³⁴ Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Matthew 22:36-40; Proverbs 3:5-8; 4:23-27; Philippians 4:6-9.

¹³⁵ Hosea 6:6; Micah 6:6-8.

¹³⁶ 2 Samuel 11:1-27.

¹³⁷ Romans 3:21-26.

¹³⁸ Jeremiah 17:9, 10; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5.

¹³⁹ 1 John 2:1-17; Matthew 12:30.

¹⁴⁰ 1 Kings 12:1-20.

pagan altars (golden calves) at Bethel and Dan so as to deter the southern journey.¹⁴¹ Both Rehoboam and Jeroboam within their decision making processes, were selfish; this in itself demonstrating inappropriate leadership, for any or all who claim knowledge of God. Demonstrating the foreknowledge of God, this separation occurred; for the Lord truly knows even our thoughts and motives far in advance.¹⁴² The Lord truly knows us better than we know ourselves!

Although the Northern kingdom never returned to proper worship of the Lord under the appropriate direction (path by example) set by certain Southern Kingdom kings, some inhabitants of Ephraim moved south to return to proper worship and fellowship.¹⁴³ The love of the few kings first and foremost for God, had led them devotionally to speak the truth to their kinfolk as to being welcome for edifying fellowship; with primary emphasis to be upon God. This also is our task, as we are to speak the truth in love for the edification of our brothers and sisters in Christ.¹⁴⁴ The choice is ours; shall we blindly follow leadership which turns us away from God toward the things of the world, or shall we not rather turn away from the inappropriate teachings of improper leadership so as to join together in worshipping God in spirit and in truth.¹⁴⁵ The choice is ours; for we will indeed go in the direction of our focus.

The Old Testament history of Israel ended in 722 B.C. when the Assyrians (an instrument of God's judgment) under the direction of King Shalmaneser (possibly Sargon II was also involved) took the Northern kingdom into bondage. The nation (Ephraim) had been repeatedly warned by the prophets of the Lord to repent, yet having stayed upon their false worship and pagan practices; the judgment of God was sure and final. Note—the Lord will once again draw the nation of Israel unto Himself in the millennial reign; for although many of the Jews have repeatedly turned away from Him, He shall never turn away from His chosen people.¹⁴⁶ The Lord warned the Southern kingdom of their wrongdoing when it was necessary, which was much less often than with

¹⁴¹ 1 Kings 12:25-33.

¹⁴² Proverbs 16:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4.

¹⁴³ 2 Kings 18:1-6; 22:1-23:25; 2 Chronicles 29:1-36; 34:1-35:19.

¹⁴⁴ Ephesians 4:14-32.

¹⁴⁵ John 4:23, 24; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 6:6-19; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

¹⁴⁶ Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:1-7; 11:1-16; Zechariah 14:1-21.

Israel (Ephraim); blessing for appropriate behavior and bringing judgment for inappropriate behavior.

There is an important fact which the Lord in His infinite wisdom chose to reveal in His Word (the Scriptures). This fact is regarding whether or not kings of the Israelites (Jews) walked in a manner pleasing to the Lord, or not. Do you suppose that there is a reason why God chose the Biblical writers to note this behavior? Do you suppose an emphasis is being made as to weighing the motives of leadership, prior to following their lead? Personally I believe our awesome loving Lord is telling us something! The following will demonstrate the point I am attempting to make, for although some kings did evil, some yet did right in the sight of God; although the kings before them had not. Godly leadership is a matter of individual attitude and focus; devotion unto the Lord, or lack thereof, being the primary motivating factor.

(Under Rehoboam) 1 Kings 14:22: And Judah did evil in the sight of the LORD, and they provoked Him to jealousy more than all that their fathers had done, with the sins which they committed.

(Abijam) 1 Kings 15:3: And he walked in all the sins of his father which he had committed before him; and his heart was not wholly devoted to the LORD his God, like the heart of his father David.

(Asa) 1 Kings 15:11: And Asa did what was right in the sight of the LORD, like David his father.

(Nadab) 1 Kings 15:26: And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of his father and in his sin which he made Israel sin.

(Baasha) 1 Kings 15:34: And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, and walked in the way of Jeroboam and in his sin which he made Israel sin.

(Hezekiah) 2 Kings 18:3: And he did right in the sight of the LORD, according to all that his father David had done.

(Manasseh) 2 Kings 21:2: And he did evil in the sight of the LORD, according to the abominations of the nations whom the LORD dispossessed before the sons of Israel.

(Josiah) 2 Kings 22:2: And he did right in the sight of the LORD and walked in all the way of his father David, nor did he turn aside to the right or to the left.

The aforementioned regarding kings of the Israelite nations, was to emphasize the outcome of blessing and/or judgment which comes forth from God. Please remember that God seeks the best for us, and in His abounding love He disciplines us when we are in need of repentance (turning back to God).¹⁴⁷ Both nations (Israel / Ephraim and Judah) had reached positions of absolute disobedience within obstinacy prior to their being taken into bondage. In both nations: worship from the heart became virtually nonexistent, selfish seeking of financial gain took precedence over loving one another, many speaking truth regarding God were hated even unto banishment or death (including Prophets); for devotional worship of God became the last priority of most people's lives.

The detriment to believers walking with God has been a continued factor throughout history; for the repeated return to the ways of the world found within Israel of days long past is the behavior of most believers within our world today!¹⁴⁸ When believers act the same as non-believing individuals (demeanor), something is very wrong; for where is the discipline and admonition of God which demonstrates the difference between light and darkness!¹⁴⁹ Complacency, obstinacy, obscurity, and blatant sexual immorality (fornication and adultery) have been present in abundance just prior to every major judgment upon humankind throughout Biblical history.¹⁵⁰ Does this type of behavior seem abundantly present in the world today?¹⁵¹ The world would fall prey to destruction derived from evil influence and humankind's wickedness right now, if it were not for the Lord who yet holds it all together (yet

¹⁴⁷ Psalm 118:1-29; Hebrews 12:4-11.

¹⁴⁸ Revelation 3:14-22; Philippians 3:15-21.

¹⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Romans 12:1-21.

¹⁵⁰ examples - Genesis 6:5-13; 18:20-19:29.

¹⁵¹ Matthew 24:36-44.

restraining). He has only to remove His divine restraint and the end will come!¹⁵² Are we ready for Christ's glorious appearing (return), or will we shrink back in shame should He come right now? The end is near; we must remain steadfast in our devotion and focus unto the Lord!¹⁵³

By study of the Old Testament kings and kingdoms, it can be evidenced that when men (and women) throughout history have relied upon themselves for success, they may achieve it financially; yet at what cost spiritually. As believers, victory is found solely by God's grace through faith; for the Lord is the victor and we are in Him!¹⁵⁴ The nations of old had almost always gone astray from proper worship and love for God, once they became prosperous financially; for in most cases reliance upon the Lord was only in troubling times. This financial prosperity may have brought them independence in and of themselves within a context of secular standards, yet this type of independence is not unto freedom in Christ, but rather that which acts independently of God toward fleshly dominion.¹⁵⁵ Too many believers (and churches) think that financial success is the standard by which our existence is to be determined; yet this belief is not at all Biblical.¹⁵⁶ The basis by which we will all give account is the standard of appropriately and morally walking by faith according to the Gospel; either loving and serving the Lord, or not.¹⁵⁷ Do not be deceived my brothers and sisters, God is not mocked nor fooled, therefore we will all give account for what we have done; so we must be careful as to our focus and walk!¹⁵⁸ While we gain perspective as to Biblical prosperity (spiritual; eternal); hopefully we will stay from foolish worldly views (physical; temporal) which end at the grave.

In Perspective within the Body of Christ

Note—So as to clarify differences between the Old Testament and New Testament; between the “Law” and “GRACE,” several aspects of theology will be forthcoming. I have included these accounts of theology, in hopes of clarifying how many misunderstandings and presumptions

¹⁵² Colossians 1:15-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:5-9.

¹⁵³ 1 John 2:28-3:24; 2 Corinthians 11:2, 3; Ephesians 5:25-27; Hebrews 12:1-11.

¹⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 John 5:4, 5.

¹⁵⁵ John 8:31-36; Romans 8:3-17; 2 Timothy 3:1-17.

¹⁵⁶ 1 Timothy 6:1-21.

¹⁵⁷ Luke 11:17-28; John 12:34-50; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12.

¹⁵⁸ Romans 2:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:10-13; Titus 3:1-8; Ephesians 2:1-10; Philippians 2:12-18; Galatians 6:6-10.

entered into aspects of the faith which should have remained simplistic. I am hopeful that this will not cause confusion, but rather allow better understanding as to the necessity to study the Gospel literally; with emphasis upon exegesis. A literal hermeneutic does not include parables; yet does include the book of Revelation.

Having witnessed the behavior of old (times past) which was pleasing to the Lord, let us now place the standard into perspective within the Body of Christ, during this dispensation of “grace.” Many things have changed between the Old Testament Law and the New Testament doctrine of grace, except the love which God has desired from all who claim to know Him. Please consider a couple of differences which will assist us in better understanding that a change has truly occurred. This is of great importance, as to realize the changes between the dispensations of Law and grace allows us to walk within the standards of present-day Christianity. Please remember, figurative language is no longer to be used, therefore no more metaphors; but rather literal interpretations (John 16:25-33; 2 Peter 1:12-21).

1. **The Tithe - Law / Grace (different dispensations)** : The tithe was according to the Law, for the purpose of sustaining the necessities of those who served the Lord (Levites), at both the tent of meeting and temple (Numbers 18:1-32). Please also note that the Lord sought the best (first fruits) from His children, for this indicated their personal best which ought to be derived from love (Hosea 6:4-11; Micah 6:1-8). Notice the following aspects for which the tithe was intended:

- The servants of the Lord were exactly that—“servants.” Serving the Lord was their inheritance, therefore demonstrating a blessing within the act of servanthood, and being sustained (having needs met) so as to serve undistracted (Numbers 18:20-24).
 - In this case, the Levites did not have an inheritance of land as had the other eleven tribes received. Within this fact please note that they did not complain about this, for to truly love the Lord is to count servanthood unto Him as a tremendous blessing.
- The tithe was an act of stewardship. In this context, the tithe was to be gathered so as to supply the sustenance necessary for a

celebration unto the Lord (Deuteronomy 14:22-29). Also within this “act of stewardship,” we can note that the tithe was a demonstration of the believer’s love for God as they sought to save for the purpose of necessities and worship (religious); this derived from love for God and appreciation of what He had supplied (Numbers 18:26-32; cf. Genesis 14:18-24; 28:16-22; Deuteronomy 10:12-22).

Although we are no longer under the Law, many seek to teach aspects of the Law (Levitical) as being appropriate when regarding—baptism in replacing circumcision, and the paying of the tithe (Galatians 3:10-18; 4:21-31). Simply put—we are not under the Law; but rather under GRACE! Aspects of the Law do not apply to the Body of Christ; for the Law (designated religion of God) was for the Israelites during times of antiquity, so as to point them to Christ (Messiah) (Galatians 3:19-25; cf. Acts 26:4, 5). Although the tithe is taught to indicate that 10% is to be paid from the gross amount of one’s earnings, this is actually incorrect; even beyond the fact that the tithe is no longer valid. Attempting to attach gross earnings to sincerity of devotion to God is pathetic (Malachi 3:7-15)! In the context of Malachi’s time of prophecy (14 years after Nehemiah’s return to rebuild the wall of Jerusalem, approximately 430 B.C.), the nation was becoming smug (complacent; obstinate) in their physical prosperity. At this point, the inhabitants of Judah were no longer supporting the Levites in their servanthood to the Lord at the Temple. They were so busy doing for “self” that their dedications for God had grown cold. This is the context of “robbing God” as spoken of in the Malachi passages, yet this is currently spoken of within the Body of Christ regarding the tithe. Now as then, God still wants our sincere love, loyalty and devotion; so let’s place our emphasis back where it belongs!

In time of antiquity, the Nation of Israel walked by sight within religion (Law); not by faith. Members of the Body of Christ are to walk by faith within a personal relationship with the Lord; not by sight from within religion. The Nation of Israel had a structural temple, where they went to worship the Lord; believers in the Body of Christ are the temple of the Lord (1 Corinthians 3:16, 17). Just as paying the tithe was to care for the structural temple, believers now are to care for the temple which is our bodies; this we do with reverence for God with

all sincerity of devotion, as this is appropriately based in our loving Him first and foremost!

There is a huge difference between the Nation of Israel and the Body of Christ; as much a difference as between the Law and grace. *If* we are to pay a form of “tithe” (as it were) unto the Lord, then let our payment be in the form of: servanthood, proper care of our bodies, supplying the necessities of those who proclaim the Gospel, and thanksgiving unto our heavenly King! Please reference these Scriptures so as to realize distinctive difference—1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 5:12-24; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; 9:6-15; cf. Exodus 13:21, 22; 33:9-11.

It is important to sustain the necessities of both those who with sincerity of devotion serve the Lord, and those in need (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:1-14; 1 John 3:16-18). *If* the truth of an individual’s fruits of giving demonstrates a seeking of prestige, riches or personal honor by one’s emphasized endeavors, then fleshly desire is at the center of attempt; not primary considerations regarding the edification and necessities of others or emphasis for God’s glory (1 Corinthians 10:23-33; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18). *If* we look at the New Testament standard for giving, we will definitely notice a difference between this time period (dispensation) of grace and that which was of the dispensation of Law. The simple standard of giving from one’s heart, is evident throughout the New Testament, for God desires our devotion (Romans 12:1-3; Galatians 5:16-26; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12)! This giving from one’s heart was also evidenced prior to the written Law, as Abram gave freely to Melchizedek for service unto the Lord; this being from his heart, prior to the Mosaic or Levitical Laws!¹⁵⁹ We give from our hearts pertaining to that which is of necessity (proclamation of Gospel truth; necessities of others, including church necessities); for if it is not in love, then unrighteous ulterior motives remain precedent!

Please reference 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, then note the following standards:

- We will reap according to that which we sow. This standard is derived from the motives of the heart, for the proper attitude is focused upon giving; not receiving (2 Corinthians 9:6, 7; cf. Proverbs 11:23-28; 19:17; Luke 6:20-38).

¹⁵⁹ Genesis 14:18-24; cf. Hebrews 7:1-8:13.

- Verse 7 demonstrates that our giving is never to be derived from compulsion. This demonstrates that pestering for tithes and offerings is absolutely inappropriate, for those who love God will give from the heart. Love brings out the reality of truth in all such cases (ref. Luke 11:39-44)!

Note—Any congregational leader who repeatedly requests (mentions) the tithe, is placing the membership under compulsion; thus they are actually sinning against the congregational members by violation of both standard and instruction!

- Please note that verses 8-15 place great emphasis upon accepting God’s grace for the purpose of appropriate giving; good and righteous deeds (vs. 8-10); endeavors of thanksgiving unto God (vs. 11, 12); fruits of the faith in accordance to God’s grace (vs. 13-15). Please understand that God’s indescribable gift in verse 15 is grace; not “stuff” (material things). One’s focus in matters such as this, demonstrates whom (God) or what (mammon) we truly seek and serve (cf. 1 Timothy 6:6-19; Matthew 6:19-34)!

Note: In many church congregations today, we have something being taught which leads to—selfish giving. An example of taking Scripture out of context is when verses are being taught with the intent of seeking a personal financial increase to take precedence over the giving from one’s heart for the sake of the Gospel and others. Although the Lord does want us to have life in abundance, it is a shame that “life in abundance” is generally taught to be a life of riches, luxury and/or prestige; vice a life of true worship and devotion unto God in spirit and in truth, as well as sincere trust in God. Too many congregations are taught that Job was wealthy and received back great riches after his ordeal with Satan; yet in the teaching, Job’s obedience and loyalty to God is rarely mentioned. Job was righteous more so than any other person on the planet; for this was derived from his trusting in God and being submissive to God’s will. Job did not seek more “stuff,” but rather better submissive servanthood.¹⁶⁰ The fact that God was the focus of Job is made evident by his continual seeking of God even when severely sick

¹⁶⁰ Job 1:1-8 (by example).

and instructed by his wife to give up.¹⁶¹ It is evident that Job's wife sought only comfort and material wealth from God, as do many?¹⁶²

From the following verses within the books of Mark and Luke, we can notice that increase is mentioned. The increase is more in regard to family and servanthood, than it is regarding riches. In the world today (church at Laodicea—cf. Revelation 3:14-18), too many have come to believe that riches is that which makes a believer successful; although riches mean nothing if one's faith is weak at best. From these passages of Scripture, please note that part of the increase includes—persecutions. Although many believers focus upon riches within their confession of faith, most fail to consider the richness of serving God even in times of trouble. If a pastor was to speak blessing in persecution and tribulation, do you suppose the congregation would be eager to hear such teachings? Instead the emphasis upon giving within too many congregations is upon giving so as to receive back ten, fifty, a hundred, and even two hundred times what is given financially. In such cases, is the giving for the purpose of receiving back (selfish giving); or is the giving solely for the sake of proclamation of the Gospel, and the necessities of others? To give for the purpose of receiving is not from the heart of a cheerful giver, but rather from the superficial love of the world derived from an overabundant love of "self" (narcissism); i.e.—what's in it for me.

Mark 10:29-31: Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel's sake, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life. "But many who are first, will be last; and the last, first."

Luke 18:29, 30: And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life."

¹⁶¹ Job 12:1-13:28.

¹⁶² Job 2:7-10 (by example).

TITHE SUMMATION

If our hearts are truly for God, we will desire to give not only our money but also our time so that none should perish; and this as our heart's desire is regarding salvation for the many.¹⁶³ If we give as by compulsion from church leadership, then our supposed spiritual leaders have violated the Gospel and should speak less and study more.¹⁶⁴ If we give expecting many fold back than we gave, then our motive is personal financial glory; aloof doing all for the glory of God. If we give according to the Law regarding the tithe, we have need of learning how to accurately handle the Word of Truth.¹⁶⁵

The tithe was nailed to the cross along with all other aspects of the Mosaic and Levitical Laws; for the "Law" was but a tutor, of which the tutorial ending at the cross!¹⁶⁶ With the emphasis of the New Testament (and Bible in general) being that God desires our sincere reverent devotion, why so great an emphasis placed upon a tithe which no longer exists! Can it be that most believers are deceived into serving mammon, as by the insidious proclamations of many church leaders who having been deceived continue forth deceiving the many!¹⁶⁷ Why so much emphasis upon our money? Could it be because they (church leadership) cannot spend our heartfelt devotion! If Christian leadership would seek to expend heartfelt devotions, then we would work together as individual parts of the whole body, and this for the edification of all! Sound familiar?¹⁶⁸

The tithe is taught—as necessary; yet there is no Temple of God which is cared for by the Levites. Fancy buildings, prestige, comfort and the seeking of riches have become precedent in far too many congregations within the Christian religion; this is not Christianity! Was individual comfort of believers ever intended by God to take precedence over proclamation of Gospel truth?¹⁶⁹ Can we suppose the gifts (talents) given us by the Holy Spirit are to be expended within our congregations; or is it only the expenditure of our money which is desired? The point of—"we," "us," and "our" evidences the Gospel truth!¹⁷⁰

¹⁶³ 2 Timothy 4:1-5; Romans 10:1-11; cf. 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

¹⁶⁴ 1 Peter 5:1-11; Romans 2:17-29.

¹⁶⁵ 2 Timothy 2:1-23.

¹⁶⁶ Galatians 2:1-4:11; specific emphasis 3:22-25.

¹⁶⁷ 1 Timothy 6:3-12; cf. Luke 12:15-34.

¹⁶⁸ 1 Corinthians 12:1-13:13; 14:26-40.

¹⁶⁹ 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

¹⁷⁰ 1 Corinthians 14:1-40.

Please notice that in regard to giving back to the Lord, we give from that which He has given us; for without Him in our lives, we actually have nothing!¹⁷¹ Far too many supposed spiritual leaders tend to cause compulsion by their frequent mention of tithing in church; or they seek to eliminate “grudging giving” as by falsely promising God’s blessing upon godly men such as Abraham and Job to be available to all others. Just as the righteousness (seeking God with all devotion) of one individual cannot be attributed to nor deliver any other human being, so also the blessing upon individuals by God cannot be claimed (coveted) by any other.¹⁷² The truth is plain to see; unless we are so deceived by the insidious work originated in the demonic realm that we no longer see clearly (total obscurity)!¹⁷³ Some things are just this simple.

Parable of the Talents

Within the “parable of the talents” (Matthew 25:14-30), is an emphasis of how we utilize the “talents” which God has given us. The talents given to each believer are to be utilized for the edification and exultation (building up; uplifting) of all believers as a whole (cf. Ephesians 4:11-16; 1 Corinthians 12:1-11), and for gathering others to obtain knowledge of Christ (cf. Matthew 12:25-30; Romans 12:1-21).

- It should be remembered, those who are led by the Holy Spirit are the legitimate children and servants of God; who walk in the light and can do nothing against the truth, as we are led by the Spirit of truth (John 14:15-21; 16:7-15; Romans 8:1-17). Those who are not led by the Holy Spirit are illegitimate children and not actual servants of God; therefore being held captive to deception and holding to but a concept of God, while being led and leading others as by spirits of deceit and error (John 8:39-47; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 John 4:1-6). The former are led for the edification of the entire Body of Christ (church), whereas the latter are led for the purpose of spiritual tearing down and destroying.¹⁷⁴

¹⁷¹ John 15:1-17.

¹⁷² Ezekiel 14:12-23; cf. Exodus 20:17; Romans 7:7-12.

¹⁷³ 1 Peter 5:8-11; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

¹⁷⁴ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

The “talent” was a weight of measure, by which precious commodities were purchased, sold or obtained; the “talent” was a weight of 70.6 lbs. With this information in mind, let us consider that the “parable of the talents” is a parable of how we utilize the measure of blessing (anointing) which God has given us for the sake of others; which involves the spreading of the Gospel for the glory of God, as by His work (God-given talents).

Almost all sermons from the pulpit regarding the “parable of the talents,” involve money in one fashion or another. Why would you suppose this is? Although the shekel was a common form of payment by most ordinary people, for the shekel was a weight of measure equaling 11.7 grams; “talents” were utilized within this parable for a reason! I personally do not know any ordinary people who can afford to make payments of gold and silver in increments of 70.6 lbs. When payment was made utilizing “talents,” this occurred mainly between kings of different nations or those of extreme wealth. Was the bible written for only kings and those of extreme wealth? Absolutely not; quite the contrary (Matthew 19:23, 24)! This makes evident that the “parable of the talents” is not speaking of money, which is the teaching of those who serve mammon!

- Although the word “money” is utilized within the parable of the talents (v. 18), the purpose of its mention directly indicates investment of the Master’s gift of blessing (talents) for the sake of others! It is for this reason that talents not invested by lazy and wicked slaves will be given to others who realize the purpose for their having been rendered; thereby going forth actively to make the appropriate investments.

The Lord has blessed us with those “talents” which He would have us utilize. Each of us can either use the blessings given us, or we can seek to hide them (ref. Matthew 25:25); which actually benefits no one. When we consider that wisdom and knowledge are derived from a reverent fear of God (Proverbs 1:7; 9:10), we can understand that the talents given us by God are indeed blessings rendered to us by God within a basis of faith and devotion. This would also explain why most sermons on the subject reference money, for many supposed spiritual leaders were never called by God; but rather by one’s own volition, usually for

the purpose of wealth, prestige or both. When a person is without the wisdom and knowledge regarding truth which comes only from God through devotional: faith, prayer, and handling accurately the Gospel; they generally will understand very little of the realistic truth revealed in Scripture. They will usually misunderstand Scripture, which leads them to most times take Scripture out of context, and generally consider the Body of Christ to be an offshoot of Israel; thereby utilizing Old Testament passages inappropriately (such as regarding the tithe). No one can serve God with any actual spiritual success, *if* money is the object of their focus and intent (Titus 1:7-16). There are no exceptions (Matthew 6:19-24)!

As believers, are we utilizing the talents given us by God for the purpose of serving Him, or are we utilizing our fleshly talents (greed; idolatry) in an effort to serve ourselves? When emphasis is continually placed upon any reference of money and weights and measures within Scripture to be in reference to mammon, then the necessities of spiritual growth and discernment are seriously lacking; along with godly wisdom. The Lord has called us to walk by faith, thus spiritual discernment and appraisal are of absolute necessity in the study and instruction of Scripture; lest we miss or evade the point of God's purposeful calling upon us (1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Jude 1:17-23; Romans 8:1-17, 24-28; 1 Timothy 1:3-11). Please pray and consider carefully the information contained here, lest someone walking by sight (carnally minded)—instructs you to journey forth as they do!

2. **The Seeking of Vengeance / Repeated Forgiveness:** Although many in the Old Testament sought the Lord's vengeance to be upon their adversaries (examples - Psalm 35:1-7; 70:1-5); the New Testament calls us to be forgiving (Matthew 18:21-35), not vengeful (Romans 12:9-21). There are huge differences between the Old and New Testaments regarding vengeance and forgiveness; as there are also many other distinctive differences regarding other subjects!
3. **The Indwelling Holy Spirit:** The Holy Spirit empowered individuals in the Old Testament, for the purpose of servanthood in accordance to the specific of His will. Within the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit generally withdrew after the service was rendered; yet in the New Testament the Holy Spirit remains within all who

have received Him (legitimate children of God).¹⁷⁵ When believers today criticize the Jews of the Old Testament as to the sin cycle which seemed prevalent, they have forgotten that we today have the convictions of the Holy Spirit within, which the Jews of antiquity did not generally have! The presence of the Holy Spirit within believers negates the necessity to have Him appear in any physical realm manifestation; for the signs He performed for the Jews were solely for them. The Israelites literally walked by sight in following God during their wilderness journeys; we follow the Lord by faith.¹⁷⁶ Huge difference!

In Perspective to Theological Variations

The purpose for this section of perspective is to demonstrate how many Scholars throughout history have gotten out on tangents away from the truth. Many of the “spiritual leaders” of old may have been sincere in their primary endeavors to better understand the Bible in proper context as revealed (inspired); yet understanding pertaining to the end result of their endeavors remains the imperative, for great emphasis is many times placed upon adherence to the teachings of former religious scholars, who may not have received the blessing of spiritual discernment and appraisal. The maintained appropriate endeavors of many in seeking truth many times is not the case; as the spiritual poison of religious: doctrines, philosophies, precepts, traditions, and ideologies have led multitudes within actual Christianity away from freedom within truth, into the bondage of “religion.”¹⁷⁷ It must be remembered that actual Christianity is all about a personal intimate relationship with the Lord; whereas the Christian religion (as with all religions) is founded within the insidious nature of religion itself (attempts to know God through fleshly means), which is the primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world! Considerable care must always be precedent pertaining to spiritual matters; for as humans we have no actual knowledge as to the actuality (truth or deception) within the heart of others, therefore we can make assumptions and yet never come to a basis of truth as to actual motives.

¹⁷⁵ examples - Isaiah 63:7-19; Exodus 31:1-11; Numbers 11:1-29; Judges 3:7-11; 6:1-40, specific vs. 34-40; 14:1-20, specific v. 6; Ephesians 1:1-23, specific vs. 13-17; 4:17-32, specific v. 30; Hebrews 13:1-6.

¹⁷⁶ Exodus 13:17-22; 33:7-11 / John 20:19-31; Ephesians 2:1-10.

¹⁷⁷ Colossians 2:1-10; Jude 1:11-25.

I am hopeful that illustration of some theological variations will demonstrate how detrimental human reason and philosophies can be to the faith of many, when inappropriate human intellect not only attempts to explain God and/or the Gospel, but also passes the inappropriate onto others who believe it (darkness) to be the truth (light).¹⁷⁸

Please consider that many throughout history, have attempted to substitute human ideas and practices in place of the faith to which we are to walk. Many spiritual (religious) leaders becoming blinded within intellectual endeavors have led others to do the same. The blind leading the blind into nothing but trouble! As you read forth, please remember that God wants our love and devotion; for without absolute sincerity of love for Him, the rest does not matter.

Scholastic Theology

Scholastic Theology is a complex type of theology which was taught during the period of A.D. 1050–1517. This type of theology was scholastic in nature because it was taught in schools and universities. As with most higher learning institutions, pride enters in where humility is warranted; within this unfortunate fact, Christian religion universities and secular universities hold no distinction of difference. This then led to human intellect clouding the wisdom, understanding and knowledge which the Lord sought to give to believers.¹⁷⁹

Scholastic Theology was never truly Biblically based, nor did it have a clear first principle or principle source as a foundation from which to build. Because Scholastic Theology lacked Biblical principle; tradition, philosophy and mysticism were substituted for Scriptural truth. Scholastic Theology was without clarity, clear purpose or goal, which led to no actual conclusion or end result, this then leading to confusion; thus many of the separations caused by varying teachings within denominations led forth by intellectual scholars.

The abundance of philosophical writings which transcended the dark ages, passing through this period of Scholastic Theology teachings, brought forth many endless and fruitless theories and discussions, which hindered spiritual growth and failed to bring glory to God. During the period of Scholastic Theology, many discussions took place which raised

¹⁷⁸ Isaiah 5:1-24.

¹⁷⁹ Proverbs 1:7; 9:10; 15:29-33; Ecclesiastes 12:9-14; James 1:2-12.

more questions than answers, and although elaborate systems of reason were formed providing background for the “Reformation Period,” man’s pride and supposed intellect increased causing proclaimed truths regarding the Gospel to become insidious and spiritually un-edifying. Far too many divisions were formed during the Scholastic Theology period; whereas the mandated unity of actual Christianity was badly obscured and damaged!¹⁸⁰

Lutheran Theology

Martin Luther’s theology was instrumental in driving many philosophies, traditions and unfruitful discussions back; so that Biblical truth could once again come forward; for Martin Luther was emphatic that Gospel truth must remain paramount! The Roman Catholic Church had brought forth a considerable lapse in Scriptural teaching, and the basis of Lutheran Theology was for a new appeal to return to the Scriptures by the principle of—justification by grace through faith.

One of the chief distinctions of Lutheran Theology was a need to distinguish between the Law and the Gospel. This was the basis of a sinner’s ability to be justified by God’s grace, separate from the Law, and according to the Lutheran doctrine of predestination to the faith through enslavement of one’s will. It was the ability to distinguish between Law and New Testament Scripture that Luther stated would either make or break the church. The principle of justification by grace through faith, remained the center of Lutheran Theology and doctrine during the Reformation Period, and has carried over even to this day.

Lutheran Theology had a poorly developed doctrine of the church, due to entry into political alliances to avoid persecutions from the Roman Catholic Church. Although the Lutheran appeal to Scripture was commendable, many of their theologies were clouded by Luther’s personal experiences; therefore exhibiting aspects of conflict because of the inner battle with conscience to which Luther was prone. Luther could not understand how sinners could ever become right with God, so denied any aspect of man’s choice in salvation, rather insisting that God is the efficient cause of salvation. This is true as we are saved by grace through faith, yet Luther did not grasp well the Biblical account of God’s efficacious (effectual) grace which allows believers the strength

¹⁸⁰ Ephesians 4:1-32.

and power to do the right thing.¹⁸¹ This aspect of Luther's confusion may very well have come from the basis of human works aside of God's grace, which is so prevalently taught in Roman Catholicism; from the foundation of which Luther never fully separated himself. "Religion" can in fact force ways and means of thinking, which are contrary to Biblical sound doctrine! Aspects of this will be illustrated later.

The most important contribution by Lutheran Theology would have to be Luther's great concern about pastoral teaching within the guidelines of—justification by grace through faith. Luther was adamant about the fact that man could in no way be right before God, and thus solely by God's grace was a man justified. According to Lutheran Theology, baptism and the Eucharist are important factors necessary in addition to the Gospel for equipping individuals regarding salvation via the Holy Spirit. This carried forward to the baptism of infants, which supposedly produced faith in the infant and brought them to salvation.

Personal Note—Luther's belief regarding both water baptism and the Eucharist as holding importance in equipping individuals regarding salvation, makes evident the religious poison which settles and many times remains within the spirit of individuals; when a firm stand is not maintained upon the only foundation of true Christianity—which is Christ Jesus!¹⁸² The elemental principles of the world (i.e. religion), apart from the personal relationship with God which is "Christianity," causes distraction of both focus and purpose; which forces forms of bondage within "religion," where freedom within the personal relationship was proposed by God.¹⁸³

Protestant Scholasticism

The period of Protestant Scholasticism, was a period productive to Evangelical Theology. Protestant Scholasticism utilized three formulas of unity: Belgic Confession, Heidelberg Catechism, and Canons of Dorte. These three brought forth doctrines beyond the doctrine of the Trinity and Apostles Creed, to include the doctrines of God the Father, God the Son, God the Holy Spirit, and the church.

¹⁸¹ Ephesians 2:4-10; 6:10-12.

¹⁸² 1 Corinthians 3:1-15.

¹⁸³ John 8:1-58; Hebrews 12:1-29.

Protestant Scholasticism involved an impressive amount of work and was well defined by the desire to define religious principles more distinctly. It continued in the basic principle of “Sola Scriptura” (Scripture alone) as being authoritative, and thus accepted the same evangelical precepts taught by Luther and Calvin with one distinct difference—the Reformers confessed their beliefs, and the Protestant Scholastics believed their confessions. In Protestant Scholasticism, was it the Biblical truth which was made more distinct, or the doctrines of man?

Because of the exceeding effort of the Protestant Scholastics to define truth within Scripture, a well-established theological vocabulary remains even to this day. The basic definitions designated by the Reformers, were expounded upon to demonstrate a further understanding into Biblical specifics—one of which is regeneration. The Protestant Scholastics went beyond the simple explanation of Calvin in his explanation of “regeneration” being the entire process of renewal, to define “regeneration” as the instantaneous transformation of the sinner by the power of God. The expounded theological vocabulary of the Protestant Scholastics therefore took many general definitions in this manner, and with great effort emphasized more in-depth definitions.

Although Protestant Scholasticism began with considerable continuity with the teachings from the Reformation Period and were catechetical in nature, they veered to discontinuity as the teachings became more scientific in nature. As the teachings (doctrines and precepts) began to vary from that of the Reformers, they began to reach back toward the teachings of Thomas Aquinas. The two extreme reactions to Protestant Scholasticism were that either God was loved very much, or to such a diminished degree that He was not sought to be known at all. Unfortunately, further divisions occurred during the period of Protestant Scholasticism, which led to further divisional separations between distinct denominationalism!

Personal Note—Two very important facts should be noted at this point:

1. The truth of Scripture (Sola Scriptura) stands upon the merits of God’s righteousness!¹⁸⁴ When this is not realized, attempts are made within the elemental teachings of humankind (i.e. religion)

¹⁸⁴ John 14:1-26.

to establish righteousness apart from actual submission and subjection.¹⁸⁵

2. Christianity is founded upon “faith,” not “religion” (man’s emotional and intellectual: doctrines, precepts, traditions, and philosophies).¹⁸⁶ Because this is a point of fact, it is the Holy Spirit (God) who renders wisdom, and leads us in understanding of truth; guiding us therefore to actual knowledge, servanthood, and righteous unity!¹⁸⁷

Pietism

The Pietists and Rationalists both disdained from doing serious theological work.

When efforts were exhibited to the extent that human philosophy was attempted to gain understanding, and synthesized philosophies were interchanged with revelation, the same extent of weakening within orthodoxy and the absoluteness of Scripture could be noted. The entrance of Biblical criticism undermined belief in Scripture, thus diminishing faith in revelation as historically true. The more reason was utilized in efforts to understand the truths of the Christian faith, the more human pride entered into the factors of reason and acceptance of truth. This increased reliance upon human intellect, led to philosophies of adherence to only that understood by logic and the criterion of reason. As the Protestant Scholars progressed in their endeavors to obtain truth by human means, they degraded in understanding to the point that they no longer considered God to be involved in the reality of the world’s functions. They began to theorize that the universe was left to laws of nature, and thus nature and natural law were the paradigmatic boundaries of existence. From this way of thinking then came Deism, which was to say that nature and all dogma was now according to its reasonableness. Thus human reason takes precedence over Biblical truth.

Because it is impossible for men to exempt the role of the mind in the process of knowing (ectypal knowledge) that which is apprehended and that which is actually real, we are forced to admit the active role of the mind in the process. This led the scholars to consider believers and

¹⁸⁵ Romans 10:1-21.

¹⁸⁶ Hebrews 11:1-40.

¹⁸⁷ John 14:16, 17; 15:26-16:1, 7-15; Romans 9:1-29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 12:1-14:40; Ephesians 1:3-2:22; 2 Timothy 1:8-4:8.

non-believers to be availed the same extent of understanding. Because of this, the truth of Scripture as to the fear of the Lord being the beginning of knowledge (Proverbs 1:7) and wisdom (Proverbs 9:10), became tainted by human reason.

The two extremes can be noted to have occurred by the initial love of the Lord, vice the foolishness of man. To love the Lord with the essence of our being is the calling of all Christians, and to stand firm in Scripture to show ourselves approved is a necessity if we are to abstain from drifting from the truth. When the Pietists remained silent upon the Rationalists insistence of seeking spiritual truths from the logic and reason of man, the extreme of failing to look to the Lord became predominant and ran rampant during the period of Protestant Scholasticism. The prideful ways of man took precedence over humility of the faith; which became the epitome of walking by sight within the Christian religion! As can be noted, this created an edification detriment from past “faith” based endeavors!

Personal Note—In my opinion, Higher Criticism has no place in our endeavors to study Scripture and seek Biblical truth, and is therefore not legitimate. Because of the way Higher Criticism undermines Scripture by saying it is but a human product or postulate, it destroys potential within the trust a believer should maintain both in the Lord and revelation (that which He has revealed). As orthodoxy planted the seeds of reliance upon reason and human understanding, the scholars (theologians) began to drift farther from Scripture as they relied more upon the studied results of their own reason and logic. This led to orthodoxy being hindered rather than strengthened, because faith took second place to man’s perceptions. This was then becoming a state of confusion, much as had occurred when the Pharisees continually added to the oral law until it was no longer understandable. Human reason unto complete religious confusion; leading to the masses’ concept of walking by faith, being solely of conjecture and assumption!

The discourse of this specific within the Christian religion became one of reason. The pulpit of teaching became a lectern from which all proclamations would be left to the consideration and acceptance of the listener. This led to failure in acceptance of God and His Word being the basis of truth, as logic was no longer considered part of God’s created order. Because God’s word although open to investigation is not open

to human prideful criticism, “Higher Criticism” is nothing less than a prideful form of interference and distraction! It fills the endeavors of individuals with errors which remain blindly hidden from consideration, and leads to reconstruction and reformation (manipulation) of Scripture; to fit the foolishness of human reason and interpretation.¹⁸⁸

To hold solely to that which is acknowledged by the rules of logic is to attempt understanding of the spiritual realm through physical reason; although the reality is spiritually discerned and appraised! This in itself violates the principles of the Christian faith; for the logic of the flesh, and the wisdom of the Holy Spirit are diametrically opposed to one another.¹⁸⁹ For this reason, I personally believe that “Higher Criticism” has no place in our endeavors to seek truth. Attempting to criticize Scripture and bring it into the physical realm of reason and logic is to walk by sight and not by faith; for within this, trust is placed in one’s own efforts rather than in the Lord! To maintain the arrogance of thinking the truth of Scripture is subject to our criticisms as to its factual content, is to insulate ourselves from receiving the true wisdom and knowledge of God’s Word granted by His grace.

Pietism had initially attempted a separation from councils of reason, for the purpose of purity in doctrine. They began to place emphasis upon “*Collegia Pietatis*” or the need to embrace small group meetings for the purpose of study and prayer. It was within the many small groups apart from the institution of the church as a whole, that the seeds of the Pietistic movement were sown and grew in strength. Within the small groups the emphasis was to strengthen one another in study of the Gospel. This then went further with emphasis being placed upon practicing the lifestyle centered upon one’s faith; within this seeking to emulate the righteousness of God, as by following certain aspects of the Law. As time progressed within the Pietist movement, they sought to distance themselves from church history and thereby the traditions which had caused harm and led so many to worship by “rote.” In their emphasis being now upon policing oneself according to the moral standards of the Law; this in and of oneself; the Pietists were drawing farther from the grace of God necessary for victory within the faith.¹⁹⁰ This

¹⁸⁸ 2 Peter 1:12-21.

¹⁸⁹ John 3:1-21; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18.

¹⁹⁰ 1 John 5:1-5.

then led to the Pietists seeking separation from all controversial matters, which is seeking a basis of purity by separation much as had the Zealots of old. It was due to this emphasis by the Pietists, that the Rationalist movement ran so rampant and caused such harm during the 17th and 18th centuries, when the characteristics of the enlightenment and the basis of logic and reason continued un-hindered.

With the Pietists staying from any controversies involving the Christian religion because of the precedence of foolish human pride to which they held, considerable harm was caused by disunity within many groups of believers. Failures of believers to speak the truth in love, and/or tangential controversies, remain factors of spiritual defeat within the Christian religion even to this day. As the Pietists sought further to stay from controversies of any kind, the end result was that they sought to proclaim only easily understood Scriptures (clarity in preaching), which led to an overall weakening of their in-depth understanding of Scripture and purity of devotion which had initially been their intent. This then caused division within the movement, which demonstrates how good intentions go astray once focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ (first love) has diminished. This demonstrates how many throughout history have sought Gospel truth, yet gone astray because they refused to remain founded upon truth, or they just give up and go with the flow.¹⁹¹ Do we notice weakness in words from the pulpit today? Do we notice most believers going with the flow, although the flow is going further into the realm of religious doctrine and philosophy?

Personal Note—To gain considerably more understanding of the aforementioned statements and that which follows within - Fundamentalism, it must be remembered that actual “Christianity,” and the “Christian religion,” hold differences to the extent of day (light) and night (darkness); respectively! With “religion” taking precedence over “the Way” within the majority of those claiming to know Jesus, since the second century A.D., most endeavors within controversy have, and continue to involve argumentation regarding the teachings of man. As Biblical truth stands upon its own merits within the reality of the Lord (way, truth, and life—John 14:6), argumentation, debates and controversies are futile attempts in the flesh, by those void of spiritual discernment; thus being

¹⁹¹ 1 Timothy 1:18, 19.

the endeavors of those who feel need to prove a point of spiritual matters, while yet ignorantly remaining in the flesh!¹⁹²

When individuals or groups seek to love and worship the Lord, aloof the foolishness of religion, attacks from spiritual forces of evil are certain to come forth. When the individual or group attempts to fight the battle within the physical realm as by intellect or convictional reason, they in fact seek a victory as by the merits and strengths of humankind; under the influential leadership of evil forces; thus they are led to distraction and defeat, vice the wisdom and strength of the Lord which leads to undistracted focus and victory.¹⁹³ The reality of this matter is proven by the fact of humankind's attempts to bring forth conviction and growth, although both (conviction and growth) are the work of God Himself!¹⁹⁴ With actual knowledge of this fact as by discernment from the Holy Spirit, true Christians who serve the Lord simply speak the truth in love; staying from attempts to do God's personal work, thus argumentation and fleshly debates are not an option.¹⁹⁵ The reality remains that we may plant and water the seeds of Gospel truth; but God brings forth the growth, within those willing to receive the blessing!

Fundamentalism

Although it is a way in which to approach and do theology, and it is designed to maintain the fundamentals of the Christian faith in seeking truth, it is not a theology in itself as seen by the possible origins of its name and the fact that it is trans-denominational. Being trans-denominational is a good thing, for the Fundamentalist movement was intended to return to the fundamentals of Gospel truth without the hindrance of the manmade doctrine which caused division where unity was to prevail. On far too many occasions when controversy arose regarding Christianity, men of the faith turned from one another to follow their own rendition of the Gospel. The Fundamentalist movement sought to return to the basics of Gospel truth, which led to a literal interpretation of Scripture; this being the only acceptable means.¹⁹⁶ The New Testament Gospel speaks for itself, and is realized only by the guidance of the Holy Spirit!¹⁹⁷

¹⁹² 2 Timothy 2:14-19.

¹⁹³ Ephesians 6:10-18; Hebrews 12:1-29.

¹⁹⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; John 15:18-16:15.

¹⁹⁵ Philipians 1:1-2:18; Ephesians 4:1-32.

¹⁹⁶ John 16:16-33.

The name “fundamentalism” has been traced back to several possible sources, which are:

1. Northern Presbyterian Church general assemblies of 1910, 1916, and 1923. It was from these assemblies, that record was made of these five doctrines of the Christian religion as being fundamentals of truth, which became known as the five fundamentals:
 - The adherence to Scripture.
 - The virgin birth of Christ.
 - The vicarious substitutionary atonement of Christ on the cross.
 - The bodily resurrection of Christ.
 - The miracles of Christ.

2. Twelve books of essential doctrines written by evangelical scholars during the years 1910-1912, which published articles defending the basic doctrines of the Christian religion.

3. The World Fundamentals Association, which was formed in the year 1919 and held to nine association fundamental teachings; which were:
 - The inspirations and truths of Scripture.
 - The triune God.
 - The deity and virgin birth of Christ.
 - The literal creation and fall of man.
 - The substitutionary atonement.
 - The bodily resurrection and ascension of Christ.
 - The regeneration of believers by the Holy Spirit.
 - The personal imminent return of Christ.
 - The resurrection of humanity to either eternal life or eternal spiritual death.

These sources all participated in making emphasis upon the doctrines of the common religion known as Christianity. Because each of the aforementioned sources participated in reaction to the Liberalism and Modernism theologies that were leading Orthodox Protestant believers away from historic Christian parameters of the faith; fundamentalism

¹⁹⁷ Hebrews 4:1-16; 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

is a movement of basic essential truth of the Christian faith; therefore not a particular theology.

It is unfortunate that many denominations throughout the years have veered from the path of understanding granted by God, and have ventured to the realm of human reason and theory in attempts to understand spiritual matters in the physical realm. For generations, the Roman Catholic Church has taken it upon itself to consider the Bible fallible (liable to be erroneous) and thus seek the wisdom (foolishness) of man to add supposed necessities of understanding to the Scriptures, which renders human reason as to the necessity for tradition.

Personal Note—From my knowledge of God (in accordance to His grace); He is totally awesome and doesn't need man to verify, justify, or render renditions as to the truth which remains the fundamental of the faith.¹⁹⁸ Are traditions added to replace our failures in understanding the Gospel? Which takes precedence in the church today, traditions and religious precepts; or the in-depth study of Scripture in accordance to the spiritual teaching, discernment, and ability to appraise which are directly from the Lord?¹⁹⁹

Although theology is considered necessary to better grasp the essential meanings of God's Word, and better explain the fundamentals of the Christian religion to those lacking spiritual discernment, it remains a fact that spiritual discernment is necessary if theologians are to understand the truth themselves, prior to teaching others. Just as the Roman Catholic Church looked to themselves as having the answer rather than to God to supply the answers, so also did Liberalists and many other religious organizations as they became autonomous. When this occurs, theology becomes a matter of anthropology and psychology rather than a means of ascertaining spiritually based truth. A basis of moral instinct takes precedence over spiritual discernment, which leads to a basis of authority being centered upon human intellect. Because of this prevalent notion of man holding a basis of truth as needed in addition to the truth which is Christ and the Gospel, and the fact that this notion has invaded many portions of the Christian church in general, the necessity of returning to the fundamentals remains essential!²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁸ Ephesians 3:1-21; James 1:2-12; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

¹⁹⁹ 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

The way in which the Fundamentalist movement came about in the latter nineteenth and early twentieth century, is in no way a surprise to me. With: the world running to sin and depravity as it has in the last one hundred years even more so than in times prior, the way in which man's reason and theories have taken precedence over the pure truth of Scripture, the fact that we were warned in advance that these things would occur with yet fewer paying heed; and the reality of the following Scriptural verses and the urgency to return to the fundamentals of the faith becomes critical.²⁰¹

1 Timothy 4:6-11: In pointing out these things to the brethren, you will be a good servant of Christ Jesus, constantly nourished on the words of the faith and of the sound doctrine which you have been following. But have nothing to do with worldly fables fit only for old women. On the other hand, discipline yourself for the purpose of godliness; for bodily discipline is only of little profit, but godliness is profitable for all things, since it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come. It is a trustworthy statement deserving full acceptance. For it is for this we labor and strive, because we have fixed our hope on the living God, who is the Savior of all men, especially of believers. Prescribe and teach these things.

Why did the Fundamentalist movement arrive in force during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century? I would tend to think that it was destined to do so by a gracious, loving, concerned and patient Lord whom seeks the darkness of our age to come to the light of truth which is found in Christ!²⁰² As always, God's timing is perfect!

Fundamentalism originated as a reactionary rebuttal to defend the Christian faith against the modernism and liberal theology which was sweeping the nation in the early twentieth century. Liberal and modern theologies of the time were centering upon human reason and intellect to force their points of concern upon the church, and by doing so were actually damaging the church. The intervention with intellectual

²⁰⁰ John 14:6; Hebrews 12:1-3.

²⁰¹ Ephesians 5:1-17; 1 Timothy 6:20, 21; 2 Timothy 2:11-19.

²⁰² John 3:9-21; 12:37-50.

responses was not important to the Fundamentalists, because they stayed their priorities upon preserving unity within the body of believers, evangelizing and reaching the lost. The Fundamentalist movement led to a reverse in the higher educational pursuits continued from the Scholastic time period, and an increase in Biblical colleges and seminaries.

By taking on an anti-intellectual Biblically based standard of teaching, the Fundamentalists caused an influx of Christianity in the United States, yet staying from figurative language which out of the norm historically identified strongly with Dispensationalist eschatology. This allowed a much better understanding of the Bible, for a literal understandable hermeneutic was now deemed probable. Fundamentalism was emphatic in their standing on the authority and integrity of the Scriptures, while others sought to undermine the Bible and its origins. Fundamentalists while under great opposition went on record defending and maintaining that the Bible was the Word of God, and argued the coherency and integrity of the Scriptures. This endeavor led to maintained doctrinal teachings among several denominations, even to this day.

Personal Note—For the purpose of better understanding, both with the aforementioned and that which is found within aspects of theology which follows, it should be remembered what was of mention in previous notations regarding attempts to do God’s work as by conviction and debates. With the things of the flesh and the things of the Spirit being opposed one to the other, attempts to prove the latter to those who walk according to the flesh is both futile and unwarranted. With the primary step of spiritual discernment (wisdom, understanding and knowledge from God) being sincere devotion (reverence) for the Lord, it is actually foolish to argue, debate, or be otherwise reactionary in situations regarding the faith; for actual sincere devotion regarding the Lord must come from within the individual, and can never be installed or instigated by another!

This fact remains a point of ignorance within the masses; demonstrated by the fruitless endeavors throughout history to install measures of faith as by human effort! The Lord our Creator gave to each a measure of faith, to stay all from arrogance within endeavors of faith; thus *if* His measure of faith is not utilized by individuals, it is foolish to believe that we (as humans) could construct a foundation of faith which will be

utilized.²⁰³ This proves the difference between “the Way” and the “Christian religion”; for “the Way” is all about the Lord as through a personal relationship founded within the measure of faith He has lovingly rendered and actuated, whereas the “Christian religion” is all about religious matters which feeds human emotion as by mimic, emulation, and rote (carnality).²⁰⁴ It is due the desires of the flesh, and the way those desires are fed by religiosity, that “religion” far surpasses “personal relationships” in matters pertaining to the Lord; leading to the disunity which is so prevalent, as individuals seek to prove a point, while journeying further into the realms of pride and arrogance, which then leads to an illusionary state of walking by sight, while within matters supposedly of the faith.²⁰⁵

Within the 2 Corinthians 5:1-13 passages, two specifics should be noted:

1. The former pride of mention (proud) (v. 12) is not the boastful (superficial; selfish) pride of life which is sinful, but rather a good form of pride which is appreciative (sincerely) of sound efforts in speaking the Gospel truth in love, against all adversity, with gentleness and patience; whereas the latter mention of pride in the same verse demonstrates the pride which is of the flesh.²⁰⁶
2. The persuasion of mention (v. 11) does not indicate that Paul was actually within himself attempting to persuade as by conviction, but rather that the Gospel truth was persuasive within those whose sincere endeavors were to know the Lord their Creator. When a human being’s spirit has been prepared by God, the door for ministry of truth is opened as by His having drawn and taught the individual.²⁰⁷ When the door to a person’s spirit has not been opened as by God’s drawing and teaching upon them, then persuasion must be forceful; which never actually leads persons to believe, but rather takes them and holds them in bondage to the insidious nature of religion.

²⁰³ Romans 12:1-21.

²⁰⁴ Isaiah 29:13-24.

²⁰⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:1-13.

²⁰⁶ cf. Colossians 3:5-17.

²⁰⁷ John 6:44, 45.

- It is due to the persuasive attempts by man within the insidiousness of religion, that many throughout history have become calloused into believing a relationship with God to be: confusing, ritualistic, one sided, and difficult; although in reality, only religion itself fits within the parameters of the aforementioned traits, which causes harshness and spiritual detriment.
- When the Lord draws individuals, He draws them to enter into a sincerely intimate personal relationship with Him; where love, forgiveness, and cleansing remain precedent at all times. This is why the actual ministry of Christianity is one of “reconciliation,” not one of: doctrines, precepts, traditions, philosophies, rituals, and forceful rules; for the former is spiritually soothing and edifying, whereas the latter is but a physical realm (religious) emulated mimic.²⁰⁸
- With knowledge of the fact that “religion” is the primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world, it becomes understandable why religion causes callousness to the human heart, and poisons the human spirit; for it is instigated by forces of evil! This is the reason why multitudes throughout history have been pushed further from the Lord because of religion, when their initial intent was to draw closer to Him; for “religion” institutes harlotry and intellectualism, thereby deceptively proclaiming fleshly efforts to be the appropriate path to God.
- Only those who have an actual personal relation with (led by) God are the legitimate children of God, whereas religious individuals are illegitimate children and not sons and daughters! This is evinced by the lasting changed lives within the righteousness of God among those who are His children, whereas only short term conceptual changes come forth among religious individuals. The children of God submit to His righteousness, with understanding that actual faith must never be emphatically proven; whereas religious individuals constantly attempt to establish their own righteousness, while also continually attempting to prove their faith in one fashion or another.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁸ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

Dispensational Theology

Dispensation Theology increased emphasis upon a literal hermeneutic necessary for a better Biblical interpretation. This was important to combat the allegorical tendencies of some millennial interpreters, as it pointed out the errors of spiritualizing the prophetic passages of the Old Testament that had forms of literal fulfillment. This theology provided new teachings on the literal bodily return of Christ, to emphasize that the event of Christ's second coming will not be solely a spiritual event, but will actually be a time when He will rule and reign upon the earth in physical form.²¹⁰

Dispensation Theology provided renewed emphasis upon prophecy with considerable eschatological labor and insight. These efforts helped to close the differences between various millennial schemes, since the earlier portions of the twentieth century. Dispensational Theology increased emphasis upon Bible study and evangelism of God's Word, teaching Bible students within Dispensationalism to reach out with increased teachings which have been beneficial to the entire church. Dispensationalism being a prominent system within many evangelical churches today, has added considerable adherence and influence to the church, while providing numerous institutions and texts to help lay Christians to increase in their knowledge of God's Word. Dispensationalism had remained active rather than passive in their endeavors to increase the proper teachings within the church, and had placed emphasis upon self-evaluation to maintain necessary corrections within their teachings. Dispensational Theology holds closely to the seeking of combined truth, which is the basis of Systematic Theology—which asks “what is true about _____?” As Systematic Theology seeks the entire truth as by the gathering and correlation of many individual truths (in context), so also does the Dispensational perspective of Bible investigation. This is the reason a “literal hermeneutic” is so very important, lest figurative language diminish understanding and potential spiritual growth.

The literal hermeneutic often opposes the reformation principle of the analogy of faith. This occurs when the literal interpretation gains understanding and answers in a physical (literal) sense, which the

²⁰⁹ Romans 10:1-11; Colossians 2:1-23; Hebrews 12:1-11.

²¹⁰ Revelation 19:11-20:3.

reformation principle seeks to ascertain with a spiritualization of certain Scriptural passages. From this form of forced literal hermeneutics, comes understanding into events of eschatology. The “end times” are not simply spiritual warnings, but rather will occur literally (Jacob’s trouble) worse so than the world has ever known.²¹¹

Reformed Theology (Calvinism)

The covenant is essential and foundational to Reformed theology, as God said He would be our God and we will be His people. This covenant relationship between God and the church (whether Jew or Gentile) allows the balance of the eminence (reminder of the Creator/creature relationship) and the transcendence (Creator/creature distinction) of God to be known and foundational to all learning endeavors within the Christian religion. This Reformed Theology covenant is a spiritual continuation of the Abrahamic Covenant.

The covenant which God made with his creatures (humankind) is the single most characterized notion of Reformed Theology. The covenant which God made at the forefront of His redemptive plan remains the central basis of Reformed Theology studies, as this demonstrates God’s intricate plan of love and grace. This characteristic of Reformed Theology maintains that there is no basis of human experience apart from God’s eternal decree, as our very existence is ordained from the Lord. This characteristic of Reformed Theology illustrates our foundation as God’s creatures to be based within His sovereignty, as our existence is that which has been decreed by God. His sovereignty is the basis of our genuine free action, according to Reformed Theology.

The relation between God and His creatures has been covenanted through the agreement that He will be our God, and we will be His children. Through Adam and his actions in the Garden of Eden, all have sinned and therefore have become covenant breakers, yet through Christ all who accept Him have been given the ability to be covenant keepers.²¹² The basis of the relationship between God and His creatures remains that of an I/you covenant, because we must do our part to be His children as He in His infinite mercy and grace has always been our God.²¹³ The emphasis on grace within Reformed Theology, maintains

²¹¹ Revelation 1:1-3; Jeremiah 30:1-11; Matthew 24:4-28.

²¹² Romans 5:12-21.

that we possess nothing that we have not received from the hand of God. This characteristic of the theology greatly reiterates that the Covenant of Grace comes with the responsibility—that as the people of God we must be accepting of God’s grace by accepting Christ by faith, hope and love. This characteristic focuses closely upon the unfolding of God’s plan of redemption which has been fulfilled, and provides coherence of Reformed Theology because its internal movement is based upon the combined covenants of Scripture.

Note—Confusion arises within Reformed Theology, as they claim we have no actions apart from God’s sovereign decree, yet also stating we must do our part to be His children.

The Word of God is central in all things that we do within the faith, whether it is praise, worship, evangelizing, preaching, teaching, prophesying, etc. The way in which Reformed Theology relates to other forms of theology, is best summed up by Warfield when he said that the difference is by degree, not kind. Reformed theology seeks to examine the fabric of Scripture which already exists, to inherently discover the system which is embedded throughout. Reformed Theology (Calvinism) seeks to embrace and help all other types of theology to be more consistent in their findings and theories, so they may achieve a more thorough foundation from which to further ascertain the strengths of their own system of theology, by better understanding the covenant which embraces all people.

Note: The immediate aforementioned paragraph is a basis of what Reformed Theology claims of itself. Although this form of theology claims to be fully developed, it yet attempts to spiritualize aspects of eschatology, as this is the only way to justify its doctrine. Anytime a theology gets aloof of literal interpretations of prophesy, the trouble arises of—“who will interpret the metaphor?” Although this form of reason leads to adherence to one’s own interpretation, and the potential of building a pedestal from which to teach; tangents away from the narrow path of truth will generally be the end result, as focus derived from doctrine takes precedence over focus upon the author and perfecter of our faith!

²¹³ Romans 14:1-12; Philippians 2:5-18.

CALVINISM—A CERTAIN ASPECT

The “World and Life View” of Calvinism, is to say that all life is religious and should be developed under the Lordship of Christ. Calvinism sees the two realms of the world and the Christian religion to be complimentary of one another, and considers both to be legitimized by the Spirit of God. This view brings a mandate that the reformation of all life within the culture of Christian religious development is as important as saving souls, because God’s intent is to redeem the entirety of creation.

According to this philosophy within the scope of Calvinism, a process of changed thinking should occur within every individual at some point in their lives, as they are inspired to do so by the Spirit of God. Calvinists believe that all persons will achieve this changed way of thinking, no matter what realm of thought and deed they may choose to dwell within, as the realm of living and the realm of Christian religious thought will complement each other, leading to the end result of the reformation of one’s whole life both physical and spiritual.

Roman Catholic Views—Scripture and Tradition

The Catholic Church implemented what they called “implicit faith” which made emphasis that only church (Catholic) leadership need have a profound understanding of the Gospel; ordinary church members have only to believe the teachings of the leadership. This is the first step (ordinary believers) in being held to a weak faith, and potentially led astray by false teaching.²¹⁴ The Roman Catholic Diocese attempts to put themselves in the position of placing anointing, whereas actual instructional anointing is the work of the Holy Spirit.²¹⁵ By members of the Roman Catholic Church following the teachings of the Diocese without question or doubt while failing to test all things by Scripture, they leave themselves open to false teachings and a manipulation of the Scriptures, which then leads to being further deceived, as they do not progress past the milk of a babe (spiritually); yet this is to be expected within “religion” which was never founded upon the reality of God, as its foundations were always of paganisms of antiquity!²¹⁶ The truth

²¹⁴ 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 John 4:1.

²¹⁵ John 14:21-26; 1 John 2:20, 27.

²¹⁶ Hebrews 5:11-14; 2 Timothy 3:13-17.

(reality) of the Scriptures received by those who truly love the Lord, is a gift from God both through His Spirit and His Word.²¹⁷ When an organization attempts to place themselves in authority as to what is taught and perceived, they actually do nothing less than interfere with the anointed teaching of the Holy Spirit, whom they claim to serve.²¹⁸ As long as the focus of individuals remains upon other human beings and their teachings, submission will fail to come forth unto the Lord; thus the author and perfecter of faith (Jesus; God) is unable to render masterful leadership! The Lord does not guide us, when we insist on being in the lead position, or leave the Lord behind as we follow other human beings or religions! Please remember—Christianity is the reality of God both willing and working for His own good pleasure in devotional individuals; devotion for God, and no one or nothing else when pertaining to “faith” and “trust” regarding eternity!

The Vatican II council which is also known as the Twenty-first Ecumenical Church Council, in attempts to reunite the church, convened from A.D. 1963 to 1965 under the direction of Pope Paul VI. The greatest concern of the meeting was to eliminate the barrier caused by the Roman Catholic Church’s standing on tradition, and its importance as necessary for the revelation of Scripture. The Roman Catholic’s dogmatic standing as tradition being necessary in the constitution of divine revelation, taught that reason and faith were the two sources of knowledge necessary to form an understanding of “Special Revelation.” The church maintained that “Natural Revelation” was supplemented by “Special Revelation,” yet agreed that the two sources of knowledge (reason and faith) were actually two aspects of a single source of revelation, and must therefore be interpreted by the teaching office of the church; if continuity was to be provided. Please remember—the actual church is the “Body of Christ”; which remains foundational to God Himself, abiding and endeavoring within “truth” (Way, “truth” and the life; Jesus—John 14:6, 7) without compromise, variation or excuse!²¹⁹

The findings of the council then affirmed that both tradition and revelation form “one sacred deposit of the Word of God,” and interpretation should concentrate on the revelation that both the Scriptures

²¹⁷ 2 Timothy 2:1-26; James 1:17, 18; Hebrews 4:11-16.

²¹⁸ John 14:15-21; 15:1-17.

²¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 13-15.

and tradition give to ensure unity of the two. In accordance with these findings, the Vatican II council agreed that all teaching and Special Revelation must be interpreted by the church council and teaching office, as this was too complex for the normal individual believer to understand. The findings of the Roman Catholic Vatican II council, inevitably led to a considerable diversity in interpretation, as they sought to break the barriers within the Christian religion church. Does this behavior remind you of the Pharisees?

The tradition which is so highly emphasized by the Roman Catholic Church is very possibly the prevalent factor within the Catholic specific of the Christian religion that forsakes the ways of the Lord, whom (God) alone allows freedom from religious bondage.²²⁰ By God's grace, the study of Scripture can literally in itself (living and active) change our lives; whereas the precepts and traditions of man cannot!

Personal Note: I know many wonderful folks who are Catholic. Several have turned away from Catholicism unto simple devotion to Christ, upon having come to knowledge of the truth! Many were confused for years as to why tradition and ritual took precedence over Scripture, and coming to realize there was no good reason, they turned away from the inappropriate so as to gain the blessing of illumination from the Holy Spirit. The fact that the Roman Catholic Church intentionally stayed their followers from personally reading and studying of the Gospel should have been a warning sign! When someone says they alone can understand that which God gave to each of us, this then begins the dark journey of pride and arrogance within religion. Our Lord wants our loyalty and devotion! Please do not be deceived into thinking organizations can draw us closer to the Lord; for intimacy within the relationship is accomplished by God's divine work and grace, and is a matter for individuals; not organizations! It is amazing how many centuries and council meetings later, the Roman Catholic Diocese yet always places emphasis back upon itself; this derived from their never knowing or focusing upon the Jesus of the Bible, who is the author and perfecter of actual "faith!" More regarding this matter and the truth regarding the variations and compromise of Catholicism is discussed in chapter eight (General Information).

²²⁰ John 8:31-58; Matthew 15:1-9; Colossians 2:8.

Protestant Traditions

The role tradition plays in Protestant churches, is one of reiteration for the purpose of passing down the rites, customs and doctrines of the denominational religion from generation to generation; to affirm what is considered proper acts of worship. The Protestant view of tradition is far from the Roman Catholic view, as the Roman Catholic view emphasizes the necessity of church tradition in determining what those of the religion are to believe, and the Protestant view does not. The Protestant church views tradition as a way to pass down proper worship techniques and ceremonies; yet places no emphasis upon tradition as being an authority in regard to what is to be believed and practiced. Protestant teaching maintains that the Bible alone is the authority to be followed. The Protestant church views tradition as a means of maintaining Scriptural truths and guidelines within the practices of the church, while also maintaining those practices within the church which allow maximum emphasis to remain upon the study of Scripture. Note—within the study of Scripture, “traditions” are irrelevant!

According to Protestant tradition in points of controversy, the solution is sought in Scripture not in the decision of the church councils. The Protestant view in placing emphasis upon the power of God’s Word (the Scriptures) to work in and of itself in the lives of believers is absolutely correct. The emphasis upon sin as being a hindrance to one’s study and understanding of God’s Word is also correct. Yet, Protestantism has tangents of its own choosing which have been sources of distraction; for although “views” are designated as a basis to be followed, it is only the concept of the view which remains potentially acceptable in nature, whereas the reality of the denominational fruits falls within forms of compromise aloof stated views.

Personal Notes:

1. God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, or He is not righteously worshipped at all; therefore, doctrines, principles and traditions of humankind are quite easily debatable!
2. I know from experience how easily sin can hinder us in our endeavors to seek and serve the Lord, as I also know the sins of pride

and arrogance are at the forefront of this hindrance.²²¹ It is imperative that we (as believers) abstain from sin and wickedness in every form, if we are to truly answer our calling and fulfill our ministry!²²² More regarding this matter is discussed in chapter ten (within Fellowship with God).

3. Throughout history, different types of religions have incorporated forms of other religions into their own doctrines, traditions, and views, in efforts to draw new converts; the Christian religion being no different. If a form of compromise is to be “protested,” then appropriately all forms of compromise and/or corruption should be denied; for this is the only means by which all forms of corruptive practices can be stopped. Although Protestantism appropriately sought to return to Gospel truth as the primary means to eliminate corruption and return to proper worship; that fact remains that religious forms of harlotry were never denied, leaving the door of deception ajar so as to allow evil influence to remain. As the only appropriate means of worship remains to worship God in spirit and in truth, all aspects of traditional (viewed) physical realm worship must cease entirely!²²³ As long as religious forms of harlotry remain (which deter loyal and devotion away from the Lord), then actual sincere love for the Lord will not be habitually forthcoming; thus attempts are made to bring forth spiritual growth which is from God alone, as through the efforts of humankind!²²⁴ The traditional forms of harlotry which remain within the Christian religion, and the truth regarding the traditions, are further mentioned in chapter eight.

Inerrancy of Scripture

There are several aspects about inerrancy noted by Charles Lee Feinberg, which should be made clear:²²⁵

- Inerrancy applies to all parts of the Scripture as originally written. When interpretations are made, we must be careful to

²²¹ Proverbs 8:13; 11:2, 3; 16:17-20; 29:23.

²²² Psalm 66:16-20; 2 Timothy 2:14-19; 1 Timothy 6:3-5.

²²³ John 4:20-24.

²²⁴ John 6:41-58; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; Matthew 22:34-40 (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-9).

²²⁵ Charles Lee Feinberg, Dean Emeritus, Talbot Theological Seminary; Lamirada, CA.

only make declarations by comparison to the original Greek or Hebrew manuscript, because the translation is only assured of a reflective form of inerrancy as compared to the original Greek or Hebrew text.

- Inerrancy is intimately tied to hermeneutics, as the interpretation of the Bible is closely related to the issue of the teaching within the text. The teaching must therefore be explained and interpreted via an illuminated source, or a faulty interpretation may be rendered by someone with a faulty hermeneutical form. The Scripture is true in its original format and text, not the interpretation.²²⁶
- All interpretation must be taken in its context as related to Scriptural intention. Because the Bible records events that are not morally approved of by the standard of Scripture, the events must be accepted as true although they are not necessarily backed with God's authority.
- Inerrancy does not demand strict adherence to the rules of grammar. This statement is in regard to the descriptive phenomenon within Scripture, because everyday communications were utilized—rules of grammar are not a necessity.
- Inerrancy does not exclude the use of either figures of speech or of a given literary genre. The literary formats in Scripture have nothing to do with the truth or falsity of
- Scripture content, and as different styles and forms of speech are utilized in Scripture, this
- factor in no way undermines the doctrine of inerrancy thereof.
- Inerrancy does not demand historical or semantic precision. Because the Bible conveys certain aspects as designated by God, there should be no insistence that it maintain scientifically accurate data, as long as the points made are true.
- Inerrancy does not demand the technical language of modern science. Because the Bible relays all aspects to and for man intended by God, and man's humility is a basis to ascertaining Scriptural truth (Proverbs 3:34; 11:2; 15:33; 30:3), popular or observational language is sufficient and acceptable.

²²⁶ 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

- Inerrancy does not demand verbal exactness in the citation of the Old Testament by the New Testament. The same Spirit inspired both Testaments (2 Timothy 3:16, 17), and the complete rendition is not necessary for the purpose of repetition. In many cases when a known statement or event is repeated, the gist or general idea is sufficient.
- Inerrancy does not demand that the Logia Jesu contain the Ipsissima Verba of Jesus, only the Ipsissima Vox. Because Jesus spoke in Aramaic and the writers of the New Testament did not have available to them the linguistic conventions available today, it is the intention of Christ which must be spoken, and noted to demonstrate that which He intended for the church.
- Inerrancy does not guarantee the exhaustive comprehensives of any single account; or of combined accounts where those are involved. There are no single or combined texts which will tell us exactly what we need to know, or might desire to have, as there are many things we seek to ascertain about God which He has not seen fit to reveal.
- Inerrancy does not demand the infallibility of the non-inspired sources used by Biblical writers. The importance within Scripture as to the many quotations by non-inspired sources remains that the quotations were repeated accurately, not that the quotations themselves were correct or true.

Personal Note—Within this aspect of Scripture inerrancy and the seeking of answers Biblically, it must be remembered—those things revealed belong to us, whereas those things yet hidden are God's.²²⁷ Although we seek to handle accurately (cut out straight) the Gospel in efforts to align and ascertain truth, this must always be accomplished under the masterful tutelage of the Holy Spirit; for within endeavors to seek answers, potential for coveting the things of God (those things not revealed) may always be at the forefront, leading to tangents and possible corruption within the learning process! The Lord in His infinite wisdom and foreknowledge has rendered unto us those things which He chose, regarding Him; remaining content, we must study the Gospel as revealed, furtherance being by the grace of the Lord on an individual

²²⁷ Deuteronomy 29:10-29, specific v. 29.

basis, in accordance to the kind intention of His will! Because this is true, devotional study of the Gospel takes years of: prayer, research regarding Biblical history, and study of the Scriptural words including punctuations; the actual “Gospel truth” being the reality behind the words is taught to individuals by the Lord Himself (actual spiritual teacher—Matthew 23:8), thus the imperative of countless hours spent in prayer quietly (listening), as the Lord does indeed reveal many things to those who are devotionally diligent (Jeremiah 33:3)!

Holding to the inerrancy of the Scriptures is a must, if we are to truly believe in the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. Inspiration cannot be held as factual in regard to the Scriptures, if we (via pride, arrogance or ignorance) refuse to believe the Scriptures as a whole (systematic investigation). In this context, we can understand how the Scripture must be taken literally (Dispensational view); for to pick and choose when to spiritualize (metaphorical conjecture), aside from parables, would lead to corruption as by frail inane thinking. The fundamental of being inspired as to the truth of the Scriptures which is revelation from God, can only be obtained by the ability to spiritual discern and appraise; faith and inspiration (illumination) from the Holy Spirit.²²⁸ Inspiration is therefore that which comes from the Holy Spirit to those who trust; believing, without: double-mindedness, doubt, or preconceived notions. To believe in the inerrancy of the Scriptures is mandatory if we are to believe that Jesus is exactly who He says He is (glory of Christ; reality of the Christ), for to not believe the one is to not believe the other.²²⁹ The faithfulness of God is not hindered by our unbelief, but rather only our ability to understand and discern; when we seek to lead rather than follow!²³⁰ Please understand—spiritual ignorance remains unless displaced by knowledge which is from the Lord!

To hold to the inerrancy of the Scriptures is to therefore go to God’s Word with no preconceived ideas of what the Scripture character is. By entering into the study of Scripture and the general witness thereof, knowing that it is truly inspired, we can then pull out (piece together; cut out straight) the texts that lead us to conclusive understanding. Accuracy of translation from the original Hebrew and Greek texts is

²²⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

²²⁹ John 5:36-47; 14:1-7; 17:6-19.

²³⁰ Romans 3:1-8; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23; 1 John 2:27.

quite important to investigative endeavors! By the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, the Gospel becomes spiritually appraised; for the Word of God is full of truth and backed by His own moral and ethical standards, as by His revelation of it. The imperative in study of Scripture remains prayer for and discipline regarding—truth; any endeavor aloof this imperative can easily go astray!

Personal Note—The way in which Satan has been murdering multitudes throughout history, is spiritually!²³¹ When the blessing to spiritually appraise has not been rendered by the Holy Spirit due to endeavors void of humble disciplined devotional obedience, a foundation of human intellect is all that remains to guide the endeavor. With continuation of the endeavor aloof the teaching and guidance of the Lord spiritually, the Great Deceiver (Satan) is allowed to instigate and influence the investigation to remain foundational to physical realm endeavor; thus the potential for darkness remains a distinct possibility!

The Scriptures being inspired by God, are reliable, sure and dependable; this of course being contingent upon accuracy of translation! The Scriptures being divinely inspired, demonstrates the literal truthful witness of the Apostles either by sight or insight, and is therefore not of any human individual's interpretation. Although the Scriptures were written down by man, they were in essence authored by the Lord Himself. By this divine revelation rendered through the recorded writings of anointed men whom were entrusted with the truths of God, all may come to believe and understand. The certainty of the Word can be noted as truth because God Himself spoke the Word and allowed it to be witnessed for verification. Although the Apostles and others within the Scriptures have borne witness to the revelation given them by God, the fact remains that God's Word is not the result of human intellectual investigation or endeavor, but rather revelation divinely passed through humans who demonstrated themselves to be devotionally submissive; thereby within God's grace, receiving wisdom, understanding, and knowledge of truth from the Lord.²³²

The emphasis of Scripture, is that man be humble and passive, and thus allow the Holy Spirit to be active.²³³ Since the pride and sin of our

²³¹ John 8:40-47.

²³² Proverbs 1:7; 2:5; 8:13; 9:10; 2 Peter 1:12-21.

carnal nature blinds us to the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, it is imperative that we maintain humility and reverence if we are to discern the revelations of the Lord given us in Scripture.²³⁴ The righteous steps of man are guided by God!²³⁵ The emphasis of Scripture is not centered upon the divine human nature of the Scriptures, but rather Scripture emphasizes that it is God who has spoken, i.e. *vox dei* (the voice of God) / *deus dixit* (God has spoken). The characteristics of revelation are many times reasoned by what man considers the standard of the revelation, whereas it should actually be considered only by the standard which has been placed upon it by God (thereby taken literally).

The characteristics of revelation must be considered only relevant to those revelations which have been given thus far. Seeking that which God has not revealed, is to waste time while sinning against God; coveting that which is His alone. Many supposed spiritual leaders have spent countless hours, by human reason, researching events of Scripture never revealed; arriving at conclusions which are at best uncertain! Thus, the conclusion of the inspired Word remains that we can submit to God within reverence and humility, and thereby learn the inerrant truth; or we can continually attempt understanding within human reason and intellect, and thereby fall far short of actual knowledge!²³⁶

Characteristics of Revelation

- Ectypal—God is communicating knowledge to us based upon an original archetype; for God already knows the truth, and the truth He conveys to us is a reflection of the truth which is of His nature.²³⁷ Since only the revelations we are capable of understanding (ectypal) are given us, it cannot be compared to His knowledge (archetypal) which is not discernible by humankind. God knows all things regarding everything of creation (the entire universe), and yet even more (all; entirety)! When individuals fail to realize this, and yet attempt to explain God; extreme pride, arrogance, and a failure to submissively learn is the result.

²³³ Proverbs 15:29-33; Acts 1:7, 8; Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 5:16-26.

²³⁴ John 3:5-8; Romans 6:1-14.

²³⁵ Proverbs 3:1-7; 4:20-27.

²³⁶ Ecclesiastes 12:9-14.

²³⁷ John 14:6-17.

- Revelation is incomplete as to total revelation, for there is yet the epiphany to come when Jesus will divinely reign in glory. Although we currently have a complete Bible from which to gain truth; when the millennial reign is instituted upon the earth, many revelations will be given that currently have not been received. The Lord will once again be the personal teacher of those dwelling upon the earth, and in His kingdom.
- Revelation is sufficient! Although it does not address all issues we may choose to have
- understanding regarding, and it does not answer all questions we may have; it is sufficient to provide every necessary standard for us to live in faithfulness to God.²³⁸
- Revelation is accurate. Revelation is truthful and conveys exactly the message intended by the Lord; again, within an accurate translation. Although many may say that the Bible must adhere to a twentieth century canon of accuracy, the fact remains that although times may change and therefore the understanding of science and physics, the canon of Scripture yet holds the answers and standards of corporeal life.

A great atrocity which seems to occur more and more as technology increases in modern times is that we (humankind) seem to look to ourselves as having the answer, and thus do not look to the Lord for the answers. Many seek to stay ahead of themselves by gaining further intellect pertaining to the world, yet in their endeavors make themselves enemies of God, and very possibly evade the spiritual relational reality!²³⁹ Those who would seek the Scriptures to answer their worldly questions according to their carnal desires may grow in arrogance and pride, yet these remain aspects of our dark nature which keep us spiritually blinded and destitute.²⁴⁰ Thus, we may note the blessing of a thorn to keep us humble, for our calling is emphatically to humility in truth.²⁴¹

With the arrogance of man growing faster than his true understanding of technology, many seek the Scriptures to render more in regard

²³⁸ 2 Timothy 1:13, 14; 3:10-17.

²³⁹ James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:12-17; Mark 8:34-38; Matthew 7:13-27.

²⁴⁰ James 3:13-18.

²⁴¹ 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; 13:1-9; Ephesians 4:14-26; 5:1-17.

to the world; yet for the Scriptures to maintain a modern approach would render it continually out of date. Men seek a God of convenience in our day and age, more so than in past centuries; as our times call for quick and easy, rather than time invested resulting in deeper conviction and discernment in spiritual matters. Although many may think that the Scriptures are no longer accurate, the fact remains that the Bible is fully truthful and accurate in what was intended to be conveyed; thus it should always be evaluated according to the truth God has established.²⁴²

Revelation is not understandable by those who are carnally minded. Carnality interferes with our anointing, and the Holy Spirit's ability to teach us through spiritual discernment. When we remain in unrighteousness, the unrepentant error of our ways blocks our reverent fear of the Lord, and thus His wisdom from being manifest in us. The "sin problem" is the reason that unbelievers (and religious individuals) cannot understand the Scriptures, as they attempt to read the Bible like a book. This "sin problem" also is the reason that many believers cannot discern God's revelation within the Scriptures, because they choose to remain in darkness, and thus cannot comprehend the light of Gospel truth.²⁴³

Revelation is an enigma, as some seem to ascertain abounding truth from the Scriptures with less effort, and some seem to be without discernment although they study intently. Hindrance to understanding the Gospel, in my opinion is based considerably upon one's faith and trust in the Lord. Although many seek a Savior, fewer seek Jesus as their Lord, and thereby love, obey and trust Him in all things.²⁴⁴ Although some portions of the Scriptures are simply understood, other portions are only understood by intense study, prayer, and wisdom from the Holy Spirit; for they can only be discerned spiritually by those who are sincere in their endeavors to better understand our Lord and the true calling of the Christian faith. To focus on mammon (money and secular materialism) is to fail in this regard; for focus must be maintained upon the author and perfecter of our faith, for actual success to occur!²⁴⁵

²⁴² Hebrews 4:11-16.

²⁴³ John 1:1-5; James 4:7-10; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Romans 6:15-23; 1 John 4:1-6.

²⁴⁴ John 15:1-17; Luke 6:39-49; Romans 8:1-30; 10:1-13.

²⁴⁵ Hebrews 12:1-11.

Inspiration in Revelation

The inspiration of the Lord can be seen throughout the Scriptures, as can the personal aspects of the individual writers personalities and efforts. The Apostles were for the most part uneducated men (many were fishermen), and yet they spoke and wrote with authority and wisdom, for the words were inspired to them by God; this directly evincing God's righteous work within individuals called according to His purpose!²⁴⁶ Throughout the Scriptures it can be noticed that the circumstances (and moods) of the writer added to the lesson emphasized in the context of the writings, to which the book of Ecclesiastes is a good example. Although many may say that Solomon wrote several parts because of his sorrowful mood at the time, and thus it must be viewed in that context; I disagree, as the mood present at the time of his writing was intended by God to be instrumental in the effect that the lesson would teach, as to the vanity of mammon and worldly ways. With all that Solomon had gone through in his life, what was Solomon's final lesson learned and emphasized?²⁴⁷

I very much believe that God inspired the writers to write how and when they did. By the many situations in which the individual writers noted the inspirations given them in the form of their writings, different aspects of our lives can be seen within the writings. We can each learn lessons as we realize our position individually within the family of God; thus realizing our purpose in life, while witnessing that the problems we face are those which have been common throughout history.²⁴⁸ I sincerely believe that the individual writers of the Scriptures were inspired in their writings by God, and I also sincerely believe that the individual writings contain personal aspects of the writers within the words. As God is far above any human's ability to understand; as we cannot even begin to understand His abounding agape love, nor the immensity of His glory; He in his infinite wisdom inspired the Scriptures to be written in a human scope of understanding, thereby reflecting the significance for all persons within the writings. Please understand—God's anointing (teaching) upon individuals is an extremely personal and intricate matter, which is to be utilized for the

²⁴⁶ Romans 8:26-39, specific vs. 26-28.

²⁴⁷ Ecclesiastes 12:11-14.

²⁴⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; Psalms 143:1-12; Colossians 1:15-23.

edification of others; therefore, the Lord reveals wonderful things unto those who will be of devotional service for the benefit of others!²⁴⁹ Unfortunately multitudes will never realize or experience the blessing of God’s personal anointing; as they refuse to be devotionally disciplined and abstain from religiosity, for the sake of the truthful spiritual relational reality!

The understanding that Scripture is “plenary” and not partial is a must—if we are to truly believe in not only the complete integrity of the Scriptures, but also the power which it possesses.²⁵⁰ The inspiration of the Holy Spirit given to the writers of the Scriptures must also be understood to be “plenary,” if we are to believe that God’s Word is complete in revealing the revelations of what is currently necessary and has yet to occur.²⁵¹ Too many individuals and organizations throughout history have held to the notion that the inspired Scriptures are “partial” and not “plenary,” which has opened the door for them to pick and choose certain Scriptures to justify their partial serving and worship of the Lord as being sufficient.²⁵² It is only when we understand that the Scriptures are “plenary,” can we truly love and serve the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength, as we refuse to deny reality!²⁵³

Personal Note—It is for the purpose of presenting Scripture in context, that many additional Scriptures are listed within the footnotes of this book. Although a single or chosen few Scriptures would be sufficient to demonstrate the Biblical point of statements made, the additional Scriptures are rendered so as to emphasize the Scriptures (in context) to be imperative to our existence upon this earth and our walk within truth! Anyone can manipulate Scripture to fit the agenda of their teachings, doctrines or philosophies; yet in order for this to actually occur, the Scriptures must be presented outward of their inspired form of presentation. As the purpose of this book is to emphasize the placing of one’s love, hope, and trust in the Lord, manipulation of

²⁴⁹ 1 John 2:20-29; 2 Timothy 2:1, 2.

²⁵⁰ Luke 1:1-4; John 17:1-26; Romans 1:16-23; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Hebrews 4:1-13.

²⁵¹ Revelation 22:18-20.

²⁵² 2 Timothy 3:1-17; 4:1-8.

²⁵³ Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Matthew 22:36-40; 2 Timothy 2:1-26.

Scripture is certainly not an option; for manipulation (adulterating) brings forth doubt, which then brings forth the potential for deception. As it is the truth which brings forth freedom in Christ, the truth must continuously prevail; lest doubt as to the “plenary” nature of the Scriptures become predominant! In addition, the plethora of Scriptures noted allows all aspects of the instruction within this book to be taken captive to Gospel truth; this can only occur, *if* and when the Scriptures are read, and hopefully studied! Please remember, my words can only assist understanding within instruction; God’s words are living, active and powerful, for the Lord alone is the actual teacher of knowledge (Matthew 23:8-11)!

The thoughts given the men were divinely inspired, yet the writers were free to choose the words because their thoughts were inspired and therefore their words also. For men (or women) to question the writings themselves, can only be justly noted as the error of proper format or grammar which came from the writers. The essence of the Word is true and correct in every way, as it is from God.²⁵⁴ To hold to verbal errors as lending a lack of credibility to the Scriptures, is to allow doubt to invade the only basis of complete truth which we have; for God is faithful, whereas we generally are not!²⁵⁵ Because the Scriptures are the standard to which we are to live and test all things, to squabble about the validity of the Scriptures due to error in the verbal aspects of the Word, can only be seen as a way to supposedly justify one’s failure in passing the Scripture rendered tests.²⁵⁶ Many seek to find fault in that which is without fault (the Scriptures), because they refuse to look inwardly to themselves to discover the errors within; although, with disciplined diligent study of the Scriptures, the living and active nature of the Gospel in accordance to God’s righteous work, actually brings forth victory over our carnal frailties; thus leaving behind all that is inappropriate as God trains and exults us spiritually now and forever!²⁵⁷ The standards of God are high; thank Him for His grace by which the standards can be achieved unto victory (God at work)! Please understand—there are many righteous things to be learned

²⁵⁴ 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; 2 Peter 1:12-21.

²⁵⁵ John 1:1-4; 14:1-6.

²⁵⁶ 1 John 4:1-6; Revelation 2:1-5; 2 Corinthians 1:21-2:11; 13:5-8; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23.

²⁵⁷ Matthew 23:23-36; Romans 5:1-11; 1 Timothy 4:6-16.

throughout the Gospel, including the un-righteous behavior of pride and arrogance which can be witnessed within diligent study and understanding; by these lessons learned, we can restrain ourselves through strict discipline to avoid the same: distractions, hindrances, and stumbling (downfalls).²⁵⁸

Because the Scriptures are in fact the Word of God, we must never believe that the Word itself is in error although different translations may err. The different manipulations of the Word by man may seem to change the meaning; yet the meaning as by its foundation remains the same.²⁵⁹ Due to the many different translations which are now present, it is legitimate to seek the most accurate copy of the Scriptures from which to study. Further word studies (etymology; exegesis) to the original translations (Greek and Hebrew) can help as we then better understand the meaning behind the writings, and thereby better correlate the translation we choose conjunctive with the original context. Is it a practice within the world today to change the title or reference of something, believing this will diminish the severity of the circumstance. Do many manipulate the Scriptures in attempts to diminish the severity of their sinfulness or error of doctrine? Are you aware of the judgment which will come upon those who do such things, when regarding the Gospel?²⁶⁰

Personal Note—I have utilized many translations in my studies; the New American Standard Bible (NASB) is, in my opinion, the most accurate word for word translation in the English language, from the original Hebrew and Greek text.

Inspiration Emphasized

Man in his incredible arrogance, denounces that which he cannot explain. The General Revelation evident to all (in creation), is witnessed by all who have active senses. When we look at the immenseness of the universe or the minute nature of the atom, we see incredible creativity beyond conceived human explanation, yet many are foolish in their endeavors to make us believe they can reason creation without a

²⁵⁸ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

²⁵⁹ 1 Timothy 6:3-19.

²⁶⁰ 2 Peter 2:4-22; Galatians 1:1-10.

Creator (evolution or happenstance). God in His awesome knowledge, wisdom and understanding has created all things which is evident in all that He has created! How any human can attempt such foolishness as to claim He does not exist, is only surpassed by the stupidity that although they (we) cannot even come close to full explanation of His creations, we either disclaim His existence or claim we can understand His very nature and existence. God is so awesome; anyone thinking they can fully explain Him is beyond arrogance and stupidity, as they border on idiocy!²⁶¹

Personal Note—In my life I walked foolishly within arrogance and pride for many years; for I had only a concept of God, due remaining aloof of the spiritual relational reality! I praise God for delivering me (yet occurring—progressive sanctification) from these carnal characteristics, and blessing me with wisdom and understanding so that I may openly acknowledge the stupidity of my ways. I have come to realize, that our quest for spiritually discerned knowledge, falls within the realm of the spiritual battle we face daily (Ephesians 6:12-20). I have also come to realize (by God's grace) that our ability to understand and discern is truly based upon the wisdom of God, and any attempt to ascertain this wisdom within myself is but a futile battle. I therefore claim the victory granted me by the Lord Jesus and hold to His strengths and wisdom, by becoming more proficient at seeking answers in prayer. I rely greatly upon the special revelations (inspirations) given me by God, as I have come to rely upon them as the basis of discernment in my Scriptural (spiritual) studies. I can witness by experience, that sin will interfere with the blessing of discernment and wisdom which we receive from God, as I can also testify that to be spiritually discerning one must seek (willful obedience) to be pleasing in the sight of our Lord; by staying (as is humanly possible) from all aspects of carnality.²⁶² Because sin grieves the Holy Spirit, and spiritual discernment and wisdom come from Him; we truly must abstain from the inappropriate in order to gain the blessing.²⁶³ To literally walk by faith is absolutely possible by God's grace (divine work); for although we presently live within a

²⁶¹ Acts 17:23-34.

²⁶² 1 Peter 1:12-17; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4; Hebrews 12:1-11.

²⁶³ Ephesians 1:3-23; 4:17-32.

fleshly body, *if* and when we present it unto God as a living sacrifice (submissive surrender), we function quite well within the goodness and righteousness of God; for by His grace, all aspects of our carnality is denied along with “self!”²⁶⁴

I never cease to be amazed by the inspiration which comes by the Holy Spirit and God’s word itself, when we diligently study and by our studies are approved by God; in accordance to His masterful leadership. I find it fascinating that the same passages of Scripture can be read and studied several times, yet the truth made evident by the Lord’s inspiration can be in addition each time; each time learning new truth which is necessary for our walk at that specific moment. Our God is truly awesome! Just as Peter stopped and wept bitterly after having denied the Lord three times because he realized the err of his ways, so also must we realize when we need to stop and turn around (repent) when we have veered from the path of inspiration given us by God. The longer we hesitate in repenting of our pride, sin and foolishness (speaking from experience) the longer it takes for the wonderful truth from the Lord to be made evident to us. My conviction that the Scriptures are truly the inspired word of God is tremendous! I have absolutely no doubt that all Scripture is inspired; unlike some pastors and teachers I know who think only portions are inspired. I know that God teaches us truth in regard to His written word when we diligently study, as I know that He inspired the Scriptural writers in their endeavors to write it. “I know” equals—absolute certainty (knowledge) within by the grace of God; for as is revealed in Scripture, spiritual “growth” does in fact come from God, as an aspect of His progressive work of sanctification (setting us apart unto Him, and making us holy)!

Necessity of Scripture

Unlike Roman Catholicism which maintains that the church gives birth to the Scriptures, the Protestant reformers maintained that the canon of Scripture guides the reform of the New Testament church. Although reformed theologians admit that God could have used other ways of communicating His means of salvation, they maintain the necessity of the Scriptures so that man may come to knowledge of truth and an understanding of salvation by grace through faith; which is freely given by

²⁶⁴ Matthew 16:24-27; Romans 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9.

God. The canon of Scripture maintains authority in itself as the inspired word of God! The canon of Scripture is self-attesting and therefore is not in need of the witness of the church to establish its authority. The canon of Scripture is active in itself.²⁶⁵

Do many believers trust their pastors and teachers to present full understanding into the Gospel? Do many believers trust a once per week visit to church, to render the entirety of knowledge necessary for the faith they profess? Please understand—understanding can come forth from human beings; actual “knowledge” pertaining to God, comes forth solely from the Holy Spirit (God)! Do many denominations and congregations yet maintain emphasis upon human teachings and doctrines, to bring forth change and/or spiritual growth within the individual members? If so, then trust in the active nature of the Gospel is not forthcoming; thus neither is actual spiritual growth from God, but rather the mimic of growth as by religious (carnal) efforts. Within this type of religiosity, which is unfortunately profound upon the earth within all religions, trusting in God is secondary if not nonexistent; thus insidious harlotry prevails, as the intimacy of personal fellowship with God is traded for the superficiality of religion! Please understand—“Christianity” is not a religion, but rather a relational matter; the “Christian religion” is something entirely different; the light of truth within the former can save us (spiritual relational reality), whereas the darkness of the latter cannot! This reality is plainly explained in chapters 5, 8, and 11 within the book.

John 8:31, 32: Jesus therefore was saying to those Jews who had believed Him, “If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free.”

Roman Catholicism maintains that the Scriptures are difficult or impossible for the average believer to interpret. This theory by the Roman Catholic Church maintains that the average believer must be taught the fundamentals by the church teachers if they are to understand the principles of the Word; yet the Scriptures maintain a lucidity as each individual is taught within one’s own submissive and diligent study endeavors, in accordance to the anointing by the Holy Spirit.²⁶⁶ The

²⁶⁵ Hebrews 4:12.

perspicuity of the Scriptures stand, as all God has inspired in His Word was inspired to be understood!²⁶⁷ The sufficiency of Scripture stands against Roman Catholic doctrine; because of the church's strong standing that tradition and an infallible teaching authority is necessary to clarify the truths of Scripture. The sufficiency of Scripture dictates that no human narrative function is necessary for the understanding of God's Word! Please understand—human beings can instruct pertaining to the Gospel; God actually teaches the “Gospel truth (to individuals)!” The Roman Catholic view of the authority of Scripture is very biased (in my opinion) in their endeavors to place themselves in authority over the interpretation of Scripture. The Roman Catholic view according to the Vatican II documents, which are basically the Catholic constitution of doctrine for the teaching of God's Word, is that two distinct elements are necessary for the teaching of the Word; these two sources (or elements) are—reason and faith.

According to the Roman Catholic view, natural revelation is supplemented by Special Revelation, which is received only by the authority of the church through faith; thus faith is to be placed upon Roman Catholic leadership, not upon the Lord. The supplemental of Special Revelation according to the Roman Catholic Church is derived from both Scripture and tradition. According to the Roman Catholic Church, both teaching and Special Revelation must be interpreted by the teaching office of the church, which basically states that the individual believer's conscience is not sufficient to interpret the Scriptures. According to this principle by the church council, only the heads of the church (Popes, Cardinals, Bishops, etc.) are authorized to interpret the Scriptures, which supposedly provide the needed continuity and certainty of interpretation. This church principle actually led to vast diversity, for a pedestal from which to teach (church hierarchy of supposed knowledge) is not necessary for personal understanding and simplicity of devotion. Unlike the Roman Catholic Church and their standing on the authority of Scriptural teachings being only that which is authorized by the church itself, the Protestant view maintains that the Special Revelations received by the individual believer comes by the innate authority of the Scripture itself.

²⁶⁶ 2 Timothy 2:15; James 1:21-25; 1 John 2:20, 27.

²⁶⁷ John 14:23-26.

Personal Note—As can be evidenced by the aforementioned facts regarding the viewpoints of both Catholicism and Protestantism (religious doctrines), no opportunity is rendered for the Lord to teach His children personally. Although it is in fact true that the Scriptures are living and active and can train individuals in righteousness, it is also factually true that the Lord can and will render spiritual discernment (teaching) to His children individually; for He is in fact our spiritual teacher, and the One who literally implants the Gospel truth into our spirit!²⁶⁸ It should be understood at this point—the “Gospel truth” is actually the reality behind the words; which trains (God’s work) us to have—the mind of Christ!²⁶⁹ It is because this blessing is from God alone, that although the “Gospel truth” is spoken in love by those who have received this knowledge from the Master, it cannot be literally conveyed to another; rather each individual must receive it from God, for this is the teaching which is solely from the Lord!²⁷⁰

As can be noted within all religions (including the Christian religion) upon planet earth, little accommodation is made for the Lord to work (bring forth growth and exultation), as human beings continually attempt to do God’s work for Him, while denying the servanthood and submission necessary to actually achieve spiritual success. It is for this reason, that multitudes have little actual knowledge of the Gospel or “the reality of God”; aside from the understanding which was ascertained by intellectual pursuits. True children of God learn the essence of the Gospel as by the masterful leadership and teaching of the Lord, and this as by disciplined submissive reverence and prayer; whereas the multitudes continually attempt to learn that which is spiritually discerned and appraised as by a physical realm (religious) endeavor, which is why “religion” is so pronounced upon the earth, as it feeds the religious (emotional) desires of the flesh.

Although the Lord has chosen some as “teachers” for the equipping of the saints (Ephesians 4:11, 12); in all reality, the best which can be rendered (pertaining to the Gospel) from one human to another is instruction. With the Gospel truth spoken in love, the Gospel will perform its function (living and active) as by being proclaimed, which allows the

²⁶⁸ James 1:21:22, 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

²⁶⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16, specific vs. 14-16.

²⁷⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:1-9.

potential for understanding when received within a submissive spirit; yet actual knowledge is rendered (taught) by the Lord. When this fact is understood, no human physical realm endeavors are forthcoming in attempts to cause growth; for seeds are planted and watered, yet only God brings forth personal growth within any believer. This is plainly distinguished by the fact—Christianity is all about the Lord from within a personal intimate relationship (spiritual relational reality); whereas all religions (including the Christian religion) primarily regard attempts to superficially know God, completely aloof “God at work,” derived from a conceptual foundation of human doctrine and carnal spiritualization! For instruction regarding this reality, please reference chapter eleven of the book.

Testimony of the Holy Spirit

The Testimony of the Holy Spirit is not new revelation, nor is it additional information conveyed in a revelatory manner. The Testimony of the Spirit is not identical with the testimony from experience, for experience demonstrates what God has providentially taught us. Since we know what the Testimony of the Holy Spirit is not, because the providence of God gives us the revelation and witness of experience both in the context of physical realm reality and in the Scriptures, we can ascertain that the Testimony of the Holy Spirit is the testimony which assures us of the truth within.²⁷¹ This conviction by the Holy Spirit can best be defined as “subjective special revelation,” because it is the work by which the Holy Spirit inwardly convinces the believer of the truth; *if* and when the believer is in disciplined subjection to His righteousness.²⁷² Although there are many outward witnesses to the truth, it is only by the work (testimony) of the Holy Spirit that we are convinced of the absolute certainties of God’s Word and salvation. The Testimony of the Holy Spirit is also the convictions He brings forth (sin, judgment, righteousness—John 16:8-11); thus His masterful leadership points the way upon the narrow path which leads to righteousness (His righteousness), once the veil has been lifted so that an individual may see clearly (spiritually).²⁷³

²⁷¹ John 14:15-17; 15: 26, 27; 16:13-15; Romans 1:16-23; Acts 14:9-20; Daniel 2:17-23.

²⁷² Romans 8:1-17; 10:1-4; Hebrews 12:7-11.

²⁷³ 2 Timothy 2:24-3:7; Hebrews 10:19-39; 2 Corinthians 3:4-18.

Existence of God - Biblical / Philosophical

Abiding in Scripture is founded within one's personal relationship with the Lord, so that the Gospel goes far beyond theological postulates, doctrines, or abstract religious notions; instead being received (implanted) as living truth. God is received intimately; thus being the Father to whom we pray and make supplication for forgiveness, cleansing, and teaching of truth. Our personal relationship with Him in this context demonstrates that the study of the Word should not result in intellectualizing or spiritualizing (fleshly attempts to understand) Scripture, but rather reverent worship of God in both spirit and truth; thus an actual confirmation to Gospel reality!

Philosophical teaching originating during the eleventh and twelfth centuries did not attempt to uncover new Biblical truth, but instead attempted to defend church doctrine through reason and intellect. This attempt in ascertaining understanding in regard to the existence of God, led to a strictly philosophical viewpoint rather than a Biblical view, which then maintained the nonexistence of anything outside of human intellect and experience. Biblical teaching as to the existence of God is based upon one's belief (trust) in the inerrancy of Scripture; thus is reliant upon faith, as we actually believe what God has chosen to reveal, or not!²⁷⁴ Philosophical teaching as to the existence of God is based upon human intellect and logic, thus centering upon theory, hypothesis, and conjecture; from which comes postulates of religious: inane thinking, rituals, traditions, doctrines, philosophies, and precepts; leading to beliefs in a god of conversion according to human specifications! To truly comprehend the existence of God is to walk by faith within the reality of the Holy Spirit's indwelling, and not by sight; unlike multitudes who never come to knowledge of the truth, although believing to the contrary.²⁷⁵ All Biblical teaching maintains a theistic stance, whereas philosophical teachings do not!²⁷⁶

The true and living God is the foundation of Scripture, and the foundational truth in the lives of all legitimate believers (Way, truth, life). The being of God is the great supposition of theology, as He is the self-existent, self-conscience personal being which originated all things, and

²⁷⁴ Hebrews 11:1-40.

²⁷⁵ Ephesians 4:17-32; Matthew 11:25-30; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5.

²⁷⁶ Colossians 1:15-23; 1 Corinthians 3:18-23.

transcends the entirety of creation; yet being imminent in every part of it. God is far above us yet completely present with us, which confirms the Christian notion that God Himself is his own explanation—the self-existent One (I am).²⁷⁷ The possibility of arguing for the existence of God is apparent as:

- God created man in His own image (spiritually) that we may have a relationship with Him (Genesis 1:26, 27).
- God converses with His creation (Examples - Genesis 1:28-30; 26:24, 25; 31:11-13; Exodus 3:4-14; John 10:25-30; cf. 14:9, 10; Jeremiah 33:3).
- God created an environment especially for man (Genesis 1:3-30; Matthew 6:25-34); including the specific location of the Earth within the Milky Way Galaxy, for the purpose of cosmos discovery.
- God tests man's love, devotion and faith (hearts, minds, and motives) (Exodus 16:4; 20:19, 20; Judges 2:21, 22; 2 Chronicles 32:30-32).
- God renders blessing to His children when they walk according to His ordinances (Deuteronomy 8:15, 16; Jeremiah 17:8-10; cf. Hebrews 5:8-10; John 15:1-17).

The existence of God must be believed, as God's existence is the basis of saving faith, and is plainly seen by all that He has created!²⁷⁸ God is the great "I am" and without Him nothing has come into existence, nor is maintained.²⁷⁹ It is possible to argue for the existence of God, while at the same time being probable; for creative design cannot actually be denied, as all that exists is far too precise for happenstance! The basis of understanding the existence of God is—faith; for without faith regarding His existence, is to remain corrupt in one's thoughts and desires, as by denial and foolishness.²⁸⁰ Because Scripture confirms the existence of God, and all will one day give account and proclaim Him as Lord, it is of the utmost importance that all be led to understand His desire to have a personal relationship with each of us for our: salvation, training, nur-

²⁷⁷ Hebrews 6:9-20; John 8:53-58; Exodus 3:13, 14; Isaiah 45:5-7, 21-25; Revelation 1:8.

²⁷⁸ Hebrews 11:6; John 8:23, 24; 14:1-4; Romans 1:16-23.

²⁷⁹ Exodus 3:14; John 8:58; Ephesians 3:8-10; Colossians 1:16, 17.

²⁸⁰ Psalms 10:1-18; 14:1-6.

turing, and spiritual growth; thereby knowing that there is nothing greater than God!²⁸¹ Although it is possible to argue for the existence of God, it is not a basis from which many will come to believe; for the measure of faith which God gave to each in addition to the precision of His creation remain primary factors of the reality that God exists. The evidence of His existence is so abounding, that for a person to argue against His existence is demonstration of a human futile and vain mindset (arrogance; narcissism). Because Satan deceives the whole world (with the exception of a remnant), and his greatest mission is that multitudes would not believe in the Christ (glory of Christ; the reality of the Christ), or worship without knowledge (in ignorance); our battle is a spiritual one which must be fought with prayer and by the power of the Holy Spirit.²⁸²

Personal Note—I know from experience that many will argue for arguments sake. To remain in an argumentative situation with such as these, is to remain in a situation which will rarely have a harmonious outcome; for during argumentation, rarely does anyone actually listen, as everyone inevitably attempts to express their own point of view. We therefore lovingly proclaim the truth of God's existence, and individuals will choose to believe in accordance to God's having drawn them, or they will not (*if* not drawn).²⁸³ We must not argue nor judge; as we simply speak the truth in love, for the sake of edification according to the need of the moment!²⁸⁴ It is due to emphatics beyond speaking the truth in love, that many throughout history have been pushed to the point of rebellion; yet within rebellion against pig-headed religious zealots, many individuals have actually run from the love of the Lord which they originally sought. Will believers be required to give account for causing dissention, where love was to prevail; when in doing so the foolish attempts were not gathering, but rather scattering?²⁸⁵

As human beings we are limited by perceptions derived in a physical realm, as many of our thoughts are derived via a visible world from that which we sense and experience. Because we exist in time and space, it is

²⁸¹ Romans 14:11, 12; Jeremiah 10:6-15; 1 Timothy 2:1-4.

²⁸² Ephesians 6:10-12; 1 John 4:1-6.

²⁸³ John 6:44, 45, 65.

²⁸⁴ Romans 1:18-20, 28-32; 2:1-11; 15:1-13; Ephesians 4:1-32.

²⁸⁵ Matthew 12:25-37, specific v. 30; Luke 11:17-26, specific v. 23; John 10:1-18, specific vs. 12, 13.

difficult for us to relate or understand how the Lord, although existing within the time He created, also exists external of time and space. God's immensity is emphasized by His transcendence. The transcendence of God is the distinction about Him that emphasizes that He is not bound by space or time. When we associate God with infinity, we attempt to speak of the absoluteness of God, while doing so in abstract terms of emptiness, for our view is one of a finite perspective seeking understanding of that which is infinite. To attempt to understand that which is infinite with a mind that is finite, is to attempt to see spirit through physical eyes. As far apart as anti-matter is from matter, so is the span between man's ability to understand the immensity (transcendence) of God, by any means other than faith and the witness of His creations and Word. If we attempt to maintain our faith in God strictly through the bounds of human experience, the dilemma arises that the saving content of His will becomes void or the idea of God transcends the world entirely. The result of this would be that we have a Savior with no relation to those He must save. Because we cannot understand God as He is to Himself, we must avoid speculation as to His abilities, or we attempt to hold Him to those abilities which can be reasoned through human intellect.

We do not now nor shall we ever know God as He knows Himself. We know God via the means in which He has chosen to reveal Himself. Just as the universe is more immense than conceivable by human logic or reason, and God created all that is or has been; thus He is far beyond His creation, and our ability to understand. It is wise and prudent for us to simply receive His love, which in itself is beyond our understanding; for He is the essence of love.²⁸⁶

Because God is not held by the factors of physics which bind us to our state of realism, He is found everywhere at all times. Because God is transcendent, He is above all temporal limitations as with Him the past, present and future are equally and always present with Him. Although God is not held by the boundaries of time and space, He nonetheless is present within the boundaries created for mankind, so that we may know Him personally.²⁸⁷ If it were not for the grace and lovingkindness of God toward us as His creations, and the revelations He has given us in His Word and all that He has created, man would be without ability to know

²⁸⁶ Isaiah 55:1-13; 1 John 4:7-10.

²⁸⁷ Psalm 90:1-17.

or understand Him in any type of reality. God has proven His existence and rendered unto His creation all that is necessary that those created in His image (humans; spiritually) may know and love Him; it is our responsibility to accept the blessings of the Lord God of all creation!

The omnipresence (immanence) of God demonstrates that He truly fills all space and time simultaneously. Just as this factor about God is a comfort to those seeking to be pleasing in His sight—as He protects us by being with us at all times; it may also serve as a warning to those seeking to remain in sin, while being deceived into believing that He does not see.²⁸⁸ The fact that God fills all space and time simultaneously, demonstrates His immensity (transcendence) and omnipresence (immanence); while also emphasizing human incomprehensibility in regard to God. Because God is not limited to His creation, as He far surpasses His creation, the inner sovereign will of God will never be understandable by that creation, as to fully understand something is to have the ability to limit that something in question. Because God is limitless, we shall never fully comprehend Him nor His abilities! Because God is far above that which He has created, and that which He has created is but a portion of the revelation He saw fit to bless us with; therefore an exhaustive understanding of His essence is impossible, for we cannot fully understand even that which He has shown us (cosmos). Just as the universe is expanded daily, and this beyond our ability to understand or reason, only a fool would dare waste time attempting to reason the immensity of the Creator who is far greater than His creation!

Notations of God Utilized so as to Better Understand

“In-corporeality” refers to that which is without physical form or tangible, not composed of matter; spiritual; therefore that which is without form detectable by human senses. To be “corporeal,” is to be localized or centralized in one area or place at a time; of the body, material, physical, opposite spiritual. The in-corporeality of God; as He is spirit; demonstrates His ability to be everywhere at once, unlimited in His abilities, and able to have substance even though He is without a physical body. The in-corporeality of God is demonstrated in one of His commandments, as to make an image of Him is to make an image from

²⁸⁸ Hebrews 13:1-6; Ezekiel 8:1-9:11.

that which cannot be seen; thus the image would not be capable of doing any type of justice to His person, never the less to His glory, holiness or righteousness.²⁸⁹ When we insist on having images of God, as do many, we attempt to place Him within a physical realm of existence for the purpose of understanding and worship; although inappropriately.²⁹⁰ The Lord has given us all things necessary so as to believe, and worship Him properly within an intimate loving spiritual relationship; must we add our own devices, thus complicating a simple matter of spirituality?

“Anthropomorphic” means to speak in the form of man and ascribe to God that which is not properly His. Anthropomorphism is a figurative language which gives God human characteristics, in attempts to make Him relationally more understandable. “Anthropomorphic” imagery is utilized in Scripture, to convey actions by the Lord in a manner to which man can attest. Because God chose to reveal Himself to those created spiritually in His image, it is righteous that revelations from God to man would be presented in a manner understandable to the creation (corporeal examples); that we may better understand our Creator.²⁹¹ In a like manner as our Lord inspired His Word in an “anthropomorphic” manner to be understandable to us in our endeavors to better know Him; it is acceptable that we utilize the same manner when instructing others regarding Scripture, when appropriate, while avoiding all forms of endeavor which would possibly lead to acts of physical realm religious worship!²⁹²

The invisibility of God flows from the concept of the in-corporeality of His being; as there is no longer an actual body of God visible to the human eye, except that form which he may choose to show of Himself.²⁹³ Because God is indeed invisible, as are human spirits and angels (unless the Lord seeks to make their presence known - Numbers 22:22-35; Genesis 19:1), the tremendous truth of our God’s presence was revealed in Christ Jesus our Lord.²⁹⁴

The manifestation of glory which is in Jesus, brings life, as His is a life giving force that casts away sin, motivates in righteousness, and al-

²⁸⁹ Exodus 20:1-17, specific vs. 4-6.

²⁹⁰ John 4:20-24; Isaiah 40:12-31.

²⁹¹ Genesis 1:26, 27; examples - Psalm 98:1; Ezekiel 8:2, 3.

²⁹² 2 Corinthians 5:14-17.

²⁹³ John 1:12-18; 1 Timothy 1:15-17; 6:13-16; Hebrews 11:24-27; Romans 1:20-23; cf. - Exodus 33:16-23.

²⁹⁴ John 1:1-18; 20:26-29; Colossians 1:15-20; Hebrews 1:5-14.

lows us to be transformed into His image.²⁹⁵ Although God is spirit and invisible, Jesus revealed the Father to humankind; so that all may know the potential of a personal spiritual relationship with God to be true and righteous!

Attributes in reference to God, can be described in basically two ways:

- The ascriptions which describe the characteristics of God; thus that which ascribe to the Lord those things that are His.
- “Those distinguishing characteristics of the divine nature which are inseparable from the idea of God, and which constitute the basis and ground for his various manifestations to his creatures.”²⁹⁶

Throughout philosophical history, there have been many discussions as to the attributes of God. Although such men as: Louis Berkhof, Charles Hodge, William Shedd, and Herman Bavinck have followed variations of categorization to the attributes of God as set forth in the Westminster Confession, other men such as J. Oliver Buswell Jr., and Charles Ryrie have denied categorization of God’s attributes altogether. The basic difference between those who would choose to categorize the attributes of God (realists) and those who would not (Nominalists), is that the realists see attributes as the elements or things in the being of God, and the Nominalists conceive God’s attributes as simple differences in our conception of Him.

Wisdom

The Biblical notion of wisdom and knowledge:

- Begins with a fear of the Lord (Psalm 111:10; Proverbs 1:2-7; 9:9-11; 15:32, 33). By this reverent fear, man becomes wise and knowledgeable by God’s grace; through faithful submissive respectful devotion.
- Is to hate and shun evil (Proverbs 3:5-8; 8:10-14).
- Is to listen to the testimony of God and obey His commands (Psalm 19:7-14).

²⁹⁵ Romans 8:28-30; 2 Corinthians 3:4-18; Colossians 3:5-17.

²⁹⁶ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, Pa.: Judson, 1907), p. 244.

- Within the Biblical standard of “commandments” as set forth for the Body of Christ (church), it must be remembered that this context does not refer to the commands of the Mosaic or Levitical Laws, but rather the instruction to: love God first and foremost, love all others as ourselves, abide in the Word, and follow the perfect moral law—in love (Matthew 22:36-40; John 8:31-36; James 1:21-25).
 - In love—specifies that *if* God is the desire of our devotional love, we will submit to follow Him, while seeking to maintain subjection to His righteousness; as within the understanding that we were created by Him and for Him for this very reason (Colossians 1:15-23; Romans 10:1-13)!
- Is revealed to man through Christ Jesus, thus we become wise in Christ as we are
 - conformed to His image. (1 Corinthians 1:26-31; Romans 8:26-30).
 - The Biblical notion of wisdom is related to the attributes of the wisdom of God:
 - As the wisdom of the world is but foolishness to God (1 Corinthians 1:18-24; 3:18-20).
 - As those without discernment from the Holy Spirit cannot understand nor obtain wisdom regarding Jesus, as: Lord; Messiah (Christ) (1 Corinthians 2:6-16). The wisdom of Christ, is wisdom granted to those who are reconciled by God (Colossians 1:19-23).
 - Because God who is all wise, has with sovereignty (kind intention of His will) planned what is best for humanity (Romans 11:33-36).
 - Because the wisdom of God can in no way be understood by natural man; it is only by God’s rendered blessing of wisdom to spiritual man, that man is capable of obtaining it (Psalms 104:24-35; Proverbs 3:13-20; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:6-15).
 - Because the wisdom of God is displayed supremely in Christ Jesus; whom allowed Biblical wisdom to enter man’s understanding, by His bringing the message of eternal hope to humankind. By the Gospel teaching of “Christ crucified,” and acceptance of it (glory of Christ), God allowed the veil of

obscurity to be lifted, that man's spiritual eyes would see clearly the Gospel truth; by faith (Matthew 11:25-30; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5; 2 Corinthians 3:4-18).

It has been argued, that we are yet under the Law of the Ten Commandments (Exodus 20:1-17). For the purpose of understanding, two points must be rendered:

1. The Ten Commandments should noticeably be understood according to the moral content of the Commandments, regarding our relationship with God. As morality is very much a standard of both the Old and New Testaments (i.e. the perfect law, the law of liberty), and morality is a primary basis which ought to be evident within those who trust in the Lord, the Ten Commandments should be adhered to; yet not as a basis of the Law, but rather as a basis derived from sincerity of devotion for God.
2. The Ten Commandments make emphasis of those things within the realm of sin from which relational degradation will assuredly occur. This fact is emphasized as:
 - Love (reverent fear) for the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, understanding, and knowledge; this fact emphasized by the first three commandments (Exodus 20:3-7; cf. Proverbs 1:7, 20-33; 9:10-12). If sincerity of devotion for the Lord is not the foundation of our existence, then the Lord God is not the volitional foundation of our existence; which would make evident that we will neither submit to Him or abide in the Word (John 1:1-5; 8:31, 32; 15:4-11; 1 Corinthians 3:10-17)!
 - Respect—is emphasized within all Ten Commandments. Respect first and foremost for the Lord, then for others; not forgetting respect for our own bodies, as by taking a day of rest each week (not necessarily as specified), for our mortal existence is frail and in need of rest in the Lord! To take a Sabbath (rest) day each week, allows us time to reflect upon God's many blessings, while allowing us time in His presence to: worship, render praise, submit, learn, trust, and hope; for this is appropriate unto the Lord, for and by those who devotionally love Him (Hebrews 4:1-16).

God's Ethical Attributes

The "Ethical Attributes" of God are those that reveal His nature of holiness, righteousness and goodness. Although many within the Body of Christ would seek a God of convenience as they focus upon carnal things; this many do by seeking reminder only of God's love, while the fact of the aforementioned "Ethical Attributes" yet remains a major factor of truth, which is only denied by the foolishness of "self-centeredness"! When we remind ourselves of God's absolute purity; proper reverence (attitude and behavior) becomes considerably more pronounced!²⁹⁷ According to Charles Hodge, holiness refers to God's moral excellence and transcendent majesty. Because God is absolutely holy, He is separate from fallen humanity. His holiness can be seen as His absolute purity; sin contradicts this aspect of His very nature. Because of the way in which sin separates us from God, we are called to be separated from sin unto God; thus the necessity to preserve purity in marriage, and within all church and personal relations.²⁹⁸

Another of God's "Ethical Attributes," is "justice." Justice being an adherence to both moral and ethical laws demonstrates how God fulfills His own laws which are in accordance with His nature. The infinite righteousness of God is the standard by which His attribute of "justice" is centered, and this inherent righteousness of God is that which sets the right laws (His righteous laws) for human government and the proper distribution of reward or punishment. The "Ethical Attribute" of God's "justice" can be noted to have two distinctions, cumulative and reciprocal. God is not bound to His creatures by any determination on our part, yet is bound by His own nature of love; He has seen fit to bind Himself for the fulfillment of His own conditions in His relationship with us.²⁹⁹

Another of the "Ethical Attributes," is the "goodness" of God. The "goodness" of God refers to His benevolence, love, mercy and grace. God is not simply loving; but rather the very essence of agape (unconditional) love!³⁰⁰ The "goodness" of God toward His people is derived from His own loyalty and kindness according to His willful relationship

²⁹⁷ Isaiah 6:1-10.

²⁹⁸ 1 Peter 1:13-21; Romans 12:1-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 1:5-2:17.

²⁹⁹ Romans 9:6-29; Hebrews 5:11-6:20.

³⁰⁰ 1 John 4:7-21.

with man.³⁰¹ God’s “goodness” can be seen in His manifested compassion upon His children, and by His long-suffering toward those who deserve punishment (all of us).³⁰² The “goodness” of God is manifest in His grace by which we are saved, strengthened, and led forth; His patience is grounded in lovingkindness.³⁰³

- With so great a lovingkindness surrounding us, why do we yet bicker, complain, and make supplication for worldly additions?
- External of the intimate relationship with the Lord who is the very essence of pure love and truth; is it any wonder why insidious religion seeks physical realm blessings, and a God who is alterable according to human: doctrines, philosophies, and whims!
 - It is due God’s goodness in having loved us first, which allows us the potential to both dwell within His love and love others without ulterior motives; for this is foundational within the relationship. As true love is founded within the spirit of individuals (received by the Holy Spirit—Galatians 5:22-26), whereas secular lust (mimicked love) is founded within the flesh (Galatians 5:19-21); denial of God’s actual attributes is necessary within religion so as to maintain an alterable concept.
 - Within the foolish pride of human existence, religion seeks change external of “self,” whereas within actual Christianity “self” is denied so as to allow internal growth in righteousness! Within Christianity humankind is altered in accordance to God’s work of sanctification; whereas religion seeks alterations within an unchangeable God. Insidious religion is therefore a basis of absolute absurdity, as God is pure and righteous within Himself; thus His attributes are un-alterable in accordance to His unique and absolute holiness.

³⁰¹ Psalm 136:1-26.

³⁰² Psalms 86:1-17; 103:1-22.

³⁰³ John 1:1-18; Ephesians 2:1-10.

Trinity

Personal Note: Because the “Trinity” has been a much discussed subject for many years, and because this subject has been the root of many controversies; I am including this segment for general information sake. I do not claim to have a full explanation as to the “Trinity” (triune God) being three personages yet the “one true God,” in accordance to theological reflection, so this is my best effort to explain what I do know; as by: formal training, prayer, supplication, and handling accurately (by God’s grace) the word of truth.

Please understand, I have no appreciation for the confusion which comes forth during attempts to explain God through human intellect and reason (carnality)! My formal training was derived from obedience to God in following avenues of investigation, to both discover the truth regarding the reality of God, and the ways in which the beauty of the spiritual relational reality (actual Christianity) has been tainted, by the detrimental teachings of humankind within religious endeavor. My actual legitimate relationship with the Lord began with supplication for pure truth regarding Christianity (knowing Christ); for disgusted with discovered correlations with paganism within the Christian religion (not Christianity), supplication was made; this allowing God’s masterful leadership to guide me upon avenues of investigation to gain knowledge for the benefit of others, within God’s personal anointing upon me; for I am to train servants of the harvest solely foundational to the Lord (pure truth)! Within the book, including this chapter, it is my hope to allow individuals to go beyond the foolishness and confusion so abounding in the world today, so that with all confusion aside, individuals may abide both in the Gospel and in the Lord as legitimate children, and go beyond all that is of the world, including all aspects of “religiosity”! The spiritual relational reality between God and individuals is not complicated whatsoever, for Christianity is the reality of God both willing and working within individuals all that is pleasing unto Him! By witness of carnal attempts to explain God, and thereby gaining understanding of the futility of such endeavors; it is hoped that devotion, discipline, obedience, and loyalty unto God will result; as many may simply move forward to God’s upward call in Christ Jesus, without the confusion of carnal futile intellectualization and explanation! In the seeking of pure truth regarding the saving relationship (glory of Christ; reality of the Christ); all worldly

endeavor aside; the reality of God may be discovered, and this as He may begin and continue the “good work” of which He alone is capable!³⁰⁴

Formal Training (Religious Theological Doctrine)

The “Eternal Generation” of the Son asserts a necessary relation, because the act of generation is necessary, for if this depended on the free will of the Father then the Son would not be co-eternal with the Father. Because the Father exists, the Son of God must also exist in an equal state of substance, or we would be forced to admit that there is some form of subordination necessary for the Son’s existence. The relation between the Father and the Son is eternal, as it has always been, is, and always shall be.

The “Eternal Generation” of the Son involves the divine immutability and deity of

the Son, which can be noted in Scripture both in regard to the Son alone and in the Son’s eternal relationship with the Father (Micah 5:2, 3; John 17:1-5, 22-26; Colossians 1:15-17). The eternality of the Father is bound up with the eternality of the Son, for there cannot be one without the other. The Father generates the Person of the Son, whose Person is constituted of the self’s same existence, for the Son is in the Father even as the Father is in the Son (John 14:9-11).

The Father gives life to the Son. The relation between the Father and the Son is spiritual, eternal and divine; so spiritual affiliation does not result in change by physical division (Hebrews 1:1-4). There was never a time when they were not the same, as the Father has always generated the Son and the Son has always been begotten of the Father, thus there is no inferiority of rank between the Father and the Son (John 1:1-5; Luke 1:31-35). The person of Christ is God from Himself, thus God from God.

The “Eternal Generation” of the Son can be noted to be the communication from the Father to the Son, which is a communication of personal subsistence. In reference to Jesus’ (the second person of the Trinity) deity, He is His own source of deity, as the communication between the Father and the Son is eternal as the Father has always begotten the Son.

³⁰⁴ John 6:44-65; 14:6, 7.

The “Eternal Procession” of the Holy Spirit, is affirmed by the necessary relationship between the Holy Spirit and God the Father, and God the Son. The Father and the Son exist necessarily as God; the Holy Spirit must exist necessarily as God, or there is subordination in the subsistence.

The Holy Spirit’s relationship with the Father and the Son is eternal and therefore has no beginning or ending, which demonstrates the divine immutability and deity of the Holy Spirit. The relationship between the Holy Spirit and God the Father and God the Son, can be noted in: creation (Genesis 1:1, 2; Isaiah 40:12-14), redemption (Hebrews 9:13, 14), and sanctification (John 14:15-18; Romans 8:12-17).

The Holy Spirit’s “Eternal Procession” relationship with the Son can be noted by: His bearing witness (John 15:18-27), His being received directly from the Son (John 20:19-22), His seal of adoption upon true believers as sons and daughters of God (Galatians 4:1-11); which is proven by the Holy Spirit’s indwelling of believers in accordance with God’s grace through faith (Romans 8:9-11; Hebrews 12:1-11).

The “Eternal Procession” of the Holy Spirit, is demonstrated as there is no inferiority regarding the Holy Spirit to the Father or Son (John 14:22-26; Acts 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 3:11-17; 6:12-20). The Holy Spirit is not dependent upon the Father or Son for His existence, nor was there any other relationship between the Holy Spirit and the Father, and Son. The Holy Spirit is self-existent in Himself.

The Holy Spirit proceeds from both the Father and the Son, as He also executes the plan of God (Genesis 1:1, 2; Titus 3:3-8). By this data, we can see that the orthodox doctrine of the Trinity is a necessity.

The unity of God must be upheld without blurring the relations between the three.

Just as the Son is eternally generated by the Father, so also has the Holy Spirit eternally proceeded from both the Father and the Son. The term “Eternal Procession,” is proven by Scriptural statements that affirm the Holy Spirit’s deity in relation to His spiritual existence with both the Father and the Son, which is proven by such statements as:

John 15:26: “When the Helper comes, whom I will send to you from the Father, that is the Spirit of truth, who proceeds from the Father, He will bear witness of Me.

Psalm 104:30: Thou dost send forth Thy Spirit, they are created; And Thou dost renew the face of the ground.

Matthew 12:28: “But if I cast out demons by the Spirit of God, then the kingdom of God has come upon you.

Romans 8:9, 10: However, you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. But if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Him. And if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the spirit is alive because of righteousness.

There are many proofs that lead to the conclusion that Jesus is God, even as the Father is God. These proofs come under the many different names and activities which have been presented in Scripture as describing the Son of God, and can be noted in the following different indicators of Christ Jesus as God or Yahweh (“I Am” - Exodus 3:13-16; John 8:45-58).

JEHOVAH OR YAHWEH:

John the Baptist who was sent to “clear the way for the Lord” was referred to by the prophet Isaiah hundreds of years before Jesus walked as the Son of Man upon the earth (Matthew 3:3; Isaiah 40:3). The Son of God was the same Lord that was witnessed by Isaiah in times past; as He was also witnessed by the Apostles, and all who saw Him during His earthly ministry (John 12:37-41). The same glorious Lord which Isaiah saw in generations past, was the same glorious Lord that was witnessed by Peter, James and John, when Jesus transfigured before them (Matthew 17:1-8; Mark 9:2-8; Isaiah 6:1-3).

The Son of God is to be worshipped and sanctified by believers, just as He was the only One to be worshipped in the Old Testament times (1 Peter 3:14-22; Exodus 20:2, 3; Hebrews 1:5-14; Psalm 97:1-12). The Son of God is the one and only Lord of hosts who is to be reverently feared, and is the (singular) stumbling block to those who refuse to believe and thus be saved (Isaiah 8:12-14; 45:21-25; 1 Corinthians 1:20-2:5; Galatians 5:1-11; Luke 8:9-18; John 3:1-21; Acts 4:8-12). The Son of God is the Lord who gives to each a measure of faith, and ascended on high leading the way to eternal life for all who believe (Ephesians 4:7-16; Romans 12:3; Psalm 68:18-20). By these aforementioned examples, we know that the Son of God is indeed Yahweh; who spoke of Himself to the prophets of Old.

The Son of God is He from whom all things came, and it is He who is from everlasting to everlasting (Ephesians 3:1-12; Colossians 1:15-23; Revelation 4:9-11). The Son of God is the one who makes all things to work together for good for those who believe, and is the One who is spoken of by the writer of Hebrews as the true God who is forever and ever (Romans 8:28; cf. 1 John 2:4-6; Hebrews 1:8).

Christ's eternity and pre-existence as Yahweh, can be noted by His being before all things (Colossians 1:15-17). The Son of God has gone forth from eternity past (Micah 5:2, 3), and holds as two of His titles (indicating once again His position as Yahweh)—Eternal Father / Mighty God; from whom will come eternal justice and righteousness (Isaiah 9:6, 7).

The Son of God is evidenced to be Yahweh, by many of the titles by which He has been called: **King** (Psalm 2:6-12; Isaiah 6:5); **King of kings and Lord of lords** (1 Timothy 6:13-16; Revelation 17:14; cf. Philippians 2:9-11; Isaiah 45:20-25); **Begotten One** (Psalm 2:6-12; Acts 13:32-41); **Lord** (Psalm 110:1-7; Romans 10:4-13; Mark 1:1-3; Matthew 22:41-46); **Righteous Scepter** (Hebrews 1:8, 9); **Wonderful Counselor** (Isaiah 9:6); **Prince of Peace** (Isaiah 9:6); **Creator** (Romans 1:24-32; 1 Peter 4:17-19; John 1:3, 4); **God** (John 1:1; Acts 15:8, 9); **Word** (John 1:1). The Son of God (Yahweh) came down from heaven (which means He was previously in heaven) long before being born in human form of the Virgin Mary (John 6:35-40); proven by His pre-incarnate work, many times under the name:

THE ANGEL OF THE LORD

The Son of God (Yahweh) appeared to many prior to coming in the flesh being born of the virgin Mary; and did so in all instances when the Lord in human form appeared visually to man (Genesis 16:11-13; 32:24-30; Judges 2:1-5; 6:11-29; 13:9-23; Numbers 22:22-35; 23:4-26). **Note:** The appearing of the Lord to man had to be the second Person of the Trinity (Jesus / Yahweh); for God the Father and God the Holy Spirit have never appeared thus far to anyone (John 1:18; 14:8-11). The angel of the Lord mentioned in the Old Testament, was not in all cases Yahweh; sometimes the angel spoke to, and was answered by Yahweh, or emphasized / proclaimed Yahweh (Zechariah 1:7-17; 3:1-10); therefore, in these instances the angel of the Lord was indeed a messenger of the Lord (angel). The angel of the Lord (Yahweh) ceased to appear

after the incarnation of the Messiah (Christ) (Isaiah 7:14, 15; Matthew 1:18-25; cf. John 1:41).

Because many have spoken of the Holy Spirit as an impersonal form or power, the necessity arises to understand that the Holy Spirit is existent within Himself, and is a personal being whom is coordinated in His relationship with the Father and the Son. When the Holy Spirit is described as an impersonal entity, the relationship which He has with the Father and the Son is diminished. When the fullness of the Holy Spirit's deity is questioned, misunderstanding as to His works and divine purpose becomes the end result.

Many individuals maintain that personality can exist only in finite beings (humans), and thereby deny that personality can exist in that which is divinely infinite. This foolish assumption is based upon the human philosophy of superiority, and seems to deny the fact that man was made in God's image; therefore the personalities of man are from God which is part of His likeness, as is our image.

With "personality" being described as one's ability to possess intellect, emotions and volition, it can be plainly noted that the Holy Spirit has these aspects within His person, thus He has personality. The Holy Spirit being the person that He is (with personality) proves that He is not simply a power of influence; as was taught by Arius in early church History, and is yet followed today by some religions, i.e. Unitarianism / Jehovah's Witnesses; but rather God who intervenes, wills and loves (1 Corinthians 12:1-11; Romans 8:20-30; Galatians 5:22, 23).

The personality (volition) of the Holy Spirit can be seen in many ways, as by His:

1. **Works:** The Holy Spirit does works similar to that of the Father and the Son. Each has the works that they do, and each is personal in their works; thus personality. The works of the Holy Spirit demonstrate His personality, as He:
 - a. Teaches: Just as Christ taught truth to all that would listen (John 14:1-12; Luke 20:19-26), so also does the Holy Spirit teach truth, and cause those who believe to remember the teachings of Jesus (John 14:15-26; cf. 1 John 2:27).
 - b. Testifies: The Holy Spirit continually bears witness of the Son. Just as we bear witness of Christ by proclaiming the

presence of the Lord in our lives, so also does the Holy Spirit bear witness.

- c. **Guides:** The Holy Spirit guides believers in all truth. The Holy Spirit knows all things, and thus knows all territories to which we may travel. Because we do not know or understand that which we have not yet experienced, it is imperative that we trust the Holy Spirit to guide us into areas that are unfamiliar to us; yet familiar to Him (Romans 8:12-17; cf. James 4:13-17).
- d. **Convicts:** The Holy Spirit convicts the world of sin, judgment and righteousness (John 15:18-16:15).
- e. **Intercedes:** The Holy Spirit intercedes for believers. When we are weak in ourselves, then we are strengthened by the Holy Spirit; whether our weakness is in prayer or in a physical sense (Romans 8:18-30). An impersonal influence or inanimate entity would not be capable of compassion for us (1 John 4:11-21); thus the Holy Spirit is a Person with personality!
- f. **Commands:** The Holy Spirit commands (or compels) us to either do that which He wills, or stop doing those things which are in violation of His will (Romans 8:12-14; 1 Corinthians 12:3-11; cf. Galatians 3:1-5; 5:16-26; 1 John 3:21-24; Acts 13:1-3).
- g. **Regenerates:** The Son gives life to individuals (John 5:19-47); those given life are born again and regenerated by the Holy Spirit (Ezekiel 36:22-38; Titus 3:3-8; John 3:5-8).

2. Identity: The Holy Spirit is God, just as the Father and Son are God. He thus is: holy, righteous, just, loving, kind, compassionate, good, and gentle; being: omniscient, omnipotent, omnipresent. (Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 John 4:11-19).

3. Attributes:

- a. **Intellect / Knowledge:** The Holy Spirit searches all things. This signifies that the Holy Spirit investigates and examines, which proves independent thought and intelligence. The Holy Spirit has inscrutable wisdom, knowledge and understanding; as He understands the mind of God, and

passes wisdom, understanding, and knowledge to man (1 Corinthians 2:6-16; Proverbs 1:7; 2:1-22). The wisdom, understanding, and knowledge which the Holy Spirit possesses is far beyond man's comprehension (Proverbs 30:2-9; Isaiah 55:6-13)!

- b. Volition: The Holy Spirit has the ability to make sovereign choices and decisions; thus He wills. Just as God the Father has volition (James 1:16-18), and God the Son has volition (Luke 22:41-44), so also does the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:8-11).
- c. Emotions: In order to be grieved, one must possess emotions. The Holy Spirit therefore has righteous emotional concerns; for when we sin, He is grieved (Ephesians 4:25-32; emphasis v. 30).

4. Designation: The Greek work for spirit is *pneuma*, which is a word that signifies a neutral gender; therefore any pronoun substituted for *pneuma* would also have to be of a neutral gender, when in reference to that which is inanimate. The Holy Spirit is referred to in a masculine sense as by the pronoun "He" several times in Scripture, which proves once again that He is a person with a personality (examples - John 15:26, 27; 16:13-15).

5. Position: There are many acts which can be performed regarding the Holy Spirit, with emphases that would make no sense if the Holy Spirit were not a Person with a personality. The Holy Spirit can be grieved (Isaiah 63:10; cf. Ephesians 4:30), blasphemed (Matthew 12:32; Mark 3:28-30), resisted (Acts 7:51-53), lied to (Acts 5:3), and obeyed (Acts 10:3-23).

Understanding that the Holy Spirit has a personality that is in direct association with His righteousness, holiness, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, compassion, love, and goodness is imperative if we are to trust Him within our personal relationship with Jesus. All that a believer does, or should do for the glory of God, is led by the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:14-17; 1 Corinthians 6:15-20; Galatians 5:18-26). How can we attempt to fight the good fight of the faith (1 Timothy 6:6-19), if we can't trust the personality and strength of the Holy Spirit (Luke

24:46-49)? To not trust the Holy Spirit is to fail terribly (Ref. 1 Timothy 1:18-20), whereas to trust Him is to be successful, victorious and blessed (John 3:5-8; 6:53-65; Romans 6:15-7:6; 8:5-17)!

Personal Note: I may be wrong in my assumption, yet I completely disagree with any reference to the “Holy Spirit,” as the “Holy Ghost.” I did a word study of the word “ghost,” and found the word to mean - the soul or spirit of a dead person; a spiritual being (as by impersonal); faint and slightly displaced from the main image; secondary image, as from a defective lens; that which appears and disappears. Because the Holy Spirit is completely God in Himself and not simply a reflection of God, and He (the Holy Spirit) has never appeared to anyone (thus never appeared and then disappeared) (John 1:18), I find the reference to Him by the name “ghost” to be totally inappropriate.

To accept the Deity of the Holy Spirit, is imperative if we are to know, love and trust our Lord. The Deity of the Holy Spirit is inextricably bound with the doctrine of the Trinity, and to deny one is to deny the other. The Deity of the Holy Spirit can be positively determined in Scripture, in how He (Holy Spirit) is related to; by His:

1. **Divine works:** The divine works of the Holy Spirit give testimony and witness as to His deity. The following different works of the Holy Spirit absolutely prove that He is God, and cannot be denied (except by prideful stupidity, for even ignorance is not an excuse—Romans 1:18-23; cf. Genesis 1:1, 2) by any humans capable of sensorium in experiencing life; for even life is a proof of His deity. The Holy Spirit is witnessed by His works of:
 - a. The Holy Spirit generated the human form of Jesus within the Virgin Mary (Matthew 1:20-25), guided and empowering Jesus within His sinless walk and ministry as the Son of Man (Mark 1:9-13; Luke 1:30-43; 4:1-13).
 - b. Creation: Statements in the Scriptures make it perfectly evident that the Holy Spirit is God and thus His deity is proven. By the very way in which God created all things through the Holy Spirit (Psalm 104:26-35), and the fact that all was void before the Holy Spirit passed over and created (Genesis 1:1-2:1); His deity is proven beyond any doubt!

- c. Inspiration of Scripture: The Word of God is exactly that—“the Word of God. Just as the Holy Spirit overshadowed Christ’s walk as the Son of Man, so also did the Holy Spirit overshadow and inspire each and every Scriptural writer in all that was written. The word of truth (Psalm 119:160; John 17:17) points directly to the reality of truth which is Christ (John 14:6-10; cf. Ephesians 4:17-32). If the Holy Spirit had not led the writers to write in complete truth, then the Scriptures would not be inerrant (in original language and format) and thus could not be the Word of God; for no lie is of the truth (1 John 2:21; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10). To accept Jesus as the reality of truth is to accept the Holy Spirit as the Spirit of truth, and thus the Scriptures as the word of truth! To deny the truthfulness of any of the three, is to deny the truth of the other two (2 Timothy 3:16, 17). Violating this simple principle remains a reason that many never come to knowledge of the truth (1 Timothy 6:3-19; 2 Timothy 3:1-9).
- d. Regeneration of believers: To regenerate is to give life. The Holy Spirit is the author of the born again experience (Titus 3:1-8), which is necessary if we are to be reborn into the family of God, and inherit God’s kingdom (John 3:3-8). The spiritual life of believers is granted and led by the Holy Spirit; to follow the Holy Spirit in walking in accordance with one’s renewed nature, is to walk in a manner pleasing to God (Romans 8:6-11). Walking under the guidance of the Holy Spirit is the opposite of walking in the flesh (John 6:63; Romans 7:1-6); for the two are opposed one to the other (John 6:63; Romans 7:1-6; cf. Galatians 5:17)! The Holy Spirit gives life in this manner, for His deity is assured and witnessed by His position as Creator of the new birth.
- e. Intercession for believers: Just as Christ intercedes for believers (Romans 8:33-39), so also does the Holy Spirit in accordance to His divine nature of love and compassion. We as believers are weak; so the Holy Spirit intercedes for us with groaning too deep for words, and with power (Romans 8:18-27; Ephesians 3:14-21).
- f. Sanctification of believers: The believer comes to be “in Christ,” by the work of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians

1:25-31). It is also by this sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit, that believers are justified and come to a continued understanding of the truth (Hebrews 10:1-18).

- g. Assists believers: The Holy Spirit leads and helps believers to live their lives within the light and knowledge of truth (John 4:20-24; 14:15-26; cf. 1 John 1:1-10).

It is evident that the works of the Holy Spirit indicate His deity, within the Godhead with the Father and the Son!

2. Divine attributes:

- a. Life: Just as the Father and Son have life in themselves, so also does the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:2; Life in the Father and Son reference—Joshua 3:10; John 1:1-4; 1 Timothy 3:14-16).
- b. Omniscience: The Holy Spirit searches all things, including the depths of God. Man is incapable of understanding the immenseness of God, but the Holy Spirit understands all things (1 Corinthians 2:10-14; Romans 11:33-36).
- c. Omnipotence: The Holy Spirit gave life to creation, and has power over all things (Genesis 1:2-2:1; Job 33:4).
- d. Omnipresence: The Holy Spirit is in all places at all times, which can be noted in how He indwells all believers simultaneously (John 14:16, 17), exemplified by the statement of King David as to his inability to hide from the Holy Spirit no matter where he may go (Ref. - Psalms 139:1-18).
- e. Eternality: The Holy Spirit is from eternity past and will continue to exist throughout eternity future (Hebrews 9:11-14).
- f. Holiness: Holiness is to be entirely set apart and separated from sin. The Holy Spirit by name alone is identified as holy, and is grieved when we sin; which proves His holy nature (Ephesians 4:25-32; Isaiah 63:7-14). The holiness of the Holy Spirit can be blasphemed, which also indicates that His holiness is very serious business and is not to be taken lightly nor denied (Matthew 12:30-37).
- g. Love: The Holy Spirit does not simply love; He is love; just as the Father and Son are love. If the Holy Spirit did not possess

love as a primary attribute, He would not be able to pass true (agape) love to believers (Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 John 4:7-21). Agape love is an attribute of the Holy Spirit's deity; this love is not attainable by human flesh, rather it is implanted into an individual's spirit by the Holy Spirit at the time of the rebirth (into God's family)! This is the only righteous love which can be devotionally returned unto the Lord!

- h. Truth: The Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth (John 14:16, 17; 15:20-16:1). The Holy Spirit is truth, just as Jesus is truth (Ref. - John 14:6). The Holy Spirit is absolute truth, which can be noted in the inspired Word of God which was and is also absolute truth (in the inerrancy of original content) (2 Timothy 2:15; John 17:17).

- 3. **Divine names / titles:** Spirit of God / Spirit of Christ—this title or name identifies the Holy Spirit with the Father and the Son, and affirms His oneness with the Father and the Son, and His deity (1 Corinthians 2:11-13; Romans 8:6-14; Acts 16:6-10). The individuality of the Holy Spirit's identity as referenced by these two names, is easily distinguished (example—Romans 8:16, 17; Ephesians 4:4-6).

**THE SIMPLICITY OF GOSPEL TRUTH;
ALOOF RELIGIOUS DOCTRINE**

Now that we have witnessed the supposed necessities of theological doctrine and reasoning, let us now evidence the truth of the Gospel.

The religious adamancy regarding the "doctrine of the Trinity" was derived from human pride and arrogance which arose during controversies and debates early in church history, as men void of the Holy Spirit attempted to explain God and a basis of faith as through carnal intellect; which led to council meetings such as at Nicea (A.D. 325). An individual named Arius was so emphatic in attempting to prove Jesus' humanity that he denied Jesus' deity. This led to pigheadedness on both sides, as Arius attempted to maintain his philosophies (Jesus created by God; Holy Spirit created by Jesus), while church leadership (led by Romans Catholics) attempted to maintain and prove their own philosophies. It was derived from this controversy that the "Nicene Creed" came into existence; as by doctrine. In an attempt to prove how Jesus was fully man and yet fully God, church leadership (void of the Spirit)

became adamant to the point of stating that Jesus was never without deity; as can be witnessed by theological doctrines (i.e. the Nicene Creed; Westminster Confessions—which follow).

Although the “Trinity,” as by doctrine, cannot actually be understood or explained spiritually by human beings (finite creatures); the fact remains that emphatic attempts to spiritualize God within the physical realm (religiosity) have been coming forth by humankind for generations! The imperative yet remains that we are to worship and serve the one true God (monotheism), while avoiding controversies and doctrines which would increase confusion, leading also to the unleashing of foolish human pride and arrogance which attempts to explain God (infinite Creator)! Those within Islam, who seek to better know the one true God, sum up the “doctrine of the Trinity” by the simple statement that it is “confusing,” which is a simple and accurate summation!

Nicene Creed:

We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, maker of all things visible and invisible, and in one Lord, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, the only-begotten of the Father, that is, of the substance [] of the Father, God from God, light from light, true God from true God, begotten, not made, of one substance [] with the Father, through whom all things came to be, those things that are in heaven and those things that are on earth, who for us men and for our salvation came down and was made flesh, and was made man, suffered, rose the third day, ascended into the heavens, and will come to judge the living and the dead.

Westminster Confession (Chapter Two):

Of God, and of the Holy Trinity

2:1 There is but one only (*Deut 6:4; 1 Cor 8:4, 6*) living, and true God (*Jer 10:10; 1 Thes 1:9*): who is infinite in being and perfection (*Job 11:7-9, 26:14*), a most pure spirit (*John 4:24*), invisible (*1 Tim 1:17*), without body, parts (*Deut 4:15, 16; Luke 24:39; John 4:24*), or passions (*Acts 14:11, 15*), immutable (*Mal 3:6; James 1:17*), immense (*1 Kings 8:27; Jer 23:23, 24*), eternal (*Psa 90:2; 1 Tim 1:17*), incomprehensible (*Psa 145:3*), almighty (*Gen 17:1; Rev 4:8*), most wise (*Rom 16:27*), most holy (*Isa*

6:3; *Rev 4:8*), most free (*Psa 115:3*), most absolute (*Ex 3:14*), working all things according to the counsel of His own immutable and most righteous will (*Eph 1:11*), for His own glory (*Prov 16:4; Rom 11:36*); most loving (*1 John 4:8, 16*), gracious, merciful, long-suffering, abundant in goodness and truth, forgiving iniquity, transgression, and sin (*Ex 34:6, 7*); the rewarder of them that diligently seek Him (*Heb 11:6*); and with all most just and terrible in His judgments (*Neh 9:32, 33*), hating all sin (*Psa 5:5, 6*), and who will by no means clear the guilty (*Ex 34:7; Nah 1:2, 3*).

2:2 God hath all life (*John 5:26*), glory (*Acts 7:2*), goodness (*Psa 119:68*), blessedness (*Rom 9:5; 1 Tim 6:15*), in and of Himself; and is alone in and unto Himself all-sufficient, not standing in need of any creatures which He hath made (*Acts 17:24, 25*), not deriving any glory from them (*Job 22:2, 23*), but only manifesting His own glory in, by, unto, and upon them: He is the alone fountain of all being, of whom, through whom, and to whom are all things (*Rom 11:36D*); and hath most sovereign dominion over them, to do by them, for them, or upon them whatsoever Himself pleaseth (*Dan 4:25, 35; 1 Tim 6:15; Rev 4:11*). In His sight all things are open and manifest (*Heb 4:13*); His knowledge is infinite, infallible, and independent upon the creature (*Psa 147:5; Rom 11:33, 34*), so as nothing is to Him contingent, or uncertain (*Ezek 11:5; Acts 15:18*). He is most holy in all His counsels, in all His works, and in all his commands (*Psa 145:17; Rom 7:12*). To Him is due from angels and men, and every other creature, whatsoever worship, service, or obedience he is pleased to require of them (*Rev 5:12-14*).

2:3 In the unity of the Godhead there be three persons, of one substance, power, and eternity; God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Ghost (*Matt 3:16, 17; 28:19; 2 Cor 13:14; 1 John 5:7*). The Father is of none, neither begotten, nor proceeding; the Son is eternally begotten of the Father: the Holy Ghost eternally proceeding from the Father and the Son (*John 1:14, 18*).

Let us now evidence the truth; so that truth may prevail over doctrine! Jesus was always God (John 1:1-3; 10:25-30; 14:1-11)! God intentionally emptied Himself by coming in the form of a human being (i.e. Immanuel), so as to redeem sinful humanity; in accordance to His lovingkindness, and grace (unmerited favor) (Isaiah 7:13-17; 9:1-7; Matthew 1:18-25). The Biblical emphasis of reality is that God came to redeem sinful men and women from the wages of sin which is death (lovingkindness), while doing so without any basis of our warranting or deserving the blessing; for it is a free gift (GRACE) (Ephesians 2:1-10).

Within the adamancy of attempting to prove the doctrine of the Trinity (thus attempting to explain and defend God religiously), Who has no necessity of our intervention in the physical realm, except to present our bodies as living sacrifices for service, the doctrine of the Trinity borders on Tri-theism (three Gods rather than three Persons within one Godhead); although we worship the one true God, for there is no other (Deuteronomy 4:1-40; Isaiah 45:1-25; Romans 12:1-3; 14:1-12)! There is but one “Lord” and “Savior,” who is the Lord our God (Isaiah 43:1-25; Luke 2:1-20; John 3:1-21)!

In accordance to the theological doctrine called “Christology,” Jesus being fully God at all times, was incapable of sin. *If* this were true, then Jesus could never have been tempted fully as we (humans) have been; yet it was by Jesus` having done so that He warranted and earned the stature of being our High Priest forever; according to the order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:1-10:39). Although I cannot for a moment either believe or state myself to have understanding as to the immensity of how Christ Jesus emptied himself fully in accordance to the Father’s will, I can (with full Biblical assurance) know that Jesus was capable of sin (although He was without sin); for this was necessary in accordance to His becoming our High Priest (Philippians 2: 5-11; Hebrews 4:11-5:14). We must also consider—Jesus never performed miracles prior to the Holy Spirit descending upon Him at the completion of His baptism, to fulfill all righteousness; which empowered Him to fulfill His earthly ministry (Matthew 3:15-17; 4:1-25; Mark 1:9-11).

Summation

Although no human being who has ever lived can actually explain God or the Trinity as by emphasis within Scripture, many have attempted to explain both; leading to human religious doctrines and controversies

that both violate the Gospel and bring forth great confusion. *If* individuals cannot even understand what is written in the Gospel, it is completely foolish to speculate things pertaining to God which are foundational to assumption and conjecture; a prime example of this being “how Jesus emptied Himself” so as to be tempted in all ways, as we are! The fact remains—we are to have faith and trust in God within the simplicity of innocence found in a child (Matthew 18:1-14). To journey upon doctrinal tangents, is to journey into bondage by one’s own choosing; yet no one has the right to lead others into bondage, when our Lord has called us to be free, as by abiding in His Word (John 8:31-45)! The simple fact remains, that although explanations pertaining to and defenses of God are in actuality impossible by human beings, all things are possible with God (Matthew 19:16-26); for truly—God is all powerful, all knowing, kind, merciful, gracious, and the very essence of both pure undefiled love and truth (John 14:1-11; 1 John 4:7-21)!

There is but one true God, who is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient! Within the darkness and deception in the Christian religion, which by the third century A.D. was terribly tainted by Roman Catholicism (ritualistic religion of the flesh); as distinguished from actual Christianity (spiritual relational reality); increased doctrines came forth in attempts to prove and defend the religion, which brought forth furtherance of disputes and controversies, leading to an increase of: doctrines, precepts, philosophies, and traditions (fleshly religiosity). The only defense that believers in God are to make is defense of the hope which is in them (salvation; the goodness and righteousness of the Lord); for any other type defense is aloof focus upon the Lord, thus defenses made through the blinding effects of carnal pride and distraction!³⁰⁵

Within humankind’s attempts to explain and defend God religiously in the physical realm (*sic et non*—I believe that which I may understand), complete avoidance has been maintained in worshipping God by actual faith (Hebrews 11:1-40). Within the religiosity which is prevalent upon planet earth, humankind has attempted to place an explainable god upon a throne within an enclosure as designated by man. It has been stated that the God of Islam is a different God than is worshipped within Christianity; yet Cain, Abel, Ishmael, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Esau all worshipped the same one true God! Within the absurdity of “reli-

³⁰⁵ 1 Peter 3:13-4:6; examples—Luke 21:10-19; Acts 22:1-21; 26:2-20.

gion,” deceived leadership void of the Holy Spirit’s guidance, has always attempted to claim superiority within their personal religious relationship with the Creator, and in doing so have caused divisions and confusion within the ranks of many who have attempted to righteously utilize the measure of faith given them by God. This is foolish to the extreme, for we are to love God and all others in a sincerely unified fashion (in truth); as all who seek to love and worship the one truth God, are one in the endeavor *if* foolish pride and distraction remain aloof; for seeking the Lord must be without compromise, variation, or excuse from within a maintained state of humility in seeking of the truth! God is righteously worshipped in spirit and in truth by faith; He is not worshipped in accordance to the flesh and the deceptive doctrines of religion! The one true God sought by devotional Muslims, is the exact same one true God worshipped and sought by devotional Christians; for there is but one true God! Mohammad was exiled from Mecca because of his proclamations of the one true God, to individuals who proclaimed polytheism (many gods); yet with time became doctrinal in his teaching due to attempts to defend the truth as by fleshly means, as have many others including Christian zealots, of which all who fell prey to these worldly distractions went astray from simplicity of devotion! Because of the many doctrinal teachings which increased over the years in attempts to defend beliefs (both Muslim and Christian) as by continued pride, arrogance and mis-focus, great controversies have repeatedly arisen causing further: disputes, dissensions, aggressions, and belligerency; this always occurs when failing to focus upon the Lord by faith, as all that is of the flesh gains control of endeavors because God is no longer allowed to both will and work for His own good pleasure! Thus, the masterful leadership of God which occurs in the spiritual realm, is obscured by the darkness of the flesh and its many facets: pride, arrogance, self-centeredness, hatred, disputes, outbursts of anger, etc.; because failing to deny “self” and thereby allow God to lead in the spiritual realm, all that is of the physical realm and thereby under the influence of the evil one (Satan) becomes dominant and therefore in control of all such endeavors! This is why “self” must be denied habitually by all who seek to follow the Lord; for without denial of “self,” the flesh is easily enticed by evil and thereby led astray of God’s

righteousness!³⁰⁶ To devotionally love the Lord, is to allow the Lord to masterfully lead and train in righteousness; for there is no exception to the fact that all true servants of the Lord are led by the Holy Spirit, thus those who are enticed to follow the flesh become enemies of God's work of righteousness!³⁰⁷ Both the Islamic religion and the Christian religion; as distinguished from actual Islam and Christianity; have gone terribly astray into the unfruitful deeds of religious darkness, because of attempts to defend the religious differences by physical realm means (carnality); whereas, this would never have happened had all: denied the flesh (self), maintained focus upon the Lord by faith, abstained from controversies, abstained from emphasis upon doctrines and traditions; for without the distractions and prideful foolishness, everyone seeking the one true God could be united in worshipping God in spirit and in truth, doing so righteously in love!³⁰⁸

God being immortal has complete holiness, righteousness and order within all that He does, thus His manifested presence is according to His sovereign volition; which is far beyond human manifesto (Isaiah 55:1-13; 1 Timothy 1:12-17)! God is awesome, and is to be worshipped in spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24)! God having the very essence of immense power (for He is God) is capable of:

- All that is within His good, acceptable and perfect will (Romans 12:1, 2).
- Being centrally located upon His throne in heaven (the Father) (Matthew 5:34, 35; 23:20-22).
- Being in human form, for the graceful sake of those created in His image (spiritually); His human form being but one (Jesus / the Angel of the Lord; the only begotten) (John 1:1-18; 3:1-21; Acts 13:15-41; Hebrews 1:5-14; 5:1-10; 1 John 3:1-18).
- Being simultaneously throughout the entirety of His creation (the Holy Spirit) (Genesis 1:1-31; Matthew 3:11-17; Romans 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20; 1 Corinthians 12:1-13:13; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10).

³⁰⁶ Matthew 16:21-28.

³⁰⁷ John 15:18-16:6, specific vs. 1-3; Romans 8:1-17.

³⁰⁸ Ephesians 4:1-32; Galatians 5:16-26; example - 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

As Simple As It Gets—We are to worship the one true God in spirit and in truth; without compromise, variation, excuse or exception (John 4:20-24; Galatians 4:1-11; James 1:2-12)! Although there is emphasis within Scripture of the many different wonderful things which God has, and continues to do for the sake of His Creation; there is no emphasis or mention of the “Trinity,” and this so that confusion may be avoided! We are to simply accept the many facets of God’s goodness, righteousness and forthright ways, without: question, doubt, human reason, or doctrinal explanation; as we simply believe that He is, and is a rewarder of those who (diligently) seek Him; this with the faith of a humble trusting child (Hebrews 11:1-6; James 4:1-17). As actual Christianity is all about God from within a personal relationship, the matter remains one of faith, focus, hope, and trust in Him; for He alone is faithful, and able to bring forth eternal holy and righteous fulfillment of all things! We have no need of explanation; but rather necessity to simply: believe, love, learn from, follow, and trust Him!

The emphasis of: the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the New Testament was for the sake of all believers, starting with the Israelites and proselytes of the Mosaic and Levitical Laws, from the time of their being chosen and drawn by God. The Levitical Law was the only religion which was ever designated by God; for the “Law” demonstrated the absolute preciseness of God, and the virtual inability to reach or maintain such a standard of precision by human beings; thus the necessity for the coming Messiah (Christ / Savior); who being God in human form would do for humankind what could never be accomplished by any other means! God has always been the only means of salvation!³⁰⁹ With the Israelites having practiced religion throughout the many years of their early history, there was necessity to learn of the spiritual relational reality within which we are saved; thus the “Law” was but a tutor which pointed to Christ, at which point the imperative became “faith!”³¹⁰ This emphasis is upon all human beings, for with the ascension of Christ, religion became null and void, as the spiritual relational reality was then fully the only way in which we may be saved; with acceptance of Jesus as Lord and Savior (reality of the Christ; glory of Christ), thus physical realm religion was defunct and no longer

³⁰⁹ Isaiah 45:21-25; Acts 4:8-12.

³¹⁰ Galatians 3:1-4:11.

valid!³¹¹ With the difficulty of walking completely away from that which has been practiced for years within one's flesh (physical realm religion and traditions), to walk by faith trusting God fully as the only avenue to success and victory; the imperative became to learn the tutorial of the tutor (Levitical Law), and walk away from all physical realm religious practices so as to enter the spiritual relational reality by faith; which can only be maintained by strict discipline to focus upon the author and perfecter of faith (Jesus; God)! It is for this reason that the emphasis was rendered in the Gospel regarding the distinction of the: Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; this to emphasize the distinct difference between religion with physical realm manifestations, and the spiritual relational reality, so as to allow the transition from physical realm religion in the flesh, to the spiritual reality within which we are saved by faith! During the dispensation of the Law (physical realm religion), multitudes of Israelites continually went astray, whereas a remnant never did; the reason being due the fact that the remnant trusted God by faith although participating in the Levitical Law as designated by God, and the multitudes never truly grasped the concept (of faith) due to solely practicing religiosity (Levitical Law). To continue holding onto aspects of practiced religion is extremely dangerous once coming to the spiritual relationship; for as God is spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, while being trusted by faith, holding to any aspects of physical realm religion as by fleshly: indulgence, practice and intellect, causes extreme detriment and even destruction in regards to our walking by faith, which is the only way to remain pleasing to the Lord our God (both then and now)!³¹² As all that remains of "religion" (doctrines, philosophies, traditions, precepts, ideologies, idealisms, conjecture and assumption) are now unrighteous practices because of the standards set forth by God with the coming of the Messiah (faith; spirituality); all such practices are potentially within the darkness of deceit, and must cease entirely! Anyone who holds to the darkness of religion in any way, shape or form, whether intentionally or in ignorance, is incapable of walking in the light of truth with the Lord; thus practiced darkness withholds the blessings of light and truth within which the blessings of God are received!³¹³

³¹¹ Romans 10:1-21, emphasis vs. 8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

³¹² Hebrews 11:1, 2, 6.

³¹³ John 3:1-21, emphasis vs. 16-21; Romans 2:17-29; Galatians 3:10-4:11; 1 John 1:5-10; 3:1-18.

Are religious practices actually worth losing the blessings of God? I cannot even begin to count the number of individuals who have stated that they will not turn away from practiced religious traditions and/or doctrines, because they have always practiced celebrating the traditions and adherence to the doctrines. This directly indicates that multitudes are guilty of blatant idolatry of “self,” as their fleshly volition takes precedence over the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, and the kind intention of God’s will! The standards of worship set forth by God being entirely righteous and appropriate are for our spiritual wellbeing and benefit; why then would we allow spiritual detriment and possible outright spiritual destruction be an option!³¹⁴ Does this type volitional behavior demonstrate love for God? The truth regarding the practiced traditions of the Christian religion is rendered in chapter eight. Please understand—“self” seeks to hold us where we have been; with denial of “self,” the Lord is allowed and capable of leading us beyond the flesh, unto the spiritual reality of our existence!

THE DECREE OF GOD

Because the decree of God is of a theological perspective, and therefore in many ways an attempted act of explanation regarding our Lord; I will simply say this about God’s decree:

Although many teach that everything a believer does is actually the will (or decree) of God for their life, this yet remains inaccurate and inappropriate. Although all that a believer does is within the knowledge of God; as He knows all things; sinfulness is never within the will of God, and therefore there is no excuse to either sin or blame one’s inappropriate behavior on God, as by stating the inappropriate to be within God’s decree. Humble submission, abiding in the Word and prayer will always change an individual’s life when God is at work; if they are sincere and persistent in their loyalty to God in accordance to His grace. God truly does work all things together for good, in the lives of those who humbly and lovingly submit to His calling according to His purpose; which always involves sanctification (Romans 6:15-23; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8)!

When emphasis is placed upon the—decree of God, aside of revealed righteous eternity, then interpretation is generally attempted regarding

³¹⁴ Proverbs 2:1-15; Jeremiah 5:1-31.

God's sovereign will; which rarely being available for man's knowledge, renders in most cases covetousness of that which is God's alone (Psalm 2:1-12). Within the fact that most mention of "decree" within Scripture is pertaining to the decrees rendered by human authority, to attempt explanations or interpretations of what God decrees within a context of comparison within human authority is absurd and unwarranted!

Sinfulness

The ways of the world and of sin can be compared to the rush of a swift river, upon the banks of which all humanity must tread. When we focus upon our Guide (the Lord our God), maintaining a position relative to His, we walk in safety knowing in whom we trust.³¹⁵ When we vary in focus via our strides of life, we tend to fall into the swift currents of sin and worldly desires, which then carry us away quickly and efficiently into dangers and potential spiritual death.³¹⁶ To stay from the effective and swift dangers of sin, a firm focus upon our Guide (Lord) and grasp of the rail which protects is necessary and warranted; yet the rail (Biblical moral and ethical standards) itself cannot fully protect us, for our grip is sure to lax.³¹⁷ This is where our focus (faith) and obedience (by grace) work together in harmony for our safe walk of devotion.³¹⁸

The law was given purposefully, yet within the Covenant of grace should never lead to legalism, or antinomianism. It is unfortunate that few surrender unto the wisdom of God's grace to realize that understanding as to proportional balance is necessary to stay from either extreme.³¹⁹ The Law was a great tool which emphasized the human sinful nature; the perfect law of liberty (Scriptures) yet remains a great tool for maintaining one's moral stature and demeanor.³²⁰ The purpose of the Law was fulfilled in showing mankind's sinful nature and dire need of redemption, then in what the Law could not do (redeem) the Lord did in accordance to His lovingkindness and grace.³²¹ The swiftness of sin is countered only by the faithfulness and steadfastness of

³¹⁵ Proverbs 3:5, 6; 4:23-27.

³¹⁶ James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Peter 5:8-11; Romans 6:15-23.

³¹⁷ Hebrews 12:1-3; Luke 6:46-49; James 2:1-12.

³¹⁸ Romans 3:21-31; 7:13-25; Hebrews 12:7-11; 1 John 2:3-11.

³¹⁹ Acts 15:7-18.

³²⁰ James 1:25.

³²¹ Romans 8:1-4; John 3:16; 1 John 4:9, 10.

God, which He freely gives to all who devotionally accept His grace through faith.³²² The law was given to emphasize our need, whereas the grace of God is freely given by Him to fulfill our need.

An expression of God's divine will (moral law) is noted by A. H. Strong, who said:

The expression of the divine will in the constitution of rational and free agents, this we call moral law. This elemental law of our moral nature with which only we are now concerned, has all the characteristics mentioned as belonging to law in general. It implies (a) a divine Lawgiver, or ordaining will. (b) Subjects, or moral beings upon whom the law terminates. (C) General command, or expression of this will in the moral constitution of the subjects. (D) Power, enforcing the command. (E) Duty, or obligation to obey. (F) Sanctions, or pains and penalties for disobedience.³²³

Sinful Nature Forgiven: GRACE

God justifies sinners because of the righteous acts of Christ. By grace through faith, we as sinners are imputed with the righteousness of Christ, and thus declared by God as righteous.³²⁴ Although all humankind (with exception of the Son of Man) has been imputed with a sinful nature due to Adam's disobedience, only those who accept the reality of the Lord Jesus Christ and His atoning work on the cross are: justified, sanctified, imputed with Christ's righteousness, and blessed with eternal life.³²⁵ Just as through the disobedience of the one—Adam, all broke the former covenant (of works), so now through the obedience and sacrifice of the One—Christ, those who follow Him (Christians) are redeemed and restored to full reconciliation.³²⁶

The epitome of God's covenant of grace was and is found in the fulfillment of prophecy concerning the coming Messiah.³²⁷ This fulfillment was manifest when the Word became flesh and dwelt among

³²² 1 Peter 5:5-7; 2 Peter 1:4-11; Hebrews 4:1-16.

³²³ A. H. Strong, *Systematic Theology* (Valley Forge, PA.), p. 537.

³²⁴ Romans 3:21-31, emphasis vs. 24, 25; 4:1-8.

³²⁵ Romans 5:14-21; 1 Corinthians 15:20-26.

³²⁶ Romans 5:8-21.

³²⁷ Christ - Matthew 1:18-25.

us; who had come to save all God's children from their sins.³²⁸ The fulfillment of prophecy in regard to God's covenant to draw His own (Israelites) unto Himself was fully revealed with the statement that the blood of Jesus was that which sealed the new covenant for all time.³²⁹ Because the first covenant (of the Law) held fault and was unfulfilling, the old had to be done away with so as to usher in the new; which through Christ brought forth restoration within God's love and grace.³³⁰ This passing away of the old with the coming of the new is an epoch (beginning point) of a dispensation, or movement of Scripture; from the dispensation of the Law (old), to the dispensation of grace (new).

The Covenant of Grace which has and will bring forth eternal life for all who believe in the Lord Jesus Christ, having sincerely accepted personally who He is (Lord; glory of Christ) and what He has done (Savior); is contingent upon the obedience and sacrifice of the Lamb of God.³³¹ The Covenant of Grace is therefore contingent upon the work of Christ in fulfilling the obedience which man could not, therefore faith in Jesus and His atoning work is necessary if we are to be accepted into the family of God.³³² The Covenant of Grace is not only the covenant which has saved all who believe, but is also a covenant which is maintained by the guidance and strength of God. An appropriate walk within the covenant is dependent upon continued faith and obedience, therefore being conformed to Christ's image becomes inherently important; as being a new creature in Christ, there must be evidence of deliverance from the former deeds of darkness!³³³ God's grace being of utmost importance for success to all who trust in Him for salvation, demonstrates God's grace is extremely valuable (spiritually prosperous) to those who have been saved!

The Bible begins in Genesis demonstrating God's love for humankind, by the creation of humankind in God's own image (spiritually).³³⁴ Upon man's failure to render obedience toward God when tested via

³²⁸ John 1:1-18.

³²⁹ Hebrews 9:1-28.

³³⁰ John 3:11-21; 1 John 4:7-10.

³³¹ Romans 10:8-13; John 1:22-34; Hebrews 2:5-18.

³³² Romans 5:1-5; Galatians 3:25-29; Philippians 3:7-14.

³³³ James 2:14-26; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Ephesians 5:1-10; Philippians 1:6-2:13; Romans 6:1-14; 8:28-30; 1 John 2:1-6.

³³⁴ Genesis 1:26-31.

temptation, God continued His lovingkindness toward humans by the setting forth of enmity between good (Christ) and evil (Satan).³³⁵ This test of His chosen to make the right decisions when presented with both truth and temptation; continued throughout the sin cycle of the Old Testament, and is in force today as God yet seeks obedience and loyalty to be based in truth.³³⁶ Even as the covenants passed from the Old Covenant of the Law to the New Covenant of grace, the evidence of God's continued work for the benefit of humankind has remained of witness. Although many may deny the presence of the Lord in the world today and throughout history, the evident truth remains intact and sound—by the existence of all that God has created and done.³³⁷

Fruitfulness (Blessing) of the Holy Spirit's Presence

The fruit of the Holy Spirit is in stark contrast to the deeds of the flesh.³³⁸ The deeds of the flesh will always remain at the forefront of one's behavior, unless the power of the Holy Spirit brings forth change.³³⁹ The change which the Holy Spirit brings forth in the lives of believers is the change from prevalent exhibit of the deeds of the flesh, to an increasing exhibit of the fruit of the Spirit (darkness to light)! As the believer submits to God in humility, the Holy Spirit renders the strength and guidance necessary for this change to occur.³⁴⁰ This work of the Holy Spirit is necessary for Christian victory over the flesh, as also this work of the Spirit brings forth success in proclamation of truth.³⁴¹ It is the presence of the Holy Spirit's work, or continual lack thereof, which makes evident one's position within the Body of Christ.³⁴² The Holy Spirit never procrastinates; therefore absence of growth in Christian character and demeanor is our fault; never His!³⁴³

The fruit (manifested works) of the Holy Spirit should bring forth growth (spiritual maturity) within one's faith.³⁴⁴ The fruits of the Spirit

³³⁵ Genesis 3:15.

³³⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; 2 Corinthians 13:1-8; Ephesians 4:7-16; John 8:31-36; 14:15-26.

³³⁷ Romans 1:20-23.

³³⁸ Galatians 5:19-23.

³³⁹ Romans 8:5-9.

³⁴⁰ James 4:1-10.

³⁴¹ Galatians 5:13-18; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

³⁴² Romans 8:1-17; James 3:1-18; Matthew 7:13-27.

³⁴³ Romans 16:17, 18; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Timothy 6:1-3-19; Hebrews 12:25-29.

are the virtues of Christianity, thus: love for God and others,³⁴⁵ joy in serving,³⁴⁶ peace in the face of adversity,³⁴⁷ patience (long-suffering) when wronged,³⁴⁸ kindness and goodness rendered in an otherwise selfish, mean world,³⁴⁹ faithfulness to God in a world of double-mindedness and greed,³⁵⁰ gentleness in return for aggression,³⁵¹ disciplined self-control to maintain one's endurance in the faith.³⁵² The fact that we are all baptized into one body by the same Spirit makes indication that our union with Christ and participation in the Body is based on the work of the Holy Spirit.³⁵³ The Holy Spirit effects change within each believer according to our adoption as sons (and daughters), which proves our position as God's true (not illegitimate) children.³⁵⁴ From the time a believer is "born again," the Holy Spirit works powerfully to transform the believer from a life leading to death, to a life to be lived abundantly in and for the Lord!³⁵⁵

The Holy Spirit blesses believers with: conviction when we do wrong; joy and peace when we are persecuted for doing right; His wonderful strength so we may diligently seek to study and pray; strength so as to persevere; focus so true hope in Jesus may abound; knowledge (proof) of our salvation; opening and closing doors to keep us on the right path! I know for a fact that the Holy Spirit is personal, because I have learned the blessing of listening in prayer! This blessing is ineffable and cannot be explained; only experienced—please place your faith and trust in God by remaining focused upon Him in praise, while silent verbally. Make supplication for truth prior to this quiet time, and then allow the Holy Spirit to fulfill the entirety of the personal intimacy.³⁵⁶ Persevere in this and you will learn the true intimacy of God's love for you; for you will (hopefully) learn of the reality of "praying in the Spirit"!

³⁴⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:1-18; Hebrews 5:11-6:12.

³⁴⁵ Matthew 22:36-40; Philippians 2:1-4; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Romans 13:7-14.

³⁴⁶ Romans 15:1-13; Philippians 2:12-18; 1 Peter 1:3-9.

³⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 4:6-14; 1 Peter 4:1-19; Philippians 4:4-9.

³⁴⁸ Matthew 5:38-48; 1 Peter 2:18-25.

³⁴⁹ Romans 12:9-21.

³⁵⁰ Luke 16:12-31; Colossians 3:5-17; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; James 1:2-12; 4:1-10.

³⁵¹ 1 Peter 3:14-4:6.

³⁵² Matthew 7:24-27; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; 13:1-8; Hebrews 10:19-39; 12:4-11; James 1:2-12.

³⁵³ 1 Corinthians 12:12-31, specific vs. 13, 14.

³⁵⁴ Romans 8:11-17; Hebrews 12:7, 8.

³⁵⁵ John 10:1-18; Ephesians 3:14-21; 2 Peter 1:3-11.

³⁵⁶ Romans 8:24-27.

As “Christianity” is “God at work” (both willing and working); please allow God full access to your existence by fulfilled “denial of self,” and thereby receive the greatest blessings you could ever hope for, while in corporeal form!

CHAPTER THREE

HUMAN LEADERSHIP

A VERY TROUBLESOME THING occurred long ago among those whom God chose to be His own. The love of God our Father was very much present in His desire to be the King of Israel, yet the love of the nation was upon the temporal things of the earth. This led to division within the relationship between God and the Israelites; this being exactly what the Lord said would happen if and when human forms of leadership were sought. The Lord Jesus Christ is the King of kings, which very much should be the central focus of the Body of Christ today; yet is not. We tend to fall prey to inappropriate focus, because most remain double-minded in seeking both the things of God, and the temporal things of the world; simultaneously.³⁵⁷ Within this chapter an attempt will be made to illustrate how the doctrines of man have been causing the same destruction to “unity,” as has occurred throughout the history of God’s chosen. I will point out simple facts, which hopefully will demonstrate how easily we (believers) are led astray by blindly following doctrines which violate the faith we confess.

The nation of Israel initially had God as their King. With those who sincerely loved the Lord having appropriate focus upon Him, certain individuals were chosen to be prophets and judges over the nation (example - Samuel).³⁵⁸ Prophets and judges were to render decisions according to the standards set forth by God, and this was done for the unity and edification of the entire nation. When all was done for the entirety of the nation, then selfishness was swallowed up by “unity” for everyone’s sake. When selfishness began to grow, then unity was swallowed up by individuality, which has never truly edified anyone.³⁵⁹ The reality was in fact that the blessing of God’s grace was before the nation, because God sought to personally lead them as their King. The nation seeking the ectypal knowledge of human leadership over the archetypal

³⁵⁷ 2 Corinthians 4:13-18.

³⁵⁸ 1 Samuel 7:15-17.

³⁵⁹ 1 Samuel 8:3-5.

knowledge of God's leadership, led to the frailty of human understanding which has continued even to this day.³⁶⁰ The reality of this remains that we (humankind) believe we know more than God, therefore we many times trust the creation more so than the Creator.³⁶¹ How absurd!

This very same—trusting the doctrines of man to lead us rather than the sound doctrine of God (Scriptures), has blindly led believers into the same bondage which holds the non-believing world at bay. As believers we have a King whose love for us is unsurpassed! As believers we have the potential of truthful knowledge which allows us freedom! As believers we are able (by GRACE) to walk by faith thereby trusting in the absolute faithfulness of God; which is actually the foundation of any and all surety we have! As believers we have the potential of fulfilling our purpose of existence; this only in accordance to the kind intention of God's will! As believers we can love others for their edification! As Christians we are blessed with being the children of God (*if* legitimate)! Are we accepting of these blessings from God, or are we mostly like everyone else in failing to be content with having God as our King? Yes, we are in the world, yet we do not have purpose in being of the world!³⁶² Proper focus leads to proper Christian behavior in following the Lord; whereas secular focus does not.³⁶³

Many nations of the earth are places of bondage and corruption. One nation criticizes others for their forms of corruption, while maintaining forms of corruption which may be different. Is one form of corruption any better than another; this in regard to righteousness? Is freedom in a nation where corruption exists, truly freedom? Being in the family of God, united in purpose, is truly the sole freedom we will ever have while in our mortal bodies. This freedom of unity in Christ has been badly damaged by human religious leadership throughout the history of God's children, just as human forms of government have been corrupted by selfishness throughout history. Multitudes are not willing to understand that we are all equal in the eyes of God, for our pride calls us to always be a little higher than others, and never beneath them; this being the essence and authority of "self"! This same stupidity is as prevalent in the Body of Christ, as in any other form of religion or

³⁶⁰ 1 Samuel 8:7-9; 1 Timothy 6:20, 21; 2 Peter 2:17-20.

³⁶¹ 1 Samuel 8:9-20.

³⁶² Romans 12:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

³⁶³ 1 Corinthians 15:33.

government on the planet. Human governments disagree with differences of human doctrine and interpretation, and church denominations disagree for the same reasons. This has all continued forth from the same mindset as led Israel to seek a human king like the surrounding nations. We are all on this planet together, and all have the same potential of knowing the one true God who created us. This simple fact yet remains; although fractured or outright broken by the different doctrines of man.

What is an idol? An idol is something created by man's hands or someone which can neither lead nor instruct unto freedom, render salvation nor protect.³⁶⁴ An idol is that which is trusted in attempts to justify our failure to trust in the Lord God.³⁶⁵ An idol is anything we consider to be of greater importance, than our devotional relationship with God! Do many trust in forms of human government, while claiming to know and love the Lord; this while failing to understand and trust in the sound doctrine and standards set forth by God? The example I put forth now will probably make many angry, yet this must be stated for the sake of example; the United States of America is a place of considerable freedom, when compared to many other nations. Many of our forefathers were men who truly trusted in God, and made decisions based on their faith according to Gospel standards. When this nation was formed, the forefathers knew that focus upon the standards of God would bring forth strength which would maintain unity in purpose. With this understanding continuing on for many years, the words—"Under God" was added by a joint resolution of Congress in A.D. 1954.

In the original context of purpose for which our forefathers were in agreement—"one nation," the form of government which they sought to originate was indeed to be centered upon this primary principle of unity. This principle being that the government itself was never to interfere with an individual's personal faith in God was the context of Thomas Jefferson's statement of "separation between Church and State." This was not within the Constitution of the United States as is commonly believed, but rather was within a letter to the Danbury Baptists who were being persecuted for their personal beliefs. Thomas Jefferson (A.D. 1743-1826) had taken his statement from a Baptist minister named

³⁶⁴ Isaiah 47:13-15.

³⁶⁵ Jeremiah 2:28-31.

Roger Williams. The statement was that the government and peoples of the United States were to work together, keeping God as the focus of all, no matter what specific faith was adhered to by individuals. Is it not amazing how the words of our forefathers are so easily manipulated to suit one's own agenda?

The forefathers never intended for the government to lead the people away from God into forms of human leadership, but rather intended that the people unite to stay focused upon the Lord, and this "government for the people" would do the same. Just as the sons of Eli caused harm to individuals by their allowing selfishness to take command of their lives (bondage to self-gratification), so also has the United States government ceased being a government for the people because of the same reasons (i.e. legislative lobbying for special interests). If our forefathers were to witness the corruption within our government which they fought so hard to eliminate, they would probably vomit! Are you aware of the severe persecution which came upon our forefathers because of their endeavors to make the United States a nation of freedom for all? It was severe, yet they persevered in their endeavors for the sake of all! How many members within our current government maintain their positions with absolute integrity and this for the sake of the many? I praise God that there are yet a few!

The intentions of our forefathers were focused upon a nation where all could enjoy freedom to choose, yet the basis was that choices made would demonstrate a moral ethic. Never would our forefathers have been accepting of choices to kill babies, have same sex marriages, or allow deceptive politicians to remain in office (these three mentioned for emphasis sake). The United States was truly founded upon principles of godly behavior, yet as with all nations (including Israel) the sinful nature has taken precedence and slowly destroyed the potential of knowing and serving God as a unified group. Where faith was lacking within such a group, love would then prevail. The Lord understanding this to be the truth warned believers to beware of worldly and empty chatter, and guard carefully one's presented words.³⁶⁶ Too many (believers included), yet speak never having tasted the bitterness of their own words prior to spitting them out. Going astray always has a starting point, with the end result many times being a bold and blatant departure to sinfulness. This

³⁶⁶ Isaiah 32:6-8; 2 Timothy 2:16.

was realized by Theodore Roosevelt (A.D. 1858-1919) whom made the statement, “ ...I Believe that the next half century will determine if we will advance the cause of Christian civilization or revert to the horrors of brutal paganism.”³⁶⁷ What did the next half century bring forth; this with numerous additions to two world wars?

The founding fathers of the United States, were attempting to maintain focus upon the Lord. They had come over from many other lands seeking freedom from the tyrannical leadership in Europe and Asia. Upon arriving they were forced to fight for their freedom, yet maintained that this would be a nation where men and women were to be equal in stature, with an emphasis of being united under the one true God; although always accepting of other cultural beliefs. A great emphasis of the founding fathers was that the government would not deter nor distract from one’s religious beliefs, but rather be a government where Gospel moral standards and truth would be foundational in all rendering of decisions and laws.

In this view I shall now consider them, under the two following heads obviously contained in them.

1. There is a certain order among mankind, according to which some are entrusted with power to rule over others.
2. Those who rule over others must be just, ruling in the fear of God.³⁶⁸

And from hence, strictly and properly speaking, does that civil order there is among men take rise. Nor will it from hence follow, that government is a mere humane constitution. For as it originates in the reason of things, ‘tis, at the same time, essentially founded on the will of God. For the voice of reason is the voice of God: And he as truly speaks to men by the reason of things, their mutual relations to and dependencies on each other, as if he uttered his voice from the excellent glory. And in this way, primarily, he declares his will respecting a civil subordination among men.³⁶⁹

³⁶⁷ Noah Brooks, *Men of Achievement—Statesmen* (NY: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1904), p. 317.

³⁶⁸ Charles Chauncy, D. D., *House of Representatives*, May 27, 1747. *Political Sermons*, p. 142.

The founding fathers of our nation, knew the bondage derived from human leadership which did not fear God. They and their ancestors had lived within the realm of bondage for generations, which was the purpose of their seeking a nation where God would be the focus of the inhabitants and government. This was a tremendous endeavor by our forefathers, whom attempted to maintain the foundation of our nation to be—the Lord Jesus Christ. According to the Bible, ruin will come upon attempts to build aloof the foundation which is Christ as by materialism, therefore care must be taken that purity of motives be maintained.³⁷⁰ Although selfless motives of unity were the driving force among our founding fathers, what are the motives amongst politicians in our current age? The founding fathers wrote slogans which emphasized their heartfelt ambitions, yet the ambitions of citizens and politicians hearts have changed, and also should the slogans; for they no longer apply as written; nor conceived.

As believers, we must remember that our enemy (Satan) leads us astray a little at a time. Satan through deceived human instruments then leads others astray who have failed to see the truth of motive in those leading. This is the basis of being led astray, for Satan never shows himself as evil but rather as an angel of light, which also becomes the deception of his instruments of wickedness.³⁷¹ Just as in the times of Hitler and Stalin, those who followed failed to turn away even when they realized the dangers in further recourse. Instead of finding security in following blindly behind selfish leaders, millions have paid the price by loss of freedom and life. Is it not amazing how we humans will follow when we believe something to be for our betterment, and will yet continue to follow even though the truth of extreme dangers becomes evident! This is the final outcome of following human leadership which has not been tested by examination of their fruits! Words lead astray as lies can be hidden within them, fruits speak the truth; therefore let all who proclaim faith in the Lord be “fruit inspectors,” lest we also be led astray!

³⁶⁹ Charles Chauncy, D. D., House of Representatives, May 27, 1747. Political Sermons, p. 143.

³⁷⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

³⁷¹ 2 Corinthians 11:3,14,15.

The true liberty of man is, to know, obey and enjoy his Creator, and to do all the good unto, and enjoy all the happiness with and in his fellow-creatures that he is capable of; in order to which the law of love was written in his heart, which carries in it's nature union and benevolence to being in general, and to each being in particular, according to its nature and excellency, and to it's relation and connexion to and with the supreme Being, and ourselves. Each rational soul, as he is a part of the whole system of rational beings, so it was and is both his duty and his liberty to regard the good of the whole in all his actions. To love ourselves, and truly to seek our own welfare, is both our liberty and our indispensable duty; but the conceit that man could advance either his honor or happiness, by disobedience instead of obedience, was first injected by the father of lies, and all such conceits ever since are as false as he is.³⁷²

If the mindset within the civilized world was yet that of reverent fear of God, we would not have the continual bickering and havoc which comes from varying doctrines of selfishness. When one country begins to argue with another, almost immediately each begins to believe themselves to be right before God, while also attempting to place themselves above the other. This is not Biblical but rather demonic, for this is derived from the pride of man and not the righteousness of God in creating mankind in His image (spiritually). Although most countries seek to please God in one fashion or another, and many do this on a basis of "works," the fact remains that faith is necessary to please God, which means love working within faith.³⁷³ This unfortunately is not the case, as the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God; therefore attempts to rise above another are attempts to manipulate God to one's own choosing.³⁷⁴ Because God is not mocked, mankind yet remains deceived having failed to realize the foolishness of our own behavior can never achieve the righteousness which is found only in Christ Jesus our Lord. We believe, therefore we submit, is unfortunately no longer the general consent of human leadership.

³⁷² Isaac Backus, *An Appeal to the Public for Religious Liberty*, A.D. 1773, *Political Sermons*, p. 331-32.

³⁷³ Hebrews 11:6; Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Corinthians 13:1-7.

³⁷⁴ Romans 1:17; 3:5-8; 10:3; James 1:19-22.

He has not, by the light of nature, nor by any positive declarations of his will, infallibly directed what form of society he would have to prevail, nor prescribed any one particular species of civil government, as more agreeable to him, than another ... The divine constitution, and government of God over his intelligent creatures, is fixed; and it does not become men to exercise their invention or wisdom in seeking any alteration or change in it: but to study the most ready and cheerful submission; at they may be assured, that whatever God requires, is fit and right for his subjects to comply with.³⁷⁵

While we give praise to God the supreme disposer of all events, for his interposition in our behalf, let us guard against the dangerous error of trusting in, or boasting of an arm of flesh. I could earnestly wish, that while our arms are crowned with success, we might content ourselves with a modest ascription of it to the power of the Highest.³⁷⁶

The epitome of taking the less knowledgeable for granted can be seen within certain religions around the world. After the attack against the United States on 9/11, the citizens of the United States attempted to place themselves above the members of Islam by proclaiming “God Bless America.” This as proclaimed was an attempt to believe ourselves to be more within the grace of God than other nations, although this was but another self-deception. God does not love Americans any more than He loved the terrorists who caused such destruction and death. Too many within Islam are deceived into believing their supposed spiritual leaders as telling them the truth, yet this same trusting in human leadership for spiritual success is just as prevalent within many Christian denominations. Many who are uneducated within Islam trusted in their educated leaders to proclaim truth, and whereas the lies of Satan were instead proclaimed, many were and are yet led astray to walk in darkness although they are led to believe that God has ordained their behavior.

³⁷⁵ Samuel Sherwood, *Scriptural Instructions to Civil Rulers*, A.D. 1774, *Political Sermons*, p. 382.

³⁷⁶ John Witherspoon, D. D., *The Dominion of Providence over the Passions of Men*, May 17, 1776, *Political Sermons*, p. 547.

The Islam religion believes in one true God, and many within Islam understand the necessity for love in all endeavors within life. Just as there are loving Christians and un-loving believers within Christendom, so also are there loving and un-loving individuals within other forms of religion. For one form of religion to condemn another, is not godly behavior in the least, yet many within all forms of religion attempt to justify themselves in acts of hatred by claiming God to be the initiator. God is love! God does all things based on His faithful attribute of love, which also includes judgment upon sin and unrighteousness. It is He who condemns or justifies, and He alone! For this reason we are to love one another always hoping the best for others, therefore any person who condemns another because of their faith, or doings of a few within their faith, prove themselves to be no better than others they judge. This is the basis of “judge not lest you be judged!”³⁷⁷ Because we are all neighbors upon the Earth, we ought to work together for the good of all, for all depend upon God whether we know it or not. Is ill will toward others a godly trait? Are we told to criticize others for their beliefs contrary to our own, or are we told to love them so they may see Christ Jesus by our love?³⁷⁸

But the branch of providence, which, in peculiar manner, demands our attention on this occasion, and should excite our gratitude, in GOD’S uninterrupted government of the rational part of his creation, mankind in particular. For as all government, so the divine, supposes laws, and laws suppose rewards and punishments, of which intelligences only are capable. Since, therefore, GOD interests himself in the affairs of mankind, and the universal administration of his providence extends to all his works, a large field opens for the employment of our contemplative minds. And we are naturally led to consider this divine government, as respecting communities; the affairs whereof are important, and upon which the order and felicity of the world greatly depend.³⁷⁹

³⁷⁷ Romans 2:1-11.

³⁷⁸ Matthew 5:16; Romans 12:20, 21.

³⁷⁹ Jacob Cushing, A. M., A Sermon Preached at Lexington, April 20, 1778, Political Sermons, p. 611.

Much of the problem around the world is the love of money! Just because someone has great amounts of money, this in no way is an indication that they are capable of leading others to Biblical prosperity! Rich Islamic leaders have led many astray, just as many rich religious leaders have led many astray! We (believers) may criticize members of Islam for being so badly deceived, yet we ourselves are just as deceived when we fail to test all things by the perfect moral law of God (Scriptures). Just as members of Islam are led astray when they do not personally read the Koran, so also are believers led astray when they do not personally read the Bible. The Bible as well as the Koran both demonstrate love to be necessary within one's faith! The Bible demonstrates the necessity of faith and the Koran the necessity of good works, one emphasizes "faith" and the other "works," yet both place great emphasis upon loving one another. This is good, as love does not wrong another, yet within both forms of religion—money has invaded and proven to deceive many as to the reality of prosperity. Material prosperity being the world's notion of success, has led millions astray throughout history. This is due to the fact that most seek God for material wealth, as they have failed to realize that in the seeking of God as one's personal Lord, true prosperity is in finding Him; even more stupendous, in being found by God as an individual in which God may both will and work for His own good pleasure! In this we achieve peace and rest from our toils, not founded on our endeavors, but on the faithfulness of God! Seeking with wrong motives leads to only a partial seeking derived from one's own selfish motives. In this material prosperity may be found, but at the cost of turning away from the One in whom is our victory and purpose!³⁸⁰ Upon human leadership trends leading toward the will of the people to take precedence over the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, the ruler of the age (Satan) can lead according to the boastful pride of life; which is only for the moment, and immediate future which ends at the grave.³⁸¹

If we now attend to matters of fact we shall find no reason to think more lightly of the dangers before us. The history of the Israelites shows us that they greatly needed the caution which

³⁸⁰ 1 Peter 1:6-9; 2 Peter 3:14-18; James 4:3, 4.

³⁸¹ 1 John 2:16, 17.

Moses gave them. Scarcely a prosperous period in their history can be pointed out which was not followed by a decay of piety, and a corruption of morals. This was the case soon after their happy settlement in the land of Canaan. This was the case very frequently in the times of their judges and kings. And this was eminently the case with respect to their highest state of wealth and power under the reign of Solomon The profligacy of his court may be seen in the history of his life: and that the moral state of his subjects was also exceedingly corrupt, appears from their conduct immediately after his death. Even in the good reign of the pious Hezekiah, ingratitude and irreligion were the consequences of success and prosperity.³⁸²

A government focused upon the purposes of God, is truly a government for the people "If we ever forget that we are One Nation Under God, then we will be a Nation gone under."³⁸³ Most of the laws within all nations came from the foundation of law which is the Ten Commandments. This in itself demonstrates how men have always believed in the format of moral law which God set forth within the hearts of all humanity.³⁸⁴ Although all will not be held accountable to have followed the Law (Mosaic and Levitical), all humanity will give account for their deeds according to the moral laws set forth within their hearts by God. This in itself demonstrates the love of God for all humanity, as He has allowed each of us an internal law to regulate our behavior. All human forms of leadership which adhere to this internal moral law have focus upon God in one form or another. These forms of leadership or government rely upon the faithful and righteous nature of the Lord, for they know that all successes, deliverance and safety come from Him. These forms of leadership understand that straight paths are directed by God, and they out of concern for those led, strive to maintain focus upon the Lord; lest all concerned end up on the wrong path which leads to destruction. Plainly put, those who love us, point us in the direction of God's leading!³⁸⁵

³⁸² Samuel Wales, D. D., *The Dangers of our National Prosperity; and the Way to Avoid Them*, May 12, 1785. *Political Sermons*, p. 841.

³⁸³ Ronald Wilson Reagan. August 23, 1984 at the ecumenical prayer breakfast at the Reunion Arena in Dallas, on the occasion of the enactment of the Equal Access Bill of 1984.

³⁸⁴ Romans 2:12-16.

Many governments throughout history have begun with focus upon the Lord, yet slowly and surely have gone astray one step at a time. Those who boldly lead others astray have generally led according to their own tyrannical behavior. Those who lead astray in a more subtle fashion many times have started out with good intentions for all concerned, yet as they are led astray by personal greed or the deceptions of Satan, then led astray those who have come to trust their leadership. This is the reason that care must be taken whenever following someone, for although they may have led appropriately in the past, they may in fact be leading astray in the present, either by ignorance or practical intentions. Please remember, a good leader is someone who also knows how to follow, for if this trait is absent in one's demeanor, then they will lead according to one's personal agenda rather than with godly motives. Are they worth following? This simple question asked of oneself, can allow avoidance of considerable troublesome consequences.

Selfishness in leadership can be witnessed by the motives and actions of religious leadership during the regime of Adolph Hitler in Nazi Germany. Most of the people did not want a dictator, and their spiritual church leaders knew better than to accept a dictator. The commoners of the country sought their spiritual leaders to stand firm in the truth, yet the spiritual leaders seeking to save their own lives, stood idly by while terrible atrocities took place. Had the spiritual leaders truly understood the love and faithfulness of God, and thereby the surety of one's salvation, they would not have sought to save themselves at the cost of millions of others. As with the nation of Israel throughout its history, when sound spiritual leadership has been lacking, the commoners followed the majority. Each seeking to save themselves, takes precedence over the welfare of all others, and thereby havoc reigns supreme over the entirety of the country or nation. This same reality can be witnessed in any form of tyrannical dictatorship! Since all who follow will end up at the same physical and spiritual location as those who led them, would it not be prudent and wise to be careful who we follow? Our forefathers knew the necessity for prudence when they founded the United States of America, and fought to maintain the liberty necessary so that all may be safe and free.

Both success and safety come of thee. And thou reignest over all: And hast wrought all our works, in us, and for us. *Praise, therefore, thy God, O America, praise the Lord, ye, his highly favoured United States.* Nor let it rest in the fleeting language of the lip; or the formal thanksgiving of a day. But, let every heart glow with gratitude: And every life, by a devout regard to his holy law, proclaim his praise. It is this, our God requires, as that wherein our personal, and national good, and the glory of his great name consist. And without which, all our professions will be but an empty name. It is, that we love the Lord our God, to walk in his ways and keep his commandments, to observe his statutes and his judgment. That a sacred regard be maintained to righteousness and truth. That we do justice, love mercy, and walk humbly with our God.³⁸⁶

The problem with most forms of human leadership is the failure of such to have a clear cut purpose in direction. When the leadership wanders aimlessly in many directions, then those who follow have no sound basis of trust. Although this should lead all to turn back unto the Lord, this as a united action would only be manifested within a land maintaining focus upon God. This is not to say—a land of shortsighted focus which calls upon Him only in times of trouble, but rather a land which is proficient at making supplication unto the One of all knowledge, prior to moving forward. This would be the way of “one nation under God”! Although most nations have certain smaller groups which are indivisible, I do not personally believe any nation or country has ever maintained a state of being undivided for any length of time. It is one thing to unite for specific purposes, yet it another thing entirely to remain united in purpose under submission to God. No nation or country has ever continually accomplished this task, not the nation of Israel and certainly not the United States of America. Our forefathers had high hopes that this nation would remain united “one nation under God,” yet this had not been the case since freedom from tyranny became a reality. For some foolish reason, the world believes that saying words makes things happen, yet neither in accepting Christ by simple words (without sincerity or

³⁸⁶ George Duffield, A. M., A Sermon Preached in the Third Presbyterian Church in the City of Philadelphia, December 11, 1783, Political Sermons, p. 788.

knowledge) nor proclaiming a nation to be united under God (without reality) can deliverance and freedom truly exist. Believing something, although contrary to reality, is the essence of being self-deluded!³⁸⁷

To proceed further in this analogy, we must understand that to love our neighbor is to love all of humankind. If a nation cannot be truly united even amongst themselves, then that nation will be incapable of being fully united with other nations and creeds. Humankind is far too quick in seeking individualized deliverance when troubles arise, which turns even brother against brother in many cases. If we will not consider others as more important than ourselves, then selfishness within a nation or creed will almost always become prevalent in times of trouble. This is demonstrated in how terrorism has killed thousands throughout the world for decades, yet most countries do not get involved until the terrorism strikes the shores of that nation. When different church structures exhibit signs proclaiming “God bless America,” I could only hope that this is requesting the blessing of chastisement from God which ushers in true unity. Please consider that blessing from God comes in the form of that which is needed, not that which is desired!³⁸⁸ When will we once again realize as had our forefathers, that unity comes from the exhibited fruits of the Holy Spirit manifest in believers (Galatians 5:22, 23; James 4:5, 6), not the deeds of human leadership (Galatians 5:19-21). In all such cases, it is not necessarily who we follow but rather in whom (God) we trust.³⁸⁹

How many nations and creeds have started out following leaders whom were felt to be correct and caring, only to continue following even though the truth of tyranny and/or bondage was made evident. It is worthy of pity when many follow in ignorance, yet pity is not warranted when efforts for freedom are not forthcoming in battling for the sake of truth. The tyrants of the world always reward those who would kowtow before them, while persecuting those who stand in truth. This ploy by those of selfish deception, has worked for generations, and will continue to work in a world where human leadership remains steadfast upon the wide path leading to spiritual destruction (example - Revelation 17:12, 13). One nation goes astray, then another and another,

³⁸⁷ James 1:22-24.

³⁸⁸ Hebrews 12:6-8; Isaiah 29:14, 15.

³⁸⁹ Romans 13:1-5; Titus 3:1-8.

and this when all of like faith refuse to stand together. Can a nation divided, stand strong within itself? Can a nation divided, stand strong for someone else? Although it is understood how we attempt to maintain hope for betterment within our nation and world, the fact remains that believers must remain within the realm of reality, and stay from journeys into fantasy as by placing our hope and trust upon ungodly human leadership. Any leadership guilty of self-centeredness or deception, cannot be led by the Lord; therefore, they cannot be trusted! The nation of Israel sought to place its trust in human leadership, yet only received deliverance when their trust was placed back upon God after all human efforts had failed. Shall believers today repeatedly miss out on deliverance for the same reasons? Individuals may obtain deliverance and freedom in Christ; never nations!

To prevent this mischief, and to secure the enjoyment of rational liberty, which summarily consists in the unmolested privilege and opportunity of “leading a quiet and peaceable life, in all godliness and honesty,” is the great end of the institution of civil society and government. The end therefore, and nature of civil government imply that it must have for its foundation, the principles and laws of truth, justice and righteousness, mercy and the fear of God; or it can never advance the happiness of mankindThere can be no beneficial union among the members of a community, where these great principles of righteousness and truth integrity and the fear of God are not maintained, both among themselves, and towards all mankind.³⁹⁰

The founding fathers of the United States, knew trust in God alone was of necessity within both leadership and citizenship, if true victory in freedom was to be assured for all. In this, the founding fathers desired a nation where faith in God would find fullness in posterity, even to the point that evangelism would henceforth come from this new nation which held freedom in Christ. Beyond the outreach of the United States citizens to other countries of the world with the good news of God’s

³⁹⁰ Elizur Goodrich, D. D., *The Principles of civil Union and Happiness considered and recommended.*, May 10, 1787, *Political Sermons*, pp. 915-16.

goodness and grace, the founding fathers were hopeful that this great spiritual prosperity found within the very nature of God, would stay the nation from the falsehoods and greed which follow the love of money. The founding fathers were truly hopeful that the United States would be a nation of believers, who would reach out to all others lovingly and with godly wisdom and knowledge. Imagine a nation where the inhabitants actually know the motives of their neighbor's heart, for all are aligned within focus on God. Wow-truly loving one's neighbor!

Our forefathers may have had high hopes for all the inhabitants in the new land called the United States, yet how long lived was the hope? Even at the beginning of our Nation when land was openly available, did not greed for the choice parcels take precedence? Were not the native inhabitants forcibly and brutally removed from the beautiful lands of their forefathers, so the white man's greed could begin to become the precedent? The initial settlers were greatly helped by the Indians, so that peaceful cohabitation could exist for the sake of all. This loving behavior was the epitome of the forefather's hopes, yet the hopes of many perished as did thousands of lives, when the invader's mindset came forward instead of hearts rendering thanksgiving. It is truly a shame when the best laid plans turn to mayhem! Although there was a great abundance for all, the greed for excess reigned supreme. Do you suppose that most Native American Indians would gladly have become Christians, had the love of Christ remained the sincere motivation of the visitors? Do you suppose the United States would have been much different even in our present age, had loving one's neighbors truly occurred and been maintained?

The natives (American Indians) respected life and nature, as was evident by their acceptance of the visitors and the way in which they (Indians) were never wasteful, but rather utilized the natural resources of the land. When the Indians went hunting, they used every part of the animal which was possible. They did this because of their respect for creation, and their respect for the Creator (Great Spirit)! This respect when combined with knowledge of the Creator which was brought by the visitors would have brought forth not only considerable growth within Christianity, but also a better respect for nature and individuals. The Indians had the potential of knowing their Creator, the One who had created such wonderment and beauty; they could have known Him by name—"Jesus," rather than by title—"Great Spirit!" Instead what

was the outcome? The visitors killed animals for sport, leaving carcasses to rot. They herded the Indians onto reservations, and destroyed the land. They fought not only against the Indians out of selfish motives, but also their own blood kin (civil war). They enslaved those of dark skin, and sought personal financial growth by destroying the financial growth of others. This did not have any necessity of happening, yet was the result of the desire for excess. Had the love for God remained the motivation of the newly founded United States, all of the inhabitants of the land could have lived and grown together as one peoples. The potential for considerable good was destroyed by the seeking of selfish gains, therefore once again the hopes of the founders laid in ruin. The hopes of an outstretched unification, destroyed by self-centeredness (idolatry of “self”)! Love initially tore down the barriers of diversity, and selfishness built them back up again!

May we ever show ourselves worthy of the blessings we enjoy, and never tarnish the bright lustre of this day, by any unbecoming excesses. Americans! think of the many privileges which distinguish your condition. Be grateful for your lot; and let your virtue secure what your valour, under God, hath obtained; and transmit to latest posterity the glorious inheritance. May the political edifice erected on the theatre of this new world, afford a practical lesson of liberty to mankind, and become in an eminent degree the model of that glorious temple of universal liberty which is about to be established over the civilized world.³⁹¹

The nation of the United States of America was founded upon the principle that “all men are created equal!” This principle fell prey to greed, coveting, and bigotry almost immediately after freedom from tyranny had been achieved. Those under tyranny now free to cause bondage upon others, was never the intent of our forefathers! Human leadership has a few good points and yet many bad points. Human leadership can in no way take the place of trusting in God; any form of leadership or government which would demand any such devotion, is leadership or

³⁹¹ Enos Hitchcock, D. D., *An Oration, in Commemoration of The Independence of the United States of America., July 4, 1793*, Political Sermons, p. 1183.

government set upon the pride and arrogance of humankind. Are pride and arrogance for the benefit of all? Can the pride of leadership teach others the humility of servitude? As public servants, hearts of humility must be maintained lest a pedestal from which to look down upon one's constituents be the outcome. When governmental leadership is chauffeured around in limousines and accepting of bribes (lobby gifts), are they any longer serving the people, or are they serving the almighty dollar (the god served by greedy self-centered individuals)!

A public servant is exactly that! Although many throughout the history of different nations, including the United States, have served with sincere hearts for the benefit of others, most have served only their own interests. This is a harsh reality which must not be denied, lest we trust in man more so than our Lord; by evading truth for the sake of fantasy. The United States of America was founded on the principle that Americans may engage in free enterprise, yet this was never to be at the expense of the poor and middle classes of people, which unfortunately has been the case. With the separation of the different States within the continental United States, has also come separation within doctrine and purpose. This occurs in any nation where the laws of the land (as a whole) are divided to suit the inhabitants of individual states. In this great land of ours, we now have individual city Mayors who violate Federal laws as they choose. We have states which condone blatant immorality, where those who choose to be immoral do so as to live in peace from what they consider tyranny. Such as "homosexuality," we do not proclaim its wrong out of hatred, but rather out of love for our neighbors within our Nation. This nation was founded upon the moral laws set forth by God, yet we now tend toward negating the laws for the sake of immorality. This is not love, but rather foolish submission to the wiles of Satan!³⁹²

Will we continue to fall prey to the desires of human sinfulness? Will we continue our silence because of fear in speaking the Biblical truth in love? Will we allow our National and world neighbors to burn in hell for all eternity because we choose to live in fear of reprisal or rejection? Although some supposed Christian leaders say mean things about the sinner on account of the sin, we as true Christians must love the sinner while never failing to speak out against the sin in love. Any

³⁹² 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 1 Peter 5:8, 9.

religious leaders, who speak against the sinner as being within themselves the sin, should shut their mouths and step down from the pulpit! Many who live immoral lives could be reached by the sincere love of true Christians, if they had not been embittered by the statements of supposed spiritual leaders who know not of their own stupidity. These troubles have been compounded throughout the years within many nations, because human leadership is followed aside of the principles of love set forth by our Creator. Although this is terribly out of control, the situation can yet be salvaged if and when our focus returns to Him who loved us and gave of Himself so that we may live. Loving one another is a godly trait, whereas all this criticism and hatred is not!

Somewhere along the way in our seeking to be free, we have allowed human leadership to once again place us in bondage. Even in the United States of America, we are no longer free, for we have become deceived into believing that God does not see our greed and selfishness. We have become so complacent that even within Christianity we are divided (denominationalism), and we yet wonder why we cannot unite even within a faith which has but one Lord! How can we possibly teach freedom in Christ, when we are in bondage to human leadership which abides upon the wide path to spiritual destruction? As Christians, we are to speak the Gospel truth in love for the purpose of edification.³⁹³ As Christians, we are never to condone immorality; neither are we to blatantly criticize entire peoples, creeds, or sects!³⁹⁴ As Christians, we are to sacrifice ourselves if need be, so that others may find freedom in Christ.³⁹⁵ As Christians, we are to focus upon God, united in purpose.³⁹⁶ As Christians, we must remain spiritually free if we are to be successful.³⁹⁷ As Christians, we must speak the truth regarding the harsh realities of sin, lest the bondage of many last for all eternity; in this we are not to condemn the sinners! As Christians, we must not allow our love to fail, lest our endeavors for Christ fail as well.³⁹⁸ As individual ambassadors for Christ, we must beware of who we follow lest we lead those who follow us astray as well.³⁹⁹ Serving God is our purpose, being

³⁹³ Romans 15:2, 3; Ephesians 4:15, 16, 29.

³⁹⁴ Romans 1:28-32.

³⁹⁵ Romans 8:35-37.

³⁹⁶ Colossians 1:16-18; 1 Corinthians 12:7-11.

³⁹⁷ 1 Timothy 6:17-19.

³⁹⁸ Matthew 12:30.

Americans is but one blessing along our path of servanthood. Our forefathers understood this, do we?

It is true, in this part of the union at least, “We know that we all have knowledge.” But, I doubt, we have more of the “knowledge which puffeth up,” than of that knowledge which promises “stability of times.” It is true, we have the light of the gospel; and were we disposed to be guided by this light, we need not fear the fate of ancient republics, that were bewildered in pagan darkness. But, in matters relative to government and subordination; too many choose to take their instructions from heathen philosophy, rather than from the oracles of God. And as the knowledge, so the virtue, of even this happy country, exceedingly wants to be Christianized. It is true, our “charity aboundeth”: but I am afraid we have not much of that charity which is “the bond of perfectness, or the bond of peace.”

Perhaps some good people are ready to think, we may safely “trust in God; who hath delivered, and doth deliver, that he will yet deliver us.” And had we rendered according to the benefits done us, indeed, we might thus securely trust. But has this been the case? On the contrary, have we not sinned more and more, since the almost miraculous deliverances granted us? Has not the worship of God been neglected; his day and name been prophaned, his law transgressed, and his gospel despised and rejected, of late years, more than ever? Have not infidelity, and all manner of loose principles, and immoral practices, abounded in all parts of the land, since the revolution, and our happy independence, more than at any former period? Shall we then “lean upon the Lord, and say, Is not the Lord among us?³⁹⁹ no evil can come upon us”? Or shall we think, “Because we are innocent, surely his anger shall turn from us”? His ancient covenant people thus leaned, and thus said, in times of their greatest degeneracy; but what were the answers of God to them?⁴⁰¹ You only have I known, of all the families of the earth;

³⁹⁹ Matthew 7:15.

⁴⁰⁰ Micah 3:11, 12; Jeremiah 2:35, 36.

therefore will I punish you for all your iniquities.” And, “shall I not visit for these things? Shall not my soul be avenged on such a nation as this?”⁴⁰²

As with all human leadership, the potential exists to either lead or be led to betterment or detriment. When our founding fathers came to this land, they brought with them the hope of the former, yet with continual variations toward excess, greed and selfishness, the latter became the outcome of tremendous endeavor. With the respect of the Native American Indians for the creations of God (Great Spirit), the only missing factor was that they may know their Creator. Yet the potential for greatness fell prey to the foolishness of individuality, which denied the Native Americans the potential of a complete and spiritually fulfilling life. The Indian leaders taught respect and discipline to their children, while many visitors taught the seeking of selfish gains. Some human leadership led to love and compassion for all living things, while other human leadership led to only the love of self. What a difference focus upon God in leadership truly makes! Many American believers place great concern upon patriotism for the sake of a piece of land or the basis of human government, yet little concern for the spiritual wellbeing of others. Wonderful relationships with others have been destroyed because of these pathetic priorities, and this because human leadership is trusted more so than the divine leadership available to all. Some say “America, love it or leave it!” I say—let’s stop loving stuff, and start loving God and others” America was founded by people who believed that God was their rock of safety. I recognize we must be cautious in claiming that God is on our side, but I think it’s all right to keep asking if we’re on His side.”⁴⁰³

⁴⁰¹ Amos 3:2; Jeremiah 2:1- 9.

⁴⁰² John Smalley, A. M., *On the Evils of a Weak Government*, May 8, 1800, *Political Sermons*, p. 1438.

⁴⁰³ Ronald Wilson Reagan, *Second Inaugural Address*, January 25, 1984, *Proclaim Liberty*, (Dallas, TX: Word of Faith), p. 3.

CHAPTER FOUR

A MATTER OF THE HEART

Luke 6:45, 46: “The good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth what is good; and the evil man out of the evil treasure brings forth what is evil, for his mouth speaks from that which fills his heart. “And why do you call Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ and do not do what I say?”

John 14:15, 24: “If you love Me, you will keep My commandments “He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Fathers who sent Me.

HAVING PREVIOUSLY RUN from the Lord upon the fast paced wide path which leads to spiritual destruction, I am now (veil lifted) quite aware of how Satan keeps non-believing individuals deceived and in bondage.⁴⁰⁴ By doing a reference to Scripture, we can determine without doubt that the ability of the lost to realize their folly and fate is not possible; for few (a remnant) are those who enter through the small gate onto the narrow path of God’s righteousness. We know: the lost are led to sin and from truth as they are under the power of Satan; the lost follow the false teaching and ways of the world; the truth is a mystery to the lost.⁴⁰⁵ When we understand the aforementioned, we can deduce that the lost are not by any means fully aware of the severity of their situation; until drawn unto the Word (Jesus) by God! This statement can easily be verified, as:

1. The lost would not be increasingly angered when warned, but rather increasingly alarmed and concerned, as no one (in their right mind) would intentionally seek destruction. *If* the lost were truly aware of

⁴⁰⁴ Matthew 7:13, 14; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 Peter 5:6-11.

⁴⁰⁵ 1 Corinthians 1:18-24; 12:1-3; 1 John 5:18-21; 2 Corinthians 11:1-3; Ephesians 2:1-10; Matthew 13:18-23; 1 John 2:12-17.

their situation, they would pay heed to warnings of destruction and thus turn to Christ.

2. The unsaved are not likely to read Scripture which would allow them awareness of the seriousness of their lost condition; although this does occur when individuals receive conviction to seek truth from God. The Scripture is the only place where truth for spiritual freedom is rendered!⁴⁰⁶

Personal Note: It should be remembered, individuals will not be receptive to Gospel truth unless they are being drawn (prepared) by the Father.⁴⁰⁷ This being a realistic fact, renders the imperative to be prayer for the specific individual prior to approaching them; the prayer being a supplication unto the Lord for His consideration to draw them! Also, it must be understood that we are never to make attempts to convince or convict the individual regarding the truth, for the Lord performs the task of convincing and convicting; which is a blessing included in His drawing them from the dominion of Satan (darkness) unto freedom in the light with the Lord.⁴⁰⁸ Far too many individuals bash individuals in attempts to make them listen; this drives them farther away and is therefore against Christ!⁴⁰⁹ Having no way of knowing the harmful callusing which has been inflicted by foolish zealots which preceded us, all endeavors must be in love after appropriate prayer! We simply remain prayerful, and speak the truth in love unto those who have been prepared to receive it; this allows maximum opportunity for the Lord to do His work, for salvation is truly the work of God!⁴¹⁰ Always remember—the spiritual relationship is all about God first and foremost; the individual is blessed in the spiritual relational reality which opens the small gate unto the narrow path upon which God is allowed to perform the work of which He alone is capable!⁴¹¹

⁴⁰⁶ John 17:14-19.

⁴⁰⁷ John 6:44.

⁴⁰⁸ Acts 26:15-18.

⁴⁰⁹ Matthew 12:25-37.

⁴¹⁰ John 6:35-58.

⁴¹¹ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

With these things in mind, we can understand how it is by God's love and grace that we are saved!⁴¹² To hold in one's heart (indication of absolute sincerity) the truth of salvation by grace, and the agape love of the Lord Jesus Christ to suffer terribly for the sins of humankind in our stead, is to know the basis of God's love for each of us!⁴¹³ To truly understand God's acceptance by grace which He freely renders to all, is to willingly render unto Him one's all in all; *if* the appropriate confession unto salvation (Jesus as Lord) is rendered in accordance to God's righteous drawing⁴¹⁴

Because nothing in the universe surpasses God's love for us (each and every one of us), nothing should take precedence in our lives over the Lord God of all creation!⁴¹⁵ A full surrender of one's life to Him, as a matter of course derived from appreciation of His love, is to desire nothing more than to please Him.⁴¹⁶ Abounding devotion for the Lord as precedence in the heart of a believer sets them apart from most others, leading to humble submission and true disciplined discipleship!⁴¹⁷

Truly sincere believers seek first to walk in the righteousness of God in Christ Jesus, henceforth placing all confidence in Him; thereby placing no confidence in the things of the world, which includes the flesh.⁴¹⁸ Although many claim to love God when in the company of other believers, the truly devotional believer stands out and many times alone in the crowd; this derived from strict discipline, and focus upon the Lord at all times, thus avoiding worldly and empty chatter (chitchat) while maintaining stern focus upon the Lord for straight paths.⁴¹⁹ Those who truly love Jesus are compelled to proclaim the truth of the Lord, even in the face of adversity and persecution.⁴²⁰

The Lord Jesus Christ has given the humble a greater grace, so that we may come boldly to His throne to receive wisdom and mercy to

⁴¹² Romans 5:1-11; Ephesians 2:4-10.

⁴¹³ Mark 14:53-65; 15:16-37; John 3:16-21; 1 John 4:10-21.

⁴¹⁴ John 6:44, 45, 65; Romans 6:5-14; 10:8-13; 1 Corinthians 15:30-34.

⁴¹⁵ Matthew 22:36-40.

⁴¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Ephesians 5:1-17; 1 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Hebrews 13:7-16, 20, 21; 1 John 2:3-11; 3:19-24.

⁴¹⁷ John 8:31-36; Romans 8:31-39.

⁴¹⁸ Romans 1:16-19; 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4, 11-13; Ephesians 1:3-17 / 1 John 2:12-17; James 4:3-10; Luke 8:110-21; 1 Timothy 6:8-19.

⁴¹⁹ Timothy 2:14-16; Hebrews 12:1-11; Proverbs 4:23-27.

⁴²⁰ Romans 8:1-18; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

avoid the foolishness of worldly bondage.⁴²¹ For so many to take grace for granted, instead of receiving it for the purpose of freedom and godliness, proves inappropriate motives and desires; for multitudes believe God saved us by grace, so we can continue to live carnally while boasting of being saved!⁴²² Attitude leading to proper focus, foundational to disciplined devotional love for Him, is the key to freedom in Christ!⁴²³

I know that a statement of believers being deceived by Satan and ignorant of his schemes is harsh, yet a plethora of individuals remaining captive to both the ways of this world and the flesh is an undeniable reality; for anything of the physical realm is easily enticed and influenced by the evil ones (Satan and demons)!⁴²⁴ For disciplined, devotional, and spiritually mature Christians to remain distracted and enslaved by the ways of this world and the enticements of the flesh (practicing sin) is simply not possible; for the path before us is led by the Holy Spirit!⁴²⁵ Mature Christians (for the most part) maintain freedom in Christ, by obediently entrusting themselves to God.⁴²⁶ This demonstrates positively that mature Christians seek to obtain and maintain a completely different mindset than do weak, cold or lukewarm believers (spiritual infants); for we know that God's instructions regarding righteousness are not by request, or open for debate!⁴²⁷ Mature devotional Christians willfully submit allowing the Lord to change the way we think and act; for with maturity comes the knowledge that our best efforts aside from Him, simply do not achieve appropriate righteousness.⁴²⁸

As human beings we tend to follow the object of our focus! *If* the Lord is not foremost in our thinking processes (focus), then it is not Him we will follow or serve!⁴²⁹ When will we learn that we cannot have it both ways: we cannot serve God and mammon;⁴³⁰ we cannot serve the Holy Spirit and the flesh;⁴³¹ we cannot seek first the things

⁴²¹ James 4:5, 6; Hebrews 4:11-16; 1 Peter 4:1-6.

⁴²² Matthew 16:24-26; Romans 6:1-23; 1 Timothy 6:3-19; 2 Timothy 3:1-5, emphasis v. 5.

⁴²³ John 8:31-47; 15:1-27; 1 Corinthians 3:10-20.

⁴²⁴ Matthew 13:18-23; Romans 13:7-14.

⁴²⁵ Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Hebrews 5:11-6:6; 1 John 3:1-18.

⁴²⁶ Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Thessalonians 5:21-24; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5; 1 Peter 2:18-25; 4:7-19.

⁴²⁷ Luke 6:39-49; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Revelation 3:14-22.

⁴²⁸ Hosea 6:6; Hebrews 11:6; Romans 10:1-4; 12:1, 2; John 14:15-26.

⁴²⁹ Proverbs 3:5-12; 4:23-27; Luke 16:9-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-19.

⁴³⁰ Matthew 6:24.

⁴³¹ Romans 8:5-8, 12, 13; 1 Corinthians 2:12-14; Galatians 5:19-23.

of the world and at the same time first the kingdom of God;⁴³² we cannot entertain sinful temptations and yet abstain from sin;⁴³³ we cannot seek to stay from tribulation and suffering, and yet conceive of speaking the truth in love while maintaining assurance of hope in God;⁴³⁴ we cannot continually walk in darkness and yet claim to be children of light;⁴³⁵ we cannot live carnally and yet bring spiritual edification to others;⁴³⁶ we cannot claim to have a servants heart, and yet expect the Lord our God to condone our worldly, sinful, and self-centered behavior!⁴³⁷ We must stop our double-mindedness and decide to love the Lord first and foremost; or our faith and walk for and with Him will never abound to its potential!⁴³⁸ We must choose now whom we will serve, and with disciplined earnestness hold fast; lest we go astray at every turn!⁴³⁹

Personal Note: Weak double-minded believers are self-deluding; they are willfully divided in their thinking and devotion, therefore in bondage to “self” by choice!⁴⁴⁰ True Christianity is a matter of the heart (indication of sincere devotion); *if* our faith in, and love for God is not sincere, then we are very possibly deceived into believing we are a child of God, when in fact we may be illegitimate children and not sons and daughters!⁴⁴¹ Illegitimate children will not inherit God’s kingdom; for actual adoption is but an illusion within them! To confess Jesus as Lord, and believe in one’s heart that God raised Him from the dead—must be with sincerity, true faith, and foundational to knowledge of the truth (glory of Christ; reality of the Christ)!⁴⁴² To doubt the authority of Christ (Lord) is to doubt God!⁴⁴³ This cannot be, *if* we are to volitionally submit and trust God henceforth with our purposeful existence!⁴⁴⁴

⁴³² Philippians 3:18-21.

⁴³³ James 1:13-18.

⁴³⁴ Ephesians 4:14-16; John 15:18-23; Romans 5:1-5.

⁴³⁵ Matthew 6:22, 24; Ephesians 5:7-17; 1 John 1:5-7.

⁴³⁶ 2 Timothy 3:1-5; Romans 15:1-6; Philippians 2:3, 4.

⁴³⁷ 1 Peter 1:10-16; Titus 1:15, 16.

⁴³⁸ James 1:7-12; Philippians 3:8-14.

⁴³⁹ Joshua 24:15-21; Revelation 3:15-19.

⁴⁴⁰ James 1:21-25.

⁴⁴¹ Matthew 7:21-27; 13:19-23; Hebrews 12:4-11.

⁴⁴² Romans 10:8-13; 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

⁴⁴³ Philippians 2:5-11.

⁴⁴⁴ Colossians 1:13-23.

Unlike the Christian religion which yet abounds with deceptive doctrines, and ritualistic traditional practices; actual Christianity is selflessly all about submission to God and adherence to sound doctrine (Scriptures)!⁴⁴⁵

A Matter of Conviction within One's Heart

It is my desire at this point, to render some facts which demonstrate appropriate Christian character!⁴⁴⁶ These are truths which must be rendered; although they will hurt, *if* inappropriate behavior is routinely practiced.⁴⁴⁷

1. Yes, all have committed sin on occasion.⁴⁴⁸ This however does not mean that we should condone or commit sin against the Lord our God (Genesis 39:8, 9: All sin is against God).
 - The fact remains that all who have been born again into the family of God, have been called to abstain from sin; with denial of “self” as the very first step in following the Lord, all that is of our carnal nature is also denied so that God may both will and work for His own good pleasure!⁴⁴⁹ When we humbly submit unto God with disciplined devotional diligence, we are led to become instruments of God’s manifest righteousness, which is far reaching from emulation of God’s righteousness; for the former is God’s manifest righteousness fulfilled in the world through His children, the latter is human emulation which is of the world. Huge difference; for the former is a spiritual manifestation of appropriate worship in spirit and in truth, the latter is fleshly attempts (indulgences) which are proclaimed to be for God, although not!⁴⁵⁰

2. Sin should hurt a Christian who truly loves the Lord!⁴⁵¹ With

⁴⁴⁵ 1 Timothy 4:1-5; Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40.

⁴⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 5:6-13.

⁴⁴⁷ Acts 26:19, 20; Romans 8:12-14; 2 Corinthians 5:10-13; Ephesians 5:11-17; Titus 2:11-15; 3:4-8; Hebrews 10:23-27; James 5:13-20; 1 Peter 4:1-6; 1 John 3:7-10.

⁴⁴⁸ Romans 3:21-26, specific v. 23.

⁴⁴⁹ John 15:1-17; Philippians 2:12-16.

⁴⁵⁰ examples—3 John 1:1-12; Matthew 16:13-27; cf. John 3:1-21; Romans 1:16, 17; 3:1-6; 10:1-4; 12:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:10.

⁴⁵¹ Romans 13:9-14; Colossians 1:21-23; Luke 6:46-49; Hebrews 12:4-7.

physical pain in our mortal bodies which when endured long enough we tend to get accustomed and thereby numb to the discomfort, so also occurs to us spiritually when sin is practiced, and not confessed as wrong.

- *If* we continue in our sin long enough, and in doing so deny the convictions of the Holy Spirit to cease, we will grieve Him and become calloused to His chastisements.⁴⁵² This is not at all a good position to be in, as convictions without can in no way match His convictions within!⁴⁵³ In addition, with withdrawal of the convictions from the Lord due to our grieving Him, as we continue to cause intentional defilement of our own spirit by practiced sin, comes callusing of our spirit; which blocks our ability to receive the blessing of God's strength, to confess our wrongdoing and thereby receive cleansing! When we remain spiritually filthy with un-confessed sin, the Lord will not listen to our prayers until we admit our faults by obedient submission and confession, and return our focus back upon Him.⁴⁵⁴ A primary practiced sin is un-forgiveness, which is actually a form of hatred; this one form of practiced sin can keep us from fellowship with the Lord for an entire mortal lifetime!⁴⁵⁵ Please understand, Satan has only to hold us to one form of practiced sin, to keep us ensnared to do his will; his will being that we both deceive and be deceived!⁴⁵⁶ This is proven by the fact that Satan has been murdering multitudes spiritually throughout the history of humankind!⁴⁵⁷

Discipline hurts but for a time, yet brings forth the fruits of righteousness. We live in a world today which has turned away from discipline, or denied the imperative of it; instead steering toward excuses and attempts to make others the scapegoat for our own rebellion, misgivings, decisions, and troubles.⁴⁵⁸ In reality, many folks (believers included) are

⁴⁵² repent - stop and turn back to God: Ephesians 4:28-32; Hebrews 12:1-3.

⁴⁵³ Hebrews 12:8-15; Titus 1:10-16.

⁴⁵⁴ Psalm 66:17-20; Isaiah 59:1, 2; John 9:27-33; 1 Corinthians 15:33, 34; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

⁴⁵⁵ Matthew 6:14, 15; 1 John 2:3-11.

⁴⁵⁶ 2 Timothy 2:1-26, specific vs. 24-26.

⁴⁵⁷ John 8:40-47.

⁴⁵⁸ Jude 1:1-25.

running from themselves, failing to realize that we can escape or evade nothing while wandering in darkness; rejecting the light of truth which assuredly illumines all things on the path of righteousness!⁴⁵⁹ Multitudes choose to remain intentionally ignorant of the fact that God knows all things with absolute preciseness; this includes each of us, even to the core of our motives!⁴⁶⁰ God knows all things, therefore we will all be held accountable for our deeds while in the flesh; there will be no excuses on that day!⁴⁶¹

Differences should be noticeable between believers and non-believers! Far too many believers become accustomed (calloused) to the same daily sins as the unbelieving. We tend to lie, violate simple laws, gossip, and act: selfishly, prideful, arrogant, and unconcerned for the welfare of others, lustful, boastful and unforgiving. These are the deeds of the flesh!⁴⁶² Anyone who has been a believer for a considerable amount of time, should exhibit more the fruits of the Holy Spirit, and less the deeds of the flesh!⁴⁶³ *If* a “believer” of some time yet acts the same as before knowing God, the question must be asked “do they know God personally,” or only by assumption and/or concept!⁴⁶⁴

Many believers hold to the statement that we are no longer under the Law; using this as an excuse to do as they please. Not being under the Law is absolutely correct in regard to salvation, as we are saved by grace through faith; yet by disciplined obedience to the standards and instructions of God, as by adoption as legitimate children, we actually establish the Law!⁴⁶⁵ *If* we intentionally continue to sin (even by violating simple laws designed to protect, or rebellion against authority), we are opposing the Lord.⁴⁶⁶ Continuous disobedience toward God demonstrates that we are without discipline and/or conviction. If we are continuously without discipline, we are possibly illegitimate children which are not heirs to the promise, or terribly distracted and/or ensnared; thereby lacking in Christian character!⁴⁶⁷ All things of and

⁴⁵⁹ Matthew 10:22-28; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

⁴⁶⁰ 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; James 4:3-6.

⁴⁶¹ Mark 4:21-23; 5:26-29; 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Timothy 5:24, 25.

⁴⁶² Galatians 5:19-21.

⁴⁶³ Galatians 5:22, 23.

⁴⁶⁴ Galatians 4:9-11.

⁴⁶⁵ Ephesians 2:4-10; Romans 3:28-31.

⁴⁶⁶ Romans 13:1-5 - emphasis verse 2.

pertaining to God involve discipline, including wisdom and love; for appropriate decisions should be made!⁴⁶⁸ Conviction regarding loving discipline is received from God; a blessing upon those who render devotional loyalty and obedient submission to Him!⁴⁶⁹ The only way to leave maximum room for God to both will and work for His own good pleasure, thereby receiving His blessings; is to deny volitional “self” with adamancy, for this is the first step toward devotional submission unto the authority of the Lord!⁴⁷⁰

Note: The following is in reference to those whom fall within the realm of that which is mentioned. These statements are in no way referencing any specific individual reader! If what you read brings forth personal conviction; praise God for His wonderful righteous goodness!⁴⁷¹

I would point out at this point, that far too many believers are babes and/or babies within their faith. Let me reiterate and expound upon this statement:

1. Many do not study the gospel, so the power of the Word can bring forth change in accordance to training in righteousness.⁴⁷² This is (in most cases) because they refuse to submit to God.⁴⁷³

Their faith does not grow beyond adolescence, because increased faith comes from hearing (being witnessed) and studying the Scriptures.⁴⁷⁴ This is also to say that many believers do not mimic the behavior of sound Christians, but rather the lukewarm-ness of the many who remain distracted by that which is of the world; this as without the necessity of “stern disciplined effort,” pride and excuses come forth!⁴⁷⁵ I have spoken to several believers who stated that they do not study the Gospel, because they will be accountable for what they have learned. Somehow

⁴⁶⁷ 2 Corinthians 11:3; Matthew 13:13-23; Hebrews 12:4-11.

⁴⁶⁸ 1 Corinthians 6:9-12; 8:5-13; 9:23-27; 10:23-11:1; John 14:15-21.

⁴⁶⁹ James 3:13-4:10; Proverbs 3:11, 12; 8:32-36; 12:1-3.

⁴⁷⁰ Matthew 16:24-26; cf. John 8:31-36.

⁴⁷¹ 1 Chronicles 16:34; Nehemiah 1:5-7.

⁴⁷² 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17; 4:1-5.

⁴⁷³ James 4:3-10.

⁴⁷⁴ Hebrews 5:11-14; Romans 10:17; John 17:17.

⁴⁷⁵ 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:4-6; 2 Thessalonians 3:13-15.

I do not believe that intentional ignorance will be an excuse on the day each of us gives account.⁴⁷⁶ This is unfortunate, as many times the children of lukewarm (or cold) believers also stay as babes within the faith..⁴⁷⁷ Because children generally mimic that which they witness in their parents, many times before listening to what is said, in many cases the children fail to realize that an abundant relationship with God is possible; as well as an abundant understanding of the Gospel. The reason for this is derived from the parent's distractions away from loving the Lord with all their heart, mind, soul and strength.⁴⁷⁸ The Lord made this the foremost commandment for a reason, as to vary from this opens the door to idolatry of "self" in one's life; thereby diminishing potential for a truly Christian demeanor.⁴⁷⁹ People tend to place the emphasis of their love upon that which is seen, rather than loving Him who is unseen; this being directly related to failure to "deny self," thus the flesh continues to motivate and mislead!⁴⁸⁰ These traits are then taught others by witnessed demeanor; this when within family can lead to generations of individuals who with weak faith never come to realize the beauty of an intimate relationship with God, which leads to: fervor, obedience, and loving submission, which allows God's full blessings!

Too many times, parents do not train up their children in the ways of the Lord, because they want their children to like them.⁴⁸¹ What kind of love is that?⁴⁸² When we truly love someone we want the best for them, therefore we teach them about our Lord by our words and deeds.⁴⁸³ *If* we as parents cannot seek to please our Lord in all things, including the rearing of our children in accordance to God's admonitions, derived from attitude leading to proper focus and obedience; how can we possibly teach another about the narrow path which leads to righteousness.⁴⁸⁴ Please remember, my brethren; *if* we will not teach the ways of the Lord to those we love (we are to love everyone), someone will most certainly entice them about inappropriate things.⁴⁸⁵

⁴⁷⁶ Romans 14:11, 12; cf. John 12:46-50.

⁴⁷⁷ Revelation 3:15, 16.

⁴⁷⁸ Deuteronomy 6:5; 13:4; Matthew 22:36-40.

⁴⁷⁹ Luke 14:26-35.

⁴⁸⁰ 2 Corinthians 4:13-18; cf. 1 Peter 16-9; 1 John 4:19-21.

⁴⁸¹ Proverbs 22:6.

⁴⁸² John 15:1-17.

⁴⁸³ James 1:22-27.

⁴⁸⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:6-9; Ephesians 5:5-17; Romans 12:1, 2; Matthew 7:13-27.

Parents: *If* you want your children to grow in the Lord—set your mind to show them how! In doing so you all will grow, with the growth which is from God alone!⁴⁸⁶ Children: *If* what you see in your parents is contradictory to the standards set forth by our Lord, you follow Jesus; *if* your parents are weak in their faith show them how to have a strong faith by your perseverance to do that which is right! Parents and children: Turn to, trust in, and serve Him!⁴⁸⁷

Personal Note: Within the Matthew 10:34-40 Scriptures please understand that not being worthy of the Lord is referencing an inability to be an instrument of His righteousness; this is not referring to an inability to be saved.

2. Many maintain excuses for, and attempt to hide from their inappropriate behavior (most folks have done this at some point in life, my “self” included). This is derived from inane thinking, in accordance to the flesh.⁴⁸⁸ Denial of volitional “self” and focus upon the Lord eliminates this from happening; for in obedience of preparation for battle, we are no longer to remain ignorant of Satan’s schemes!⁴⁸⁹

The Lord knows how very much we need to change the way we think. This is why the first step in doing so, is to love the Lord first and foremost!⁴⁹⁰ When we practice staying clear of (not touching) that which defiles, we slowly begin to realize that we can do without such things (which defile) much easier than we had previously believed. With this new understanding, we come to realize the effectiveness in letting God change our way of thinking! When we realize the necessity of walking in truth as commanded by our Lord, we also then realize that we are no longer in need of excuses for, and further evasion from our past actions. The Lord’s forgiveness of our past sins is complete by the atonement of Christ (*if* confessed); our forgiveness of ourselves should also be complete as we place our trust in His faithfulness to have forgiven us!⁴⁹¹

⁴⁸⁵ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15; 1 Corinthians 15:33; Colossians 1:28, 29.

⁴⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:5-9.

⁴⁸⁷ Matthew 10:34-40; Colossians 1:16-23.

⁴⁸⁸ Jeremiah 23:24; Psalms 94:7-15.

⁴⁸⁹ Ephesians 6:10-20; 2 Corinthians 10:3-7; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4.

⁴⁹⁰ Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 12:1-3; Philippians 3:18-21.

Personal Note: There is no righteous reason not to confess our wrongdoing; for God knows all things about us! An excuse being an attempt to evade either truth or reality, or both, is but a form of delusion; thus completely inappropriate. Since God knows all things, excuses do not vindicate us, but rather hinder our spiritual growth as we seek to hide from God; as His children we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth!⁴⁹² It is righteous to surrender our “self” unto God by insistent denial of it, because of the detriment which it causes; thus all that is of the flesh which causes spiritual hindrance is rejected, which is an act of devotional love! I believe this simple principle to be very true—we have regrets tomorrow, for failure to do our best unto the Lord today!⁴⁹³ What I say now, I say from personal experience. Even as adults we tend to be insecure, thereby feeling the necessity to fit in. Being in the family of God we are never alone, nor are we in need of being like others solely for the purpose of companionship, when many continued relationships can potentially lead us astray.⁴⁹⁴ To put on the Lord Jesus Christ, is to have the attitude to be Christ-like; attitude leading to proper immovable focus (on Him) is the key to victory!

When we fail to realize the abounding, intimate love of the Lord for each of us (everyone included), we tend to remain open to carnal insecurities which cause trouble. We refuse to come out from the midst of folks who maintain (practice) inappropriate behavior, while also refusing to allow the Lord to cleanse us from all which defiles flesh and spirit; because we continue to associate foolishly. Please remember that sin causes terrible disruption in our fellowship with the Lord!⁴⁹⁵ Because being in God’s grace abounding presence is the foundation for victory, being outside of His presence leads to defeat! I know this to be a fact, as to dabble in the inappropriate indeed causes terrible hindrance to fellowship with God; therefore, nothing of the created realm is worth causing hindrance to the greatest relationship which has ever been!⁴⁹⁶

⁴⁹¹ Galatians 2:17-21.

⁴⁹² 2 Corinthians 13:1-8.

⁴⁹³ Romans 13:11-14; Philippians 16:6; 2:12, 13.

⁴⁹⁴ Corinthians 15:33.

⁴⁹⁵ Isaiah 59:1-4; Psalm 66:18.

⁴⁹⁶ Matthew 6:25-34.

How many times as parents have we told our children not to touch something, yet they do the exact opposite of what they were told! This is the same principle as our heavenly Father telling us—not to touch that which defiles, and we do it anyway! So we dabble with things, and make excuses for our decision by saying things such as: I really did not grab hold Lord; oh a little touch won't hurt; what's the big deal; if it feels good do it; well everyone else is doing it; it's what I have always done. When a little child is disobedient, that is one thing; when we act like disobedient children although we are grown adults, this is something else entirely!⁴⁹⁷ Is there actually any form of love emphasized in disobedience?⁴⁹⁸

I have done these things myself, so I speak from experience when I say “please stop, for enough is enough!”⁴⁹⁹ Many believers have never known the blessing of true communication with the Lord; neither had I, until turning completely away from all that defiles both flesh and spirit! Until we surrender all our foolishness before His throne of grace and sincerely decide to cease our excuses, evasion tactics and sin, we may never know! *If* you have never considered separating yourself from inappropriate friends and circumstances, thereby also the temptations, please do so; for the Lord God of all creation eagerly awaits our un-hindered loyalty and devotion!

3. Many seek to stay in their comfort zones; although this in reality constructs (by inadvertent choice) a cell of bondage around the believer; for we remain in the dungeon of our own ego.

When a believer stays in their comfort zone, they in fact stay where they feel it is safe; in this place, the reality remains a refusal to serve or see clearly.⁵⁰⁰ This refusal to serve is based upon one's desire for comfort rather than being receptive to appropriate: suffering, tribulation, and persecution; which is for the glory of God and the edification of others. The brethren who desire this form of comfort demonstrate their trust to be in: situations, circumstances and “self”; proving a lack of trust in the Lord.⁵⁰¹ I am very sorrowful

⁴⁹⁷ 1 Corinthians 13:9-13.

⁴⁹⁸ John 14:15-17.

⁴⁹⁹ 1 Peter 4:3; Titus 1:16; Matthew 15:7-9; Mark 7:6-9.

⁵⁰⁰ Romans 8:36, 37; Philippians 3:7-14; 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

⁵⁰¹ 2 Corinthians 1:3-7.

that the brethren who seek comfort over service will never know the blessing of adversity, thereby the true comfort which comes from the Lord's safe and serene deliverance!⁵⁰²

When a brother or sister stays in the cell of bondage (comfort zone) which they have built by choice, they remain deceived into believing they will serve God. Because all who seek to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution for the sake of Christ and the gospel; to deny this fact by seeking to dwell within one's comfort zone by choice, leads to being deluded and defeated.⁵⁰³ What would we say—"here am I, Lord, send me," just make sure that whatever you call me to do is within the boundaries of my will (volitional cell)! How absurd, to believe that our will be done can in any way serve the Lord.⁵⁰⁴ This foolishness of living comfortably within Christianity has led to: diminished discipline, weak watered down love and instruction, condoning of sin and inappropriate behavior, overabundant seeking of worldly things, marriage until discomfort do us part, failure to speak the truth for the glory of God, coveting, great emphasis for religious traditions and rituals; failure to correct, rebuke, reproof and exhort according to Biblical standards; cowardice, extreme love of "self" (narcissism), self-centeredness, a changing of words to avoid severity (example—human bodies no longer die—they pass away or expire—like a magazine subscription).

The seeking of comfort will not only keep true believers from serving the Lord, it will also keep many professing (deceived, unsaved) believers out of God's kingdom.⁵⁰⁵ Discomfort dwelling within rituals and traditions, has caused men throughout the history of the church to drop some useless practices, yet hold to others; which are just as useless for spiritual growth.⁵⁰⁶ This is the basis of the different denominations within the body of Christ today. Because it is difficult for creatures of habit (humans) to set their minds to cease the inappropriate completely, we tend to hold on to portions; just because that is what we have always done or have become accustomed. Why did the Apostles not celebrate traditions

⁵⁰² 2 Timothy 2:3, 4; 1 Peter 2:20-25; 3:14-17; 4:17-19; Hebrews 5:7-10.

⁵⁰³ Timothy 3:10-13.

⁵⁰⁴ Isaiah 6:8; Matthew 10:32, 33; 16:24-26; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15; Titus 2:11-15.

⁵⁰⁵ Matthew 11:43.

⁵⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 10:23; Mark 7:5-9.

in the first century; with the exception of the Lord's Supper (which is an act of remembrance)? Because they celebrated and remembered the Lord daily by faith; not looking back at what He had already done via traditions and rituals!⁵⁰⁷ This will be discussed further in the following segment (#4); and in chapter eight.

The Lord indicated that we must count the cost of service.⁵⁰⁸ True Christianity involves service (servanthood)! To claim to know God and yet deny this fact is the essence of being lukewarm, cold, or intentionally ignorant. To devotionally understand this fact is to submit and serve! How much money is spent on believers comfort in congregation structures, when millions have yet to have possession of a Bible, or sustenance throughout the world? How is it that the church no longer has responsibility for the poor, but rather the government?⁵⁰⁹ The seeking of comfort has caused terrible spiritual harm within the Body of Christ, and to many believers; for failure to relinquish the flesh causes spiritual destitution! When will this foolishness in congregational settings stop, so we can once again focus upon our Lord; thereby regaining appropriate focus and devotion as a unified body of believers?⁵¹⁰

Note: To speak the truth in love is to love enough to speak the truth which must be spoken. As the truth hurts, have we become so cowardice and weak in our love for others, that we allow our brethren to continue wandering in darkness?⁵¹¹ The Lord said we would suffer tribulation in our service to Him for others, well this is but one way in which we will, *if* we serve by speaking the Gospel truth in love! Nowhere in the Gospel did the Lord tell us to deny or reject speaking the Gospel truth in love; for the sake of appeasing the flesh of others unto spiritual degradation and detriment! This fact has been rejected within the current-day church; this being one of the reasons why Jesus (the: Way, truth, and life) has been denied access to the church (kept out) since A.D. 1954!⁵¹²

⁵⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 11:3; John 19:30; Galatians 4:9-11.

⁵⁰⁸ Luke 14:27-30.

⁵⁰⁹ Matthew 26:9-11.

⁵¹⁰ Ephesians 4:14-16.

⁵¹¹ James 5:19, 20.

⁵¹² Revelation 3:14-22.

4. Many refuse to pass beyond the elementary teaching about the Christ and the traditions of man, so as to gain maturity within the faith.⁵¹³ This attitude of refusal is found greatly within those who focus upon, and follow other men and women, many times forsaking the ways of God within intentional ignorance; for multitudes are more concerned of what other humans may think and practice, than are concerned with what God knows (even to the core of motive) and is concerned with (righteousness, holiness, living in the light of truth)!⁵¹⁴

Throughout the history of God's chosen people (offspring of Abraham), individuals have held to ritualistic aspects of physical realm materialism in worship.⁵¹⁵ This repeatedly occurred within the nation of Israel, as but a few kings demanded the people return to worshipping the Lord in purity; thereby turning away from worldly aspects of fear and ritual.⁵¹⁶ The Lord is pleased with those who denounce worldly acts of worship; wholly (without restriction). It is unfortunate that so many believers do not realize the harm caused in regard to walking by faith, when aspects of sight are utilized (and believed) to be pleasing to the Lord.⁵¹⁷

Men of little faith, who dwell in positions of superiority, lead many others of little faith to walk by sight; which condones and allows ritualistic worship of rote! Many supposed spiritual leaders are but the blind leading the blind to depravity and carnal devotions. It is because of such things that too many within the Body of Christ are captive to wrongful desires, and thereby captive to the wiles of manmade religion.⁵¹⁸ Thus discipline falls prey to one's own willful comfort, leading to dwelling within worldly foolishness deprived of truth! This is why even believers hate to hear "stop" or "no," for these words tell us that rules apply. Remember, my brethren—it is for discipline that we endure; although discipline to do the right thing (righteousness) is not a human trait, it is a necessary trait of Christianity, which is why believers must become devotional instruments of God's righteousness!⁵¹⁹

⁵¹³ Hebrews 5:12-6:3.

⁵¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Galatians 1:10; 3:25-4:11; cf. Romans 12:1, 2; 1 Peter 1:13-16; 1 John 1:5-10.

⁵¹⁵ Deuteronomy 7:6; Romans 10:12, 13; cf. 1 Kings 3:3; 11:31-35; 15:1-6.

⁵¹⁶ 2 Kings 18:1-12; 22:1-23:30; cf. 1 John 4:1-21.

⁵¹⁷ Hosea 6:6; Hebrews 11:6.

⁵¹⁸ 2 Corinthians 11:14, 15; Colossians 2:20-23.

⁵¹⁹ 1 Timothy 4:7-11; 1 Corinthians 9:23-27; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; cf. Psalm 119.

Just as a few choice men of old refused to bow the knee to futile false religiosity, so also has a remnant throughout history turned from the inappropriate fully (examples—Daniel, Josiah, Jeremiah, Isaiah, Samuel; Elijah) in accordance to truth. This is an outward manifestation of true devotion and reverence for the Lord.⁵²⁰ Just as so many in the past had believed that “high places” (top closer to heaven) brought them closer to the Lord, so it is that too many maintain “high places” (physical realm rituals and traditions) yet today within the Body of Christ; this as multitudes continue attempts to worship God carnally, rather than by disciplined devotional faith according to standards of spiritual reverence and dedication appropriate to sincere love for God! Many of the traditions and rituals followed blindly within the Body of Christ, although futile to those who truly walk by faith, are in actuality “high places” which are taught to be pleasing to the Lord, by compromising individuals who seek to appease! The primary reason why Jesus has been kept out of His own church (Body of Christ), is because multitudes do not want to walk in truth or in the light of reality regarding devotional obedience, loyalty, and reverence to God! When the sinful nature is in control and leading our existence, we will tend to believe only according to personal choice; while denying the truth because of the pain it (truth) may bring forth, when we realize our wrong and must confront it!

How many professing believers go to church only on Easter (name derived from Eostre—name of the Anglo-Saxon goddess of the dawn / Ishtar-Mesopotamian goddess of fertility and war), as they yet believe that this pleases God; although all aspects of pagan religious endeavor are adamantly condemned in the Gospel! How many believers trust a once a week visit to their local congregational meeting structure (Sunday believers), to be the essence of Christianity? This type of behavior is the epitome of “high places” in the lives of multitudes; for beliefs which incorporate places and things are of delusive fleshly indulgent religion (carnality) which is opposed to worship of God in spirit and in truth! What is a church? When most (not all) folks are asked this question, they almost always refer to a structure. A “church” (Biblically = *ekklyasia*: an assembly; a (religious) congregation) is a group or gathering of individuals, which includes: mobs, protestors, etc.; in all cases having nothing to do with a structure.⁵²¹ The existence of

⁵²⁰ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Psalm 19:8-11; James 2:18-26.

“high places” demonstrates a lack of knowledge and faithful spiritual devotion; whereas it is the humble willful rendering of our devotion that is pleasing to the Lord!⁵²²

One must be willfully receptive to the Word of the Lord *if* it is to uplift, edify and change their life; this by training in discipline and righteousness!⁵²³ How many folks assemble together (church), and actually do not pay attention to what is said? How many go to chitchat (con-fabulate) about so and so, or sit eagerly awaiting the moment they can dash to a local restaurant? How many actually look up the Scriptures of mention during the sermons, so as to study and thereby evidence the actual context of the Scripture? Do not misunderstand me; gathering together with other believers is very important to one’s uplifting within the faith; *if* and only *if* all gatherings are conducted with strict adherence to Gospel standards, and are conducted devotionally!⁵²⁴ My reference here is that many gather together with other believers thinking this makes them a “Christian”; whereas in actuality a “Christian” (those who are Christ-like) is an individual who selflessly is disciplined and devotional in humbly submitting to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, and who by diligent study of Scripture walks according to knowledge upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness! High places are useless, and understood to be so by “Christians” with true faith and reverent devotion!⁵²⁵ Christians walk trusting in the faithfulness of the Lord, placing no spiritual trust in that which is seen or practiced.⁵²⁶ Please understand, sincere devotion for the Lord is not a “practiced” trait; for devotion is a moment by moment reality which comes forth because of disciplined reverence!

Turning from carnal trust in worldly things (including religiosity) is very important in the life of anyone who truly desires to love and serve the Lord! The longer we remain within the realm of futile (inane) thinking and worship, the more opportunity we give our enemy (Satan and demons) to entrap us into the inanity of this world. “Christians” are in the world, we are not of it; for our home awaits us in heaven!⁵²⁷

⁵²¹ Acts 5:11; 8:1-3; 9:31; 11:22-26; 12:5; cf. Matthew 18:20.

⁵²² Isaiah 29:13, 14.

⁵²³ 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

⁵²⁴ Hebrews 10:19-27.

⁵²⁵ Galatians 4:1-11; 1 John 3:19-24.

⁵²⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:13-18.

The aforementioned few Jewish kings who turned completely from all worldly religious darkness, by seeking the Lord in the light of truth, were mentioned to have done so, that we may realize this indeed pleases God. I fail to notice differences (other than subtle) between how believers and non-believers celebrate (practice) holidays which make proclamation to be for Christ Jesus. All celebrations must be in the light of truth, or they should cease entirely!⁵²⁸ Surrender of carnal foolish behavior practices opens the way for spiritual maturity and growth, *if* devotion unto God leads to submission and obedience; this *if* the individual is a legitimate child of God, as spiritual growth from God is solely upon His legitimate children! Please understand, spiritual growth and emotional responses are two entirely different things; for spiritual growth from God leads to a devotionally more in-depth obedience within His mature children, whereas emotional responses lead only to increased religiosity. Proper attitude leading to proper focus, leads to surrender and thereby freedom and victory (by faith) in Christ! Since it is the Lord Himself who does that which is pleasing to Himself in the life of a believer; we no longer need “high places” as He is present within born again believers!⁵²⁹ Physical realm aspects of worship will be discussed further in chapter eight.

Where shall we find ourselves? Shall we find that we remained deceived into believing we were saved, when the evidence of our fruits demonstrated otherwise?⁵³⁰ Shall we find that although we have been saved by God’s grace, we have never earned reward in heaven by allowing the Lord to perform in and through us good and pure acts?⁵³¹ Shall we find that in our seeking to appease others (men and women) we have greatly disappointed our Lord?⁵³² Shall we find that distractions by worldly foolishness have caused our Christian fruits to lie dormant? Shall we find (by our procrastination) that tomorrow never comes, and now all is said and done?⁵³³ Shall we find that our holding to “high places” has caused great hindrance to our growth as believers? Shall we find that

⁵²⁷ Hebrews 11:8-16.

⁵²⁸ Romans 14:5-8; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8; 1 John 1:5-10.

⁵²⁹ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22; Ephesians 1:13-23.

⁵³⁰ Matthew 7:16-27; Titus 1:15, 16.

⁵³¹ 1 Corinthians 3:11-16.

⁵³² Matthew 10:34-40; Galatians 1:3-10; Colossians 3:22-4:1.

⁵³³ James 4:13-17; John 3:3-7; Luke 12:15-21.

our devotional surrender unto the Lord opened the door to the greatest blessings we have ever known; true spiritual fellowship and servanthood?⁵³⁴ The choice rests with each of us; therefore, it is sound advice that we each test ourselves to see *if* we are actually legitimate children of God, for eternity is a very long time to regret never having done so.⁵³⁵

A Matter of the Heart: Summation

To wander through life under the leadership of one's own volition and desires is okay if there is no ambition beyond the grave; living carnally leads to spiritual defeat, and/or condemnation!⁵³⁶ To come to knowledge of the truth and thereby an understanding of this fact, is to receive the potential understanding of human wretchedness.⁵³⁷ To understand one's need of a Lord and Savior for redemption from sin, and the necessity to submit to the authority of God; is to understand the wretchedness of our sinful nature, and the imperative of going beyond one's "self" for: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and guidance!⁵³⁸ With the veil lifted as by being in Christ; the wisdom of God demonstrates in our spirit the necessity and importance of disciplined focus upon the Lord.⁵³⁹ With the knowledge of the necessity for disciplined focus and obedience, we now must make a choice as to continue in our former lusts and sin, or repent and surrender unto the Lord! This is the decision which multitudes of believers refuse to make, leading them to straddle the fence of indecision; many times for the remainder of their mortal existence!

Simply put: To understand what the Lord has done for us by grace, should lead to a understanding of His love;⁵⁴⁰ to understand His love to be the greatest love in the universe, should lead our spiritual earnestness to be focused upon loving, serving and worshipping Him with our very existence;⁵⁴¹ to understand the wide path leads to spiritual destruction and in no way leads to anything eternally profitable, is to understand the necessity to walk the narrow path which leads to righteousness;⁵⁴²

⁵³⁴ Matthew 13:23; Luke 8:15-18; Philippians 1:19-24; 1 Timothy 4:6-11; Romans 13:11-14; 1 John 2:4-6.

⁵³⁵ Romans 2:4-11; cf. Revelation 22:12-17.

⁵³⁶ Romans 8:12, 13; 2 Peter 3:17, 18.

⁵³⁷ Galatians 5:16, 17; 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

⁵³⁸ Galatians 5:19-26; Romans 8:14-17; Hebrews 5:8-10.

⁵³⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:15-18; Hebrews 12:1-11.

⁵⁴⁰ Ephesians 2:4-10; John 3:1-17; Romans 5:1-11.

⁵⁴¹ John 4:20-24; 2 Corinthians 5:2-9; Ephesians 3:14-21; 5:5-17; 1 John 4:19-21.

to walk the narrow path of righteousness takes the masterful leadership of the Lord, therefore true knowledge should lead to sincere surrender of one's trust and devotion unto Him!⁵⁴³ Please remember, my brethren; the Lord does not save or protect groups, but rather individuals, therefore the devotional doings or walk of others cannot help us.⁵⁴⁴

Personal Note: All of my early life when aloof a relationship with God, I sought purpose through exciting acts and actions. Having done many different things yet finding no satisfaction as to my purpose, I realized that my pride and arrogance (carnality) had blinded me to the reality of my purpose—knowing, loving, and serving the Lord Jesus Christ! Everything I have ever sought, including excitement and the answers of life, I have found within my relationship with the Lord. For someone like me who enjoyed the wages of sin and foolishness, this is a statement of truth which I freely give; hoping you also will find your purpose in Christ.⁵⁴⁵ I know now from experience—the purpose of being which all seek is found in a personal relationship with the Lord! We were truly created by Him and for Him, thus existing through Him!⁵⁴⁶ Please ask Him to lead you upon the journey of your eternal existence, which begins now; the blessed journey of your life He has chosen specifically for you!⁵⁴⁷ The supplication unto the Lord which opens the narrow gate onto the narrow path of righteousness is for “truth”; for the blessing of the Lord which begins our journey unto freedom is the blessing of truth!⁵⁴⁸

It does not matter where we have been, or what we have previously done!⁵⁴⁹ What matters is that we take a good hard look (through the spiritual eyes of faith) at who the Lord is; earnestly seeking for Him to teach us.⁵⁵⁰ Just as we seek to please those whom we love upon this earth, should we not all the more seek to love Him who has loved us with unsurpassed lovingkindness, mercy and grace!⁵⁵¹

⁵⁴² Matthew 7:13-27; 1 Corinthians 6:12-14; 10:23, 24; 1 Timothy 4:1-12; 6:12-19; Luke 12:15.

⁵⁴³ Jeremiah 17:5-14; cf. Philippians 4:4-9.

⁵⁴⁴ Ezekiel 14:19, 20; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:10.

⁵⁴⁵ Colossians 1:9-14; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5.

⁵⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6.

⁵⁴⁷ Ephesians 3:14-19.

⁵⁴⁸ John 8:31-36.

⁵⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Philippians 3:7-14.

⁵⁵⁰ Hebrews 11:6; 1 John 2:21-27; Matthew 23:8, 9.

⁵⁵¹ John 3:16; 15:11-17; Titus 3:4-8; 1 John 4:11-17.

Multitudes of believers: seek a God of convenience;⁵⁵² seek a Savior, and yet deny the divine lordship and masterful leadership of Christ in their lives (carnal believers);⁵⁵³ expect God to follow their mortal will, while denying God's will be done;⁵⁵⁴ place the things of God secondary to the things (stuff / mammon) of the world, thus wanting it both ways!⁵⁵⁵ The Lord waits patiently for each of us to open our heart and spirit (our choice) so that He may enter unrestricted by carnal volition! *If* you have not yet opened your heart to Him—please wait no longer!⁵⁵⁶ Please remember—He is our Savior by grace, He is our Lord by choice!⁵⁵⁷

For us to understand that our way simply does not work, should lead us to the understanding that the proper paths are only made straight by the Lord.⁵⁵⁸ Too many believers yet continue on the same path as prior to coming to knowledge of the truth, as they feel if they continue long enough all will work out for the better. How can anything work out for the better on such a path, when the path is all together the wrong one!⁵⁵⁹ *If* we desire to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord, it must be upon the narrow path of His righteousness!⁵⁶⁰ We cannot have a spiritually victorious journey in life unless we go back to square one and begin again on the correct (righteous) path!⁵⁶¹ *If* the path you are on is not working, rather than continuing on, please change direction under the guidance of the Lord Jesus Christ; for with sincerity of devotion for Him, and supplication for “truth”; He will show the way, one disciplined and devotional step at a time, henceforth!

Key Note of Truth

True Christianity being a matter of the most sincere devotion, demonstrates how it is the agape love given by God, which is necessary to escape the superficial love of the world.⁵⁶² As Christians we should never

⁵⁵² Isaiah 29:13; James 4:3-6.

⁵⁵³ Romans 8:24, 25; 10:8-10; Luke 14:25-35.

⁵⁵⁴ 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 1 Peter 4:1-6; 2 Peter 1:1-11.

⁵⁵⁵ 1 John 2:15-17.

⁵⁵⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

⁵⁵⁷ Ephesians 2:4-10; Romans 10:8-13, specific v. 9; James 4:7-10.

⁵⁵⁸ Proverbs 3:5-8; Luke 16:10-13.

⁵⁵⁹ 6:4-8.

⁵⁶⁰ Peter 1:13-16; Romans 1:16, 17; 10:1-4.

⁵⁶¹ Proverbs 4:23-27; Matthew 6:25-34; 22:36-40.

⁵⁶² fruit of the Spirit - Galatians 5:22, 23; cf. John 14:27-15:17; Luke 16:15-31; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

love anything that does not have life, for *if* we do—we have not overcome the ways of the world; thus we are yet ignorant of Satan’s schemes, and being overcome by the world and the one who entices and influences in accordance!⁵⁶³ Satan need only hold a believer captive efficiently in one way, to succeed in his (Satan’s) task of keeping us from better knowing and serving the Lord God of truth and light; for Satan’s will is that multitudes both deceive and be deceived, and by this be led astray of the spiritual reality!⁵⁶⁴ Whether this is (examples): inappropriate love (aforementioned), un-forgiveness (please consider that love and un-forgiveness are opposites; thus un-forgiveness is an act of hatred),⁵⁶⁵ trusting uncertainties,⁵⁶⁶ fear,⁵⁶⁷ forms of immorality,⁵⁶⁸ malicious gossip, nosiness, moodiness;⁵⁶⁹ the result will be bondage to (distraction by) that which is of this world.⁵⁷⁰ To love anything which has not life is to have idols!⁵⁷¹ To love anyone more than our Lord, is to have idols!⁵⁷² Do we have idol worship in the world today, and yet even within the Body of Christ (church)? Absolutely!

Although following the Lord Jesus Christ takes perseverance, endurance, proven character, and the strength which God provides; it is not complicated.⁵⁷³ The confusion within the faith of many comes from their own: double-mindedness, failure to obey and accurately align the Gospel, and split devotions.⁵⁷⁴ Christianity is truly a matter of both heart and spirit; for with disciplined sincere devotion (heart), comes the growth which is from God alone (spiritual)! The choices we make evidence the motives of our demeanor; therefore our fruits indeed evidence the truth as to our faith and righteousness in accordance to God’s grace, or lack thereof!⁵⁷⁵ Instead of attempting the Christian walk of our own accord (carnal at best), leading to spiritual defeat; follow the

⁵⁶³ James 4:1-4; 2 Corinthians 2:9-11; 1 Peter 5:5-11.

⁵⁶⁴ Matthew 13:18-23, 37-43; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3.

⁵⁶⁵ Matthew 6:14, 15; 1 Peter 1:22-25; John 13:34, 35; 15:14-17.

⁵⁶⁶ 1 Timothy 6:17-19; Matthew 15:7-9; Colossians 2:6-10.

⁵⁶⁷ 1 John 4:17-19.

⁵⁶⁸ Romans 13:12-14; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

⁵⁶⁹ Romans 1:28-32; 1 Timothy 3:11; 5:13.

⁵⁷⁰ Matthew 13:22; Luke 8:14.

⁵⁷¹ James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

⁵⁷² Matthew 10:36-40; Luke 14:26, 27.

⁵⁷³ Matthew 10:22-28; Ephesians 6:10-18; Luke 8:15-18; Romans 2:5-11; 5:1-6; 15:5-13.

⁵⁷⁴ James 1:7, 8; 4:7, 8; Luke 6:46-49; Acts 20:24; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12; Galatians 4:9-11; Titus 1:15, 16.

⁵⁷⁵ Matthew 6:19-24; 7:16-20.

Lord as He takes you where He wills, henceforth achieving victory both in the spiritual and physical realms!

The primary baby steps of Christianity are—faith in knowing that our Lord is the one true God and the only Savior of humanity,⁵⁷⁶ and denial of “self.”⁵⁷⁷ These steps are all manifest in the life of individuals who have answered God’s righteous drawing to believe, in accordance to the measure of faith which He has righteously activated.⁵⁷⁸ A remnant chooses disciplined devotion and obedience, while multitudes deny Him because of: pride, arrogance, worldly distractions, or being deceived by Satan.⁵⁷⁹ Too many fail because of a lack of devotional sincerity! Superficiality has no place in the realm of our faith and walk for Jesus; as the Lord looks to the depths of one’s heart and mind, and thereby knows the utter truth.⁵⁸⁰ We must examine ourselves carefully, for true sincerity of: faith, restraint, love, and discipline; for these are all a matter of the heart!⁵⁸¹

Personal Note: The wonderment of the spiritual relational reality within which we are saved and blessed is all about God! When during a moment of complete and utter surrender, we confess Jesus as Lord; we are adopted into God’s family by grace; and this by the divine work (drawing process) of God.⁵⁸² The confession unto salvation is—“Jesus as Lord,” not Jesus as Savior! Within the moment of surrender, when this is according to God’s righteous drawing, acknowledgement is made of the imperative to submit to the authority of God; for this is the doorway (small / narrow gate) which leads to the narrow path of God’s righteousness, upon which our journey with the Lord begins and continues for all eternity. Any attempt to pass through the doorway as by the flesh (self) is: futile, foolish, and foundational to insincerity; leading to sustained carnal endeavors which rarely (*if ever*) achieve appropriate behavior which is pleasing to the Lord! When we realize that God is greater than our “self,” during a devotional confession of faith, the Lord

⁵⁷⁶ Deuteronomy 4:35-40; Isaiah 9:6, 7; 43:11-13; 45:5, 6, 21-25; John 14:1-4; Romans 10:8-13; 14:11, 12; Philippians 2:9-11.

⁵⁷⁷ Matthew 16:24-27.

⁵⁷⁸ Romans 8:1-39; 12:1-21.

⁵⁷⁹ Romans 10:1-21.

⁵⁸⁰ 1 Corinthians 4:4, 5; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Psalm 26:2.

⁵⁸¹ Lamentation 3:1-66; 1 Corinthians 11:23-34; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10.

⁵⁸² John 6:44, 45; cf. 14:6, 7.

is then willing and able to masterfully guide us upon the path of His righteousness; thus the reality of Gospel standards is manifest in us by our heavenly Father, as He truly wills and works in us all that is pleasing to Himself! This is Christianity; with the blessing being that we become capable of living our existence unto the Lord, as by His masterful leadership and strength by which we are: taught, nurtured, strengthened and exulted to higher levels of: love, devotion, discipline, dedication, righteousness, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge; thus all our endeavors of life become increasingly efficient and effective as we move forward to God's upward call in Christ Jesus!⁵⁸³

Amazingly these blessings last for all eternity! Can anything of our flesh (self) bring forth such beauty and righteousness? I think not!

⁵⁸³ Philippians 3:8-14.

CHAPTER FIVE

CHRISTIAN ATTITUDINAL BEHAVIOR

*Prophesy from the seven churches of revelation
regarding historical spiritual decline
Revelation 2:1-3:22*

Preface

Aspects of history and general characteristics will precede many examples of the churches; the purpose—to allow a better understanding of specifics in regard to each city, thereby also its church (ekklaysia), for the purpose of hermeneutic investigation. Hermeneutic investigation is imperative during study of the seven churches; for the words Jesus rendered reiterate importance in conjunction with the history of the place and people; thus the immensity of the words is fully emphasized, and thereby the message reaches full potential within the specific rendering of truth. Specifics in regard to individuals, peoples, Scriptural mandates and Christian standards will be mentioned in various areas of the writings, this also to reiterate meaning; thereby furthering understanding.

Please understand—the book of Revelation is prophesy, therefore future (eschatology) from the time of its being revealed (A.D. 90-96). The accounts which follow are for understanding of both life long ago, and prophesy which has unfolded from the time of its being rendered. This is revealed so as to better realize Christ's statements, and the different characteristics of Christian demeanor; throughout the fulfillment of church history, with the hermeneutic being vital for in-depth understanding as to how the Lord regards behavior by believers both appropriate and inappropriate specific to the understanding of human beings at certain places at certain times! The attitudinal behavior of all professing believers (not born again; illegitimate children) and/or confessing believers (born again; legitimate children) can be found within these accounts. Note—a scriptural test regarding “legitimate” and “illegitimate” children of God can be found in Hebrews 12:1-24; with specifics found in vs. 7-11.

I do not state that every specific which follows is completely accurate (exact distances; etc.); therefore I apologize for any inaccuracies in specifics. My intent is to make illustration of relational and religious (Christian in nature, former; doctrinal and ritualistic, latter): character, demeanor, sincerity, and focus. These are the specifics as I have noted them according to much study, investigation, and prayer. I am hopeful that in witnessing the characteristics of both life long ago and how most of the general characteristics yet remain even to present today; reading this may bring new understanding regarding loving and serving the Lord Jesus Christ. Just like everyone, I have a lot to learn regarding our Lord, which is why studying the Gospel and its history has for many years been my greatest expenditure of personal time. I truly hope that these historical accounts of Christian and religious life will uplift and bless the reader with new understanding as to the differences and similarities from times long ago, and the present age in which we live.

NOTES OF IMPERATIVE IMPORTANCE

1. The necessity to “heed” that which is rendered in Revelation chapters 2 & 3 (the seven churches) was, and remains imperative for understanding regarding the primary form of corruption which infiltrated the Christian church; thereby bringing forth alteration which was, and remains the—Christian religion! Although the church (actual Christianity) was founded in righteousness by the Lord in the forefront of the first century A.D.; the primary corruption entered at the forefront of the second century A.D., and being tolerated became a convincing insidious means of detrimental harlotry in the lives of multitudes from the third century A.D.; even so greatly to this very day!
2. Had believers actually “heeded” the warnings; which was not a request; then many more than a simple remnant (few) would have avoided being deceived (been blessed; Revelation 1:3), and the church would have abounded unto edification for multitudes, rather than but a remnant throughout the centuries from the time of the church being righteously founded by the Lord. The Lord not only rendered the warnings found in the specifics of the seven churches, but has done all possible that none should perish; yet the decision to avoid

deception, or not, being in accordance to human volition, leaves the realistic truth that each of us is responsible and accountable for our own success or failure, regarding adoption as God's children unto salvation or remaining condemned as by volitional choice to adhere to religious deception! God cannot be blamed; for His loving-kindness, mercy, and grace has abounded throughout!

3. The essence of what is stated in this chapter will become evident with study of the historical truth within the accounts which follow. Please also remember, the entire book of Revelation is to be "heeded"! The accounts which follow are solely in accordance to understanding the aforementioned (seven churches; Revelation chapters 2 & 3), and not the entire book of Revelation; thus much is indicative of Jewish history during the time period of discussion; therefore the imperative exists for exegesis and hermeneutics unto actual understanding pertaining to the Lord's statements; for investigation must be forthcoming as to what the specific words meant to those people at that place and time, if the actual emphasis is to be appropriately understood! Regarding the remaining chapters of Revelation please read and reference chapter six of the book (Big If—"Notations on Revelation").
4. Although there was once a "religion" as designated by the Lord, i.e. the Levitical Law; with the coming of the Messiah the necessary imperative became—faith; for the Law pointed directly to the coming Messiah, and with acceptance of Jesus as the Lord and Messiah of prophesy no further "religious tutoring" is of necessity! Please read Galatians chapters two through five; investigating specifically chapter three. Please understand, physical realm "religion" is only for those who did not learn the lesson of the tutorial, and thereby come to realize the essence of the personal spiritual relationship which is necessary in order to be legitimately adopted into God's family, and thereby saved from the wages of sin which is death; thus stayed from eternal separation from the Lord our Creator. Simply stated—religion is for those who hold to but a concept of the saving relationship (spiritual relational reality)! Please read John chapter three.

Foreword

1. The key to any actual form of “Christian” success is to place and keep God first; for as He never leads from the tail position, and as His masterful leadership is imperative for the achieving of anyone’s spiritual growth, He must (by personal choice) have priority within all endeavors within the life of any believer. The key to actual success as a servant of God, remains that He must be first and foremost; this as by a volitional decision of surrender, which is guarded each moment for the entirety of one’s existence in human form.⁵⁸⁴ Please note as by the footnote that it is rendered as a commandment—love the Lord; yet as devotional and reverent sincerity for Him is the motivational factor within the remnant who actually love Him aloof the insidious nature of religion and “self,” a commandment is not of necessity! A considerable understanding can be forthcoming, upon consideration of waning human devotion and the dangers of double-mindedness; for these fleshly degradations are the primary causes of wretchedness which led, and yet lead to the necessity for a commandment to love the Lord our Creator! It is for this reason that denial of “self” is imperative to an abounding relationship with the Lord, for sincere unwavering devotion for another cannot be achieved while the sinful nature (self; individuality) leads any or all endeavors!⁵⁸⁵ A primary example of leadership gone astray because of waning devotion, and the outcome being the Lord’s light of righteousness and truth being withdrawn from the congregation, can be plainly evidenced by proclamations from pastors and ministers that the specific congregation is “their congregation!” IT IS CHRIST’S BODY AND CONGREGATION; NO EXCEPTIONS! It is derived from the foolishness of the sinful nature (self; individuality) abounding in leadership no longer led by the Master and King, that denominational and conventional doctrine has taken precedence over Gospel truth; thus the leadership no longer upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness, leads those who follow them upon the broad path of spiritual decline and/or destruction!⁵⁸⁶

⁵⁸⁴ cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-25; Matthew 22:36-40; Luke 9:57-62; 14:26-35; John 12:24-27.

⁵⁸⁵ cf. Matthew 16:24-27; James 4:1-10.

⁵⁸⁶ cf. Matthew 7:13-27.

- More regarding the final outcome of this type wretchedness will be forthcoming within notes regarding the church at Laodicea; which is the current-day church (A.D. 1954—present), as by prophetic characteristics fulfilled.
 - Something which should remain of consideration throughout the study of the seven churches; what is “lukewarm” (Biblically)? Lukewarm is derived from three sources—having failed as by the heating effect of diligence to reach a hot state; having achieved a hot state, failing to be assiduous; having achieved a hot state, adding the cooling effects of: distraction, compromise, following the status quo, adherence to human religious: doctrines, precepts, philosophies, traditions, ideologies, and idealisms.
2. The Epistles of Christ are to be considered as:
- They are directed to the local church, as things which are (truth revealed).
 - The Epistles (seven = complete) are directed to all believers. Let all hear what the Spirit says!⁵⁸⁷
 - Effort should be made to apply (heed) the principals learned by the Epistles.⁵⁸⁸
 - Prophecy is to be believed without doubt, as the events which must take place. Jesus is the center (head) of the Church because He purchased it with His blood and knows it better than anyone; thus His instructions should be followed with devotional humble submissiveness and obedience!
 - Both commendation and rebuke should be considered, thereby gaining the understanding which motivates us to keep the Lord first; thus maintaining an appropriate attitude of subjection to God’s righteousness, which turns inappropriate behavior into appropriate godliness, as by the growth which He supplies.⁵⁸⁹
 - To those who overcome the world,⁵⁹⁰ Jesus promised the reward (blessing) of:
 - Eternal life (the paradise of God).⁵⁹¹

⁵⁸⁷ Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22.

⁵⁸⁸ cf. Revelation 1:1-8, specific v. 3; 22:6-16, specific v. 7.

⁵⁸⁹ cf. 1 Timothy 6:3-19; 2 Peter 1:1-11; Romans 10:1-4; 1 Corinthians 3:1-15.

⁵⁹⁰ cf. Romans 12:9-21; 1 John 2:3-27; 4:1-21.

- Being saved from the second death.⁵⁹²
- Being given hidden manna (food from God), and a new name.⁵⁹³
- Ruling the nations with Him during His millennial reign.⁵⁹⁴
Revelation 2:28—morning star;⁵⁹⁵ referring to being in the personal presence of Jesus Himself during the one thousand year millennial reign, blessed with true illumination from the Lord on a continual basis.
- Being given white garments (pure white as we have been cleansed of all sin for eternity); also having our names confessed before the Father as eternally secure.⁵⁹⁶
- Residence in the New Jerusalem, with the names of God the Father, Jesus, and the city upon believers.⁵⁹⁷
- The ability to sit with Jesus upon His throne.⁵⁹⁸
- Crowns of: righteousness;⁵⁹⁹ life;⁶⁰⁰ glory (for those anointed unto leadership).⁶⁰¹
- The honor of being called God’s child.⁶⁰²
 - A key factor should be remembered; the actual imperative of salvation is that God knows an individual as His legitimately adopted child!⁶⁰³ Religions, denominations, sects, emulated righteousness, living by the “golden rule,”⁶⁰⁴ etc., will save no one!

Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7) History

The initial inhabitants of Ephesus (Leleges and Carians), were conquered by Ionian Greek settlers led by Androclus of Athens in the year 1,000 B.C. The now predominant Greek inhabitants of Ephesus

⁵⁹¹ Revelation 2:7.

⁵⁹² Revelation 2:11.

⁵⁹³ Revelation 2:17.

⁵⁹⁴ Revelation 2:26, 27.

⁵⁹⁵ cf. Revelation 22:16.

⁵⁹⁶ Revelation 3:5.

⁵⁹⁷ Revelation 3:12.

⁵⁹⁸ Revelation 3:21.

⁵⁹⁹ cf. 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

⁶⁰⁰ Revelation 2:10; cf. James 1:12.

⁶⁰¹ cf. 1 Peter 5:1-4.

⁶⁰² Revelation 21:7.

⁶⁰³ cf. John 10:1-30; Romans 8:1-25; Ephesians 1:3-14; Galatians 4:1-11, specific vs. 9-11.

⁶⁰⁴ cf. Matthew 7:12; Luke 6:31-34.

worshipped the fertility goddess Artemus, assimilated from the inhabitants of the land.

Ephesus was a very proud city with an inhabitancy of approximately 250,000; making the city the fourth largest in the known world. The city: possessed the Temple of Diana (Artemus—constructed 550 B.C.), held considerable competition games from 420-356 B.C., was renowned for its amphitheater and bath houses; later becoming a city of great wealth (under full Roman rule), which attracted many whom sought dishonest gains.

After the Temple of Artemus was destroyed by fire in 356 B.C., it was rebuilt in 250 B.C. The city of Ephesus was under the control of Lysimachus, one of Alexander's (356-323 B.C.) generals, and was moved to higher ground to avoid flooding. The city's wall was rebuilt along with a new harbor and streets during Lysimachus' reign (301-281 B.C.).

Upon Lysimachus' death, the city came under the control of the Seleucids, until they were defeated by the Romans in 189 B.C. The city then came under the leadership of the king of Pergamum, as a gift for his military assistance to Rome. When the last king of Pergamum had died, the city of Ephesus came under direct Roman rule in 133 B.C.

Under the direct rule of Rome, the city of Ephesus became a very industrious city. The city for many years after the coming of the Messiah maintained a sincere zeal for the Lord; as Paul, Timothy, and John all ministered there. Prior, the city was torn in spiritual beliefs as it came under Persian, Greek and Roman rule; suffering the frailties of any large city because sin and greed invaded industry as opportunity grew.

The social situation in Ephesus was booming. The city was a major port in Asia Minor and contained the Temple of Artemus. Ephesus was under Roman rule and was designated the capital of the Roman province of Asia. Ephesus was a huge metropolis where games involving men and beast were prevalent, occurring in an open theater which was capable of holding thousands of spectators. The city drew to itself (as a major city) both good and evil, having the social conditions being that of industry and wealth.

Ephesus was an immoral city before the Apostle Paul opened their eyes to the truth of the Gospel. The city worshipped fertility gods, adhering to sexual immorality derived from pagan worship. Upon receiving the Gospel, the city of Ephesus became a key central location for the spreading of the Gospel in the western provinces of Asia. With

the inhabitants of Ephesus coming to knowledge of the truth, they improved greatly in moral stature and also the works they did for Christ throughout the land of Asia Minor. Although there were many adversaries to the Gospel within Ephesus, the door to effective evangelism remained open.⁶⁰⁵

The city of Ephesus was a metropolis much like any large city of present day. It held to many immoral practices, while it blossomed greatly socially. The city was torn between many gods, but held to the goddess Artemus (Diana) primarily.⁶⁰⁶ As a remnant of the city's inhabitants came to know Jesus and the truth of the Gospel, it became divided yet grew in spiritual stature; some appropriate and a majority not. Being a capital city, it drew many criminals to its gates, bringing their own immoralities to a city already divided.

- Jesus as one's first love is pertaining to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) who is the image of God (2 Corinthians 4:1-6)! As Jesus stated—"I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me" (John 14:6, 7); within this statement it must be realized that Jesus (**the Way**) is the only avenue (path; ladder) between the earth and the throne of God in heaven, therefore He leads upon the narrow path of His righteousness, upon which He must be spiritually followed (Matthew 7:13-27; Romans 8:1-17; cf. Genesis 28:12; John 1:51)! In addition, Jesus is "**the truth**" which in reality specifies that He is the one in full authority (reality of the Christ; God); within whom and by whom freedom comes forth to make individuals free from bondage to the world, the elemental things of the world (principles; religion), and the guile of the ruler of the world (Satan); for without the light of truth within which the Lord always remains, there is no potential to remain aloof the darkness of deception (John 8:31 -45; 1 John 1:5-10; cf. Luke 11:33-36; John 1:4, 5; 3:19-21; 12:35, 36, 44-50; Colossians 2:8-10)! Jesus as the "truth" is in reality the very essence of our existence, now and forever; for in Him we find spiritual purpose, deliverance and fulfillment, which far

⁶⁰⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 16:8, 9; Acts 19:22-28.

⁶⁰⁶ cf. Acts 19:35-37.

surpasses anything of this world which can be sought carnally (Romans 12:1, 2; Ephesians 4:20-24; Colossians 1:16, 17)! In addition, Jesus is “**the life**” both now (corporeal with righteous purpose) and forever (eternal); thus He is the Savior of all human beings, especially of believers (1 Timothy 4:6-11); for “believers” accept the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ), and non-believers do not!

- It was during the latter part of the first century A.D. that the falsehood of “personal savior gods” entered into the Christian church; this had been initiated within Greek Mythology, and through instigation tore at the fabric of the church as individuals sought solely to have a savior. This same falsehood is yet witnessed to this very day; for multitudes seek a Savior (life), yet have no intention of actual knowledge or submission unto the authority of God (as Lord and Master—the Way and the truth)!⁶⁰⁷ This selfish action by multitudes is foundational to acceptance of but one aspect of the Christ (life); while rejected the imperatives to both follow (the Way) and remain in the light as He is in the light (truth)!
 - Severity of seeking a personal savior god, and this generally due to: carnality, self-centeredness, fleshly complacency, seeking of comfort within being served rather than serving, and the following of others; henceforth from the time of its introduction in the first century within the Christian church, has reached such dangerous proportions that most Christian religious pulpit proclamations regard a simple confession of faith accepting Jesus as Savior, yet the Biblical confession of faith is that of “Jesus as Lord” (Romans 10:5-13, specific v. 9). The severity of the danger lies in the fact of knowledge regarding the “glory of Christ” being necessary in order to be saved; this knowledge being the truth regarding Jesus’ lordship, which evades those who would fall for the deception of simply accepting Him as “personal savior” within insincerity void of truth and devotion. The necessary knowledge is the reality of the Christ (John 6:44-65; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10; Hebrews

⁶⁰⁷ cf. Jude 1:1-16; 1 Timothy 1:3-7.

5:8-10)! Spiritual ignorance always remains until displaced by knowledge of the truth!

The Church at Ephesus (Revelation 2:1-7)

- Commendation
- Their spiritual works (deeds; v. 2).⁶⁰⁸
- Their tremendous toils (v. 2).⁶⁰⁹
- Their perseverance in not growing weary of serving God (v. 3).⁶¹⁰
- Their steadfastness in proclaiming the truth (vs. 2, 6).⁶¹¹
- Their testing of all teachings, and open rejection of false teachers (v. 2).⁶¹²
- Their loyalty to the Gospel, even in times of hardship.⁶¹³
- Their hatred toward evil and open condemnation of wickedness.⁶¹⁴

REBUKE

The church at Ephesus had forgotten their first love—Jesus. Although the church at Ephesus had been on fire for the Lord for more than forty years; for their devotion toward Him was exceptional; many were now second generation believers whom did not maintain the appropriate sincerity of devotion to Christ that their progenitors had.⁶¹⁵

- As aforementioned, when sincere devotion for God wanes, so also does motivation derived from submissive obedience; thus individuals seek to do the right thing for the wrong reasons. Within this, subjection to the righteousness of God is replaced by one's endeavors to establish a righteousness of human stature; thus focus falls aloof of God, turning rather unto the capabilities of human kind (religious endeavors, rather than relational success).⁶¹⁶

⁶⁰⁸ cf. Ephesians 1:1-14.

⁶⁰⁹ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:58.

⁶¹⁰ cf. Ephesians 6:18-20; Romans 5:1-5.

⁶¹¹ cf. 1 Thessalonians 1:2-10; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10.

⁶¹² cf. 1 John 4:1-6.

⁶¹³ cf. 2 Timothy 2:3-26.

⁶¹⁴ cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24.

⁶¹⁵ cf. Ephesians 1:15-23.

- The primary means by which progeny fall away from sincerity of devotion for God, is variances in rearing away from the edifying standards of admonition as set forth by the Lord.⁶¹⁷ The realm of the “Christian religion” has come to believe the possibility exists to both walk in the light as God is in the light, while dabbling with darkness as through compromise with the elemental principles of the world; this is due falling prey to the insidious nature of Satan’s schemes, while also failing to habitually test all things according to the Gospel as by diligence within both study and prayer!⁶¹⁸ Please remember—“religion” is the primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world (minus a remnant); actual Christianity (as distinguished from the Christian religion) is not a religion, but rather a spiritual relational reality!

The church at Ephesus was an orthodox high spirited church of Biblical sound doctrine, yet their spirits were beginning to cool down to the point that they no longer were focused upon Jesus as the foundation of their endeavors (author and perfecter of faith). When the Lord calls us, He calls us to love Him first and foremost; which is the imperative for successful servanthood in accordance to His masterful righteous leadership! When we allow anything to come before our love for Him, we allow our love and devotion to drift (harlotry) and thereby become weary and misguided; which is what was happening in Ephesus.⁶¹⁹

The believers within the church at Ephesus were told to remember where they had once been in loving the Lord, by considering how far they had fallen. They were then told to repent of their mediocre love for the Lord, lest their lampstand (spiritual witness) be removed. Jesus was instructing the Ephesians to once again place their devotional focus toward Him, in their exhibited toils for the spreading of the Gospel. It was not the efforts within the church that were lacking, but rather the proper devotional focus, which results in submission unto His masterful

⁶¹⁶ cf. Hebrews 12:1-11; Ephesians 6:10-18.

⁶¹⁷ cf. Proverbs 22:6, 15; 23:13, 14; 29:15-17.

⁶¹⁸ cf. Psalm 37:7; Galatians 4:8-11; Colossians 2:8-10, 20-23; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24; 1 John 1:5-10; 2:15-17; Hebrews 5:12-6:3; James 4:1-10.

⁶¹⁹ cf. 2 Corinthians 11:1-15; Matthew 10:34-39.

tutelage, thereby maintained stance in the light as He is in the light (righteous truth).

Please consider the effects of continually doing the right thing for the wrong reasons. At some point confusion will reign in the place of the Lord's wisdom, which He gives to those who maintain focus upon Him!⁶²⁰ Too many have fallen into the pride and arrogance trap of the world, by seeking spiritual success in accordance to one's own merits and inappropriate motivations (carnal endeavor). Leaving our first love for Jesus (allowing our love for Him to vary and/or diminish), is the first step in going astray. Far too many who initially loved the Lord have taken this first step!⁶²¹

KEY FACTOR WHICH MUST BE REALIZED

The key imperative which is lost when sincerity of devotion has waned is—actual personal fellowship with the Lord, and thus his masterful leadership in one's corporeal lifelong endeavors! Although having fellowship with the Lord is a concept which many believers and supposed believers may have, the reality exists that fellowship with God, with certainty is the greatest blessing (heavenly gift) we can receive in accompaniment with salvation; for both salvation by and fellowship with our Creator is by grace (unwarranted and unmerited favor)!⁶²² As “sanctification” (the setting apart and making holy) is God's will for all believers, and it is during times of actual fellowship (with the Lord) that we receive: instruction, reproof, correction, spiritual nurturing and growth; absolute devotion for the Lord and abstention from sin must be maintained; for *if* devotion diminishes and/or intentional sin is maintained, so also potential for actual fellowship is diminished or intentionally denied and lost! The essence of Revelation 2:5 directly indicates that the “light” of God's righteousness will be removed; thus any endeavors are in accordance to attempts at harmonious outcome via the establishing of one's own righteousness, causing negation regarding reception of God's righteousness in any attempted endeavor pertaining to life, the Gospel, or speaking the Gospel truth unto non-

⁶²⁰ cf. James 1:2-12.

⁶²¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10-4:5.

⁶²² cf. Hebrews 6:1-8.

believers!⁶²³ This is an area where “religion” causes great detriment in the life of multitudes of believers, for they are religiously taught the manner in which they must do things for God; this causing negation regarding devotional humble submission so as to allow God to both will and work for His own good pleasure, which is actually the only means of success and growth in spiritual matters!⁶²⁴

- **Imperative note:** The first step in going astray of both truth and actual fellowship with God is to stop loving the Lord first and foremost! When the Lord witnesses earnestness within a believer to both know and love Him, the blessing of God’s love (pure, un-defiled and selfless; of His spiritual fruit) is rendered which replaces the much lesser emotional love which is of the flesh (impure, defiled and selfish)! When foremost love for the Lord wanes, the door is then opened for Satan’s guile (deceptions); this as foremost focus is placed upon secular aspects or specifics, all of which can be utilized by demonic forces to distract and coerce for the purpose of causing spiritual detriment! As Satan has always desired to be worshipped, inasmuch as he would settle for nothing less than being like the Most High God (Isaiah 14:12-14, specifically v. 14), he (Satan) knows that the first step in coercing humans to worship him; even in ignorance; comes with failure to continually love and place the Lord God first and foremost. It is within this fact that Satan utilizes “religion” as a means of primary deception against human beings; for he (Satan) understands fully the dangers of secular influence derived from fleshly desire and wanton sensuality, for thus physical realm religion entices the flesh and thereby destroys spiritual potential; as human beings ignorantly worship the devil as by adherence to the doctrines of demons (religious: doctrines, precepts, philosophies and traditions) which bring forth emotional (fleshly; earthy) responses!⁶²⁵ This form of enticed coercion entered at the time designation of

⁶²³ cf. Romans 10:1-4.

⁶²⁴ cf. Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Philippians 1:1-2:16, specific 1:6; 2:12, 13.

⁶²⁵ 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

Smyrna and grew to huge dangerous proportions throughout the remaining history of the Christian Church!⁶²⁶

Although other human beings (*if* led by God) can instruct us in the ways we are to go regarding a relationship with God, no human being can actually teach or guide us regarding entrance into the spiritual realm where God is to be found. As the Lord searches the minds and hearts (motives) of all human beings, He alone can take us (individually) on the journey which reveals and teaches us our purpose in accordance to His personal anointing! Absolute unwavering devotion for the Lord is the key factor which places us in the position of humility and submission necessary to receive His heavenly gift (actual fellowship with Him); thus only the individual can hope or seek to achieve the appropriate place from which to receive the teaching by which to journey forward with the Lord, and by doing so actually fulfill one's purpose of existence!⁶²⁷ The endeavor to achieve actual fellowship with the Lord may take months or years; this dependent upon the individual as by decisions (volition) regarding:

- Denial of self (Matthew 16:24-27)!
- Love for the Lord first and foremost (Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40)!
- Exuberant concern for the salvation of others, and the admonitions of God (Romans 10:1-4; 1 John 3:19-24; Luke 17:7-10; John 15:1-20)!
- Insistence for an abounding relationship with the Lord; regardless of the direction taken by others (Matthew 10:34-39; Philippians 1:15-30; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21)!
- Persistence in returning to the place of His presence (spiritual realm) (John 4:20-24; 1 Corinthians 2:1-4:5)!

Realities according to Biblical standards are:⁶²⁸

⁶²⁶ cf. Colossians 2:1-23; 2 Timothy 2:1-4:5.

⁶²⁷ 1 John 2:18-27.

⁶²⁸ cf. Matthew 22:36-40; 1 Timothy 5:8; 1 Corinthians 7:1-9; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; Philippians 2:1-18.

(True Christians never cross this line)

IDOL

(anything preceding God)

GOD

SPOUSE

CHILDREN

MINISTRY (which includes all endeavors)

SELF (never rises above this position)

The world's priorities according to the influence of demons are:⁶²⁹

(Idol) SELF

(Idol) RICHES

(Idol) FAMILY

GOD

Priorities for a Bondservant of God: ⁶³⁰

NOT AN OPTION - IDOLATRY; COMPROMISE;

VARIATION; EXCUSE

GOD (FIRST AND FOREMOST)

SALVATION OF OTHERS

Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)

Smyrna was a rather large city on the west coast of Asia Minor, approximately thirty-five miles north of Ephesus. The city had substantial port facilities, was surrounded on three sides by fertile farmland, and had an unwavering loyalty to Rome for the first two centuries A.D.

Smyrna was the headquarters for the imperial cult of emperor worship in that portion of the Roman Empire. The city's harbor was well protected, and was connected to the Hermus River which supplied a route of trade from within areas of Asia Minor. The city of Smyrna was

⁶²⁹ cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Matthew 6:19-34; 1 John 5:18-21; Ephesians 6:12.

⁶³⁰ cf. Romans 14:5-9; Philippians 1:21-24; 3:7-14; 2 Timothy 2:1-4.

the location of the temple of Emperor Tiberius, which was a symbol of the alliance the city had with the Roman Empire.

Smyrna was a central harbor city where beautiful foothills and lower altitude mountains were decorated with extravagant temples of pagan worship. The many municipal buildings which were erected to accommodate the judicial system of the area, along with the houses of worship upon the hills (Mt. Pagos), comprised what was known as the “Crown of Asia.” The extravagance and beauty of Smyrna made it a vacation spot which was well known (as was Ephesus) for its bath and shopping facilities.

Smyrna was one of the two cities which received no words of correction (rebuke) from the Lord Jesus Christ. The city of Smyrna was a place of great suffering for Christians, because they were persecuted by both the Romans and the Jews. Although the city was a place loyal to the Roman Empire, the Christian church (remnant of the masses) was strong and unwavering in proclamation of the Gospel truth without variation.⁶³¹ The church at Smyrna realized the necessity for intentional and persistent personal consecration; which verifies the imperatives of constant: denial of self, focus, humble submission, and sincerity of devotion; for when any of the four wanes, all begin to diminish gradually leaving the individual unaware of the detriment and damage being caused to their personal spiritual relationship with God.⁶³² It is never God’s faithfulness which can be brought into question; but rather one’s own!⁶³³ The church in Smyrna is an excellent example of the perseverance and steadfastness all true Christians should maintain for the sake of the spiritual relational reality, and proclamation of the Gospel.

The Caesars (most) of Ancient Rome considered themselves to be gods; as they progressed in their arrogant ways, they began to insist upon the worship of their citizens. This worship of the Caesars became known as the “Caesar Cult,” for even the Jews began to follow this worship of men, in their avoidance of persecution and punishment for refusal. When Jesus our Lord had stated to ... render to Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and to God the things that are God’s (Matthew 22:17-21), He was referring to the first fruits or taxes. The cowardice

⁶³¹ cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

⁶³² cf. Hebrews 12:1-11, specific attention vs. 1-3, 7-11.

⁶³³ cf. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 10:1-13; Galatians 5:19-23; 2 Timothy 2:8-13.

Jews utilized this phrase by the Lord to justify their worship of the Caesars, and persecuted the unwavering Christians for failure to do the same. Smyrna was a central city for the worship of Caesar as a god, everyone was closely scrutinized as to whether they would offer incense unto Caesar for worship. The Caesar Cult was prevalent, leading to willingness by the citizens of Smyrna to tell on those whom would not submit to the secular rules of proper worship unto Caesar.

The Romans as well as the Jews (minus a remnant) in Smyrna knew that the Christians worshipped the one true God (the Jews were supposed to be also), yet they felt that the Christians were acting inappropriately in their refusal to worship any other gods. Because the Romans were worshippers of many gods, everyone except the true Christians and a remnant of Jews, felt there was nothing wrong with worshipping the many (polytheism) rather than the One (monotheism). The Caesar Cult among the Jews held to the sin cycle which had been prevalent amongst the many (Israelites; minus a remnant) throughout their history. Whenever they (most; not all) came under the oppression of foreign rule, they took it upon themselves to worship as the inhabitants of the land worshipped. Many in the Israelite nation strayed from solely worshipping the Lord, whenever a true man of God was not present to lead them like children. The Caesar Cult maintained cowardly worship of pagan gods, in a manner as had their ancestors so many times before.

Many Christians were killed by the Romans in the first and second centuries, because they refused to worship the Caesars as gods. The Romans having many gods, felt anger regarding devotional Christians who refused to worship any of Rome's pagan gods. The basis for the extreme anger demonstrated by the Romans was that they could not understand why the Christians could not worship their God and the gods of the Romans (including Caesar) at the same time. The common practice within Rome was to spread one's worship between many gods; thereby they could not understand the refusal of the true Christians to consider a simple compromise of calling Caesar—*Kurios* (lord). The Romans considered the steadfastness of the Christians to worship only one God, to be an act of direct rebellion toward the ruling powers. The Romans felt that the Christians were holding to a sense of intentional stubbornness, so as to cause trouble and discord within the city, for reasons of direct defiance against Caesar. The Jews were helping in the

persecution of the Christians, because they themselves were unwilling to suffer for the Gospel which was proclaimed by a man whom they considered to be only a teacher (Jesus).

Unfortunately, many of the Jews in the city of Smyrna helped in the persecution of their own brothers and sisters, because they sought to save and/or protect their own lives (Revelation 2:9).⁶³⁴ The unwavering Christians in the city of Smyrna were true Christians indeed, for they: stayed strong in their proclamation of truth; stayed from false worship; held to a sincere unwavering devotion for the Lord Jesus Christ. The Romans found reasons to persecute the Christians, just as the world finds reasons to persecute true devotional Christians today; although in modern times, actual Christians are criticized and persecuted because of the insidious teachings of the Christian religion, which is far aloof the reality of actual Christianity. The Romans made up false accusations against the Christians, to the point that everything that went wrong was the fault of a Christian. The hatred of Christians by the Romans became so terrible, that anyone who refused to deny Christ was severely persecuted and/or put to death; many times for the sport of the people (orthodox Jews included).

COMMONALITY NOTES

When sincerity of devotional love for the Lord has diminished, the next step in going astray is that of misguided focus; i.e. religious distraction. From this comes individuals who believe they are within a personal relationship with the Lord, although not; which brings persecution upon those who are relational with the Lord, as the religious doctrines (doctrines of demons) of the former cause suffering and tribulation toward those of sound doctrine (the latter), who realize the futility of religious precepts and philosophies which are apart from God's masterful tutelage and leadership (Revelation 2:9, 10). This can be witnessed throughout the history of the church as by the disunity brought forth within the persecutions between different factions (denominations and/or sects) of the Christian religion (un-Biblical *ekklesia*); whereas spiritually edifying unity remains the prevalent factor amongst those who join together, with each and all having actual fellowship with God (Biblical *ekklesia*) as by maintained devotion.⁶³⁵

⁶³⁴ cf. Mark 8:34-38.

It should be understood that “devotion” is love given with the whole heart and will (volition)!

- It was during the time designation regarding the message to the church at Smyrna that a specific form of distractive falsehood was pre-warned against regarding the Christian church. This reality is referenced by the statement—those who say they are Jews and are not, but are a synagogue of Satan (v. 9); for this in reality makes emphasis of false teaching, which although claiming to be appropriate for believers in God, was completely insidious and destructive (Satan is the Great Deceiver). The statement by the Lord was a statement of warning that a congregation of Satan’s servants (synagogue of Satan) would be causing spiritual detriment and suffering within the church; this as warning to the inevitable necessity to be watchful and continually on guard, standing firm in preparation for the tests which would assuredly occur (v. 10).⁶³⁶
 - When actual sincerity of devotion for the Lord our God wanes, the door is opened to once again return to religious: doctrines, precepts, philosophies, idealisms, ideologies, and traditions. Although there was no rebuke toward the remnant in Smyrna who remained devotionally obedient, the multitudes within the city were upon the path of once again returning to “religion” which was brought forth mostly by Judaism; due to its teachings regarding belief in the Messiah plus adherence to the Levitical and Mosaic Laws. The Levitical Law was but a tutor which pointed to the Messiah, when the necessity for faith within a personal spiritual relationship with God occurs, there is no further necessity for “religion” for the lesson of the tutorial was learned; yet with those who return to or trust in religion, the lesson of the tutorial was not learned, thus the door to religious delusive practices in accordance to Satan’s guile is opened by personal choice; this then leading to further

⁶³⁵ cf. Galatians 1:1-10; Philippians 3:1-21.

⁶³⁶ cf. Ephesians 6:10-20; Colossians 2:1-23, specific vs. 16-23; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, specific v. 12.

forms of derivational decline regarding spiritual matters, thus adherence and further captivity to the ways of fleshly and secular delusion (elemental things).

- More regarding the insidious guile of Satan as by this aforementioned specific will be emphasized and explained within notes pertaining to the next three churches.

The repeated sin cycle of corruptive compromise away from worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth (i.e. the Way) has continued even to this day. We may not call it Caesar worship, yet isms regarding: patriotism, nationalism, Calvinism, Lutheranism, Catholicism, etc.. in addition to various denominations, congregations, religious sects, and sects shrouded in mystery; yet remain ignorant of truth, thereby leading many astray from simplicity of devotion for the Lord our Creator.⁶³⁷ Manipulation of Scripture out of context (adulterating), subtle deceptions placed between Biblical truths (manipulative religion), sermons focusing upon the desires of sensual and financial gains, sermon emphases solely upon God's immense love yet negating His holiness and righteousness; these have and will continue to lead multitudes astray.⁶³⁸ When we allow our focus to wander unto the things of the world, and believe that slight aspects of compromise will not cause harm within our spiritual relationship with God, we have fallen prey to the deceptions (wiles of Satan) which are intended to negate our ability for fellowship with God!⁶³⁹ Without God's anointed teaching and masterful leadership; as by actual fellowship with Him; our potential for righteousness remains worldly endeavors of an earthy nature; thus foundational to the sinful nature (self; individuality)!

- Once an individual has left what should be their first love (i.e. sincere devotional love for Jesus; Lord and God), the potential arises that beyond doing the right thing for the wrong reasons, the individual will journey forth susceptible to compromise within their endeavors. This is the first step in being receptive to the corruption of false beliefs, such as believing oneself to be

⁶³⁷ cf. Colossians 1:15-23.

⁶³⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:1-18.

⁶³⁹ cf. 1 John 1:5-2:27.

a child of God; although yet illegitimate!⁶⁴⁰ Care must always be forthcoming to maintain attentiveness as to the path of one's endeavors; for the narrow path of God's righteousness has no turns, for the direction is solely forward in accordance to God's good, acceptable and perfect will; whereas the broad path of religious spiritual destruction has no specific direction and is thereby alterable!⁶⁴¹

- The fact of religious alterable direction is proven by the lateral and backward direction of practiced traditions of human postulation and rote! Does this please God; is He fooled?⁶⁴²

The prevalent reasons behind compromise (slavery or bondage) away from serving God properly have always been the same: lack of devotional love for the Lord our God; fear of death, cowardice, self-centeredness.⁶⁴³ Too many within the church today are not willing to stand firm for (be immovable from) the ways of the Lord because they are afraid of offending someone, and possibly coming under scrutiny or persecution; thus the cowardice of going with the status quo. The city of Smyrna was a city of close scrutiny, where true Christians were found guilty of following the one true God and persecuted for it. Many individual believers today are doing as the majority of believers did then; they seek to remain in their comfort zones, and do that which is acceptable by both the world and the multitudes which surround them.⁶⁴⁴

It is an unfortunate fact that persecution remains even within the walls of Christian congregations today, falling upon those who hold to true worship without corruptibility derived from spiritual ignorance and compromise with the world.⁶⁴⁵ It is a shame that those within our own faith who have no excuse, would continue to find reasons to hinder the truth which is proclaimed by the few totally loyal servants of the Lord (remnant), whom remain within the multitudes of Christianity.⁶⁴⁶

⁶⁴⁰ cf. Matthew 7:13-27; Hebrews 12:1-11.

⁶⁴¹ cf. Romans 8:1-39, specific vs. 18-30; 12:1-21, specific vs. 1, 2; Philippians 3:1-21; Proverbs 4:23-27.

⁶⁴² cf. Isaiah 29:1-24, specific vs. 13-16; Ezekiel 8:1-18.

⁶⁴³ cf. Matthew 22:36-40; Hebrews 2:10-18; Philippians 2:1-11; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 John 4:7-21.

⁶⁴⁴ cf. 1 Timothy 6:1-21.

⁶⁴⁵ cf. John 4:20-24; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

It is also a shame that lukewarm believers are willing to criticize the truth proclaimed by the few (remnant of the remnant), who remain within the scrutiny as we realize the imperative of truth to be the only means by which freedom from bondage is achieved! Being “made” free from all the delusive behavior of religion, the flesh, and the ways of the world; is a work of God, which is a blessing upon the devotionally loyal and obedient; those who do not follow and obey the Lord will never receive this blessing!⁶⁴⁷ Failing to heed warning and thereby remaining deceived, multitudes maintain their unwillingness to listen and make appropriate changes according to Biblical truth.⁶⁴⁸ This is generally because most have failed to realize who they are in Christ (*if* actually in Christ); due mostly because of a severe lack of devotional love for God, which always follows refusal to deny “self” so as to actually follow the righteous leadership of the Lord! In current times as with times of antiquity, when a believer’s love for God has waned, the next step is compromise with the surrounding multitudes; this is what occurred in Smyrna amongst all but the remnant.

- This continues to an extreme extent even to this day; evidenced by religious zeal, accompanied by spiritual: immaturity, insecurity, and detriment.

To truly place devotion upon the Lord first and foremost (first love), never occurs without denial of “self”; as “self” is the primary basis of fleshly insecurities and superficiality!

What had happened during the prophesy concerning—Ephesus, was that the progeny of former believers were not serving Jesus from a foundation of devotion as had their progenitors; but rather were serving from a foundation of personal motive aloof devotional loyalty, which when intact is nurtured and led by the Lord. True abiding in the Word and proclamation of Gospel truth is completely aloof all enticement and influence foundational to the flesh; as to be led spiritually by the Lord an individual must be devotionally willing to deny “self” and the instigations there from. As simple as it gets—without the reality of denial

⁶⁴⁶ cf. Romans 9:1-33; 2 Timothy 2:1-26; 3:10-17.

⁶⁴⁷ John 8:31-47.

⁶⁴⁸ cf. Revelation 12:9; Matthew 13:18-23; John 17:1-26; 1 John 5:1-21.

of “self” foundational to devotional love for the Lord first and foremost (first love), there is no actual willingness (volition) to humbly and submissively follow the Lord; as the Lord cannot lead those who refuse to follow (in reality), because they are being obedient to their flesh (religiously; carnal motives), the righteousness of God cannot be manifested and fulfilled; without the manifest righteousness of God, the Lord cannot divinely work through the individual unto spiritual fruition in others; thus, individuals go forth making proclamations without the Lord’s masterful leadership and divine preparation unto those being reached; therefore, individuals cannot be prepared and taught by God for the spiritual relational reality to occur!⁶⁴⁹ Attempting to reach others without the masterful leadership and work of the Lord is detrimental to everyone involved; which is what occurs when devotional denial of “self” does not occur, leading to compromise from the foundation of truth which is the Lord! As denial of “self” is the primary step forward so as to maturely walk by faith (spiritually) and not by sight (in the flesh); without this imperative occurring, individuals continue to crawl as spiritual infants, which leaves them open to further “religious” delusive behavior, void of actual knowledge of the Biblical truth which is received solely from the Lord!⁶⁵⁰ This is what was becoming pronounced during the time period of “Smyrna,” with the exception of the remnant; proven by the tribulation the remnant was forced to endure (vs. 9-11).

If we as individual believers were scrutinized as the Christians (remnant) were in Smyrna, and put on trial for our faith, would there be enough evidence to convict us as Christians? If then, when we were found guilty we were threatened with death, would we accept that death graciously for Christ, or would we deny Him as many have in the past (and currently) for the purpose of self-preservation. Much of the problem lies within the looseness of the word—“Christian,” as it has been utilized throughout church history. The remnant in Smyrna was indeed—“Christ-like” (Christian); yet the many were not. It was to the remnant that Jesus had no words of rebuke!

⁶⁴⁹ respectively—Matthew 22:36-40; 16:21-28; Romans 8 1-17, emphasis vs. 5-14; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; John 6:44-65.

⁶⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Hebrews 5:11-6:3; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10; 2 Timothy 2:24-3:7; 2 Peter 1:2-11; James 1:19-25.

NOTE OF INTEREST REGARDING MYRRH

Myrrh is:

- An aromatic resin used in anointing oil, perfume, as a deodorizer and embalmer.
- A resin from the leaves of the sweetgum plant (*Balsamodendron myrrha*), utilized to treat diseases in ancient times.
- Smyrna and Myrrh are different names for the same gummy resin substance, for which the ancient city of Ionia was named (Smyrna).
- Incense utilized along with frankincense, for the purpose of raising a sweet aroma when burned. This incense was burned in Smyrna to show worship to Caesar as a god.
- A form of payment. It was sweet smelling and used to improve the smell of a person's body and cloths.
- A numbing agent (anodyne) when mixed with vinegar. This substance was refused by our Lord at the time of His crucifixion, for He chose to accept the full painful bitterness of the cup given Him by the Father.⁶⁵¹ Praise Jesus for such abounding lovingkindness; for He accepted the full "pain" of our sinfulness, that we may enjoy comfort from the pain which is of the world (sanctification is God's work to set apart from the world; make holy)!
- A bitter substance when tasted. It is this bitterness relating to myrrh in association with Smyrna, which illustrates the bitter persecution which was suffered by the uncompromising Christians there. The sweet fragrance of the plant when crushed was associated with the sweetness of the Smyrna Christian's faith (the remnant) when they were crushed in persecution.

The Church at Smyrna (Revelation 2:8-11)

COMMENDATION

When Jesus utilized the word "know" in addressing the church at Smyrna, He did so with the impact of realism, for He lived the essence of realistic truth.

⁶⁵¹ cf. Mark 15:23; John 18:10, 11.

Jesus in using the word “know,” was speaking in the deepest most sympathetic, understanding manner. Jesus lived a life of poverty so that His followers may live a life of richness (spiritually); he also lived a life of constant unrest and suffering.⁶⁵² When Jesus told the church at Smyrna that He knew their tribulation and suffering, He was speaking from experience and thus could comfort them with the knowledge that He fully understood their predicament. The statements of Jesus therefore rendered words of strength and guidance; yet only for those who had within devotional diligent discipline journeyed forward beyond complacent laziness within delusive religiosity!⁶⁵³ By the poverty, suffering and tribulations suffered by the Lord Jesus Christ, we as believers in Him (with insistent disciplined diligence) are spiritually strong and rich in faith!

THE TERM TEN DAYS

- The ten days symbolic of God’s plan to correct the problem and strengthen the believers who walk by faith.⁶⁵⁴ In this instance, a test was put forth against those who held an uncompromising faith in the Lord, whom upon the completion of the ten day test, were found to be stronger than prior to the test’s beginning.

In the Lord utilizing this warning to persevere for ten days (even unto death) (v. 10), He emphasized with certainty that “testing trials” would be allowed pertinent to believers, demonstrating the fact that our faith would survive even the greatest tribulations, *if* and when appropriate focus and devotion is maintained. With the believers being familiar with the tests of past prophets, they must have understood that although some would die, the faith (spiritual soundness) of those remaining would endure and be stronger than prior. As the Lord Himself learned by those things which He suffered, it is a shame that far too many arrogant believers are not willing to suffer so as to learn the importance of a “tested faith!”⁶⁵⁵

⁶⁵² cf. Matthew 8:18-22; 2 Corinthians 8:7-15.

⁶⁵³ cf. Philippians 3:1-14.

⁶⁵⁴ cf. Jeremiah 42:1-22; Daniel 1:1-21, specifics vs. 8-20.

⁶⁵⁵ cf. Luke 8:4-21; John 15:18-16:6; emphasis vs. 18-22; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23.

- It should always be remembered—the Lord allows believers to be tested for the purpose of tempering and nurturing the believer’s faith and trust; not in oneself, but rather fully in the Lord; this then bringing forth the fruit of God’s righteousness, as He is allowed to both will and work for His own good pleasure and purpose. The tests become more difficult as a believer endeavors forth for the purpose of increased servanthood unto the Lord; for progressive forthright focus and appropriate gratitude unto the Lord are necessary for the efficient training and endurance of the Lord’s soldiers (devotional servants)!⁶⁵⁶
 - It is an unfortunate fact, but the multitudes of believers become fearful and distraught when trials are presented. Failing to be appreciative unto the Lord for allowing the trials, and failing to realize the purpose for which tests are allowed, weak and effeminate believers cringe, fawn, and attempt to flee the trial; which is the specific reason that the weak faith of multitudes remains frail year after year, generally for the entirety of their corporeal existence. Spiritual purpose will never be discovered *if* aloof the reality of God; for continuation within the cowardice of carnal religiosity aloof the spiritual reality, causes negation to the possibilities and potential which are found within the spiritual relational reality, within which all things work together for good to those who love God, to those who are called according to His purpose!⁶⁵⁷
 - Although many tests (and trials) allowed by the Lord are harsh, causing concern and sometimes bewilderment, true servants of the Lord render thanksgiving with understanding as to the purpose of the trials (or tests); this then stifling the bewilderment as the Lord blesses the appropriate response by the believer (Christian).⁶⁵⁸ This leads to an increased stature of immovability, and a strengthened forward movement unto the Lord’s upward

⁶⁵⁶ cf. 2 Timothy 2:1-26, specific vs. 3-10; James 1:2-18.

⁶⁵⁷ cf. Romans 8:20-39.

⁶⁵⁸ cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24.

call.⁶⁵⁹ It is due to the fact that only remnants of believers (Christians; those who are Christ-like) achieve temperament of servanthood, that the harvest is plentiful and the workers remain few; for while multitudes flee tests and trials, the remnant makes supplication unto the Lord for discernment (what is to be learned by the test or trial), and then receiving the ability to appraise the reality (a blessing from God), move forward with increased spiritual vigor and vitality (within knowledge) unto the next test and/or trial.⁶⁶⁰

- An astonishing means by which to receive successful victory in times of persecution, suffering and tribulation, remains the rendering of thanksgiving unto the Lord!⁶⁶¹ While multitudes whine and seek to flee circumstances of harshness, as they seek primarily the comfort of their flesh as by myopia; the fact remains that this occurs due to the many that are mastered by their own sinful nature! Servants of the Lord realize instead, that our existence upon this earth is not about us, but rather entirely about the Lord and fulfillment of His good, acceptable and perfect will; thus the servants (remnant) remain assiduous in praising and thanking God for righteous transition through the troubling times, while the multitudes seek only to evade and/or flee within the seeking of comfort!⁶⁶²
- **Rebuke—NONE**

Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17)

Pergamos (Pergamum) was a wealthy ancient acropolis in the district of Mysia in Asia Minor. Pergamos was: a city located by the river Caicus, approximately 20 miles from Smyrna; quite industrious as the primary provider of parchment (Greek = pergamene); the location for the temple of Athena and the altar of Zeus; the seat for a Roman procurator with the authority of death; and a center of knowledge as it had a library with some 200,000 books (probably made of parchment).

⁶⁵⁹ cf. Philippians 3:1-21, specific vs. 12-14.

⁶⁶⁰ cf. Romans 5:1-5; 8:1-39; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

⁶⁶¹ cf. example—Acts 16:22-30.

⁶⁶² cf. Romans 12:1-3.

Pergamos means citadel or parchment. The city was rightfully named “parchment,” because the city of Pergamos was renowned for being the first to invent the technology of parchment (the skin of sheep, goats, lambs, or calves which was specially prepared for the purpose of being written upon).⁶⁶³ The city of Pergamos, supposedly because of a severe shortage of papyrus (a reed, which when pressed together formed sheets), in the year 200 B.C. was forced to invent parchment (vellum), so as to be able to have the material needed to document ideas, drawings and writings. They invented the technique of a specially treated animal skin which was stretched to the point that it was translucent. The city was the primary supplier of the material, thus the city’s largest export product must have been supplying parchment to the known world. From this substance the city gained its name.

The inventing of parchment in Pergamos made it possible for many of the ancient world’s writings to be preserved. The parchment was bonded one piece to another, which allowed rather large rolls of the substance to be utilized for the collected writings of many authors to be combined together in a single scroll. Some of these scrolls are:

- The Dead Sea Scrolls.
- The scroll of Isaiah, which was 2,312 feet long.
- The Temple scroll, which was 2,812 feet long.

Another way, in which the parchment was utilized, was that it was folded and placed into bindings, which allowed the material to be written upon on both sides, making it easier to be maintained and read; for there was no longer a need to unroll the scroll. This technology became known as parchment codices or parchment books.

Pergamos was the center of worship for Caesar; Zeus, Athena, and other fertility deities of the Romans. It was a city focused around pagan worship and drew individuals from miles around for the pagan worship festivals which took place. With the city being deeply rooted in paganism, it was a city without morals, except for the sincere God fearing Christians whom dwelled there. The city was the center for the pagan gods brought from Babylon by the Babylonian priests in the year 539 B.C., of which three of the primary gods were: Marduk (Bel), Nebo

⁶⁶³ cf. 2 Timothy 4:13.

(Nabu = the son of Bel), and Asklepios (Asclepius) (the serpent god of healing).⁶⁶⁴

- The symbol of Asclepius (Caduceus)—a symbol utilized for the medical profession, can yet be seen throughout the world, i.e. hospitals, ambulance, rescue vehicles.

Other pagan gods brought from Babylon to Pergamos were: Shamash (the sun god), Sin (the moon god), Ishtar (goddess of the morning and evening star; queen of the heavens; goddess of fertility and love; Astarte / Ashtaroth (Greek = Aphrodite; Roman = Venus), Hadad (Adad = god of storms), Ninurta (god of war and hunting).

Pergamos was a very busy city, where in the hills beside the city were found pagan altars which were utilized twenty-four hours a day. The city must have had many quarters for visitation (inns), as individuals would come to worship the many pagan gods (including Caesar) of the Romans. The city was booming (virtually overrun) with evil influence and the wickedness which was drawn hither; therefore it was referred to by many as the “throne of Satan.” Pergamos was the original site for the temple of the Caesar cult. Having a huge series of structures settled into the hills, the city must have been a sight to see (as far as structural engineering is concerned).

Throne of Satan—Due to the multitudes of pagan worshipers who journeyed to Pergamos, and the fact of corrupt government which was present in the city, many commentators and expositors deem this the reason for the rendered emphasis “Satan’s throne” (v. 13); yet the reality of the truth, and the dangers of corruption go much deeper!

Babylon had been considered the origin point of many false religious practices; which began with the building of the tower of Babel (Babel—being another name for Babylon).⁶⁶⁵ A primary false religious system which came from Babylon, was the secret religious rites of the “Babylonian Mysteries” which was initiated and instituted by Nimrod’s wife—Semiramis, from which came worship of: Baals, Ishtar (the Babylonian queen of heaven), and Tammuz (of which worship of the

⁶⁶⁴ cf. Jeremiah 50:1-3; 51:44-49; Isaiah 46:1-13.

⁶⁶⁵ cf. Genesis chapters 10, 11; specific to Nimrod—10:8-11; specific to Babel—11:1-9.

Baals is associated); this occurring at the approximate time of Nimrod's founding of Nineveh (Genesis 10:8-12). All such worship is adamantly condemned in the Gospel; and rightfully so, for it had and yet continues to lead multitudes astray from appropriate worship of the one true God; for compromise away from truth, brings forth the consequences of being deceived!⁶⁶⁶

When the religious practices of Babylon were discouraged after Babylon was conquered by the Medo-Persian Empire in 539 B.C., the cultic priests of the Babylonian Mysteries religion moved to Pergamum; where they continued their pagan worship practices clandestinely. When the Medo-Persian Empire was conquered by the Greeks during the Inter-testament Period, the clandestine activities of the Babylonian Mysteries religion continued; for the practice was adamantly condemned during Greek reign, inasmuch as the primary object of worship was female (Babylonian Mysteries; "Ishtar"—queen of heaven), whereas the superior gods of Greek mythology were male. "

When the Way (actual Christianity) came about with the spoken ministry of Christ who was born of a virgin, the Babylonian religion arose again from its covert activities; for the foundational basis of the Babylonian religion was that Semiramis (Nimrod's wife) had conceived Tammuz as by miraculous conception, this as a mimic of the prophesy regarding the seed.⁶⁶⁷ As Jesus was actually born of miraculous conception, the priesthood of the Babylonian Mystery Rites Religion perceived to make a union with the new supposed religion (supposed religion explanation follows) as a means of arising once again from clandestine practice as by the association between the deception of the centuries old pagan religion and the reality of truth which was realized in the coming of the Messiah.

When it is understood that "religion" is a primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world (minus a remnant), and that the best way to hide a lie is by associating it with truth; it can be easily understood why the servants of Satan were sent forth from his (Satan's) throne to proclaim the deceptive practices as having association with the truth; although not! The reality of this truth can be evidenced within the fact

⁶⁶⁶ cf. Deuteronomy 4:1-40, cf. Numbers 25:1-13; Judges 2:8-16; 3:1-14; Jeremiah 7:1-27, specific 18-24; 44:1-30, specific 15-30; Ezekiel 8:1-18; Revelation 17:1-18.

⁶⁶⁷ cf. Genesis 3:15.

that the Babylonian priesthood wore crowns in the shape of a fish head, which bore the words—“Keeper of the Bridge”; which symbolized the bridge between man and Satan. When this slogan was adopted by the Roman emperors, the Latin title utilized for the adoption was “Pontifex Maximus,” which holds the meaning “Major Keeper of the Bridge.” The priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries religion then adopted the word “Pontiff,” which comes from “Pontifex”; having continued to utilize this title for its leadership even to this day (Pope; Pontiff). Within the reality of this evidence, we can understand that the reference to Pergamos being the place of “Satan’s throne,” makes direct emphasis upon the fact that Pergamos was the place from which the Way (actual Christianity) was corrupted by the deceptions of Satan; for it was at Pergamos that the servants of Satan came forth to instigate corruptive compromise from the purity of Christianity (the Way), so as to lead multitudes astray of the truth which would have allowed freedom from the wiles of the devil!⁶⁶⁸

In the same fashion as Greek mythology maintained supremacy of the male gender gods over the female gender goddesses, so also did the Romans within their mythology. Because a primary religious deity of the Babylonian Mysteries religion was of a female gender (Ishtar), and this would yet continue to bring forth scrutiny and potential persecution, the Babylonian Mysteries priesthood yet practiced clandestinely; until Christianity was fairly established, which had a woman of notice (Mary), who could then be substituted into the religion in a corruptive and coercive way (in the stead of Ishtar). It is for this reason that the instigation began in the second century A.D., was tolerated by the third century A.D., and forcibly instituted in the fourth century A.D.

- It should be remembered from this point forward; any alterations from the truth results in a deception; religious or otherwise!
- Further explanation as to the forcefulness of the aforementioned instigated compromise will be forthcoming; within explanation regarding the churches at Thyatira and Sardis.

⁶⁶⁸ 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 12-15.

Supposed religion explanation—The Way (actual Christianity) is not a religion; rather it is a spiritual relational reality foundational to faith in Christ (Jesus)! The religion (tutor) which was designated by God was the Levitical Law; which held great purpose as it pointed directly to Christ, while emphasizing the preciseness of God.⁶⁶⁹ With the coming of Jesus (Christ; Messiah), and the reality of truth which was evinced in His spoken ministry upon the earth; the imperative became one of—“faith,” as during the time period of the Law this imperative had not yet been revealed (Galatians 3:23, 24)!

With the coming of the Messiah, a great distinction occurred inasmuch as “religion” no longer held purpose, *if* the lesson rendered by the tutor (Law) was understood. With the coming of the Lord upon the earth and the fabulous atoning work which He performed completed, the curtain leading into the holy of holies was torn from top to bottom; opening “the way” for individuals to come directly into the presence of God so as to have a personal intimate relationship and fellowship with Him; without the necessity of either religion or a human priesthood.⁶⁷⁰ Because emotional response is a means of powerful leadership within human beings in accordance to the sinful nature, the emotional responses which are brought forth by physical realm “religion” is easily accepted; although relevance of emotions have no bearing within the actual relationship between individuals and God, for the imperative of the spiritual relationship is—“FAITH”! Actual Christianity is a faith-based personal relationship between individuals and God (spiritual relational reality); this being the great distinction which came about with the ascension of Jesus, which eradicated all necessity for “religion” as being of necessity; for “Christianity is all about the Lord Jesus (God), as he is—the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6, 7)!

The servants of Satan (priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries religion) were quite aware of the power of the sinful nature, and utilized the power of the nature in conjunction with the insidious nature of religion (aloof the actual purpose of religion as designated by God) to cause corruptive compromise within the lives of multitudes, away from the purity of the relationship. Within this, the “Christian religion” came into existence; continuing effectively even to this day in leading multi-

⁶⁶⁹ cf. Galatians 2:1-4:11; emphasis—3:10-29.

⁶⁷⁰ cf. Matthew 27:47-54; Hebrews 5:1-10:39.

tudes astray from the purity (glory of Christ) of the “faith” based relationship God seeks to have with those created in His image (spiritually)! Christianity is a spiritual matter; whereas the Christian religion is a pathetic physical realm emulation, which is void of the essence of God’s presence (truth) within; for it remains a physical realm ritualistic religion which entices the emotions of the flesh!⁶⁷¹

- Further explanation of the Lord being external of the Christian religion is forthcoming regarding the—church at Laodicea.

Although the many pagan religions present at Pergamos caused potential harm as by the intentional compromise which individuals as well as groups chose involvement within, the Christian religion within insidious attachment to actual Christianity caused harm as by furtive coercive compromise; which was not easily recognizable by those who were void of appropriate focus upon the Lord. When focus upon the Lord is not maintained with devotional adamancy when in the vicinity of corruption, then aspects of compromise away from sound doctrine and worship of God in spirit and in truth becomes optional within one’s way of religious thinking; this virtually eliminating the individual’s appropriate diligence to test all things according to the sound doctrine which is the Gospel alone!⁶⁷²

The Church at Pergamum (Revelation 2:12-17)

COMMENDATION

The Lord made the commendation to the church remnant at Pergamos that He knew that they lived in the center of pagan deception (Satan’s throne), yet would not deny their faith. Jesus accredited (for appropriate righteous behavior) the unwavering believers in Pergamos for their perseverance in holding to the truth, for persecution even unto death was prevalent within the vile city.

The Lord mentioned that the believers remained faithful even at the death of Antipas, a martyred leader. It was at the time of Antipas’

⁶⁷¹ cf. John 14:15-17; 15:26, 27; 16:7-15; Romans 8:5-14.

⁶⁷² cf. John 4:19-24; 1 John 4:1-6; 1 Timothy 4:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; Jude 1:8-23; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58.

death, that the persecution was at its peak (this is assumed as the Lord mentioned it for a reason), yet the true believers whom refused to compromise, remained faithful to the Lord even unto death. The sincere faith and perseverance of the remnant, was that for which the Lord was giving commendation; there is never commendation from the Lord for undisciplined cold or lukewarm Christianity!

REBUKE

The church at Pergamos began to listen to the Romans and pagan religious leadership, thereby taking it upon themselves to allow corruption in worship of the one true God; as by compromise within false teaching (heresy) and false worship practices (apostasy). The Romans and many Jews reasoned that there was nothing wrong with slight compromise in serving other gods (teaching of the Nicolaitans), therefore those who refused to compromise were persecuted and many times killed. Many within the church at Pergamos continued in their corruptive compromise, effectually (one's choice) to escape persecution for the sake of the Gospel.

- Multitudes throughout church history have maintained involvement in religious compromise volitionally and effectually for the same reasons even to this day! While multitudes of professing believers seek to evade persecution and suffering, while also being overly concerned as to what others may think or feel; the remnant of true Christians understand that our calling is unto persecution, tribulation and suffering; for the truth must be proclaimed without compromise, variation or excuse; for we are devoted to the Lord, not "self" or others who compromise!⁶⁷³

Jesus held against the church at Pergamos, the fact that many of them continually compromised the true basis of their faith by adherence to the teachings of Balaam and the Nicolaitans (Revelation 2:14, 15). Balaam was a prophet (soothsayer) whom was the epitome of intentional compromise, as he sold his spiritual talents to obtain personal gains.⁶⁷⁴

⁶⁷³ cf. Matthew 11:11-19; Romans 8:1-39, specific vs. 14-25; 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; Philippians 1:21-30; 2 Timothy 3:1-17.

Balaam maintained no moral stature, as he would bless or curse a people or civilization for financial gain; himself compromising within inappropriate worship (Baal of Peor).⁶⁷⁵

The Nicolaitans were a heretical group among the early church that taught compromise as had Balaam. They taught that it was acceptable for the believers to hold to their faith in God, while engaging in open sexual relations (orgies and fornication). The Nicolaitans also taught that it was acceptable for the believers to engage in pagan feasts of eating the food offered to false idols; teaching also subtle compromises from the strict rules of the Christian faith, as by the insidious nature of other pagan religious beliefs. The basic premise of Nicolaitan corruptive instruction was that inflection was acceptable, considerate upon one's adherence to any form of belief in God; even though minute (purport).

Just as the Lord God had forbidden the Israelites to mingle and have sexual relations with the inhabitants of the lands in which they sojourned, yet out of rebellious actions the Israelites continually fell prey to sin by their disobedience; so it was again in the city of Pergamum. The Lord is not pleased with compromise to worship any false deities, nor have sexual relations with persons outside of the faith and the confines of covenantal marriage (endeavored within vows).⁶⁷⁶ The Lord knew that believers would (and will yet) be drawn further into the pagan practices of surrounding cultures and religions, *if* they do not maintain complete separateness as by appropriate persistent devotional focus!⁶⁷⁷

- Please understand—subtle compromise generally breeds (produces) increased compromise! Separate (adj.) - To set asunder; disunite or disjoin; sever.⁶⁷⁸
- A primary key basis by which the multitudes have gone astray of appropriate (in depth) reverence and worship of the one true God, is failure to abide both in the Lord and the Gospel; thus the compromise of superficiality keeps individuals aloof of the intimacy necessary to abound spiritually!⁶⁷⁹

⁶⁷⁴ cf. 2 Peter 2:1-22, specific vs. 12-16; Numbers 22:1-24:25.

⁶⁷⁵ cf. Numbers 25:1-5; 31:13-20, specific v. 16.

⁶⁷⁶ cf. Exodus 20:3-6; Deuteronomy 7:1-6; 12:32-13:5; 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.

⁶⁷⁷ cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Hebrews 12:1-11.

⁶⁷⁸ Funk & Wagnalls Standard Desk Dictionary, Volume 2, Funk & Wagnalls, INC., New York, 1975.

⁶⁷⁹ cf. John 8:31-47; 15:4-27.

There is only one true God and Savior; besides Him there is no other!⁶⁸⁰ The believers in the city of Pergamos could not see this fact through the spiritual blindness caused by setting their minds on the flesh by their desires to avoid persecution. Unfortunately, this problem remains prevalent within the church today, as believers compromise without concern of the spiritual consequences! This compromise comes from failing to identify oneself fully with Christ (steadfast Christianity), but rather identifying with one's "self" (primarily) and other men and women; leading to a fleshly walk within the Christian religion, as individuals are yet held captive to carnality because the divine work of God has not been accepted, allowed, or has been denied or rejected! Just as many Jews continually worshipped pagan fertility gods and goddesses (in times of antiquity), as sex was an integral part of the false worship; so also do many believers engage in practices which involve sexual relations external of the covenant relationship of marriage; for the flesh entices powerfully to sin.

- Please understand; human insecurities which would lead us to seek fellowship with other humans as precedent, is derived from failure to realize who we are within an intimate personal relationship with the Lord. When unity with the Lord is forthcoming derived from actual sincere devotion for Him, human insecurities are diminished to the point of nonexistence; as God's fruits displace the deeds of our flesh! When the strength of a secure relationship with God is forthcoming: potential to edify others, ability to stay from insidious religion, fellowship with others without fear of compromise, coming to abounding knowledge of Gospel truth; becomes a reality, thus actual purpose of one's being created becomes not only evident but also fulfilled (thereby security within actual knowledge of the truth)!⁶⁸¹
 - Please remember, the truth (living and active nature) of the Gospel is rendered to individuals by the Lord personally, through implantation of it; thus the ability to actually come to knowledge of the truth is enabled only within an intimate personal relationship (fellowship) with God! This

⁶⁸⁰ cf. Deuteronomy 4:35-39; Isaiah 45:5-7, 21-25.

⁶⁸¹ cf. Colossians 1:15-23.

is unfortunately not available to those who live for the flesh with but a concept of spirituality; for a life lived spiritually walking by faith, trusting God in every way, is a life within which God's divine work is welcomed, accepted, sought, and obeyed!

Balaam and the Nicolaitans Further Explained

Balaam was not a true Scriptural prophet, but rather a soothsayer. Balaam utilized his talents of divination for the purpose of personal gain, by his either cursing or blessing a group or civilization in accordance to the request rendered by the paying party.

Balaam was no stranger to workings of a supernatural nature, which is made evident by the way he showed no concern when the donkey talked to him while on the path through the vineyards when accompanied by the men of King Balak from Moab. Although Balaam was accustomed to doing exactly as he was told in accordance to the payment rendered him, in this case with the king of Moab, Balaam followed the Lord in blessing the Hebrews; yet what was the extent necessary for Balaam to awaken from his slumber or selfishness!⁶⁸²

The basic errors of Balaam were that he would compromise with the deities of any civilization, and would teach others that idol worship or the worship of pagan gods was of no bad consequence to one's faith in the one true God. Balaam obviously knew of the Lord God and feared Him, for he sought to save his life when confronted by the angel in the vineyards. Balaam never truly turned from his ways of spiritual compromise, because he served money (mammon); not God!⁶⁸³ Would Balaam have continued by personal intention, had there not been potential for personal harm or loss? How many believers yet remain in compromise even to this very day, with little or no concern for the consequences to others or to personal spiritual wellbeing; but rather concern only for their "self," for the very same reasons?⁶⁸⁴

The error of Balaam was that he felt the Lord should curse the Israelites because he said so; thus Balaam believed that God was alterable from His absolute holiness and righteousness! How many throughout

⁶⁸² cf. Numbers 22:21-38.

⁶⁸³ cf. Matthew 6:19-24; Luke 16:8-13.

⁶⁸⁴ cf. Titus 1:10-16; Jude 1:3-16.

history have believed the same regarding the Lord, with no consideration as to the reality of God within their faulty beliefs? Balaam was accustomed to being able to call upon evil spirits to either bless or curse as he directed, so as to earn the money he was being paid. How many yet within the church (Body of Christ) feel God should change to suit the times, or alter His perfect plan so as to appease?⁶⁸⁵ How many within the Body of Christ think that because someone said “the Lord says,” that God should change the Biblical standards to suit their attempts at manipulation; and this due the sensuality of the flesh?⁶⁸⁶ Many such things as these foolishly continue with compromising believers then wondering why spiritual dejection occurs! Much better, let us seek first His: kingdom, righteousness, and good, acceptable and perfect will; thereby receiving growth and joy during our journey toward His upward call in Christ Jesus, within the “reality” of the spiritual relationship which saves us!⁶⁸⁷

Balaam was very much in error when he thought that the Lord God would do as he said, just because he said so. Balaam learned the error of his ways, for he did exactly as the Lord commanded—blessing the people of Israel although he was paid to curse them. Balaam went further to proclaim: prophecies of the coming Messiah, the captivity of Israel in Assyria, and the affliction of the Kittimites.⁶⁸⁸ Balaam was responsible for making illustration to King Balak of how to cause the Israelites to sin, leading them to desire Moabite woman and worship Baal of Peor.⁶⁸⁹ This demonstrates how quickly we will return to our sinful ways, once righteous focus and reverence unto the Lord has been rejected! The spiritual battles we face must be devotionally fought each moment of each day, lest our devotion diminishes and we return to living for the flesh; which is exactly what our sinful nature and demonic forces desire to happen! Please remember—our sinful nature desires to control us constantly; this with the addition of demonic influence regarding the matter, leads to spiritual battles which can never be fought or won when the reality of God is denied or rejected!

Balaam sought gain by any means available, whether by divination, the attempted justification of unsound doctrine, or teaching open wor-

⁶⁸⁵ cf. Numbers 23:18-24; 1 Samuel 15:24-31; 2 Peter 2:4-22; emphasis vs. 12-22.

⁶⁸⁶ cf. Hebrews 13:1-14; 2 Timothy 3:1-4:8.

⁶⁸⁷ cf. Philippians 3:1-21.

⁶⁸⁸ cf. Numbers 23:1-24:25.

⁶⁸⁹ cf. Numbers 25:1-9.

ship of false gods. The way of Balaam was personal gain as by the fruits of unrighteousness. The way of Balaam was to sell his prophetic (soothsaying or magical) gifts for money. He had absolutely no spiritual morals beyond what could be purchased; with the exception of God's having utilized him within specifics. Another way of Balaam was that any lifestyle was acceptable if one could explain their actions by intellectual prowess (excuses). Does this sort of intellectualizing occur within the church today; thus—I will believe and do whatever I so choose?

NOTE: Extreme care must be taken that carnal doctrinal compromise has no beginnings in our walk for Christ. Once carnal doctrinal compromise has begun, further captivity to compromise becomes the end result, unless repentance (turning back to God; being transformed by the renewing of our minds) in accordance to sincere devotion takes place.⁶⁹⁰ Please remember—compromise can happen to anyone at any time; this tending to occur more effectively when following the secular and fleshly capriciousness of others!⁶⁹¹

Although not much is historically known about the Nicolaitans, I know they assumed any and all types of worship / behavior were acceptable, providing the one true God had some minuscule place in one's life. This is a trait which I yet witness frequently in the lives of many believers, as far too many: refuse to grasp the necessity of God's grace, instead taking it for granted; have divided devotions (double-mindedness); yet serve idols (including "self").⁶⁹² Please remember—holding as precedent anyone or anything more than the Lord our God, including oneself, is idolatry (harlotry)! Inappropriately accepted and justified religious doctrine is but secular and demonic; dare to be different from the multitudes and thus separate unto the Lord, for the multitudes foolishly turn to and fro upon the broad path of spiritual detriment and destruction, whereas upon the narrow path of spiritual success our focus is directly ahead upon the Lord our King!⁶⁹³ The way of success: SINCERE DEVOTIONAL LOVE FOR

⁶⁹⁰ cf. Romans 10:1-4; 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 10:5-18.

⁶⁹¹ cf. Galatians 2:11-21; 2 Peter 3:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:20-3:5; 1 Corinthians 10:1-33, specific emphasis v. 12.

⁶⁹² cf. Colossians 3:1-11, examine v. 5.

⁶⁹³ cf. Proverbs 4:20-27; 1 John 2:3-29; James 4:1-10; 1 Timothy 4:1-16; 2 Corinthians 10:1-

GOD FIRST AND FOREMOST, HUMBLE SUBMISSION TO FOLLOW HIM, AND SUBJECTION TO HIS RIGHTEOUSNESS!

WHITE STONE

White stones had several meanings in ancient times. During trials, the jurors were given one white and one black stone to vote in regard to their personal verdict. When the individual was found guilty, the black stone was presented; upon an innocent verdict, the white stone was presented.

When the stones (black and white) were utilized in ancient times, the white stone remained a sign of innocence and purity. This same type of verdict indication has continued to present day, as a person or situation is either voted in (white ball), or voted out (black ball). Even though the stones may have been changed for other substances, the basis of guilt / innocence; acceptance / rejection remains the same in regard to voting or verdict.

Another use for the white stone in ancient times was to indicate the name (by number) of a god (any of numerous) which a person held as their own. During celebrations unto these gods by those who believed in them, a white stone with the god's number upon it was presented as the pass necessary to enter into these celebrations. As there was a numerical value to each letter within the Greek alphabet, the number of the god to whom the people gathered to worship was upon the stone; this number verified the god's name. In the flagrant false worship of the ancient world, individuals would have the number of their own personal god upon a stone. Because there were multitudes of pagan gods, each person could claim the extravagant power of their own personal savior god to be solely theirs, and thus feel special in and of themselves. A personal god of convenience; do you suppose anyone today would seek such a thing?

Note—Angels are God's servants; not ours. Too many believers talk to (worship) what they consider to be personal guardian angels. This is a modern form of worshipping false gods; for although heavenly angels fulfill God's will without exception, to believe them to be subject to

one's own volition is absolute foolishness! When individuals speak to angels, which is a form of worship, it must be realized who and what they are speaking to; for as individuals cannot converse with heavenly angels (aforementioned), the reality exists that the individuals are speaking to fallen angels (demons) which is actually worship of Satan! Heavenly angels remain focused upon the Lord, as also should all believers! Please remember—prayer is to an object of worship; this is a fact (reality) which is many times denied or rejected, so as to continue that which is un-righteous! Things of this nature will never be realized within physical realm religiosity or the multitudes held captive by it, for physical realm religion entices worship in the flesh; which is completely aloof the “reality of God”!

In the context of having a hidden number or name upon a stone, a specific white stone will be given personally to each who overcomes (Revelation 2:17). The stone will indicate a name for Jesus written upon it that only that individual believer will know, allowing them a personal access and relationship with the Lord. The stone which the individual will receive from the Lord, will guarantee the individual a close intimate relationship with the Lord unlike that of anyone else; for all eternity. The relationship will be as secret and intimate as the name upon the stone! This reality is but a portion of the blessings God seeks to prepare us for while in our corporeal bodies; for the Lord seeks to train us for the eternal state of existence even now, which can be realized within immovable devotion within the spiritual relational reality; which is hindered as long as “self” is allowed to lead our motivations and endeavors of life! As we were created by and for the Lord, complete surrender of our full volition (self) unto the Lord is very sound advice; for the reality of the goodness of God is realized only within His ability to control every aspect of our existence!

Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29)

Thyatira was a city located in the Lycus River valley on the borders of Lydia and Mysia, approximately 40 miles southeast of Pergamum. The city although small, was the central location for the natural resources utilized in the making of dyes.

The city of Thyatira was the center of Roman Catholicism in later years (beginning in the fourth century A.D.). It originated as a garrison

town for the Macedonians, after being founded by Alexander the Great in 330 B.C. After several centuries, Thyatira became a busy business center under Roman rule, with more trade guilds than any other Asian city. These guilds were set up for each and every trade within the city, and no one could successfully do business unless they belonged to the trade's guild. These guilds involved such trades as: leather, dying, linen, metal work, pottery, etc. The trade guilds within the city of Thyatira were much like the unions of today, except for the way the meetings were handled. When the guilds would meet to discuss business, they first began with a sacrifice to the pagan gods of that particular guild, then after going over the business at hand, would generally end with an orgy or further pagan worship.

Thyatira was a city of many pagan gods and rituals, which led to great compromise by believers if they wanted to remain successful in business. No one within the city could successfully engage in trade without belonging to the appropriate guild. Belonging to the guild meant involvement in improper sexual and/or worship practices, therefore the believers in Thyatira were between a rock and hard place as they knew they should not compromise, yet many times did so for the purpose of financial success in business.

Note—How many believers today compromise from the appropriate standards of worship and devotion (first and foremost unto God) set forth by the Lord, so as to be financially and physically successful? Answer—too many!⁶⁹⁴ How many believers place their spiritual relationship with the Lord as the highest priority of life; thereby humbly and devotionally submitting unto the Lord in every way possible?

For truly sincere Christians to follow the Lord and the Gospel in Thyatira, they had to stay clear of the pagan worship and celebrations prevalent within the city. When the Christians separated themselves, they put an end to any chance they may have at being successful in business. Membership in a guild without practicing as the guild demanded meant expulsion from the guild, leading to financial failure.

Thyatira was famous for its abilities in creating dyes for fabric.

⁶⁹⁴ cf. 1 Timothy 6:3-21.

Thyatira utilized the natural resources of the area to produce different colors, examples of which are:

- Purple—came from a species of shell-fish (the *Murex trunculus*) which was difficult to obtain in volume. Only one drop could be extracted from each shell-fish, leading to its expensive cost and use by royalty.
- Blue—came from a species of shell-fish (the *Helix ianthina*), also from the rind of pomegranates.
- Scarlet—came from a worm or grub (*Coccus ilics*).
- Turkey red—came from the madder root.

Thyatira was well known for its dyes, because they did not fade as did dyes from other sources; the most famous of the unfading colors being scarlet. The fabrics dyed by the dyers in Thyatira were considered to be the best dyed fabrics available; the dyers themselves were considered to be the best in the trade.

The Church at Thyatira (Revelation 2:18-29)

COMMENDATION

The description given to Christ in verse 18, making indication of His deity and His righteous indignation at their sins; reiterates focus upon what He was to say as being absolutely true and just. Jesus rendered commendation to the love, faith, service and perseverance of the church at Thyatira (remnant), for the righteous works and testimony of the church had increased with time. This can be contrasted with the church at Ephesus, whose works (for Christ) were decreasing, as love for the Lord first and foremost had also decreased.

REBUKE

The church at Thyatira wanted to follow the teachings of Christ, yet did not want to turn from the sexual immorality which had been prevalent for so long. The prevalent aspect of sexual immorality present at Thyatira may have been fornication. Fornication being voluntary sexual relations external of the confines of marriage, is a sinful means by which

many had and yet compromise.⁶⁹⁵ The church tolerated the teachings of Jezebel, thereby violating the righteous standards of the faith, which caused hindrance to the work of the Holy Spirit.

- Further explanation of Jezebel is forthcoming.

The violation by the church in Thyatira in regards to the teaching of Jezebel consisted of history repeating itself; thus the outcome of repeated mistakes forced inappropriate: worship, compromise, and cowardice.

1. Although many debate as to whether: “Jezebel” was the actual name of a women living in Thyatira who was leading members of the church astray, the name “Jezebel” was utilized to compare the wretchedness of a women in Thyatira with the wretched demeanor of the Jezebel of the Old Testament, or whether the situation was that the church was listening and adhering to the teachings of a women in a church (ekklyasia) setting, against Gospel standards regarding appropriate church and moral behavior; the reality of the matter is that the “Jezebel” of mention is in fact the Jezebel who was the daughter of Ethbaal king of the Sidonians, whom Ahab (King of Israel) had married.⁶⁹⁶
 - It was during the latter part of the third and during the fourth century A.D. that the teachings of the Babylonian Mystery Rites Religion gained impetus and inevitably expounded forcibly. From the time and decree of Constantine granting freedom of religion (Edict of Milan; A.D. 313), Roman Catholicism (the insidious teachings of Jezebel; the Christian Religion) was tolerated; which allowed deceptive alterations to entice delusion to both the intimate devotion between individuals and God (thus harlotry) and to the sound doctrine of Gospel truth (thus false doctrine; doctrines of demons).⁶⁹⁷

⁶⁹⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 6:9, 10; Hebrews 13:4.

⁶⁹⁶ cf. 1 Kings 16:29-33; 1 Corinthians 14:34-40.

⁶⁹⁷ cf. 2 Peter 2:1-22.

2. As by the union of mother and son; Mary and Jesus / Semiramis and Tammuz; regarding Christianity and the Babylonian Mysteries; a non-realistic association was made so as to subtly deceive (insidiousness) within the realm of a true relationship with God.
 - Semiramis (Nimrod's wife) supposedly had a son by alleged miraculous conception, whom was given the name Tammuz. The basis of the story (from the time of Babylon's foundational existence—Genesis 10:8-12) in effect was a false fulfillment of the promise regarding the seed of the woman (Genesis 3:15).
 - Because of the subtle deceptive connections between Christianity and the Babylonian Mysteries, variance from truth was not noticed or seemed justifiable; thus subtle deception (insidiousness) led to subtle compromise within religious doctrines (doctrines of demons) which led to further compromise which exists to this day.
 - Worship of the Baals and goddesses of the Ashtaroth was directly linked to the Babylonian Mysteries Religion; thus that which was associated with gods and goddesses of fertility seemed only natural; for sex and religious (as distinguished from relational) beliefs are both derived from the sinful nature (flesh).
 - Due to the aforementioned fact, it is quite understandable why supposed innocent sexual relations (fornication) would appear to hold little consequence within one's relationship with God (teachings of the Nicolaitans); therefore the Christian religion (introduced at Pergamum) seemed innocent enough to the masses; for from within subtle compromise, further compromise seems even less consequential.
3. Jezebel had utilized the strength of a nation's armies to intimidate and force involvement of the Israelites in the inappropriate worship of the fertility gods and goddesses of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion. It was for this form of worship that the "high places" were built to hold the asherim (pagan images) which were inappropriately worshipped. All such worship to gods and goddesses (of fertility) as

well as all forms of compromise with pagan religion was adamantly condemned in Old Testament times; this standard of avoidance never having changed!⁶⁹⁸

- Simply put—just as the Israelites had compromised as by the teachings derived from false religion; so also occurred with acceptance at Pergamum (Pergamos) and tolerance at Thyatira of a revised form of the pagan Babylonian Mystery Rites Religion. As compromise breeds further compromise within religion; the imperative is to remain completely aloof of “religious” teachings, rather allowing God’s work of sanctification (setting apart and making holy) to abound from within an intimate personal relationship with Him (actual Christianity).
 - God’s purpose and intention is to train us for the eternal state upon the narrow path of His righteousness, upon which He leads and we follow; with the ushering in to occur at the first resurrection!
 - True love for and unto the Lord our God is not complicated; although it does take sincere: devotion, selflessness, humility, submission, persistence, diligence, discipline, and fortitude. Taking all thoughts immediately captive to obedience avoids distractions; just as testing all teaching according to sound doctrine (the Gospel) avoids false teachings and beliefs.
 - Within the reality of the truth which is actual Christianity (the personal intimate relationship with the Lord our Creator; spiritual relational reality), that which is of the flesh is of little consequence (except regarding the instrument of our “going forth”), for: intellect, emotional stature, and zeal void of actual knowledge; are actually hindrances to the spiritual growth which occurs on the narrow path in accordance to God’s good, acceptable and perfect will, and the kind intention of His will!⁶⁹⁹

⁶⁹⁸ cf. 1 Kings 18:1-19:18; Ephesians 4:7-24; Titus 1:5-16; Jude 1:1-23.

⁶⁹⁹ cf. Romans 10:1-4; 12:1-21; Matthew 7:13-27.

4. When the “Christian Religion” was declared the “State Religion” (Theodosius’s edict of A.D. 380), the religion gained momentum as by the forceful nature of the Roman Empire (imperial interference); for previously Constantine had granted Catholic clergy freedom from civil obligations which was the foundation for the pedestal from which the Catholic hierarchy believed itself to be above humanity, and thus rulers over the realm of the believing world. It was from this foundation that the papacy came into existence.
 - Although it is actually quite real that individuals can go directly into the presence of God and learn as by His personal masterful leadership and tutelage, humans tend to seek answers through the instruction of other human beings who are educated and thus seem superior intellectually. This added to the tolerance which was forthcoming regarding the revised Babylonian Mystery Rites Religion (Roman Catholicism); for although the actual relationship with the Lord (Christianity) is not a complicated matter, with the passing of time and introduction of obscure religious teachings (false doctrines), confusion led the commoners (uneducated individuals) to seek answers from those they considered superior in intellectual stature. From this, the pedestal of the Roman Catholicism hierarchy grew in both pride and arrogance to the point that most individuals (including Roman rulers) put forth more devotion and reverence for the supposed spiritual leadership than for God.
5. It was from the fourth century A.D. that the council meetings were convened in efforts to explain God and the spiritual relationship, and defend against what was considered heresies; yet the fact remained that the leadership of such endeavors and the attempts to explain God as by defensive debate was but attempts in the physical realm (religion) to explain the reality of a wonderful spiritual realm relationship (actual Christianity). This occurred; although God cannot be known, understood, or worshipped foundational to the flesh!
6. The church followed wickedness by eating the meat which was purchased after the animal was sacrificed to idols. Although this meat was generally sold at market and was the only source of meat

available to those without wealth, the members of the church could have settled for meat from other sources or no meat at all.

- To eat of the meat when no other acts of compromise were present, was acceptable. The weak believers at Thyatira were practicing compromise, which led to little restraint from further inappropriate behavior.⁷⁰⁰

7. Members of the church (minus a remnant) intentionally involved themselves in the sexual immorality which was prevalent within the city, because they were accustomed to sensuality of the flesh and did not want to stop. Their philosophy being—it is what we have always done, why change.

- Actual Christianity is all about change; change from the unfruitful deeds of carnal darkness, to being “light” in the Lord (Ephesians 5:1-17; cf. 2 Peter 14-11)! For as the old things have gone and new things have come in accordance to God’s grace, indwelling, righteousness, and masterful leadership; actual Christians are transformed by the renewing of their minds, and the wonderful convincing convictions of the Lord.⁷⁰¹
 - Aloof the relationship (actual Christianity), religious doctrinal convictions must come forth in attempts to establish righteousness as by human effort; thus actual growth in accordance to God’s work of sanctification is hindered, or eliminated completely; for emulated righteousness in the physical realm does not actual spiritual growth accomplish, for spiritual growth is solely foundational to the Lord’s righteousness!⁷⁰² Multitudes have lived attempting to establish righteousness by personal endeavor; although this eliminates the possibility for actual righteousness, which comes forth solely by God’s willing and working within individuals for His own good pleasure!⁷⁰³

⁷⁰⁰ cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 8:8-13.

⁷⁰¹ cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1-21; Romans 12:1, 2.

⁷⁰² cf. Romans 10:1-4.

⁷⁰³ Romans 10:1-4; Philippians 2:12-16.

JEZEBEL

The Jezebel of both Testaments was a coercive means which sought to cause the fall of God's chosen people, by teaching them to compromise involving false gods and immoral practices. The name "Jezebel" became the name associated with wickedness and apostasy, as the means of both Testaments attempted to lead God's elect astray regarding knowledge of the truth, pertaining to "the reality of God"!

The Jezebel of both Testaments was wretched in accordance to evil influence and the behavior derived there from; neither having concern of repentance nor fear of God's judgment. Jezebel led to the epitome of apostasy, as she led by example the ways of sin within pagan beliefs, and taught compromise as acceptable. All who follow the leadership of Jezebel are held captive to do Satan's will; for in accordance to the instigator (Satan), and servant of (Jezebel; the Roman Catholic Church; Mother of Harlots), or those foolish enough to follow in ignorance; all who journey within the darkness of deception and carnal religious indulgence cannot please the righteous Lord of truth (Revelation 2:24; cf. 2:13)!⁷⁰⁴

- It is imperative to understand that all the traditions of the Christian religion are falsehoods (religious deceptions); with the exception of the Lord's Supper, which is not a tradition but rather an act of remembrance. The dates of the traditions were incorporated to ease conversion of peoples from other religions (pagan); as also many of the facets were derived from aspects of the pagan religions; thus all that has been incorporated into the Christian religion by the Mother of Harlotry are delusive; which are exactly contrary to appropriate worship of God in spirit and in truth (righteous reality—John 4:20-24)! This is of mention, as the multitudes have gone astray by involvement in insidious religion; whereas only a remnant abstains so as to remain in subjection to God's righteousness, and subject to His abounding leadership, which is received during actual righteous spiritual fellowship with the Lord!

⁷⁰⁴ cf. John 8:42-47; 2 Corinthians 13:1-8; 1 John 3:4-24.

- More regarding the compromise of Christian religious traditions, and the actual truth of the traditions, can be found in chapter eight.

Jesus said he would render the following judgments upon Jezebel and her followers *if* they did not repent (turn back to God; change the way they think):

1. They would be thrown onto a bed of sickness and tribulation. This may be an indication that although they foresee that they are headed to fulfillment of lustful pleasure, the bed to which they are actually headed, is the bed of suffering and death (Revelation 2:21-23).⁷⁰⁵
2. Her children (followers) whom involved themselves in sexual immorality and the following of false religion would be plagued with pestilence, sickness and death.
 - This will occur during the bowl judgments of the Great Tribulation Period; for those alive during the Tribulation Period. The bowl judgments will be ushered in by the seventh (last) trumpet judgment; at which time the Rapture will occur and all true children of God will be “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air. Directly following true believers being “caught up” (Rapture) the full wrath of God will be poured out upon the earth and upon those who were deceived by the mother or harlots and all other false religions; for in accordance to God’s faithfulness, true believers will be kept from His wrath and the hour of testing which will befall the whole earth, both of which are during the bowl judgments (Revelation 2:20-25).⁷⁰⁶
 - A simple fact—nothing taught or practiced by the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion, tests accurately according to the Gospel truth; for it is but ritualistic insidious religion! A single emphasis proves this point, as the priesthood has all focus remain upon them; thus stopping the focus of all members of the religion prior to actually going to God! Only the Lord God can actually forgive

⁷⁰⁵ cf. Matthew 24:36-51; Revelation 22:10-17.

⁷⁰⁶ cf. Revelation 3:10, 11; 11:1-19; 15:1-16:21; John 3:1-36; Romans 1:18-32.

sins (absolve), as all sin is directed unto Him who is absolutely holy and righteous (God); thus all confession of sin which falls short of going to God, remains (Mark 2:5-11)! Please understand that Satan's intention is to murder as many human beings spiritually as possible; this he does by stopping individuals (religiously) prior to coming to the spiritual reality of God and of Christ! "Religion" will save no one; for we are saved solely by God's grace in accordance to the righteous kind intention of His will, within the spiritual relational reality which is led by God, and God alone (Romans 8:14; cf. 10:8-13, specific v. 9; John 6:44-66)! "Religion" holds multitudes to fleshly indulgence worship; which is but a deceptive physical realm mimic of a spiritual reality!

OVERCOMERS AT THYATIRA

Jesus applied Psalm 2:9 to the overcomers, as He was making illustration that they would be with Him during His 1,000 year millennial reign (Revelation 2:26-29).⁷⁰⁷

The behavioral illustration of the overcomers in the statements regarding Thyatira, are in regard to all believers. These statements demonstrate that a sincere effort must be put forth to stay from the sin of false worship (religion) and sexual immorality.⁷⁰⁸ One must truly overcome all sensuality of the flesh (foundational to "self") *if* they are to experience the full blessings of the Lord!⁷⁰⁹

- The key to success in this matter is—denial of (all) one's personal volitional desires (self), so as to accomplish and maintain absolute sincere devotion for the Lord (Matthew 16:22-26)! Multitudes of believers have never actually had intimate spiritual fellowship with the Lord, because this truth (and reality) has been denied or outright rejected; which is the outcome of practiced carnal volition and religiosity, which completely denies or rejects the imperative of God's divine work of righteousness, which is necessary to achieve and maintain the

⁷⁰⁷ cf. Revelation 20:1-6.

⁷⁰⁸ cf. Acts 15:22-29.

⁷⁰⁹ cf. Hebrews 6:4-6; 10:26, 27.

righteous relationship with God by which we walk by faith and not by sight. This matter is rendered in detail within chapter eleven—Truth and the Spiritual Relational Reality!

It may currently be difficult for many who seek to follow Jesus, to understand the difference derived from holiness upon this earth. When Jesus comes to reign and those who overcome reign with Him, they (overcomers) will witness the breaking and shattering of the rebellious ones who refused to separate themselves from the un-righteousness of the world and flesh for whatever reason. Although conceiving of a righteous reign seems impossible at the present time, we must remember that all things righteous, holy, and just are possible with God; and He will faithfully fulfill all prophesy!⁷¹⁰ It is only by overcoming, that the true follower of the Lord will be witness to the destruction which comes from sin. We (believers) can either separate ourselves and overcome, or risk having our carnal works destroyed; without ever truly understanding the blessings which could have been achieved in Christ.⁷¹¹ *If* daily we are not overcoming the world, then daily we are being overcome by the world; this reality is proven Biblically within the statements of 1 John 5:18-21. Please remember—“self” is the primary form of idolatry which has been present throughout the history of humankind; for “self” abounding (narcissism) is the foundation of all within individuals that denies or rejects the imperative necessity of God’s divine work for: spiritual awakening, success, and victory!⁷¹²

The Christians in Thyatira lived surrounded by a very harsh situation. Jesus knew that their general way of life would be one of harsh successes; He therefore told them that they would not have any further burden placed upon them. Jesus strengthened them to continue in their endeavors to abstain from improper practices and deceptions (deep things of Satan; i.e. insidious religion), exactly as they had been (Revelation 2:24, 25). Persevering in godliness would lead to overcoming the situation of sin and false worship within the city of Thyatira. Those who overcome: would then be given authority over the nations, would rule them (as co-heirs with Christ) with a rod of iron (strict discipline)

⁷¹⁰ cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24.

⁷¹¹ cf. John 15:1-17; Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23.

⁷¹² cf. Romans 13: 1-14, specific vs. 7-14; 1 John 3:1-18; cf. 1 John 2:18-29.

would receive their authority from Jesus, and would receive the morning star. Discipline persevering in one's godliness by the grace and guidance of our Lord, is true victory while in our earthly bodies!⁷¹³

To rule over the nations, is to rule with Jesus during His reign upon the earth for the millennium. The morning star (the brightest star) is Jesus Himself.⁷¹⁴ He is the beginning of the new day, and the hope of all who have a personal righteous relationship with Him! With Jesus being on the road to Zion (His return to righteously reign); by our actions and focus, are we following Him or remaining behind?⁷¹⁵

Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)

PREFATORY

Much had occurred during the 1200 years between the 4th (emphasized with the church at Thyatira) and 16th centuries A.D. (emphasized with the church at Sardis). Beginning with the first ecumenical council meeting which occurred at Nicaea in 325 A.D., which Roman emperor Constantine presided over in an effort to achieve unity of belief in God; this as an affect to stop the discouraging and distracting intermix of teachings from the many forms of religion in the Roman Empire, from having such a drastic effect of indifference upon Christian believers and the empire as a whole.

Due to debates which occurred, heated arguments came forth between a man named Arius and a man named Athanasius; these two of specific mention as each was zealous to prove either side of the debate. Arius (A.D. 256-336; Alexandrian priest, and founder of Arianism) denied the deity of Christ, for the theological school of Antioch which he attended was known for its emphasis upon historical and inductive reasoning within religious investigation (sic et non); leading to the school's tendency of regarding Jesus as a created being, subordinate to God the Father.⁷¹⁶ Arius was banished for his beliefs and teachings which were condemned during the ecumenical council at Nicaea; although re-accepted after several years when opposition to Arianism seemed to have abated. The current-day followers of Arius' teachings, who have followed

⁷¹³ cf. Ephesians 6:10-18; Proverbs 4:20-27; 12:1-3; 19:20-23; 23:12-19; 1 Corinthians 15:10.

⁷¹⁴ cf. Revelation 22:12-16.

⁷¹⁵ cf. Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14; Hebrews 12:1-11.

⁷¹⁶ cf. John 10:22-30; 14:7-11.

a proponent of Arius (Charles Taze Russell), are the Jehovah's Witnesses. Athanasius (circa A.D. 293-373; bishop of Alexandria), championed for orthodoxy against the teaching of Arianism at the ecumenical council of Nicaea; for Constantine had convened the first General Council (May A.D. 325) for the purpose of settling the matter which had culminated thereby causing considerable division and animosity within the different sects of the church, which were separated by inductive and doctrinal reasoning. At the finale of the first General Council at Nicaea, Arianism was condemned, and "religious" orthodoxy was pronounced with the initiation of the fabricated Nicene Creed; which was foundational to the Homoousian doctrine which Athanasius had formulated within his antagonistic endeavors against the teachings of Arius.

- The Homoousian Doctrine was a doctrine which attempted to explain how the Son of God is of the same essence or substance as the Father. This was to contradict Arius' belief and teaching which stated that the Son was of a different substance than the Father, and was merely a creature; a creature more perfect than any other, although yet a created being utilized by God during subsequent works of creation. Matters of this nature are presented in detail in chapter two of the book—"Gaining Perspective."

Within importance to gain understanding regarding what was occurring during the subsequent centuries; it must be first understood that at the time of the first ecumenical council meeting, presumptuous doctrinal religion was the point of argument, and as such what was considered to be "Christianity" was in fact Roman Catholic coerced and corrupted Christianity (the Christian religion).

To begin the appropriate understanding as to how and why the beauty of Christianity could possibly be coerced and corrupted, the distinction must be made concerning two distinct and separate realms; the physical realm, and the spiritual realm. With the reality of the physical realm religion as designated by God (the Levitical Law) pointing directly to the Messiah, the remnant of Israelites who put forth devotional and diligent effort to maintain focus and adherence upon and for the teachings of God, learned to trust the Lord for the answers; and thus they accepted God's standards to save them (salvation) by their belief that the Messiah

would come, and that in the interim they must hold fast to the standard of religion which God had set forth. A considerable emphatic lesson of the Levitical Law regarded virtual impossibility for human beings to achieve a standard of worthiness and righteousness in and of themselves which could in any way please the one true God of immense glory and righteousness; thus the only avenue of acceptance would be to trust God for deliverance from the wages of sin which was cause for distancing.⁷¹⁷ This fact emphasizes the immense blessing of God's grace (un-merited and un-deserved favor), and why the ministry of the church (Body of Christ) is one of reconciliation; growth within the foundational relationship contingent upon personal humble submission so as to learn from the Teacher personally!⁷¹⁸ With the coming of the Messiah, the imperative for salvation became one of "faith," for the tutor (Levitical Law) pointed to the imperative of trusting in God upon the forward narrow path of His righteousness (right doing); thus the necessity for adherence to religious standards as taught by humankind was replaced by faith in both what God had done upon the cross, and fulfillment of prophesy regarding judgment and ultimate deliverance (salvation).

Because of the difficulty regarding transition from physical realm religion (in the flesh) to a spiritual realm relationship (wholly spiritual), God had empowered the Apostles with the ability to perform signs and wonders (*saymaion* and *teras*), for His chosen people (the Israelites) always sought for signs; in accordance during Old Testament times, God had manifest signs so as to engender greater trust by those who wanted to believe in Him.⁷¹⁹ Please note who exactly the Apostles were sent to reach (Matthew 10:1-6), and who exactly Jesus' spoken ministry was unto (Matthew 15:24); this of course initially, prior to "the Way" being opened fully to Jews and Gentiles alike, with no further distinction.⁷²⁰ The gift of signs and wonders unto the Apostles held dual purpose, as aforementioned regarding the Israelites, and to establish the Apostle's testimony as being from God. When the Israelites were set aside (temporarily), the ability to perform signs and wonders (*saymaion* and *teras*)

⁷¹⁷ cf. Romans 3:21-31; 6:1-23; John 14:1-14, specific vs. 6, 7.

⁷¹⁸ cf. Matthew 23:2-10, emphasis v. 8; Romans 5:1-11; 1 Corinthians 3:1-13; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

⁷¹⁹ cf. Matthew 12:39-45; Mark 8:11-13; Luke 11:29-36; John 2:18-25; 6:30-40; 1 Corinthians 1:22-29; Genesis 9:13-17; Exodus 13:21, 22.

⁷²⁰ cf. Acts 15:1-18; Romans 10:1-21, specific vs. 12-21; Colossians 3:5-17.

was withdrawn, for the church had been established, and those who had necessity of signs and wonders after that time were not actually people of faith; thus the necessity for signs and wonders as by God's perfect timing was no longer valid.⁷²¹ When the actual necessity for signs and wonders was no longer valid, truly chosen servants of the Lord were sent to prophesy (proclaim) the word of truth (Gospel) in love, and further instruct students of earnest and diligent devotion. Satan utilizing opportunity in accordance to humankind's fleshly whims and desires, empowered his servants to perform counterfeit signs and wonders (*se-meiois* and *terasim*), to deceive the multitudes, and *if* possible even the elect; this in preparation for the ultimate deceptions which will lead multitudes to believe the antichrist to be the Lord, and accept the mark of the beast; for the stage must be set for Satan to play out his scheme of deceiving the whole world, minus the remnant!⁷²² The imperative all along has been to utilize the righteously activated measure of faith given by the Lord for the purpose of righteous focus upon and trust in Him; for when the measure of faith is not utilized righteously (not divinely actuated), the flesh (sinful nature) under instigations from the demonic realm leads individuals to seek spiritual answers in the physical realm; thus doctrinal and ritualistic religion becomes a powerful tool by which to deceive! As the multitudes fell prey to the schemes of Satan's volition that individuals both deceive and be deceived, they then choose for themselves supposed servants of the Lord who are also deceived, and these servants manipulate (adulterate) Scripture to suit the whims of both fleshly desire and secular indulgence; thereby deception upon deception, and all due to individuals failing to love the Lord (devotionally), and henceforth remain un-righteous within focus and service!⁷²³ Ultimately, each individual is responsible for victory or defeat; for the Lord is as close as our devotion, supplication, and appropriate thanksgiving! The key to victory or defeat being righteous or un-righteous (respectively) utilization of the measure of faith given to each by the Lord in accordance to the kind intention of His will, dictates understanding regarding the distinct difference between—that which is of the “Spirit” and that which is of the “flesh,” for they are diametrically

⁷²¹ cf. John 3:1-21; 4:46-54; 10:24-30; 20:26-31; Romans 11:1-36; 1 Peter 1:3-9.

⁷²² cf. Matthew 7:13-27, contemplate vs. 21-23; Matthew 24:4-51; Mark 13:5-37; 1 John 2:18-27; 4:1-6; 2 John 1:7-11; Revelation 12:7-12; 13:11-18; 14:9-13.

⁷²³ cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-4:5; James 4:1-10; 1 John 2:1-17.

opposed to one another; thus one must be conquered for the sake of the other!⁷²⁴ Question—is it possible to be led by the Holy Spirit and yet be victoriously successful while in corporeal form? Answer—absolutely; for God has given us the potential for victory and success, as by righteous focus, devotion, discipline, and motive; which comes forth by a righteously activated measure of faith and the divine work of the Lord during His “drawing process”!⁷²⁵ Anyone who believes they know Jesus who have never been divinely drawn to the reality of the Christ by God, are deceived and thus illegitimate children and not sons and daughters of the Lord; this occurs as Satan’s primary means to deceive the whole world (minus the remnant who were divinely drawn to the spiritual reality) is through “religion”!

There were several forms of: doctrinal, philosophical, traditional, and blatant deceptive influence (forms of harlotry which distract from devotion for God) which were, and remain instrumental in corrupting the beauty of actual Christianity, effectively bringing forth and maintaining the insidious nature of the Christian religion; which by the 4th century A.D. was that which was announced as being “Christianity”; although not.⁷²⁶

1. The adaptation of the language and philosophical vocabulary of the Greco-Roman world. With the adaptation of words and the philosophical meanings utilized by the indigenous peoples within a geographical location and society, comes acceptance of the philosophies and precepts utilized to govern. Because sojourners tend to follow the innate ways of life found within the natives of a foreign land, the sojourners tend also toward tolerant adaptation of principles and doctrines which contradict afore rendered principles and doctrines which were formerly standards of existence for the sojourners. As Christians, the standards of our existence were rendered by the Lord God; thus they are never to be altered, coerced, or adapted to standards of other societies or religious beliefs. With “immovable devotion” being the primary motivator of Christian behavior; within this devotional love for God first and foremost;

⁷²⁴ cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:1-12; Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:16-23.

⁷²⁵ cf. John 6:44, 45, 65; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; exemplified Matthew 26:37-46; Hebrews 12:7-11.

⁷²⁶ cf. Colossians 2:1-23.

alterations should never be necessary, for standards of righteous and loving existence in accordance to the admonitions of God are correct on a planetary scale!⁷²⁷ This does not by any means indicate that Christians should ever violate standards of law as designated by a society; rather if standards of law within a society violate Gospel standards set forth by the Lord, Christians do not sojourn there!

Because the Christians of the Roman Empire were captive to location, multitudes of believers compromised to avoid persecution; the primary form of compromise being in showing homage to imperial persons and/or images, which were political acts demanded within the Roman Empire. The devotional remnant of believers in the Roman Empire were persecuted, tortured and even killed for their failure to compromise; their behavior being righteous, as indicated by God's commendation unto the remnants at each church (with the exception of Sardis and Laodicea)! With the Edict of Milan, Christian persecution lessened as by the hand of pagan believers and Roman authorities; only to be replaced by Christian religious persecution unto the true Christians who refused to adhere to newly founded doctrines of the Christian religion. When compromise grew because of the demonic influenced doctrines and traditions of the Christian religion as by alterations to better accommodate converts to what was proclaimed as being "Christianity," the insistent ways of both the Babylonian Mysteries Religion (Roman Catholicism) and other paganism of the Roman Empire caused heavy burdens to be upon any who would not adhere to emphasized presumptuous doctrinal teaching; thus blatant distraction away from actual devotion for God resulted; for the multitudes of commoners who sought God in a simple, pure, and devotional manner were held captive by threat and persecution by the intellectually elite.

2. **The adaptation and incorporation of procedural and organizational practices of the Roman Empire.** With adaptation of procedural and organizational practices of a society, comes compromise as by a mixture of good and evil as a means of governing one's own existence. As God is light, Christians who seek fellowship with Him must remain in the light as He is in the light!⁷²⁸ When an

⁷²⁷ cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Romans 1:16, 17; 10:1-21; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21.

intermix occurred between the church and the Roman Empire, and this derived mostly from the comfort and prestige enjoyed by Roman Catholic leadership, the empire began to persecute all Christians who refused to adhere to the doctrines of the state religion which was instituted by the edict of Theodosius. All who refused submission to the standards of Catholic orthodox doctrine and practices were persecuted as heretics; for by this time in history, the religious doctrines of man were placed as precedent, with the Pope being the ultimate final authority. As can be witnessed by the hindsight of history, when compromise comes forth for the purpose of settling comfortably and the receiving of power by a ruling regime or government, men place themselves as idols; this placing God within the realm of belief only as by concept and conjecture void of spiritual understanding. This occurring easily within the corrupted Christian religion, as God was never involved in the Babylonian Mysteries Religion which He condemned from the time of its fabrication, of which Catholicism (the mother of the corrupt Christian religion) is the revised priesthood.⁷²⁹

Because authoritarian rule permeated every aspect of life within the Roman Empire, there should be little wonder as to why this also occurred within the state religion (supposed Christianity) of the Empire! In a like fashion as the bureaucrats of the Roman government relished within the specific prestige of their titled positions, so also occurred within church leadership; for leadership in both cases having forgotten their positions to be of servanthood, caused antiquation by incorporation of multiple policies and procedures evasive of necessity, thus leading to furtherance of one's position as by seniority rather than competency, which led to flagrant and rampant corruption. Within the wealthy and elite classes, both governmental and religious leaders were exempt of paying appropriate taxation due to the positions held, leading to both the bureaucrats of government and of the church becoming increasingly corrupt; while the normal classes of people were hard-pressed to make a living, nonetheless achieve financial success; for both the state and the church thrived financially upon the hard work of commoners,

⁷²⁸ cf. 1 John 1:1-3:24, light specific 1:5-10.

⁷²⁹ cf. Ezekiel 8:1-18.

with little or no actual concern as to the welfare of the inhabitants and/or righteous. This was furthered within the Roman Empire and the church, as Latin became the preferred language of the elite; thereby causing separateness which regarding the church led to believers being ignorant of written truth and susceptible to further deception, as they had necessity of learning from that which was spoken by church leadership, which was in actuality the insidiousness of religion; for the delusional leadership had Bibles written in Latin which commoners could not read! In the case of both the empire government and the church, as the corruption abounded due to the prestige of being amongst the elite, forcefulness was forthcoming to suppress the commoner's ability to come to knowledge of the truth; for maintained confusion was necessary by leadership to stifle growth which comes from knowledge! Ignorance remains unless displaced by knowledge, thus the commoners of Rome remained susceptible to the whims of leadership.

As began in the 4th century A.D. and continued throughout the Inquisition which began in A.D. 1231, lasting for almost five hundred years; all who refused the teaching and inappropriate worship practices of the Christian religion (Catholicism) were: excommunicated, had all belongings forcibly confiscated, persecuted, tortured, and many times killed as heretics. When church leadership was empowered by ruling authorities and given troops for enforcement of church law, no one was safe from persecution; except by willfulness to compromise, which became the norm for the multitudes; lasting, with the inclusion of written material forbidden by the church, until A.D. 1965. Just as the Roman Empire utilized force of arms to enforce its laws upon the inhabitants of the land, so also did church leadership utilize force of arms to cause fear of severe punishments; forcibly distracting individuals from reverent fear of God, replacing it with fright of church leadership; thus appropriate reverent fear of God was replaced with inappropriate fear of humankind!⁷³⁰ Although it is appropriate to appreciate servants of the Lord who speak the truth in love; never, ever was it intended or appropriate for church leadership to be treated as if they are different and somehow above

⁷³⁰ cf. Galatians 1:6-10; Colossians 3:22-25; Hebrews 13:1-6.

others; for we are all human beings blessed of God for the purpose of righteous service, unless of course His blessing upon us is removed due to our own prideful and arrogant refusal to submit as by faithful reverent devotion.

- The presumptuous ways of Catholic leadership which is expected to be not only accepted but also condoned and appreciated, can be evidenced in the manner by which the conclave meets clandestinely to elect a new Pontiff (Pope). The cardinals presume to read the mind of God, and thus choose a new “spiritual leader” who then presumedly assumes God’s authority on earth; thus God is actually left external of all endeavors, for neither faith nor humble submission was forthcoming or emphasized! This is in essence the epitome of human arrogance which was emphasized during the inquisition; as individuals who would not accept as truth that the Pope held the authority of God on earth, were murdered as heretics. The epitome of arrogance is evidenced in the fact that the Lord God has full authority throughout the entire universe; and only those wandering in the darkness of prideful deception would ever believe that God would give His authority to individuals of the human race!

As has occurred throughout history, the strong have always victimized the weak. This continued for generations with the papacy seeking and achieving positions of power and prestigious forthright behavior. What occurred cannot be construed as fortuitous, for the Israelites were instructed to utterly eradicate the nations which practiced in accordance to the Babylonian Mysteries Religion; and had this occurred the religion which has caused the greatest harm to those who are called of God would not have existed at the time of the Messiah’s coming.⁷³¹ Even so continuing forth, the false religion which coerced the lives of both the ignorant and effeminate within Christianity would not have proceeded to power had it not first been tolerated, then condoned and followed; for a specific within the Gospel directly rendered information as to how avoidance could be achieved, and this as by direct association of specified violations of Gospel standards.⁷³²

⁷³¹ cf. Exodus 23:20-33; Leviticus 26:1-46; Deuteronomy 7:1-8:20.

- 3. The adaptation of different human: inductive and religious reasoning, doctrines, philosophies, assumptions, ideologies, idealisms, precepts and traditions, for the purpose of social structuring within a church body of believers.** As time proceeded forward from the initiation of the Pope (pontiff) as the supreme ruler over church matters, reverent fear of God subsided and fear of Roman Catholic enforcement gained precedent. With the passing of time and the proven outcome of enforcement being one of evidenced reality; even so ruling secular leadership began to fear disobedience toward the Pope and even Bishops, for the farce of their authority had reached proportions of believing they had the power to revoke one's salvation! This led to obedience being rendered by all within geographical locations, minus those who truly sought the God of the Bible. This is the primary reason animosity arose to abounding proportions between Christians and Muslims, for only by the masterful tutelage of God could individuals distinguish the blatant difference between actual Christianity and the corrupted Christian religion! Because Islam is monotheistic exactly as is Christianity, and the God sought by each is in fact the one true God, the animosity between the two monotheistic sects should never have existed. Aggressions between the two sects of monotheistic religion occurred due to the demonically coerced precepts and doctrines within each, when leadership lost and failed to reanimate appropriate focus upon the Lord, in both cases due to: pride, arrogance, distraction, self-centeredness, greed, argumentation, and zealous religious insistence. Neither had ever come to realize the reality of God or of the Christ!
- The reality of the blinding effects which come forth from threat and punishment by bigoted, prideful and arrogant human beings is easily evidenced, when witness is rendered as to the teaching and worship practices of Catholicism. The emphasis of the Babylonian Mysteries priesthood has always been upon a woman; first with Ishtar, then with Mary. The fact of the female gender emphasis is slight when compared with little or no emphasis being rendered upon the God of the Bible, except by coercive presumption and conjecture. An evinced factor is that the Savior (God) of the Bible offered Himself once for all, to

⁷³² cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-11.

make propitiation for humanity which could never have been achieved of our own accord!⁷³³ The savior of Catholicism is yet upon the cross (crucifix), for the god they worship has necessity to be offered by the priesthood daily (masse) for the sins of humanity. Anyone with even a slight understanding of Biblical salvation would realize the distinct differences which exist between the sound doctrine of the Bible and the insidious doctrines of the Christian religion's mother of harlotry (Catholicism)!

The Christian religion was not solely corrupted by Roman Catholic doctrine and secular associations, but also by the church of the "Reformed Tradition" which was led by such reformers as: Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox. Church members adhering to the doctrines of the reformation were accepted, whereas all who refused adherence were persecuted by criticism and chastisement; just as with any "religion" those failing to blindly submit are stigmatized as rebellious heretics and forced to suffer, for deviation from the standards of humankind are not easily tolerated, especially when the leadership is boldly religious in mindset! Much of the tribulation and persecution which has befallen true Christians throughout the history of the church, both Catholic and Protestant (protectors of Catholicism), has come when through investigation of truth the true children of God have evidenced deception and questioned its origins; while making proclamation of the truth to others after investigation of origins, so as to assist in bringing forth freedom from insidious religious bondage!⁷³⁴ Ignominy has been exhibited for generations because of the many who concern themselves with adherence to the religious teachings of humankind; which is actually the doctrines instigated by demons; while caring little or not at all for spiritual growth within the strength (living and active nature) of the sound doctrine which is the Gospel!⁷³⁵ All such "religious" endeavors which attempt to fulfill work of which God alone is capable (righteous convincing and convicting), place emphasis upon the abilities of human intellect, prowess, and religious endeavor; all of

⁷³³ cf. Romans 3:21-31; Hebrews 1:5-2:18; 7:1-10:18; 1 John 1:1-2:11; 4:1-10.

⁷³⁴ cf. 2 Timothy 2:1-26, specific vs. 20-26.

⁷³⁵ cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-16; 6:1-21; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17; Hebrews 4:11-13; James 1:21-25.

which emphasizing a rejection of the actual “work of God” which is the imperative of spiritual existence!

Just as through disputes leading to argumentation, members of the body of Christ have been alienated one from another because of religious: doctrines, precepts, traditions, etc., and this even to this day due to indifference between denominations which now exceedingly abound to carnal absurdity; so also has been the case since the time humankind has attempted to arrogantly explain and fulfill the things of God religiously!⁷³⁶ Just as with from times of antiquity Catholics and Protestants have proclaimed their specific doctrines to be the way of salvation, so this foolishness continues to this very day as each sect of denominationalism makes proclamation of their way being the right way, while all other ways being wrong and unacceptable; and these by any human means being contrary to the sound doctrine of the Gospel which states no further distinctions as we are all one in Christ Jesus; leads us to the imperative of devotion for God first and foremost, which has and remains the precedent to fellowship with one another which is now rare and mostly un-noticed!⁷³⁷ The Lord has blessed each individual created in His image with a measure of faith so that we may believe and through faith submit to Him so as to gain actual understanding and knowledge; yet humankind for the most part has failed to realize the necessity regarding denial of “self” for the purpose of following the Lord, while remaining full of “self” thereby obstinate in leading others away from the Lord as by adherence to human intellectual epigram. What good is found within religious argumentation pertaining to one doctrine against all others, when actual salvation is found solely within a personal relationship with the Lord our Savior? More regarding the bungle of the Reformation is forthcoming.

4. Tolerance and adaptation regarding the mixture of political and religious affairs, for the purpose of acceptance and conformation within a society. Associations between social governments and religions have occurred throughout history. As each has sought to carry forth its own standards of doctrine, while tolerating the other; this occurring also between different religious factions, and cults

⁷³⁶ cf. Luke 9:41-50; John 6:26-68; 1 Timothy 6:3-21; Titus 2:11-3:11.

⁷³⁷ cf. Romans 3:1-6:23; 10:1-21.

which are indigenous to the same geographical areas upon the earth. As can be witness through investigation of the four Biblical kingdoms upon the earth (Babylon, Medo-Persia, Greece, and Rome), tolerance for religious beliefs by the ruling government has been noted, as this stayed kingdoms from needless uprising and rebellions.

Tolerance many times results in acceptance either partially or completely. As can be evidenced in study of Biblical history, and more specifically during the Persian Empire; for many of those once taken captive became so accustomed to life in the foreign land that return to the land of their origin held little interest. This can be noted also in study of the book of Esther, for the majority of the Israelites remained in Persian provinces, while only a portion returned to rebuild Jerusalem and the Temple of Solomon which had been destroyed.⁷³⁸ When comfort and that which is considered of secular value becomes of higher motivational value than knowing, following, and worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth, decisions are made by the majority to remain within the abundance of those things desired by the flesh. Only when individuals love the Lord with all of their: heart, soul, mind, and strength (immovable devotion); are decisions forthwith regarding acceptance of the tribulation, suffering and persecution which will surely come forth when walking in the light of truth; upon a world abounding with: human selfish motivations, demonic deceptive influence, secular distractions, and carnal wanton desires.

With the passing of time within any society where any religious beliefs are tolerated, the religions and in most cases even so the governments' attempt to sway the other in ways regarding ethical behavior. As pride is a foremost trait of the human sinful nature, as it is the primary means by which the nature is protected, individuals and/or groups generally attempt dominion as through step-by-step control over lesser moral values and desires; then with submission to the lesser desired values even though slight, increase attempts at further dominion in other areas of greater magnitude. Because arrogance generally follows successes derived from prideful endeavors, and because those weakened by past events tend to submit more so to the victors of past experiences, the abounding pride of the

⁷³⁸ cf. Books of: Esther, Nehemiah, Ezra.

victorious leads to increased efforts to control; this as contentment never mixes well with pride and arrogance. This reality is plainly evidenced through study of history regarding the United States of America, as the Christian religion church has sought to coerce the Government toward its chosen ethical values, while the government attempts to appease by delusional adherence to said values in word alone; while attempting to coerce changes to the afore values as by public opinion and vote. Within all such behavior, once again the admonitions of the Lord are followed by neither entity, while each deludes themselves to believe they are in compliance and therefore justified before God!⁷³⁹ It is from this farce that multitudes on each side as a combined whole believe themselves to be capable of spirituality, while remaining within the secular delusion of religiosity; realistically remaining void of any spiritual reality!⁷⁴⁰ Truly, a nation which is “under God” is a nation of democratic stature where the government fears the inhabitants, the inhabitants remain concerned pertaining to wrongdoing and the consequences thereof, and all fear the Lord with devotional reverence! Such a society upon planet earth does not exist currently, except within the realm of fantasy; for the only righteous reign (of the Lord) upon the earth is yet to come!

SARDIS—HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The church at Sardis represents the reformation church (A.D. 1517-1750). The church at Sardis was not commended by Jesus, because although they felt they were a church of much spirituality; they in fact were a church of spiritual desolation. The church at Sardis had a reputation for being alive to the faith (walking by faith), yet this farce was only enacted and had no depth or reality (actually walking by sight—religiously). The church at Sardis was a church which needed reform in every way; for the heart of the believers and the actuality of faith within the city was: insincere, superficial, delusional, cold and dead. The church of Sardis was a gathering of hypocrites, for they were like the Pharisees in that they appeared clean and active on the outside (religious), yet were filthy with self-centeredness and deluding on the inside (spiritually destitute and delusional).⁷⁴¹ The spiritual reality of a

⁷³⁹ cf. James 2:1-26.

⁷⁴⁰ cf. Romans 8:1-39; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 2 Timothy 2:1-3:17.

believer's walk is realized only by the degree in which devotional humble submission is forthcoming to follow the Holy Spirit's leadership; for the reality of God is the righteous imperative, which does not exist when endeavoring "religiously" within carnality!

- Factual point—relational worship of God is a spiritual matter; not a conceptual intellectualized physical realm mimic!
- What was considered the "Great Reformation," was in fact a work of bungle! Although the point was made that we are saved by grace through faith completely aloof of human works, and this in protest (Protestant) against Catholic doctrinal teaching of grace plus works, numerous aspects of religion were never denounced as inappropriate. The Christian church; for the most part, minus a remnant of righteous devotional believers; had from the 4th century A.D. become more and more abounding with religiosity, due to the dominance of Roman Catholicism, leading to a severe lesser state of worshipping God in spirit and in truth. In this, the multitudes believed themselves to be firmly foundational upon the Rock which is the Lord, yet were in essence sinking into the sand of spiritual despair and depravity, due greatly because of accustomed adherence to religious doctrines, philosophies and traditions. Within the endeavors of insidious religion, the multitudes were placing great emphasis upon their religiously intellectual stature; although the physical realm mimic of the actual spiritual relationship led their endeavors away from the reality of the Lord! This is the reason that Jesus stated that they (the multitudes) were actually spiritually dead (v. 3:1), had necessity to awaken from their delusional slumber (v. 3:2), and repent (turn back to God) (v. 3:3); lest they be completely unprepared for what is assuredly coming. During and from the time of the "Great Reformation," the majority of Christian denominations and sects have emphasized—"do this and don't do that"; placing greatest emphasis upon the works of humankind to regulate the world and bodies of believers, and less emphasis upon the work of the Holy Spirit and the fulfillment of prophesy regarding the end

⁷⁴¹ cf. Matthew 23:1-39, specific vs. 13-33.

times! The church (for the most part, minus the remnant) has been, and continues to be spiritually dead; for the majority of believers have yet to heed the warnings! Ignorance and religious complacency will avail not as excuses!⁷⁴² The Lord considers “religious complacency” to be the epitome of abomination (Ezekiel 8:1-18, specific vs. 16-18)!

- The traditions of the “Reformed” Christian religion have absolutely nothing to do with the God of the Bible, and everything to do with personal and congregational religious carnal prowess! Deceptive traditions were carried forth through the supposed Great Reformation Period, vice discarded, because the desires of the flesh instigates physical realm celebrations to supposedly prove a union with God; thus complete ignorance regarding the imperative of worship in spirit and truth, lends credence to importance of human celebration and emotional responses there from.
- Christian religious leadership in accordance to the teachings of John Calvin (Calvinism), and other such reformers as John Knox, yet emphasizes authority to convince, convict and render decisions as to God’s will for the world and individuals; which actually falls directly under God’s sovereign: volition, strength, righteousness, goodness, and efficacious work.⁷⁴³
- In this, little acknowledgement or effort is actually directed upon and for the Lord; except by: concept, conjecture, assumption, proclamation and religious indulgence.
- In this, focus is emphasized to be of necessity upon religious leadership; leaving little focus and trust by multitudes to be righteously upon the Lord! This is a directive by which the people of Sardis were of mention as being asleep and in need of turning back to God (repenting); for His is the only actual leadership upon the narrow path which leads to righteousness (His righteousness).⁷⁴⁴ Although human beings would like to believe we can perform God’s work in His stead; the fact

⁷⁴² cf. Jude 1:1-25; Matthew 24:1-25:46; Galatians 2:1-4:11; Philippians 3:1-21; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 3:1-4:21.

⁷⁴³ cf. 1 Corinthians 12:1-31; 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6; Galatians 5:1-26; John 16:7-15.

⁷⁴⁴ cf. Romans 10:1-4; Matthew 7:13-23; 1 Timothy 1:3-19.

remains that God Himself functions quite well in accordance to His good, acceptable and perfect will, and the kind intention of His will; this purposefully with great intricacy on an individual basis (personal anointing) in the lives of His adopted legitimate children, as He leads us forward to His return and inevitable kingdom of righteousness.⁷⁴⁵ Religious traditions which celebrate aspects of history, directly evidences a religious refusal to move forward with the Lord; thus as He moves forward within His good, acceptable and perfect will, religiously ignorant individuals (the multitudes) refuse to follow, and thereby remain behind as by spiritual slumber and stagnancy!

- An additional human emphasis which occurred during the time period represented by the church at Sardis was the supposed necessity for “scholasticism.”
 - With protest (Protestant reform) coming forth to dispute the Catholic doctrinal teachings that a life of personal righteous works was necessary in addition to God’s grace in order to be saved, great secular emphasis was placed upon intellectual debates; which led to many different scholars attempted to prove their theorems regarding “interpretation” of the Bible, which instigated additional denominational sects. Although actual servants of God are not to be argumentative or quarrelsome, the different factions of Catholic and Protestant leadership felt it necessary to be disputatious as each faction or sect attempted to prove their individual points of human emphasis; from which arose excessive pride, arrogance, pedantry, aggressiveness, and belligerence!
 - As time progressed with the different factions and sects attempting to prove themselves right and everyone else wrong, disassociation occurred which led to many different religious doctrines and the denominations which adhered to the separate doctrines; this leading to further discord between the factions and sects, which further damaged the Body of Christ (church), as the different members of the

⁷⁴⁵ cf. Romans 12:1-21; Philippians 2:1-18; Hebrews 12:1-29.

body no longer associated with the other members of the same body in a unified fashion. Rather than the edification of the body as a whole in accordance to God's anointing upon each individual member working in conjunction with the other members, what came forth was increased importance for strengthening on an individual basis aloof edification and strengthening for other members; thus self-centeredness grew as precedent to abounding proportions in accordance to the human sinful nature aloof the Holy Spirit's guidance. The exuberant and unethical "love of self" within religion has caused great harlotry, as devotion is no longer affixed to anyone aloof one's own desires and whims! What became directly evident was that the children (Reformed Church) of the harlot mother (Roman Catholicism) learned harlotry well in accordance to Satan's deceptive willful purpose within "religion"! The climax of this crescendo will be forthcoming within the church at Laodicea.

Please consider the following factors:

There are two basic principles (three sources) of "faith" followed by most men regarding the existence of God (Scholastic Theology).

- **Corpus Juris Canonici** (Gratian)—*I believe in order that I may know.*

This is a potential basis of walking by faith, for we must never attribute faith to only those things we personally can explain and/or fully understand. When we trust God for growth and increase, we then submit to Him so as to learn; thereby gaining actual knowledge.⁷⁴⁶

- Corpus Juris Canonici is the only foundation of faith-based investigation which may potentially lead to any form of spiritual understanding; for "believing" precedes spiritual discernment and appraisal, as discernment and the ability to appraise are gifts from God.

⁷⁴⁶ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-18; Hebrews 11:1-40.

- **Sic et Non** (yes or no) (Abaelard)—*I believe that which I may understand*. Abaelard was a bit confusing in his belief system.

Although he had stated that belief was necessary in order to know (Corpus Juris Canonici), he also stated that faith had to be founded upon inquiry and experience; this obviously contradictory. This borders on the teachings of Immanuel Kant (A.D. 1724-1804), who believed that knowledge could not exist apart from human reason and scientific investigation. Kant believed that God is solely a postulate of human consciousness; therefore God is but a subjective function of the human mind. In a like manner as Kant went to the extreme conjecturing we can reason and thereby fully understand God; this is but the work of arrogance. On far too many occasions, men have started out to accomplish something effective in regard to better knowing God, yet failing to beware in their endeavors as by appropriate focus, soon fell short of godly intent as by distraction, human intellect, and failure in using one's measure of faith.⁷⁴⁷ It should always be remembered—without faith it is impossible to please God, as God is opposed to the proud but gives GRACE to the humble; therefore, God's giving of grace is preceded by an individual's humble submission by faith, which is preceded by denial of "self" (individuality).

The teachings of Abaelard came forth from a foundation of human reason, which is a basis of Papal Catholicism. Although Abaelard was not liberally close minded as was Kant, he yet placed emphatic insistence upon that which is fully understood; therefore the efficiency of the sacraments.

- Sic et Non is the foundational basis of scholastic religion; thus religion based upon human reason. This is not foundational to faith, for this form of religious endeavor attempts to place God within the realm of human intellect and scientific investigation; thus the god which is sought is variable and changes with the passing of time in accordance to human intellectual understanding and secular growth.
- **Libri Quatour Sententiarum** (Four Books of Sentences) (Peter the Lombard): Peter the Lombard was the father of

⁷⁴⁷ cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1-24; 1 Timothy 1:3-17.

Systematic Theology in the Catholic religion. The Lombard produced the most popular theological text-book referencing dogmatic theology of the Middle Ages; much of this derived from his being a proponent of both Abaelard (more so) and Gratian. The seven sacraments were emphasized by Peter the Lombard; with the elements being transmuted into the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation) during the sacrament of communion (Eucharist). Peter taught that communion is a sacrifice; although the Scriptures state that the Lord's Supper is an act of remembrance.⁷⁴⁸

- Libri Quatour Sententiarum is the foundational basis of ritualistic religion; which seeks God's grace (unmerited favor) as by religious endeavors.

The most terrible aspect of what was and yet continues to happen within the religious life of multitudes, and this from times of antiquity; is that they allow themselves to be kept (religiously) from understanding as to personal intimate fellowship with the Lord; thereby also being kept from knowledge of the truth which is rendered and received during actual intimate fellowship with God. As by the bondage of intellectual and deceptive religion, that which is realistically true (personal fellowship with God; imperative participatory communion) remains but a concept! When one form of religious doctrine was exchanged for another and then another, spiritual destitution remained and expanded; thus for the past few centuries humankind has been led to seek God in the "flesh" as by physical realm means (religion), and this opposing to God as the human sinful nature (emotional self; individuality) is diametrically opposed to the Holy Spirit's masterful leadership (spiritual relational reality)! The harshness of spiritual depravity always occurs when we (members of the human race) begin to seek answers pertaining to God, by any means other than from the Lord; therefore, the reality of God is rejected, as devotion for God is replaced with devotion for "self," as within our carnal insecurities our flesh guides our endeavors through pride and arrogance! This reality proves that multitudes have never actually had the measure of faith within them righteously actuated by the Lord during His preparatory drawing unto the reality of the

⁷⁴⁸ cf. 1 Corinthians 11:1-34.

Christ; for although the measure of faith exists within all created in God's image (spiritually), the reality of it when righteously activated by God excludes—arrogance which is “pride” based!⁷⁴⁹ The entire problem remains foundational to carnal endeavors in seeking God; for although the Lord seeks our devotional loyalty and obedience, during the Reformation Period, human intellect became the precedent which brought forth emphasized endeavors of religiosity in the flesh, which led to avoidance of submission unto God's good, acceptable and perfect will (in actuality)!

HISTORY

Sardis was the chief city of Lydia, which was under a fortified spur of Mt. Tmolus within the Hermus valley. Sardis was set among the cliffs at the road junctions of central Asia Minor, Ephesus, Smyrna and Pergamum; located approximately 30 miles southeast of Thyatira.

The city of Sardis was under the rule of King Croesus, and was a seat of Roman governors after the Persian defeats. Sardis was a city renowned for its arts, crafts and great wealth, derived from the gold retrieved from the Pactolus River which passed through the city. This was the first city where gold and silver coinage was minted, a city defeated by the Persians due to the presumptuous arrogance of King Croesus, and a city of great pride and material wealth derived also from its carpet, jewelry, dye, and textile industries.

The citadel of Sardis along with the city itself was captured by Cyrus and his Persian armies in 549 B.C. They gained access to this virtually impregnable city, via a secret path up through the cliffs. The city of Sardis was virtually ruined by a tremendous earthquake in A.D. 17. Although the Roman Empire attempted to rebuild the city of Sardis after the earthquake, the city never returned to its extreme wealth and prosperity.

The most famous person from Sardis was Croesus. Croesus was the king of Sardis who stored his vast wealth at the city. Croesus accrued his vast wealth by not only the wealth of the city via its gold and carpet industry, but also by his exploits to conquer other lands. Croesus conquered Ephesus in the approximate year of 560 B.C.; then proceeded to conquer most of the lands of Asia Minor. During the rule of Croesus, the temple of Artemision was constructed in Ephesus. The wealth of

⁷⁴⁹ cf. Romans 12:1-3, specific v. 3; John 6:44, 45, 65; 14:15-21; James 4:1-10; Hebrews 5:8-10.

Croesus had been renowned for centuries, as he controlled a vast empire, until he was defeated by Cyrus of Persia in 549 B.C.

ADMONITION TO BE WATCHFUL

The admonition to be watchful held much meaning for the people of Sardis. When King Croesus had retreated to the city of Sardis upon being pursued by Cyrus, he dropped his guard as he felt the city was impregnable; realizing too late that it was not. The people of Sardis were well aware of the city's being defeated because of the previous failure to be watchful. Past experience forced them to reminisce the consequences of failing to watch in this situation, for they were quite aware of sudden onslaught and defeat. The Lord was drawing upon the city's history, to force their attention to the problem at hand, i.e. all but a few had fallen asleep spiritually, being now on the verge of complete spiritual desolation (death). A danger which existed then which continues to this very day, remains that those who have fallen asleep spiritually, while yet dreaming of proper service unto the Lord yet without righteous fruition, fail to be watchful for all concerned (spiritually—themselves and others); for when individuals who could have been reached with news of the immensity of God, are passed by because of the spiritual destitution of those who should have reached out to them, no one receives spiritual edification and understanding; which could have led to knowledge from the Lord! This yet occurs frequently even to this day, as individuals visit one church after another seeking truth regarding the Lord; yet as God is kept from the endeavors because of spiritual slumber, individuals rarely come to knowledge of the truth they seek. This reality is described in detail regarding the church at Laodicea (current-day church); as the truth (the Lord God) has been rejected by the church and the door closed to deny Him access!

FAILURE TO BE WATCHFUL

Just as the church at Sardis had fallen asleep spiritually, so also happened to the Reformation churches for centuries thereafter. Many of the Reformation churches began to produce individuals who proclaimed the faith-based upon the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, yet almost immediately turned from the proper path of ministry (reconciliation).⁷⁵⁰

⁷⁵⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 3:1-6:10; 1 Timothy 6:3-19.

The Reformation church leaders began to work for the state (Germany, France, Holland, etc.) and the church, instead of for the Lord Jesus Christ! This mix up in priorities allowed the works of secularism to increase within the teachings regarding the faith, while placing tremendous restrictions upon the usefulness of the church leaders regarding proclamation of truth.

When congregational leaders would attempt to once again separate Gospel teachings from the instruction of the state or church conventional leadership, they would find themselves introducing traditions, catechisms and rituals which caused their teachings to become spiritually lifeless and cold. This pretense of socialistic ways would ultimately cause deception to enter into the teaching of the Gospel of Christ. Terrible Papal persecutions occurred prior to and during the Reformation years; for Satan repeatedly sends his servants (inadvertent or otherwise) to stop proclamation of truth, so as to force return to complacency within ritualistic, doctrinal, and philosophical religion which is void of spiritual edification.

The deeds in Sardis were never completed. The believers in Sardis had begun the true works of the Gospel, yet had stopped being receptive to the Holy Spirit. This led most within the church at Sardis to retreat back to their ways prior to conversion.⁷⁵¹ The church in Sardis (minus the remnant) became wrapped up in their secular surroundings, and failed to continue forward on the righteous path.⁷⁵² They had begun the works of spiritually led believers (years prior), yet never completed what they had started; for lack of devotional focus upon the Lord led quickly and efficiently to double-mindedness, which then led to spiritual delusion. They became distracted from simplicity of devotion; wrapped up in their own arrogance, pride and past reputations (resting on one's laurels).⁷⁵³

The church in Sardis forgot the number one rule in evangelism, submit to the Holy Spirit by prayer and supplication for direction onto straight paths.⁷⁵⁴ The people of Sardis had done somewhat (only worse) the same thing as the people in Ephesus—they forgot their first love (long ago); thereby going astray from both devotion and submission

⁷⁵¹ cf. Luke 11:14-26.

⁷⁵² cf. John 15:1-16:15; Luke 8:5-21.

⁷⁵³ cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

⁷⁵⁴ cf. Proverbs 3:5-8; 4:18-27; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

unto the Lord. The only difference being that the people of Ephesus continued to proclaim Gospel truth, and the people of Sardis did not, and had not for many years.

- **Important Note**—The people at Ephesus proclaimed Gospel truth from wrong motives; for motivation must be derived from disciplined devotional obedience unto God, and righteous anticipation of the powerful work of which God alone is capable. The people at Sardis proclaimed religious doctrine of rote (reformed tradition); thus neither Gospel truth nor the reality of relational worship in spirit and in truth was any longer proclaimed.⁷⁵⁵
 - The greatest bungle which occurred during the “Great Reformation,” was failure to immovably return to worshipping God in both spirit and truth. As has been so prevalent throughout the history of the church, humankind (especially of the male gender) has always attempted to place themselves upon pedestals of notice and reverence; thereby placing great emphasis upon fabricated religious: doctrines, precepts and philosophies; of which, of course, they are the supposed masters of intellectual reason. It is due this repeated prideful foolishness which has kept focus upon human religious leadership, that the multitudes have been held in bondage to the schemes of Satan’s deceptions for generations! Due to the flagrant pride and arrogance of supposed spiritual leadership, and the lazy, complacent behavior of most believers, the necessity for true “reformation” had to come forth; this emphasized with the church at Philadelphia.

The Church at Sardis (Revelation 3:1-6)

COMMENDATION – NONE

Jesus said that the remnant (few) within the city of Sardis had not soiled their cloths (spiritual natures); this by acceptance of insidious religious doctrines (rote). Jesus said that these few would walk with Him in white,

⁷⁵⁵ cf. Isaiah 29:1-16; specific vs. 12-16.

as they were worthy. This statement by Jesus demonstrated that although these individuals lived at the same location, they maintained separateness from the ways of the multitudes who Jesus called dead (spiritually).⁷⁵⁶ We know that these few were actually “very few”; for overall the church was without commendation.

NOTE: Too many seeking to belong, fail to separate themselves from the behavior of the many. This is an outcome derived from mixed priorities and love; thus double-mindedness and lack of righteous devotion. When we fail to love the Lord first and foremost, we allow the desires for secondary necessities to become precedent in our life; thus our attentiveness turns toward secular priorities.⁷⁵⁷ This in turn opens the door to delusional religious fantasy, and being led astray with the many; for we no longer spiritually discern all things (a received gift in accordance to God’s anointing); thereby our ability to actually walk by faith is diminished and/or destroyed.⁷⁵⁸

Exulting in the tribulation brought forth by those around us, is a necessity *if* our hope is to fully manifest itself in our Lord.⁷⁵⁹ The imperative remains that we must maintain focus and devotion upon the Lord; for within devotional focus we are led to appropriate disciplined service and worship.⁷⁶⁰ Too many folks in Sardis and throughout church history have attempted to gain the rewards beyond the cross, without going to and through the cross. This cannot occur in reality; yet in accordance to unrighteous pulpit proclamations, multitudes have believed a few choice words (simple confession) to be sufficient for salvation, although the Gospel truth contradicts this religious fantasy within the imperative that “knowledge” and “devotional submissive obedience” is of necessity!⁷⁶¹ The only way to the blessings of God is through the Lord Jesus Christ; for He is our High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek!⁷⁶² Being distracted by those around us or seeking to bypass the cross, leads strictly to spiritual desolation and defeat; for within carnal

⁷⁵⁶ cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-5, contemplate instruction v. 5.

⁷⁵⁷ cf. Matthew 6:19-34.

⁷⁵⁸ cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 1 John 3:1-24; 1 John 2:20-29.

⁷⁵⁹ cf. Romans 5:1-11, specific vs. 3-5; 1 Peter 1:3-4:6.

⁷⁶⁰ cf. John 4:20-24; Romans 12:1, 2; Hebrews 12:1-29.

⁷⁶¹ cf. John 6:44, 45, 65; Romans 10:1-13, specific vs. 8-10; Philippians 1:6-11; 2:12, 13; Hebrews 5:8-10.

⁷⁶² cf. John 14:1-15:17; Hebrews 5:1-7:28.

superficiality the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) is denied or rejected! This is what happened in Sardis; for the following of doctrinal traditions (rote) fails to render the truth which can make us free!⁷⁶³

The overcomers at the church of Sardis would: be clothed in white garments of purity; be guaranteed salvation (sealed for the day of redemption); would have their names proclaimed by Jesus to the Father and His angels. The “white garments of purity” demonstrates reward to those whom have put forth the devotional effort to separate themselves from sin and the ways of the world (including religion of rote); having remained separate by choice, regardless of secular consequences!⁷⁶⁴ Although many will be saved by grace through faith, many will find their works come to ruin rather than reward, because they chose to remain religious and worldly (carnal).⁷⁶⁵

- The greatest hindrance to God’s work of sanctification is one’s own decisions and choices! Although there are many distractions in life, and even more so distractions within church (religious ekklyasia) settings which have the possibility of instigating distractive hindrance; the fact remains that actions or reactions can be for or against the Lord, this by personal choice! The reality of Christianity is solely “spiritual,” as God is worshipped, adored, and served in spirit and in truth; or He is not appropriately (righteously) worshipped, adored, or served at all! Religiosity will save and righteously guide no one; for although our corporeal bodies are necessary for the purpose of going forth, the fact remains that God’s leadership and our obedient following is solely spiritual, which is the reason our bodies must be presented as living and holy sacrifices, which is our spiritual service of worship⁷⁶⁶!

REBUKE

The church at Sardis was spiritually dead. They once had good works (instruments of God’s both willing and working) for the sake of the Gospel, yet had relied upon their reputation to the point of becoming

⁷⁶³ cf. John 8:31-47; Luke 8:4-21; Colossians 2:8-3:17.

⁷⁶⁴ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, specific vs. 11-15; 2 Timothy 3:1-4:8.

⁷⁶⁵ cf. 2 Timothy 2:1-26; 2 John 1:1-11; James 2:18-26.

⁷⁶⁶ cf. Romans 12:1, 2.

dead in their faith, while believing themselves to remain spiritually alive; they had become void of the Holy Spirit's guidance.⁷⁶⁷ The letter to Sardis did not begin with commendation for the few true followers (remnant) of the Gospel. The church at Sardis (minus the very few) had illusions as to their relational stature, thereby proclaiming of themselves levels of devotional obedience unto the Lord which did not realistically exist. If Jesus had started the letter with a message of commendation, the arrogance of the many may have been boosted to the point that they would not have listened any further. Jesus in His wonderful wisdom stated His message to the church as necessary, so the believers there would not stay upon their dead faith. As always—the wisdom and love of Jesus is astounding!

The people of Sardis were known for their works. Those who heard of these works may have very well been fooled, as superficially most do not look past the surface for the essence of the internal truth (God's indwelling; or not). Jesus was never fooled by the use of works, for He searches the heart and mind (core of motive).⁷⁶⁸ He knew that the people of Sardis believed their own stories (now grandiose), and He knew their delusion would hold them to dormancy within their faith. Jesus warned the believers at Sardis, that *if* they would not wake up and once again walk their faith, He would come like a thief at a time which they did not know, and would bring punishment and judgment (v. 3:3). The people of Sardis realized what was said to them in this form of warning! As Sardis was in the mountain area adjacent to the valley, thieves would come up at night and be upon the inhabitants of households when they least expected it. This warning by Jesus brought realization to the people of a potential threat, explained in a way totally understood.

With the many warnings rendered in the Gospel as to potential threat of spiritual attack, it is quite a shame that multitudes of believers yet refuse to: awaken from their spiritual slumber, be vitalized by the Gospel truth (which is taught by the Holy Spirit), and don the full armor of God; for victorious freedom! Actually walking by faith being led by the Holy Spirit (God) is a reality which is unknown by multitudes; for the reality is proven only by God's indwelling, and an individual's anointing foundational to pure truth!⁷⁶⁹

⁷⁶⁷ cf. Galatians 5:1-26.

⁷⁶⁸ cf. Acts 15:6-18; Hebrews 4:1-16.

NOTE: It is very important that congregations not consider themselves to be alive spiritually, by comparison to other congregations, where they once were, or by financial status. The spiritual growth of multitudes (with all probability multiple millions / billions) has been stagnated by mimicking the behavior of other delusional spiritually stagnant individuals and congregations; directly indicated by those who count spiritual success by: mammon, adherence to manmade traditions believed to be pleasing to the Lord, and by trusting in physical realm religion (emphasized by signs and wonders) as proving faith.⁷⁷⁰

- Of importance—actual signs (*saymeion*) and wonders (*teras*) were of the Lord for the purpose of assisting the Jews within the transition from physical realm religion; as designated by God (Levitical Law); to the imperative for faith with the coming of the Messiah.⁷⁷¹ The signs (*semeiois*) and wonders (*terasim*) emphasized through individuals since the time Israel was temporarily set aside for acceptance of Gentiles according to the will of God, are counterfeit for the purpose of deception! Although God can perform miraculously when it is His will to do so, human instruments are no longer utilized or empowered for this purpose! With Satan’s influence within “religion” for the purpose of deceiving, the potential threat remains considerable!

STEPS FOR RESTORATION

Jesus told the church at Sardis (Revelation 3:2, 3) to:

- Wake up! The church at Sardis was living in a slumberous state (illusionary). They relied upon what had once been accomplished for the faith, yet now were only dreaming of their successes (resting upon laurels).
- Strengthen what little remained. Jesus was telling them to strengthen what little faith and appropriate motivation

⁷⁶⁹ cf. 1 John 2:20-29.

⁷⁷⁰ cf. Hebrews 11:1-16; Luke 16: 1-15; Romans 14:1-18; 1 Corinthians 12:20-31; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; Galatians 4:1-11; reiteration—1 Timothy 6:3-21.

⁷⁷¹ Galatians 2:1-3:29, emphasis 3:16-25; Matthew 10:1-6; 12:39-41; 15:24; Mark 8:11, 12; Luke 11:14-36; John 6:22-40.

remained, before that too became cold and dead. This would be accomplished only by returning to: the foundation which is Christ (appropriate devotional focus and obedience), sound doctrine (appropriate disciplined diligent studies), and humble submission unto the Lord so as to receive His masterful leadership as by actual fellowship with Him! The best example would have been the very few spoken of by the Lord; yet those who refuse to listen and learn from the remnant devotional to God, always remain stagnant!

- Remember what they had received and heard regarding the faith. This was a call to look
- back, and return to the former ways and teachings (again—devotional proclamation of sound doctrine (Gospel truth) without variation, compromise, or excuse).
- Keep it. This is exhorting the believers to live their faith and do what they know is right (the only righteous action by believers is to believe in and trust God for appropriate spiritual success and victory).⁷⁷²
- Repent. The believers needed to return their focus upon the Lord, so that they may start anew to live the faith and proclaim Gospel truth to others—by word and deed (by example, not hypocrisy). In this context as with any form of appropriate focus for spiritual success, we must place our focus immovably upon the Lord; for He alone leads upon the narrow path of righteousness (reiteration—His righteousness)!
 - A considerable problem within congregational and denominational settings regarding a religious mindset is that the wide path of religiosity is adhered to with no specific direction within God’s righteousness. The members of congregations and denominations continue on the same path with hopes of reaching a harmonious destination, yet how can this occur when the path upon which they journey is not the narrow path upon which the Lord leads! The appropriate destination cannot be reached, when all the paths designated by “religion” lead in opposing directions. Repentance for appropriate direction from the Lord is a

⁷⁷² cf. Romans 4:1-25.

wonderful thing, and can happen when appropriate decisions are rendered!

- Note regarding the word—“repent.” The word “repent” indicates to stop and turn around, stop and turn back, change of orientation. Because the most popular definition as utilized in religious proclamation is to turn from sin, multitudes have been driven away from the Lord as they have been led to believe a level of righteousness must be achieved in order to be accepted by God; although nothing is further from the truth.⁷⁷³ Because most believers follow the foolish leadership of others who make confident assertions without actual knowledge, and because speaking in ignorance brings forth harm; the word “repent” should never be spoken to non-believers, but rather the emphasis for acceptance by God and the salvation which He freely gives, should be and must remain directly associated with God’s grace! Christian ministry is a ministry of reconciliation!⁷⁷⁴

Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13)

HISTORICAL SIGNIFICANCE

The church at Philadelphia represents the spiritual revival period for the expanded proclamation of the Gospel truth A.D. 1730-1953. It was during this period in history that many great evangelists came forward, and proclaimed the Gospel like never before in the history of the church. The overseas missions’ network was established during this two-hundred-year period. It must be remembered, as prior to this (indicated by the church at Sardis) the spiritual wellbeing of the multitudes was illusory, cold and dying; therefore, this period of reviving from a state of imminent spiritual slumber and potential death had to occur!

Spiritual revival remains active even today, through devotional, disciplined, and obedient individual servants of the Lord; because the door to the church has shut out the Lord (spiritual truth and reality) since A.D. 1954. This reality is witnessed within (Laodicea). Just as it

⁷⁷³ cf. Romans 5:8-21.

⁷⁷⁴ cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, specific vs. 14-21.

was in Philadelphia in the first century A.D., so it is today as the remnant (few) who truly love the Lord are not being deterred by the ways of the world or insidious religion. The remnant of uncompromising believers is diminishing (now a remnant of the remnant), as the church is being pressured to: condone, tolerate, accept and justify (by doctrine) wretched inappropriate: teachings, behavior, and worship practices. The unity within God's righteousness necessary for the spiritual edification and success of all is in terrible jeopardy; because those willing to compromise (multitudes) criticize those who stand firm (remnant who remain staunch)!⁷⁷⁵

- A considerable effort was put forth to return to diligence in handling accurately the word of truth (Gospel; sound doctrine) during the Fundamentalist movement of the later 1800s A.D. During this movement, all that was inappropriate in worshipping God in spirit and in truth was denied for the sake of relational righteousness (right doing). Although a considerable effort was put forth, it did not last but for a few years, this as efforts fade quickly when under attack by the multitudes; for debates lead to prideful endeavors which displease the Lord, thereby causing opposition to the God of absolute holiness and righteousness!⁷⁷⁶
 - Because by human nature multitudes tend to follow the status quo of the majority, and by human nature we attempt to please God as by religious manmade righteousness in thinking our endeavors to adorn somehow please God; belligerence came forth between the multitudes and the fundamentalists, mostly due to the fleshly insistence to continue religious traditions (holidays), even though there is actually no righteous reality to “Christian holidays”; for “rote” and Christianity have nothing in common!⁷⁷⁷
 - The primary reason that the fundamentalist movement as indicated by the church at Philadelphia failed for the multitudes is simple; the first step in actually following the

⁷⁷⁵ cf. Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 Peter 4:1-19.

⁷⁷⁶ cf. James 4:1-17.

⁷⁷⁷ cf. Isaiah 29:13-16; 64:1-12; Galatians 4:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:6-21.

Lord is—“denial of self” (the sinful nature; human volition; individuality); thus as the multitudes have never learned nor practiced “denial of self” for the purpose of devotionally following the Lord, within generations upon generations only a remnant have worshipped and served the Lord righteously in accordance to God’s masterful leadership!⁷⁷⁸

At some point in the life of every believer, the individual should seek to mature (stand erect and walk); this occurring only after taking the first infant step of—“denial of self” (denial of physical realm carnal desires and personal volition); for without taking this first step, individuals continue to crawl as they remain spiritual infants!⁷⁷⁹ When individuals refuse to “deny self,” the reason remains the guardian of the sinful nature, which is foolish adolescent pride; as God is opposed to the “proud” but gives grace to the humble, it should be remembered that God’s grace is imperative for salvation! The church at Philadelphia represents the remnant whom (individual matter) have accomplished and practiced the imperative of “denial of self” (selflessness); for God cannot work within those who remain in opposition to Him, which includes the work of God (drawing and teaching) which divinely brings individuals unto the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ)!

- A simple fact—actual devotion for another cannot occur while idolatry of “self” yet exists (full of “self”; narcissism)! Failure to realize this fact and afford appropriate change (selflessness) for the sake of someone else is the reason for both superficial relationships with God, and divorce from marriage due to superficial emotional love.
- Throughout the book (*Big If*) an emphasis is placed upon the imperative to deny “self”; this for an extremely important reason! Without a willingness to “deny personal volition and carnal desires,” there will not

⁷⁷⁸ Romans 8:17, specific v. 14.

⁷⁷⁹ cf. Matthew 16:21-28; reiterations—Colossians 2:1-23, specific vs. 8-23; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; 14:20; 2 Corinthians 5:9-21; Hebrews 5:12-6:3.

actually be a willingness to follow the Lord. As those who are actually led by the Lord are His legitimately adopted children; without being led by the Lord, what prove is there of the actual relationship! With multitudes, the words of the Gospel remain vain, as the reality of the Gospel (implanted truth) remains open for debate; although not; for individuals fail to realize that God set standards of our obedience for our benefit, and actually works within us for righteous fulfillment of the standards, so that He (the Lord God) may be our Father and we His children!⁷⁸⁰ Nowhere in the Gospel did the Lord God render the word—“please,” for the instructions for devotional obedience are commanded; not requested! Until an individual is devotionally willing to “deny self,” there will be no necessary submission (or actual selfless devotion), which is imperative for the Lord to take us beyond the carnality of the flesh and world, unto the spiritual reality which leads to freedom in Christ!⁷⁸¹ A primary problem which has kept multitudes from the Gospel truth, remains that multitudes expect God to bless them, while they ignorantly reject personal obedience pertaining to responsibilities and duties necessary to the receiving of God’s blessings; this generally because multitudes although claiming to know and love the Lord, remain completely aloof the reality of God as He does not know them as His legitimate children, because they have never humbly and reverently acquiesced unto God for the reality to take place.⁷⁸² The deceptive captivity foundational to “religion” holds a plethora of individuals in darkness; which stays them from realization of the spiritual relational reality; thus multitudes have no idea whatsoever regarding the guile and schemes of Satan utilized within “religion”! During the fundamentalist

⁷⁸⁰ cf. emphasis—2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Philippians 1:6; 2:1-13.

⁷⁸¹ cf. Matthew 16:24-26; John 8:31-36; 15:1-17.

⁷⁸² cf. John 6:44, 45, 65; 14:6, 7.

movement these truths were proclaimed by the remnant who had experienced the reality of God; yet they were rejected, partially because those (multitudes) aloof the reality of God do not listen to truth pertaining to the reality, and partially because several of the fundamentalists began to insist upon righteous change, which was beyond the purview of their authority and responsibility.⁷⁸³

Personal Note: I personally sought the Lord “religiously” for four years, prior to coming to the reality of God as by His indwelling! It was only through the seeking of “pure truth” that the reality of God’s divine work (preparing, drawing, teaching, indwelling, and anointing) occurred; which revealed the spiritual relational reality. Prior, I had no idea of the reality, but rather only religious assumption and conjecture; with this reality realized, it becomes plainly evident why multitudes remain aloof the reality of God which is realized only by His actual indwelling; for without the actual spiritual experience of the intimate presence of God, individuals can only guess within ignorance, as they remain void of actual knowledge of the truth (His presence)!

HISTORY

Philadelphia was founded by Attalus II Philadelphus (159-138 B.C.). The city was known as the city of brotherly love, because of the king’s devotion to his brother Eumenes. The city was located 28-30 miles southeast of Sardis.

The city of Philadelphia was an outpost for Hellenism in the land of Anatolia. The city was located at the base of Mt. Tmolus upon a well defended hill, across the Hermos Valley from Sardis. Philadelphia was a city located upon volcanic soil, due to the previous volcanic activity. The city of Philadelphia was a city racked with earth tremors; this led many of the city’s inhabitants to move outside of the city, being fearful of death should a tremor bring the destruction of the city. Concern for the structural integrity of the city was warranted, as in A.D. 17 the city

⁷⁸³ cf. 1 John 4:1-6; 1 Peter 5:1-11.

was utterly destroyed by a great earthquake in the area. The earthquake was destructive to many cities, yet Philadelphia was the worst hit, being itself centered over the quake epicenter.

The church at Philadelphia was strong in their endeavors to proclaim and live according to the Gospel.⁷⁸⁴ The church was not rebuked by Jesus, because although there was but a little power (received from the Lord), a great abounding devotion for Him within the few whom claimed the faith yet remained. Jesus spoke attributes of His deity to the church so as to proclaim Himself as God, thereby further strengthening His church there; for within the reality of actual Christianity, our existence and purpose are fully and completely foundational to Him! Jesus emphasized that He: is holy, true, holds the key of David, opens and closes doors. By these statements Jesus is demonstrating that He is: without sin,⁷⁸⁵ truthful,⁷⁸⁶ within the lineage of David,⁷⁸⁷ in actuality—God.⁷⁸⁸

- A “little power” explained: The potential for reaching multitudes with the good news of the Gospel is nonexistent! Because of the insidious nature of religion due to strong demonic influence, the number of human beings who devotionally seek the truth is but a remnant. The “little power” of mention is directly related to the aforementioned fact, and the fact that but a remnant of believers will be reached with the Gospel truth unto an abounding relationship with the Lord (spiritual relational reality). The “little power” of mention makes emphasis of the potential for reaching multitudes which has been lost by both demonic instigations and influence, and the foolishness of human pride, arrogance and emotionalism, in attempting to prove God and do His work; which in all cases is futile and recklessly stupid; for God works through His true servants to reach the few within whom has been witnessed a righteous spark for actual selfless devotion. The true servants of God place the salvation of others and the reaching of the

⁷⁸⁴ cf. Matthew 7:1-27.

⁷⁸⁵ cf. 1 John 3:1-18, specific vs. 3-5; Hebrews 4:14-16.

⁷⁸⁶ cf. John 14:1-7; 1 John 5:1-21, specific vs. 9-21.

⁷⁸⁷ cf. Matthew 1:1-17; Luke 3:23-38.

⁷⁸⁸ cf. John 1:1-18; 14:1-26, specific vs. 6, 7.

remnant as highest priority; second only to maintaining focus and fellowship upon and with the Lord! For this reason, the remnant of devotional servants continue to go forth in attempts to speak the truth of Christianity (as distinguished from the Christian religion); even so, through the harshness and tribulation of confrontation by the multitudes who religiously argue and thereby fight against the truth, for somewhere within the multitudes are yet a few individuals who seek fulfillment of purpose within an intimate relationship with God; for in actuality we were all created by Him and for Him!⁷⁸⁹ The “little power” is the one thing which we guard at all times; for it is the blessing from God which allows us immovable focus and devotional servanthood against all adversity, to pass through the open door which leads to the individuals within whom is witnessed the righteous spark (God’s divine drawing process)!

The attribute of Holiness is very important regarding Jesus, because He is absolutely holy and without sin. Although Scripture tells believers to be holy as He is holy, we are yet sinful and only cleansed by the blood of Jesus, and victorious by His faithfulness.⁷⁹⁰ The cleansing from sin cannot occur *if* the cross is bypassed! To bypass the cross by one’s inappropriate behavior is to bypass the reality of fellowship with God! Higher levels of actual fellowship with God being necessary for spiritual success in a sinful, rebellious world should never be jeopardized!⁷⁹¹

- Personal fellowship with the Lord should be sought after with absolute devotional: insistent, consistent, and disciplined diligence (Hebrews 12:7-11)! As fellowship with Him is the means by which: He teaches and we learn, He convinces and we receive convictions, He leads and we follow, He strengthens and we are strengthened, He blesses spiritually and we become spiritual (able to appraise and walk by faith), He calls and we serve; we should realize our purpose of existence is found in

⁷⁸⁹ cf. Colossians 1:3-23; Ephesians 1:3-23; 6:10-20.

⁷⁹⁰ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16-23; Revelation 22:11-13; Romans 12:1-3; Ephesians 2:8-22; 1 Peter 1:1-25; 1 John 1:5-2:6.

⁷⁹¹ cf. Isaiah 59:1-21; Psalm 66:1-20, please contemplate v. 18.

Him, therefore intimate fellowship with Him must be imperatively maintained!

As Holiness is to be separate from sin (physically and spiritually pure), Jesus is absolutely holy and righteous! This attribute of the Lord is prevalent within Scripture, and should be an attribute which each and every Christian strives to maintain by continual devotion to and identity with Christ.⁷⁹² Holiness must be sought by believers; submitting to the Holy Spirit's work of sanctification. Only God's holiness is an absolute!

Note: Sanctify (the work of sanctification; being made holy): to be set apart for God and His righteous purposes.⁷⁹³

KEY OF DAVID

The key holder held a position of authority within a kingdom, for the key holder could grant or deny personal access to the king. The individual, whom held the key, was the only one capable of unlocking the doors to the king's inner chambers.⁷⁹⁴ Jesus is the true key holder for the key of David, as we have accessibility to the Father only through the Son.⁷⁹⁵ When Jesus stated that He had "the key of David," He was stating that He is the Messiah, the chosen One; the Christ—who alone holds the key of David and whose kingdom will endure forever.⁷⁹⁶

Christ opened the doors of righteous fulfillment (Revelation 1:17, 18), and service (Revelation 3:7, 8). Jesus stated that because the church had remained loyal in proclaiming His name and the truth of the Gospel, He would now keep them from the hour of testing which would come upon the whole earth. (Revelation 3:10, 11).

- The hour of testing will come during the "Bowl Judgments" and this during the time when God's wrath is poured out upon sinful humanity; for sin and lawlessness has expanded greatly due to continual denial of and rebellion against the Lord (way, **truth**, and life). It is from both the hour of testing and the full

⁷⁹² cf. 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5.

⁷⁹³ cf. Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

⁷⁹⁴ cf. examples are illustrated in Isaiah chapters 22 & 26.

⁷⁹⁵ cf. John 14:6; Hebrews 7:1-10:39; cf. John 1:51.

⁷⁹⁶ cf. 2 Peter 1:1-11.

wrath of God that true believers (actual legitimate sons and daughters; not illegitimate children) will be delivered.⁷⁹⁷

The Church at Philadelphia (Revelation 3:7-13)

COMMENDATION: SPIRITUAL PROFILE

The church of Philadelphia was a small yet motivated church. They refused to deny the name of Jesus and truth of the Gospel, although their refusal may bring suffering and death. The few proclaimed the truth of the Gospel even though surrounded by those held ignorantly captive to serve Satan as hindrances to proclamation of truth, who sought to cause the devoted church harm. The few remained strong in their faith, and retained their spiritual focus even though distractions were prevalent.⁷⁹⁸ The church at Philadelphia possessed a little power in them (personal devotional motivation with the Lord's nurturing), as they sought to follow the Lord Jesus Christ without wavering. Having only had a little power within themselves, they trusted in the Lord for the strength of His might (rendered within His sufficient grace) needed to maintain their abounding faith, love, and servanthood.⁷⁹⁹

- Loving the Lord with all of one's heart, all of one's soul, all of one's mind, and all of one's strength, means to be devoted to the Lord with one's all in all! This type of devotion which is appropriate for all who call upon the name of the Lord, leads to actual servanthood and steadfastness (immovability)! Selflessness (absolute denial of "self") is imperative for this endeavor to begin and continue!
 - If actual devotion which should come hither from the heart and spirit of believers actually occurred of one's own volition (as was intended), and as is certainly warranted within sincere appreciation and gratitude from creation (capable of faith) to one's Creator; a commandment would never had to be rendered to—LOVE THE LORD!

⁷⁹⁷ cf. Matthew 7:21-27; 13:34-43; 24:4-28; Romans 4:1-8; 6:1-23; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Titus 2:1-15.

⁷⁹⁸ cf. 2 Corinthians 10:1-18.

⁷⁹⁹ Psalm 31:1-24; Ephesians 6:10-18, specific vs. 10-12; Luke 17:5-10.

- True devotional believers as are emphasized by the church of Philadelphia know the imperative of immovable devotion for God, and although most believers are in need of constant nudging in order to continue moving forward within an appropriate righteous relationship with the Lord, the remnant which is emphasized within this church is motivated by loving appreciation; this setting them apart from the multitudes, for the Lord is our Master and King (One we serve) by choice of complete humble surrender!
 - The mindset of the multitudes of having a Savior (God of convenience) while continuing within one's carnal sensuality and mindset is absolutely unacceptable; as also is superficial devotion and half-hearted servanthood within compromise! It is due such insincerity as this that the harvest remains plentiful and the workers remain few!⁸⁰⁰ The Lord summed up this type of practiced (self-centered; un-righteous) behavior quite well to the church at Laodicea, when He emphasized that they make him want to vomit (spit; spew; *emew*) (Revelation 3:15, 16)!

The church at Philadelphia is the example of how all churches (of Biblical *ekklesia* standards) should be today. In the world as we know it now, and as they knew it then, legitimate children of God are surrounded by a wicked and unbelieving generation which would like nothing more than to cause actual believers harm and distraction; this by any and all who are held captive by Satan to do his will, which is potentially all who do not maintain immovable devotional focus upon the Lord! By the example set by the church in Philadelphia, we must remain attentive for the open door left us by Christ, remaining steadfast and gallant to pass through and proclaim the truth of the Gospel when opportunity arises; while never attempting to kick down doors because of carnal emotionality.

Although many expositors believe that the church at Philadelphia represents the missionary church; this is not correct. Christianity has always been about reaching others with all sincerity, derived from devotion for the Lord our: Creator, God, Master, King, and Savior. From devotion,

⁸⁰⁰ cf. Matthew 9:36-38; Romans 8:1-17.

we proclaim the blessings of a personal relationship, while being decisive regarding worshipping God in spirit and in truth; within this, Christianity has always been about individuals reaching individuals with the good news of God's: lovingkindness, kingdom, grace, and righteousness!

- The missionary church carried forth not only the Bible, but also the delusions and deceptions of human religious: doctrines, precepts, directives, and traditions. The servants of God as emphasized by the church at Philadelphia serve solely in proclamation of truth; for it is the Lord of light and truth we serve within our ministry of reconciliation!⁸⁰¹
 - Within our ministry of reconciliation, we proclaim not only the truth that God is not angry with humanity due to His atoning work, yet also proclaim that God desires all to draw near to him, so that none would perish; also we instruct the Gospel truth (reality behind the words) to those who seek righteous growth from God. Within our ministry, we do not: insist, command, demand, instigate, convince, and/or convict; for a person's mindset for or against the Lord is derived from within, therefore they must arise the motivation necessary without any form of external insistence or convincing! As servants of God we realize that our potential successes from without, are far reaching from the Lord's immense, righteous successes from within; thus we do our best in and during instruction, trusting God for potential righteous: growth, conviction, correction, wisdom, knowledge, understanding, and directives. Christianity is all about God; the church at Philadelphia knew this, thus leaving the imperative work of God unto fulfillment by God alone! We instruct pertaining to the truth; the Lord actually teaches the spiritual truth.
 - The word "potential" aforementioned is precise and warranted; for although God mercifully intends that individuals function within His righteous work of sanctification, the fact remains that an individual must prepare themselves to receive God's blessings. Just as

⁸⁰¹ cf. 2 Corinthians 13:1-8, emphasis vs. 5-8.

multitudes will refuse the truth of God's love and thus perish in their sins, so also many believers refuse to deny "self" unto humble submission so as to receive the teaching, nurturing, and spiritual growth which is from God alone.

- ▶ Motivational laziness derived from a lack of appropriate devotion and focus for and upon the Lord, has much to do with believer's failure to deny "self," for the denial endeavor holds the imperative of strict spiritual discipline for the entirety of one's life in human form; as the sinful nature seeks to emphatically control all individuals. The power of the Lord's guidance and nurturing is of absolute necessity for victory over fleshly: desire, instigation, influence and indulgence; for the sinful nature is a powerful adversary!⁸⁰² The fact of the adversarial sinful nature is a primary facet of life which is denied by multitudes, which leads the many to deny the truth about themselves; which is many times foundational to the spiritual cowardice which is prevalent within spiritual infants (babes). Multitudes seek quick and easy answers, instruction, worship strategies, times of supposed devotion, and answers to prayer; for this reason (self-centered laziness) multitudes of believers remain spiritually stagnant and fruitless, having never put forth the diligence for realization as to the immensity of God's wonderful blessings! God blesses nothing less than disciplined devotional diligence; thus lazy, half-hearted, and double-minded efforts are mostly futile, for efforts of this type does nothing more than delude the individual!⁸⁰³

The missionary church of the late 1800s and early 1900s went forth into the world carrying forward the inappropriate: doctrines, precepts, philosophies, and traditions of the Christian religion. Inasmuch as

⁸⁰² cf. Romans 7:1-25, specific vs. 15-25.

⁸⁰³ cf. James 1:19-27.

drawing others into a form of religion which has traditions foundational to deception, the missionary church drew multitudes from one deceptive form of bondage directly into another deceptive form of bondage; which ensnares and deludes within variant forms of rote (the Christian religion)! The aforementioned physical realm aspects which have remained even to this day are all part of a foolish physical realm mimic of the actual spiritual realm relationship which is actual Christianity; a primary form of the delusional bondage being the deception that physical realm aspects of worship and devotion constitute “Christianity” and walking by faith (although not).

The church at Philadelphia was a church of true spiritual revival, for the reality of the Gospel truth was proclaimed without compromise, variation or excuse! This is not the same type of “revival” as is most commonly known which entices the emotions of the flesh; rather this actual type of spiritual revival is that which revitalizes the motivation of believers, so they remain within the reality of proper worship of God in spirit and in truth, without variation! The church at Philadelphia had great unity in their endeavors for the Lord; as without compromise in a unified fashion, all were invited to worship (open door) yet there was no tolerance for the insidious foolishness of religion! Within this form of righteous devotion and worship, the entire congregation worked together for the edification (spiritual prosperity) of all, while also each individual member of the body (church) sought abounding fellowship with the Lord, so that the body of believers at Philadelphia functioned together both efficiently and successfully!⁸⁰⁴ Wow, actual church behavior within Biblical standards (true Christianity)!⁸⁰⁵

The Lord Jesus is currently opening doors for us as He did for them, with disciplined perseverance we must not allow the Synagogue of Satan (organized insidious religion which abounds with servants of delusive teachings) to deter us from our appointed and anointed tasks.⁸⁰⁶ Jesus continues to open the doors to true service and salvation; having since opening the doors prior to Philadelphia, remained the faithful witness upon whom our focus and devotion should remain.⁸⁰⁷ The church at

⁸⁰⁴ cf. 1 Corinthians 12:12-31; Ephesians 4:1-32; Jude 1:17-23.

⁸⁰⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40.

⁸⁰⁶ cf. Revelation 2:2, 3; Romans 16:17-20; 2 Timothy 2:1-3:17; Jude 1:1-25.

⁸⁰⁷ cf. Ephesians 5:1-17; 1 John 2:1-29.

Philadelphia relied upon the Lord for His strength and guidance manifest! The spiritual profile which they set should be an example for all who truly seek to serve the Lord in thought, word, and deed! This is a spiritual matter which is manifested in the physical realm; this being the purpose of our human form of existence (corporeality)!

It is difficult to face this reality; only a remnant of believers (very few) actually worship righteously as did the church at Philadelphia. With the deceptive wiles of Satan (doctrines of demons) being so pronounced within the Christian religion, the greatest numbers of believers (multitudes) have been led astray in attempts to worship the Lord of truth as by deceptive means (insidious religion)! The good news is that the Lord yet opens the door to reality for individuals who seek to know Him in truth, and then sends servants to proclaim the truth in love so that the appropriate spiritual relationship may move forward!⁸⁰⁸ The difficulty which lies within the ministry of God's true servants (ministry of reconciliation and instruction of truth) is that we must attempt proclamation regarding the necessity of entering into the spiritual realm so as to reap the benefits of the actual relationship; the greatest being actual fellowship with God which accompanies salvation.⁸⁰⁹ It is from actual fellowship that the imperative blessings are received, which includes: the ability to appraise all things, receiving knowledge of the truth; receiving of correction, chastisement and reproof if necessary; the receiving of agape love (which is spiritually based; God's fruit); and the instilment of truth which makes us free, and allows us (in a maintained fashion) to walk in the light as He is in the light!⁸¹⁰

- It should be remembered, although we instruct and attempt spiritual nurturing from without; the true blessings come from God within. It should also be remembered, discipline must be of mention to those who seek spiritual maturity; for personal discipline is imperative for all who seek growth beyond the elemental things of the world and teachings about the Christ; as it is for and by discipline that we endure!⁸¹¹

⁸⁰⁸ cf.. Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

⁸⁰⁹ cf. Hebrews 6:4-12.

⁸¹⁰ cf. 1 John 1:1-10.

⁸¹¹ cf. Hebrews 12:1-11, specific vs. 7-11; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN

The Synagogue of Satan was (and is) the unbelieving, whom claim a faith within a religious foundation aloof the sound foundation which is the Lord Jesus Christ.⁸¹² The antiquated Synagogue of Satan consisted of the Jews whom claimed to be the descendants of Abraham by birth. These Jews did not, and could not understand that the true descendants of Abraham were the congregation of Jews and Gentiles (alike; no distinction) whom: believed in the Lord and accepted His authority (God), understood Jesus to be the Messiah of prophesy, hear and abide in His word (Gospel), trust in His pure truth (which is trusting the reality of the Christ, as He is the essence of pure truth); thereby following the path of devotion.⁸¹³

The Jews of antiquity whom looked to the Messiah as someone who would bring others into their servanthood, yet refusing to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, were in actuality the Synagogue of Satan (Revelation 2:9). They followed not the Lord of truth, but rather the father of religious deception (the devil).⁸¹⁴ The fact that the unbelieving Jews were not willing to love their brethren who had realized and accepted the Messiah, made evident whom they served! The “Synagogue of Satan” were the Jews who claimed (deceived professing) to be within the family of God (true congregation), yet refused to understand that they were illegitimate children; evidenced by their insistence upon adherence to vain religious standards of antiquity. They continued to oppose the ministry of God’s children who were led to serve others; rather they continually sought to be followed and served by others. The Synagogue of Satan are those who although popular, influential and many times wealthy, remain spiritual destitute and in bondage to their own intellectual reasoning and sensual appetites.⁸¹⁵ The unbelieving Jews of antiquity (Synagogue of Satan) will be forced someday to acknowledge Jesus as Lord, and bow before those whom they felt should bow before them (Revelation 3:9).⁸¹⁶

REVELATION 3:10

The Revelation 3:10 passage is a passage indicating the safety of being

⁸¹² cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:5.

⁸¹³ cf. 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; John 8:1-58; 14:6; Luke 19:1-10; 20:27-21:4.

⁸¹⁴ cf. 1 Peter 5:6-11; 1 John 3:4-18; 8:39-45.

⁸¹⁵ cf. Mark 7:1-23; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16.

⁸¹⁶ cf. Romans 14:1-12; Philippians 2:1-11.

in Christ (cf. Romans 8:1, 2). We can see (spiritually) by this passage, that the sons and daughters (actual legitimate children) of God will be protected from the hour of intense testing which will befall those who dwell (Greek - *katoikew*; settled) in the world.

- It is imperative to understand, that only the legitimate (adopted) children of God will be kept from the hour of testing which will befall the entire world; those who believe they are children of God as by insidious religiosity or false hopes and beliefs (carnally based) will fall prey to the immense hour of testing, thereby in failing to realize their illegitimate state (not adopted sons and daughters of God) will curse God as *if* He is to blame for their having been deceived!
 - Please remember, it is the responsibility of each believer to persevere with diligence within discipline to evidence the truth and walk therein (abide in the Word); thus when individuals are deceived and forced to suffer the consequences of the delusive bondage to which they have remained captive, they actually have no one to blame but themselves! It is the responsibility (duty) of every believer to test, examine, and judge ourselves righteously according to Biblical standards; the primary reason multitudes refuse to fulfill this duty is cowardice, as they refuse to believe the wretchedness of which we are all guilty, when aloof the—reality of God! Please remember, the primary defender of our sinful nature is—foolish adolescent (stubborn and rebellious) pride; which forces cowardice in the flesh (rejection of truth), followed by spiritual destitution, which is the result of living in opposition to God, as He is opposed to the proud!⁸¹⁷ The simple reality which is obscured to the carnally cowardice and spiritually destitute is the fact that God knows everything about each of us (even to the number of hairs on our heads); therefore, multitudes reject investigation due fear of truth, although the Lord already knows the truth; thus the fear of multitudes (cowardice) is inappropriate as it also

⁸¹⁷ James 4:1-10.

leads to fear of circumstances; for they have but to confess unto the Lord what He already knows, and acknowledge the truth to themselves, so that God may begin the good work of taking them beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality within which is found pure truth (Jesus; glory of Christ) and righteous hope!⁸¹⁸ Rejection of this truth is the reason why the cowardly will inherit the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (second death)!⁸¹⁹

As we seek to ascertain the truth of this Scriptural verse, we must inspect the wording carefully. The verse emphasizes the fact that believers will be kept from the testing which will befall the whole world. This is an emphasis of the deliverance such as was upon the Israelites in Egypt; as the chosen of God were kept from the harshness of the plague judgments, whereas those not chosen of God were forced to suffer the onslaught of the judgment.

- Although the actual legitimate children of God will be forced to endure the terrible aspects of the Great Tribulation Period up to the time of the sounding of the seventh (last) trumpet, the terrible hour of testing from which they will be kept will occur during the bowl judgments; which will begin immediately following true believers being “caught up” to meet the Lord in the air (Rapture). This is the context of how the actual children of God will be “kept from” the hour of testing which will befall the whole world; while those holding to but a concept of God and deliverance as by delusion will shockingly remain.⁸²⁰
 - It should be realized; the true children of God will be taken, while others left behind! The associations kept (i.e. denominations; religious sects; acquaintances; friends; etc.) will matter not; for this is an individual matter pertinent only to the personal relationship with God (spiritual relational reality) which actually saves individuals from the wages of sin and death!

⁸¹⁸ cf. Matthew 10:17-37, number of “hairs” specific v.30; Romans 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 3:17-4:10; 13:5-8.

⁸¹⁹ cf. Revelation 21:8.

⁸²⁰ cf. Matthew 24:36-44.

Scripture makes distinct illustrations of the worldly mindset those whom truly “settled” upon the earth will exhibit; while demonstrating the difference of mindset from those whom actually hold their residence to be in heaven; thereby maintaining their focus upon, and faith in the Lord.⁸²¹ The safety of the Lord therefore will be upon those whom are truly His legitimate children (only)! The Lord’s judgments (wrath) will be upon those who have rejected Him by unbelief or holding to the elementary principles of the world (religiosity) upon which they dwell. As true believers are found to be righteous within an actual relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ, there will be no physical judgment upon them.⁸²² This is further explained within the ORDO SALUTIS (chapter seven), and within Notations on Revelation (chapter six).

HOLDING FAST

A believer holds fast by:

1. Being secure in Jesus.⁸²³
 - As all human insecurities are derived from either failing to have a relationship with Jesus, or failing to realize one’s position within the relationship; greater soundness within actual knowledge leads to greater security!
2. Refraining from reliance upon “self.”⁸²⁴
 - As denial of “self” (carnality) is the first step in actually following the Lord (spiritually); full denial of self-reliance leads to humble submission unto the Lord and subjection to His righteousness!
 - It should be remembered, our sinful nature desires to control our every aspect of existence; this leads to: greed, ingratitude, self-centeredness, selfishness, sensuality, and arrogance, wanton desires, fleshly indulgences, and idolatry; *if* “self” is allowed to achieve victory, the sinful nature has become the idol which masters us! By the power of God’s might, through prayer and

⁸²¹ cf. Philippians 1:12-30; 3:2-21; Ephesians 3:8-21; Revelation 11:4-19; Hebrews 11:1-16; Matthew 6:19-34; Psalm 33:1-22; 118:1-29.

⁸²² cf. Luke 1:66-80; Romans 4:1-8; 5:12-21; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

⁸²³ cf. Galatians 3:21-29; Romans 3:21-31; Colossians 2:1-10.

⁸²⁴ cf. Proverbs 3:1-12; Matthew 10:34-42; 16:21-27; James 4:3-10.

diligent discipline to crucify our sinful nature, the Lord almighty is allowed (by personal choice of submission) to be the God which is Master over us.⁸²⁵

3. Refusing to deny Jesus or His name even in the face of adversity.⁸²⁶
 - True children of God are: active, bold, and courageous soldiers of light and truth; this as differentiated from the: passive, compromising, effeminate cowards; of Christian religious folklore! Yes, a child of God will turn the other cheek *if* for the glory of God; no, we do not turn tail and run for foolish reasons!⁸²⁷

4. Staying from a secular mindset.⁸²⁸
 - In accordance to the elementary principles of the world (religious: doctrines, precepts, philosophies, and traditions), little change (*if* any) as by growth from the Lord occurs; for a mindset upon the Lord is directly the only avenue of actual spiritual success (this derived from devotional love, both from and to the Lord)!⁸²⁹
 - The reality of religious distraction can be noted frequently as by proclamation emphasis upon aspects of the Lord, rather than upon the Lord Himself!
 - Anthropomorphic statements are found in the Gospel pertaining to God, so that He may be somewhat better understood by human beings yet without spiritual knowledge. I have used the word “somewhat,” inasmuch as numerous individuals continually use statements of Anthropomorphism when speaking of the Lord, for they within their mind’s eye attempt to bring the Lord into the realm of the creation; this as foolish finite creatures with diminished faith attempt to place God into a mold of postulation.

⁸²⁵ cf. Colossians 3:5-17.

⁸²⁶ cf. Matthew 10:17-33.

⁸²⁷ cf. Luke 22:35-38.

⁸²⁸ cf. Romans 8:1-17; 12:1-8; 16:17-27; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5.

⁸²⁹ cf. Colossians 2:1-23, emphasis vs. 18-23; Galatians 4:1-11.

- Attempts to explain God in the physical realm are derived from human: pride, arrogance, and general foolishness; for these are attempts toward ineffable communication and understanding! Attempts to explain God to someone's flesh should never occur; for the Lord will render revelation to whomsoever He chooses!⁸³⁰
5. Living according to Scripture; thus abiding in the Word.⁸³¹
- The Gospel truth is in reality the “living and active” nature of the Gospel! Upon insistent disciplined diligence within prayer and earnest study of the Gospel, the living and active nature of the Gospel as by the grace of God (implantation) literally trains up the believer within the righteousness of the Lord.⁸³²
 - Because this is a reality; although the Gospel truth can be spoken by a servant of God who has actual knowledge, it cannot be expected that the hearing party will receive the spoken truth unto actual knowledge and growth. It is also important to realize, that simply reading the words found in the Gospel will not have the profound effect within an individual which comes from persevered submission in prayer and diligent study! God blesses individuals who are humbly submissive and diligent; as the Gospel truth is literally instilled by Him into the believer's spirit. God will not bless lazy and complacent believers; for denial of “self” has not been forthcoming.

OVERCOMERS IN PHILADELPHIA

The overcomers are promised the following:

- They will be a pillar in the temple of God. This can either refer to how a pillar will be named after the overcomers in the New Jerusalem (as was done in ancient temples at Philadelphia to honor dignitaries), or this is in reference to receiving the spiritual strength of a pillar in the Lord.

⁸³⁰ cf. John 6:44, 45.

⁸³¹ cf. John 8:31, 32; 15:1-17; Philippians 2:1-18; 2 Timothy 1:8-14; 2:1-19; 3:10-17; Hebrews 4:1-16.

⁸³² cf. James 1:21-25.

- They will be allowed to dwell with the Lord for eternity.
- They will receive upon them the names of God the Father, God the Son, and the New Jerusalem. This will be an eternally joyous event, for God Himself will dwell there and be the focal point of worship. This receiving of God's name will confirm the believer (individuals who overcome) in righteousness, and as a resident of the New Jerusalem.

SIGNIFICANCE OF THE WORD-PILLAR

The word pillar was significant to the citizens of Philadelphia, as they knew the word to indicate strength. In the years surrounding this epistle of Christ to the city of Philadelphia, earthquakes had threatened the land. Many inhabitants of the city would flee the city when tremors erupted, and be hesitant to return. Many folks refused to live within the confines of the city because they feared for their lives when quakes would occur; being fearful the roofs may fall in upon them. When Jesus tells them that they will be a pillar, this is affirming to them that they will be secured and completely out of harm's way. They would see this promise as meaning the future kingdom would be structurally sound and without fault, as also would they because by God's grace—they are that pillar. In this context, the word pillar would indicate to the believers—a permanent secure place in God's kingdom which they will receive from the Lord; stated in Scripture to be within the temple of God (Revelation 3:12); thus eternal: purity, holiness, righteousness, strength, and security.

- It can be noted visually by the sighting of ancient ruins, that the pillars are the predominant remaining aspects of many structures. This makes evident the fact of strength both of the pillars and the foundations beneath. Jesus is the foundation of Christianity!⁸³³

It had been a custom at Philadelphia of honoring dignitaries (magistrates) by naming a pillar after them within one of the temples. In this context, the believers at Philadelphia would understand that eternal security in God's kingdom is a tremendous honor which only sincere (born again)

⁸³³ cf. Psalm 118:21-24; Matthew 21:42-45; Luke 20:17, 18; Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11; 1 Peter 2:6-10.

believers will receive. Although magistrates of the time were honored in accordance to the prestige of their position, in the statement to the believers at Philadelphia—the honor is understood to be in accordance to the giving nature (loving-kindness and grace) of the King.

REBUKE NONE

Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22)

HISTORY

The city of Laodicea was located on a highway between Ephesus and Syria approximately ten miles from Colossae; forty miles southeast of Philadelphia. Laodicea was a city of considerable wealth which was founded in the third century B.C. by Antiochus II, and was named after his wife Laodice. The considerable wealth of the city is demonstrated by the fact that it was rebuilt after the great earthquake of A.D. 60, without the financial help of Rome.

The city of Laodicea earned its great wealth via the banking industry present in the city, and also its production of black wool garments and cloth for which it was renowned. Laodicea was well known for its medical school's production of a spice nard, which was dried and compressed into tablet form, then was re-hydrated and used in treatment of ear and eye illnesses (eye salve = collyrium).

The city of Laodicea was without a sufficient proximity water source. The city received its water through a series of stone pipelines which carried the water to the city from a few miles north at Denizli. The hot springs which supplied the water to the city from Denizli (Hierapolis), cooled to the point of being lukewarm by the time the water reached Laodicea. This lukewarm condition of the water at Laodicea was that which illustration was made toward the offensively weak faith, focus, and appropriate worship and service; found prevalent in the church.

- With the emphasized statement regarding a “lukewarm” state, individuals at Laodicea realized immediately the specific of affectation. The inhabitants were quirky regarding drinking the water in a lukewarm state; therefore water was either cooled or heated prior to drinking, as it was considered otherwise offensive.

- It is specifics such as this, which add considerable understanding to the immensity of Jesus' statements, and how the statements would be received by a specific people at specific places and times (hermeneutics)! The importance of the history pertaining to each church has been rendered for each of the seven churches, as understanding of the history adds depth of understanding to Jesus' statements rendered to each.

Christ standing outside the door (Revelation 3:20; cf. vs. 15-18):
 Jesus standing outside the door directly indicates many things:

1. His awesome love, as He is the Creator of all things yet he waits patiently upon His creation (individually).
 - As we were made by Him and for Him, His eagerly awaiting individuals within the church to open the door to allow Him actual access for fulfillment of the believer's purpose (spiritual relational reality); this on an individual basis, as the church (ekklesia) has closed Him (the Lord) out!
2. As He is the light of the world, He eagerly awaits the church to open the door to allow the light of life and truth to enter.
 - Due to the exuberant love of self, love of pleasure, love of money, insidious religious doctrines and ritualistic worship, and personal delusion of individual members in a combined setting; the door remains shut from within, with the Lord outside. As will become evident, the church closed the door in front of the Lord, to deny Him access, for within the delusional mindset of those who choose for themselves (multitudes) church leadership who teach according to carnal volition, the truth of the spiritual reality of an intimate devotional relationship with God is no longer held in high regard or as precedent!
3. Divine love and patience, awaiting human reluctance in church settings to cease.
 - Even though multitudes realize a necessity for the Lord (as Savior), demonstrated by the fact of their going to church; the many yet remain reluctant to deny "self" so as to humbly come

to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ; Lord, God, Savior), so as to invite the Lord to teach them and bring forth spiritual growth (personally in a combined setting); this as the imperative of Gospel truth is not the precedent of the blatantly carnal church (Laodicea; A.D. 1954-present)!

- It should be remembered; being inside a specific structure means nothing, if the Lord is outside being denied access! Inappropriately, multitudes continue to attend churches for the wrong reasons; in doing so failing to realize the detriment derived from failure to diligently seek His personal teaching, and this they do delusional as to their surroundings and the purpose all individuals are righteously to be there.
 - If it isn't all about God, in a spiritual context; the reason for attendance is inappropriate and futile! We as believers (actual Christians) are blessed in finding and fulfilling our purpose according to the kind intention of God's good, acceptable and perfect will; and this on an individual basis, when fellowship with other true Christians is unavailable! Attempting fellowship with others (in a combined setting; church) who deny the reality of the Christ is futile and evasive of truth!
- 4. His divine love and patience, as some of the doors are rusted and rotten with age.
 - This demonstrating how long He has waited for corrupted and/or corroded church congregations to invite Him in; while continuing to knock and wait patiently, for individuals to pay heed and come to Him! The foolishness of expecting the Lord to come get us, and make everything all right, even though we refuse to put forth diligence regarding Him, is selfish and futile at best; for the flesh (self; individuality) which guides all such endeavors is diametrically opposed to the masterful spiritual leadership of the Holy Spirit!⁸³⁴
- 5. The door signifies the door of the current-day church where the latch is on the inside; therefore the door must be opened from within.

⁸³⁴ cf. Romans 8:1-39, emphasis vs. 1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Galatians 5:1-26.

- Devotion is of utmost importance! Jesus is patient in His approach to gatherings of believers, not forceful. The door must be opened by the inhabitant(s), as Jesus will not cause distress to gain access. Jesus only enters with permission; which He is no longer given, as the current-day church (Laodicea) rejects the imperative of spiritual truth!
- **Imperative** (Revelation 3:20): *If* anyone yet hears His voice, that individual must open the door of intimacy with the Lord on a personal devotional basis; for as the church (ekklyasia) in general has put the Lord out, all that remains is for individuals to become personal and devotional with the Lord; as the multitudes are content with lazy, self-centered and assumptive Christianity which remains without light and truth; for the Lord God of light and truth has been rejected due to religious complacency! Please understand, religious complacency is the epitome of “abomination” unto the Lord! The key factor here is that individuals within the church must come out from the midst of foolishness, and personally love the Lord; for the bad company which is kept within a church (ekklyasia) which has refused the Lord, will assuredly cause corruption unto all who remain in the midst!⁸³⁵ Please note by the footnote (2 Timothy 3:1-7) that the description rendered of behavior in the last days (progressively since A.D. 1954) pertaining to believers, are descriptions foundational to selfish insincerity and blatant self-centeredness; this is realized (v. 5) by descriptiveness of those who hold to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power. God is the power of our faith and hope within Christianity, thus God is not a part of what is occurring in congregations abounding with self-centered “lukewarm” believers void of devotion; which renders the reality of why the Lord is being kept out of His own church, as congregations are no longer concerned with the teaching of “pure Gospel truth” (spiritual reality) (Revelation 3:15-18)!

⁸³⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:30-34; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5, emphasis vs. 3:1-7.

6. He is calling and knocking.
 - He is doing everything He can to allow the believer(s) to know He is there, lovingly waiting; yet the corruption of delusional religion has caused callosity of: hearts, minds, and spirits; thereby making them inept to reception of the Lord's actual goodness and righteous teaching.

7. He makes mention of dining personally with individuals. This is the time when those important to us are invited into our homes and hearts, to share with us the personal aspects of their day, hope, faith, devotions, etc.
 - Jesus is very eager to receive the most intimate aspects of our lives, and do so personally! It is an unfortunate fact that the multitudes believe a half-hearted, double-minded sincerity is sufficient in order to have a sound relationship with the Lord; this in reality making emphasis of blatant ignorance as to the intimate, humble, and reverent sincerity (devotion) necessary to both know and accept Him as Lord (head of the church). This fact is reiterated by how the multitudes want a Savior, yet have no intention of submission to Jesus as Lord (One in authority)! Because of the prideful sinful nature which leads pastors and ministers not called of God to the position they have designated unto themselves (rebellion of Korah), and because of the love of money which motivates many church leaders (error of Balaam), and the insincerity of waning devotion (way of Cain); the current-day church has denied the Lord of Glory, as they have exchanged the truth for a lie (Christianity; the Christian religion, respectively)!⁸³⁶

Why has the Lord been put out of the current-day church? The answers are simple; within what has become blatant religiosity due to seeking God in the flesh, most aspects of spirituality (including spiritual devotion) has been denied or outright rejected, and this to appease the ease and comfort (emotional calmness) desired by the human sinful nature!

⁸³⁶ cf. Jude 1:1-25, specific vs. 11-16.

Isaiah 6:3: Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory.

Revelation 4:8: And the four living creatures, each one of them having six wings, are full of eyes around and within; and day and night they do not cease to say, "HOLY, HOLY, HOLY, is THE LORD GOD, THE ALMIGHTY, WHO WAS AND WHO IS AND WHO IS TO COME."

1. With the darkness of deceptive (insidious), ritualistic, bigoted, and prejudicial religion being allowed to enter the church, and even more so become precedent; the Biblical God of righteousness, holiness, light, truth, lovingkindness, mercy, and grace was abundantly patient; yet with time exited as reparation did not occur. Within complacency, foolishly self-centered, lazy, ignorant congregations closed the door before Him; for when actual fellowship with God was lost due to the bondage of human religious doctrine and precept (darkness; influential doctrines and instigations of demons), the multitudes were no longer willing to follow the Lord to the goal of His upward call (righteous spiritual growth and freedom)!⁸³⁷ Within absolute wretched proclamations from pulpits of some god who has a sense of humor regarding sinful stupidity and secular mindedness, and who must bless individuals according to fleshly whims and desires (human volition); exactly what god is proclaimed is foreign to me, for the God of the Bible (afore emphasized) is absolutely holy, righteous, pure, just, and astounding.⁸³⁸ Who is being proclaimed from pulpits; is it the god of human postulation, or the God of the Bible who is the only actual Lord, Savior, and spiritual teacher?⁸³⁹ There is no such thing as religious salvation; for eternal spiritual salvation is a relational imperative which must be taught to individuals by God!⁸⁴⁰
 - Although many would seek to blame church leadership for the failures, and this *if* and when individuals come to actual

⁸³⁷ cf. John 8:31-36; 15:1-17; Philippians 3:1-21.

⁸³⁸ cf. Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Romans 8:1-17.

⁸³⁹ cf. 2 Samuel 22:3-51; Isaiah 43:1-11; 45:1-25; 49:1-26; 60:1-62:12; Matthew 23:5-11; Luke 1:39-2:20; Acts 5:27-42.

⁸⁴⁰ cf. Matthew 23:13-28; John 3:1-21; 6:44, 45; Colossians 2:1-23; Philippians 3:1-21; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58.

understanding of the spiritual imperative; failure must be realized as being a personal matter, for the duty of each “Christian” (those who are Christ- like) is diligence to: study the Gospel, evidence the truth and walk therein, submit to God, and maintain subjection to His: righteousness, teaching, anointing, and masterful leadership.⁸⁴¹

- Multitudes of supposed church leadership were never called by God to serve in the positions they have designated unto themselves! Although God calls his children to responsibilities and duties in accordance to His anointing upon each, it has never been the volitional choice of human beings to choose or designate unto themselves or others positions of authority, leadership, and servanthood within the church (body of Christ)!⁸⁴²
 - **Bigotry and prejudice are not Christian traits!** Although believers are to judge other believers in accordance to standards of disciplined righteousness (right doing) as designated by God within His revealed will (the Gospel); we do not judge non-believers, or others in accordance to personal volitional beliefs or standards. Although in a work environment others can be expected to fulfill the duties for which they were employed, and assistance can and should be rendered to edify individuals to higher standards of motivational success; expectations should never be forthcoming as to an individual’s personal anointing which is from God alone. God is supposed to be predominated within the Church (Lord; *kurios*); thus individual believers should never go beyond loving edification unto others in efforts to assist them to maintain their focus upon the Lord, and seek increased understanding which may lead to actual knowledge (*if* the Lord permits)!⁸⁴³ No endeavors should ever be forthcoming which show favoritism regarding race, color or creed; for human characteristics from birth are of

⁸⁴¹ cf. Romans 8:1-17, emphasis v. 14; 10:1-21, emphasis vs. 1-4, 8-10; 2 Timothy 2:1-26, emphasis vs. 11-19; James 1:1-4:19, emphasis 1:16-25; 1 John 2:1-27, emphasis vs. 1-11, 21-27; Jude 1:1-25.

⁸⁴² cf. 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40, emphasis 12:1-27.

⁸⁴³ cf. Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

God's designations and therefore not open to debate or ridicule by other humans; additionally, personal beliefs within an individual are derived from motivational focus (the object or objects of one's volitional motivations or focus); thus individual human design is an aspect of God's creativity, and aspects of personal belief either of human postulation in accordance to carnal influence, or appropriate submission to one's creator (God) for His leadership to fulfill one's purpose in accordance to the Lord's righteous anointing, are aspects of God's purposeful choosing (if the latter is chosen)!

- The latter-day church (Laodicea; carnal church A.D. 1954-present) has proclaimed salvation to be a matter of but a few chosen words which accept a specific aspect of the Christ (Savior); yet the imperative for knowledge of the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ; Way; truth) remains a Biblical standard (mandate) which has become obscured! The current-day church (Laodicea) no longer holds desire for implantation of Biblical truth which is a divine work of the Teacher (Lord Jesus), as the multitudes have only the desire to believe and worship according to personal volition, no matter how far from the truth their desires may take them! Although the spiritual relational reality is all about the righteous work of God within the existence of His legitimate children; the current-day church feels (emotionally) the necessity to establish a righteousness of "self" (human religious effort), which denies the truth regarding the imperative to deny "self"; thus multitudes actually reject the goodness and righteousness of the Lord, from whom comes good and righteous fulfillment of human purpose! We were made by Him and for Him; yet within the blatantly carnal church (Laodicea) it is now believed that God must serve us, which makes evident that multitudes are without understanding, and completely void of Biblical knowledge, because the Lord (truth; Teacher of knowledge) is being kept out of His church! The current-day church actually rejects the reality of God and Christ,

while deluding themselves to believe un-righteous faith and worship (carnal darkness) is acceptable to God; although not, as God in His absolute holiness and righteousness remains always in the light of truth and reality! Multitudes in the current-day church prove themselves to be in complete rejection of the reality of God; while within religious complacency maintaining fantasy in denial of reality!

Important note—strict spiritual discipline is an imperative within a relationship with God; therefore any fulfillment of endeavors must be accomplished with strict discipline to endeavor always in the light of truth, or the endeavor is not of God’s anointing! Within the blatant love of “self” (narcissism) which was prophesied in the Gospel pertaining to the “last days” (2 Timothy 3:1-7), comes introversion into one’s sinful nature; with the protector (pride; arrogance) of the nature’s insecurities gaining predomination over existence! When this occurs, the sense of right and wrong / good and evil which the Lord ingrained in each human being’s mind at their birth is clouded (obscured); thus committing lawless deeds becomes a natural occurrence with no conviction of wrongdoing, unless an outward force of reckoning is present! Lawlessness is sin, and with sin comes the loss of fellowship with God; therefore, with complacency within lawlessness internal convictions from the Lord are no longer forthcoming; thus increased levels of depravity become inevitable, up to and possibly including full release to the depravity of one’s mind!⁸⁴⁴

- God is the sole Teacher in spiritual matters; we are all students! Actual motivation within a relationship with God is derived from sincerity of devotion; motivation in this regard must be mustered within individuals, for motivation from without cannot achieve an appropriate harmonious outcome which endures the test of time!⁸⁴⁵

⁸⁴⁴ cf. Romans 1:20-32; 1 Timothy 6:3-19.

⁸⁴⁵ cf. Hebrews 6:1-20; 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6.

- It is due to human volitional standards within church settings which have caused divisions where unity was to prevail! Through the foolishness of manmade religion, humankind has set themselves upon a pedestal of superiority to the point of inappropriate designations of authority. With failure to maintain understanding that God is the head of the church, church leadership have condoned and accepted focus upon themselves; thus they have placed the Lord as no longer being predominant within the church (His Body), to the point that multitudes of believers no longer realize the imperative of actual fellowship with God (actual Teacher from whom comes spiritual growth), instead placing emphasis upon fellowship with other believers as priority (instructors at best)!
 - ▶ Denominational divisions are of religion (secular ekklyasia); unity within the Body of Christ is of God (Biblical ekklyasia). Which is most pronounced upon the earth?
 - ▶ Secular (religious) ekklyasia (church): occurs when blatantly distracted individuals meet together with other blatantly distracted individuals, together foolishly expecting devotional spiritual discipline to occur in a very short period of time.
 - ▶ Biblical ekklyasia (church): occurs when individuals have prepared themselves beforehand with personal fellowship with God, in anticipation of participation with others in a group setting who have done the same; for by this the individuals within the group as a whole can be taught by God (the actual Teacher of spiritual matters)! When the pastor or minister has been designated by God to the position they hold in the church setting, their emphasis is disciplined focus and devotion (always upon the Lord); thus they quickly stop distraction by any means necessary, and this emphatically to the point that the entire congregation is unified in godly discipline at all times while in the church setting! This is the essence of

reality which was found at the church of Philadelphia; yet has been rejected thereafter!

- Within the foolishness of a worldly physical realm mindset, multitudes of believers have come to believe that “church” involves a physical realm structure. This in reality is far from the truth; for where two or more are gathered to focus upon the Lord, this is church! What many do not realize is that when an individual through prayerful submissiveness diligently strives to gain understanding and knowledge regarding the truth (Lord) and His word (the Gospel), the individual and Lord (when present in the endeavor) constitutes a “church.”
 - Within this understanding comes the knowledge that quantity is irrelevant; for the relevance is within the quality of the endeavor! When individuals come to realization of this important fact, they can easily leave lukewarm congregational settings so as to gain quality within their relationship with God and others of like mindedness (mind of Christ).
 - The current-day church in general has journeyed far from the truth and realization of relational purpose; for this is the outcome when individuals meet together while abounding with “self,” which avoids the imperative unity of focus upon the Lord!

- 2. When mammon (worldly wealth) became the point of pulpit emphasis and proclamation, the Lord of the Bible was no longer being proclaimed, worshipped, or served appropriately; but rather God is now expected to serve and condone in accordance to human arrogant volition!⁸⁴⁶ With the gathering of numerous false teachers derived from human sensual whims and desires, the flesh is the recipient of pulpit proclamation (for the most part); thus multitudes of congregations remain spiritually destitute and un-edified, while remaining emotionally tilted toward increased self-centeredness! There is no such thing as a “Christian” who is: selfish, self-centered, fleshly, immoral, effeminate, greedy, un-grateful, un-disciplined, or ignorant!

⁸⁴⁶ cf. Matthew 6:19-24; Luke 16:1-31.

- Although many within the body of Christ may be saved through the wonderful grace of God (only God knows with certainty in many cases); only the remnants who devotionally submit to be led by God can realistically be called “Christians!”⁸⁴⁷
 - When actual believers (those saved by God’s grace) exhibit the aforementioned traits, the reality evinces lukewarm Christianity; for the growth which is indicative of an intimate relationship with God is avoided. It is not through the efforts of an individual that they become an actual Christian, it is the work of God; for actual righteousness is from and of God, whereas those who become actual Christians (Christ-like), are but humbly submissive and receptive to God’s creative spiritual molding and beauty (He is the potter, we are the clay)!⁸⁴⁸ The more God’s work of sanctification abounds within an individual, the greater the conformity of the individual to the image of Christ; thus the sinful nature is further crucified and inevitably put to death! Unlike the Christian religion which emphasizes successes as by physical realm endeavors and means from without, the reality of Christianity is righteous change as by the work of God from within!
 - The kind intention of God’s will is to train His children in preparation for the eternal state! Lukewarm believers failing to understand this focus and earnestly endeavor for the flesh which ends at the grave; whereas actual Christians through knowledgeable realization maintain focus upon the Lord and His personal teaching, as we know with certainty that He will supply our needs upon this earth, thus we have no need of secular concerns regarding wealth and comfort. True Christians work hard as unto the Lord; whereas lukewarm believers work wholeheartedly for personal gains, which unfortunately lead to spiritual destitution.⁸⁴⁹

⁸⁴⁷ cf. John 5:30; 6:38-40; Romans 8:1-17, 26-30; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Ephesians 1:3-23.

⁸⁴⁸ cf. Isaiah 29:1-24; 63:1-65:25; Romans 9:6-29.

⁸⁴⁹ cf. Matthew 6:1-34; Romans 12:1-21; Philipians 4:4-20.

The foolishness of expecting the Lord God to change in accordance to human postulations and desires is beyond pathetic; it is stupid, idiotic, asinine, and demonic!⁸⁵⁰

3. With the emphasis of physical realm rituals and traditions becoming precedent due to the instruction of the harlot mother (Roman Catholic Church), the reality of the spiritual relationship became vain; for actual “faith” is imperative to journey into the spiritual realm where God is located and appreciated, thus the deceived multitudes attempt to find and worship God in the physical realm as by religious: assumption, conjecture, ideologies, idealisms and futile deceptive traditions! There is no such thing as a “Christian” holiday; the very notion is deceptive and spiritually poisonous!
 - The supposed Christian holidays were initiated and instituted by the Roman Catholic Church as a way of easing the journey of proselytes to the human founded Christian religion. The dates of supposed Christian holidays are all derived from the dates of pagan worship of the sun, gods and goddesses of fertility, and astrologic beliefs. As Roman Catholicism (the Christian religion; revised Babylonian Mysteries priesthood) expanded to different geographical locations, the dates of worship indigenous to the locations were copulative and instituted as a means of appeasement; thus deception, ease, comfort, and emotional response; took precedence over having an actual relationship with God. Actual Christianity is all about a personal relationship with God completely aloof secular and demonic deceptiveness; within the relationship, individuals are adopted by God and saved from the wages of sin which is death, by being literally brought into the light of pure truth!
 - The ministry of actual Christianity is solely one of “reconciliation” by the divine work of God!⁸⁵¹ This is a standard set forth by the Lord God and is therefore not open for debate!⁸⁵²

⁸⁵⁰ cf. Hebrews 13:1-19; 2 Timothy 3:1-4:5.

⁸⁵¹ cf. John 6:44-65; Romans 5:1-11.

⁸⁵² cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, emphasis vs. 14-21.

- Participation in deception is sin, and with un-confessed sin all potential for fellowship with God is lost; thus until realization of sin, awakening from delusional slumber, and righteous confession of wrongdoing leading to repentance (righteous turning back to God) occurs, all journey endeavors are in darkness with no distinct path for spiritual success!⁸⁵³
 - Ignorant participation within religious deceptive traditions is without excuse! Although multitudes claim that they will continue to do as they have always done, this also is without excuse; for where is our devotion, when we attempt to mix light of truth with the darkness of deception, while remaining complacent in doing so! As aforementioned, the duty of any and all “Christians” is to evidence the truth and walk therein; thus to worship the God of truth and light, the worshippers must walk in the light of truth or fellowship with God is nonexistent!⁸⁵⁴
 - Although many church leaders are actually ignorant of the truth and thereby teach deception to others, there are many church leaders who are aware that the traditions (holidays) of the church are of deception and darkness. Although the former make confident assertions in their ignorance, the latter continue the darkness of deception purposefully due to cowardice and appeasement of human beings for personal gains. The former are deserving of pity and instruction, the latter are deserving of judgment; for their judgment will be just!⁸⁵⁵
 - This is what occurs when humankind calls themselves to positions of church authority without God’s anointing! If human beings would learn to: deny “self,” submit to God, remain in subjection to His righteousness, and worship God solely in spirit and in truth; these things would not occur, but rather unified growth which is from God alone would abound within the current-day church. This will not actually occur, realized by the Lord’s truthful

⁸⁵³ cf. John 12:44-50; Romans 2:17-29; 13:1-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; Ephesians 5:1-17; 6:10-18.

⁸⁵⁴ cf. 1 John 1:1-2:2.

⁸⁵⁵ cf. 2 Peter 1:1-2:22.

prophecies of end time events; yet individuals can be reached with truth and thereby there is yet hope for humanity, yet only for a remnant.

- True Christians do not stop to look back upon secular and religious dates of celebration; for we have revealed knowledge of a wonderful righteous future. Non-believers and lukewarm believers continually stop to look back regarding dates of celebration; for they are without or unaware (as by revelation) of a future, respectively. It is the duty of all legitimate children of God to evidence the truth, and proclaim it for the sake of others; if the truth is rejected, we (true servants) have no place for regret, for the Lord warned us that we would be rejected and hated when fulfilling our ministry of pure truth!
4. The way of “Christianity” is simple; it is all about God and being involved within fulfillment of His purposeful good, acceptable and perfect will. The way of the “Christian religion” is devious; it is all about evading truth and spiritual reality, for the sake of fleshly indulgence! In reality; it is either God’s way or the wrong way!

CHRIST THE AMEN

Jesus is the Amen (Greek = amayn), as He is:

- The truth (John 14:6, 7).
- God (John 1:1; 14:7-11).
- Creator of all things (John 1:2, 3; 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6; Colossians 1:15-17).
- The faithful and true witness (Revelation 1:1-6; 3:14).
- The bright Morning Star (Revelation 22:16).
- The foundation of sound doctrine and light (1 Corinthians 3:1-11; John 1:1-14; 1 Timothy 4:1-11).
- The beginning and the end; the Alpha and the Omega (Revelation 1:8; 21:5, 6; 22:12, 13).
- The purpose of a true believer (Colossians 1:16, 17).
- The cornerstone (foundation) of our strength, faith and existence (Ephesians 2:11-22; John 15:1-16:3).
- The Lord / I Am (Exodus 3:13, 14; Deuteronomy 4:39; Isaiah 45:5-8; John 8:58).

*The Church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22)***COMMENDATION - NONE****REBUKE**

The spiritual life of the believers at Laodicea was neither hot nor cold, but only lukewarm. The believers reveled in their fleshly and earthy ways (carnality) to the point that they were incapable of spiritual fruits; did not realize it, nor was there any sincere concern as to their blatant practices or the spiritual depravity foundational to practiced carnality. The believers at Laodicea were living in a dream world in which they delusively felt their material wealth was from the Lord; and this as carnal mindedness has effectively eliminated all ability to discern and appraise reality! Having their spirituality blinded by the deceptiveness of materialism, they were held captive and unable to break free and thereby see the truth regarding their predicament of being spiritually destitute. They were abounding with everything that did not matter, yet were suffering deprivation in their relationship with Jesus Christ! In their ignorance of spiritual matters, they had no motivational sincerity in seeking of truth or knowledge; rather dwelling in the darkness of materialistic arrogance and pride.⁸⁵⁶

The believers in Laodicea did not realize: their love for material things was in actuality causing a demoralization of their spiritual devotional abilities (demeanor, understanding, and capability for humble submission); for to serve mammon is not to serve God; focus on the things of the flesh is to lose focus for the things of God.⁸⁵⁷ The reality of holding to materialism is to despise God, this fact completely evades the multitudes! They saw themselves as rich and in need of nothing, yet were in actuality wretched, miserable, poor, blind and naked (Revelation 3:17, 18). Jesus stated to the believers in Laodicea that He: was well aware of their deeds (not fooled as were they), nauseated by their lukewarm faith and works, would spit (Greek—emew = to vomit) them out of His mouth (an indication of sickening offense) (Revelation 3:15, 16).

Jesus indicated to the believers in Laodicea that although they were materially rich, they were yet spiritually poor. He made illustration to

⁸⁵⁶ cf. Matthew 6:19-24; Romans 8:1-17.

⁸⁵⁷ cf. James 4:3-10; 1 John 2:3-17.

them that they were well known for their medical abilities to heal certain physically ailments (eye salve), yet were spiritually blind, sick and dying themselves. As Jesus is the great Counselor, abounding in mercy, grace and understanding, He did not threaten them with demands but rather counseled them to do the things which would bring them spiritual—freedom and prosperity (purity; gold refined by fire v. 18), and growth. Jesus emphasized to the believers at Laodicea that they could not utilize their material wealth to gain spiritual blessings, nor could they heal themselves with the medicines they possessed, for theirs was not a physical poverty or ailment. Jesus emphasized to them that they needed to return to Him; for He alone was the source of the wealth and healing of which they had necessity! He told them that He reproveth and disciplines those whom He loves, therefore they needed to repent (stop delusional directive focus and turn back to Him).

Jesus emphasized that they needed to become zealous and regenerate their faith; this by a change of attitude and priority (mindset). He made illustration that although they were renowned for their wool garments, yet they were naked in the shame of extravagant physical adornment and lukewarm faith. The emphasis of verse 18 is terrific in pointing out simple truth which evades many believers even to this day. Clothing we may feel is beautiful in the physical realm, are but rags of little value in comparison to clothing ourselves with the righteousness of Christ!⁸⁵⁸ Riches we may consider to bring us success in the physical realm are but delusional prosperity in comparison to rewards gained by the focus and fruits of purity!⁸⁵⁹

The church at Laodicea represents the apostate (blatantly carnal) church of today. The church at Laodicea was fully delusional as to their actual position of being spiritually destitute. In their complacency, they had come to believe that the comfort and physical prosperity they enjoyed was an aspect of blessing from God; just as many congregations today are deceived into believing the same falsehood. *If* our local family of believers (congregation) is spiritually stagnant and potentially destitute, then all the secular riches, comfort, and membership numbers mean nothing. Once the church at Laodicea had begun to serve mammon (sensuality of the world; fame, comfort, prestige and monetary gain), they were in fact no longer submissive to and serving God; but

⁸⁵⁸ cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Isaiah 64:1-12.

⁸⁵⁹ cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-16; 1 John 2:18-3:3.

rather themselves, as they sought to expound upon the materialistic stature they had accomplished in and of themselves. When the truth of obscurity foundational to materialism is discovered, then and only then can individuals realize the vainness of their endeavors, and gain potential of returning to walking their faith instead of just talking their faith (become effectual doers of the Word)!⁸⁶⁰

- This is unfortunately the precise situation which is occurring in most congregations within the Body of Christ to this very day; for too many apostatize for the sake of appeasement.
- This makes direct evidence of the effects brought forth by the “individuality” aspect of the sinful nature; for personal accomplishment does not achieve the righteousness of God, even though deception would lead to the illusion of such!
- The apostate church of today which is emphasized by the Lord’s words to the church at Laodicea has become so in tune and comfortable within deception that the Lord of truth has been put out of most congregational settings and individual endeavors. The pride and arrogance which accompanies materialism has led to the majority of believers seeking God to serve them in accordance to personal volition; thus God’s good, acceptable and perfect will is denied for the sake of one’s sinful nature (self; individuality)! As the Lord must be worshipped in spirit and in truth or He is not appropriately worshipped at all, the current-day church has estranged itself from the Lord by its idealisms in accordance to secular standards, and adherence to religious traditions of rote which are solely foundational to pagan beliefs and delusive endeavors (insidious religion)!⁸⁶¹ Attempts to worship God as by physical realm religion; counting successes as by material gains and quantity, is the exact opposite of appropriate worship as designated by the Lord our Creator; therefore, that which is molded (the clay) now believes itself to hold superiority over the Potter who alone has the potential and capabilities to create actual beauty!⁸⁶²

⁸⁶⁰ cf. James 1:22-25; 2:18-26.

⁸⁶¹ cf. John 4:20-24; Isaiah 29:13-16.

⁸⁶² cf. Romans 9:6-29; 1 Timothy 6:1-19.

Within the church at Laodicea, most congregational settings of current day, and the hearts of a multitudes of believers; the prevalent focus remains upon that which is of the physical realm (carnality; fleshly secularism). With a mindset consistent with the desires of the flesh (secular sensuality; fleshly mindset) both congregations and their members foolishly imagine that God will leave the spiritual realm of His dwelling in order to meet individuals in the physical realm; this leading to further fantasy of walking by faith while holding to but a concept of God, while also claiming abounding faith and devotion. The blatantly carnal church of today is completely without understanding that “devotion” encompasses both volition and sincerity of love; thus the current-day church (minus a remnant) holds no understanding whatsoever as to the—reality of God, as He is despised (looked down upon) because of the materialistic mindset! This is precisely why He is left outside, yet knocking; for within this fantasy delusive individuals and congregations belief they are in need of nothing, while failing to realize they are destitute of anything which will go forth beyond the grave (such as: spiritual growth; training in righteousness; holiness; purity; preparation for eternity). The blatantly carnal church of today (Laodicea) is completely ignorant of any Gospel reality; for the Lord God is no longer atop any priority lists, and therefore cannot lead unto spiritual success because the multitudes have no intention of following Him or accepting His blessing of spiritual growth!

It is truly pathetic when individuals are so ignorant so as to compare the materialistic aspects of the world with the spiritual blessings which bring forth actual growth for preparation regarding eternity; it is solely God’s work which leads to a changed life, which is why the carnal multitudes of the current-day church remain the same; for the Lord is kept out of His own church, and rejected from allowed entrance into individual’s lives; which is why the Lord seeks individuals capable of “devotion” to come out from the midst of the carnal church, for the sake of true personal intimacy with Him! When the Scriptures render many “tests” to evidence whether individuals actually have a saving relationship with God, it evinces the truth when all the tests are failed in reality; yet multitudes cannot see the truth of failing the test(s), for they are focused upon that which is of the flesh, which is opposed to God!⁸⁶³ Friendship with the world is hostility toward God; yet the multitudes

⁸⁶³ cf. Revelation 3:18-22; cf. Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10.

couldn't care less!⁸⁶⁴ Praise the Lord for His wonderful divine: patience, tender mercy, everlasting lovingkindness, and sufficient grace; which He puts forth continuously for the sake of those within whom He witnesses a sincere spark for devotion (a remnant)!

The Spiritual Decadence of the New Testament Church As Represented by the Seven Churches of Revelation; Prophetically Fulfilled Successively.

By the progressive decline demonstrated in the letters to the seven churches, we can witness (by spiritual discernment) the many ways in which the church has maintained its decline even to this day. The decline progressed as follows:

1. **Ephesus:** Loss of first love. Believers began to proclaim the Gospel for reasons other than their devotional love for Christ. This is the beginning of spiritual decadence, in serving from other than sincere devotional motives; for compromise unto distraction and misdirection results.⁸⁶⁵
 - It must be realized—when endeavoring within sincere submissive devotion, the Lord may lead the endeavor unto righteous fruition; whereas without devotion and the potential for humble submissiveness derived there from, the Lord cannot lead as individuals refuse to follow; therefore, within waning devotion, inevitably individuals stray away from the narrow path of God's righteousness, to endeavor upon the wide path which leads to spiritual decline and depravity, which is contingent upon seeking to establish righteousness foundational to "self"! Without maintained "devotion" for the Lord, the sinful nature inevitably regains control, leading to mastery over us; within this fact it is quite easy to understand why multitudes return to the spiritual depravity of secular religiosity, which is enticed and influenced from the demonic realm!
 - The severe problem of—leaving one's first love for the Lord, would diminish greatly, *if* the adamant proclamation from all pulpits was to LOVE THE LORD; for sincere unwavering

⁸⁶⁴ cf. James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

⁸⁶⁵ cf. Hebrews 12:1-11.

devotion for Him is a primary motivational avenue of strength within ministry righteousness!

- A key reality of truth which very few supposed (were they called by Him?) servants of God realize, is that light shining in darkness is a work of God's goodness, thus without the light of truth being: proclaimed, perceived, and accepted by the Lord's work of righteous preparation which goes before the servant; no actual spiritual success and victory can occur, for darkness is only illumined by the light of Christ! Simply stated, *if* the Lord does not prepare the path before His servants, darkness remains; thus the servant is serving in accordance to specifics other than as designated by the Lord! Please look closely at Revelation 2:5; for it is plainly stated that the servant's lampstand will be "removed out of its place," therefore the service rendered will no longer occur as by the Lord's masterful leadership (illumination)!⁸⁶⁶
- Without absolute maintained devotion for the Lord, fellowship with Him is diminished or taken away entirely; as it is a gift from heaven which is rendered for the servant's instruction and growth within God's righteous leadership. This is an area where each individual either obtains and is motivated to seek fellowship with God in abundance; or has forgotten the blessing (*if* received), which leads to their denial of its importance. No human being can lead another human being into the spiritual realm where actual fellowship with God occurs; we can instruct regarding the devotion necessary in order to make the journey, yet no further tutorial endeavor is possible! Very few human beings (a remnant only) receive this blessing frequently and abundantly through devotional disciplined prayer (which remains foundational to the Lord's good, acceptable and perfect will); for most (the multitudes) do not realize the imperatives of righteous focus and prayer, or remain distracted following others within the wiles of superficial religious deception which inevitably follows—leaving one's first love!
 - With the loss of foremost devotional love for God and henceforth the seeking of His righteousness, comes

⁸⁶⁶ cf. Romans 3:1-31; Matthew 6:19-24, specific v. 23; Jude 1:5-16.

attempts to make turns on the narrow path of His righteousness upon which is no turns; thereby departure from the narrow path unto destructive broad paths of attempted human established righteousness, which is not actually “right doing” (righteous) at all! The primary pulpit proclamation (stumbling block) to this form of downfall (stumbling) is to accept Jesus (partially) as one’s Savior; rather than (fully) as Lord, King, God, and Savior; i.e. the Master of our existence now and forever!⁸⁶⁷

- The simple fact—love the Lord devotionally, or wander aloof of His masterful leadership; for He is neither mocked nor fooled as to our motives!⁸⁶⁸
 - The key imperative is to focus upon the Lord who is the sole author and perfecter of faith; this occurring immovably as by sincerity of devotion!⁸⁶⁹ When an individual falters in devotional love for God first and foremost, they are then left susceptible to focus upon secular influences and coercion; with instigations from the demonic realm. Within the influence of secular physical realm religion which attempts mimic of the spiritual relationship with God which is actual Christianity, comes deceptions which lead individuals further astray of truth; thus the only surety becomes one of false hope and religious promises which cannot bring forth spiritual growth which is solely from God, therefore the potential for danger within further decline becomes both possible and probable!⁸⁷⁰

2. Smyrna: Those who had a personal relationship (beyond religious) with the Lord Jesus Christ (although few) were at their best when persecuted; for they refused to compromise from the standards of the faith, thereby maintaining purity of devotion unto submission. This is a considerable example of Christian character in suffering for the sake of the Gospel; while proving—that God causes all things

⁸⁶⁷ cf. Romans 10:1-21; Proverbs 4:20-27; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5; Colossians 1:3-23.

⁸⁶⁸ cf. Galatians 6:1-10, specific vs. 7-9; Jude 1:17-25.

⁸⁶⁹ cf. Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58.

⁸⁷⁰ cf. Romans 5:1-21, specific vs. 1-11; Hebrews 6:1-20, specific vs. 1-8.

to work together for good to those who love Him, to those who are called according to His purpose (Romans 8:28).⁸⁷¹

The only decline at this point in Smyrna is not an actual spiritual decline, but rather a spiritual refusal, for the multitudes were returning to once again trusting in physical realm religion; as the necessity of “faith within a personal spiritual relationship with God” was becoming more a concept and less a reality! I say this because the primary basis problem which existed in this case is the problem of folks remaining ignorant of the imperative spiritual relationship necessary in order to be saved and receive spiritual growth from God; instead trusting in the teachings of human leadership who in arrogance attempt to explain spiritual matters from and to the flesh. This refusal is the same deadly mistake (spiritually) which millions have made throughout history; although the multitudes yet have had (throughout the history of God’s people) the company of uncompromising believers whose unwavering devotion for the Lord abounds. In Smyrna, there were a few true children of God (an adopted remnant); while the multitudes were illegitimate children and not adopted sons and daughters, who yet remained within the bondage of deceptive religious compromise which kept them from the freedom necessary in order to come to knowledge of the truth.

- The key factor which has, and continues to lead the multitudes unto spiritual depravity and potential death, is the fact of “double-mindedness”!⁸⁷² The multitudes throughout the history of God having called individuals unto Himself, have failed to intently decide to love the Lord first and foremost (immovable devotion); having failed to do so violating the first and foremost commandment, which is the only commandment which leads to victory when adhered to!⁸⁷³ Individuals throughout history talk about how they will “try” to love the Lord, yet the word “try” as spoken by the multitudes is the excuse which holds them at bay to personal delusion in failing to decide; for a righteous imperative decision is made in a single

⁸⁷¹ cf. Romans 8:18-39; 1 Peter 1:3-4:5; 2 Peter 1:2-11.

⁸⁷² cf. James 1:2-27; 2:14-26; 4:1-17; 1 John 2:3-27; Hebrews 12:1-29, contemplate—vs. 7, 8.

⁸⁷³ cf. Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Matthew 22:36-40; 1 John 5:1-21.

moment in time, then guarded immovably unto victory, or not made sternly at all which leads to continuous defeat!

- The multitudes in Smyrna were guilty of double-mindedness; this leading to their being susceptible to the influences which surrounded them. The remnant in Smyrna was immovable in loving the Lord, and thereby denied distractions as dangerously inappropriate! The multitudes throughout the history of believers in God have been guilty of double-mindedness due to one form of secular distraction or another, and this leading to defeat; whereas the remnant has always loved the Lord first and foremost, without distraction, and this allowing God to both will and work in and through them the things which are pleasing in His sight!⁸⁷⁴
- A simple fact—when God is at work in an individual, change from being carnal (secular, fleshly) to being spiritual occurs, as the Lord takes us into the reality of the spiritual relationship; for the mindset the Lord maintained when upon the earth is made manifest in the true child of God!⁸⁷⁵ Within the religious teachings of—do this and that, and don't do this or that; no actual spiritual growth occurs except by conceptual and assumptive conjecture; this is why the multitudes remain fleshly walking by sight, although believing themselves to be walking by faith!

Personal Note: It should be remembered that when God divinely begins a good work in an individual, the good work which is from God alone starts with initial preparation during the “drawing” process.⁸⁷⁶ Within the preparatory work, all aspects of the flesh are put aside for introduction into a spiritual reality; which is never realized in the flesh! The only aspect of the flesh which the Lord does not put aside is foolish adolescent (stubborn and rebellious) pride; for it is the individual's responsibility to muster selfless humility in the seeking of truth, when seeking a relationship with God! All other aspects of the flesh including

⁸⁷⁴ cf. Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

⁸⁷⁵ cf. reiteration—Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

⁸⁷⁶ cf. John 6:44, 45, 65.

bigotry and prejudice are placed aside by the Lord; unless these aspects are foundational to the foolish pride. Because many individuals are taught bigotry and prejudice by their parents, if these forms of selfish decisiveness are not foundational to the individual's pride, then these aspects will be also put aside; for during the divine process unto salvation, all aspects of the parents behavior are not considered, except of course the parents devotional faith! God is opposed to the proud; this without exception!

During God's divine preparatory and drawing (good) work in the life of individuals many things happen. Divine righteous activation of the individual's measure of faith, the ability for devotional humility; except as aforementioned regarding foolish adolescent pride; submission unto the teaching of God pertaining to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ; Lord, King, Savior, God), knowledge regarding the imperative to submit unto the authority of Jesus; not simply acceptance of a specific aspect of Him (Savior), acceptance and confession of the Biblical "confession of faith" (Romans 10:8-10, specific v. 9—Jesus as Lord), a humble ability to submit unto the Lord's masterful leadership and teaching, and a selfless volition (will) to follow where the Lord leads! Because this is the righteous beginning of the good spiritual work which God performs in individuals, it is in fact a divine work which must be welcomed and fully accepted; lest a false "confession of faith" begin according to religious delusive proclamations, which most times places the individual directly into bondage to the guile of Satan, which many times holds them in bondage for the entirety of their corporeal existence!

It should be remembered that the Lord has been kept out of His church since A.D. 1954! In most cases when an individual decides to seek God, they attempt to do so by going to a congregational setting (church building). When they realize that something is terribly wrong at that location, they will seek church structure after church structure in attempts to be found by God; which many times continues indefinitely; as God is not allowed through the closed door of the church, because the truth regarding the reality of God and of the Christ (Jesus) is no longer taught, due to carnal emphasis in attempts to appease human flesh religiously! All that is of mention here is quite prevalent within the end times church (Laodicea). It should also be remembered, that because the Lord is kept out of His own church, the standards as well as the divine work of the Lord are no longer taught nor considered;

therefore, it must be understood that religious teachings and standards are aloof the reality of God and thus insufficient for both salvation and spiritual growth, which are from God and God alone!

During the Scholastic Period emphasized by the church at Sardis, human religious intellectualizing turned away from the reality of God, as human beings believed themselves to be greater than they actually were (arrogance), which led to furtherance of denial of the reality of God, as intellect and arrogant prowess of the flesh begin to take precedence over the divine work of God; which is the reason the church at Philadelphia (Fundamentalist church) had necessity to occur, or the Lord would have been rejected far sooner than actually occurred! When the Reformation Period occurred which fought against the teachings and ritualistic practices of Roman Catholicism, individuals took it upon themselves to prove that they had come to realize the truth of the relationship; yet in having failed to actually reform away from the deceptions of religious traditions, the ability to be led to the actual Biblical truth by God was withdrawn; for God being absolutely holy and righteous cannot and will not be involved in religious deceptions nor human: pride, arrogance and complacency; neither can He lead those who refuse to come out into the light so as to receive knowledge of the truth!⁸⁷⁷ When pride and arrogance are witnessed in church leadership, individuals should walk away immediately, for the second purpose of a divinely actuated measure of faith is to stay individuals from “arrogance,” whereas rejection of the pride aspect is the responsibility of the individual; therefore, if “arrogance” is witnessed, the possibility exists that the church leader was never divinely called by God to his position, and *if* pride is witnessed the individual is in opposition to God and therefore not capable of being led by the Lord!⁸⁷⁸ It is never wise to follow someone in church who themselves are not being led by the Lord! Because “Christianity is all about God, and the divine work of God is the necessary imperative for: salvation, masterful spiritual leadership, spiritual growth, and spiritual successful victory (ability to actually walk by devotional faith now and forever); the divine work of God must never be hindered or rejected; lest the deceptions of religion lead increased numbers of individuals astray in these last

⁸⁷⁷ cf. 1 John 1:5-10.

⁸⁷⁸ cf. Romans 12:1-3, specific v. 3; James 4:3-10.

days; for it must be understood, that the imperative is that we are known by God as His legitimate children, not that we think we know God!”⁸⁷⁹ The spiritual relational reality which saves us from the wages of sin which is death is started within seeking relational knowledge of the truth! Within this endeavor the aforementioned good work of God may begin and continue unto fulfillment according to the kind intention of God’s will; unless the individual once again returns to blatant carnal religiosity, which then rejects furtherance of God’s divine work! I praise God for His divine work which has led to salvation for many (a remnant in comparison); yet I am ashamed at how the Lord has been rejected by His own church, and how individuals who have known the truth, have within cowardice failed to proclaim it for the sake of others! Being “drawn,” “taught,” and “led” by the Lord God is the greatest blessing, gift, and reward we could ever hope for; for He is the Creator of all things everywhere, including our divinely activated measure of faith!

It should be understood that the personal instruction from the Apostles when present with the individual churches was much more in-depth and abounding with truth pertaining to the spiritual relational reality (saving and guiding relationship) and divine work of God, than is witnessed in the epistles which were written to the churches at later times! As aforementioned, instruction pertaining to the Gospel truth can be rendered, yet is only received from the Lord on an individual personal basis; which was emphasized once in the Gospel, in one of Paul’s epistles!⁸⁸⁰ Within the “epistles” (New Testament books), many things were written pertaining to the behavior of individuals within the specific churches, which emphasized the direction taken by the church individuals after the Apostles had departed; whether good or bad. Also within the epistles, specifics were reiterated unto the individual churches pertinent to the spiritual necessities of each church, derived from the paths the churches chose to take. Study of the Gospel is terrific and appropriate; yet learning the “Gospel truth” from the Lord personally is ineffable (beyond words; indescribable), so we do the best we can to describe the reality of the personal experience and knowledge of the Gospel truth

⁸⁷⁹ cf. John 3:1-8, specific vs. 3, 7; Romans 8:14; Galatians 4:8-11, specific vs. 9, 11; Hebrews 12:7-9.

⁸⁸⁰ cf. Galatians 1:11-19, specific vs. 11, 12, 15-17.

received (revelatory), while always hoping that those we have reached will remain upon the narrow path of God's righteousness, and thereby receive the righteous beauty which cannot be described! Within the book (Big If) I have attempted to explain the reality which is realized solely within the spiritual relational reality; which is the same as the Apostles attempted to do when with the individual churches in person.

Explained: Some of the greatest severe persecution true believers have faced throughout history, has come from others claiming (professing) faith in God.⁸⁸¹ Those who are not born again and thereby submissive to the Holy Spirit, and receptive to His revelatory work of truth, cannot truly appraise the reality of God, nor understand the ways of sincere Christians who actually walk by faith within God's tutelage and leadership.⁸⁸² This in many cases leads supposed (professing) believers to: criticize that which they do not understand, as they worship foundational to ignorance; remain in bondage to precepts, traditions, and rituals of deceptive corruptive compromise; defend un-righteous doctrine (doctrines of demons); persecute the brethren; and inadvertently serve Satan in battling against the truth. This is where the necessity of loving patience takes precedence within those who serve Jesus; for with difficulty we witness the multitudes going astray, while persevering to proclaim the Gospel truth in love; without compromise, variation or excuse!⁸⁸³ Unfortunately many hate us for the truth which must be proclaimed, and this as multitudes chooses to believe "what they choose to believe," no matter how far from the truth their endeavors have taken them; yet please understand that they hated Jesus (our Lord) for the very same reason!⁸⁸⁴

- Double-minded (lukewarm and/or cold) believers have no idea whatsoever as to the patience which is profound within the remnant who truly love them in serving the Lord! It is very difficult to listen to excuses for years from individuals who delude themselves, especially when they attempt to accuse us (servants of God) of thinking ourselves somehow better than

⁸⁸¹ cf. John 16:2-4.

⁸⁸² cf. John 3:3-21; Ephesians 5:1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 1 John 4:1-6.

⁸⁸³ cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 2 Corinthians 13:1-8, emphasis vs. 5-8; 2 Timothy 2:1-26; Galatians 5:1-26.

⁸⁸⁴ cf. John 15:18-23, 25-27.

others; this as they attempt to make the remnant scapegoats for their own indecisiveness! The remnant came to realize what was necessary (humble submission unto the divine work of God) and got it done (denial of “self”; humility and submission) in accordance to God’s wonderful grace; whereas the multitudes refuse to achieve the necessary motivation (derived from selfless devotion) and thereby remain complacent within indecision! No we do not think we are better than anyone else; we simply count ourselves as blessed in being considered amongst the least of the Lord’s servants, while also considering the torment and suffering we must endure to be blessings in hopes that someone, somewhere will come to knowledge of the relational truth and thereby be saved (in reality)! This was prevalent in Smyrna and continues to be true even to this day, as child-like (un-disciplined; spiritually immature) individuals fail to realize that those who truly love the Lord, love other humans with the love which is of the Spirit, and thereby speak the words which must be spoken; whereas those guilty of superficiality speak words which appease the flesh, yet bringing no spiritual reality to fruition!⁸⁸⁵

- It must be remembered—no human being does “good,” except by the spiritual fruition of God’s work of sanctification! Where the Lord is at work because the believer has submitted so that God may both will and work for His own good pleasure, spiritual growth and training in righteousness occurs; thus the Lord’s fruits (fruit of the Spirit) displace the deeds which are of our flesh. This is the essence of walking by faith and not by sight; for God’s actual righteousness supplants our religious and fleshly un-righteousness! Those who are indecisive cannot receive the blessings of God which teaches us to focus forward upon His kingdom; therefore they remain double-minded which renders focus upon the flesh and the things of the world primarily, thereby rendering unto the Lord only the remains of endeavor attempts (secondarily).⁸⁸⁶ As can be noted by

⁸⁸⁵ cf. reiteration—Galatians 5:16-26; 1 Corinthians 3:7-4:21; 15:1-19; 2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1.

⁸⁸⁶ cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-17; Matthew 6:25-34; Romans 10:1-4; Colossians 2:1-23, specific vs. 20-23.

the 2 Timothy 3:16, 17 passages, study of the Gospel is imperative to training in righteousness; thus double-minded individuals can always be noticeable by the fact that they do not study the Gospel, so as to present themselves approved to God as “devotional” (cf. 2 Timothy 2:14-19)! Ignorance of Gospel truth remains until displaced by knowledge of the Gospel truth which comes from God, just as the deeds of the flesh remain until displaced by the supplanting of God’s fruits (James 1:21-25)! Please remember, the “Gospel truth” is the reality (living and active nature) which exists beyond the Biblical words; God’s servants can speak the “Gospel truth,” yet it cannot be actually received unto knowledge, until implanted by the Lord! For knowledge of the Gospel truth everyone must humbly submit unto the Lord, with devotional righteous zeal to learn; which never occurs *if* individuals are not motivationally prepared to walk accordingly! The Lord always witnesses the truth of “motive”!

- It was during the time period designated by the church at Smyrna, when devotional focus and submission for and unto the Lord began to wane within ministry endeavors (with the exception of the devotional remnant); this less than one hundred years from the foundation of the church; leading the multitudes to once again seek understanding regarding spiritual matters from human leadership of physical realm religion. The beauty of God’s intentions regarding the edification of all within combined purpose and unity had begun to be lost!⁸⁸⁷ The remnant alone has maintained focus upon the Lord, for they know that the ability to appraise all things is a blessing bestowed only upon those who walk by faith (literally); placing no confidence in those things which are of the world and flesh! God’s instruction is to train and prepare us for His righteous kingdom; those who do not realize this and those who have forgotten this very important fact, always return to physical realm religion; for fellowship with the Lord who is the teacher in spiritual

⁸⁸⁷ cf. Romans 15:1-13; 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40; Ephesians 4:1-5:17.

matters is lost! Within this step of decline a very sure danger exists, for once having tasted the heavenly gift of God's goodness within actual fellowship with Him (during His drawing process), and then falling away, there is nothing God's servants can do to bring forth repentance; for now the individual is accessible by God alone!⁸⁸⁸ Multitudes have fallen prey to this extreme danger!

- True evangelism: Door open: remnant was rich spiritually yet poor financially for they expended their all for the sake of other's salvation; thus the door to spiritual growth and proclamation of truth is opened by the Lord!
- Religious evangelism: Door closed: for religious influence due to indecision and seeking to be led by humans rather than God has taken precedent. Religious humans seeking financial gains enter ministry to serve mammon, not God; thus the door to spiritual growth is closed by the Lord! The door for potential proclamation of truth is always left ajar when the Gospel is proclaimed; yet hindered greatly when Scriptures are proclaimed out of context (adulterated)!⁸⁸⁹

3. Pergamum (Pergamos)—The decadence continued to where at this point compromise increased, and remorse / repentance (returning focus unto God) decreased. The believers were beginning to listen to the deceptions of Satan, that religiosity within corruptive compromise aloof the strict standard pertaining to worship of the one true God, was acceptable.⁸⁹⁰ This is the foolishness (insidious religious doctrine) that—the end justifies the means, if emotional stature is not lost!

- Please understand—a righteous relationship with God is a spiritual matter; thus emotions and physical realm aspects of worship are: misleading, un-righteous, and unacceptable!
- This third step in the progression of compromise is the place where all illegitimate children and even many actual children of God fall prey to deception within attempts to worship God as

⁸⁸⁸ cf. Hebrews 6:1-20, emphasis vs. 4-8.

⁸⁸⁹ cf. 1 Corinthians 1:10-17; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 3:9-4:6; Philippians 1:15-18.

⁸⁹⁰ cf. John 4:20-24; Galatians 3:1-4:11.

by physical realm means (insidious religion aloof of the specific—in spirit and in truth)!

- It was from Pergamum that the devil’s religious servants were sent forth to defile the beauty of actual Christianity, with the form of defilement (harlotry) which has been most prevalent even unto this day; for the devil’s servants introduced the coercive ways of the Babylonians *Mysteries Religion* under the guise of being a form of Christian worship, although the proclaimed god of this priesthood (Catholicism) is not the God of the Bible!
 - **Emphasized deceptions:** focus upon a human being—Mary instead of Ishtar; return to ritualistic physical realm religion, which is void of faith-based spirituality and truth (except by concept); focus once again upon a human priesthood; dependence upon human teachings, which is void of Christ’s expert tutelage. Within these deceptions, the Lord (Creator; God) has been reduced to but a coercible god of: speculation, assumption and conjecture, which is (supposedly) fully explainable by human kind (creation).

The decline then continued when the believers also compromised by the teachings of the Nicolaitans. They engaged in improper sexual activities (primarily fornication) and worship by rote which involved aspects of fertility; this as worldly attempts to justify inappropriate behavior (false justification) always leads to compromising excuses. This trend demonstrates the Scriptural progression of sin (James 1:14, 15); thereby the necessity of taking thoughts (and teachings) captive immediately to obedience unto God and Biblical standards, if sin and the excuses thereof are to be avoided!⁸⁹¹ Please remember—there is no potential for continuation within compromise, *if* variance from Gospel standards is never allowed to be an option; thus as few enter in by the narrow gate and tread upon the narrow path which leads to righteousness, beware of following the multitudes!⁸⁹² There is no Biblical basis by which to believe the cliché—there is strength in numbers (hackneyed; trite)!

⁸⁹¹ cf. 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; 1 John 4:1-6.

⁸⁹² cf. Matthew 7:1-29, specific vs. 13-27.

4. **Thyatira:** The decadence (decline) then proceeded to the new level of no longer testing anything according to the standards of the faith (actual devotional Christianity). The people of Thyatira began to listen to false doctrine, as the priesthood of the Babylonian Mystery Rites Religion was presented in a revised format. The revised false doctrines, replaced worship of Ishtar (Babylonian queen of heaven) with precedence of focus upon Jesus' mother Mary. Comparison of pictorial between Catholic and Babylonian emphases makes direct association of falsehood; for both depicted a woman with their infant son. Although a point is made in Scripture that it was a blessing bestowed upon Mary to be the mother of Jesus; never was an emphasis made to focus upon the means of the Messiah's arrival; for certainly in this case—the Way does not emphasize the means!⁸⁹³ Within both false doctrines of religion (Babylonian; Christian religion), focus is made upon the woman rather than the child of Immaculate Conception; for Tammuz was presented as fulfillment of prophesy concerning the seed, whereas Jesus was actually fulfillment of the prophesy; yet the focus was upon Ishtar and is yet upon Mary.⁸⁹⁴

- Yes, Mary deserves respectful remembrance, for she was a bond-servant of God; yet she does not warrant devotion or worship!
- It must be understood—all that is necessary to hinder or completely destroy a believer's walk with the Lord is distraction away from righteous focus and devotion upon and for Him! Although it is true servants of God can plant and water seeds of truth, only God can bring forth actual growth!⁸⁹⁵ Although it is also true that humans can instruct to the physical senses of others (speaking the utterances of God in love); only God Himself can actually teach knowledge of Gospel truth to a human's spirit, which brings forth spiritual growth.⁸⁹⁶
 - The reality of this is evidenced by considerable durations of time many individuals have professed to have walked with God; yet actual spiritual growth leading to physical realm manifestations of His presence (fruits) are yet

⁸⁹³ cf. Matthew 12:47-50; Luke 1:39-56; John 14:1-14; reiteration—1 John 4:1-6.

⁸⁹⁴ cf. Genesis 3:15.

⁸⁹⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:5-9.

⁸⁹⁶ cf. 1 Peter 4:7-19; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:5.

undistinguishable from the standard behavior of the sinful nature (deeds).⁸⁹⁷

- A key factor utilized by the enemy of Christendom (Satan; demons) is to influence and then instigate falsehoods within human church leadership. It is from this that the “doctrines of demons” (religious doctrines and precepts) ensnare and dominate the multitudes; for most human beings seek answers from other human beings, whereas the realistic truth is sought and found only through the One who can actually teach through personal fellowship and anointing!⁸⁹⁸ The former is the reasoned purpose (ideology) of secular religion; whereas the latter is actual Christianity!⁸⁹⁹
- Two additional factors which should be considered:
 - Although the written words of the Bible can be studied as by: etymology, exegesis, and hermeneutics (in certain cases); and these beyond the simplicity of reading the words with but minute amounts of discernable understanding; the Gospel truth is spiritually appraised, and therefore must be taught to individuals by the Lord who is the only actual Teacher pertaining to spiritual matters! Actual training by the Lord unto students (disciples; learned pupils), comes only when the pupil is devotionally humble and submissive to receive the blessing, and diligent in seeking—**the truth!** Religiosity has no place in this endeavor; nor will spiritual fruition come forth from religious endeavors, unless the endeavor is study of the Levitical Law so as to realize the truth regarding the Messiah, at which time all “religious” endeavors become futile if Jesus is accepted (fully) as the Messiah of prophetic fulfillment. If religiosity is yet followed by individuals claiming to know the Christ (Messiah), then the insidious nature of religion (Satan’s guile) has blinded the individual or individuals to the imperative relationship necessary in

⁸⁹⁷ cf. Galatians 5:1-26, specific vs. 19-21 (human fleshly deeds); 22, 23 (God’s fruits; spiritually manifested).

⁸⁹⁸ cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 1 John 2:1-29, specific 3-6, 9-29.

⁸⁹⁹ cf. Colossians 2:1-23; specific vs. 1-10; 18-23; 1 Corinthians 1:1-31.

order to be saved; this many times due to initial false confessions of faith!⁹⁰⁰

- Because the fruit of the Holy Spirit is received into the spirit of God's legitimate children, distinctions can be easily evidenced by those who have the ability to spiritually appraise all things (also a gift from God).⁹⁰¹ A specific in this regard is—"love"; for the "love" which is from God is selfless and sacrificial, whereas the "love" which is of the world is selfish as it always considers "what do I have to gain." The love which is from God is the love which motivates His servants, as we study the Gospel with diligence to go forth proclaiming truth regarding the saving relationship (salvation) unto human beings; even those we neither like or respect; for our concern is solely for their salvation, as we generally suffer hardship in the endeavor due to the wretchedness of earthy (secular) and fleshly mindsets.⁹⁰² Any statement utilizing the word "love" which denotes a factor void of the breath of life (something without life) is the idolatrous love which is of the world; this is the object of specific warning which makes evident an insincere worldly love for God, which is found in many professing believers (multitudes)!⁹⁰³
- ▶ The distinction of the love which is of God's fruits that is instilled into the spirit of a true legitimate child of God, and the love which is secular or fleshly in nature is easily discernable (spiritually); this as we are capable of illuminative love only by God's (Holy Spirit's) indwelling, and this as by the reality of an actual relationship when God is allowed to both will and work for His own good pleasure!⁹⁰⁴ The love which is secular or fleshly (emotional) in nature is distinguished by its characteristics of: "self," insincerity, ingratitude, materialism, greed, and individuality.

⁹⁰⁰ cf. Romans 10:5-13, specific vs. 8-10, more specific v. 9; Matthew 7:21-23.

⁹⁰¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

⁹⁰² cf. Jude 1:20-23.

⁹⁰³ cf. Luke 6:42-49, specific vs. 46-49; James 4:1-10; 1 John 2:1-17, specific vs. 15-17.

⁹⁰⁴ cf. 1 John 4:1-21; Ephesians 5:1-21; Philippians 2:1-16.

The religious deceptions at this point are by royal proclamation; under threat of intimidation and harm, it becomes easy for the multitudes to participate in religious doctrines and traditions which seem to have no spiritual consequence! The immorality had now reached the point where conscience was no longer affected by inappropriate compromise; and this in addition to the fact of God's convictions being no longer forthcoming or attentive toward (regarding the multitudes).⁹⁰⁵ This is the step which comes before total abandonment of spiritual matters! Because it is by the convictions of the Holy Spirit, and righteous acceptance of the convictions, that we remain victorious over the flesh; earnestness for discipline must always be forthcoming, lest we fall prey to inappropriate motives, desires, false teaching and the harmful effects (spiritually) which are brought forth when the flesh has been obeyed, without spiritual considerations.⁹⁰⁶

The church at Thyatira represents the time period when extreme false teaching initiated into the Body of Christ, and was instigated by intimidation and brute force. The false teaching was not tested by Biblical standard, and thus was (and has been) believed to be appropriate; although all testing according to the Gospel reveals heretical and apostate teaching and carnal motivational worship practices. The church at Thyatira completely lost focus upon Christ, and thus also appropriate characteristics of proper Christian worship and behavior.

- It is within this fourth step of decline that all illegitimate and many actual children of God place full (former) and/or more so (latter) trust in religion to save or deliver them; whereas only an actual intimate relationship with God (personally) can perform this wondrous task! Directly associated with this fourth step of compromise is found adamant trusting in religion and/or personal savior gods for salvation; for the ability to spiritually discern and appraise is removed because of wrong motives!⁹⁰⁷
 - It is at this point with multitudes of individuals being deceived, that human servants of the Lord can only convey truth with great difficulty; for the insidious nature of

⁹⁰⁵ cf. exemplified—Isaiah 5:1-24; Romans 2:1-16, specific vs. 14-16; John 15:18-16:15.

⁹⁰⁶ cf. 1 John 3:1-24; 5:1-21; Ephesians 4:17-32.

⁹⁰⁷ cf. Proverbs 16:1-9; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; 15:20-34, specific vs. 30-34.

religion has caused callousness to the spirit of individuals, thereby making them impervious regarding reception of truthful spiritual reality! Praise God, that although many things are impossible for human kind, all things righteous are possible with Him!⁹⁰⁸

- It should be remembered, the Bible at this time is the Latin Vulgate. Because commoners only spoke Greek and were for the most part illiterate, they were forced to seek answers from (supposed) spiritual leadership; the leadership in actuality being the servants of Satan who were sent forth from Pergamum (revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries religion).
- The reality of fleshly religiosity within but a concept of spirituality have and can yet be witnessed within organizations who believe they are greater than others of different nationalities and creeds. They through manipulation of the Gospel attempt to justify their prejudice and bigotry as by proclamation—that what they do is in accordance to God’s instruction and leadership; which is also emphasized by the nations who have gone to war under the guise that—“God wills it,” when something of this world foundational to greed remained the goal of the murderous endeavors! Without the actual spiritual guidance which comes from the Lord within an actual relationship, all things seem possible and justifiable through rhetoric and fleshly explanation; although completely void of any spiritual reality! This being completely spiritually destitute while yet believing a relationship with God is the outcome of what had become prevalent during the time period of Thyatira, as by the schemes and guile of Satan; witnessed since that time by the travesties committed by a plethora of individuals who remain completely void of the reality of God!

5. Sardis: This is the final decline (decadence) of progressive (flagrant) compromise involving sexual immorality, secular idol worship, and insidious religious delusion. The church at Sardis was dead to the

⁹⁰⁸ cf. Matthew 19:23-26; Mark 9:17-29; Hebrews 6:1-20, emphasis vs. 4-6.

faith and actual servanthood for God; although they felt that they were accomplishing much. Respectively, simply stated:

- Fornication throughout the history of the church has been tolerated, condoned, and outright accepted. This form of sin has become so customary that little or no conscious thought is any longer forthcoming as to the spiritual consequences to one's walk with and for the Lord; thus walking in darkness by sight is believed to be walking in light by faith; therefore, no clear direction can be discernable, nor the reality of complete and utter loss of fellowship with God for appropriate: correction, tutelage, edification and righteousness within servanthood. In this, religion without conviction of wrongdoing for sexual sins easily remains the status quo as believers are no longer distinguishable from non-believers regarding sexual relationships, the only distinction being confessions of faith completely aloof reality of Gospel standards which are made by professing Christians void of truth.⁹⁰⁹ True legitimate children of God cannot practice sin; for such practice is not acceptable to the indwelling Holy Spirit, who renders conviction against such things!⁹¹⁰ Anyone who practices sin is incapable of being heard during prayer; for to even harbor sin in one's heart by motive or intent voids all prayer potential; with the exception of confession of wrongdoing (sin) prior to continuation in prayer; for the Lord will not listen to those who remain rebellious and deluded within sin!⁹¹¹
- It must be remembered, anything which takes precedence in one's existence over the Lord God is an idol! With the church from the time designation of Sardis being one of religious delusion void of the Holy Spirit's guidance in accordance to God's own righteousness, which occurs as believers actually walk by faith and not by sight, the priorities of religious standard become and remain precedent; thus the righteousness of God is avoided to accommodate fleshly emotional

⁹⁰⁹ cf. 1 Corinthians 6:1-20; 1 John 1:5-10; Hebrews 13:4.

⁹¹⁰ cf. John 8:34, 35; 1 John 3:1-18.

⁹¹¹ cf. Isaiah 59:2; Psalm 66:18; James 1:22-25.

indulgence, and the maintaining of religious elementary principles which are of no spiritual value!⁹¹² The carnal problems which lead away from any spiritual reality, always proceed forth from a foundation of “self” which eliminates any and all actual spiritual devotion for the Lord; as the only love which goes forth is of the flesh which always seeks personal gains in one form or another!

- This fifth step within the progression of decline is that within which all illegitimate and many actual children (legitimate) of God go forth making religious proclamations (rather than speaking Gospel truth); the former derived from outright ignorance or inveigled ostentation, the latter derived from having fallen prey fully to carnal illusion of spirituality. Although to this very day most “Christians” criticize and condemn the religion of Islam, the fact remains that Islamic extremists are generally ignorant of what is written in the Koran, just as the criticizing religious believers are ignorant of Gospel truth; this as most believers within both sects have never actually read the specific book regarding their beliefs, and thus are led astray by religious leadership who have mastered manipulation of the specific book (Koran; Bible) so as to emphasize fleshly and secular agendas. There are individuals within both Islam and the Christian religion who desire to know and be known by God, yet having fallen prey to religiosity and the guile of Satan within the religious teachings of human beings (doctrines of demons), can find no specific path (narrow path) by which to gain freedom from the religious bondage!
- At this point, involvement in the insidious nature of religious traditions, doctrines and percepts has stifled the spiritual stature of multitudes; thus only a remnant who remained chaste from deception have grown by the growth which is from God alone; while the multitudes remained “religious” while yet believing themselves to be spiritually walking by faith; although not! This occurs as the “love” which is proclaimed to be for God by the multitudes, is the aforementioned worldly love which is in

⁹¹² cf. reiteration—Colossians 2:1-23, specific vs. 18-23.

accordance to fleshly emotions; for this form of “love” is void of devotion (volitionally in-depth)! When individuals have been made void of “God’s love” which is pure and selfless, all that remains is a form of superficiality which is easily coerced as by demonic guile through supposed spiritual servants of God who are void of both the Holy Spirit (who seals for the day of redemption), and actual formidable truth!

- Heed of warning—the more an individual (or individuals) choose a mindset of a secular and/or fleshly nature, the less they will be receptive to the standards and commandments of God which are revealed by Him to legitimate children. When double-mindedness remains, the individuals will remain delusional in believing they can do as they please (a matter of volition), with little or no consequence to their spiritual wellbeing. This is the purpose of illusionary religion in accordance to demonic guile, and the primary means by which the multitudes remain deceived! The things of the flesh and the wonderment of the Holy Spirit’s grace filled blessings are diametrically opposed one to the other; thus having it “both ways” is but a deceptive illusion!

The maintaining of a religious mindset demonstrates the fact that Satan will allow individuals to be as religious as they choose, when they are not actually doing anything for Christ! The church at Sardis was relying upon what they had once done (resting upon laurels), and remained blind to the fact that they were accomplishing nothing further. They remained in the rut of delusion; this being the outcome of failure to test oneself and those of worship associations. As a saving relationship (spiritual relational reality) is both from God and for God, and this for all eternity; why so little effort by multitudes to investigate the truth and foundations of the basis within which they “believe”!

- Physical realm ritualistic, doctrinal and traditional religion is the end result of following and further proclaiming religiosity aloof of Gospel truth. When the philosophies, precepts, doctrines and traditions of insidious religion are followed for extended periods of time, they then become the means of deceptive rote by which a concept of God is deemed as

sufficient; whereas a concept by no means assures salvation which is foundational upon an actual personal relationship with the Lord our Creator. The ultimate end result is that multitudes believe they are saved by rituals and carnal (fleshly; secular) beliefs and proclamations (conceptual); whereas in reality *if* an individual has not actually been adopted into God's family (born again), His declaration unto them will be—'I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS' (Matthew 7:23).⁹¹³

- The reality of this fact can be evinced by examination of professing believer's demeanor. Do individuals make confident assertions in ignorance and attempt to justify their behavior as by manipulation of Gospel? Have individuals been supposed believers for extended periods of time, yet the essence of their demeanor has never actually been altered by God's work of sanctification (setting them apart and making them holy)? Do individuals fail to perform the work of an actual Christian evidencing the truth and walking therein? Do individuals place emphasis upon aspects of religion (denominations, structures, places, persons, etc.), rather than fully upon the Lord? These are but a few avenues of earnest investigation which evidence the directives of the Holy Spirit, or lack thereof!
- Although there are numerous specifics within the Gospel which render "tests" as to being in the faith, the multitudes in Sardis were blinded to the fact that they were failing all the tests. This continues even to this day, as a multitude of individuals who professedly claim to know God fail all of the Gospel rendered tests; yet they are so deluded that they remain completely ignorant of the fact.
 - This is the essence of Jesus' statement regarding erasing names from the book of life. Those who overcome the slumber of religious deception before it is too late, may yet enter into an actual relationship with the Lord our Savior so as to realistically be saved (born again into God's family)!⁹¹⁴

⁹¹³ cf. Matthew 7:13-27.

⁹¹⁴ cf. John 3:3-21; 6:44, 45.

The unfortunate fact remains that the more an individual holds to misled and/or misguided bases of faith (darkness); the potential of them coming out into the light of truth where God can be found is greatly diminished, as their spirit has been entrapped by the enticements of the flesh to the point of being held completely captive; within this, only the divine work of God can allow freedom, and this as the “divine work” of God has always been the necessary imperative for both freedom and salvation!

- 6. Philadelphia:** There was no spiritual decline in Philadelphia within the church itself. The true believers were surrounded by evil influence, wicked persecution, and delusive behavior (Synagogue of Satan), yet refused to deny: Jesus, their faith, and the imperative of—truth.
- This is not a step of decline; rather the information rendered within the behavior of the church at Philadelphia demonstrates that: daily denial of “self,” repentance immediately when necessary, fellowship with mature Christians, and (especially) abounding fellowship with God; can in fact maintain an individual’s sound stance upon the narrow path of righteous direction (God’s righteousness; forward), and this from the strength of standing firm upon the foundation which is Christ Jesus the Lord! The strength aforementioned is the strength of God’s might, this blessing being rendered only upon individuals and groups of individuals (Biblical *ekklyasia*) which are immovable from appropriate (un-wavering) hope and trust in the Lord (true Christians)!

This coincidentally is much like the church at Smyrna in one way, as here at Philadelphia the believers maintained their abounding love for Jesus, and refused *to* compromise; the difference being that in Philadelphia all of the believers were united in this endeavor, whereas in Smyrna the unwavering believers were but a remnant of the church. No matter what happened, they remained strong with the little power they had—to remain focused upon the Lord and trust Him fully. This is an illustration of the remnant church which began during the Fundamentalist Period and exists even to this day (although scattered), as but a few believers (compared to the Body of Christ as a whole)

choose to remain loyal to the Lord with purity of truth and sincerity of devotion unto immovable motivational diligence (an act of righteousness foundational to God's grace).⁹¹⁵

The church at Philadelphia refused to compromise, which brought persecution and accusation from both non-believers and supposed believers. This is the trend which continues today, as lukewarm or cold believers are willing to compromise and condemn those who remain faithfully immovable.⁹¹⁶ All believers can learn from the church at Philadelphia that it is possible to remain strong in our faith, without: compromise, variation, or excuse; no matter what types of temptation, consequence or influence may arise!⁹¹⁷ True abounding sincere and disciplined devotion for the Lord is the only key to spiritual success in this matter; for sincerity of disciplined devotion is nurtured by the Lord, and becomes an aspect of our demeanor which is spiritually based! All such "gifts" from the Lord are implanted within the spirit of His legitimate children, for the fortitude necessary to maintain immovability from the foundation of our faith, which is the Lord (Jesus; the way, **truth**, and life)! God's divine "drawing" process which begins and continues God's "good" work in us foundational to Jesus the Lord, renders many wonderful and righteous blessings and gifts; this for fulfillment of "purpose" which is realized unto righteous fruition solely within the spiritual relational reality; which rarely occurs (begins and continues) when individuals are held captive to the guile of Satan within religion and religious endeavor!

A very important factor of Christianity which was known in Philadelphia, and ought to as well remain a precedent imperative to all believers, is that it is the Lord of truth and light which we know and serve. As any variation from the truth (including excuses) is but a deception (lie); and journeys away from light lead to diminished illumination and thereby the inability to see clearly; no variation from truth and light is an option! Immovable adherence to truth is a sound Gospel test regarding being a child of God!⁹¹⁸ The Christian religion is filled with religious variations away from the truth (thus darkness); whereas actual Christianity is absolutely foundational to truth (thus light).

⁹¹⁵ cf. 1 Peter 1:1-25; 2 Peter 1:1-21; 1 Timothy 1:1-19.

⁹¹⁶ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:1-58.

⁹¹⁷ cf. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13.

⁹¹⁸ cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

- THE RESPONSIBILITY (DUTY) OF ALL CHRISTIANS IS TO EVIDENCE THE TRUTH AND WALK THEREIN; THUS ABIDING IN BOTH THE GOSPEL AND LORD!⁹¹⁹
- The time period and characteristics of the latter nineteenth and earlier twentieth centuries Fundamentalist Movement had to occur; this in accordance to God’s immense mercy and lovingkindness, as He seeks that none should perish but rather that all would come to repentance (for astray believers) and/or knowledge of truth (for non-believers)!⁹²⁰ Because of extreme levels of decadence which had occurred even so from the second century A.D., with the coercive deceptions of the Babylonian Mysteries religion (Catholicism); then further religious guile which occurred during the Scholastic Period in conjunction with the Protestant (reformation) movement during which time the supposed great reformers introduced human postulated religious mandates in attempts to counter Catholic heretical teachings and apostate ritualistic worship practices, an earnest attempt had to come forth in hopes of allowing the multitudes to return unto Gospel truth and appropriate spiritual worship; prior to the ultimate form of decline which remains prevalent from A.D. 1954 to this day.
 - Note regarding—repentance: The word “repent” means to stop and turn back or around; also meaning to change the way of one’s thinking. Inasmuch as non-believers have never faced God, it would be completely futile to speak the word “repent” to a non-believer; for the reality would be to instruct them to turn back to their licentious (sinful) life! Inasmuch as the world in general believes the word “repent” to directly mean—“turn from sin,” animosity arises along with confusion as non-believers have been led to believe (falsely) that they must “repent” from all sin before God will welcome them; yet nothing is further from the truth, as while we were yet sinners Christ died for us (Romans 5:1-21, emphasis v. 8), and the actual ministry of true Christianity is one of—reconciliation, as God is no longer

⁹¹⁹ cf. John 8:31-36; 15:1-17.

⁹²⁰ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17, specific vs. 5-12; 2 Peter 3:1-18; 1 Timothy 2:1-8.

angry with humanity because of the sacrifice He rendered upon the cross which was the propitiation for our sin debt (Romans 3:21-31; Hebrews 2:1-18; 1 John 2:1-27; 4:1-21; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21, emphasis vs. 14-21)! Therefore, the word “repent” should never be mentioned to non-believers, but rather the immense love of God which He renders upon us; even though we are un-deserving! For wayward believers, repentance should be spoken, in an effort to exhibit love for them as we would hope they would come (or return) to an abounding relationship with God; which only occurs when fellowship with Him is continuously forthcoming; which cannot occur when a believer wanders in darkness habitually, while deluding themselves in attempts to justify inappropriate behavior and their refusal (rebellion) to “stop and turn back” to God (1 John 1:1-2:2).

- 7. Laodicea:** The spiritual decadence (decline) found in the church at Laodicea (A.D. 1954-present), is the epitome of spiritual weakness unto deprivation and destitution. The level of decline in aspects of spiritual focus (walking by faith), is now to the point that virtually no one; except a remnant (few); are willing to render complete (utter) dedication and loyalty to the Lord God, holding always to Scripture truth.⁹²¹ This is the end result of being distracted (deceived) by Satan as by: materialistic focus upon the things of the world; the trusting of oneself rather than trusting in the Lord; gathering of teachers who instruct according to fleshly whims and carnal desires; seeking emotional puffing up, rather than spiritual edification; following of others upon the broad path which leads to destruction; failing to fulfill the responsibility of a “Christian,” by testing the spirits to see if they are from God, evidencing the truth so as to walk therein, praying according to God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will, and abstaining from wretched intentional ignorance! Please remember, religious complacency which leads to spiritual despair and depravity is an abomination unto God!

⁹²¹ cf. Matthew 7:13-27; Luke 6:39-49; 8:4-21; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12; Ephesians 6:10-20; Philippians 1:12-30.

The church at Laodicea (current-day church) is now only lukewarm (at best) because of habitual compromise and lawlessness! This demonstrates that when decadence continues long enough, the end result becomes practiced minimal effort for any appropriate reason regarding good deeds (within God's righteousness).⁹²² This is where (unfortunately) the Lord becomes a God of convenience to the believer, rather than: Lord of all, first and foremost, the First and the Last, the Alpha and the Omega, the highest priority of existence.

The church at Laodicea images the harsh reality of faith found in most believers, and Christian religious organizations today. Many tend to falsely believe that spiritual success can be determined by physical realm means such as: financial status, outward appearance, size of membership (in regard to a congregation), one's own merits or achievements ("self" righteousness), prestige of a name or position (individuals: Pastor; Minister; Teacher; Bishop; Pope; Reverend; etc. / organizations: Seminary; College of the Bible; Vatican; Synagogue; Church; Temple; etc.). To falsely believe is to have false faith and hope, for true faith and hope is both assuring and convicting; as its confidence and trust is in God alone!⁹²³ The downfall of most current-day pulpit proclamation is twofold:

1. The primary proclamation (adamantly) should be—devotional love for God, and reception of the reality of God and reality of Christ (glory of Christ)!
 - The proclamation of multitude churches is contradictory, because of the many false teachers who have been gathered to instruct according to human whims and physical realm desires. The multitudes now seek for God to serve them, and this in ignorance of His works regarding human kind having been completed before the foundation of the world.⁹²⁴ Within the ignorance of the multitudes, the focus is upon the secular world and all that is impure in accordance to the flesh; for this is the end result of exuberant love for "self" (varying forms of narcissism) in accordance to the influence of the sinful nature (self; individuality).

⁹²² cf. Philippians 4:4-9.

⁹²³ cf. Hebrews 5:11-6:20; 11:1-40; 12:1-29.

⁹²⁴ cf. Ephesians 1:3-23; Hebrews 4:1-16.

- A harsh reality, as we are not to judge those who are external of the faith (as God judges non-believers—1 Corinthians 5:1-13); the characteristics rendered in the Gospel regarding the behavior of humankind pertaining to the end times, is the characteristics regarding those we are to judge (members of the church)! Please read 2 Timothy 3:1-7.
 - What is stated we (the remnant who are led and empowered by the Lord) are to do regarding “lukewarm” or “cold” believers whose behavior is pathetic at best (answer—v. 5)? The standard which legitimate children of God are to obey found in verse five is righteous; for within the behavior and beliefs of individual members of the blatantly carnal church (Laodicea), the reality of God and of the Christ are habitually denied and/or rejected, which can cause extreme detriment to the spirituality of true believers, through close associations with those who remain blatantly carnal (by choice or ignorance; makes no difference)!

- 2. The primary ministry of the church is—RECONCILIATION. As the Lord is no longer angry with humankind because of His work upon the cross, He seeks that all draw near to Him from across the chasm caused by sin. When individuals sincerely seek Him through seeking of truth, He then may begin training them for the state of eternity which is to come; the entirety of the two endeavors being contingent upon God’s knowledge of all things, including the motive of the individuals, and God’s divine work of grace abounding righteousness!⁹²⁵ When the Lord is allowed to lead an individual after preparing, drawing and teaching them, the leading is unto a changed life (being conformed to the image of Christ), a distinctive mindset primarily upon spiritual matters (the mind of Christ), an attitude which denies the “old” nature so as to walk according to the “new” nature; and appropriate: focus, reverence, and devotion upon and for the Lord.⁹²⁶

⁹²⁵ cf. 1 Chronicles 28:9; Romans 8:24-28.

⁹²⁶ cf. 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:10.

- The proclamation of multitude churches is contradictory, because voidance of the spiritual growth which is from God has occurred due to absolutely inappropriate focus and sinful motives! Ritualistic physical realm traditional religion of human doctrine and precept has taken the place of worshipping God in spirit and in truth; just as traditions of deceptive (pagan) rote has taken the place of sincerity of devotion! Due to deceptive proclamations from multitude church pulpits regarding a “confession of faith unto salvation,” millions of individuals believe themselves to be saved; although they remain void of the Holy Spirit’s seal for the day of redemption, void of God’s convictions of wrongdoing, void of the imperative righteous work of God; ignorant of being spiritually destitute, void of truth, ignorant of the purpose of God’s instruction (training for the future state of eternity), ignorant of the Gospel (as most have never actually read the Bible), focused upon the flesh, willing to deny truth for the purpose of avoiding responsibility, lazy, ungrateful, and delusional; all of these demonstrating failure to pass Biblical tests!
 - It is for this reason that Jesus stated—“I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot; I would that you were cold or hot. So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will spit you out of my mouth” (NASB Revelation 3:15, 16). What then is the reality; “hot” is to be devotionally obedient and loyal, “cold” is to just shut up and make no professions; but because the multitudes are un-devotional and yet making professions (lukewarm), the behavior is sickening to the Lord (spit/spew; Greek—*emew*, to vomit)! It is not necessarily the lukewarm spiritual stature within multitudes that is so upsetting to the Lord, but rather the complacency within the lukewarm state; as complacency within wrongdoing (un-righteousness) is the very epitome of abomination unto the Lord, as multitudes consider their actions to be “too light a thing” to warrant change!⁹²⁷ The current-day church (Laodicea) holds no respect for accountability unto the Lord, for multitudes are void of devotion and

⁹²⁷ cf. Ezekiel 8:1-18, specific v. 17.

reverence for the Lord; being detestable and disobedient because of an abundance of carnal—"self."⁹²⁸

SPIRITUAL DECLINE SUMMATION

The progression of decline went from losing one's first love (diminished devotion), to fear of suffering (diminished devotion leads to failure to receive God's perfect love which casts out fear), to religious doctrinal compromise (fear leads to loss of appropriate spiritual focus), to moral compromise (loss of appropriate focus leads to delusional spiritual degradation), to spiritual lifelessness and no longer holding fast (delusional spiritual degradation leads to but a concept of spiritually active well-being), to lukewarm-ness as neither hot nor cold in reverence to the Lord (conceptual spiritual insincerity leads to secular fleshly endeavors); thus the inevitable result becomes conceptual consideration that physical realm endeavors will bring spiritual realm success (heresy and apostasy). A remnant of the totality of believers actually have devotional love for the Lord, thereby serving as by His strength according to His masterful leadership upon the narrow path of His righteousness; whereas the multitudes remain un-devotional except by concept, religiously deceived, serving upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction as by the insidious nature of both Satan's schemes and the deceptive authority of the sinful carnal nature! Within the end result of spiritual decline and degradation, human beings render only minimal attentiveness upon the Lord, instead seeking to establish their own righteousness via secular standards of materialism and supposed holiness; which henceforth leads to attempts to justify God's having to come to lower standards to please humanity at chosen levels of ignorant speculation, and spiritual realm assumption! If lukewarm believers of the current church would confess the truth of their religious stature; the truth would appear as:

Greetings Demons

Within our constant return to religiosity, religious complacency, self-centeredness, and seeking and loving that which is of the world; we by our decision making processes have welcomed you to return into our lives so as to deceive!

⁹²⁸ cf. Titus 1:13-16.

In our chosen maintained ignorance of appropriate focus upon Lord God, the imperative of constant prayer, and seeking of the Gospel truth which may keep us free from the deceptive realm; we instead choose to be double-mindedly lazy and thus deny submission unto God, choosing instead to be served within our own volition to remain active with fleshly indulgences and secular desires; having failed by righteous choice to actually love the Lord!

ESCHATOLOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE OF REVELATION 1:17, 18

LINKED TO REVELATION 4:1

Revelation 4:1 begins prophesy of what must take place. This passage of Revelation is the step which is just beyond our present position in the time line of history and future. As the illustrations of the seven churches sum up the ways within the church even to this day, so now we enter into that which has yet to happen, and must occur. The “must” aspect of this statement demonstrates that there is no doubt remaining as to whether or not heaven awaits the saved, and judgment the lost. As these things must take place, it is now only a matter of time!

John signifies every true believer who has held to the blessed hope of salvation with Christ in heaven. The significance of John being called up to the third heaven (where God dwells), demonstrates the goal of every believer as being a reality. It has now been demonstrated as being as real as it gets! In Revelation 1:18, Jesus is saying that He holds the keys of death and Hades. This is significant as death and Hades were once an entrapment to all, yet now the way of freedom from the entrapment has been opened (Revelation 4:1). The door which is now open is the door which could not previously be passed, for it was locked.⁹²⁹

Important Note: Appropriate righteous worship of God is in the spiritual realm; therefore cheap physical realm (religious) mimics or emulation will not suffice! When the Lord is loved with sincere devotion and shown appropriate reverence; and this with persistent disciplined diligence; He then brings us into the spiritual realm where we may have intimate and abounding fellowship with Him. When this fact is understood, leaving one’s first love is no longer an option; for the immensity of actual fellowship with the Lord is a motivational factor which leads

⁹²⁹ cf. John 10:1-42.

those accustomed to the reality of the spiritual realm, to follow the Lord upon the narrow path of His righteousness. The effect of actual fellowship with the Lord is a lifechanging experience which ushers forth the force of internal conviction and awe; this then bringing forth continued humility, which is necessary for return visits into His presence.

- It is imperative to realize the distinct difference between spiritual reality and emotional response; for lasting growth comes from the reality of the spiritual relationship (spiritual reality), whereas only temporary change occurs due to emotional response within the physical realm mimic of the spiritual realm relationship! The emotional response which comes through religious mimic or emulation of God's righteousness never lasts; for this reason (revival) is necessary, to rekindle the emotional responses which will bring forth an acceptable religious comfort within the flesh!

FINAL NOTES

1. Within the religious concept of walking by faith (although not), the spiritual realm remains but postulates of human inane thinking; thus no actual intimate relationship with God exists beyond fleshly emotional fantasy. The spiritual realm remains un-charted territory as by deceptive religious ignorance; for the reality of the spiritual realm is only revealed by the Lord to those who are devotionally relational (legitimate), aloof any and all: insidious religion, false doctrine, human precepts and philosophies, emotional (fleshly) worship practices, pride, arrogance, and sensual (secular wanton) desires! The spiritual relational reality never begins or continues without the divine grace abounding work of God which prepares, draws and teaches unto salvation; therefore, if God has never begun a good work in individuals, then He cannot continue or complete the work which never began; all the religious fantasy which is possible cannot change this reality!
2. Although the multitudes have never actually tasted the heavenly gift which is intimate fellowship with the Lord, the possibility yet exists that with: appropriate sincere seeking of truth, appropriate focus upon the Lord, courage, diligence, imperative denial of the sinful

nature (self; individuality), and maintaining a forward motion (to His upward call) in the light as He is in the light; the potential is yet available to all who would believe, to achieve and be blessed with actual fellowship with the Lord, by which comes the growth that changes an individual's life, thereby conforming them to the image of Christ (which is a lifelong endeavor process)! This is the essence of "Christianity."

3. When remembrance of the heavenly gift which is actual fellowship with God is removed by the Lord due to repetition of that which is inappropriate; righteous motivation is also removed, for the Lord even though infinitely merciful will not bless repeated intentional foolishness! Once remembrance and the motivation hence from is removed, the only avenue for repentance (turning back to God in actuality) must come from the Lord; for there is nothing further a servant of God can do! Because removal of remembrance and motivation is a harsh reality which cannot be denied, it is of extreme importance that all believers remain vigilant to guard against heresy and apostasy at all times; for being released to the depravity of delusion happens without warning, when the furthest extent of lost focus and/or licentiousness has been reached without consideration of consequences!

4. "Religion" as designated by humankind has caused bondage for multitudes of believers for generations upon generations! *If* the measure of faith given to each individual was appropriately utilized in conjunction with the physical blessings rendered upon each (sight, hearing, smell, touch, speech) anyone at any time has possibility to have an actual relationship with God their Creator; as the blessings bring forth gratitude and assurance, within understanding of the precise creativity and choices of the Lord.⁹³⁰ As God is plainly witnessed within the realm of His creation, the only reason for individuals to be held in bondage to delusion and deception is that which is emphasized by the insincerities and insecurities of the human sinful nature. When this nature is denied (crucified by choice) as an action of devotion, the insincerity is replaced by sincerity (God's love re-

⁹³⁰ cf. Romans 1:1-32, contemplate vs. 18-32.

places the emotional love which is of the flesh), and insecurity (of the flesh) is replaced by the security which is foundational to God's righteousness and faithfulness; for with the transition from a physical realm mindset and existence to a spiritual realm mindset and existence as by God's divine work, appropriate devotional worship of God in spirit and in truth becomes a reality; for the Lord Himself brings forth growth pertaining to eternal existence and thereby fulfillment of an individual's purpose by creation. "Manmade religion" has caused detriment and destruction to the potential of relational existence throughout the history of the church; yet this should never have been, for the reality of the relationship and the purposeful existence hence the time of origin has been available to each person. The choice is simple, follow men who can be coerced and misguided, or follow the Lord who is unchangeable and divine; the former is easy as our flesh and endeavors remain in the physical realm, the latter is initially difficult as our motivations and endeavors are toward the spiritual realm; the choice (without double-mindedness) is the initial hardest step, yet the journey (all consequential steps) become easier as the Lord guides the individual's steps upon the narrow path of His righteousness. Disciplined devotional motivation and diligence is the key to success! As God is as close as our knees knelt upon in humble submission and appreciation for what He has already done, there will be no excuse by anyone for having failed to be relational with the Lord our: Creator, God, Master, King, and Savior! Follow religion and be held captive to deception and guile, or follow the Lord and receive the illumination of truth and the victory henceforth; the choice rests with each of us!⁹³¹

A "Christian" is "Christ-like"! A "Christian" abides both in the Lord and in the Gospel; striving with disciplined diligence to remain both submissive to God and in subjection to His righteousness! A "Christian" places no confidence in either the flesh or in the uncertainty of mammon; instead placing full confidence and trust in the Lord, grasping the blessing of spiritual growth which leads us not only in this life but forward to life eternal; which is life indeed!¹⁹³²

⁹³¹ cf. John 3:3-21; 1 John 1:1-5:21; Colossians 1:3-3:17; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Jude 1:1-25.

CHRISTIANS (THOSE WHO ARE CHRIST-LIKE) ARE:

1. **Devotional (first and foremost):** “Christians” deny the desires of individuality, and “self” (selfish ambition and motive) so as to maintain relational ardor for the Lord our God. The “deeds” of the flesh are insistently surrendered for the purpose of receiving the “fruits” of God’s righteousness!⁹³³
2. **Appreciative:** “Christians” understand and appreciate the immense blessing of not only knowing but being known by the Creator of the universe; whom made the earth habitable so as to sustain and nourish the wonderment of life. It is within sincere appreciation that “Christians” consider the instruction, admonitions, and commandments of God to be never burdensome; rather we render continuous thanksgiving unto the Lord for keeping us free and safe from the harm which befalls those of fleshly and secular mindedness!⁹³⁴
3. **Courageous:** “Christians” stand firm upon the foundational “Rock” which is our Lord; graciously accepting the tribulation, persecution, and suffering which assuredly comes forth from adamant proclamation of both truth and necessary responsibility, in a world which is deceived, negligent, stubborn and rebellious! “Christians” are taught by the Lord regarding the power of both the sinful nature and demonic influence; thus also the imperatives regarding the battle which must be fought!⁹³⁵
4. **Selfless and sacrificial servants:** “Christians” seek to serve the Lord God within the responsibilities of our corporeal existence! “Christians” seek to—understand the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, fulfill their purpose within it, and perform their duties diligently as by the power and guidance of God’s might and masterful leadership!⁹³⁶

⁹³² cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; John 8:1-59; 15:1-16:33; Romans 10:1-21; James 2:1-4:17; 1 Timothy 6:1-21.

⁹³³ cf. Matthew 16:24-28; Galatians 5:19-26; Romans 3:1-5:21.

⁹³⁴ cf. Genesis 1:1-2:25; Romans 1:1-32; 8:1-39; Galatians 4:1-11; John 8:31-51; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

⁹³⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; 15:1-34; 1 Timothy 6:1-21; 2 Timothy 2:1-4:8; John 15:1-16:1; Ephesians 6:1-20.

CHRISTIANS ARE NOT:

1. **Selfish:** Only non-believers and lukewarm / cold believers place their own motivations as precedent over the good, acceptable and perfect will of God. Lukewarm and cold believers; who may or may not actually be saved (only God knows with certainty); seek to be serviced by God, usually within the realm of secular and fleshly wanton and sensual desire (religion; earthly endeavor). “Self” is that which binds individuals to all the darkness of the physical realm (including demonic instigation and influence), and foolish adolescent (stubborn and rebellious) pride is that which protects the sinful nature (“self”); holding human corporeal existence to the darkness of ignorance regarding spiritual freedom, within which is no clear way of escape! By the divine work of God’s preparatory drawing and teaching, the exit to spiritual freedom from the darkness of the secular world is opened and the “Way” illumined; for by no other means may individuals witness the reality by which we must be saved! Selfish motives lead individuals to evade the reality of God in the seeking of salvation; this being the reason why the darkness of religious motif continues and abounds within the drama of life upon the earth, when the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) is evaded, denied and/or rejected through the influential workings (darkness) of religious teachings and traditions of rote! Selfishness holds us to the superficiality of a physical realm existence; whereas “selflessness” by the grace of God eliminates the barriers to allow the in-depth spiritual reality to occur unto victory!

2. **Bigoted and Prejudice:** Only foolish individuals would believe their own standards of life to have capability of bringing forth betterment regarding the existence of others. Foolish and ignorant believers appoint blame to others guilty of wickedness derived from the human sinful nature; also affixing judgmental authority unto themselves, believing thus that they have not sinned and fallen short of God’s glory!

3. **Wandering in Darkness:** In Jesus is life, and the life accepted unto manifested reality is the light of humankind, by which we achieve

⁹³⁶ cf. John 1:1-18; Romans 8:1-17; 12:1-14:23; Ephesians 4:1-6:18; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 1 Peter 1:3-5:11; James 1:2-5:20.

freedom and clarity to exit the darkness of this world in: thought, word, and deed! Only non-believers and foolish believers would be so ignorant as to believe a harmonious destination in the light of truth, can be achieved and come forth while wandering blindly in the darkness of secular fantasy and deception; which is void of truth! Within the darkness of religious deceit and traditional ritualistic fantasy (rote), there is no illumination (light) by which to witness the “Way” out of all carnality which binds; for the divine grace abounding work of God within the reality of the Christ is the imperative necessity by which the narrow path of God’s righteousness is traveled unto spiritual victory!

4. **Religiously Deceived:** Only those deceived by demonic guile would believe “religion” to be capable of guiding, nurturing and saving them! Within “religion” the cords of bondage are pulled tighter and tighter, until the possibility of spiritual freedom becomes but a lost memory; as the ability for reminiscence of the possibility is obscured to the point of nonexistence! The delusive effects of religiosity, leads to the deluding effects brought forth by practiced ignorance within religion; for the “depth” of the saving relationship is skipped over because of the obscurity which surrounds religious ambitions and practices!

CHAPTER SIX

NOTATIONS ON REVELATION

I AM INCLUDING THIS CHAPTER on books 4-22 of Revelation for the purpose of emphasis, motivation and understanding. The torment of the “Great Tribulation Period should motivate us to reach everyone possible with the good news of the Gospel, while there is yet still time! *If* we truly love all others as we ought, with the love that is from God, and *if* we truly love Jesus, we will speak about Him; as we do not want anyone to go through the agony of the Tribulation Period, without the hope of eternal life in God’s kingdom!

There will be many different judgments within the Great Tribulation Period, and a period of God’s divine wrath which brings forth summation. The Great Tribulation Period (3.5 years) begins at the halfway point of the Tribulation Period (7 years), after the Antichrist is revealed for who he truly is—the instrument of Satan against the Jews and all others who seek after God. After a brief description of the Antichrist, I will render explanations as to the events of the Tribulation Period; as I have come to understand them. I am hopeful that this chapter will render explanations as to what the judgment message of Revelation conveys. This is in no way complete in eschatological explanation; for I do not claim to fully understand myself, the intricacies within the final book of Scripture; yet study of the book is a blessing (v. 1:3).

PREFATORY

Personal Note: I must say—although I studied the book of Revelation in school, and have for many years attempted to gain further understanding derived from a foundation of formal training; something has never seemed right or appropriate. I set forth on a journey of considerable study, while humbly submitting to the Lord in prayer throughout the endeavor, in efforts to diligently allow Him to teach me this very confusing book. I have never felt it appropriate to explain the book of Revelation metaphorically, in attempts to explain the reality of what the Apostle John saw; for this would be to maintain actual ignorance, rather than gaining understanding.

Although we do not have the ability to fully understand what John was shown, the wars and desolation during the Great Tribulation Period will occur, and must be taken literally! The following accounts are my personal efforts to explain what will occur in Revelation chapters 4-22. Please understand that I am unsure as to the intricate reality of what will actually take place, as was witnessed by the Apostle John; so please forgive me for any inaccuracies which occur within this account. There are a few factors which must be taken into consideration during study of the book of Revelation:

1. The book of Revelation is prophesy of future events from the time of its being revealed; therefore it must be taken literally, never metaphorically; for it is not a matter of human interpretation, but rather a matter of God's sovereign fulfillment involving judgment for the atrocities of humankind to a degree comparable with the time of Noah!⁹³⁷
 - The extent of wretchedness leading up to the time and necessity of the Great Tribulation Period is easily understandable; for with the world being within the stage of church history (Laodicea) of which the Lord is kept out of His own church, the blatant unfruitful deeds of darkness abound moreover upon the earth, with ejection of the light of truth from gatherings of believers (church; *ekklyasia*)!⁹³⁸
 - Anyone can manipulate the Gospel, when delusive conjecture and assumption lead the endeavors; yet as a child and servant of God, I cannot intentionally involve myself in any aspect of Scripture study or presentation which may involve forms of guile!⁹³⁹
2. Because we are not actually aware of what exactly was shown the Apostle John, we can at best in many cases only guess the specifics of that which he (John) attempts to describe.
 - How 20th and 21st century A.D. weapons of warfare would be described by an individual living in the 1st century A.D. is solely

⁹³⁷ 1:1-2, 19; 22:18, 19; cf. 2 Peter 1:19-21; Genesis 6:5-13.

⁹³⁸ 3:14-22, specific v. 20; cf. John 1:1-11; 14:6; Acts 26:15-18; Romans 13:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:6.

⁹³⁹ cf. 1 Peter 2:1-3; 3:8-12.

a matter of investigative hypothesis. We must remember that John's descriptions would be associated and comparative with aspects of his human existence, as it would be necessary for him to make descriptive comparisons.

- During the course of this study, I will render explanations pertinent to the reality of that which is described; this under notes of "Possibilities and Considerations." All personal attempts at explanation or reiterations in conjunction with descriptiveness by John will fall under the aforementioned note heading.

Regarding weaponry, I will not do this solely as a basis of investigation, but rather from past personal experience with modern weapons of warfare.

3. Although there are times when we must attempt to understand things which can never be actually known for certain without personal witness of the revelation (example #2 above), as by revealed descriptiveness; it is neither wise nor appropriate for believers to make conjecture or assumption based on that which is not written or described (absence of revelation). As believers, our endeavor is to study the word to show ourselves approved; handling accurately (cut out straight) the Word of truth!⁹⁴⁰
 - Further understanding of this important fact will arise later within the study; concerning the "Rapture" of the church.

THE PERSON OF "ANTICHRIST" AS HE IS DESCRIBED IN SCRIPTURE

The world today (as throughout history) looks to the surface rather than to the heart.⁹⁴¹ Just as Scripture has stated would be the way of the world regarding favoritism due to appearance and/or financial stature, this world leader (the Antichrist) will be a person of both, or he would not be accepted by this superficial world. In regard to acceptance by the world, Scripture is perfectly clear, and by this truth it becomes apparent why so many will be deceived as they refuse to be separate

⁹⁴⁰ cf. 2 Timothy 2:14-16; 3:16, 17.

⁹⁴¹ cf. James 2:2-4; 2 Corinthians 5:10-13; John 7:21-24.

from the ways of the world (carnality) unto the Lord. Although the Antichrist will be handsome as by aesthetics or financial stature, and thus the type of individual who carnal folks will want to follow; he will also be the epitome of one whose existence is founded upon guile leading to outright delusive behavior!

The basis for a person to be absolutely convincing to others, although delusive, is for the person to be so totally deceived that they believe their own lies. This is the case with many in the world today and throughout history, and will be the case with the Antichrist as he will seriously believe that he is God; for he will be fully under Satan's influence and power, thus the human representation of the "Great Deceiver." It is an unfortunate fact, but there are many supposed Christians today who have never known the Lord, and yet think and confess that they do.⁹⁴² The tribulation saints, will be the remnant of the masses upon the earth who are not deceived by this man's deceptions. This ability to stay clear of being deceived and thus victorious will only come by the spiritual discernment granted individuals by the Holy Spirit's presence (within), in conjunction with appropriate maintained focus upon the Lord; for His (Holy Spirit's) work of restraint will be withdrawn (without) from the entirety of the world, so as to allow the blatant deception to occur.⁹⁴³ With the Spirit of truth withdrawn from the world, conviction of truth from without will cease to come forth, which is why only those sealed and protected by God will remain free from deception.⁹⁴⁴

Personal Note: With ejection of the Lord from His own church (aforementioned), and the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit's embrace of truth upon the world; deception will reign supreme, allowing Satan to be worshipped in human form by all who are without the seal of manifest truth which is from the Lord!⁹⁴⁵ With the rejection of the Lord within the church, came the reality that the darkness of deception would be allowed to continue unhindered by the righteousness of God; for without love for and seeking of truth, the light of the Lord (being rejected) is incapable of exposing the inappropriate deceptions and delusions of multitudes

⁹⁴² cf. Matthew 7:15-23.

⁹⁴³ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; Ephesians 1:9-14.

⁹⁴⁴ cf. John 16:13-15.

⁹⁴⁵ 7:2-8; cf. 2 Corinthians 1:20-22; Ephesians 1:9-14; 4:30.

who have remained intentionally ignorant and thereby deceived.⁹⁴⁶ Throughout this book (*Big If*), emphasis has been made that we must study and pray with devotional disciplined diligence, as this is an imperative basis of our sincere love for the Lord God; yet with the ejection of the Lord from the church in general, now only superficial love is emphasized and evinced, within which laziness and complacency have replaced reverence and devotion. The emphasis within this book was never to emphasize “do this or that,” or “don’t do this or that,” but rather the reality that without devotional love for the Lord and the outcome of motivation and behavior there from; deception and darkness will assuredly enter in to one’s endeavors bringing forth the laziness and complacency aforementioned. Within this generation, the cold or lukewarm realistic walk of parents has produces un-disciplined and outright rebellious attitudes and behavior contrary to standards set forth by God; this then creating the perfect setting for the Tribulation Period and the spiritual downfall of multitudes! The overall emphasis of this book has remained—LOVE THE LORD; for with this imperative being met, bringing forth submission so that God may both will and work for His own good pleasure, many may realize the error of nonchalant lukewarm Christianity, and turn to the Lord before it is too late!

As Satan has always desired to be worshipped, as he would settle for nothing less than being like the Most High; being worshipped in the human form of the Antichrist will be the ultimate culmination of his desire.⁹⁴⁷ This will be the crescendo of Satan’s scheme to achieve superiority, which will finally end at the battle of Gog and Magog.⁹⁴⁸ With Satan being worshipped within the ignorance of deceptive religion throughout history, and this because trust was placed upon servants of darkness who were believed to be servants of light, multitudes have never come out into the light of truth so as to be sealed for the day of redemption and thereby saved!⁹⁴⁹ So that this may be avoided, emphasis has been repeatedly rendered in this book (*Big If*) to abide in the Word of God (Lord, truth of Scripture) as by the many rendered specifics, so that the power of the living and active Word may bring forth strength and guidance away from darkness into the light where God leads, trains,

⁹⁴⁶ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

⁹⁴⁷ cf. Isaiah 14:12-15.

⁹⁴⁸ 20:7-9.

⁹⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

and nurtures! It is hoped that individuals would: love the Lord, heed that warnings of the Scriptures, understand the instruction of this book (by God's graceful guidance), and get serious regarding walking in a manner pleasing to God; so as not to be deceived.⁹⁵⁰

The Antichrist is a person who will be trusted by many, and will bring great persecution to the Lord's elect (both Jews and Gentiles). The Antichrist will cause great desolation to come upon the world.⁹⁵¹ The Antichrist will be a person who is allowed to rule and cause dissension among many nations, while also being a person of great hatred of the one true God; for the Antichrist's master (Satan) abhors any focus which would delve into spiritual depths beyond the superficiality of religious ignorance, within which Satan is worshipped!⁹⁵² The individual of the Antichrist will be a severely wicked person who will receive his power directly from Satan; mimicking the one who empowers him.⁹⁵³ He will be a person of absolutely zero morals, who will find pleasure in the persecution and destruction of millions.⁹⁵⁴ The unfortunate fact which follows the destruction of those deceived by Satan through the Antichrist is that only a remnant of the world population shall inevitably be physically saved throughout the Great Tribulation Period. All who willfully accept the mark of the beast (Satan being the beast) will assuredly perish, while blaming God for their misfortune and torment! The remnant of individuals, who do not receive the mark, will render refusal out of devotional obedience to God, yet trusting Him throughout the havoc!⁹⁵⁵

Daniel 11:37 makes emphasis that the Antichrist will be a man of great self-pride, and will not have had any form of true faith as by religious heritage throughout his life. This same Scripture makes emphasis that the Antichrist will have no desire (respect; esteem) for women. If we consider the following facts about the mindset of the world today, and the fact that the Antichrist will be a man of great delusion (blatantly deceived), the possibility of his being a supposed leader of good will who does not respect or value women, increases considerably. It should be understood that a person of abounding narcissism, who is also led

⁹⁵⁰ cf. John 3:1-36, specific vs.29-36.

⁹⁵¹ cf. Daniel 9:27.

⁹⁵² 6:2; 13:5-7; cf. Matthew 24:5-25.

⁹⁵³ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8, 9.

⁹⁵⁴ cf. Daniel 11:36-44.

⁹⁵⁵ 14:11, 12.

and empowered by pure evil (Satan) is actually incapable of respecting anyone beyond “self”; for within the darkness and wretchedness of blatant self-centeredness, self-importance and self-absorption, the Antichrist will be the epitome of an individual rife for delusion!

The Antichrist will be a man of considerable military strategy, for ten nations will follow him. For him to place his greatest faith in fortresses and physical might, he would have to be a man of previous military supervision; well seasoned in military stratagem (or nations of might would not trust and follow him).⁹⁵⁶ The Antichrist will be a man of considerable wealth, and will prosper during his reign as leader and military victor. The way in which the world follows those with great wealth, would add to the factor of the Antichrist’s being wealthy prior to his convincing deceptions. His prior wealth would lend credibility to his supposed humble claim to the throne; in that he would appear to be in need of nothing.

The most considerable factor of the Antichrist which will add credibility to his claim as being God will be his life from death experience regarding his wound that will be healed by Satan (cf. 13:3). This wound will appear to be a death blow, which will be one of the devil’s greater convincing deceptions, along with other signs and wonders to further accredit the Antichrist with being who he is not (Jesus).⁹⁵⁷ The Antichrist will be very much like his father the devil; for he will be prideful to settle for nothing less than being like the Most High God! Although he is in actuality filthy with sin and absolutely without truth; a prideful lover of self, and outright wicked; he will appear to be a person of morals and light by the multitudes who remained deceived.⁹⁵⁸

Note of interest: An almost precise representation of the guile and intrigue which will be utilized by the Antichrist can be evinced by a study of—Antiochus IV Epiphanes, whose reign was during the 2nd century B.C. Prophecy concerning Antiochus can be found within the book of Daniel (little horn - cf. 8:23-25), as well as prophecy concerning the Antichrist (cf. 11:36-45). By a comparative study of the verses pertaining to Antiochus and those pertaining to the Antichrist, we find that both Antiochus and the Antichrist (individually):

⁹⁵⁶ cf. Daniel 11:38-42.

⁹⁵⁷ cf. 13:13, 14; Matthew 24:24.

⁹⁵⁸ cf. 2 Corinthians 11:13-15.

1. Deceive the Jews into believing he is a friend (Revelation 6:2; cf. Daniel 8:23, 25).
2. Will subdue as by conquests; empowered by Satan (cf. Daniel 8:24; 11:38-44).
3. Will believe and proclaim himself to be equal with God (cf. Daniel 8:25; 11:36, 37).
4. His reign will come to an end by divine judgment (cf. Daniel 8:25; 11:45).

Although many have stated that Daniel chapter 11 passages pertain also to Antiochus IV Epiphanes, historical accounts show no evidence of fulfillment during the life of Antiochus. For this reason, prophecy makes illustration of the associations between the two; for by the devastation caused by Antiochus, and the way in which he had dealt treacherously with the Jews, they (remembering history) would avoid falling prey to the same forms of guile, intrigue and inevitable devastation a second time. It is due the repeated sin cycle of obstinacy and rebellion by the Jews, which led them to deny the Messiah of promise (at His first advent), that will someday again lead them within prideful stubbornness to fall prey to the wiles of Satan through his servant the Antichrist.

- Although Antiochus preferred the name “Epiphanes” (the illustrious one); the Jews referred to him as “Epimanes” (the madman); for they despised him. Just as the Antichrist will be defeated by divine judgment (cf. 19:20), Antiochus IV Epiphanes was also divinely judged, for he died an insane individual in Persia (163 B.C.).

THE HORNS, EYES, AND BOWLS OF PRAYERS

Horns in Scripture generally are an illustration of strength and salvation. Horns throughout Biblical history have been used to call believers to worship, and center their attention upon the Lord.⁹⁵⁹ Horns are illustrated also as an article of power (strength), physical safety and salvation.⁹⁶⁰

Eyes in Scripture many times represent the Holy Spirit, for He sees all (omniscient; omnipresent). The eyes can be denoted as one’s faith

⁹⁵⁹ cf. Joshua 6:5-8; Hebrews 12:18, 19.

⁹⁶⁰ cf. 1 Kings 1:47-53; 2:28-30; Zechariah 1:18, 19; Luke 1:69-75.

(understanding) that God sees all and will render the just judgment according to His righteousness, holiness, mercies and GRACE. As we hold to the mercy and grace of our Lord by faith, so also do we believe that the Lord is aware of truth, reality, and necessities in all situations.⁹⁶¹

The bowls of prayer are denoted in the Revelation 5:8 passage. These bowls can be realized as the combined prayers of the saints, which are before the Lord as soothing and pleasing. The comparison of the prayers to incense, illustrates how the prayers are pleasing to the Lord, much like the sweet aroma of the fat from the burnt offerings of the Old Testament.⁹⁶²

The illustration of the prayers of the saints being like bowls of incense, demonstrates how the Lord is pleased with the prayers of devotional believers, who never pray contrary to God's good, acceptable and perfect will. As incense is relaxing and pleasing, so also are our prayers to the Lord, for they denote our trust, faith and reliance upon Him in every area of our lives; in accordance to the kind intention of His will. Just as incense comes in many different aromas which are pleasing, so also should our prayers be! Prayer is not just to request, but also to communicate and relate to God in the form of praise, adoration, confession of concerns, thanksgiving, and listening so as to learn!⁹⁶³ PRAYER IS COMMUNICATION; NOT ONE-SIDED SPEAKING!

Revelation Chapters 4-5

Chapter 4

With completion of the message to the seven churches within Revelation chapters two and three; which emphasized the characteristics which were and remain noticeable within the body of Christ (church), we now come to realization of that which must occur. This statement—"what must take place after these things" (v. 1), is different from the statement—"things which shall take place after these things" (cf. 1:19); for the statement of v. 1:19 indicates what will occur later (after the message of chapters 1-3), whereas the statement of v. 1 (Greek - *dei*) indicates what must now occur commensurate with the sovereign will of God.

⁹⁶¹ cf. Mark 4:22, 23; Luke 12:1-3; Romans 2:14-16; Matthew 6:5-8.

⁹⁶² cf. Exodus 29:13, 14; Psalm 141:2.

⁹⁶³ cf. 2 Corinthians 9:10-15; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; Philippians 4:4-9; Colossians 4:2-4; Psalms 34:1-6.

The Apostle John stated that he was “in the Spirit,” signifying that he was spiritually elsewhere (immersed spiritually in the Lord; within intimate fellowship) according to God’s will for this revelation, although his physical body remained upon the island of Patmos (v. 2).⁹⁶⁴ John was shown a throne in heaven, and described the beauty of the One upon it as by comparison to gemstones; of which (jasper) was designated for the breastplate of the Jewish high priest (v. 3).⁹⁶⁵

- Note of interest: Revelation 1:10 is the only place in Scripture where “Lord’s Day” can be found. Although many have believed this to indicate “Sunday,” and many utilize this as a reference to Sunday, the reality remains that every day is the Lord’s Day; so let us rejoice and be glad in them all!⁹⁶⁶

Around the primary heavenly throne, were twenty-four lesser thrones (v. 4). Upon the lesser thrones were twenty-four elders, who were clothed in white garments, having golden crowns donned upon their heads; indicating reward for devotion.⁹⁶⁷ These “crowns” (Greek—*stephanos*) were of the type given those victorious within Greek games, and should not be confused with the “crown” (*diadem*) of sovereign rule. There has been much speculation as to the identity of the twenty-four individuals upon the thrones, which includes members of the “caught up” church, and angels of much responsibility.

- I will not attempt to surmise the identity of the individuals, as my best guess is but conjecture; instead I will simply say that angels (to my knowledge) were never exemplified in Scripture to receive crowns, although believers are exemplified; and I do not believe in the Rapture prior to the Great Tribulation Period, according to the assumptions of others (which will be discussed later in the lesson).

John continued by descriptions of:

1. *Seven lamps of burning* (which are the seven Spirits of God) (v. 5). Although this also has been the topic of much speculation, I will simply state I believe this to be emphasis of God’s divinity completeness.⁹⁶⁸

⁹⁶⁴ cf. 1:9-11; 17:3.

⁹⁶⁵ cf. Exodus 28:15-21.

⁹⁶⁶ cf. Psalm 118:24.

⁹⁶⁷ cf. 2 Timothy 4:7, 8; James 1:2-12, specific v. 12; 1 Peter 5:1-4, specific v. 4.

Notations of mention for consideration of the number 7:

- God rested upon completion of His work (cf. Genesis 2:2, 3).
 - The number of specific cleansing (cf. Leviticus 14:7-9).
 - The number of coordinated task fulfillment (cf. Acts 6:1-4).
 - Seven churches of mention; which emphasize the overall personal characteristics found within the church even to this day (Revelation 1:4-6; chapters 2 and 3).
 - Seven lampstands (Revelation 1:12, 20).
 - Seven stars (Revelation 1:16, 20).
 - Book with seven seals (Revelation 5:1, 5).
 - Seven horns and seven eyes of the Lord (Revelation 5:6).
 - Seven angels and seven trumpets (Revelation 8:1-6).
 - Seven peals of thunder (Revelation 10:1-7).
 - Seven golden bowls of God's wrath (Revelation 15:5-8; described 16:1-21).
 - Seven kings of finality human reign upon the earth (Revelation 17:9-13).
2. *Lightning and Thunder* (v. 5); all of which as mentioned indicate divine power and/or majesty within the final book of the revealed Word—cf. 6:1; 8:5; 11:19; 14:2; 16:18; 19:6.
3. *Sea of glass* (vs. 5, 6); which (I believe) emphasizes divine serenity and patient calmness.

Possibilities and Considerations: Anyone who has been upon turbulent seas understands the feeling of peace which accompanies a smooth calm body of water (sea of glass). I believe this to be an indication of God's divine majesty within His creation of time and space; for His timing, will, and work are always good, acceptable and perfect.⁹⁶⁹ Within this aspect of potential meaning, we should always remember that God involves Himself in time and space for the sake of His creatures; for He is not simply loving, but rather the very essence of agape (unconditional) love.⁹⁷⁰

⁹⁶⁸ cf. 5:6; Isaiah 9:6, 7; 11:1-5.

⁹⁶⁹ v. 11; cf. James 1:16-18; Romans 12:2.

⁹⁷⁰ cf. 1 John 4:8-19; 2 Peter 3:8, 9.

4. *Four living creatures* (vs. 5-8); which **may** reference: angels (cf. Isaiah 6:2, 3; Ezekiel 10:15-20); the divine attributes of God (i.e. omnipresence, omnipotence, omniscience; for they are seen within and surrounding the throne); some other aspect of Scripture—lion, calf, man, and eagle (possibly Synoptic Gospels).
5. *Appropriate praise for God* (vs. 8-11). An emphasis worth noting is found in v. 10; for the twenty-four elders prostrate themselves and cast their crowns before God's throne. This renders emphasis of His solely unique awesomeness; for God is divinely majestic and worthy of all honor, praise and heartfelt worship, whereas our existence before Him is based solely within His mercy, lovingkindness and grace; within this, rewards (crowns) are irrelevant, as being before the Lord is the greatest honor, blessing, and reward possible! Within this fact, we are behooved to understanding that our existence is all about Him, as our worth is due to the Potter's work; for we are but clay without life, form or value, aside from the reality of the Lord's masterful goodness and intentions.⁹⁷¹

Chapter 5

The sovereignty and majesty of the Lord having been presented in chapter four, now allows understanding as to the content of chapter 5; for truly only the Lord Jesus Christ is worthy (vs. 1-5)! Fulfillment of completeness is emphasized by the scroll (book) with seven seals; for each seal must be opened separately, in order for the entirety (completeness) of the scroll to be witnessed (fulfilled); all of which is based upon the worthiness of the Lamb (Lion of Judah) (vs. 5-7)!⁹⁷²

- With this knowledge, we ought to realize the necessity for constant, diligent and appropriate focus upon Jesus at all times; for we were made by and for Him, through Whom is victory and purpose (v. 5)!⁹⁷³
- The word rendered “book” or “scroll” (vs. 1-5; cf. 6:14),

⁹⁷¹ cf. 5:11-14; Isaiah 29:15, 16; 45:1-13; 64:1-8; Jeremiah 18:1-12; John 1:1-4; Romans 9:6-29; Ephesians 3:4-12.

⁹⁷² cf. 22:16; Isaiah 11:1, 2.

⁹⁷³ cf. 1:4-8; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Colossians 1:9-23.

comes from the Greek word “*biblion*,” from which is derived the word Bible.

By the descriptiveness given Jesus as both “Lamb” and “Lion,” we denote the reality of both history in His coming as the sacrificial Lamb for the sins of mankind, and the time future when He will come triumphantly in fulfillment of all prophesy (vs. 6-14).

The worthiness of the Lamb, as well as the appropriate praise, worship and appreciation for the Lord is rendered by all in the heavenly realm (vs. 8-13). The surety of the Lord’s sovereignty is reassured by the statement rendered by the four living creatures—“Amen” (v. 14); for this word is acknowledgement of truth, as it is specifically defined—“truly”!

As the time of the Lord’s judgment of sin, and the time of His appearing have been sought by devotional believers throughout the generations, even so prior to His atoning work upon the cross, these chapters have now laid the threshold for the end time events. Within this, we may understand the emphasis of both chapters 4 and 5 to indicate:

1. The sovereignty of Jesus, and the necessity for His righteous judgment upon the sinful world, which occurs within the seal, trumpet, and bowl judgments.
2. The fact that heaven is existent, and is not simply imagined! Although we cannot fully understand the splendor of what the apostles John and Paul saw when they were caught up to the heavenly realm (third heaven), we can yet gain strength from the reality of heaven’s existence; while also maintaining hope within the sovereign majesty of our Lord.⁹⁷⁴ For a more in-depth description (as is humanly possible) of God’s existence in heaven, please reference the description rendered by Ezekiel.⁹⁷⁵

Great Tribulation Period: Chapters 6-19

Prefatory

1. For the sake of understanding the sequence of events which occur during God’s judgments upon the sinful world, consideration should be maintained:

⁹⁷⁴ cf. 2 Corinthians 12:1-4; 13:4-11.

⁹⁷⁵ cf. Ezekiel 1:1-28.

- The trumpet judgments fall within the confines of the 7th (last) seal.
 - The bowl judgments fall within the confines of the 7th (last) trumpet.
 - The divine wrath of God upon the sinful world is completed within the confines of the 7th (last) bowl (“It is done.”—cf. 16:17).
2. Peace will be the prevalent factor, although shrouded in deception, during the first 3.5 years of the tribulation period (cf. 6:1, 2). For this reason, the judgments which follow beginning in v. 6:3 should not be considered as proportionate with the first 3.5 years of the tribulation; but rather should be considered commensurate of the last 3.5 years which is considered the actual time of judgment—“Great Tribulation” or “Great Tribulation Period.”
- It should be noted in v. 6:2 that the servant of Satan (Antichrist) has the potential for aggressive actions (bow), yet arises to power without actual aggression (absence of arrow). The way in which the Antichrist “conquers” (v. 2), is in actuality by guile and intrigue; for he will gain the confidence of others (including Israel) by deception. The truth becomes known beginning in vs. 3, 4; when peace is withdrawn.
3. A distinction is made regarding the “bowl” judgments, when compared to the “seal” and “trumpet” judgments; the distinction being these judgments (bowl) are in accordance to God’s divine wrath upon the flesh of the wicked.
- With consideration of the distinction of God’s wrath upon the flesh, as being far different than the wrathful judgments which involve human warfare and the desolation wherefrom, and the judgments which are upon the world due the sinfulness of humankind, understanding is forthcoming as to that which believers have been promised deliverance.⁹⁷⁶
 - I am unaware of Scripture which states believers will be delivered from tribulation, suffering, and persecution; when speaking the Gospel truth in love is necessary for the sake of

⁹⁷⁶ cf. 3:10; Matthew 3:7-9; 1 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

the lost, and must be proclaimed for the glory of God!⁹⁷⁷ The emphasis of the Gospel is void that we will not have suffering, but that we must “overcome” the adversity! If all believers will be “caught up” (Raptured) prior to the Tribulation Period, then who will be present to proclaim the good news of the Gospel? Since further study of Revelation positively illustrates that individuals will come to knowledge of truth during the Tribulation Period, how could this occur without the witness of devotionally truthful believers?⁹⁷⁸ Further mention will be forthcoming regarding deliverance of believers.

4. Although there has been speculation as to the judgments of Revelation having been fulfilled in the past, I cannot lay credence to these speculations; for the severity of the judgments could not have been fulfilled in antiquity, without historical accounts of such devastation to have been upon the world.
 - Much of the conjecture regarding fulfillment of the book of Revelation within history is derived from the statement rendered in Daniel 9:27. Inasmuch as several rulers throughout history (pertaining to the history of believers; both Jews and Gentiles) such as Nero, Domitian, and Antiochus IV Epiphanes have exhibited characteristics as mentioned in the Daniel passage; the fact remains that none throughout history have exemplified the worldwide tyranny which will be fulfilled by the Antichrist of Revelation.
 - Because the Daniel passage has obviously not been fulfilled during times of antiquity, consideration should be maintained that the final *heptad* (7 years) of the 70 (62 + 7 + 1) weeks of years within the book of Daniel, actually does refer to the 7 year tribulation period.⁹⁷⁹
 - For more information pertaining to the prophecies within the book of Daniel, please reference—John F. Walvoord; Roy B. Zuck; The Bible Knowledge Commentary: Old

⁹⁷⁷ cf. 2:9-11, 15-17, 25-29; 3:3-6, 10-13, 19-22; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; 3:12-17; Hebrews 2:9-18.

⁹⁷⁸ cf. Romans 8:16, 17; 10:8-21; 2 Corinthians 1:6, 7; Philippians 1:29, 30; 2 Timothy 2:3-9.

⁹⁷⁹ cf. Daniel 9:1-27.

Testament; SP Publications, Inc. 1983 and/or Thomas R. Rogers, D.Min.; *The Panorama of the Old Testament*; Trinity Press 1995.

5. It is due absence of mention concerning the “church” after chapter 3, which is the basis of belief by many as to the pre-tribulation Rapture. Another basis of belief in the pre-tribulation Rapture is the statement of Scripture pertaining to believers being kept from the hour of testing (cf. 3:10).
 - My personal beliefs according to Scriptural findings concerning believers being “caught up” (Rapture), will be forthcoming in the presentation.

6. The time prior to the sudden beginning of the Tribulation Period is compared scripturally with the times of Noah and Lot. Just as people had warning, by the testimony and actions of the godly man—Noah, that something intense was going to happen; life among the masses continued as usual (complacently). So also it will be once again as the illegitimate children of God (religious individuals) will be taken by surprise; thereby remaining in the midst of the deception and devastation.⁹⁸⁰
 - The fact of these warnings should motivate all believers to action.⁹⁸¹ The church today has become considerably complacent, as “religion” has become a conduit for entertainment and appeasement of the flesh! As it is evident that we are in the end times, and this proven by fulfillment of the current day characteristics emphasized by the Holy Spirit; the time for superficial and complacent “religion,” must be replaced with sincerity of disciplined devotion, and strength of appropriate “Christian” (relational) testimonies!⁹⁸²
 - The time leading up to the flood (time of Noah) was a time period (dispensation) of conscience; when upon the earth, the law written upon the hearts of humans (conscience) was to lead individuals to betterment and good, rather than diminishment

⁹⁸⁰ cf. Genesis 6:11-13; Matthew 24:37-39; Luke 17:26-33; Hebrews 11:7; 1 Peter 3:18-22; 2 Peter 2:4-11.

⁹⁸¹ cf. Matthew 25:1-13.

⁹⁸² cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:1-8; 3:1-7; Matthew 24:42-44.

and wickedness; with the latter being the end result.⁹⁸³ It was due supremacy of “self-importance” which led the inhabitants of the world to a state of habitual submission to demonic influence (evil), leading to the necessity of judgment to be upon the blatant wickedness (human actions according to demonic influence) which was throughout the world.

Just as the inhabitants of the world slowly yet surely came to a state of wretchedness due precedence upon “self” although surrounded by others, so has the world taken this same wide path to destruction; more so in the past sixty years than in centuries past. The way in which “self” (personal volition and indulgences) is taught within many congregations throughout the world, with emphasis of “self” taking precedence in far too many American church congregations, the words of warning by the Holy Spirit are in fact made evident. Truly we are in the end times!

Within the choice selections (manipulation) of Scripture which is in accordance to the whims of many supposed believers, and due the love of money within much supposed spiritual leadership who are willing to teach according to human whims and carnal desires, the sheepfold has been invaded by ravenous wolves; leading to multitudes of believers no longer being prepared for what must occur, which includes Jesus` triumphant return!⁹⁸⁴ Focus upon the Lord as by loving Him first and foremost, is the imperative for all who seek a life of righteousness; for complacency within religious distractions will deny and/or reject forms of deliverance.

The Seal Judgments

Chapter 6

The chronological sequence of the seal, trumpet and bowl judgments begins with the opening of the first seal, thus beginning the tribulation (first 3.5 years of the 7-year tribulation period); which is a time of deceptive peace (vs. 1, 2).⁹⁸⁵ The opening of the first seal, which ushers 3.5 years of delusive peace then leads to opening of the second seal; bringing

⁹⁸³ cf. Romans 2:14-16.

⁹⁸⁴ cf. Hebrews 10:19-39; 1 John 2:28-3:18; Romans 2:1-16.

⁹⁸⁵ cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:3-6.

about open warfare within many countries (vs. 3, 4). The emphasis of a “great sword” (v. 4) being given to the Antichrist indicates not only that he is empowered by Satan for fulfillment of his political endeavors, but also that God is allowing this to happen; for this is the initial stages of God’s withdrawing restraint upon evil, in fulfillment of revealed prophesy.⁹⁸⁶ Just as God utilized powerful nations to bring judgment upon the nation of Israel in times of antiquity, when they chose to be obstinate and rebellious, so now the warmonger influence of the Antichrist and his armies will inflict forms of judgment upon the rebellious nations of the earth.

- It should also be noted by the 1 Thessalonians passages, that believers who focus upon the Lord will not be deceived (overtaken) by the intrigue of the Antichrist; although the masses of the world shall be.
 - It should be noted; all nations will be involved in these conflicts. In accordance to the formal training I had received, the emphasis was that the wars would be in the Eurasian countries; yet with further investigation by the graceful leadership of God, I can no longer agree.

With the wars raging throughout many nations, the offsets of warfare will begin as the third seal is opened, which ushers in great injustice and famine due to war. With the opening of this seal comes great recession and hardship upon all without wealth. Favoritism will be upon the rich, and those who choose to assist the Antichrist in his efforts to rule the world; for he will reward blind loyalty (vs. 5, 6).⁹⁸⁷

The mention of the Roman denarius in conjunction with a quart of wheat or three quarts of barley, signifies that a day’s wage (denarius) will be necessary to buy either a quart of wheat (one meal), or three quarts of barley (three meals); yet leaving nothing for the purchase of oil or wine.

- It should also be remembered that entire families will be in need of sustenance from the small amounts of food which will come at a high price. Within this, we must realize the necessities

⁹⁸⁶ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:6-12.

⁹⁸⁷ cf. Daniel 11:39.

for survival (oil for lamps and heat; wine for medicinal purposes) will not be afforded the many.

- Consideration should be made as to how the Antichrist will reward those who serve him as by traitorous behavior against others (especially believers); just as Antiochus IV Epiphanes rewarded those who were traitors against the Jews. With the famine which comes upon the world, many will surrender to the volition of Satan through the Antichrist; lest they be forced into devastation along with the multitudes.

With the wars continuing to grow in intensity upon the earth and the increase of destruction upon the earth due to the devastation and desolation derived from wickedness, one-fourth of the world's population will be killed with the opening of the fourth seal; allowing death, famine and disease to conquer the many who will perish due to the wars (vs. 7, 8).

- Consideration should be made to the statement of—Hades following Death (the ashen horse's rider). As we know that the bodies of those killed will become food for wild beasts and birds; what of their spirits? The answer is found in Hades following Death, and in understanding of the atonement of Jesus. Just as the spirits of martyred saints will go to be with the Lord in heaven, the spirits of non-believers will immediately go into Hades (Old Testament—Sheol) where they will remain in torment until the second resurrection unto judgment—“White Throne Judgment.”⁹⁸⁸
- There is no actual way for determining the length of time which has passed from the Antichrist breaking his peace accord, up until this point. Even the amount of time from the onslaught of warfare until the severity of the famine caused by it, cannot be determined with any certainty; without proportion exactness as to the devastation caused. Because we know that the destructiveness up to this point is wherefrom human wars, we can but guess as to the amount of time involved for the killing of one fourth of the world's population.

⁹⁸⁸ cf. 7:14-17; 13:7-10; 14:9-13; 20:11-15; Luke 16:15-31.

As the destruction upon the earth is growing constantly worse, the view with the opening of the fifth seal reverts to heaven. We are shown the souls of the martyrs beneath the altar, and we hear their cries for God's judgments to come quickly. The martyrs are given white robes to wear and are told to be patient for a short period more; until the numbers of remaining saints who will die for the Gospel have yet to be completed. With the conclusion of this scene in heaven and the saints being calmed, we now enter a time of further judgments to come upon the earth (vs. 9-11).

- Although the time period of the great wars has been considerable, the succession of events, as well as increased devastation upon the earth, will now begin to occur much more quickly; for with the opening of the sixth seal, begins a time of divine wrathful judgment, far beyond the devastation of human warfare.
- With the giving of “robes” to the saints in heaven, it should be noted that believers have a type of substance when we go to be with the Lord. As there is no descriptiveness given in Scripture of this substance, we simply know for certain that it exists, and someday will be exchanged for our imperishable immortal substance (spiritual body).⁹⁸⁹ This change cannot occur until the 1st resurrection (upon which death has no victory); for those asleep in Christ will rise first.⁹⁹⁰
 - The prayers of the saints unto the Lord to bring forth just judgment, illustrates the mindset which should be within all Christians. If we are pleased or condoning in regards to the unrighteous behaviors and actions found upon this world, something is very wrong with our way of thinking. The mindset of believers should be one of the world's being cleansed from sin; therefore our focus should be upon the coming of Christ, which ushers in the eternal state of existence. If we cannot find shame in the wickedness which is prevalent upon this earth, then we have become entangled within the ways of the world, and thus blinded to the

⁹⁸⁹ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-58.

⁹⁹⁰ cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:15-18.

necessity for righteousness. We must be cautious when we stand, lest we fall!⁹⁹¹

- The prayers of the saints going up before the Lord, demonstrates that indeed God is the very essence of pure, undefiled (agape) love. The prayers are soothing to the Lord as a preliminary to such ravaging judgments, as I believe it will not be pleasing for the Lord to allow such harshness to come forth upon His creation. As God is absolutely holy, righteous and just, the judgments must occur; yet some things which must take place, are never easy.

With the opening of the sixth seal, we now notice great physical disturbances to come upon the earth. With the opening of this seal comes earthquakes, atmospheric contamination, and great distress among all who are yet alive upon the earth. The earthquakes which come upon the world will literally move mountains and islands from their foundations, causing destruction upon many structures which have been left standing from the previous devastating warfare (vs. 12-17).

The extent of this judgment will frighten all who live upon the planet; except believers who have been forewarned that this must occur; who then knew to flee the cities (v. 15).⁹⁹² The extent of the fear is emphasized by the fact that even the: rich, strong, military leaders and great men will attempt to flee to areas of created strength (caves; mountains). This will be a time when no one can trust their riches, military might, or manmade structures for protection; no matter how much had been spent on the reinforcement construction endeavors!

Possibilities and Considerations: Sun became black and the moon became like blood (v. 12). With numerous meteors falling from the sky (like figs from a tree—v. 13), the amount of dust which would be cast into the atmosphere can only be imagined. With such atmospheric contamination, the light of the sun would be considerable diminished, as well as the light of the moon. The descriptiveness of the moon becoming like blood, can be witnessed during any full eclipse of the moon; for as the shadow of the earth being cast upon the moon brings forth

⁹⁹¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 10:12-13; 2 Peter 2:12-22.

⁹⁹² cf. Matthew 24:15-21; Mark 13:14-19.

this appearance (dark red), so also would considerable amounts of dust and other atmospheric contaminants.

Chapter 7

INTERLUDE - THE 144,000 SEALED AND DIVINELY PROTECTED JEWS

With devastation far worse than could be caused by human warfare, as judgment is now coming forth upon the earth from the Lord, the question is asked—who is able to stand (cf. 6:17). With the asking of the question, the answer is immediately forthcoming; with the divine protection proclaimed upon the Jews (vs. 1-8).

- It should be remembered, that believers during the Tribulation Period will be protected to whatever degree deemed appropriate by the Lord. It should also be remembered that even if we are martyred for the sake of others, proclamation of the Gospel and the glory of God; we are yet blessed with eternal life and therefore secure in the Lord.⁹⁹³

The 144,000 will be sealed and thus divinely protected by the Lord. This sealing of the 144,000 is for the purpose that they may be saved for the continuation of the nation of Israel; according to covenant promise into the millennial reign of Christ. The 144,000 will be the first fruits of the renewed nation of Israel.⁹⁹⁴ The sealing will take a period of time to accomplish and thus four separate angels are instructed to cause a calm to come over the earth. The will of God in the sealing of the 144,000 elect will be completed without hindrance or deterrence, this to ensure their divine protection as God once again works to save and unite His chosen people.

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- Aside of the specifics mentioned of 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes (vs. 4-8), it would be a futile endeavor to attempt further identification. God knows exactly who the individuals

⁹⁹³ cf. Ephesians 1:13, 14; 2 Timothy 2:3-19.

⁹⁹⁴ cf. Romans 11:1-32.

are who will comprise the 12 tribes, and who (exactly) the individuals will be who are sealed for protection.

- It should be considered, the 12 protected tribes of Israel may be orthodox Jews! There is no indication that the 144,000 have become believers in the Messiah (born again); therefore if they are orthodox Jews, we know this action of the Lord to be one of mercy upon His chosen people, in accordance to His *hesed* (covenantal loyal) love that—He will be their God and they His people.⁹⁹⁵
 - The statement of the 144,000 being “bond-servants” of the Lord (v. 3), illustrates that the 144,000 wholeheartedly are devoted to God, and have kept to the strict letter of the Mosaic Law according to their devotion, if they are in fact yet within Israelite orthodox religion (Levitical Law). Even with understanding that physical manifestations of God as were previously witnessed in times of antiquity, will once again be manifest for the Israelites during future times; we yet do not have certainty as to these considerations!⁹⁹⁶
 - If the 144,000 have been “born again” by faith in Jesus’ lordship and acceptance of Jesus’ atoning works upon the cross, there is no indication as to when they came to believe.⁹⁹⁷ If the 144,000 are in fact “born again,” this would explain why they follow the Lamb wherever He goes; although their following Him may be due conditions of which we remain unaware, if they are actually not “born again.”⁹⁹⁸ It would be difficult to know with any certainty, what exactly occurs within the hearts of the chosen 144,000 Israelites, at the time of their being sealed; yet as the Jews seek for a “sign,” this would certainly render unto them an addition to simple faith (seeing is believing), making evident the physical manifested reality of God’s work.⁹⁹⁹
- Although there have been many attempts to associate the 144,000 with the church, this attempt by any is both unjust and

⁹⁹⁵ cf. Hebrews 8:1-13.

⁹⁹⁶ cf. Isaiah 4:2-6; Exodus 13:21, 22.

⁹⁹⁷ cf. Romans 10: 1-13.

⁹⁹⁸ cf. 14:1-5; John 3:1-21.

⁹⁹⁹ cf. Matthew 12:39, 40; 16:1-4; John 6:30-66; 1 Corinthians 1:21-29.

unwarranted. The Jews have always been God's chosen people, and although they were set aside for a time due their obstinacy and rebellion, they were never set aside permanently; for God is faithful to fulfill His covenant with them!

- Although some Gentiles (non-Jews) may claim that they are the 144,000 mentioned within the book of Revelation, any such statement is incorrect and religiously biased. The Bible makes it very specific that the 144,000 are 12,000 from each of the twelve tribes of Israel (vs. 1-8). The Lord had promised to draw His chosen people (the Jews) back unto Himself, and bless them once again. This will occur during the millennial reign of Christ, when the Jewish nation is revived by God; beginning with these protected 144,000 and others such as Daniel.¹⁰⁰⁰ The Jews have been chosen by God and blessed with certain things which they alone receive from God. Although some would covet God's blessing to the Jews, for they believe themselves worthy of these blessings; we must remember that we are deserving of death via our sins, therefore we have no place to covet someone else's blessings, when we already have immense blessings as well (God's leadership and salvation by grace through faith). A tremendous victory is in this knowledge—"godliness is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment."¹⁰⁰¹

Four angels are sent to hold back all winds from the four corners of the earth. Being that there are not actually four corners on a round planet, this is to signify that all disturbances will be held back during this period of time, so that no harm will befall the 144,000 prior to their being sealed. A single angel, who is carrying the seal of God, is then sent to the earth from the east (ascending from the rising of the sun—v. 2). This one angel proclaims to the four angels granted permission to cause damage, a reprieve of destruction from being upon the earth and any of its attributes, until the 12,000 chosen from each of the twelve tribes of Israel can receive the seal of God upon their foreheads (vs. 2, 3).

¹⁰⁰⁰ cf. Daniel 12:13.

¹⁰⁰¹ cf. 1 Timothy 6:3-8.

Prior to this calm, the earth has been in torment like never before in its history. With the coming of this calm, an eerie feeling must be present upon the earth to all who yet dwell here, for they do not understand this sudden reprieve from destructive activities. During this calm the 144,000 elect of the Lord are being divinely separated, and thus protected from all forms of harm. Upon the completion of the sealing of the Jewish elect, and then a time of silent anticipation, the torment and destruction upon the earth will once again continue.

- A matter for consideration: The emphasis of protection within the book of Revelation is focused upon the Jews (nation of Israel). Upon decree of the Lord's coming, the state of eternity will begin; with the Israelites inheriting an earthly kingdom, and the saints (bride of Christ) inheriting a heavenly kingdom. Due the consideration that the Israelites will therefore have earthly bodies in conjunction with their existence upon the earth, at a time when the Lord will Himself reign; an imperative exists that their human bodies be protected from harm during the Tribulation Period. As the saints during this time period (dispensation) of grace will inherit a heavenly kingdom within the eternal state, and therefore will have a substance which is imperishable and eternal; an imperative of protection upon our corporeal bodies does not exist.¹⁰⁰²
 - It must always be remembered, specific mention of Israel and Israelites is for the purpose of understanding a specific of the revelation. This neither negates nor includes the Gentile Church within the purpose of that which is revealed; therefore additions or subtractions as by conjecture or assumption is never warranted.

Failure to make distinction between the nation of Israel and the body of Christ (church) has led to many discrepancies within "Christian" religious teachings; for when this distinction is not forthcoming, neither is understanding as to the different movements of time (epochs / dispensations) within Scripture. The failure of discernment involving the dispensations, has led to many believing the church to be entitled to the blessings of both individual Israelites and the nation of Israel as a

¹⁰⁰² cf. 20:4-15; 1 Corinthians 15:51-57; 1 Thessalonians 4:15-17; Matthew 16:25-28; 24:9, 10.

whole; although Israel and the church are not synonymous, except by individuality in worship of the one true God, and having Abraham as our father according to faith.¹⁰⁰³ When distinction is appropriately made, in conjunction with discernment from the Holy Spirit, then study of Scripture is not only understandable, but also becomes a basis of “knowledge.”

Although no one actually knows the details of eternity beyond Scripture descriptions of: the Lord’s earthly reign, the existence of the church in the heavens (and thus we shall always be with the Lord - cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17), the existence of and dwelling place which is the New Jerusalem, and thereby condemnation or blessing; it behooves us to study with diligence that which is revealed, while maintaining realization that further “knowledge” will come only within the eternal state.¹⁰⁰⁴

VERSES 9-17

During the time of the sealing of the 144,000 elect, great praise is being rendered to God in heaven. The twenty-four elders, angels, the four living creatures, and those martyred during the tribulation thus far (great multitude), are all before the Lord’s throne in worship and praise to Him.

The Trumpet Judgments

PREFATORY

A specific understanding must come forth prior to continuation with the trumpet judgments; lest confusion become an inappropriate factor at the sounding of the seventh (last) trumpet.

Although some within a play of words would proclaim a distinction between the seven trumpets of these judgments, and the “Trumpet of God” as being far reaching one from the other, and this same type play of phraseology causes confusion within statements pertaining to—the Day of the Lord; these types of disagreements are not appropriate, for once we depart a foundation of subservient open-mindedness, our ability to spiritually discern is lost.¹⁰⁰⁵ As understanding is important within

¹⁰⁰³ cf. Acts 15:1-11; Romans 3:21-5:5; Galatians 3:1-29.

¹⁰⁰⁴ cf. 1 John 3:1-3.

¹⁰⁰⁵ cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16.

both these specifics in order to gain knowledge of “end time events,” we will pause for investigation and consideration.

1. Please note in 8:2, the specifics as stated, for the statement is—“I saw the seven angels who stand before God; and seven trumpets were given to them”... Within this, we must note that the angels standing before God are then given seven trumpets.

- Without consideration of demons; within the book of Revelation, there is considerable mention of the work of angels; the exact numbers of mention not necessary for this investigation. The work of the angels includes: ministering, proclaiming, instructing, pouring, sounding, inflicting judgment, carrying out specific functions; in all cases within direct obedience to the commands of God, according to both His sovereign and providential will.¹⁰⁰⁶
- Because each instance where an angel received instruction from another angel is specifically mentioned within the book of Revelation, conjecture is not warranted as from Whom the angels received the seven trumpets; for they were standing before God when the seven trumpets were both given and received. Because the only specific mention of the “trumpet of God” is stated as specific to believers being “caught up” (Raptured—cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17), and the change necessary in order to be Raptured will occur at the “last trumpet” (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-55), the only answer possible is that the “last trumpet” is in fact the “trumpet of God”; which begins the eternal state.¹⁰⁰⁷ Within this we realize that the seven trumpets were given to the angels by God; therefore the trumpets are all of God.
 - A simple fact—in order to have a “last trumpet,” there has to be preceding trumpets!
 - The day in which “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of His Christ,” is initiated by the sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet (cf. 11:15). The “trumpet of God” is the trumpet which calls for the

¹⁰⁰⁶ cf. Hebrews 1:5-14.

¹⁰⁰⁷ cf. 11:15-17; Matthew 24:29-31.

gathering of His children and bride (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17). Due these facts, the signal which initiates His kingdom is the same signal which calls forth the inhabitants of His kingdom; thus the 7th trumpet is in fact the “last trumpet” which is in fact the “trumpet of God.”

- Within this, we understand the words which Jesus spoke regarding the “Rapture” of the church; for with these words we realize the exactness of all things according to the will of the Father!

Matthew 24:36-39: “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone.” For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. “For as in those days which were before the flood they were eating and drinking, they were marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so shall the coming of the Son of Man be.”¹⁰⁰⁸

- Please note from the Mark chapter 13 passages, that believers will be gathered together by angels from the farthest end of the earth and be taken to the farthest end of heaven (v. 27). With this, let me say in summation—unless there are two occurrences of believers being “caught up” (Raptured), of which the second is never mentioned in Scripture; this must be the event which has been awaited for generations, due believers devotion for the Lord and abhorrence of evil.
2. The Day of the Lord: This exact wording has been utilized many times in Scripture; always referring to a time of God’s divine works involving those created in His image (spiritually). Aside of the main usage of this phrase in reference to the “end time events” (judgment upon the entire world), it has also been utilized regarding judgments against nations which have been fulfilled in times of antiquity (specifics - Egypt; Edom).

¹⁰⁰⁸ cf. Mark 13:4-37.

- With understanding that the phrase “day of the Lord,” always refers to times of righteous judgment; specifically judgment from the Lord; there is no necessity to bring forth confusion as by individualizing event specifics; for the phrase in regard to the “end times” references the time from the beginning of the Tribulation Period (breaking of the second seal), and includes all events through the coming of the Lord, the millennial kingdom, the completion of divine judgment (White Throne), the recreation of the heavens and the earth; thereby in ultimate fulfillment of all revealed Biblical prophecy and promise; with finality when God is all in all.¹⁰⁰⁹ This is the basis by which; although confusing; “with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.”¹⁰¹⁰ Until the Lord has placed all enemies beneath His feet, a necessity for judgment yet exists; within the “Day of the Lord!” We must remember—the Day of the Lord is all about Him; His: righteousness, holiness, and justice!
 - From within the 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4 passages, it must be noted that believers being “caught up” (Raptured); within the “day of the Lord”; will not occur until the apostasy both comes and is revealed. Within this, we can easily discern no possibility for the Rapture to occur prior to the midpoint of the tribulation period; which negates both the philosophy and possibility of a pre-tribulation Rapture!

Chapter 8

Although no mention is made of the amount of time involved in the sealing process, a total silence of one half-hour immediately follows the breaking of the seventh seal; because this seal’s opening will unleash great devastation and judgment upon the earth; even greater than with the breaking of the sixth seal. The severity of the judgments which are about to be unleashed, can be illustrated by the total quiet which comes upon the heavenly realm (v. 1). This total silence is in itself a revelation of what is about to occur. This unleashing is severe beyond imagination, as it will demonstrate the continued righteous judgment of God upon

¹⁰⁰⁹ cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-4; Joel 1:15-3:21; 1 Corinthians 15:23-28.

¹⁰¹⁰ cf. 2 Peter 3:1-13.

sin; involving those who are yet alive upon the earth, minus those who are divinely protected by the Lord.

By the previous illustration of the saints beneath the altar eagerly seeking their deaths to be avenged, they are now silent as they anticipate the judgment of the Lord to be put forth. They are without words as they anticipate something immense, yet are probably unaware as to the severity of the Lord's just judgment; which is reinforced by the prayers of the saints; petitioning for just judgment to come upon the earth because of sin (vs. 1-6).¹⁰¹¹

- Consideration should be maintained from this point forward, of the children of God throughout history seeking the Lord's just judgment to be upon the wickedness of the world carried out by the "sons of disobedience."¹⁰¹² This consideration is due the angel presenting the prayers of all the saints upon the altar which is before God's throne (v. 3).

All who remain are now vulnerable to devastating destruction; except those divinely protected! The wrath of the Lord which is now to come upon all creation remaining on the earth will begin the equivalent of God's stored up fury in regard to sin and rebellious disobedience; thus it will be beyond human comprehension.

With the opening of the seventh seal comes the first trumpet judgment. Following the prayers of the saints, comes the judgment upon the earth with the hot coals of the census being thrown to the earth, destroying one third of the earth's vegetation. The grass and many of the trees and other vegetation are burned up (v. 7).

With one third of the earth's surface now in ruin, a large meteor or comet (Great Mountain burning with fire—v. 8) strikes the sea and one third of the ships are destroyed, as the second trumpet judgment begins. Along with the sea being struck comes also the poisoning of the sea with blood, which will kill one third of the sea creatures. This devastation now eradicates one third of the world's sea resources and animal life (vs. 8, 9).

¹⁰¹¹ cf. 6:9-11.

¹⁰¹² cf. Ephesians 2:1-3; Ephesians 5:1-10.

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- The sea becoming blood—The exact meaning of this cannot be known for certain; although it is known for certain that God can turn water into blood; for He can fully control elements of creation.¹⁰¹³
- Food for thought—The striking of a large body of water with a mass from space, would result in tidal waves of extreme proportion. The extent of the damage would be contingent upon the size and weight of the mass, including the location and velocity of the impact. By the extent and specifics of mention, we are assured that God is in complete control of all things.

The third trumpet judgment brings forth the poisoning of one third of the earth's rivers and springs; as a great star will fall from heaven, burning like a torch (vs. 10, 11).

Possibilities and Considerations: The factor of flaming fragments striking waterways throughout the world at approximately the same time, demonstrates the awesome abilities of God to create and destroy as necessary, for fulfillment of His sovereign will. With the specific of the star named “Wormwood” being the instrument of this destruction (led forth), and the fact that many waterways will be stricken, the potential exists of “Wormwood” being broken into pieces upon impact with the atmosphere; then the fragments striking exactly according to God's choosing.¹⁰¹⁴

Because the waters become “wormwood” (v. 11), it is evident that the star (Wormwood) will introduce a type of contamination into the waters (possibly at the watersheds); making the effected rivers and streams unfit for safe consumption (many men died from the waters—v. 11).

TWO CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Because the specific of mention is that the star “Wormwood” fell upon one third of the rivers and streams (v. 10), this cannot be reasoned as being a maintained single mass; although this could have

¹⁰¹³ cf. Exodus 7:14-24.

¹⁰¹⁴ cf. Isaiah 40:26; Psalm 147:4, 5.

been a consideration, had the statement indicated one mass causing the bitterness of the rivers and streams (as by transference).

- As by transference—This potential also exists, and could be accomplished if the star “Wormwood” were to strike at exactly the appropriate place; of which only God knows. By an alternate definition of the Greek word for “fall”—*piptw* indicates “to beat down,” infection of the specific waters (only God knows) could be effected by a single mass; from whatever determined strike point the contaminate spreads.
2. Although many have taken this judgment metaphorically due knowledge of the earthly plant of bitterness named “wormwood,” this is but human reason as by association. Although we attempt to understand the possibilities, it is inappropriate to attempt explanation of Scripture by associations which may not actually exist.¹⁰¹⁵
- Although many have attempted interpretation of this account symbolically, the fact remains that God has named all the stars, and as He leads them forth by number, a literal interpretation must be maintained! We must always remember—the Lord’s thoughts and ways are far above our own; therefore manipulated understanding as by metaphorical or symbolic reasoning is not warranted, but rather truthful acknowledgment that we have much to learn!¹⁰¹⁶
 - Please remember—I do not claim to have full understanding as to what John actually saw, and although I am attempting possible explanations, I yet maintain literal interpretations of these events; for I remain prayerful never to be so arrogant as to attempt understanding, reason, or explanation of God’s immensity, nor of what a first-century apostle attempted to describe of far future events.¹⁰¹⁷

With the destructive poisoning of many of the earth’s waterways by the star named Wormwood, we now come to the forth trumpet judgment of the sun, moon and stars being dimmed by one third (v. 12). The

¹⁰¹⁵ cf. wormwood—Deuteronomy 29:17, 18; Proverbs 5:3, 4; Jeremiah 9:13-15; 23:14-16.

¹⁰¹⁶ cf. Isaiah 55:8, 9; Jeremiah 33:1-3.

¹⁰¹⁷ cf. 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

judgment upon the earth as by alterations in the heavens of the sun, moon and stars being smitten, will bring forth severe climate changes; immediately preceding the warning of three “woes” to be proclaimed. The woes are to emphasize the severity of the following three trumpet judgments, with devastation greater than those prior (v.13).

Chapter 9

VERSES 1-12

The chronology of Revelation chapter nine begins with the sounding of the fifth trumpet. The first “woe” begins with the key to the bottomless pit being given to a demon (star), who then opens the abyss (vs. 1, 2).

- We know that this is a demon, for an angel of the Lord would be sent forth, and this angel (demon) fell from the heavens (v. 1). This demon may possibly be Satan, for he is the overall (self-proclaimed) king of the demons (cf. v.11).¹⁰¹⁸

The releasing of the locusts (demons) upon the earth will be restricted in event and time, as the demons are held to the torment of men (with restrictions) for a specific duration period—five months (vs. 4-12). The locusts (specifically trapped creatures) will be allowed to torment men and yet will be stayed from harming what vegetation is left of the earth. These creatures (demons) will not be allowed to kill, yet will inflict pain which will cause men to desire death, and yet not obtain it (v. 6). The only individuals safe from the torment of the scorpion like locusts will be those who are divinely protected; who have been sealed and thus blessed by the Lord.

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The demon that opened the abyss cannot necessarily be determined as either Satan, or the angel of the abyss (v. 11); although Satan was cast from heaven approximate to this time.¹⁰¹⁹
 - It is stated—the demon locusts have a king over them (angel of the abyss); whose name is both Abaddon (Hebrew) and

¹⁰¹⁸ cf. Isaiah 14:12-14.

¹⁰¹⁹ cf. 12:9.

Apollyon (Greek), with both names indicating “destruction”; therefore with the specific of the “angel of the abyss” having these names, he specifically is identified—“destroyer.” The angel of the abyss may be the specific demon who reigns within the abyss, which would eliminate both Satan and the angel given the key of the bottomless pit from being identified as—Abaddon / Apollyon. We must consider that there is a hierarchy among demons; specifics of which we have no certainty. Just as kings (rulers) of nations had under their jurisdictions—kings of provinces, so also may be the case within the demon hierarchy upon the earth; with Satan as the primary demonic ruler (ruler of the world).¹⁰²⁰

2. The abyss (*abyssos*): Is the abode of incarcerated demons, and a place of great torment. This place is also referred to as—*tartaroo* (*tartaros*), which is the deepest region of “sheol” (she`ol); a place reserved for demons, where they do not want to go.¹⁰²¹
 - This will be the place of Satan’s incarceration (being bound) during the one thousand year millennial reign of Jesus.¹⁰²²
 - In accordance to the description given regarding the opening of the abyss (bottomless pit—v. 2), we should consider the point of opening to be the vertex of a deep shaft. Within this consideration, we can theorize the “abyss” to be a specific volcano which erupts upon being opened. Within this consideration (theory), we can understand why the demons would not want to be sent into the terribly hot belly of a volcano; where burning sulfur and magma are the order of each day.
 - Because smoke like that of a great furnace came out of the abyss upon its being opened, and the smoke rose into the air causing contamination of the atmosphere, we can understand why both the sun and air were darkened by the smoke of the pit (v. 2).

¹⁰²⁰ cf. Ephesians 6:12; John 12:31; 14:30; 16:8-11.

¹⁰²¹ cf. Luke 8:31.

¹⁰²² cf. 20:1-3.

3. We know that the demon locusts are not actual insect locusts, for insects would surely attack vegetation for sustenance; these creatures will not (v. 4).¹⁰²³
- Descriptiveness of the demon locust: Although the demons may appear exactly as described; here are a few other possibilities.
 - *Like horses prepared for battle* (v. 7): Cavalry were feared by many who were entering into battle, for the horses brought swiftness to the charge, which many times could not be fended against. Unlike cavalry where the horses were led by the troops who rode them, these demons will attack swiftly in a wielded direct manner; which cannot be defended against, as human weaponry would be useless as instruments to fend off the attack.
 - *On their heads, as it were, crowns like gold* (v. 7): The specific of this statement being their “crowns” of authority. This indicates them to have free reign for the fulfillment of their mission; rendering credence to the directed swiftness of their attack.
 - *Their faces were like the faces of men* (v. 7). This in an indication of advanced intelligence. As man holds and utilizes the highest order of thinking abilities among all God’s earthly created beings, these demons will utilize their measure of created intellect for their attack strategies.
 - *They had hair like the hair of women* (v. 8). This may indicate the demons to have a form of beauty (bewilderment), which may stall the retreat of their prey.
 - *Their teeth were like the teeth of lions* (v. 8). This indicates the crushing penetration effectiveness of their onslaught attack.
 - *Breastplates like breastplates of iron* (v. 9). This indicates them to be invincible and unstoppable.
 - *The sound of their wings was like the sound of chariots, of many horses rushing to battle* (v. 9). This indicates the fear they will instill within their prey upon approach.
 - *They have tails like scorpions, and stings; and in their tails is their power to hurt men for five months* (v. 10). By the description of

¹⁰²³ cf. Joel 1:4-7.

how men will be agonized (yet not killed) by the effects of the demon's attacks, they may very possibly inject a hemotoxin (like certain type scorpions) which causes: swelling, redness, and severe pain; with the addition of certain effects of a neurotoxin (of other type scorpions) which causes—convulsions and paralysis.

VERSES 13-21

After a period of torment which spans five months, the sixth trumpet will sound, bringing forth the second “woe” judgment. Four demons will motivate a tremendous army of 200,000,000 men, to march forth and kill one third of the world's remaining population. This one third when combined with the one forth previously killed upon the earth, will bring the death toll to one half of the world's population; approximately two billion people (vs. 13-16).

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

John could not possibly count the one third of the world population which will be killed by this massive force, yet the fact remains that Jesus revealed this precise exactness to John in some manner; once again emphasizing literal acceptance.

It is not known exactly what John saw in his vision, yet the number of men standing at 200,000,000 must be taken literally. Whether or not the weapons of warfare are those of modern times, or whether they will be fighting with sticks, clubs and flaming arrows while on horseback, cannot be known with certainty. All that remains in the path of this fighting force upon the completion of their devastation will be death and destruction; this is certain as approximately one billion individuals will lose their lives.

This massive fighting force will be set on destroying everyone in their path, for they will be initially opposed to the Antichrist and his regime (false Christianity and idol worship). This may be the forces of Islam, Hinduism, Buddhism, and Taoism; for they are the prevalent religions of the eastern areas from which the tremendous fighting force will come. With a force the size of two hundred million, the sheer numbers of the men are in excess of count ability, and yet the machinery of warfare is then added, which makes for one huge destructive force.

With the devil and the Antichrist leading nations of the world in warfare against each other, the strategy of each side remains the same, as they each seek to kill before being killed. With the mindset of man being centered upon personal existence and preservation (of “self”), they will beat each other to death with their bare hands if need be, in order to survive. As wicked intent regulates the man, and not vice versa, and this fact even more substantial during the Tribulation Period, when divine restraint of evil has been removed; the only end to this conflict with wickedness upon the earth, will come by the glory of the Lord Jesus and Him alone.¹⁰²⁴

The description given by John (as he was speaking in words of his day, and attempting to explain what he was seeing two thousand years before these modern day weapons of warfare were invented), was one of evil looking machines of mobility.

- The description which John gave to the horses and riders was a descriptiveness of heavily armored personnel (body armor) and vehicles (tanks; assault vehicles) of warfare (v. 17).
 - John compares the horse’s heads with the heads of lions, with fire coming forth from their mouths. Just like since World War II and the Korean war, when the aircraft were painted with mouths at the cockpit and the fuselage was silver and thus armor in appearance, these factors of design painting and the fact that the machine guns and cannons spit fire when they are discharged, would make for a scene much like the one described by John.
 - Tanks of today have many types of metal structuring, much for the purpose of passing through obstacles. With sharp edging at the forefront of the vehicle, would this appear to be “heads of lions” (v. 17)?
- John describes that one third of the world’s remaining population will be destroyed by the fire, smoke and brimstone which proceeds forth from these troops and weapons of warfare (v. 18). Since we know that this massive destruction will come from humankind, we can easily assume that this will not be actual fire and brimstone (burning sulfur).

¹⁰²⁴ cf. 19:11-21.

- The description given by John as to the horse's mouths and tails having power can be seen by the powder and booster flashes which come from the muzzle and guidance mounts of cannons and missile launchers. By the descriptiveness by John of—*their tails are like serpents and have heads; and with them they do harm* (v. 19), let us consider the characteristics of a missile. A missile: has fins (scales) upon its tail, which are utilized for both guidance and flight stability; unless malfunctioning, a missile always strikes “head” first, thus— with them (the head) they do harm.
- How would we describe a detonation explosion, if we lived in the 1st century A.D.? We (having witnessed the destructiveness of an detonation explosion) realize—fire and hot flying debris (shrapnel) from the instrument of destruction, when combined with the flaming debris rising into the air from the target, would appear as brimstone in accordance to the expanding and fiery effects.
- Another factor which should be considered is that of thermo nuclear explosions. Most ballistic missiles are designed to detonate several hundred feet above ground level (AGL), and this for maximum dispersal of thermo nuclear fallout and decimation; imagine the destructive force of several detonations! Underwater thermo nuclear explosions, cause great destruction to the waterway wildlife, and whatever else is present within the blast radius; with nuclear explosions designed to destroy ballistic missile submarines, imagine the destructive force of several detonations! What would these blasts be described as by someone living in the first century A.D.; considering the immense heat and fiery explosion from thermo nuclear detonations?
- It should also be considered that if anyone launches nuclear ballistic missiles, which maintain flight paths of thirty minutes or less, then retaliatory launches will follow. Imagine the short time duration of multiple launches, and the nuclear devastation which will follow throughout the world; within this, consider that there will be very little time to flee for safety!¹⁰²⁵
- What of biological warfare (virus) which can kill anything which has life?

¹⁰²⁵ Matthew 24:15-21.

1. We know that four demons will be released from imprisonment at the River Euphrates during the sixth trumpet judgment, to gather a great army and kill one third of the world's population, in accordance to human warfare. We know that the battle (Armageddon) will be a battle of ultimate victory by the Lord Jesus Christ over all of complacently sinful humanity, with the exception of the few who will yet live to enter the millennial kingdom (cf. 19:11-21). We can understand that although the massive army of 200,000,000 is initially against the forces of the Antichrist, during which time the massive army will cause great devastation upon the earth; the armies will yet within wickedness become allies prior to the Armageddon battle, for all who are battling are being led by demonic influence and stubborn adolescent pride! By these facts, we discern two different usages of the tremendous army of 200,000,000.¹⁰²⁶

2. The exact circumstance of how one third of the world's population was killed by the massive army in accordance to the sixth trumpet judgment is not known for certain. The specific could possibly be in accordance to the mindset of rulers of antiquity such as—Genghis Khan, whose generalized philosophy was one of “join us or die.” Within this basis of thinking, one third of the world's population was killed due their refusal to join the ranks of either the massive army, or the armies of the Antichrist. Matters of further consideration regarding this are:
 - a. Due the historical facts of the “Crusades,” inappropriate religious fanaticism had continued forth in pride; void of actual humility of faith and obedience unto the one true God. Although there has always been a remnant within both Christianity and Islam who have sought with diligence to know the truth regarding the God of all creation, the majority have followed the teachings of the wolves who have invaded the sheep fold. With understanding in this regard, we can better understand the potential possibilities of what will occur; leading up to the coming of Christ in glory, and the ultimate outcome of His return.

¹⁰²⁶ cf. 9:13-21; 19:17-21.

- Two of the largest religious nations upon the earth at the time of the Crusades, were Catholicism (supposed Christianity) and Islam. Although the Crusades began as a European effort to regain control of Jerusalem from the Muslims, due Jerusalem's supposed sacredness as the place of Jesus' crucifixion, the Crusades quickly became the excuse of supposed Christendom to advance military campaigns against all non-Christian religious believers. This led to supposed holy wars where each side considered the opposing forces to be "infidels," leading to many thousands being murdered under the religious guise that "God wills it." Within the prideful foolishness of religious zealotry, the supposed will of God has always been utilized as the primary excuse for fulfillment of worldly conquests; which is completely devoid the reality of God within religiosity, as each side believes their god to be superior in personal favoritism!
- b. When the Antichrist comes to power with ten nations as allies, the prideful blindness which follows submission to demonic influence will lead to the same religious situation, where with one form of religion insistent upon superiority (Antichrist's claims to be God); the other forms of religion will retaliate. The gathering of the massive army of 200,000,000 by the four angels of trumpet judgment number six will constitute the forces of religious retaliation, which will kill one third of the world's population prior to the action of deception which draws them to an alliance with the forces of the Antichrist.
- c. With both the armies of the Antichrist and the massive army of 200,000,000 fighting for dominance within religious excuses, multitudes upon the earth will be placed in harm's way and millions killed. We know the religious aspect of the fighting to be a reality by emphasis of the shedding of "saints" blood during the fighting.¹⁰²⁷ It is those who seek an actual relationship of diligence with the one true God, who will adamantly refuse to join either side of the immense religious world war; for God has called us to love one

¹⁰²⁷ cf. 17:6.

another as by reconciliation unto Him. This act of reconciliation is that which leads individuals to reject the basis of warfare (sword), which places true believers as sheep for slaughter during the Tribulation Period.¹⁰²⁸ This reality (sheep for slaughter) is contingent upon the righteousness of the Lord; for saints seeking to remain separate from vain and hostile battling while also seeking to minister, have a righteous authorization to protect themselves from blatant wickedness which seeks to destroy; for we cannot minister if we just lie down and succumb to wicked deadly hostility; for this is an entirely different circumstance than turning the other cheek!¹⁰²⁹

- d. With both sides prideful and adamant upon proving themselves correct in their forms of world religion, and the murderous religious indignation which will occur due the battles for dominance, only One (Jesus Christ) will be able to stay the world from destruction.¹⁰³⁰ Upon the alliance of the two major world powers (forces of the Antichrist and the force of 200,000,000), Christ will return in glory and introduce the righteousness of a true relationship with God; thus proving wrong all forms of secular religion. Although the foundationally different religions of the world powers had attempted to mimic an actual relationship with God as by “religious maxims,” only a remnant among those who have truly sought the relationship with God, that is the basis of true faith, will survive to enter the millennial kingdom. This reality is completely separate from the Rapture (being caught up) of the saints, at the sounding of the seventh (last) trumpet; just prior to God’s wrath (bowl judgments) being put forth upon the sinful world!
- This is the basis by which all upon the world will know of Jesus during the millennial reign, although many during the thousand years will never actually know Him personally. It is those outside of the actual relationship who will be gathered by Satan

¹⁰²⁸ cf. 13:10.

¹⁰²⁹ cf. Matthew 5:39; Luke 22: 35-38.

¹⁰³⁰ cf. Mark 13:20.

when he is released from the pit; all of which (Satan and his followers) will be destroyed at the battle of Gog and Magog, just prior to the White Throne Judgment, and the creation of the new heavens and new earth.¹⁰³¹

3. The severity of the Tribulation Period both in conjunction with the human warfare and the outright evil warmongering of the Antichrist, in accordance to this time period being a time of prophesied judgment upon the sinful world; is emphasized by:
 - The necessity for divine protection and specified time duration, lest all life upon earth be extinguished.¹⁰³²
 - The specified time of: the hour and day and month and year (v. 15), of the demons` release.

4. It is due the yet climbing death toll of millions upon millions of individuals, that we know for certain that many yet dwell upon the earth in addition to: those previously martyred, the 144,000 Israelites specifically sealed and protected, those who will survive to enter the millennial kingdom, and the number who have yet to be martyred prior to the conclusion of the Great Tribulation Period.¹⁰³³

5. Four Angels (fallen angels - demons)—The four angels in vs. 14, 15 are not heavenly angels, as holy angels of the Lord are not bound like these four have been. The four angels (demons) involved in gathering the tremendous fighting force involved in this sixth trumpet judgment, have been bound for the explicit purpose of leading the circumstances of this warlike action; demonstrated by the fact that the time of their release is counted down to the exact day and hour. Another factor which demonstrates that the four angels are in fact demons can be noted in the way they are released from bondage by the heavenly angel who holds the sixth trumpet. As heavenly angels are guided and empowered by the Lord to do

¹⁰³¹ cf. 20:7-21:1.

¹⁰³² cf. 6:7, 8; Daniel 12:1-3; Matthew 24:15-25.

¹⁰³³ cf. 6:11; 7:4.

their work according to His will and the authoritative strength of His might (four horns of the golden altar which is before God), the four angels in question here are guided to their task by the sixth trumpet angel; thus are demonic as they are subject to the trumpet angel's commands (vs. 13-15).

6. Further considerations (v. 21; cf. 21:8): Even though one half of the world's population has now been killed in the most gruesome fighting, famine, disease and destructive circumstances in the world's history, those yet remaining will stay adamant (within complacent "self") to remain in their sins, and be unrepentant. The specific revealed aspects of wickedness (sinfulness; lawlessness) which will not be repented of are:
- Murders: It must be remembered that emphasis upon personal sustained physical existence will lead many to deliver others to destruction. When kill or be killed becomes the only option within those without eternal hope, the welfare of others will hold no comparison to the "self" preservation of the many.¹⁰³⁴
 - Sorceries: Although many would consider this to be solely the work of mediums and those who practice divination, the fact remains that although these forms of wickedness will yet continue in accordance to both maintained carnal personal and religious mindsets, the sorceries (plural) of mention very much will include drugs.¹⁰³⁵ Sorceries (*Greek—pharmakeia*) is a word from which is derived "pharmaceuticals"; thus the use of drugs will be a prevalent factor which will keep millions from the clarity of thinking necessary in order to repent (stop current direction and turn back to God). This will be a basis of many being held deceptively in bondage, for the Lord does not work within those who maintain intentional sin; which within this specific is intentional avoidance of clear conscious thought. With the world being one where many answers are sought, and both denial and evasiveness are attempted through drugs, the

¹⁰³⁴ cf. Matthew 24:9, 10; Daniel 12:10; Romans 5:3-5; Ephesians 2:11-16;
1 Thessalonians 4:13.

¹⁰³⁵ cf. Matthew 24:11-13, 23-27.

stage is set for “sorceries” to be a major factor within Satan’s guile upon the earth! As the “trumpet judgments” will obviously cause great fear to befall the multitudes, the shame will lie in the masses further trusting the things of humankind and of the world; while yet denying the Lord in whom is found hope, answers, and promise!¹⁰³⁶

- Immorality: The masses will continue to engage in all aspects of “fleshly indulgences”; for “self” is the foundation of lustful motives and desires!¹⁰³⁷ Please understand—“religion” is useless (of no value) against “fleshly indulgence!”¹⁰³⁸
- Thefts: With the world in states of corruption, famine, disease, torment, depravity, and wantonness, stealing from others will be of little concern when compared with the overwhelming potential for death!
 - Further considerations regarding the army of 200,000,000 and the River Euphrates, will be forthcoming in the area of the sixth bowl judgment.

7. Many of the religions of the world are for the most part drastically opposed to supposed Christianity (the Christian religion); this when combined with the fact that Islam is adamantly opposed to idolatry, will lead to a religious context of battle; for the Antichrist will claim to be God. With these factors in mind, it is understandable that the initial differences between the armies of the Antichrist and the army of 200,000,000 will be derived from what is considered a holy war. The ways in which many of the Eurasian countries cause major destruction supposedly for their faith (death to the infidel), can it be that they initially fight against other religious cultures of the world as an aspect of honoring their philosophies and gods?

- When the Holy Spirit is removed so as to allow wickedness to run rampant through both the idol worship as demanded by the Antichrist and the opposition to it, is it possible that this will be the religious root of the battles?¹⁰³⁹ Throughout history, some

¹⁰³⁶ cf. 18:22-24.

¹⁰³⁷ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:32, 33; Matthew 24:37-39; Galatians 5:19-21.

¹⁰³⁸ cf. Colossians 2:20-23.

¹⁰³⁹ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:6-9.

of the most bloody battles and extended confrontations have been due to different beliefs and religious doctrines.

- The prelude to this type of aggression has been coming forth for many years. Within many religions, including the Christian religion (not Christianity), teachings of anger and hatred toward those of other cultures and creeds have been proclaimed by many supposed “spiritual leaders” who serve Satan; while claiming their service to be for God!¹⁰⁴⁰ This has continued because many believe the words of religious leadership; although their fruits deny the God they claim to know and serve.
- Could the final massive world war which kills billions, be due religious philosophies in addition to self-survival?
 - Just as Germany and Japan sought world dominance in World War II, and many nations allied themselves for the sake of world freedom from tyranny, so also may be the situation during the Tribulation Period. Because Satan through the Antichrist will insist upon worship and submission from all humankind, and the population of the world is not about to surrender their religious beliefs without a fight, will this be a separation of forces (to the utmost degree) much as has been evinced (in a partial degree) in past years?
 - I do not know, yet there is considerable potential to the notion; especially with the increase in worldwide religious fanaticism. When we remember that the actual battle faced by all religious and relational believers is in the spiritual realm, we can discern the basis of the wicked battles of the Tribulation Period to be in conjunction with direct demonic influence; while also understanding that only those who focus upon the Lord (those within the spiritual relational reality) will avoid the predominant deceptions which will befall the entire world!¹⁰⁴¹
 - This will be further discussed in chapter 17 (religious Babylon).

¹⁰⁴⁰ cf. John 16:2, 3.

¹⁰⁴¹ cf. Ephesians 6:10-12.

Chapter 10

The chapter begins with emphasis upon a powerful angel (by description) with a little book, speaking to John; John is then denied the authority of passing on that which has been proclaimed by the “seven peals of thunder” (loud utterances) (vs. 1-4).

- Because the voice which denied John authority to write the proclamations from the “seven peals of thunder” was rendered from heaven, and the voice was immediately followed by praise from the angel who was standing on the sea and land; it must be considered that the voice from heaven, was the voice of the Lord (cf. v. 8).
- Although the book of Revelation was revealed to us so that we may know what “must occur” in the end times, this demonstrates thoroughly that we are not to attempt conjecture as to those things yet sealed (v. 4). As the instruction was specifically that John not reveal that which was uttered by the “seven peals of thunder,” I will in no way attempt explanation as to what may have been spoken!

The angel then lifted his hands to the heavens and proclaimed glory to God eternal, in a manner to emphasize Him as the Creator of all things. The proclamation of glory to God (as Creator) was immediately followed by the statement—*there shall be delay no longer* (vs. 5, 6). Proclamations for the glory of God as Creator are repeated in the book of Revelation which emphasizes a return to reality; this prior to the Tribulation Period, and again as it draws to a close; thus individuals upon the earth have opportunity for understanding of truth and/or repentance! This holds a twofold significance, for the severity of the judgments themselves, and the time for the reaping of the earth is precise according to God’s omniscience and omnipotence; while yet throughout, the Lord is merciful.¹⁰⁴² All fulfillments within the book of Revelation are exactly according to the will of the Father; for the sounding of the 7th trumpet (last) will soon occur!

- Quick reminder: It is exactness emphasized within the book of Revelation, which makes evident the necessity for a literal interpretation!

¹⁰⁴² cf. 4:8-11; 14:6-8, 14-20.

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The immense truth which is emphasized by these verses must be considered; as:
 - Even though the judgments upon the earth have been severe beyond human explanation or reasoning (as they are divinely allowed by God), the masses upon the earth have yet refused to acknowledge self-guilt or necessity for repentance! Because the existence of God has always been easily witnessed by that which He has created, and the masses upon the earth yet attempt ignorance of the fact as by their refusal to turn to God, the further severity with the sounding of the 7th trumpet will no longer have delay. This in essence illustrates that truly no one has excuse or actual reason for denial as to the suffering which will now be inflicted upon sinful humanity.¹⁰⁴³
 - It has been due human attempts at denial of these facts, which have led to the immorality becoming prevalent upon the earth; this becoming overwhelmingly pronounced during the Tribulation Period!¹⁰⁴⁴ This type of fleshly prideful arrogance does not occur within those who have had the measure of faith righteously actuated within them by the Lord; yet because God gave each a measure of faith, the matter and consequences of failing to believe (supposed atheism; stubborn pride) falls to each individually, as also the punishment which will occur according to outright divine wrath will come upon the earth after God's legitimate born again children are "caught up" (Raptured) upon the sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet!¹⁰⁴⁵
 - Because the state of eternity (mystery) will begin when the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our God, the preliminaries of the millennial kingdom as well as the eternal state of believers will begin upon the sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet (v. 7). Within this, we gain understanding as to the different mysteries; one for the Jews, which was proclaimed by God's servants the prophets;

¹⁰⁴³ cf. Romans 1:18-23.

¹⁰⁴⁴ cf. 9:20, 21; Romans 1:24-32; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12.

¹⁰⁴⁵ cf. Romans 12:2, 3; Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 5:9-11.

the other, fulfillment of the mystery which was revealed through the Apostle Paul's ministry.¹⁰⁴⁶

The book held by the angel is given to John to eat, which is sweet to the taste; yet bitter in the stomach when digested (vs. 8-10). The sweetness signifies the pleasantry of Gospel truth, salvation, and the Scriptural emphasis of God's mercy, grace, and lovingkindness; yet the bitterness is that of reality, as the choice of millions has and will continue to be denial of truth, leading to their condemnation.¹⁰⁴⁷ The sweet taste (reality) of truth is both strengthening and reassuring for those who trust in the faithfulness of God; yet the bitterness of being deceived is always harsh, when all attempts at ignorance and denial are brought into the light of reality (bitter)!

2. Even though the revelations which John was shown had thus far been terrible, the coming "bowl" judgments will be even more so extreme; yet John must go on prophesying, so that all upon the earth may gain understanding as to what must occur (v. 11)!
 - This reality teaches us to maintain our focus upon the Lord, staying from allowing circumstances to distract or discourage us. Just as in the world today, the deceptive and coercive effects of "religion" has caused great disunity within the Body of Christ (church), leading to many blatant false teachings and coercions which yet cause great harm in leading the many away from truth, so also will this continue until worsened when God allows deluding influence to come upon the sons of disobedience. With understanding as to the sweetness of the truth and of the harsh reality of judgment to be certain, we must all continue to speak the truth in love; laying aside all concerns of "self" lest we fail to serve our Lord due disillusionment, discouragement, deception, and "religion" which lies outside the confines of the personal relationship necessary in order to be saved and led forth righteously!¹⁰⁴⁸

¹⁰⁴⁶ cf. 11:15-19; Joel 2:1-11; Jeremiah 31:27-40; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 15:51-58; Romans 11:25-32; 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:1-12.

¹⁰⁴⁷ Jeremiah 15:16; Psalm 19:9-14; 136:1-26; Romans 8:1-11; 10:8-13; Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

- The harsh reality of “religion” becoming a means of entertainment in the past several years, and a means of prolonged ritualistic superficial worship (of rote) throughout generations, has served demonic influence in leading astray multitudes; for doctrinal and ritualistic religion is necessary for those who walk by sight within carnality! This reality is confirmed by the necessity for destruction of the “religion” of the world, which has caused harlotry in relation to the one true God. When the Antichrist deems the usefulness of “religion” to become hindrance to his attempts to be worshipped, he will destroy supposed “Christianity” from the face of the earth; as an aspect of full initiation of idolatrous worship unto himself.¹⁰⁴⁹ The fact that “religion” can be destroyed emphasizes the fact that “religion” is not based in truth; for the truth shall never pass away.¹⁰⁵⁰ With deception being a primary weapon upon the world, it must be understood that religious foolishness has allowed millions to be held captive within a lie; thus unable to discern truth which could gain them freedom. The primary human factor which obscures ability to come to knowledge of truth is stubborn and rebellious adolescent pride; which is the reason the Gospel emphatically emphasizes the necessity of humble submission pertaining to a relationship with God! The factors of prideful obscurity, evasion of truth, and blatant deception will be prevalent during the Tribulation Period!¹⁰⁵¹

Chapter 11

PREFATORY:

At this point I must point out that what I believe is far reaching from the beliefs and teachings of many. The imperative remains that we must test all things according to revealed Scripture truth, without any form of denial so as to maintain a former doctrine or belief. In areas such as

¹⁰⁴⁸ cf. Ezekiel 2:8-3:11; Romans 10:1-17.

¹⁰⁴⁹ cf. 17:1-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:3, 4.

¹⁰⁵⁰ cf. Matthew 24:35; 2 Peter 3:10-13; John 14:6, 7.

¹⁰⁵¹ cf. Luke 21:34-36; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12.

prophesy, we must evidence the realistic truth of the Gospel, in accordance to appropriate correlation, lest we fail in understanding the reality of what is current and what shall be.

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS (VS. 1-15):

1. Orthodox Jews currently attempt to worship God as by adherence to the Mosaic Law; this aside of Levitical Temple worship which involves the sacrifice of animals.
 - Because the “Dome of the Rock” lies atop the old Temple mount, it would be futile to believe the Muslims would willfully allow the reconstruction of the Temple upon the mount. Any attempt to destroy the Dome of the Rock would lead to a considerable adversarial warfare. Because we know the first 3.5 years of the tribulation to be times of peace, and we know the “regular sacrifice will be abolished” upon the breaking of the second seal; we therefore can discern that the sacrifice is one of the “heart,” not one within the structure of the Jewish Temple.¹⁰⁵²
 - Even though the Jews may rebuild the Temple in attempts to initiate the former sacrificial system; false adoration and worship for the Antichrist would have to come from within the hearts (emotions) of individuals.¹⁰⁵³ The difference between legitimate born again children of God and the illegitimate children, remains the fact that the “spirit” within the legitimate children is the place of God’s indwelling (temple of the Lord); whereas the “heart” (emotionally stature) of the illegitimate children is the place where the deception will occur; for the former (legitimate children) are allowed freedom from deception by God’s indwelling, and the latter (illegitimate children) are not; for external of the spiritual relational reality, there can be no freedom in Christ!¹⁰⁵⁴
 - The factor of carnal (false) worship and false adoration coming forth in accordance to the deceit of the beast (Satan)

¹⁰⁵² cf. Daniel 12:11.

¹⁰⁵³ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17.

¹⁰⁵⁴ cf. John 8:31-45.

through his servant the Antichrist is quite easily understandable; for the current-day church (Laodicea) is blatantly carnal, within seeking God in the physical realm through the flesh, whereas the actual relationship with God is solely spiritual; thus those external of the spiritual relational reality are not legitimate children of God, and thus their bodies are not the “temple of the Lord,” thus they would seek physical realm fulfillment of that which is spiritual (false mimic and/or emulation)!

- Although the multitudes of the world’s inhabitants have attempted to please God through physical aspects of worship void of spiritual devotion and reality, and this has led to the foolishness of believing God’s blessing to be upon that which is more pronounced in the physical realm (involvement indicates belief); the fact remains that “religion of rote” does not please God, but rather maintains the deception of a relationship which does not actually exist.¹⁰⁵⁵ It is this type of “deception within religion” which denies those without righteously actuated faith, the possibility of actual spiritual understanding and knowledge (spiritual discernment and ability to appraise)!
 - The old covenant was done away with upon the introduction of the new covenant which is in Christ; whether it is accepted or not, a reversion to the old covenant will not actually ever occur!¹⁰⁵⁶ If it should occur, the potential for Jews to be born again during the tribulation, would be non-existent; yet we know by revelation that a remnant of Jews will become born again believing martyrs.
- Although most scholars believe that a literal temple will be reconstructed, due the words of descriptiveness utilized by John; one most important factor of Temple sacrificial worship is missing! What of the “Ark of the Covenant”?
 - We know with certainty that the Ark of the Covenant will someday appear in the heavenly temple of God, and we know that although sought for generations it yet remains elusive to all; although a Catholic Church in Ethiopia

¹⁰⁵⁵ cf. Matthew 7:21-27; Isaiah 29:9-16.

¹⁰⁵⁶ cf. Hebrews 8:1-10:39.

claims to have the Ark in their possession. What is not obvious to many is that the Ark of the Covenant is the possession of God almighty; and not to be coveted (v. 19).

- Without the actual Ark of the Covenant, atop of which is the “mercy seat” where the sacrifice must be rendered, there can be no Jewish sacrifice! Although a replica of the original Ark which belongs to God could be built; the fact remains that without the original Ark which holds the: tablets of the covenant, Aaron’s rod which budded, and the jar of manna; the sacrifice would be invalid! We can be assured that the Israelites know this as well!
2. Because we can spiritually discern that without righteously activated faith, which is a divine work of God during His “drawing” process, it is impossible to please God, and this will not change no matter what attempts at “religion” are put forth, we can understand how many will be “purged, purified and refined” as by entering into the personal relationship with Jesus; whereas those held captive by religion will continue in their captivity to delusive religious endeavor, as the veil remains which keeps them from clarity of understanding and truth.¹⁰⁵⁷
 3. Within these facts, we know that the “temple” within which the Antichrist will set himself up as being a god, is in actuality the “temple” of the human heart; for it is within the hearts (emotions) of the un-believing that the falsehoods of Satan’s deceptions through his Antichrist will be established. This has been prepared for by false Christianity (Christian religion) for centuries; with the supposed emphases placed upon signs, wonders, and the necessity for the miraculous; which is a basis of walking by sight in accordance to “religion.” Religion teaches the necessity to rely upon men for understanding and knowledge, which is based in such instituted things by the Mother or harlots as “canonization.”¹⁰⁵⁸
 - Upon Jesus` first coming, many of the Jews refused to accept Him as the Messiah because He did not come as a conquering

¹⁰⁵⁷ cf. Daniel 12:10; Romans 2:17-29; Hebrews 11:1-12:29; 2 Corinthians 3:4-18.

¹⁰⁵⁸ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:5; 6:9-20; Ephesians 2:11-22; 1 John 2:18-23; 4:1-6; 2 John 1:7-11.

physical authority; which was their hope, for they sought release from Roman tyranny. Within this, we can understand that they failed to render their spirits to God in accordance to His prophesied blessing (matter of “faith”), as they continued to focus upon physical salvation alone. This will be a basis of accepting the “mark of the beast”; for without the seal of God unto salvation, the physical body is the foundation of hope within the multitudes.

- When the Antichrist comes with authority (although not his own, but rather that of Satan—i.e. the ruler of the world; beast), the Jews will accept him as the Messiah of promise, for he will come in a physical authoritative manner of which (unfortunately) the Jews seek. It is due the inappropriate maintained physical focus of the Israelites (and multitudes), when combined with the many “signs and wonders” they also seek, that the Antichrist will deceive them (and Gentiles) into acceptance of him. It is due the deceptions (false signs and wonders) and physical aspects of authority exemplified by the Antichrist, which will be his means of “setting himself up as being God,” for he will feed upon the fear of the multitudes derived from their seeking salvation in the flesh.

Chapter eleven brings the measuring of the temple and altar of the Lord, yet the courtyard is not measured at this time (vs. 1, 2). Although most commentators say that this is the most perplexing chapter in the book of Revelation because of factors such as this measuring, the fact remains that if taken literally in context of New Testament realities, the truth is presented without confusion.

The factor of measuring the actual distances of a structure to validate area is easy to comprehend, yet the measuring of the worshippers (v. 1) is quite different. The measuring reed in this instance (measure worshippers) is now utilized to measure standard, rather than distance. The worshippers in this instance were to step forward and stand next to God’s form of measure, and thus would be forced to realize that none can live up to the holy standards of God, which further demonstrates (to all) our need for a Lord and Savior.¹⁰⁵⁹ This coincides directly with the degraded

¹⁰⁵⁹ Romans 3:21-31; Acts 4:7-12.

mindset of those yet remaining upon the earth, for they yet refuse to turn to God although salvation by God's grace is directly before them.

John was told to measure the temple and altar of the Lord, along with those who worship within it (v. 1). He was told not to measure the courtyard of which the nations have control (v. 2). These two verses are concluded with the fact of Jerusalem being trodden for forty two months.

1. With all that is happening, the instruction is to “measure” all within a spiritual context: temple, altar, and worshippers; for those outside “faith” (the nations) are not to be measured.

- Although many scholars believe the temple must be rebuilt, and thus hold to physical aspects of religious worship, the reality of the New Testament is spiritual in nature; for this is plainly explained in Scripture.¹⁰⁶⁰ With the world having returned to physical realm religiosity beginning in the second century A.D., the reality which is spirituality has fallen away to the point that the New Testament (which is spiritually appraised) is believed to be explainable by human reason and intellect, and that God can be worshipped other than in spirit and in truth; although nothing is further from the truth! In seeking to hold to aspects of faith while involved in physical realm religion, the reality of the spiritual is avoided or outright denied and rejected, along with the reality of God; this explaining why the necessity for rituals, doctrines, philosophies, and traditions as foundational bases for religious worship! The reality of the church's decline from righteous spirituality is revealed in finer detail within chapter five of the book (Big If).
- As there is no basis by which to measure (judge) those outside of the faith, the important factor is that matters of the faith be measured for understanding pertaining to the two witnesses.¹⁰⁶¹
- Because actual righteous faith in Jesus is necessary for the veil to be lifted, and while the veil remains, understanding of Biblical truth is impossible, the imperative exists for actual knowledge of this fact if the testimony of the two witnesses is to be understood and acknowledged (vs. 3-6).

¹⁰⁶⁰ Galatians 3:1-29, specific vs. 19-25.

¹⁰⁶¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 5:3-13, specific vs. 9-13.

2. This renders separation between actual spiritual matters, and physical realm matters which appear to be of God; for the Antichrist will deceive as by false signs and wonders yet void of truth (darkness) so as to lead astray, while the two witnesses will render true signs and wonders (light) as aspects of judgment which emphasize righteous truth; so as to allow freedom from deception (vs. 3-6)! The two witnesses will prophesy (proclaim) truth, during the time the Antichrist is deceiving the many (1,260 days—v. 3). This demonstrates God’s mercy and grace to yet go forth for the sake of the many; for He seeks that all come to knowledge of the truth! Within this aspect of God’s lovingkindness, we must make note of His consistent sending forth of light into a world of darkness!
 - The fact the two witnesses are both sent and protected by God is evinced by the fact that Satan through the Antichrist cannot stop them until the time of God’s choosing (v. 7).
 - The Jews seek for a sign, as also do a plethora of Gentiles, and by doing so yet maintain acts of worship without actual faith; due this fact, both Jewish and Gentile multitudes will be led astray by the Antichrist. Because the tender mercies of God as well as His sufficient grace will be put forth unto the end, the two witnesses will continue to proclaim the truth for the sake of those who will come to believe and thus be saved.

3. A matter of notice: The death of the two witnesses. With the mention of “the beast that comes up out of the abyss”; a possibility exists that Satan led forth the demon locusts from the abyss upon their release, although he was not incarcerated with them.¹⁰⁶² Even though the actual answer cannot be determined with certainty, there is yet a basis by which to gain possible understanding that Satan is the beast who came up from the abyss who instigates the killing of the two witnesses (v. 7); for:
 - The Antichrist is not the actual ruler upon the earth, but rather Satan; the Antichrist is his vassal (puppet) ruler. We know this, as Satan’s desire is to be worshipped, which he will receive through human’s worship of the Antichrist; for Satan holds the actual authority.¹⁰⁶³ It should also be remembered

¹⁰⁶² cf. 9:1-11.

that all who have falsely worshipped in the flesh, have in actuality been worshipping the “father of lies” within religious deception!

- We know that Satan will be cast from heaven (for the last time) at the midpoint of the tribulation, which will initiate the Great Tribulation Period; for the peace accord will end when Satan embodies the Antichrist to begin the devastation and seeking of worship.
 - It is Satan’s embodiment of the Antichrist which will bring forth his (Antichrist’s) healing from the fatal wound. This is the basis by which the Antichrist becomes the “beast,” for at this point Satan becomes the ruling power; in a physical reality (Antichrist) upon the earth.
 - It should be understood that Satan and the Antichrist work closely in conjunction with one another under the authority and power of Satan; therefore, much of the evil and activity must be attributed to Satan, although working through the Antichrist.
- Because we know that Satan will be cast down from heaven, we therefore know that he did not come up out of the abyss initially. Because we know that the Antichrist will be a human being, we know that he (Antichrist) is not a demon from the abyss.
- Within this, we can determine (by discernment) that Satan has been restrained by God from bringing harm upon the witnesses, until the time of God’s choosing. Satan when authorized sends forth his servant the Antichrist to kill the witnesses; which is in accordance to God’s will as a continued aspect of the witness of the two (vs. 11-13).
 - This makes absolute discernable sense; for Satan can only perform his tasks when authorized by God, the Antichrist is controlled by Satan; for the two witnesses would never had survived to proclaim truth if it was solely a basis of choice by Satan and the human Antichrist.
 - Although it is believed by most that the beast of v. 7 is the Antichrist, this makes no sense in the reality of the

¹⁰⁶³ cf. 12:7-9; 13:2-4.

aforementioned. The “beast from the abyss” is the one authorized by God!

4. What is occurring with John’s measuring is preparation for the separation of those who are God’s, from those who are not; in preparation for Christ` return (Rapture) upon the sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet (vs. 15-19).¹⁰⁶⁴
 - This is a time of preparation for Christ` return, when the children of God (sheep) will be separated from the multitudes of the world (goats), when the kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; for the sheep will be raised up to meet the Lord in the air, and the goats will remain behind.
 - The final divine judgments (bowl judgments) upon the world, which will have duration of 30 days. 1,260 days + 30 days of divine wrathful judgment = 1,290 days; which is followed when the Antichrist and false prophet will be seized at the finally of the battle of Armageddon (1335 days).¹⁰⁶⁵
 - It is due the devastation upon the world, which includes the bodies of millions, which allows us understanding as to the individuals who “wait and attain to the 1,335 days,” at which time the millennial reign of Jesus Christ will begin.
 - Although at the current time it is true that no one except the Lord knows the day and time of future events; the Scriptural fact remains that from the day the Antichrist is revealed as the “man of lawlessness,” the exact proportion of days is rendered for our instructional understanding!¹⁰⁶⁶
 - It should be understood that when believers are “caught up” (Raptured), at the sounding of the seventh (last) trumpet (trumpet of God which ushers His kingdom), the reality of the eternal state has begun; for this is the starting point of restoration for the spiritual offspring of Abraham. Although much has yet to be accomplished until the eternal state is

¹⁰⁶⁴ cf. Matthew 24:40-44, truth exemplified - 25:31-46.

¹⁰⁶⁵ cf. 19:11-21; Daniel 12:11, 12.

¹⁰⁶⁶ cf. Daniel 7:4-28; 11:36-12:12; Ezekiel 20:32-44.

fully and completely brought forth by the Lord's great power (strength of His might), this is truly the beginning of the end of un-righteousness both upon the earth and in the heavens (which were defiled by humankind in accordance to the instigated distractions from the evil one)!

5. After the testimony of truth by the two witnesses is finished, and they are slain by the Antichrist, a period (3.5 days) of rejoicing follows by those who are yet doomed to the coming bowl judgments (vs. 7-10).
 - Whether the 3.5 days is a measure of exactness pertaining to the testimony of the two witnesses being for a period of 3.5 years, is not certain. This may be a basis of completion, for the endeavor for which the two witnesses were sent forth; in accordance to the exactness of time between their death, and the Rapture. After the 3.5 days, the witnesses will be given life by the Lord, which will instill fear in the hearts of all who have beheld the miraculous work of the Lord, in restoring and receiving His servants of righteousness (v. 11); while also sparking fear in those who did not perish due to the great earthquake, as they acknowledge the two witnesses to have been servants of God, and therefore servants of truth (the rest - v. 13).
 - As those who intentionally wander in darkness fear the truth of their own existence, which is the basis of the "ignorance is bliss" mentality of the world, the fear which befalls them in having experienced the proclamations of truth by the two witnesses, and the divine witness of truth by their being raised into the heavens, will be severe; for the truth was not only proclaimed, but also realistically witnessed so there can be no denial!
 - Within this work of completion by: the testimony of the two witnesses, their death and being risen, the fear instilled in the hearts of the un-righteously carnal, and divine acts which draw attention to God; the second "woe" is complete (vs. 12-14).
6. These actions of completion according to the will of God now usher in the true action of eternal change; the 7th (last) trumpet!

Notes regarding the two witnesses:

The Lord will rise up two faithful servants who will not waver in their proclamation of the truth regarding the “reality of God.” During the time the two men are prophesying upon the earth, they will be granted power to control nature and do great miracles of righteous judgment. During the period of their prophesying, the Gentiles will be in control of Jerusalem as indicated by their trampling of the city and the temple (v. 2). The witness of these two men will bring forth great torment within the un-righteously carnal; guidance and hope for those who yet seek the truth regarding salvation which is by the divine work of God alone (glory of Christ).¹⁰⁶⁷

Many believe the two witnesses for God during this period, to be Elijah and Enoch; myself included. The reasoning behind this belief is that the Gospel states that it is destined for all men to die once before judgment.¹⁰⁶⁸ Enoch and Elijah were the only two who never saw death (according to the Gospel); therefore this is the basis of believing them to be the two witnesses.¹⁰⁶⁹ A second strong basis for the belief that the two will be Enoch and Elijah, is that Enoch was a prophet to the Gentiles (his prophesies are mentioned in the New Testament—Jude 1:14-16), and Elijah was a prophet to the Jews. In addition, Enoch was shown the reality of the Great Tribulation Period by the Lord, emphasized by the Jude passages afore listed.

Some have said that they are simply two anonymous individuals, whereas others have said that they are Moses and Elijah, because it was these two who appeared with Christ upon the mountain of transfiguration.¹⁰⁷⁰ It should be understood that Moses did in fact die, and was buried by the Lord in a certain location unknown to all, except the Lord.¹⁰⁷¹ The factor remains that we must believe these two witnesses to be real live individuals, who have been appointed by God to be prophets and martyrs for the sake of the Gospel truth; no matter who they may be.

¹⁰⁶⁷ cf. 2 Corinthians 3:4-4:6.

¹⁰⁶⁸ cf. Hebrews 9:26-28, specific v. 27.

¹⁰⁶⁹ cf. Genesis 5:22-24; 2 Kings 2:11.

¹⁰⁷⁰ cf. Matthew 17:1-4.

¹⁰⁷¹ cf. Deuteronomy 34:4-6.

7TH (LAST) TRUMPET (VS. 15-19):

Now with the testimony of the two witnesses finished, and the voice from heaven, their being raised from the dead, and the disturbances upon the earth confirming their testimony as being true (2nd “woe”); the realistic reality of being saved by grace through faith is made evident to all upon the earth (vs. 15-19; cf. 19:1-10).

With the sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet bringing forth the third woe, we hear ... *“The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever”* (v.15). With the twenty-four elders bowing their faces to the ground and praising the Lord, stating that He has taken His great power and begun to reign, we are told of the rage of the world as their judgment has come, and also the reward to the saints.¹⁰⁷² This scene in heaven ends with the ark of His covenant appearing in His temple, accompanied by flashes of lightning, sounds and peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm (v. 19).

1. Although many (including scholars) have stated the “Rapture” to be a secret event, as by a specific of descriptiveness, and that the Rapture happens prior to the tribulation period; we can discern the event to be witnessed by all inhabitants of the earth; for the “nations” become enraged (v. 18).¹⁰⁷³ Why would non-believers become enraged?
 - Now with legitimate (born again) children of God being taken out of the world, as we are gathered by angels to the location of our Lord (in the clouds), the testimony of true Christians is removed from the earth; leaving only the falsehoods of “religion” and harshness of ignorance revealed, void of truth. Because individuals of the world are now left to fend for themselves without the testimony of true witnesses, and they know the proclamation of the good news was true all along, and this as by the events of both the 2nd and 3rd “woes,” they must now pay the consequences of their denial and rejection of the truth (reality of the Christ; glory of Christ). It should also be realized that illegitimate (not born again; rather “religious”) children will be furious (enraged); for they remained ignorant, in denial, rejecting, and/or rebellious regarding the truth of the

¹⁰⁷² cf. 22:11-15, specific v. 12.

¹⁰⁷³ cf. 11:12; 1:4-8, specific v. 7; Matthew 24:36-41.

spiritual relational reality thus far during their lives; yet now being forced to realize the error of their ways, while seeking to make someone the scapegoat of their own rejection of responsibility to: seek the truth, evidence the truth, and walk within the truth!

- The descriptiveness which has led many to believe the Rapture to happen in a moment in time is actually a description pertaining to the change which must occur; which allows believers the substance necessary to inherit the kingdom of God.¹⁰⁷⁴
 - Just because the actual change from the earthly body into the heavenly body will occur in the “twinkling of an eye,” it is absurd to believe the entire process of the Rapture would occur instantly; for the earthly bodies will be changed into the heavenly bodies, which are then raised to meet the Lord in the air. If it had occurred instantly, there would not have been a state of “awe” (woe) within the hearts of the non-believing, nor confirmation and evince of the witness of the two regarding acceptance of truth and salvation. The certainty of their (two witnesses) being raised as the final aspect of their ordained testimony, renders finality to God’s mercy upon sinful man prior to the final bowl judgments, as well as certainty of the witnessed Rapture, for they (witnesses) are primary of the dead who will be raised first (vs. 11-19).
 - It is the raising of believers into the air immediately following the resurrection of the dead, which will cause the fear to be within those left behind. How anyone can make conjecture that the world will not be aware of: the Lord coming in the air, the literal voice of the archangel, the sounding of the trumpet of God, the dead being raised, and the children of God being changed and raised into the heavens; is beyond my ability to comprehend.¹⁰⁷⁵ With the physical disturbances which follow this blessed event, those upon the world will be enraged; for no acts of ignorance or denial can any longer evade this reality (3rd “woe”)!

¹⁰⁷⁴ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:36-58.

¹⁰⁷⁵ cf. Acts 1:9-11.

- For correlation evidence of the reality, please reference—v. 18; cf. 22:6-17; 1 Corinthians 3:12-15; for His rewards are with Him and will be rendered, according to acceptance or denial and rejection of the truth; with the ultimate culmination occurring when the Groom has gathered His bride; leaving those who remained unprepared, ignorant, or rebellious!¹⁰⁷⁶
2. Many throughout history have wondered where the Ark of the Covenant is. By the v. 19 passage, we know where it will be! In such things as searching for the Ark of the Covenant, men have wasted time throughout history, whereas if we simply wait—the answer will come to us. Men have sought it for its financial value (priceless), and in doing so have coveted that which belongs to God. This is the epitome of time wasted, while seeking to sin against the Lord God; as those who serve mammon have not a clue as to the “reality of God”!¹⁰⁷⁷
 - The Ark of the Covenant appearing in God’s temple in heaven is quite significant. Because the mercy seat upon the Ark was the place of temporary forgiveness of sin (once per year—day of atonement), and the ultimate fulfillment of redemption is now occurring (Rapture) just prior to judgment upon the flesh of those remaining upon the earth, the glory of God is revealed as filling the temple in heaven; for certainly the kingdom of the world is now becoming the kingdom of our God! This is the threshold of the greatest change which has ever occurred, since the foundation of planet earth!
 3. More information regarding the spiritual relational reality will be forthcoming within study of—the Wedding Feast (cf. 19:1-10).
 4. With believers now taken out of the world, and thus their testimony removed, the final judgments upon the world of non-believers will come forth within the “bowl judgments” which are included in the 7th (last) trumpet. For the sake of understanding, consideration should be maintained that a separation within the eternal state has occurred with the sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet.

¹⁰⁷⁶ cf. Matthew 25:1-30; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11.

¹⁰⁷⁷ cf. Matthew 6:24.

- Believers have been removed from the earth, so as to be saved from the divine wrath of God which will come upon the world. This is the deliverance from “wrath” (hour of testing) which was promised to the church; thus let us pay heed to “what the Spirit says to the churches”!¹⁰⁷⁸ Please remember from “Big If” chapter five (Laodicea), that the Lord was rejected (kept out due to delusive denial of the truth) of His own church since A.D. 1954; this explaining Satan’s work of delusive religiosity in preparation for the Tribulation Period, and why multitudes will be furious and enraged when they are left to fend for themselves, because of the deluded religiosity to which they remained in bondage!¹⁰⁷⁹
- With believers now delivered from the wrath of God to come upon the world, those yet dwelling upon the earth will suffer terribly.
- Upon completion of the “bowl judgments” and the battle of Armageddon, the earth will be prepared for the reign of Jesus Christ, where His chosen people (the Israelites) will be drawn unto Him. This will be a time (1,000 years) of which all upon the earth will know of Jesus, yet the understanding of many for the Lord will remain but a concept; for those who fail to believe will be gathered by Satan for the battle of Gog and Magog (final battle between good and evil).¹⁰⁸⁰
 - Although revelation is rendered as to the Israelites being gathered unto the Lord in fulfillment of prophesy in the millennial kingdom, there is no mention of the blessing which awaits the bride of Christ (church within which has been no distinction).
- Although many scholars state that these specifics (vs. 11-19) do not refer to the Rapture, due the fact that at other times there has been resurrection of the dead, let us consider two factors:
 - a. Not including Enoch and Elijah who did not die; when the dead were raised, they walked upon the earth.¹⁰⁸¹

¹⁰⁷⁸ cf. 2:4-7, 10-11, 14-17, 20-29; 3:3-6, 10-13, 14-22.

¹⁰⁷⁹ cf. Revelation 3:14-22; James 1:19-25.

¹⁰⁸⁰ cf. 20:7-9; Hebrews 8:7-13.

¹⁰⁸¹ cf. John 12:1, 2, 9, 17, 18; Matthew 27:50-54.

- b. At the Rapture, the dead will not continue to walk upon the earth, but rather all believers will be changed and raised up into the sky (air; clouds); making this resurrection of the dead specific to ultimate redemption; whereas previous resurrections were not unto redemptive salvation!

PREFATORY: CHAPTERS 12-15; 17-18

Chapters 12-15 introduce and describe the seven main personages of the end time tribulation period. These chapters must be correlated with the other chapters of Revelation (6-20) in order to gain perspective and understanding pertaining to the approximate time periods of the events. Although specifics are rendered in Scripture; more specifically in the book of Daniel, pertaining to certain events and times; the fact remains that timeframes (aside of specifics) of each of the tribulation period events cannot be known for certain.

Chapter 17 and 18 render specifics regarding both the religious and financial standards which entering into the hearts of humanity, has led to inappropriate: focus, harlotry, and idolatry; throughout the generations. The judgment upon “Babylon” will indicate judgment upon the wiles of demonic influence which has held the world in bondage to both “self” and manmade religion; these factors (“self” and manmade religion) influencing both the weak and outright destroyed faith of millions throughout history.

When we understand with certainty that Satan has been the ruler of the world from times of antiquity until now, we can understand much of what occurs in these two chapters (17 and 18). With understanding as to the distinctions of emphasis found within the investigation of chapters 12-15, we gain certainty as to certain means by which demonic influence has led billions of individuals astray of the truth.

Chapter 12

With chapter twelve we are introduced to the woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; which represents the nation of Israel.¹⁰⁸² The great serpent (dragon) that is the devil pursues the woman and attempts to kill her

¹⁰⁸² cf. Isaiah 60:1-62:12.

child, which caused the woman (nation) to flee to the mountains under the Lord's protection for a period of 1,260 days (vs. 1-6).¹⁰⁸³

- Representation of Israel by the descriptiveness of the women clothed with the sun will be evinced greatly during the millennial reign of Jesus, by the nation (Israel) following the Lord in righteousness, and by the surrounding nation's attentions upon them.
1. These verses (1-12) indicate the attempt which will be put forth by Satan during the second half of the tribulation (Great Tribulation Period) to eradicate the Jews.
 - The archangel Michael and Gabriel are the chief angelic defenders of Israel. Both Michael and Gabriel are specifically assigned by the Lord to lead endeavors pertaining to the nation of Israel, while also being the most powerful of the heavenly angels sent forth for Israel's protection and preservation (v. 7).¹⁰⁸⁴
 - By emphasis found within vs. 2-4, Israel will be the direct target of Satan's major onslaught; for the Messiah came from Israel, and upon doing so put an end to all hopes Satan had of being the ruler of the earth indefinitely.
 - This fact is emphasized historically, in how demonic influence has attempted the eradication of the Jews as through human instruments of wickedness; a prime example being—Adolph Hitler.
 - With the death and destruction which came forth during Hitler's attempts to conquer the world, it should be remembered that evil was yet restrained upon the earth. During the Great Tribulation Period, the Lord will no longer restrain the blatant evil of Satan's influence upon the earth; this when combined with all demons being cast to the earth to assist with accomplishment of great evil, directly emphasizes an evil and destructiveness upon the earth which

¹⁰⁸³ cf. 13:5; Matthew 24:15-21; Mark 13:14-19; Luke 21:21-24.

¹⁰⁸⁴ cf. Daniel 8:16; 9:20-22; 10:10-21; 12:1.

has never before been allowed; or even conceived of! The extent of this reality is proven by the specific time which the Lord is allowing for the Great Tribulation Period, or all life upon the earth would be extinguished!¹⁰⁸⁵

2. It is due potential for eradication of the Jews in the physical realm which Satan is capable of (through men), that will bring forth necessity for the 144,000 Jews to be sealed and divinely protected.
 - If Satan could eradicate the Jews from planet earth, he could win the war as by forcing avoidance of prophesy fulfillment. Because victory in the war belongs to the Lord, and thus any endeavor to stop the fulfillment of prophesy is futile, Satan realizing the futility of his speculative endeavors becomes enraged; for he will certainly know that his time is short, as the sovereign will of God cannot be disturbed, nonetheless stopped (vs. 7-12)!

3. When Satan and all demons are cast out of heaven for the last and final time, their wrath will be released upon the world; yet those who trust in the Lord shall be protected to whatever degree chosen by God, as testimony of the truth must be forthcoming for the sake of those who yet seek the reality of God and of Christ within a personal spiritual relationship (vs. 11, 12).
 - This will occur at the midpoint of the tribulation, leading to the identity of the Antichrist being revealed. Upon Satan's being cast from heaven, he will immediately empower the Antichrist for the prevalent work of deception which will befall the world. Satan will also put great deceptive emphases within the hearts of the earth's inhabitants, so the Antichrist will be accepted as God; although not by the righteously devotional remnant.
 - This will be allowed by God, for Satan and his many demons will be sent to deceive the masses. By correlation of Scripture (systematic investigation), we discern that Satan and demons being cast from heaven is in exact fulfillment of God's will; for although the demonic forces are cast (thrown down) from heaven, they yet have designated duties.¹⁰⁸⁶

¹⁰⁸⁵ cf. Matthew 24:22; 2 Thessalonians 2:6, 7.

¹⁰⁸⁶ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17; cf. 1 Kings 22:19-23.

- The deceptiveness of demonic influence will be powerful to the extreme upon the earth, for the conviction and restraining work of the Holy Spirit will be removed from all who are not indwelt by Him. Within this, we understand that only those who have the seal of God will be able to discern and thereby avoid the flagrant deceptions (vs. 13-17).¹⁰⁸⁷
4. Satan has been in heaven accusing the saints for an undeterminable number of years.¹⁰⁸⁸ Satan has continued his accusations in later years after the ascension of Jesus, which is made evident by God allowing him to tempt us (all human beings) at times; this to strengthen and nurture devotional obedience unto God, *if* obedience is upheld throughout the temptation.¹⁰⁸⁹
- I cannot help but think that Satan yet believes by his causing us to stumble, he may cause us to fall from grace; as if the atoning work of Jesus would somehow become void, and believers would once again be forced to pay the penalty of sin.¹⁰⁹⁰ This is the only potential reason for his (Satan's) accusations regarding the saints, during his times before God's throne (vs. 9-11).
 - This demonstrates the wicked power of "pride," for no power in the universe can reverse or nullify the power of the cross; yet remaining blinded by the same basis of pride which caused his fall from heaven the first time, Satan continues forth in various mostly futile endeavors.¹⁰⁹¹
 - The statement of "mostly" futile endeavors explained: Satan cannot in any way disturb, hinder or disrupt the will of God, nor can he make void the atoning work of Jesus upon the cross! Satan can and has however, caused great disruption within the hearts and minds of men and women upon the earth, so that many have and will continue to refuse knowledge of the truth by which they may be saved. If Satan can hold individual's focus upon

¹⁰⁸⁷ cf. 7:1-8; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30.

¹⁰⁸⁸ cf. Job 1:6-2:10.

¹⁰⁸⁹ cf. James 4:7-10.

¹⁰⁹⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 9:8-15; Romans 6:1-23; James 4:3-6.

¹⁰⁹¹ Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:13-16.

the things of the world and of the flesh, he will gain individual battle victories; yet the war has already been won by the Lord. The ultimate victory, and devotional successes of the saints (by the grace of God), are the reason for heavenly rejoicing (vs. 11, 12).¹⁰⁹²

- Please remember that God is opposed to the “proud,” while yet giving grace to the humble; which is the exact same grace by which we are saved! Satan knows the unrighteous power of pride, and how it blinds individuals from reality of truth regarding their existence! As pride is the primary defender of the human sinful nature, and as pride causes opposition between humans and God; it is understandable why billions of individuals never come to knowledge of the truth regarding the “glory of Christ” (reality of the Christ); for they remained prideful and religious; thereby devoid of the possibilities which God could have rendered, had they not remained in opposition!¹⁰⁹³

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. What is meant by the “poured water like a river” which comes forth from the mouth of Satan (v. 15)?
 - This may be a literal river which at flood stage would endanger Israelites upon the earth at their place of protection and nourishment, yet how would such a flood come forth from Satan’s mouth (vs. 14-16)?¹⁰⁹⁴
 - Because the contours within the land of Israel would not lend credence of entrapment so as to be susceptible to a single devastating flood, and the flood is from the mouth of Satan, this can only indicate Satan’s commands will rush forth and pertain directly to destruction upon Israel.
 - Because we know that the Antichrist will be Satan’s vassal ruler upon the earth, it is understandable that Satan’s commands will go forth through the Antichrist, as well as to

¹⁰⁹² cf. John 16:8-11.

¹⁰⁹³ cf. James 4:1-10; Galatians 5:17-25; 2 Corinthians 3:4-18.

¹⁰⁹⁴ cf. Isaiah 40:27-31; Deuteronomy 32:11-14.

the many demons upon the earth. This makes illustration as to the outward means of Satan's wrath.

- This also indicates the blatant deceptions which Satan will have emphasized through the Antichrist. What Satan cannot accomplish through military might, he will accomplish by the deceptions which will occur to lead astray the multitudes (proclaimed from the mouth of the father of lies).¹⁰⁹⁵

2. Because Michael and Gabriel are the most powerful of God's heavenly angels, and the time of the Tribulation Period will be a time of distress for Israel far greater than any other in their history (time of Jacob's distress), I would tend to believe they will both assuredly be involved in Israel's protection and nourishment during the Tribulation Period (v. 7, 8).¹⁰⁹⁶

Chapter 13

VS. 1-10

This chapter draws our attention to the coming forth of the second and third persons of Satan's evil trinity. The first to be introduced is the Antichrist, as he comes forth from the sea and is described as having seven heads, ten horns, and ten crowns upon his horns. The ten horns of the Antichrist will in actuality be the ten nations and their kings (ten crowns—diadems), which will swear allegiance to the Antichrist and his world order of religion and government.¹⁰⁹⁷

- It is necessary to make a distinction for the sake of understanding. The emphasis of the Antichrist coming up out of the sea is indication that he is a Gentile (v. 1). The mention of the seven heads (seven mountains / hills—cf. 17:9, 10), makes indication pertaining to the revived Roman Empire.
- With understanding that the final (Roman) of the four major world empires of the book of Daniel—Babylonian {lion},

¹⁰⁹⁵ cf. John 8:40-47.

¹⁰⁹⁶ cf. Jeremiah 30:1-8; Daniel 12:1-3.

¹⁰⁹⁷ cf. Daniel 7:7, 8, 24.

Medo-Persian {bear}, Greek {leopard}, Roman {extremely strong}, has continued forth even to this day as through “religion,” we gain discernment as to means by which the Antichrist will rise to power through the deceptiveness of the Roman religion, whose doctrinal foundation originated in Babylon.¹⁰⁹⁸

The Antichrist will receive his powers of deception, false wonders and miraculous signs directly from Satan.¹⁰⁹⁹ The Antichrist is seen here as the seventh of seven rulers (key rulers or heads); the seventh ruler (Antichrist) receives some sort of fatal wound which is healed by Satan. Because the wound is healed, many will worship Satan as through this man of deception; which adds credibility to the Antichrist’s false claims to be God within the hearts of deceived individuals (vs. 3, 4).¹¹⁰⁰

With understanding that Satan has (as revealed) always wanted to be “like the Most High,” and thus worshipped; we understand that through the worship of the Antichrist by the multitudes upon the earth, Satan will receive this as worship unto himself as through his vassal ruler.

Within religious seeking of “signs and wonders” as a basis of supposed faith, the wound of the Antichrist which is healed by Satan will confirm in the hearts of the world’s weak believers (non-born again believers) a form of exultation (actually nonexistent / deceptive) for the Antichrist.

- “Religion by rote” has been a means of falsehood utilized by Satan throughout the generations, to stay individuals upon the earth from having the personal spiritual relationship with God through faith; by which individuals are led forth and saved hence.
- Religion throughout the world has set the stage for this to occur, for ritualistic religion (rote) is apart of actual “faith” by which it is possible to please God. “Faith” is not a necessity within religion by rote, for actual faith is based upon that which is not seen!¹¹⁰¹

¹⁰⁹⁸ cf. 17:1-18; Daniel 2:31-43; 7:4-7.

¹⁰⁹⁹ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-10.

¹¹⁰⁰ cf. Isaiah 14:14.

¹¹⁰¹ cf. Hebrews 11:1-6.

The Antichrist will speak tremendous blasphemies against God and the saints, while gaining continual favor through deception and increased wealth. All who have not had their names written in the Lamb's book of life shall with certainty be deceived (vs. 5-10)! Several factors of importance are mentioned in these verses:

1. The Antichrist will have authority to act upon the earth (v. 5). Because the Great Tribulation Period will be a time of God's judgment upon the sinful (lawless) of the earth, and because there is no actual divine authority except that of the Lord our God; the empowerment given to the Antichrist by Satan, will be authorized by God.¹¹⁰²
 - The non-believers of the Great Tribulation Period will submit to the authority of the Antichrist, whereas believers (for the most part) will not; for our (believers) submission to the commands of human ruling authority goes only as far as the point from whence it violates the Word and standards of God. This point being (regarding the Tribulation Period), the point of our fleeing the cities; which is the point by which, through discernment by the Holy Spirit, we will know the time of the Great Tribulation Period has come!¹¹⁰³
 - With actual knowledge of this distinction, we realize why we are not to have close associations with non-believers, for the potential of corruption always exists.¹¹⁰⁴
 - With knowledge of what must occur, and thereby understanding that the human ruling authorities of the world are designated and chosen in accordance to God's sovereign and revealed will leading us to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, we gain discernment as to the limits by which we may attempt intervention or rejection regarding ruling powers.
 - How many believers (?) in God throughout the generations, have actually fought against the will of the Father, by their attempts to bring peace and contentment to the entirety of the world, which will only be brought forth by the divine

¹¹⁰² cf. Ephesians 1:18-23; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Romans 13:1-5.

¹¹⁰³ cf. Matthew 24:15-21.

¹¹⁰⁴ cf. 1 Corinthians 10:12; 15:20-34; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

power of God? Actions such as these demonstrate that many believers do not study, or abide in the Lord, Gospel, and according to Gospel standards, nor do they have understanding as to what must occur!¹¹⁰⁵

- Emphasis in this regard is forthcoming within study of the—“mark of the beast.”

2. Statements will come forth from the mouth of the Antichrist, which causes hatred to come upon true believers by those who have been deceived by religion (vs. 6-9); for the hatred will be foundational to religious denial of the truth regarding the reality of God, which the Lord’s true servants must proclaim! It is an unfortunate fact that multitudes in choosing to believe only that which is of personal volition, outright deny truth regarding the spiritual relational reality; within denial of truth, deceptions always hold great potential to abound unto the deceiving of multitudes!¹¹⁰⁶ This is but an aspect of Satan’s strategy for wrathful working against the children of God, through the religious and political government of the Antichrist.

- Those without actual faith (religious individuals) who worship the beast, will be sent forth to kill and enslave true believers. Within this, we can understand that a basis of worldly religion will be utilized, thus this will be considered a holy war by the multitudes.
- With the statement—If anyone has an ear, let him hear (v. 9), we know that this is being rendered for instruction pertaining to that which we (legitimate children of God) may be forced to suffer. This is an emphasis to listen to what the Spirit of truth has to say (emphasized—7 churches; cf. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22). Simply put—the implanted inspired Word of God is for our instruction and spiritual benefit, so that we may come to understanding and knowledge of the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) within which we are saved!¹¹⁰⁷ Religious ignorance within seeking God through the flesh (carnal endeavor) always

¹¹⁰⁵ cf. John 8:31-36; 15:4-10.

¹¹⁰⁶ cf. 12:9.

¹¹⁰⁷ cf. James 1:19-27, emphasis v. 21; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; important—Romans 10:8-13, specific v. 9.

remains, until the ignorance is displaced by knowledge which is from God within the spiritual relational reality; once sealed for the day of redemption by His indwelling (which occurs during the Lord's divine drawing process)! This matter is made evident in chapter eleven of the book (Big If).

3. Although the foolish teachings of “religions” claiming Christianity put forth great effort to avoid the truth of Scripture regarding children of God, the fact remains that we are called to: suffering, tribulation, and persecution. Religious fantasy maintains types of bondage upon those not actually known by God (as His legitimate children), while also maintaining the deception of a relationship with God that does not exist.
 - This fact of reality upon the earth is the basis by which wars are declared in accordance to the deception—“God wills it”; although within “religion” apart from the actual relationship, there is no fellowship potential with God Almighty so as to gain actual instruction.
 - Knowledge of this renders the imperative of having actual fellowship with God; for truth makes us free, whereas deception holds us in bondage.¹¹⁰⁸
4. This is an area within the book of Revelation, where many Bible expositors claim a previous Rapture due the absence of the specific word—“church”; whereas the specific word—churches, was utilized in chapters 2, 3, and 22.
 - Although the words “church” and “churches” are not utilized on any basis of frequency in chapters 5-22, the word “saints” and other words pertaining to those with actual faith in Jesus are utilized often. Please consider—the word “saint” is a word which specifically designates a person who is a true “born again” child of God. Although there are numerous mentions of “saint” and “saints” within Scripture and specifically to this study within the book of Revelation, please consider these specifics according to this topic of mention (vs. 7-10).¹¹⁰⁹

¹¹⁰⁸ cf. 1 John 1:1-3:18; Hebrews 12:1-29; John 8:28-47.

¹¹⁰⁹ cf. 11:16-19; 14:9-13; 16:4-7; 17:4-7; 18:20-19:9.

- Denial of persecution upon “church saints” during the Tribulation Period, continues the outright conjecture of attempting to understand the Gospel as by that which is not revealed, rather than actual understanding as by study (and diligent prayer) of that which has been presented for our instruction.

It would make no sense whatsoever, for the book of Revelation chapters 5-22 to be revealed by God as instruction for non-believers. The Gospel (Genesis chapter 1 –

Revelation chapter 22) was inspired by God for the instruction of believers so as to adequately equip us for service. Since the multitudes of the Tribulation Period will fall prey to the deceptions of Satan, and this proven by illustration and emphasis, it is absurdity to think the book of Revelation was revealed for the sake of non-believers; for if it was, then the instruction of chapters 1-4 would have been sufficient for the equipping of the saints; yet specifics for the sake of our perseverance, steadfastness, and endurance yet continues throughout the entirety of the book. Please reference—cf. 22:6-17; while considering that conjecture based upon absence of mention is in actuality “taking away” from the Gospel (cf. 22:18, 19). Selah! To who is the emphasis of instruction—cf. 22:16?

- I have actually had people claiming to know God, make statements as to how non-believers in the Tribulation Period will seek answers in the Bible, which will lead to their being born again (saved). This is but an excuse introduced by the enemy (demonic influence), to stay supposed believers within the cowardice, procrastination, and fantasizing which is brought forth in accordance with deception. Why is the first, of the types rendered pertaining to those will not inherit the kingdom of God—“cowards” (cf. 21:8)? Selah!

With the removal of the Holy Spirit (restrainer) from the earth (except within true believers who are sealed by His indwelling), evil will run rampant and thereby wickedness as well. Without the convictions of the Holy Spirit who convicts of: sin, judgment and righteousness, and without His teaching of truth upon the earth from within, would non-believers have conviction to simply pick up the

Bible, and without spiritual discernment (also from the Holy Spirit) be able to actually understand what is presented? I think not! Selah!

VS. 11-18

We are now introduced to the chief captain or sidekick (some call him—lieutenant) of the Antichrist, who is the third person of the evil trinity (Satan; Antichrist, False Prophet). The False Prophet arises from the ranks of allied nations under the Antichrist, and leads the known world (except those with the seal of God) into worshipping the beast as God. Although the False Prophet is described as a horned lamb, he speaks as a dragon, emphasizing his proclamations of harm and death although under the cloak of “religious leadership;” and this as the False Prophet is the Antichrist’s puppet (vs. 11, 12).

- Understanding that the reign of the Antichrist will be one of a religious political system, the False Prophet will have necessity of a foundation of both a religious and political bases as well. With certainty that the servants of Satan masquerade as servants of light; although of darkness; we can understand how this guise (guile; intrigue) by both the Antichrist and False Prophet will be accepted by those without actual spiritual discernment; thus leading to acceptance of their “two faced” behavior without question or doubt.
- Just as the leaders of nations have maintained “spiritual advisors” for assorted reasons under the guise of “godly advice,” so also will the False Prophet be in a supposed position of like service to the Antichrist.

The False Prophet will be given tremendous powers by the devil; leading to his ability to perform false signs and wonders, including his ability to cause an image of the beast to come to life and be an object of worship. The dragon aspect of the False Prophet will become evident to all, as he acts as judge and jury to those who refuse to worship the beast or receive the mark of the beast (vs. 13-15).

- Although some may say that the Antichrist and False Prophet may be a world power or nation, Scripture makes it plainly evident that they are men (v.18).

- It must be considered: men lead government, governments deceive the inhabitants of nations, and inhabitants are many times duped under the guise that leadership is concerned with their welfare; which ultimately leads to the inhabitants trusting in leadership although the relationship is based in guile. This is the bases of—authoritarianism, which began in Babylon and has continued through most powerful governments throughout history; as they are led ultimately by the “ruler of the world” (Satan). Within this fact and for the sake of understanding, we must remember that God’s revealed will is to lead us to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ, who will return “righteousness” to planet earth!

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Although it is not known for certain exactly how the False Prophet will be able to give life to the image of the beast, and in generations past this would seem completely impossible; the potential for this to occur in the world of today is not only possible but also probable.
 - What of cloning? With the seeking of signs (*saymaion*) and wonders (*teras*) within many forms of religion today, and the fact that the signs (*semeiois*) and wonders (*teras*) which are actually produced are in accordance to a demonic deceptive masquerade (*dymanei*), it can be assumed that all without actual spiritual discernment (from the Holy Spirit) will easily fall prey to this Satanic work through the False Prophet.
 - Just as in time of antiquity under rulers of pagan beliefs, inhabitants of their nation were expected to show worship homage to images of the ruler, so also will this be the expected trait of false worship under the reign of the Antichrist.
2. Although actual true “signs and wonders” were from the Lord for the sake of the Israelites (which ceased long ago when Israel was temporarily set aside), there is also a counterfeit (aforementioned) of which Satan is capable. Many will be deceived by the empowerment of the counterfeit unto the False Prophet by Satan; which includes making fire come down from heaven (v. 13).

- The potential possibilities of the—fire from heaven as mentioned (v. 13) are numerous.
 - Lightning
 - Fuel Air Bombs—fuel air bombs are the most powerful bomb weapons, with the exception of nuclear devices. A fuel air bomb completely destroys everything within a one mile radius; while eliminating all air within the same radius as fuel for the explosion.
 - Because the testimony of the two witnesses has been viewed by the entire world, and this would only be possible by means of satellites; could the “fire from heaven” be satellites forced to malfunction (to potentially eliminate the witness` testimonies), falling from space through the atmosphere; striking exactly according to Satan’s determination? With the testimony of the two witnesses sent by the Lord being that of absolute truth, and truth being diametrically opposed to Satan’s work of deception through the Antichrist and False Prophet; this means of false signs and wonders would serve a dual purpose (witnesses seen by all—cf. 11:9).

- 3. The mark of the beast. Because we know that the mark of the beast is in fact something created by man (666—the number of a man), which can be placed upon the forehead or (right) hand, and we know that the mark of the beast will be necessary to (specifically) buy or sell; the actual basis of the “mark of the beast” is quite simple (vs. 16-18). Although there has been many attempts to understand the “number of a man” (666), as by mathematical calculations, numerical sequencing of letters as by equivalent, gematria (investigative seeking of hidden meaning), and by other means too numerous to mention; within a basic understanding as to the “wiles of Satan,” the potential possibilities are greatly reduced.
 - Because the number—7 is emphasized as a number of completeness when pertaining to the things of God; the number—6 is a basis of incompleteness.
 - Although Satan is the Great Deceiver; he is yet capable of emphasizing truth; when the overall outcome is an outright

deception. Within this, we understand that the best way to cloak a lie is between portions of truths.

- There are three realities which hold great concern among many in the world today: the germs transmitted upon the world's currency; identity theft, and terrorism; all of which cause great concern regarding the welfare of individual's flesh.
 - If the "mark of the beast" is in fact a computer chip (invention of man) which is ordered implanted into all by the Antichrist and False Prophet, they would appear by this action to be thoughtful of humanity; although not. By this action: the spread of disease by the handling of money, identity theft, and terrorism would be greatly curtailed; while also presenting the ultimate means by which goods and services could be "bought and sold" safely and with little concern of fraud or misuse of the initiated financial system.
- By this action, acceptance of the "mark of the beast" for personal protection and preservation, although seeming appropriate and just as through guile, would be in actuality the acceptance of the "mark of the world" which seals one's fate of condemnation!
 - Although this would be an injustice to the physical freedoms of all upon the planet, as by the government of the Antichrist having ability to track all who have the mark; we must remember that this must occur. Within this, we must ask ourselves; will we fight for personal freedoms regarding our flesh and thereby fight against God's will, or will we accept what must occur and with diligence look forward to Jesus' return; accepting the tribulation, suffering, and persecution which will certainly come to pass; after our flight to avoid acceptance of the mark of the world? Within this, we must understand that although we must not fight the induction of the "mark," as this must occur, we yet can neither accept it! Selah!

4. World stature considerations:

- a. The emphasis of Scripture pertaining to the Great Tribulation Period is that the nations gathered together under the leadership of the Antichrist, will share a singular

basis of: government, religion, and economics; all of which are initiated and led by the ruling powers (Satan and Antichrist) (authoritarianism). This specific, initially cannot be considered for nations which are opposed to the Antichrist (by their refusal to submit to idolatry), yet the opposing nations may be considered significant in several ways; for they (200,000,000) will be instrumental in the murder of millions, and ultimately all nations will be gathered (allied) for the battle of Armageddon.

- b. The initial 3.5 years of the Tribulation Period will be a time of considerable peace. Many without actual Scriptural knowledge of what must occur have hoped for “peace on earth” for generations. This time of peace will bring forth physical reassurance to masses upon the earth that this is a work of God, although not; leading to the ultimate spiritual defeat of the masses, as they fall prey to the deception which is in accordance to safety and indulgence of the flesh.
- c. Along these lines of thought: For generations, many have believed that God would bring peace to the earth through the behavior and endeavors of believers. If this were in actuality a possibility, the world would have become better on some type of consistent basis, yet history shows no evidence to this effect; which is in reality Biblical, for we are aware of what must occur. Whereas those with spiritual discernment understand and realize the Gospel to be true and correct in every way, those without the guidance of the Holy Spirit continue within the fantasy derived from human intellectual hope and conjecture. Although seeking and believing peace will come to the earth through the actions of believers is fable to those with actual Biblical understanding and spiritual discernment, the weak understanding and beliefs of the multitudes yet leaves the door into this falsehood ajar; entry of which will occur within the deceptions of Satan.
- d. It is an unfortunate reality, yet the truth remains that the United States of America leads the world in authoritarianism, for the government of the United States utilizes force to inflict their policies and doctrines upon other nations; under the guise of—democracy.

- e. **Let us evidence the truth!** Although this evidence is a harsh reality, it must be noted for truthful understanding as to what must occur, and the potential of what may occur.
- The United States of America is not a democratic society, as is commonly believed! The United States of America is a—Constitutional Republic. What is a constitutional republic? A “constitutional republic” is a nation of states which comprise a republic within which all laws are derived from a Constitution (foundation for law). Within the specific of the United States of America, the foundation of law is commonly known as—The Constitution of the United States; which contains amendments referred to as—The Bill of Rights.

The National Guard is a unit of the military intended to protect the shores of the United States from attack. The National Guard is being utilized outside the confines of the United States to force other countries into a compliance with supposed democracy; whereas although in violation of Constitutional Law, this allows for a basis of warfare with other countries void of the consent of Congress which is according to the Constitution of the republic. Within this basis of reality, the government of the United States of America is violating the basis of law (Constitution) for which it was formed; thereby denying the foundational basis, as well as accountability to the laws for which it was founded. This in essence evinces the government of the United States of America to be both devious and deceptive; thereby serving Satan (the ruler of the world; father of lies).

As we know that the Antichrist will be a man of profound deception and guile, we know that a basis of deceit will be utilized to lead the world into a false sense of security in accordance to the ruler of the world (Satan) who is the leader of world affairs during the Great Tribulation Period. When a country engages in warfare under the guise of “democracy,” although not; they within themselves become a form of terrorism unto the world, for through military might they impose human doctrine upon others; even though unjust by any form of truthful standard. When a nation kills those of innocence; as through the guise of supposed concern for the inhabitants of any or all nations; they as a matter of fact, commit murder without formal declaration of warfare; which is apart from the world’s standards as set forth (Geneva

Convention of War). Within this, we understand both violation of Christian values; and a complete disregard for declarations of morality as set forth by the compassion of man. Is America a Christian nation?

The United States government is a government of deception and financial greed! As a basis of finance must be founded upon an actual basis of worth; which in the case of the United States was initially—the gold standard; the basis of actual worth (gold) must be maintained in order for checks and balances to occur in an actual sense. When the “gold standard” was voided under the presidency of Jimmy Carter, the basis of actual worth was eliminated; this allowing for the financial stature of the United States to become one without checks and balances, thereby eliminating all aspects of actual accountability to the inhabitants of the—Constitutional Republic. This is the exact opposite of a democracy (practice of social equality), for this is a basis of deceit by which manipulation by the governing authorities’ rules over the inhabitants of the land; rather than serving the peoples of the republic. Is America a nation of and for the people?

To emphasize the blatant deception which has continued for generations, we must evidence realistic truth. In A.D. 1913, the Supreme Court of the United States declared that the 16th amendment did not allow for any further taxation; beyond that of corporate and capital gains, and voluntary compliance. The United States Government, in violation of its highest court (Supreme Court), initiated a federal income tax in addition to that allowed in accordance to the laws of the republic. This violated the foundational law (Constitution) for which the republic was founded; thereby violating the assumed rights of the inhabitants which were rendered by the amendments (Bill of Rights). Within the fact that no law exists which allows the federal government of the United States to lawfully levy taxation upon the wages of its inhabitants, the government of the United States has stolen trillions of dollars from its citizens throughout the generations (since A.D. 1913); having done so in violation of the laws which were sworn to be upheld. Is America’s government one of honesty?

The foolishness continues! Due the fact that no law exists for the taxation of income regarding the citizens of the United States of America, and the fact that taxation is in reality levied under supposed penalty of law regarding the citizens should they refuse to pay, the government has violated the Civil Rights of its citizens for decades;

imprisoning many who would question the government in accordance to the basis of law for which the republic was formed. The government instead of admitting intentional fault continues the deception as by force of intimidation. Can those of extreme financial stature and governing physical might be trusted?

In accordance to the Constitution of the United States of America, the government is accountable to the people of the republic; for this would be a basis of actual “democracy.” The government must; according to constitutional law; explain their actions to the inhabitants of the nation upon request or demand, and do so in a forthright fashion. Just as the Internal Revenue Service has never explained income taxation in violation of constitutional law; although requested and demanded; the government of the United States of America has proven itself to be a republic of financial deviants, who have every intention of boldly lying to its inhabitants; utilizing force if necessary, in order to maintain the perpetrated deception and greed!

Inasmuch as individuals within government, who yet have morals, have failed to receive answers as to the devious and deceptive actions of the government at its highest levels, so also our government is obviously deceived by someone. Remember the gold standard, which once was? With the induction of the Federal Reserve Bank, the nation of the United States of America became a nation of captives, to those of financial greatness! The Federal Reserve Bank is a privately owned institution which has been given authority by the Congress of the United States, to print and distribute currency. Although the United States government has authority within itself to create currency; based upon a means of checks and balances (the gold standard); the Federal Reserve Bank creates the money, and charges the citizens of the United States of America for the production thereof. This in essence makes evident that those with greatness of financial stature, own the United States of America; leading the nation to the forefront of a One World Order, which is based within the—love of money! Now with the standard of accountability (gold standard) being one of “unaccountability,” the citizens of the United States of America pay the Federal Reserve Bank for a commodity (money) which no longer has actual value; thus we pay financially for a deceptive work of Satan.

Because we know that love for money is the root of many forms of evil, and by evidencing truth we note that those who love money are

actually in control, we can understand the basis by which Satan controls many nations. With understanding as to the foundation of a one world order being derived from a basis thus far discussed, we can understand that the ruling authorities over the government of the United States of America are leading the world in serving Satan derived from their devious and deceptive ulterior motives. From this, we can make conjecture that the Antichrist and/or False Prophet will very possibly arise from within the upper levels of American government or the ranks of financial greatness which actually leads the nation, and (either one—i.e. Antichrist or False Prophet) will probably be within the religion of Catholicism.

- The religious aspect (Catholicism) will be discussed in chapter 17.
- Within this, we must remember that the United States of America has chosen itself as the savior of the world in the physical realm; for this is the basis by which the United States has elected itself to police the world, and gather allies deceptively within its endeavor.

With this information, we can better understand the political and financial foundation which will be destroyed by the Lord in chapter 18, as well as the actual basis for the “mark of the beast.” Because the upper levels of government within the United States of America; in submission to those in actual authority as by their great financial stature, must continue the deception; there must be a basis by which the inhabitants of the nation will submit to the ruling authorities, while yet being deceived into believing the action to be for their betterment; for after all, this is a government supposedly for the people! How will this occur? It is very simple, for with the supposed United States war on terror, the President (George W. Bush) had laws enacted which render “executive privilege” for which there is no accountability in accordance to constitutional law. Within this, the office of the President of the United States is no longer under the laws of the Constitution of the United States; neither is the President any longer accountable to the United States Senate or Congress; which is the basis by which the government is for the people. Power corrupts, and absolute power corrupts absolutely!

Within this, we can understand that a means of monitoring will be forcibly enforced upon the inhabitants of the United States and many

other nations (10), so that those in actual authority (servants of Satan) can track, manipulate and regulate the behavior of the masses. This is the basis by which the “mark of the beast” will be initiated and enforced; although based in deception. The guise will be that this is necessary for the protection of all according to the flesh, which will example to most inhabitants the necessity to receive the “mark” for the sake of safety; although this will ultimately lead to eternal spiritual death. By this way of reasoning, we can understand the basis by which the “mark” will be necessary in order to buy and sell, for this will be necessary in order to appropriate the necessities for human existence; such as sustenance, clothing, etc. The “mark of the beast” is in fact the invention of man, in accordance to the leadership of the “beast”; for although the specific is—the Antichrist (beast), the actual ruling authority is the “dragon” who is Satan (vs. 3-18)!

Three things will be necessary for the deception involving the “mark of the beast” to be initiated and continued without question, debate, or rejection; this as pertinent to the purchase and selling of material items and services.

- The ruling power (human government) must have previously proven that they can both convincingly deceive, and maintain the deception; by force of arms and/or intimidation if necessary. What of “income taxation”; although unlawful?
- A foundation of actual financial stature reality must be replaced without notice or permission. This is to say that an actual foundation of wealth is supposed, although not actually existent. What of a system based upon credit (cyber space)?
- Those accepting the “mark” must have previously been convinced to concern themselves with (trust) the falsehood, as if it were actually necessary for an appropriate existence. What of credit scores?

The basis, by which the citizens of the United States and other countries have been led to trust in the simplest forms of non-discernable deception, is through the “internet.” Although specifics can be understood regarding certain aspects of the root means (internet) of initiated deception, only the actual instigator (Satan) knows with certainty the full basis of the deception as through the conduit by which it will be

introduced fully into the lives of the world's inhabitants. With the "internet" drawing the world's inhabitants continuously farther into the unseen reality of Satan's ultimate deceptions (fantasy; false signs and wonders; cyber space) one step at a time, the ultimate "ease" of physical existence will come in the form (mark; computer chip) which is forced upon the inhabitants of the world. Along with the "ultimate ease" of physical existence which will (supposedly) eliminate the prevalent hazards to fleshly comfort (fraud, disease, identity theft, aliases—i.e. terrorism); will come the ultimate "ease" (mark) of initiation into the—full wrath of God (vs. 16, 17)!¹¹¹⁰

The summation is this: The "mark of the beast" will be forcibly initiated and enforced by servants of Satan; the "mark" will seem to be of necessity for the welfare and safety of the multitudes; the utilized tactic of "fear" will bring forth submission and thereby acceptance of the "mark" by all who are without eternal hope, because righteous hope is derived from acceptance of God's love (cf. 1 John 4:17, 18); the masses who accept the "mark" will turn against those who do not, for they will be deceived into thinking those without the "mark" to be a direct threat, and in accordance to their fear will betray those without the "mark." During the Great Tribulation Period, there will be no cohabitation of believers and non-believers; for the non-believers (those with the "mark") will betray or kill those without the "mark" (mostly saints). Although this harsh reality exists, we as servants of God must go forth to speak the truth in love. With Gospel truth being contrary to the deceptions perpetrated upon mankind, this will make believers a direct threat to Satan's deceptive endeavors, therefore objects of his wrath. Could it be that those without the "mark" will be proclaimed as being traitors and/or terrorists? Whatever the deception may be, the fact remains that life and survival will be excessively difficult for the saints during the Great Tribulation Period; for we cannot violate the moral standards set forth by our Lord for any reason, including survival; for our testimony and demeanor must remain apportioned for His glory (vs. 10, 18; cf. 3:10-13; 14:12, 13)!

Within any nation which seeks first the things and ways of the world, and those things which allow "ease" and "comfort" of and for the flesh; individuals who attempt to seek God first and foremost will remain

¹¹¹⁰ cf. 14:9-11; 16:2; 19:20, 21.

alienated from those who seek first the world and its ways; which cannot be denied as this reality is Biblical. Within nations of which the reality of God has been denied by rejection of Biblical truth (glory of Christ), the stage is set for the playing out of delusive behavior which will deceive the majority of humankind. The only avenue of deliverance and ultimate victory remains turning to, acceptance of, and trusting in the reality of truth; which is the Lord Jesus Christ, for no one will be saved through the delusive natures of “religion” or evasive and elusive government! Willful acceptance of the “mark of the beast” is an immediate sentence unto eternal spiritual death within the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (hell); which will completely evade all who refuse to deny “self” so as to allow God to take them beyond the flesh and ways of the world! Truly, eternity will be a very long time to regret having fallen prey to the deceptions of humankind and guile of Satan’s schemes!

Chapter 14: A Chapter of Reassurance

Please remember that within diligent and disciplined seeking of truth regarding the “reality of God,” the door to humility and disciplined acquiescence is opened by the Lord as an aspect of His divine preparatory work within the “drawing” process; which allows the Lord to begin and continue the “good and righteous” work of which He alone is capable. Just as throughout the church age history, no one comes to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) without the divine grace abounding righteous work of God; so also remains the reality during the Tribulation Period, which includes God’s final call to accept the reality of both Him and salvation by grace; which has nothing to do with religion; and this at the threshold of the “bowl” judgments which will begin almost immediately (vs. 6-8).

In regard to the 144,000 sealed and protected Israelites, the “seal” of God has been placed upon each of them (prior), which is the seal necessary for physical salvation; for regarding the 144,000, the seal is upon their foreheads which emphasizes God’s divine protection to be upon them, so that no demonic attack of any kind is allowed, nor physical attack of any kind; for they are divinely protected as the first fruits to God and the Lamb for the renewed nation of Israel entering the Millennial reign of Christ!

It should be understood that the physical corporeal bodies of the 144,000 must be protected and preserved for existence upon the earth;

which is different from the seal (indwelling Holy Spirit) of God for the day of redemption of which Jew and Gentile alike received as legitimate children of God, who will inherit a heavenly kingdom within which a different eternal body will be of necessity! The fact of the seal being placed upon the foreheads of the 144,000; 12,000 of which are from each of the twelve tribes of Israel; makes no indication that the 144,000 are Messianic Jews (sealed for the day of redemption), but rather are Israelites who have sought devotion for the Lord by their remaining chaste, and blameless regarding all forms of sin or lawlessness; which would indicate obedience to the Law (Mosaic and Levitical). The fact that the 144,000 will follow the Lamb (Messiah; Christ) wherever He goes, directly evinces the reality of God's divine work upon them; for even though they may or may not be Messianic Jews, by their obedience unto God as action foundational to having trusted God during their chaste and blameless corporeal existence, including remembrance of the prophesy concerning the coming Messiah, they will (by God's graceful divine work) be fully receptive and accepting of the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ), made evident by their immediate devotion for the Christ (vs. 1-5).

Within this chapter, we are strengthened and uplifted within knowledge of God's providential working throughout the Tribulation Period; for His tender mercies, lovingkindness, and grace are yet witnessed by His final call to believe, while not trusting in "religion" or the elemental things of the world to do so (vs. 6-8). A third angel proclaims loud warning to everyone of the wrath of God, mixed full strength with His anger which will be upon all who accept the "mark of the beast," with emphasis of the eternal torment which they will suffer for acceptance of the "mark" (vs. 9-11). The loud proclamation continues with the necessity for perseverance to be with all who choose obedience to God; with assurances that although they may die within the following judgments, they will yet be blessed with rest from the terrible times (labors to survive), while their obedience to God's final call will be remembered (deeds follow with them) (vs. 12, 13). It must be understood that the "Rapture" will now occur immediately; therefore, all upon the earth, with the exception of the 144,000 divinely sealed by God, will have to endure the worst judgments which have ever come upon the earth. Because this will be a reality, the aforementioned was of necessity; so that everyone yet living may realize the consequences of procrastination,

and/or choosing to remain sons and daughters of disobedience; while those who choose obedience to God's final call to believe, will yet have suffering, although aloof God's wrath, because they had not accepted God's free gift of salvation by grace through faith prior to the now immediate action (Rapture). The fact that "hope" is yet possible by the proclamations, will render strength to those who had remained only partially deceived (yet procrastinate); for they are the ones who refusing to accept the "mark of the beast," may yet survive the "bowl judgments"; and during the Millennial reign of Christ come to believe.¹¹¹¹ In addition, all who come to believe commensurable to the saints who will now be immediately "caught up" (Rapture), will have the assurance of salvation; although they will not have been "caught up," due the fact that at the moment of Jesus' arrival in the clouds the rewards for each individual is with Him (vs. 13-15).¹¹¹²

With understanding as to these matters, and thereby emphasis of appropriate focus and submission upon and to the Lord so as to avoid all forms of guile (manipulation and deception), we are blessed with assured outcome certainties; for the decision regarding the path upon which we choose to journey (narrow path to righteous; wide path to destruction) is a personal matter, of which we alone hold responsibility.

We have been instructed regarding the "mark of the beast" which cannot for any reason be accepted by believers. We understand that without the "mark of the beast" we will neither be able to buy or sell, and by this we know that life will be difficult; for we will have difficulty obtaining food, while also having necessity to hide from those who would betray us. Although the endeavors of believers will be of difficulty as aforementioned, the Gospel must yet be proclaimed, which means that the spiritual salvation of the lost must take precedence over the physical salvation of believers; thus we must be willing to be as sheep for slaughter (vs. 9-13).¹¹¹³ As can be witnessed by what would seem a dual context of verses 9-13, please understand the "Rapture" will begin in a moment in time; what "rewards" are with the Lord upon His arrival in the clouds, cannot be known with certainty; therefore, the fate of

¹¹¹¹ cf. Daniel 12:12.

¹¹¹² cf. Revelation 22:11-13.

¹¹¹³ cf. Romans 8:1-39, specific vs. 35-37.

each individual can neither be known with any certainty within that moment in time. Only Jesus knows who accepted Him prior to His arrival, and who had not yet done so!

This chapter begins with information concerning the 144,000 who have been sealed by God. These chosen saints are singing a song which only they know, and are described as the first fruits of the earth (Jewish physical salvation). The 144,000 have never defiled themselves with sexual encounters (including fornication) or deception (vs. 1-5); for they each have diligently endeavored absolute obedience unto God throughout their life.

The chapter continues as an angel of the Lord is flying in mid-heaven ministering that all should fear God and give Him glory; for the time of His judgments is quickly approaching (chapter sixteen = the bowl judgments). Along with the ministering of the angel for the maintaining of appropriate focus and worship for those who believe, comes another angel's proclamation of Babylon's destruction; which illustrates that the foundation of worldly strength trusted by the masses (self; religion; financial prosperity; military might), is in reality a foundation of weakness which will be destroyed (vs. 6-8).

- The descriptive destruction of spiritual and political / financial Babylon is forthcoming in chapters 17 and 18. It is due: the lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life, which has led to submission unto "Babylon" by the masses throughout the generations; as trust and hope have been placed upon the things of the world¹¹¹⁴

A third angel now comes forth proclaiming the judgment which will come upon any who accept the mark of the beast, or worship the beast or his image. This judgment is proclaimed—the full wrath of God to be upon them; this wrath is the beginning of that which will torment them for eternity as they are inevitably held captive in the lake of fire and brimstone (vs. 9-11). Demonstrating God to be abounding in mercy and grace (beyond our capability to comprehend), the proclamation of judgment is immediately followed by the statements of perseverance,

¹¹¹⁴ cf. 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:3-10.

and how death will be a blessing to those who die for the Gospel, as death will bring relief from pain and suffering (vs. 12, 13).

- This makes emphasis of how believers must maintain: hope in the things of God, trust in the faithfulness of God and certainty in the salvation of God, and faith in the righteousness of God; for without these things, we are without actual faith-based assurance of divine deliverance.

The voice of the angel is then followed by the vision of one like the “son of man” whom has a golden crown upon His head and a sickle in His hand. This one like the Son of Man is the Lord Jesus Christ who orders the gathering (reaping) of believers from the earth; for immediately following His reaping (gathering) of the elect (remnant) from the earth, another angel reaps (gathers) the world of sinful men and women (clusters) who are worthy of the wrath of God. Let us consider:

1. Jesus has always been obedient to the Father, precisely and habitually! The Lord is in position with full preparedness and anticipation for action (v. 14); for when the word is given, immediate action begins (v. 15).
2. The reaping (gathering) is one of separation; for this is the specific when the decision is made; by authoritative determination of separating the sheep (legitimate children of God) from the goats (illegitimate children of God; non-believers) (cf. Matthew 25:1-46).¹¹¹⁵
3. The “one like a son of man” had a crown, which proves authority (Lord). Within this factor, we realize this “one like a son of man” has authority over others (vs. 14, 15); as:
 - a. Several angels will be sent to gather believers (cf. Mark 13:23-27).
 - b. Believers will be gathered to the central location of the Lord Jesus Christ (in the clouds); therefore a plan for organization

¹¹¹⁵ cf. 16:15, 16.

is necessary, initiated by the One with full authority to command the gathering (God from the heavenly temple).¹¹¹⁶

4. The difference found through definition:

- a. The definition for the word “ripe” as utilized regarding the “one like a son of man” (Lord) charged with gathering believers from the earth is the word—*xayrainw*; which indicates—overripe to the point of withering (v. 15).
 - Believers throughout the generations have hoped for the return of the Lord to occur in their lifetime; righteously foundational to disgust pertaining to the wickedness of the world, which has always existed within the legitimate children of God.
 - With disgust of wickedness and abhorrence of the evil which influenced it, throughout the generations, the coming of the Lord could be none too soon for all generations of believers; thus the harvest is considered far overdue (ripe to the point of withering).
- b. The definition for the word “ripe” as utilized regarding the second angel charged with gathering the clusters of those due judgment is the word—*akmazw*; which indicates—prime ripeness (v. 18).
 - In conjunction with believers throughout the generations hope for ultimate deliverance (caught up; Rapture) during their lifetime, has been concern for the lost due the inevitable onslaught of judgment which must occur.
 - As true believers would hope that none would perish but rather come to knowledge of truth; as we have the mind of Christ, and He also has patience for this purpose; we would hope the time of judgment to be extended, so that all may be reached with the good news of the Gospel; even though this would mean a continuation of our suffering.
 - The time of the judgment is exactly correct according to the sovereign will of the Father; for this is indicated by both instruction and definition, as the commands of the Father are relayed by the angels who came forth from within the heavenly temple (vs. 15, 18)! For the Tribulation Period to continue

¹¹¹⁶ cf. Matthew 24:29-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16, 17.

beyond the specific of God's choosing, would be for all humanity to be extinguished; thus the time of the reaping is exactly correct and appropriate (prime ripeness—v. 18; cf. Matthew 24:22; 1 Timothy 6:13-16)!

The angel with the second sharp sickle will be instructed by the angel from the heavenly altar, to gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, in preparation for throwing them into the great wine press of the wrath of God (vs. 19, 20).

- The “wine press” making illustration of immense amounts of blood flowing forth from the battlefield of Armageddon (Har-Magedon); for this will be the most gruesome, deadly battle ever fought thus far.¹¹¹⁷
- The battle of Armageddon will be fought outside the confines of Jerusalem (v. 20), upon completion of the “bowl judgments”; it is in preparation of this battle that the angel is gathering the foes of righteousness.

Chapter 15

This chapter begins with the introduction of the seven angels who hold the seven bowl (plague) judgments; of God's divine wrath. The introduction is accompanied by the description of the sea of glass mixed with fire, for the saints (children of God) have been cleansed unto eternal purity (fire), and have peace (glass; no turmoil) in God's presence. The wicked will be receiving the judgments (wrath of God) due them, because of their chosen (religious) rebellion against truth regarding the spiritual relational reality, and rejection of God's mercy and grace.¹¹¹⁸

- Important mention: For the sake of increased understanding not only for the book of Revelation, but also regarding faith in general, it is important to realize a simple fact! Just as “religion” as set forth by the Antichrist will but deceive so that by it many will not be saved, so also has occurred for generations, as the

¹¹¹⁷ cf. 19:17-21.

¹¹¹⁸ cf. John 1:12-17; Ephesians 2:1-9.

many spirits of the Antichrist (demon influence) throughout the world have brought deception into the hearts of many; thereby callusing their spirit against the truth.¹¹¹⁹ The fact remains that God has always desired our hearts (submissive sincere love and appreciation); for this is the love shown the Father by those who truly desire to know Him.

The “religions” (manmade) of the world have attempted to mimic actual love and devotion as by “rote” (mechanics of practiced habit); somehow thinking practiced doctrines and rituals to be pleasing to God, who examines our hearts. “Religion of rote” is the basis of deception by which millions have been led astray of truth; “religion of rote” teaches supposed devotion and appreciation by ritual and doctrine; void of actual faith, love, understanding and knowledge.

By this deceptive work of demonic influence, many tangents have been taken, which have led astray of the narrow path of God’s righteousness, thereby attempting a righteousness by human works which does not actually exist. This is the foundation by which supposed believers never actually listen when they pray, for “religion of rote” is one sided; thus void of actual fellowship with the Lord our Creator.

Although the majority of the former judgments involved the earth and heavens being smitten, and harm to humans as by the effects of wicked human warfare, the bowl judgments hold affliction directly upon humans by divine decree. It is for this reason, that believers (true children of God) will be caught up prior to the seven bowl judgments; for these final judgments of God’s wrath are upon the “flesh,” and those who chose to walk solely according to the deeds thereof.¹¹²⁰

Because all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory; including believers; the former judgments will be upon all who are alive upon the earth, for the torment brought forth by warfare will be worldwide. Although the Lord will ultimately protect the 144,000 as they are the first fruits of the renewed nation of Israel, and He will protect the saints to whatever degree He deems appropriate, the fact remains that all will

¹¹¹⁹ cf. 1 John 2:18.

¹¹²⁰ cf. emphasized—Matthew 9:27-31; 16:24-27; 23:1-36; 25:14-30; Romans 2:1-11; 8:1-17; 2 Corinthians 10:2-18; Galatians 1:3-17; 4:21-31; 5:19-23; Ephesians 1:3-23.

have distress; yet the saints are reassured of God's glory and faithfulness, so as to remain steadfast within servanthood. Because the plagues of the "bowl judgments" will be sent forth from heaven, all who have either worshipped the beast or accepted his mark will be afflicted.

Tremendous praise is heard in heaven, as the time of God's righteous judgments has arrived! The completed numbers of the tribulation saints in heaven are now seen rejoicing greatly (v- 2-4). The seven angels dressed with authority from God, with the judgments given them by one of the four living creatures that will complete God's wrath, are seen exiting the temple of the Lord in heaven. With the angels now outside of the temple in heaven, the glory of God fills it, and it is sealed from occupancy until the righteous judgments of God have been completed (v- 8). With this wonderful scene of praise to God, and the anticipation of the long awaited judgments now at the threshold of fulfillment, the bowl judgments are welcome and forthcoming.

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- I believe the temple in heaven was filled with God's glory and sealed, because the Lord being the very essence of true love has to render upon the earth the necessary judgments for sin. As I had aforementioned, I believe this will be a time of anguish for the Lord; for the further damage upon the beauty of creation will be devastating, although just and of righteousness (v. 8).
 - With the state of eternity having been initiated by the sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet, all aspects of existence upon the earth will now move forward in time in accordance to the Father's will to bring about the coming of Jesus in glory, and the re-gathering of the Israelites unto their Lord and King. With the final "bowl" judgments, the wrath of God will be finished.¹¹²¹
- The judgments being commanded by God is emphasized by the transfer of the seven plagues from the four living creatures (who are within and surround God's throne) to the angels authorized to initiate them (v. 7).¹¹²²

¹¹²¹ cf. 16:17; Isaiah 2:1-4; 9:1-7; 66:10-24; Zechariah 14:1-21.

- The golden girdles (sashes) around the angel's breasts are an indication of their authority from God. A crown would indicate authority over others in accordance to God's glorious choosing; whereas the girdles indicate individual authority to act within a specific, in accordance to the absolute righteous will of God (v. 6).
- The clean and bright linen is indication of the angel's purity, and righteousness (right doing) according to the will of the Father (vs. 6, 7).
- The songs (2—song of Moses; song of the Lamb) being sung, are indication of both Jewish and Gentile believers honoring and worshipping God. The twofold nature of the singing is confirmed—“*Righteous and true are Thy ways, Thou King of the nations*” (v. 3).
 - It should be noted, the Lord is the actual King of all nations! With the destruction of the human forms of government which were derived from the boastful pride of life which originated in Babylon (authoritarianism), the King of kings will reign supreme; righteously with love.
 - Whether the “song of Moses” is the same song of antiquity which emphasized God's blessings upon Israel, is not known for certain.¹¹²³

The Bowl Judgments

Chapter 16

Within this chapter, the righteous judgments of God now come upon the earth in rapid succession, as the seven angels are sent to carry out their orders. The succession begins with a loud voice in heaven, which is the voice of the Father commanding the final judgment to begin.

- We know with certainty that the Father renders the command for the commencement of the seven bowl judgments, for the temple in heaven was sealed just prior to the voice coming forth

¹¹²² cf. 4:5-8; 5:6, 8, 14; 6:1.

¹¹²³ cf. Deuteronomy 31:30-32:47.

(cf. 15:8). The specific of that revealed was that no one but God was within the temple, and that none other could enter until these plagues were concluded.

FIRST BOWL JUDGMENT:

The first bowl judgment is that of painful, grievous, malignant soars to come upon all who have worshipped the beast (and/or his image), accepted his mark; and upon those who attacked Israel. The exact type of sores given those who submitted to the beast is not known for certain, yet descriptiveness of the plague indicates that a type of flesh rot will occur. The onset of this plague will be quick and painful; and will include animals, with similar plagues; although the “rotting” aspect will be solely upon humans who succumbed to Satan’s guile (v. 2).¹¹²⁴

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- The fact of animals being stricken with similar plagues illustrates a point of fact that creatures of innocence have been forced to suffer the consequences of human sinfulness throughout history.
- Praise God! A time will come when peace will be maintained upon the earth within all species of created beings; thus beautiful critters (animals) will never again be forced to suffer the consequences of man’s sins!¹¹²⁵
 - Interesting note: Isaiah 11:15 states that the River Euphrates will be divided into seven lesser brooks, which can be crossed easily. When we consider that all manmade structures upon the earth will be destroyed with the final earthquake of massive devastation (vs. 18-20), we lay witness to the love of the Lord for His elect upon the earth, as the structures (specifically—bridging) will no longer be necessary for safe and easy passage.

SECOND BOWL JUDGMENT:

When the second bowl judgment is cast to the earth, the onslaught of death comes upon the seas. Unlike the second trumpet judgment where

¹¹²⁴ cf. Zechariah 14:12-15.

¹¹²⁵ cf. Isaiah 11:1-16; 35:1-10.

one third of the seas were turned to blood, and struck by a body of mass destruction bringing forth the death of one third of the creatures within the waters, this bowl judgment will bring forth the death of all creatures within the sea (v. 3).

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

I have checked many different translations, and the point made by each is that of “sea.” This illustrates “sea” as singular, not “seas” as plural. I do not know whether all the seas and oceans will be smitten, or whether one major sea or ocean in a specific area will be smitten. I can only imagine however, the stench and disease which will accompany a huge body of water becoming dead. However:

- Because we know that with completion of the bowl judgments the wrath of God upon the earth is complete (It is done v. 17), and we know that certainties were rendered within the trumpet judgments specifying “one third” (cf. 8:7-11), we can deduce the finality of these judgments to include “all” which remain unaffected from previous judgments. Within this, we can understand the singular usage (sea) to indicate all waterways of type to be conclusive.
- By the description of how the waters became blood like that of a dead man, this would indicate that either the sea actually becomes blood (as all things are possible with God), or the waters become stagnant and unable to sustain life. Emphases—the blood of a dead man ceases all internal movement (flow); thus indicating stagnation (v. 3).

THIRD BOWL JUDGMENT:

The release of the third bowl judgment forces the death of the waterways of the earth (rivers and streams) (v. 4). The waterways will be turned to blood as a just judgment for the blood of the saints which has been spilt (v. 6). This statement by the angel sums up the purpose of this judgment, and as with the other judgments—the Lord is praised for His justness (truth) and righteousness of judgment (v. 7). The proclamation is made by the angel of the waters:

Revelation 16:5, 6: “Righteous art Thou, who art and who wast, O Holy One, because Thou didst judge these things; for they

poured out the blood of saints and prophets, and Thou hast given them blood to drink. They deserve it.”

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- Whether the rivers and streams will actually become blood cannot be known with certainty. The fact is rendered however; the rivers and streams will become a means of contaminated consumption, which the wicked of the world deserve; partly because of the blatant complacency to remain wretched by choice.¹¹²⁶

FOURTH BOWL JUDGMENT:

The fourth bowl judgment brings the intense heat of the sun upon the sons of disobedience whom yet dwell on the earth (vs. 8, 9).¹¹²⁷ Unlike the fourth trumpet judgment where the sun’s light was reduced, this judgment brings its increased brightness and thus intense heat and suffering. With the individuals suffering due to the increased heat and the misery there from, they will curse (blaspheme) God and refuse to repent (v. 9).

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- If the “rot” which will occur (bowl judgment #1) is actually the flesh-eating bacteria—*Necrotizing fasciitis / fasciitis necroticans or Staphylococcus aureus*, which exposes many surfaces of the body including internal organs, excessive heat would cause burning, blistering, and drying of sensitive tissues and thereby terrible pain and suffering. When the sun is diminished (bowl judgment # 5), which would bring forth a considerable decrease in temperature, the sensitive tissues would become susceptible to factors of cold such as hypothermia and frostbite.
- The possibilities are basically endless, as to how the intense heat is brought forth upon the earth. Because we know by description that tremendous climate changes will come forth upon the earth in accordance to God’s sovereign will regarding the many judgments, and we know that all things are possible

¹¹²⁶ cf. 22:11.

¹¹²⁷ cf. Ephesians 5:5, 6.

with God throughout the entire created universe, exactly how He will bring forth judgments involving the sun is not known.

- When the sun is dimmed, and thereby the heat from it diminished, could this be excessive sun spotting according to God's will?
- When the heat of the sun is increased, could this be massive sun flares according to God's will?
- It should also be considered, that as all things are possible with the Creator when involving holiness and righteousness (vs. 5, 6); the Lord may possibly increase and decrease the surface temperature of the sun, for fulfillment of these judgments!

FIFTH BOWL JUDGMENT:

The fifth bowl judgment brings forth the darkening of the kingdom which is inhabited by the beast and his followers. This darkness will bring increased pain from the plague of bowl judgment number one, as the sun helps in the healing process; within moderate temperatures; and is then taken away to add to the torment and suffering. Because of the increased pain and suffering by those yet dwelling upon the earth that have worshipped the beast, they will once again curse God and refuse to repent (vs. 10, 11).

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

- It should be remembered that the bowl judgments are upon those who have never accepted the reality of God in Christ, and have blatantly fallen prey to the wiles and guile of the devil. Having ministered for many years, I can attest to the fact of multitudes that both deceive and remain deceived, while falling further into the darkness of deception by rejection of the truth. With multitudes upon the planet now rebellious against: discipline, responsibility, and truth; the fact of being blasphemous and intentionally disobedient during the time of the Great Tribulation Period, makes absolute sense within the light of reality.
- This is the last mention of the inhabitant's failure to repent in the book of Revelation; this specifically pertaining to those under the direct influence of Satan through the Antichrist (v. 11).

- Please consider that those who sought protection from suffering by accepting the mark of the beast, have now gone through repeated torment and suffering because of their decision to deny Christ. They yet blame God for their predicament, although His tender mercies had always been available to them prior to acceptance of the “mark of the beast.”
 - We must remember the blessing of proclamation which occurred immediately preceding the saints being “caught up” (Rapture). Those who during this time are accepting the reality of the Christ, and thus salvation by grace through faith, will be forced to endure the divine judgments regarding atmospheric phenomenon; yet they will not have had the “rotting” to their bodies occur (bowl judgment #1), which will save them from torment beyond the wickedness of humankind in accordance to the evil of Satan, the Antichrist, and false prophet.
 - This makes emphasis pertaining to the hold which deceptive demonic influence has held over humanity throughout the generations. With understanding that “religion” has led to millions trusting supposed spiritual leadership; rather than testing all things according to the Gospel, and thereby seeking and gaining knowledge of truth; we come to realize a considerable battle strategy of the enemy (Satan and demons) to be influence leading to acts of procrastination pertaining to the things of God. It should be remembered in addition to this, that God will allow further deluding influence to come upon the human mind of those living in the end times, who have failed to accept and evidence the truth.¹¹²⁸
- With absolute certainty, we can understand that immense suffering will befall sinful humans upon planet earth during the bowl judgments. Because the initial judgment (bowl #1) involves loathsome and malignant sores, and the following judgments involve the waters and climate of the earth, the agony will be terrible; for the sores will be irritated by the climate changes, without possibility of being cleansed; for the waters of the earth will be contaminated.

¹¹²⁸ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12.

- Would not attempts at cleansing be as placing salt into a wound?

SIXTH BOWL JUDGMENT:

The sixth bowl judgment coincides with the sixth trumpet judgment (by mention), as both have reference to the River Euphrates (cf. 9:14). Within this judgment, the great river Euphrates will be dried to accommodate the passage of the 200,000,000 troop army from the east (v. 12). This drying of the Euphrates will coincide with the release of three unclean spirits which will show great signs and wonders, so as to draw the rulers of the world together at the Euphrates for the final battle prior to the millennial reign (Armageddon) (vs. 13-16).

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. As a note—please remember the angel with the second sharp sickle (14:17, 18), who was sent to prepare and gather the “clusters,” (wicked) for the battle of Armageddon. This angel, by the authority of God, is very much involved in the sequence of events which are now occurring.
2. These judgments are in quick succession, as with the sixth bowl judgment comes the warning to be awake and ready for Jesus’ return in glory (battle of Armageddon); the time is soon arriving (vs. 15, 16).
 - Within this, we must consider that there yet exists upon the earth some who will yet survive to enter into the millennial reign of Jesus. We know this in accordance to the proclamation within the sixth bowl judgment—“Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his garments” (v. 15); which does not include anyone who accepted the mark of the beast!
 - Note of mention: During Roman times, if a guard fell asleep at his post (other than guard duty), his cloths would be confiscated, leaving him to walk about naked and ashamed. Any soldier who fell asleep during guard duty was put to death.
3. We know that the tremendous fighting force from the east will cross over the dried Euphrates River, in their endeavor to join the Antichrist whose forces lie to the west (v. 12). This advance would be

stricken if the advancing troops were forced to construct bridging to move across such a large body of water, and for this reason the river will be dried so as to make the passing of the river quick and easy.

- Although the drawing of the massive army will be a work of Satan's devious and deceptive ways, the river Euphrates will be a work from God, for the sixth bowl of wrath is that which dries the river (v. 12).
 - The River Euphrates has been in the twentieth century fitted with dams, which has led many times to the water level being low. Whether the bowl which dries it will be in the form of instruction which leads to the flood gates being closed, or whether a form of damage will have occurred disallowing use of the dam functions, is not known for certain. If the dam has been damaged so as to disallow human intervention, the necessity for a work from heaven would be necessary.
 - Whatever the case may be, it is God's will that the massive armies converge with one another, for the upcoming battle.
4. The spirits of demons (like frogs—v. 13) coming forth from the mouths of—Satan, the Antichrist, and the False Prophet, are deceptive proclamations; with the signs (*semeiois*) and wonders (*terasim*) being aspects of the deception.
- This can be understood by the specific of coming forth from their mouths; with emphasis of performing signs specifically to the kings of the massive army (kings of the whole world— v. 14).
 - We know that Satan and his servants are incapable of speaking actual truth, unless the overall outcome is deception. With this knowledge, and understanding that Satan's ulterior motive is preparation to fight against the Lord Jesus Christ and His armies, we can deduce the deception by Satan unto the kings of the world to be either: some sort of phony peace accord; or a gathering of like hatred, for a concentrated attack against Israel.
 - Due the fact of constant offenses against Israel leading up to the final joining of the armies prior to the battle of Armageddon, the latter regarding a mutual hatred of Israel

seems considerably possible.¹¹²⁹ When combined with the former potential (peace accord), the action may be one of combining forces to rally against the specific of religion which holds Jerusalem as important, by the different former battling religious sects.

- Within this type reasoning, the possible deception which will be proclaimed to the kings of the world by Satan may be a type of threat supposedly from Israel against the massive army; which would affect the armies to seek a concentrated attack to fend off imminent physical dangers. If this is actually the case, the signs and wonders would be utilized to frighten the massive army into alliance submission with the forces of the Antichrist.

5. What countries may possibly comprise the kings of the east: As there are many countries with large populations east of the Euphrates River, the list of possible allied countries is rather large. China in itself claimed to possess a readily available army of 200,000,000 as far back as A.D.1965, and has since that time grown considerably, even though they have killed millions of babies in efforts to curb their population growth.¹¹³⁰ Other countries which may comprise the nations (kings) of the east are: Russia to the north, Japan (who have been known for their brutality throughout Asia in historical times), North and South Korea, Mongolia, the Philippines, Indonesia to the south, India, Pakistan, parts of: Iran, Iraq and Saudi Arabia.¹¹³¹

- I do not claim to understand the possibilities of who the nations which make up this huge army may be. With the large numbers of individuals whom inhabit many of the aforementioned nations, it is possible that these nations could fight against each other with considerable loses, and yet combine with what is left and muster a force of two hundred million.
 - Although many believe the numbers in the book of Revelation to be aspects of symbolic representation, there is

¹¹²⁹ Cf. Zechariah 14:1-5.

¹¹³⁰ cf. *Time*, May 21, 1965, p. 35.

¹¹³¹ cf. Daniel 11:44, 45.

no actual reasonable answer to be found unless the numbers are taken literally. With diligence within the study of the Scriptures, it is plainly evinced that numbers are given as specifics for the purpose that we may not only understand, but also know the exactness; for appropriate to the warning of what “must occur,” the severity is emphasized!

SEVENTH BOWL JUDGMENT:

The seventh (last) bowl judgment is a judgment of completion; illustrated by the preceding statement—“It is done” (v. 17). The seventh bowl judgment brings tremendous lightning, thunder and the most ferocious earthquake imaginable. This earthquake will bring to destruction every structure which is upon the earth; the only possible exception being within the land of Israel, for this will be the geographical location of Jesus’ reign. This tremendous earthquake will shake the very foundations of the planet; knocking down mountains and moving islands (vs. 18-20).

Along with the tremendous earthquake which will utterly disrupt the physical foundations of the earth, will come hail stones down upon the people, which are huge and deadly (100 pounds each at terminal velocity = mush). This severe judgment will once again bring men to blaspheme God, for they remain deceived as to why they are forced to live such terrible cataclysmic torment.

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. The city of mention (Babylon) (v. 19).
 - a. The two primary factors which have led the masses astray of an actual relationship with God throughout history are—money and religion. With understanding pertaining to this fact of realistic human existence and spiritual downfall, we will gain greater potential understanding when studying chapters 17 and 18.
 - **Money** is not the root of many forms of evil; yet rather the love of money is the root!¹¹³²
 - This is why the children of God must love Him; not the things of the world!¹¹³³

¹¹³² cf. 1 Timothy 6:10.

- **Religion** is that which is necessary as an action (works) to please God; when in fact only faith holds the potential of actually pleasing Him!¹¹³⁴
 - b. The next phase of the judgment sequence according to Scriptural account; after the descriptiveness pertaining to “Babylon” (chapters 17, 18), is the Marriage Supper of the Lamb (cf. 19:1-10).
 - The basis of religion in the world basically comes down to: assorted forms of polytheism, monotheism, and anthropocentric beliefs; all three being separate and distinct from an actual relationship with God which is founded upon the Rock (the Lord Jesus Christ); which is a spiritual reality, not a religious one.¹¹³⁵
 - Because we know this fact to plainly indicate three types of religion, of which one is not actually religion (monotheism) but rather relational between the Creator and the creature made in His image (spiritually); and because we know the immediately following aspect of revealed reality is the Wedding Feast, we plainly discern a necessity for separation between those who are invited and those who are not!
 - When combined with the fact that the coming of Jesus Christ in glory is that which divinely forces truth upon the world as to the futile nature of “religion” and the blessing of the “relationship”; the remaining books of Revelation are not only understandable, but soothing and reassuring!
2. The factor of destructiveness upon the mountains, and the islands of the earth moving from their foundations, emphasizes the fact that all manmade structures will crumble. Within this fact of the final judgment, it must be determined that no place will be found to protect the inhabitants of the earth from the massive hail stones which will fall. The only protection will be as the hail will fall exactly where God chooses; whereby all individuals are susceptible, except those of divine physical salvation, which are solely the 144,000

¹¹³³ cf. 1 Timothy 6:3-19.

¹¹³⁴ cf. Hebrews 11:1-40, specific vs. 1-6.

¹¹³⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:10-23.

Israelites and those who have endured (by God's grace) so as to believe and enter the Millennial reign of Christ.

3. With the terrible cataclysmic devastations which the sixth bowl judgment will bring upon the earth, there are two types of people yet remaining—those who are desperate for Christ's coming in glory, so this time of absolute tribulation will end; those yet without any hope, who yet blaspheme God (v. 21).
 - We know that a remnant of individuals in addition to the 144,000 divinely protected Jews will yet enter into the millennial reign of Jesus, for mention of the peoples of many nations indicates the fact.¹¹³⁶
 - It remains by human pride and the deception of Satan that the lost curse God and blame Him for their own foolishness; disbelief, and unrepentant ways (hardened hearts). It may be noted, that in today's world, excuses are prevalent (unfortunately even among many professing believers). By these excuses many deny: the truth, the necessity for faith, and the reality of Scripture (glory of Christ); while being unaware of the bondage to which they remain.¹¹³⁷

Chapter 17

Chapter seventeen will be a harsh reality to those who have sworn by and defended the many forms of "religion," which have come from the "harlot" who sits on many waters. The harlot will be utilized as a basis for the Antichrist's rise to power over the nations, and will come to an end once her usefulness to the Antichrist has run its course.

1. There are several factors which must be noted in these verses (1-7).
 - The emphasis of the woman sitting on many waters is defined as the influence which the woman (false religious system) had maintained upon many nations and peoples (v. 15); leading them to acts of immorality.¹¹³⁸

¹¹³⁶ cf. Zechariah 14:16, 17.

¹¹³⁷ cf. Titus 3:3-8; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Luke 14:15-24.

¹¹³⁸ cf. 14:8.

- The harlot is quite wealthy, yet her wealth is derived from falsehoods from within her denial of the “reality of God,” as through the idolatrous foundation of her choosing (vs. 4, 5).
- The harlot is guilty of not only killing actual children of God, but also of fighting against the truth of their witness (v. 6).
- The harlot although rich, prideful and arrogant, is yet deceived by the beast upon which she is carried; for she is carried in directions of the beast’s choosing (seven heads and ten horns— v. 7).

Just as many sinful ways were introduced to the Jewish nation and the church in general (which remains even to this day) by the harlotry of Babylon, the falsehoods (misdirection; ritualistic religious practices) of mysticism (vague denial of reality) will continue to its maximum potential, until its destruction by the forces of the Antichrist. Because the religion referenced by the name “Babylon the Great” demonstrates a pagan worship other than to the Antichrist, the basis of its rule will be destroyed, and thus its followers will be absorbed by the central false religion of the Antichrist. When the destruction to this mystic false religion comes to pass, a great angel coming down from heaven will proclaim:

Revelation 18:2, 3: “Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! And she has become a dwelling place of demons and a prison of every unclean spirit, and a prison of every unclean and hateful bird. “For all the nations have drunk of the wine of the passion of her immorality, and the kings of the earth have committed acts of immorality with her, and the merchants of the earth have become rich by the wealth of her sensuality.”

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

This chapter reveals the fall of a false religion which has been strong (Great) in its ability to lead astray into darkness. Through Babylon (Babel / land of the Chaldeans) of old, came many pagan forms of idol worship, sexually immoral religious practices, and many other deceptions against proper worship of God. This false religion (Babylon the Great) has maintained many forms of pagan worship throughout its existence; having hidden the essence of its paganism by shrouded mystery

(v. 5). Although this false religion (harlot) has pretenses of worship to God, the fruits of its worship practices evince the truth of her immorality and deceptiveness.¹¹³⁹

- Note of mention: The original mysteries religion within Babylon was derived from the time of Babylon (specifically Nineveh) being founded by Nimrod.¹¹⁴⁰ Nimrod's wife Semiramis started the religious rites sect of the Babylonian Mysteries; from which worship of Baal was initiated, through a lavish story of supposed divine conception (Tammuz) in false fulfillment regarding the promise of the seed.¹¹⁴¹ "Baal" worship derived from Babylon's mysteries worship of Tammuz and Ishtar, is repeatedly condemned in Scripture (Baals; goddesses of the Ashtaroth).
- It is not the original mysteries of Babylon which is emphasized in this chapter, but rather the influence brought forward from Babylon which has led to manipulation of Scripture out of context within forms of Christianity (heretical and apostate Christian religion); leading to deceptions from a mixture of the Babylonian Mysteries and the misuse (adulteration) of Gospel truth.¹¹⁴²
 - A terrible basis, by which the Babylonian Mysteries have been brought forward through incorporation into the teachings of supposed Christendom by the Mother of harlots, is through the worship of the "queen of heaven"; the Assyrian and Babylonian mysteries goddess—"Ishtar." This foolishness when incorporated into supposed Christianity brought forth worship as by devotion for a woman; which was substituted for the Babylonian "queen of heaven." Ishtar was a supposed fertility goddess who was married to Tammuz; this union constituting a supposed form of deity. "Ishtar" is yet inadvertently worshipped within most of Christendom in the form of a tradition even to this day (Easter), although only openly worshipped by the

¹¹³⁹ cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3-15.

¹¹⁴⁰ cf. Genesis 10:8-12.

¹¹⁴¹ cf. Genesis 3:15.

¹¹⁴² cf. Jeremiah 7:5-20; 44:13-28; Ezekiel 8:5-18; 2 Corinthians 4:1, 2.

mother of harlots (through deceptively utilizing another name—"Mary"). This rubber stamps the name of the Lord Jesus Christ to a completely pagan form of worship, as a supposed means of justifying the false religion as being "Christian" in nature, although not! Although the religious foundation for pagan Christianity worships openly as they are greatly deceived (Mother of harlotry), the children of the harlot (apostate believers), yet worship inappropriately through intentional ignorance! This is why the basis of actual Christianity is "abiding in the Word"; for without this imperative we cannot remain founded upon the Rock which is the Lord Jesus Christ, thereby staying from deceptive worship practices (apostate religion)!

- Within the Ezekiel passages 8:7-18 please note aspects for which leadership within Babylon's harlotry yet remains guilty: openly claiming to worship God, yet actually worshipping false gods when in secret (vs. 10-12); coming supposedly before the Lord, yet maintaining lamentations and worship for those who are falsely attributed with deity (vs. 13-16); placing emphasis upon the physical aspects of worship (religion), rather than achieving the heartfelt devotion of actual worship (spiritually relational), which is according to faith in the one true God.

The mysticism which originated in Babylon, has been maintained through false religion; having continued forth through deceptive insistence upon religious superiority. Leadership of Babylon's harlotry (Mother of harlots) has believed themselves to have the authority of God on earth, this passed (deceptively) as true by demanding confessions be made to them as God's chosen keepers of the bridge, rather than directly to God. This is building oneself an inappropriate pedestal in an unwarranted position, according to the leadership of the one (Satan) who actually leads them to deceive the multitudes.¹¹⁴³ This position as placed by the arrogance of man was in times of antiquity called the position of the "Pontifex Maximus," which means the "Major Keeper of the Bridge"; although pertaining to the bridge between man and Satan.

¹¹⁴³ cf. Isaiah 14:13, 14.

The words of the “Pontiff” were to be considered as inerrant (without error), and thereby absolute law and truth.

A short progression of the “Pontiff” position, for the purpose of following from whence it came to its current position, renders harsh reality as to this false religion (Babylon the Great), which is yet strong in leading millions astray of the truth necessary in order to be saved! Julius Caesar was made Pontiff of the Etruscan Order in 74 B.C., and “Supreme Pontiff” of the Babylonian Order in 63 B.C. The progression of Pontiff among the Roman Emperors continued until Emperor Gratian refused the position for Christian reasons, which then placed the position of Pontiff unto Damascus, the Bishop of the Church at Rome, whom with great pride accepted election to the position. Through the influence of monks at the Mt. Carmel sanctuary (college) of Babylonian religion, Bishop Damascus became the ruler (Supreme Pontiff) of the “Roman Church” in A.D. 378. The combined false religious systems of Rome and Babylon were then united into a form of pagan mysticism. This form of heretical pagan worship entered into the Christian church at Rome through the church at Pergamum, which had been infiltrated by Babylonian religious rites teachers, years prior. This position “Pontifex” was in later times referred to as “Pontiff;” yet being used within the papacy to this day.

- The reality of this is emphasized in vs. 9-13; as the false religion arose to power through Roman leadership; which at the time of John; some had fallen, one was, and another (Antichrist) was to come. In context, the former Roman rulers would have been those whose tolerance led ultimately to allowance for and inevitable strengthening of this false religion; which coming through Roman rule would currently exist under the guise of being supposedly Christian in nature. By this emphasis, Rome will once again be powerfully involved in world affairs, prior to the Antichrist’s insistence that the world worship him.

Religious Babylon as described in chapter seventeen has been, and will continue to be the foundation of false Christianity from which the Antichrist will rise; the specific form of harlotry within supposed Christendom is not known with any certainty, for the Mother of harlots has many children (types of denominations yet committing harlotry). It must also be understood that the Mother of harlotry and the

abominations of the earth, and the Antichrist; as with all antichrists; have been led by Satan who instigates evil and influences wickedness; this to both deceive and delusively lead astray from truth regarding the reality of God and the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ).¹¹⁴⁴ This form of false religion which has and will continue to keep millions from freedom in Christ is based upon deception (mysticism) and idolatrous worship practices. This false religion will fall prey to the manipulation of the Antichrist, leading to its rendering assistance to the Antichrist as he makes a covenant with the nation of Israel. This form of false religion will be destroyed by the armies of the Antichrist, when its usefulness to him is depleted. The destruction of this religious system by the Antichrist will be praised and never questioned by the millions deceived by the beast; for the destruction of the “religious system” will seem appropriate as by former teachings of the “harlot.” As the Antichrist utilizes the power of practiced deception which is from his father the devil, he will convince the world that he is God and therefore will justify the destruction of any former religious foundation as useless, because he (god) is present in the flesh. The destruction of the prevalent religious system will be followed by the persecution and deaths of most individuals who seek Christ (tribulation saints), for they will refuse to believe the deception of the Antichrist’s deity, and will therefore be a direct threat to the darkness of the Antichrist, as they will become servants of light.¹¹⁴⁵

- Because of the idolatrous nature by which the Antichrist will both utilize the harlot and insist upon being worshipped either in person or by spiritual tribute to his image, we know that the harlot of Babylon is not Islam; for Muslims abhor idolatry.
- This harlot of Babylon is one practiced in idolatrous worship, who through extreme pride, arrogance and being deceived, has proclaimed herself to be of supreme authority. Due the harlot’s influence through the centuries, and the way in which her deceptions have been believed as true, although not; she will rise to new heights under the manipulations of the Antichrist. This could only occur within “religion” completely void of truth!

¹¹⁴⁴ cf. John 6:44-65; 14:6, 7; 2 Thessalonians 2:3-12; 1 John 2:18.

¹¹⁴⁵ cf. Matthew 5:14-16; Ephesians 5:3-10.

- Because the ten kings will be gathered from many nations which have been influenced by the harlot, the nations can be within any major denominations (harlot's offspring) of supposed Christianity (the Christian religion); for through the rituals of harlotry (inappropriate worship void of truth and devotion for God) passed by the “mother of harlots,” all who have practiced paganism within the Christian religion will be vulnerable.
- The dwelling place of the great harlot, will be burned to the ground in accordance to God's will for its demise; for the Lord will unite the forces of the Antichrist within this single intent (vs. 16-18).
 - From what single place in Rome has ritualistic and idolatrous false Christianity yet influenced the world? This is a place of great wealth, great influence, great religious arrogance and blatant darkness (paganism); although claiming servanthood of light.¹¹⁴⁶ This is a place where the inhabitants claim superiority over all others, and are never to be questioned or doubted. The arrogance of the harlot will continue until an ending point of the Great Tribulation Period, when eradication of her is brought forth by the Antichrist; for he will become the sole source of religious influence, from the foundation of which the harlot gave birth. For better understanding regarding the Babylonian harlot, please reference chapter eight of the book (Big If).

Chapter 18

Unlike in chapter eighteen where the destruction of financial and political “Babylon” is mourned, the destruction of the harlot (false religious system) in chapter seventeen was without emotion. This is easily explainable by factors brought into the world by the mother of harlots and the abominations of the earth—Babylon (v. 2, 3; cf. 17:5). Although many expositors and scholars believe the emphases of chapter eighteen to reference: Vatican, Rome, or an actual city of Babylon which will supposedly be built in the end times; I disagree, for the direction of both chapters 17 and 18 reference how religion (chapter 17), politics and finances (chapter 18) have been trusted and manipulated throughout

¹¹⁴⁶ cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3, 4, 12-15.

history. Within my disagreement, please understand that although I do not believe Vatican to be financial Babylon within this chapter; I absolutely believe Vatican (more so Papal Catholicism) to be the mother of harlotry of chapter seventeen; as tolerance for the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries religion (Roman Catholicism), was warned against by the Lord!¹¹⁴⁷

When realization is made by the facts of Scripture which has been rendered for our instruction, we understand those with faith (children of God) trust in the Lord, whereas the children of the world (those without actual trusting faith) trust in the uncertainty of human government and physical prosperity.¹¹⁴⁸ From within the basis of truth that Satan entices through those of financially superior stature, we can understand that the basis of authoritarian rule upon the earth during the Tribulation Period will be derived from the worldly strength of riches and guile.

Although the faith of the Israelites was far diminished from possible potential prior to the Babylonian exile, the duration of the exile (70 years) increased the trust of the majority to rest upon human government and physical prosperity to an even greater degree; for this is evident by the small percentage of the Israelites who returned to Jerusalem under the leadership of Zerubbabel and Ezra, as compared to the masses which remained in Babylon under Persian dominion. This also accounts for: the lack of mention of God's blessings within the book of Esther, the return to fleshly indulgences when Nehemiah was absent from Jerusalem, and the sin cycle of the nation when godly men were not present with continual righteous leadership.¹¹⁴⁹

The way in which trusting in human government and the uncertainty of physical prosperity (riches) has carried forth from the time of "Babylon" is not only evident in Scripture, but also through the study of human history in general. Please reference chapter three of the book (Big If) for further understanding regarding—"human leadership." The children of God have always been instructed to focus upon the Lord and trust in Him; yet the abundant foolishness of the world has always continued, as humans tend to trust in that which is temporal (seen and

¹¹⁴⁷ cf. Revelation 2:13, 20-23.

¹¹⁴⁸ cf. Romans 15:1-6; 1 Samuel 8:4-22.

¹¹⁴⁹ cf. Books of Esther; Nehemiah; Ezra; Malachi; Haggai.

witnessed in the physical realm), while failing to utilize the measure of faith which God has given to strengthen and reassure our relationship with Him; which endures forever! With understanding as to the reality of human existence and the lack of spiritual faith which is present in most who claim a relationship with God, we gain potential for knowledge as to the actual content of chapters 17 (harlotry) and 18 (abominations of the earth).

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

1. Although Scripture plainly states that servants cannot actually serve two masters; mammon and God; the mother of—harlotry, and abominations of the earth (cf. 17:5), has attempted to teach potential believers to seek and trust in physical prosperity.¹¹⁵⁰ The fact that financial stature has entered into supposed Christianity as by the same means (abominations of the earth) as a sign of spiritual success, although not, is emphasized in vs. 2, 3; for this is an area where true believers cannot afford to be taken captive (vs. 4, 5).
 - The love of mammon introduced by Babylon, has allowed demons of all sorts to enter into the religion called Christianity (Christian religion; not actual Christianity); emphasized in the reality of the physical prosperity generated by “religion,” and the many who have sought “religion” to be a basis of personal financial gains.
 - The ultimate motive of seeking riches or the derivatives thereof has caused distraction and detriment to the faith of millions throughout history. Once an individual places attentive focus upon mammon, all else including “religion” must fall within the confines of physical existence; for this is the basis of walking by sight which is deceptively taught from many supposed Christian pulpits, and inappropriately instigated and accepted by the multitudes.¹¹⁵¹ Denial of physical means of distraction is contingent upon looking beyond “oneself,” which also happens to be the first step necessary to follow Jesus by faith upon the narrow path of His righteousness, which leads unto fulfillment of spiritual

¹¹⁵⁰ cf. Matthew 6:19-24.

¹¹⁵¹ cf. 2 Timothy 4:3, 4; 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

purpose; which includes “salvation”!¹¹⁵² It is the denial of this primary step of submission (denial of self) which is prevalent within the multitudes of believers; leading to their having (and continuing to have) external expansion in the physical realm, with little or no expansion within spiritually. By this, claim is made of spiritual expansion as by physical prosperity, whereas in reality spiritual growth remains elusive

- Within this fact, I must point out that the Christian religion (not actual Christianity) is for the most part but foolishness of rote, due the introduction and acceptance of harlotry and abominations, received and followed by those with little or no actual faith. Unlike the Christian religion which has become pagan due heretical false teachings and apostate worship practices, “actual Christianity” is the basis of true faith by which saints are saved by grace through faith, and seek to be “Christ-like” by the grace of God! The difference between the two is immense, as one is of darkness (pagan Christian religion; i.e. physical realm worship), and the other of light (actual Christianity; i.e. worship in spirit and in truth). The former is an adulterous mimic of a true relationship with God; whereas the latter is an actual relationship based within the love, faithfulness and strength of God!¹¹⁵³

2. The emphasized ultimate authority brought forth through Babylon (harlotry and abominations) has been believed by those of her rearing. Within this factor, we understand that supposed Christianity has continued the harlotry and abominations as through inappropriate rituals, teachings, and seeking of riches; for the teachings of the harlot were never tested in accordance to Gospel truth. As real Christians (prudent brides and learned pupils of Christ) utilize the talents given by the Lord and test all things as an act of preparedness awaiting our beloved Lord, apostate Christians remain unprepared

¹¹⁵² cf. Matthew 7:13-27; 16:23-26.

¹¹⁵³ cf. 2:18-29; Matthew 12:39-50; James 4:3-10; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 2:1-3:18.

as by intentional spiritual procrastination, and fleshly indulgences (vs. 4-7)!¹¹⁵⁴

- Why didn't the "reformers" make a clean break from the abominations, during the Reformation Period? It should be known—true reform mandates coming into the light of truth and staying there; for no acts of darkness are allowed in the pure light of truth!

Unlike the destructive basis of the world religious system by the armies of the Antichrist at a latter point of the tribulation period, the destruction of this commercial system will come as the result of an earthquake (judgment of God—vs. 9-19; cf. 16:18, 19) nearing the end of the Great Tribulation Period. Throughout history when sudden financial decline has caused confusion and turmoil, so also will it be in this situation when the financial basis of strength attributed to worldly existence is suddenly brought to complete and utter destruction by the Lord, at the designated time. All foolish enough to have trusted in the uncertainty of riches and human leadership will have the foundation of their hope destroyed in one hour (hour of testing); when the very foundations of the world will be divinely shaken, bringing the collapse of all that is considered valuable by those who sought purpose through material existence and wealth (vs. 8-23).¹¹⁵⁵

Prior to the destruction of all material things which will be considered of extreme value by those who remain upon the earth, rampant wickedness will persist throughout the world, as individuals of greed and selfishness (personal idolatry) ponder their ways of unjust gains and enterprise. In a manner consistent with the larger cities within the Roman Empire of old, every form of thievery, deception and immorality will continue upon the earth, as individuals seek to prosper and live within their chosen unrighteousness.

Babylon of antiquity was a great fortified city, which was believed to be impregnable. The city of Babylon was a place of great paganism and worldly existence, where the inhabitants trusted in the physical manmade structure for protection. So also will the supposed strength of man be trusted just prior to Jesus' return in glory.¹¹⁵⁶ Remember

¹¹⁵⁴ cf. Matthew 25:1-30; Colossians 2:20-23.

¹¹⁵⁵ cf. 3:10, 11.

Sodom and Gomorrah? Remember how the army of Cyrus so easily captured Babylon?

It is the inappropriate trusting in the uncertainty of riches and human leadership, and the many ways by which mammon and demonically influenced leadership turns the hearts of individuals to ultimately serve “self,” that is the foundation for chapter eighteen. Babylon was the first of the four major kingdoms of Biblical mention. From Babylon (1st kingdom) precept factors centered upon the lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and the boastful pride of life; entered into and corrupted the spiritual and moral stature of human existence as set forth by the Lord to His chosen people. This began the basis of covert authoritarianism throughout the known world; as freedom for lesser capital gains among the commoners, became the basis of great riches to the ruling authorities. This corruption continued through the Medo-Persian Period (2nd kingdom) which added forms of political doctrine and increased trust in government, then through the Greek Period (3rd kingdom) which added forms of philosophy; bringing forth increased human intellectual feelings of worth. The fourth and final kingdom—Roman, having collected the precepts, doctrines and philosophies of the former kingdoms, then added many traditions which made the forms of secular bondage complete; which yet to this day holds the multitudes captive to worldly affairs, hopes and trust.

With the foundation of Roman rule being the strength of the sword (military might), this form of macho authoritarianism has continued throughout the generations, to the point of acceptance by the apostate church; who utilized supposed spiritual influence to enter into human forms of government; thereby utilizing the “sword” to further their ungodly endeavors (Dark Ages; Crusades; Holy Wars). It is the basis of Babylon’s influence regarding human forms of religion dominion and financial dominance which will be destroyed; the former by man, the latter by the Lord. With all individually conceived forms of human strength shattered, all that remains is the combined military might of all nations, which will be gathered by Satan to fight against the Lord upon His return in glory (Armageddon). The Lord will usher in the eternal state with the final eradication of prideful human potential (abominations), which has been led by demonic instigation and influence all along (vs. 9-24).

¹¹⁵⁶ cf. Matthew 24:29-39.

The entire basis of “Babylon” in context of chapters 17 and 18, regards not only the character changes within the chosen elect of God (Jews) derived from the exile, and the post exilic period when compromise settled into the spiritual and physical aspects of “believer’s” human existence, but also the generalized mindset of all humankind. The worldly contamination of “Babylon” through years of coercion has caused degradation upon the faith and physical existence derivatives of faith within the chosen of God; leaving only a remnant, that through focus and submission upon and to God has carried forward the essence of the relational reality.¹¹⁵⁷ The remnant is now gone (“caught up”; Rapture), leaving only deceived humanity to face the reality of truth which will be realized by the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ. Because the masses of humankind have gone astray of truth; having trusted in not only the things of the world, but also inadvertently the ruler of the world (Satan); a name was given to the secular endeavors of man, the name specifically regarding the place of dwelling from which humankind journeyed forth in frailty—“Babylon!”

All aspects of trusting in both “religion” apart from an actual relationship with Jesus, and in the frailty of “human government” must cease prior to the millennial reign of the Lord! If this did not occur, those remaining to enter into the millennial reign would do so through the same basis of human trust (the harlotry and abominations of Babylon), leaving nothing un-changed; yet it does change (must occur)—as the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord!¹¹⁵⁸ If contextually, it were true that Babylon will be a physical structure upon the earth, it would make no sense that the destruction of a structure would eliminate the harlotry and abominations from the earth; nor would the following books of Revelation make any sense, if all remains as it was in accordance to the secular mindset, minus specifics of human cities. The major emphasis of chapter eighteen is that the financial stature of the world which has been trusted for generations, will be destroyed by the Lord; rendering emphases upon the futility of attempts to find purpose and beauty (clump of clay) without the righteous and purposeful craftsmanship of the Potter!

¹¹⁵⁷ cf. James 1:19-27.

¹¹⁵⁸ cf. 11:15-19; Zechariah 14:16-19.

- Please look closely at vs. 3 and 9; note the emphasis placed upon the secular condition of the human mind and heart. When we understand that only God can change the basis of a secular physical existence into an existence based in faith; the Biblical emphases becomes clear.

Chapter 19

PREFATORY

Chapter nineteen begins with the words—after these things (v. 1). This is of importance, for as aforementioned, the mindset of trusting in “religion” and/or the political / financial strengths of the world must cease; prior to entrance into the Lord’s reign. With these words, we realize that the Lord’s kingdom is one of truth and righteousness, therefore any human way of thinking (inane) must be eradicated from the essence of our being; for the corruptible must become incorruptible, just as the mortal must put on immortality. The necessity for destruction upon all aspects of secular stature is emphasized in the words of vs. 2 and 3; for the harlot has been judged with finality, the evidence of her destruction (smoke) rises forever and ever! We discern this to be factual by the affirming word—Amen (*truly*) (v. 4)!

With this understanding, we can discern that the destruction of Babylon (chapter 18) will occur after the sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet; shortly after the “Rapture” of believers; within the rendering to the “bowl judgments.”¹¹⁵⁹ Because the sounding of the last trumpet initiates renewing with the coming of the new (God’s kingdom) and the passing of the old (kingdom of the world), the essence of righteous change is brought forth by the sovereign will and glory of God. Within this change, the saints are raised incorruptible; whereas the corruptible of the world will suffer the final judgments (bowl judgments). Although the exact correlation cannot be known with certainty, it is made evident that sounding of the 7th (last) trumpet indeed brings forth the greatest righteous change in the history of humankind; for the time period of the temporal is now of short duration, even so based in the righteousness of Christ; with finality at the end of the millennial period, when the

¹¹⁵⁹ cf. 11:15-19; 16:17-21.

temporal is swallowed completely by the eternal! This is both evidenced and confirmed by the proclamations of “Hallelujah” (vs. 1, 3, 4, 6)!

With mention of the destruction of the “harlot” (v. 2), and how her smoke will rise for all eternity (v. 3), we realize the inevitable outcome for all who would bring harm to God’s elect throughout history. “Babylon” being the “Mother of harlots and abominations of the earth,” again emphasizes that Babylon indicates wicked stature, not a literal city; for a structure will not burn in hell, but rather the demonic influence and sons and daughters of disobedience who fulfilled the will of their leader and father (Satan) throughout the generations.¹¹⁶⁰ This should bring forth considerable conviction within all claiming faith in God; for the spiritual relationship of the remnant with God brings forth salvation, whereas the religion of the multitudes (harlotry) brings forth deception and condemnation.¹¹⁶¹ Religion cannot save anyone, for a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ is the sole basis of salvation; by grace we have been saved (accepted by faith), not on any basis of human works (religion)!

Although salvation has never been by any basis of human works, an emphasis is rendered regarding the appropriate submission of believers unto the Lord; this by the statement of the “fine linen, bright and clean” being in actuality the righteous acts of the saints (v. 8). Although all good, acceptable and perfects gifts come from the Lord, it is submissiveness unto His righteous leadership which allows His grace to be appropriated for righteous devotion.¹¹⁶² Although many will be saved by God’s grace, many will not have reward, for they sought salvation with no intent of prudent righteous service; these are those who desired to love the Lord, while living for the flesh. It is the prudent work of submission to love God first and foremost, which leads bond servants to be instruments of God’s righteousness. This is the context of “the righteous acts of the saints,” for all fruits of righteousness are actually of the Lord; obedient saints simply submit and serve within devotion.¹¹⁶³

Now with chapter nineteen, comes the time which devotional believers have all been waiting and praying for!¹¹⁶⁴ This is a time of great

¹¹⁶⁰ cf. 17:1-6, 15; 18:2, 3.

¹¹⁶¹ cf. 2 Corinthians 11:1-3.

¹¹⁶² cf. James 1:17; Romans 4:13-25; 10:1-4; 11:5-10; Philippians 3:7-14.

¹¹⁶³ cf. Philippians 1:6-2:18.

¹¹⁶⁴ cf. 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

rejoicing by all who have called upon the name of the Lord. Great cheers of praise to God are now heard, as the long awaited time of judgment and revenge for the saints by the Lord has come!¹¹⁶⁵ We are now witness to the uplifted voices by the twenty-four elders, the four living creatures and a great multitude of saints (all), whom give praise to God for His righteous judgments upon the world of sin and injustice. The praise continues as the “bride” is now diligent for the wedding feast with the Lamb; being completely prepared and dressed for the occasion (vs. 1-10).

It may be noted that the use of the word “Hallelujah” (Greek = hal-laylouia - adoring exclamation) is now used, and rightfully so! A distinction should also be noted between the “bride” and “those invited to the wedding feast.” Although this will be a time of great rejoicing, as all have been blessed with salvation, the bride is within the place of honor with the Groom (Lamb). The distinction is that the “bride” had made herself ready by actions of devotional love, whereas the others had awaited the Groom within a stature of selfish procrastination. Hopefully the prefatory allows greater understanding in this regard; for many seek salvation from the Messiah, whereas to bond servants—He is “Lord of all!”¹¹⁶⁶

- Although as aforementioned, many believe the church was raptured prior to the seven year tribulation period, it would make no sense whatsoever that the wedding feast would follow seven years after the Groom comes to accept His bride. Although God has different specific plans for Jews, and born again believers during this time within which is no distinction; this may be an emphasis distinction between the “bride” and others invited to the feast, it would yet remain absurd to make conjecture as to why the wedding and the feast would be separated one from the other for a period of seven years.

Within verse ten we find a very fitting introduction as to what is about to occur, for the Lord will soon come in glory. Immediately we are presented with the coming of our Lord, as the eastern skies open up and

¹¹⁶⁵ cf. Hebrews 10:26-31.

¹¹⁶⁶ cf. exemplar - Psalm 106:13-48; Isaiah 43:10-44:28; 49:1-26.

He arrives in glory with eyes of fire and many crowns upon His head; which fulfills prophesy concerning His return, causing blatant realization by all who dwell upon the earth that Truth (Jesus) prevails. He comes now with the name “The Word of God,” for with the Word (sharp sword) coming forth from His mouth, He smites the nations.¹¹⁶⁷ On His robe (which is dipped in blood) is written the wonderment of His title—“KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS” (vs. 10-16).

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

The prelude to the marriage supper is the fourth of the four hallelujahs. The first three were in response to the Lord’s just judgments, and now this final hallelujah is in response to what is about to happen, as the anticipation for the second coming of Christ is great. Those who have truly loved the Lord and been born again because of His grace, are now fully prepared for the marriage supper, having been clothed with proper attire. We, by the grace of God, having been cleansed of all unrighteousness and impurity, are invited to the wedding feast as pure virgins, having been clothed in fine linen for the occasion. The saints enter into the banquet (time of rejoicing); thus the state of blessed eternity with the Lord Jesus Christ. Amen. Come, Lord Jesus (cf. 22:20)!

The linen worn by the bride of Christ (the saint), would appear to be the combined righteous acts (combined) of all the saints (v. 8). As it is only by the grace of God that we may walk in His righteousness, the praise is tremendous toward God, for it is His grace which has brought us to the salvation which He destined for those who truly love Him.¹¹⁶⁸ The time of the marriage supper will be a time of extreme happiness and joy. The fact of our joy and rejoicing due: God’s grace, and our faith in Jesus, and the salvation He has freely given us by grace; will abound to a degree unfathomable; for at the marriage supper we will be in the presence of our Lord, and thus see Him and experience His presence like never before!¹¹⁶⁹

1. The Significance of the Linen Garment in v. 8

¹¹⁶⁷ cf. sharp two edged sword - 1:16; 2:12; Hebrews 4:12; sword reality - John 12:46-50, specific v. 48.

¹¹⁶⁸ cf. Ephesians 1:3-14.

¹¹⁶⁹ cf. 1 Peter 1:3-9; 1 John 3:1-3.

The linen is significant, as we must be properly clothed if we are to be identified with Christ as His bride.¹¹⁷⁰ The linen itself is the basic garment necessary to be worn by the saints, for entrance into the marriage supper of the Lamb (v. 8); for the righteous acts of the saints is foundational to the righteousness of God manifest and fulfilled!¹¹⁷¹

In days of old, two types of linen garments were worn to important meetings and gatherings. The first was the primary garment of covering, which was to cover the person's nakedness (long white garment), and the second was a garment of dignity which held the insignia and metals of honor or reward (usually scarlet in color).

At the marriage supper, we may very well be wearing both of these types of proper attire, as we come before our Lord in a place of honor (by His grace); for we may very well be wearing our reward insignia, having received it upon our joining the Lord.¹¹⁷² Wearing the reward insignia is done in humility, with the saints being in the presence of our divine, glorious Lord.¹¹⁷³ Within this, it should be noted that from the time of the Rapture (being "caught up") until the saints are fully prepared to journey with the Lord, is but short time duration. With gathering of the saints completed, the saints join the Lord as He comes in glory, to eliminate the forces of wickedness upon the earth (vs. 11-14).¹¹⁷⁴

- It may be noted, that although we may very well be wearing our rewards by the rights given according to God's grace, we will probably not even notice as we are in complete awe as we stand in the presence of God our Savior. Standing in the presence of complete righteousness and glory, we would most likely not notice the attire being worn. As we praise and honor our Lord at the marriage supper, we will not be aware of anything except "Wow, He is glorious and awesome!"
- The time period of the bowl judgments upon the earth, may be the time period of which believers give account for our deeds while in the flesh. Because we will all give account as to whether

¹¹⁷⁰ cf. Matthew 22:11-14; 25:32-46.

¹¹⁷¹ cf. Romans 10:1-4; 2 Corinthians 5:21.

¹¹⁷² cf. 22:12, 13; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8; James 1:12; 1 Peter 5:1-4.

¹¹⁷³ cf. Philippians 3:20, 21; James 1:9, 10.

¹¹⁷⁴ cf. 1 Thessalonians 3:11-13; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-2:4.

our deeds were for or against Jesus, and this must occur prior to entrance into the state of eternity, the time period of the bowl judgments upon the earth would also be the time period of the “Bema Seat” (mercy seat) judgment.¹¹⁷⁵ This would certainly be discernable, for a time period will precede our return with Jesus to fight the battle of Armageddon; this a short time after being “caught up.”

2. What do His Names Represent About His Person and Work?

- The primary declaration used by John in describing Christ in chapter 19, is the declaration of sovereign victory! The name of Christ “Faithful and True” (v. 11) as he comes upon the white horse of victory, carries the theme of chapter nineteen, for He is:
 - Already victorious.¹¹⁷⁶ This factor is wonderful, for only our Lord can be victorious in a battle not yet fought!
 - Fulfilling prophesy in absolute truth and righteousness.¹¹⁷⁷
 - Faithful in all things.¹¹⁷⁸

Jesus returns with the crown of many diadems. These diadems are the multiple aspects or crowns of Christ’s authority over all things.¹¹⁷⁹ The robe which He wears upon His return in victorious glory is dipped in blood, and upon Him now is the name “*The Word of God.*” This name of our Lord is very descriptive and proper, because He will judge by the Word (Scriptures) which was given us to guide our paths unto righteousness (or destruction when rejected).¹¹⁸⁰

The names given to Jesus in verse sixteen ... “KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS,” is the name signifying His supremacy over all rulers, kings, princes, lords, etc. Jesus is truly the Lord (Kurios) of all things, and as He comes, this title is demonstrated in advance of any action, because this is the undeniable righteous truth!¹¹⁸¹ These decla-

¹¹⁷⁵ cf. Romans 2:1-16; 14:1-12.

¹¹⁷⁶ cf. 16:17; John 19:30; Romans 6:5-14.

¹¹⁷⁷ cf. John 5:19-47.

¹¹⁷⁸ cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:23, 24; 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

¹¹⁷⁹ cf. Colossians 1:16, 17; Acts 10:36, 37.

¹¹⁸⁰ cf. Romans 2:14-16; John 8:31, 32; 12:48-50; 1 Corinthians 11:31, 32.

¹¹⁸¹ cf. Luke 10:22-24; Philippians 2:9-11; Isaiah 45:20-25.

rations and names set forth in regard to the Lord Jesus Christ are in regard to His relationship with: God the Father, the saints, and His incarnation to glory over the kingdoms of the world.¹¹⁸²

The armies of the earth are gathered at Armageddon for the battle against the Lord; amid ravaging raids upon the city of Jerusalem, led by demonic influence.¹¹⁸³ Gathering note, remember the heavenly angel with the second sharp sickle (vs. 17, 18; cf. 14:17)! With the armies of the world now at full readiness and driven by demons in anger and hatred, Jesus will come down upon the Mount of Olives with such great power, that the mountain will split in two from east to west.¹¹⁸⁴

- The Mount of Olives splitting in two and the Jews fleeing through the opening is a wonderful rehash of past events, for this will be a divine deliverance much as occurred when the Israelites passed through the Red (Reed) Sea; when being pursued by Pharaoh and his army!¹¹⁸⁵

The battle of Armageddon (vs. 17-21) will be a devastating destruction of evil by righteousness! Just prior to this tremendous devastation, the birds of the air are called to gather together in preparation for feasting upon the bodies of the millions who will be killed (vs. 17, 18).¹¹⁸⁶ By the sheer numbers of bodies (man and animal) which will come from such a devastating judgment, the birds will be overwhelmed with sustenance, for millions will perish by the Word (Gospel) they (disobedient humans) chose to rebel against (v. 21). As the birds are being gathered for the tremendous death toll which is about to occur, the armies of the world are gathering their forces, weapons, strategies and wits in final preparation for their inevitable defeat. With the world's armies now at total readiness (so they think), the Lord and His angels will come and throw (quickly and easily) the Antichrist and the False Prophet into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, and the massive armies of the earth will be killed by the words of truth which will come forth from the mouth of Christ; this being the reality of fulfillment for what

¹¹⁸² cf. Acts 2:24-36.

¹¹⁸³ cf. Zechariah 14:2, 3.

¹¹⁸⁴ cf. Zechariah 14:4, 5.

¹¹⁸⁵ cf. Exodus 14:16-22.

¹¹⁸⁶ cf. Matthew 24:27, 28.

had to occur! We must remember, the Lord has only to speak for actions to occur!¹¹⁸⁷

The Lord warned of this in prophetic Scripture, so that all may know of what must occur.¹¹⁸⁸ Having failed to heed the message of warning, the inhabitants of the world will have gone through terrible times of warfare and judgment. Many could have avoided aspects of the extreme harshness of the Great Tribulation Period, had they only accepted God's lovingkindness and grace, by allowing the measure of faith He had given them to be righteously activated and nurtured. Now with the ultimate arrogance of man (strength in numbers) gathered at the same place upon the earth in rebellion against Truth, it is the reality of Truth (Jesus) who will defeat them.

The truth and reality of the Gospel will be brunt upon those coming under the judgment of Armageddon. The truth of God's grace will have eluded the many, as they failed to accept the free gift of salvation by grace through faith; yet at the battle of Armageddon, the certainty of Gospel truth will become a severe harsh reality. Within a moment in time, all who had been presented with the Gospel will realize that it was true and correct all along; yet it will then be too late for the many. The simple fact remains, we can either acknowledge the Bible as true now and yet receive God's mercy and grace, or acknowledge it later when falling under severe judgment. Although the decision rests with each of us, the Truth (Jesus) remains the same!¹¹⁸⁹

Amazing facts in the surrounding events of the battle of Armageddon would have to be: the years of preparation by Satan, the immense strategies by the Antichrist and the False Prophet, the tremendous arrogance and greed by the world rulers, the massive amounts of time spent in attempts to gain superiority. Taking into account all the time and effort emphasized by men and the forces of evil driving them forth, this with the final event of battle being total victory for the Lord in a short period of time as He has only to speak the victory (v. 21); would not man's time have been better spent listening to the truth spoken by the servants of the Lord, and the convictions of the Holy Spirit unto salvation!

¹¹⁸⁷ cf. exemplified - Genesis 1:3-5, 6-8, 9-10, 11-12, 14-18, 20-22, 24-25, 26-30; 2:1.

¹¹⁸⁸ cf. 1:1, 2; 4:1.

¹¹⁸⁹ cf. Hebrews 13:7-19, specific v. 8.

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

It is by the example of this battle that we may see simple truths of rebellion against the Lord by individuals upon the earth today. Many choose to rebel openly, many are rebellious secretly, many rely upon their pride and arrogance to justify foolishness (speaking from past personal experience; although not pertaining to the Lord), many believe they can fool the Lord as they fool people, and many rely upon the human strengths of wit, masses and weaponry. The battle of Armageddon will be won by the sheer truth (and might) of the Lord, whose strength can be witnessed (now) when we study His word (Gospel) and enter into fellowship with Him. Just as believers can be witness to the glory of the Lord now, as un-believers cannot possibly understand due their refusal to heed truth, so also will victory or defeat effectively come later from the Lord; with obedient devotional submission, or rebellious denial and rejection.

- It is absolutely true that the Word of God is living and active; yet this is only realized by those who have humbly and obediently submitted unto the Lord for implantation of the Gospel reality!¹¹⁹⁰ It can change lives and lead away from deception, or it can be that which judges unto death in sins. I am very distraught by the way many individuals (many supposed believers included) flee quickly from the truth that can make them free (by God's grace); and even more so upset by the deceptions from pulpits which manipulate (adulterate) the Gospel and thereby deny the power thereof. It seems like the simplest of truths are offensive to folks these days, and the acceptance and teaching of the harsh ones like: love the Lord, walk the talk, put your focus back on Jesus, be sober and vigilant, and be separate from the world; are rarely sought nor taught. The greatest hindrance to the walk of average believers is that so much supposed spiritual leadership speaks from ignorance; for they have never actually learned the Gospel truth from the Lord; yet they make confident assertions and proclamations as authoritative, although not.
- Sometimes I become very confused as to why we are told how mean we (true Christians; those with the mind of Christ) are,

¹¹⁹⁰ cf. James 1:19-22, specific v. 21.

when we quote Scripture in response to everyday situations. Folks today seem to want personal opinion and entertainment; yet as our words are without strength, we prefer to speak from God's wisdom frequently.¹¹⁹¹ When believers speak the Gospel truth even in a mild tone of voice and with love, we are hated, slandered, falsely accused and rejected (even by other supposed believers).¹¹⁹² I become confused on occasion when praying for folks, because they openly rebel against the faith they confess, and are deceived into believing that the Lord can be mocked and/or fooled.¹¹⁹³ I guess the part that hurts the most is the fact that all this deception, rebellion, practiced sin and love of the world, will come to a quick end just as the battle of Armageddon shall. When this occurs, the many will be surprised as they are defeated by the Truth they chose to reject, or find themselves without reward because they only sought to preserve their fleshly desires and existence.¹¹⁹⁴ Believers ought to be different regarding the things upon which we place our focus, for ours is - the kingdom of God!¹¹⁹⁵

THE MARRIAGE SUPPER OF THE LAMB: PREFATORY

- The time of the Rapture (being “caught up”) had for many years been a Scriptural subject of which I remained confused; for I could not say with any accuracy whether the Rapture would occur before, midpoint, or at the end of the Great Tribulation Period. After many conversations with my mentor about the subject, Paul rendered questions regarding the “Wedding Feast” which had to be researched (by both of us) in order to realize the truth. After much study of Scripture, as by cross referencing the different prophesies regarding the series of events concerning the gathering of believers to be with the Lord (Bride; Groom; Wedding Feast), that which follows is the result. Although I had believed that the Rapture would occur at the midpoint of the Tribulation Period, as by this we would be kept

¹¹⁹¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 1:21; 1 Peter 4:11; Titus 2:11-15.

¹¹⁹² cf. John 15:18, 19.

¹¹⁹³ cf. Matthew 7:16-27; 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16; Galatians 6:7, 8.

¹¹⁹⁴ cf. Matthew 6:1-5, 10:34-39; Luke 16:1-13; 1 Corinthians 3:11-15.

¹¹⁹⁵ cf. Hebrews 12:1-11, specific vs. 1-3.

from the “hour of testing,” and God’s wrath; in this I had failed to realize the association of the end time events. Scriptural prophecies regarding the Rapture make absolute sense when placed into context with the blessed event to which we are to eagerly await—the Marriage Supper of the Lamb; for the Scriptures do not tell us to eagerly await the “Rapture” (Rapture mention—1 Thessalonians 4:16-18), but rather the Wedding Feast. That to which we are to eagerly await is the return of the Lord, for He will bring righteousness to the earth according to His good, acceptable and perfect will; our deliverance is a blessing according to the kind intention of God’s will.

Even though portions of what is presented here have already been discussed in certain ways, I present this in a completed form as previously written. My Mentor (Paul M. Davis) had sparked my interest in gaining discernment regarding the time of the Rapture; for which this was the outcome of my investigation, which includes—the DAY OF THE LORD. Please understand that a lot of prayer unto the Lord was continually rendered during this investigation; as abundant “prayer” is always wise during any study of the Gospel, or any books pertaining to the Gospel (including *Big If*); for at times of the Lord’s choosing, when the “truth” is sought with disciplined diligence, the truth is revealed (if God permits by His involvement)!

REITERATIONS; POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Although most Christian organizations state that the “Rapture” will occur prior to the beginning of the seven year tribulation period, this must be investigated to come to a realization of the truth. The distinguishable factor which allows us to better understand the time of the “Rapture,” is the “marriage supper of the Lamb.” The time in which the Lord will come to receive His bride (believers) unto Himself, is the Rapture; with the wedding feast shortly thereafter. Although it is not our responsibility to know the exact time of which our Lord will come to take us home, it is our responsibility to be prepared for His arrival; this we do with anticipation, remaining always prepared.¹¹⁹⁶

¹¹⁹⁶ cf. Matthew 25:1-13; 1 John 2:28-3:3.

- Food for thought: If the “Rapture occurs prior to the tribulation period, as is believed by many due absence of revelation, then the wedding feast would be almost seven years after the Groom gathers His bride; for the wedding feast is within the time frame of the battle of Armageddon.

Most have stated that the Rapture will occur prior to the seven year tribulation period, because the “church” is not emphasized after Revelation chapter three. With prelude for the tribulation period beginning in chapter four, the assumption is made that the church is not mentioned, because the Rapture has occurred. This is to assume based upon what is not written in Scripture, rather than realization as by that which is revealed. Assumptions and conjecture are never warranted as a foundation for surety when studying the Scriptures; for that which is revealed is truth, whereas conjecture and assumption can lead to possible deceptions and forms of bondage within doctrine; although inadvertent. It should be mentioned at this point, that many Christian religion denominations hold to specifics regarding the Gospel, while rejected the overall truth which is revealed though the investigation of several individual portions; all of which when combined comprise the truth regarding the specific truth! Just as much conjecture comes forth derived from concepts and assumptions regarding prophetic specifics, when righteous (“handling accurately”; i.e. cut out straight) investigation is not fulfilled; so also the entirety of the Gospel cannot be righteously understood, when failing to handle the Gospel righteously according to Biblical standards!¹¹⁹⁷ Because the Gospel reality (combined truth) is the basis by which judgment will be rendered unto all human beings; the imperative to diligently and devotionally study the Scriptures accurately is of the utmost importance!

Another reason the Rapture is believed to be a separate event than the second coming of Christ, is the fact that believers will be raised (caught up—Rapture) to meet the Lord in the air; whereas at Christ’s second coming in glory, He will come to the earth. This must be investigated in accordance to Scripture reality, so as to ascertain the truth of both events as being in actuality one event (Day of the Lord) with several parts; initiated by 7th (last) trumpet. All believers should look

¹¹⁹⁷ cf. 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17; 2 Peter 1:17-21.

forward to the righteous arrival of Christ Jesus; the significance of this being our continual focus upon Him, and obedient preparedness for the event!¹¹⁹⁸ This will be a blessed event, at which time we will go to meet the Lord in the air; and thus we shall always be with the Lord.¹¹⁹⁹ This will be the occasion when we (the bride of Christ) go to meet the Groom (our Lord), and thus the event to which we look forward is in fact—the wedding feast; for which our waiting should be one of prudence (exercising sound judgment).¹²⁰⁰

- Many expositors and scholars have stated the specifics within the book of Revelation pertaining to the “resurrection” of saints, as not being reference to the Rapture; for resurrections had occurred at other times in Scripture. Although it is true that resurrections from the dead had occurred, those resurrected prior to the Rapture continued to walk upon the earth, and were not therefore “caught up” (gathered) to be with the Lord; which is a specific regarding the Rapture.¹²⁰¹ “Rapture” is a theological term referring to believer’s being “caught up.”

Nowhere in Scripture are we told to anticipate the Rapture; the context of being “caught up” (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17) is one of being comforted within surety of the event (if we are God’s legitimate children), with the emphasis being upon our diligence to remain pure virgins (holy) in preparation of His arrival, which ushers in the fulfillment of God’s revealed will to return righteousness to the earth.¹²⁰² Is this the attitude of most believers? Are endeavors in humility of submission to be pleasing to the Lord the sustained preference of most believers?¹²⁰³

Although the “Rapture” and the second coming of Christ (advent) to fight the battle of Armageddon are two separate specifics, the events proceed from the sounding of the 7th “last” trumpet. This is easily understandable by the gathering of believers from areas in the air, for as we will be raised in different areas of the world, we will then be gathered

¹¹⁹⁸ cf. 3:1-6; Galatians 3:27.

¹¹⁹⁹ cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:13-5:11, specific v. 17.

¹²⁰⁰ cf. reiterated - Matthew 25:1-13.

¹²⁰¹ cf. John 11:43, 44; 12:1, 2, 10, 11; Matthew 27:51-53.

¹²⁰² cf. 1 Peter 1:13-16; 2:1-10; 2 Peter 3:10-13; Jude 1:17-23.

¹²⁰³ cf. 22:20; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; 11:1-15; Ephesians 5:1-17.

to the central location of our Lord.¹²⁰⁴ Please remember that the Lord was at a certain location (in the clouds) awaiting the instruction to “reap”; for the harvest was ripe (cf. 14:14-16; *xayrainw*—ripe to the point of wither). When Scripture is taken in context, without the conjecture and assumption of human reasoning, and that which is derived from what is not written; the truth becomes plainly evident. Although it does not cause enthusiasm within believers to go through the majority of the Great Tribulation Period, the fact remains that we are servants of the Lord, saved by grace for an eternity of wonderment and blessing. The lack of enthusiasm comes from “self,” for we fail to remember that our purpose is to be taken by the Lord beyond “self” for the sake of others; as we follow the Lord.¹²⁰⁵ When we realize that we are in fact made alive in Christ for all eternity, the times of suffering we may face no longer compares with the blessings to come; therefore we serve without the hindrance of “fear”; for in accordance to God’s love, we have been made aware of what must occur! Diligent disciplined focus upon the Lord Jesus Christ is the imperative to endure, persevere, and succeed during times of persecution, tribulation, and suffering!¹²⁰⁶

Although most believers do not want to hear words of reality such as tribulation, suffering and persecution, the fact remains that these are characteristics of our walk for the Lord! If all believers had been raptured prior to the Tribulation Period, then whom would remain so as to evangelize for the Lord; when the non-believers of the Tribulation Period remain deceived, thereby directing their attitude of blame toward the Lord.¹²⁰⁷ Although it is true that many seek to blame the servants of the Lord, as they seek “scapegoats” from responsibility to render decisive decisions; the fact remains that the Gospel truth must be proclaimed, and thus we will be forced to suffer according to the double-mindedness of the multitudes!¹²⁰⁸ Although the second half of the Tribulation Period (Great Tribulation Period) will be a time of great suffering, the fact remains that the Lord is quite capable of protecting His legitimate servants and children to whatever degree He chooses; for this is an aspect of our being sealed by God and indwelt by the

¹²⁰⁴ cf. Matthew 24:29-31; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51, 52.

¹²⁰⁵ cf. Matthew 16:24, 25.

¹²⁰⁶ cf. Hebrews 12:1-11, focus specific vs. 1-3, discipline specific vs. 4-11.

¹²⁰⁷ cf. 9:20, 21; 16:9-11.

¹²⁰⁸ cf. James 1:2-8; 4:1-10.

Holy Spirit of promise.¹²⁰⁹ This will be the case during the Tribulation Period, for we must remember that there will be many killed during the Tribulation Period, after the Antichrist has been revealed for the man of lawlessness he truly is. Please remember—to accept the mark of the beast is to receive no protection from the Lord during the time period of His wrath being poured out upon wicked humanity.¹²¹⁰ Please reference these Scriptures—Matthew 24:4-31; Mark 13:5-37; Luke 21:5-36; please note from the Luke 21:27, 28 passages that we are to lift up our heads, for our redemption is near.

- Within this, it should be noted that “redemption” (release from debt as by payment of ransom) is for all eternity!

As can be noted by the Matthew 24:31 passage, the Lord will gather his elect (believers) from areas in the “sky.” This illustrates that we will indeed be in the sky, as that is where we will go to meet the Lord. Shortly after, the battle of Armageddon will begin, and thus believers are the ones dressed in “fine linen,” who are with the Lord and His angels entering into battle; yet this battle belongs to the Lord, and will thus be a short duration battle as by the power of His mighty spoken Word. Although the events of the Rapture and battle of Armageddon are separate events, there is only one “marriage supper of the Lamb,” therefore according to Scripture there is only one “second coming of the Lord.” His second coming will be: to gather the saints, fight the battle of Armageddon, and begin His reign over His chosen people (the Jews) for a millennium. Please consider these facts from the midpoint of the Tribulation period: Christ will return to gather His bride after 1260 days; then the “bowl judgments; and at 1335 days begins Christ’s millennial reign, when He will gather the Jews back unto Himself, thereby fulfilling His prophesies concerning them.”¹²¹¹

DAY OF THE LORD

Preliminary Note: There are several Scripture references which are repeated within this “basis of investigation,” which are repetitions also

¹²⁰⁹ cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-2:17; Matthew 24:22; Mark 13:20; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 1:13, 14; 4:30.

¹²¹⁰ cf. 14:9-13; 16:1-21.

¹²¹¹ cf. Daniel 7:4-28; 12:1-13; Ezekiel 20:32-44; Joel 2:28-3:21.

from the base study on the Rapture / Wedding Feast. These repetitions are imperative to emphasize the correlations necessary for understanding.

1. Jesus' spoken ministry was for the Jews (cf. Matthew 15:24).
2. The written word is for all believers in this dispensation of grace; for the inspired Word was rendered to adequately equip us for every good deed (cf. 2 Timothy 3:16, 17); while never being open to debate nor distortion (cf. 2 Peter 1:20, 21; 1 Corinthians 2:14)!
3. THE SIGN OF HIS COMING (v. 3); MATTHEW CHAPTER 24
 - The informational instruction regarding the Tribulation Period is emphasized to be written (v. 15; let the reader understand) for our edification and understanding. Let us consider the heed of warning rendered by our Lord regarding the arrival of the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION (vs. 4-27). This we do so as to better understand the events which must occur; therefore if the church was Raptured prior to the start of the seven year Tribulation Period (70th week of years—cf. Daniel 9:27), why would warnings regarding the Great Tribulation Period (second 3.5 years) be rendered in the one book (Bible) non-believers would not read! Also please consider, that the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION is revealed at the mid-point of the tribulation; which also begins the time of the Antichrist's persecutions (Satan's wrath) being poured out upon the world; most specifically upon the nation of Israel (cf. Revelation 12:12-13:2).
 - Let us consider the coming "Day of the Lord," as this will include the most astounding arrival of the Lord; for initially He came as a humble servant, yet His final return will be in great glory (v. 30); initially "in the air!" Although several days within the inspired Word (Bible) are rightly mentioned as being a "day of the Lord" as He rendered specific judgments (examples: Isaiah 13:1-6; Ezekiel 13:1-9; 30:1-4), the final "Day of the Lord" will be witnessed by all humanity; as this will be when He comes to judge the sinful world, gather His elect (the true church), and reign in glory. The Day of the Lord will have

many specific characteristics; which must be considered, for within these specific characteristics we find necessary correlations to the Rapture! Although the “Day of the Lord” is considered by most to be an entirely separate event than the Rapture, as previously stated the great “Day of the Lord” is a progression of events which ushers in God’s kingdom as through several aspects or parts—bowl judgments, the Rapture, time of accountability, the battle of Armageddon, the Millennial reign of the Lord, the White Throne Judgment, and the creation of the New Heavens and New Earth. Within this; in context; we understand how a “day” with the Lord is as a thousand years.¹²¹²

- Upon the coming of the “Day of the Lord,” the sun, moon, and stars will be smitten (cf. Matthew 24:29; Isaiah 13:9-13; Joel 2:31; 3:15).
- There will be quite the commotion as the voice of the archangel (probably Michael; for he is the only archangel mentioned in Scripture—Jude 1:9) will be heard, as well as the sounding of the trumpet of God (last trumpet of the seven trumpet judgments—cf. 1 Corinthians 15:51-53; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; Revelation 11:15-19).

4. If it is true that the church was raptured prior to the Tribulation Period, then why is the Book of Revelation so vivid in detail, until the point of quick mention regarding: the resurrection of tribulation saints (cf. Revelation 20:4-6); Satan’s being bound and released (cf. Revelation 20:1-3, 7); sinful humanity’s final rebellion (cf. Revelation 20:7-9); the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (cf. Revelation 20:10-15); the righteous and divine elimination of sin and our entry into eternity (cf. Revelation 21:1-22:5)? With the book of Revelation ending with words of comfort and warning within vs. 22:6-21, the immensity of our eternity with the Lord is not realized through revelation, but rather by personal blessing. So much mentioned about the most troubling time ever to come upon the earth, and this after reference to the seven churches of Revelation chapters two and three; all this rendered in specific detail (although we are uncertain

¹²¹² cf. 2 Peter 3:1-18.

as to what John saw exactly), yet the point is this, why such detail if not to warn God's legitimate children (true church) of that which must occur (emphasis: cf. Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22; 22:16)! Although some scholars have stated that the warning of what "must occur" is for the Jews and non-believers; the fact remains that non-believers, and Orthodox Jews yet seeking adherence to the Law, do not read the Bible!

- Please consider—with Satan's wrath being poured out directly against the nation of Israel in attempts to eradicate the Jews from the face of the earth, much of prophesy is directed toward the Jews; for they have been and always shall be God's chosen people.
 - Please also consider—it would be complete arrogance on our part to believe God's chosen people would be forced to endure such hardships as will be present during the Great Tribulation Period, while we (body of believers / church) sit on the side lines. We have deceptions to avoid, and duties to perform even unto death if need be (cf. Matthew 24:4-28; Mark 13:4-23; Revelation 14:9-13); yet He will arrive to take us home, exactly at a time of the Father's choosing (cf. 14:14-16; Matthew 24:27-33; Mark 13:24-37)! Ours is to remain focused and alert; for from the time the ABOMINATION OF DESOLATION is revealed, we can count the days (1,260); yet not the hour, although the heavens will reveal that the time is near.
5. Let us consider the intricate details leading up to and including the Rapture of the saints; with close inspection as to the revealed characteristics.
- Although Satan has been before God's throne for generations accusing the saints, he will be thrown down to the earth along with all his demons. Satan will then be here upon the earth leading the turmoil of the Great Tribulation Period through the Antichrist, the false prophet, and human beings not blessed of the Lord (cf. Revelation 12:7-13:18). If we think the world is terrible with evil and wickedness now; imagine what it will be like during this 3.5 years, when evil is no longer restrained!
 - The faith of weak believers will grow cold, which is not difficult from a "lukewarm" state; leading them to fall prey to the

deception of signs and wonders performed by the Antichrist and false prophet, as by the power of Satan (cf. Matthew 24:24, 25; Mark 13:21-23; Revelation 13:12-15; 16:13, 14). Please consider—the world is being prepared for this to occur, as by the rise of supposed prophets, prophetesses, false signs (*semeiois*) and wonders (*teras*) by false supposed spiritual leaders; although Scripture pertaining to the actual reinstitution of these things is in regard to the Millennial kingdom, which occurs after the battle of Armageddon (cf. Joel 2:28-32; Zechariah 13:1-14:21; Romans 11:25-27). True signs (*saymaion*) and wonders (*teras*) were and will again be for the benefit of the Jews; so they may again turn to the Lord (examples—cf. Revelation 11:3-6; John 4:48-53; Hebrews 2:1-4).

- Those who are not actually legitimate children of God will accept the “mark of the beast,” and be subjected to terrible suffering (bowl judgments—cf. Revelation 16:1-21), and the full wrath of God (cf. Revelation 14:9-11). It would certainly be better to suffer even to the point of death, then to be subject to absolute torment (cf. Revelation 2:16; 14:12, 13; 20:11-15; 1 Thessalonians 1:9, 10).
- The bowl judgments (cf. Revelation 16:1-21; cf. correlation—trumpet judgments cf. Revelation 8:7-9:21; 11:15-19); close correlations:
 - Second bowl and trumpet judgments—seas smitten (vs. 16:3; 8:8, 9).
 - Third bowl and trumpet judgments—waters smitten (vs. 16:4-7; 8:10, 11).
 - Sixth bowl and trumpet judgments—effects from and upon the Euphrates River (vs. 16:12-16; 9:13-21).
 - Seventh bowl and trumpet judgments—the Lord’s coming in glory begins (vs. 16:17; 11:15-19). For all who have hoped for peace on earth throughout the generations; this is the threshold of actuality!

Important Note: The abounding work of Satan to deceive the whole world, so as to stay multitudes from knowledge of the truth which leads to salvation, is quite evident in the world; for multitudes say one thing and do another! Multitudes upon planet earth absolutely fail to realize

that saying one thing and doing another is a lie; therefore a deceptive work foundational to Satan's guile, who is the father of lies!¹²¹³ Multitudes utilize delusive behavior (deceptions) frequently in order to coerce and/or entice situations for selfish reasons, or evade personal: culpability, accountability, duties, and responsibilities. There is never an appropriate time to serve the devil by deceiving in any way! The emphasized point of this is simple, anyone who is willing to deceive (in any way, shape, or form) is void of fellowship with God, which causes evasion of the primary factor (fellowship with God) necessary in order to stay aloof (be made free) of Satan's schemes! The fact that multitudes commit this form of sin habitually without conviction of wrongdoing from the Lord, evidences the reality of how multitudes are held captive by Satan to do his will; which is that individuals both deceive and remain deceived! Those who remain aloof fellowship with God because they refuse to remain in the light of absolute truth, remain receptive for more abounding deceptions; the epitome of which is acceptance of the "mark of the beast," which holds eternal consequences! As legitimate children of God we must accept and walk in the light of absolute truth at all times; lest we remain within bondage to the ruler of the world (Satan)!¹²¹⁴ The importance of this matter can never be over stated or emphasized; for the utilization of guile or outright deception is in absolute opposition to the reality of truth, and therefore in opposition to the reality of God; which is sinfulness toward God in and of itself!

SECRET RAPTURE: 1 CORINTHIANS 15:51, 52?

- Although He will come suddenly like a thief in the night; and the perishable must put on the imperishable in the twinkling of an eye; we cannot deny the signs of His coming as being nonexistent or occurring simultaneously nor instantly. Such words as "first," "last," and "then," must be considered; for these words indicate progressive aspects of the same event, or a specific series of events within the intricate revealed will of God!

¹²¹³ cf. John 8:39-46.

¹²¹⁴ cf. 1 :John 1:5-10.

- a. The sign of His coming; the sun, moon, and stars smitten (cf. Joel 3:15; Mark 13:24, 25; Matthew 24:29, 30).
- b. The voice of the archangel (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- c. The trumpet of God (cf. Matthew 24:31; 1 Thessalonians 4:16).
- d. The Lord coming in the clouds; gathering believers unto Himself (cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Revelation 17:14; 19:11-14).
- e. We who are alive receive our incorruptible bodies and are gathered by angels to Jesus' location; where we will join our deceased believing loved ones who have gone before us (who rise first); combined with angels, becoming the army of the Lord (cf. Matthew 24:31; Mark 13:27; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Revelation 17:14; 19:11-16); with initial beginnings at the 7th (last) trumpet (cf. Revelation 11:15)!
- f. The marriage supper (wedding feast) (cf. Matthew 25:1-13; Revelation 19:1-10).
- g. The gathering of the birds for a great feast at the slaughter of the un-righteous (cf. Revelation 19:17, 18, 21).
- h. The battle of Armageddon (Har-Magedon—cf. Revelation 16:16) (cf. Joel 3:2—valley of Jehoshaphat: Yahweh judges—cf. Joel 3:9-17; Revelation 14:14-20; 19:11-21).
- i. For believers -? (1 Thessalonians 4:17)
- j. For the Jews—the millennial reign (cf. Zechariah 14:1-21; Revelation 20:1-6); then inheritance of the earth (cf. Zechariah 8:12-15; Matthew 5:5; Israelite specific—Matthew 15:24)!

Chapter 20

Satan throughout Biblically revealed history has been able to act within the guidelines of God's granted authority. By the just mercies of God, all human beings have been given the choice as to the master they will serve, and Satan has been allowed to do his part in influencing wicked desires within people's decisions.¹²¹⁵ With the conclusion of

¹²¹⁵ cf. cf. Matthew 12:30; Romans 12:9; Jeremiah 17:10; 1 Peter 5:8, 9; James 4:7, 8.

the battle of Armageddon and the defeat of Satan's planned and gathered human armies, will come the incarceration of this evil war criminal (Satan). It is at this point that Satan will be chained and bound in the abyss (*tartaroo*; *tartaros*). Satan will be bound by an angel whom comes with the authority of God, and held captive for one thousand years (vs. 1-3). Satan has been deceiving the whole world (except those in the light of God) for thousands of years.¹²¹⁶ During his time of imprisonment, he will be kept from his deceptive actions and will thus be tormented as he is not permitted to use his favorite weapon (deceit) against the inhabitants of the world. It should also be remembered, the deepest part of Sheol / Hades (abyss; *tartaroo*) where Satan will be imprisoned, it the place where demons do not want to go; for it is a place of great torment, therefore Satan's incarceration will be one of great anguish!¹²¹⁷

This time of Satan's imprisonment will be wonderful, as he is easily cast into the abyss. Satan's angels (demons) will witness the weakness of their leader, and be forced to realize the awesome righteous power of the Lord, as but one of God's angels (under God's full authority) was more than sufficient to subdue and bind Satan. It is sure that many will learn a lesson from this quick effective judgment by the Lord, yet Satan will not be one of them. He will eagerly await his release for furtherance of his arrogant acts of evil (v. 3).

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

With Jesus our Lord now reigning over everyone on the earth, all persons will be able to discern truth without the hindrance of deception from Satan; for he has been bound.¹²¹⁸ Our attention is brought to the martyred saints and thrones which will be occupied (v. 4). There are several different theories as to who will sit upon the thrones, and a close look at v. 4 will not specify exactly, yet will eliminate some possibilities. Theories can be derived from Scripture as to the identity of those upon the thrones (yet their identity is not known for certain), they may be:

¹²¹⁶ cf. 12:9; John 8:12.

¹²¹⁷ cf. Luke 8:31.

¹²¹⁸ cf. Hebrews 8:10-13; Zechariah 14:1-21.

- The twelve Apostles (cf. Luke 22:28-30), as they will judge the twelve tribes of Israel.
 - It should be noted: the Jews were promised the millennial kingdom according to covenant promise. Although we know there will be Gentiles upon the earth during the millennium, the emphasis of Scripture is pertaining to Jews; for the promise was given to them alone.
- Because we know there will only be two resurrections; the 1st for those devoted to God, the second for un-believers facing judgment (White Throne); we know with certainty the individuals of mention in these verses were resurrected at the time of the Rapture, when the dead were raised first. If this were not so, then a third resurrection would be necessary; which is not revealed in Scripture (vs. 4-6).
- So what is the major emphasis of this resurrection; for this would seem to be a third resurrection from the dead, although stated as belonging to the first (v. 5)? The answer is discernibly simple:
 - The Gentile saints are somewhere in the heavens with the Lord; for as we are raised into the air, thus we shall always be with the Lord!¹²¹⁹
 - The Jews will initially be blessed within an earthly reign with the Lord, in accordance to prophesy fulfillment during the millennial period; which includes those of devotion from times of antiquity.¹²²⁰
 - Prophecy will be fulfilled in accordance to the hesed (covenantal loyal) love of the Lord for and with His chosen people the Jews; therefore this resurrection is pertaining to Jews alone, when they will be resurrected in physical form for their millennial reign existence! Just as Jesus will be in physical form during His reign upon the earth, so also will the risen Jews; for they will reign with Him according to promise! It would be foolish to attempt a mixture of both physical and spiritual existences for the millennial time period, for Scriptural emphases does not allow for such a

¹²¹⁹ cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:17.

¹²²⁰ cf. Daniel 12:13.

mixture.¹²²¹ Specifics of what will happen after the coming of the New Heavens and New Earth at the end of the millennial reign is not known for certain, nor is that specific pertinent to this aspect regarding the millennial time period.

During this thousand-year period, Jesus will reign over the entire world and will be the center of worship and praise for most, yet there will be millions born during the one thousand years, who will be deceiving themselves and others; as they seem to appreciate and worship the Lord, whereas in reality they do not. During the one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth, each and every person on the earth will know of Jesus.¹²²² Unlike the period in which we live now, where many have yet to hear the good news of the Gospel, and a relationship with Jesus is one which involves faith; everyone during the millennial reign will know of Jesus, although the knowledge of some unfortunately will be calloused of their own accord, leading to their never actually trusting Him. Satan is bound and thus cannot be blamed for any deception or delusive and/or double-minded decision by individuals, prior to his release. It is these born on the earth during the thousand-year period not trusting in Christ, which will rebel under the guidance of Satan upon his release (vs. 7-9).

Many current roots of evil will not be present upon the earth during the millennial period. When combined with the fact that our Lord will be here upon the earth and therefore not solely known through the means of faith, the ability of those born during this period of time to accept Christ as Lord, will be easier than all the years prior in the earth's history. Because Satan is captive and unable to tempt during this period, the many who will rebel against Christ, at Satan's release for a short time, will do so based upon the root of sin born to them (from Adam's initial sin—cf. Romans 5:17-19), and by their own decision.

Upon Satan's release from the abyss (pit), he will waste no time in gathering all rebellious individuals dwelling on the earth together, as he attempts to produce a worldwide rebellion against the reign of Christ. All upon the earth who have not trusted in Christ by devotional faith, as eternal salvation is a faith-based matter, will openly rebel against

¹²²¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:46-50.

¹²²² cf. Jeremiah 31:31-36.

Him, because Satan will deceive them into believing some lie as to how he (Satan) will give them what they want or need, for Satan has a lie for every occasion. The elect will be gathered together with the Lord at the beloved city of Jerusalem, where the glory of God will be evinced as He sends fire from heaven to devour the unbelieving adversaries who had been led to this judgment by the deceptions of Satan.

It will be a very peculiar situation, as for one thousand years peace has been prevalent upon the earth. Now with Satan's release, those having failed to trust in Jesus will be led by deceptive anger and arrogant pride to harm those to whom they had just previously lived. This sense of anger derived from the deceptions of Satan, will be played out to the hilt in this circumstance; as Satan is allowed his one last act of total rebellion in attempting the impossible.

Satan throughout history has always wanted to be worshipped as God. Whatever lies he will use to gain favor with the lost dwelling on the earth, it is evident that his lies will be in an attempt to be worshipped and therefore must be aimed directly toward Jesus. If the reality of his (Satan) capture and imprisonment (by a single angel) was not enough, Satan will have yet not learned that his power is infinitesimal compared to his Creator. The realism of the situation will come suddenly as his (Satan's) troops are burned up quickly by fire from heaven, and he is grabbed easily and thrown into the lake that burns with fire and brimstone. Here Satan will join his Antichrist and False Prophet, who have been tormented thus far for one thousand years; with the torment to continue for all eternity (v. 10).

- This fact (v. 10) lays positive evidence that eternal torment in the lake of fire and brimstone (hell) is a reality. Although many prefer to believe that existence will cease upon being cast into the lake of fire (annihilation), this makes evident their beliefs to be deluded; for the Antichrist and False Prophet will at that point have been there (hell) for one thousand years, and yet their torment continues (forever and ever).

Important Note: During the millennial reign of Jesus upon the earth, there will be only one yearly celebration—"the Feast of Booths." The Feast of Booths was a remembrance celebration to commemorate the time of the Israelite's Exodus from Egypt, and the journey to the

Promised Land. As the Israelites lived in “booths” which could be constructed and torn down effectively, so as to stop where the Lord stopped them, and continue forth when the Lord moved them further toward the Promised Land; the point of the celebration was to remember how they (Israelites) had to obey and trust God during the long journey, which because of disobedience lasted forty years; although the journey when unhindered only takes forty days (walking)! All who live upon the earth during the time of the millennial reign of Jesus, must celebrate the Feast of Booths each year; for refusal to celebrate the Feast of Booths, would disallow rain to fall upon the area within which they live, as a punishment against them by the Lord.¹²²³ The yearly celebration of the Feast of Booths is completely righteous and appropriate during the millennial reign of Christ; for the reason that as the Israelites had to trust and follow the Lord (the means of their salvation) during their long journey to the Promised Land, so also all who dwell upon the earth during the millennial reign of Christ Jesus would realize that Jesus should be trusted and obeyed (true Way to eternal salvation)! In addition, this will specifically reiterate unto all who live upon the earth that the God of Israel is in fact the one true God, who must be trusted and obeyed if salvation is to be forthcoming!

1. A Contrast of the Great White Throne with the First Throne in Revelation: The first throne in Revelation was a throne of mercy and grace (Bema Seat). The rainbow that surrounded the throne (cf. v. 4:3) demonstrated the mercy of the Lord and illustrated a reminder of His grace and covenant with His living creatures.¹²²⁴ The emphasis of mercy surrounding the throne of chapter four is illustrated by the rainbow emerald in appearance. The color of sardine is red, an indication of God’s wrath and judgment; the emerald is green, a color associated with grace and mercy; therefore although judgment is rendered, mercy and grace are very much associated.

In addition to the rainbow at the throne of Revelation 4, was the indication of the Lamb who was worthy to open the seven seals. The emphasis upon the Lamb being as if slain, demonstrates the sacrifice

¹²²³ cf. Zechariah 14:16-19.

¹²²⁴ cf. exemplar - Genesis 9:13, 16.

of Christ to redeem the world, and the horns and eyes demonstrate His power and omnipresence.¹²²⁵ The greatest emphasis made in the description of the throne in Revelation 4 and 5, is upon grace and mercy (Bema), whereas the Great White Throne is solely for judgment (vs. 11-15). The Great White Throne has no rainbow illustrating mercy around it, as grace was upon those who chose Christ. Those who come before the White Throne of judgment are the lost who chose to rebel and reject salvation, and thus all who come before this Great White Throne come into judgment and sentencing for the crime of rejecting the Savior and thus the grace of God. The judgment of the lost will include all the sins they had committed, for their sins were not cleansed by the Lamb's blood; because they had denied Him. Because there is no redemption or substitution for sin at the Great White Throne judgment, the perfect sacrificial Lamb who died for the sins of the world is not emphasized, but rather the holy and righteous Lord who will judge each as they deserve, according to their works of sin and rebellion.

- 2. Judgment upon Sin:** The basis of the Lord's absolute authority and holiness is present at the Great White Throne; this point made plainly evident by the statement of the heavens and earth fleeing; for the sin within them renders no place in the presence of God's absolute holiness (v. 11). With this statement, we witness the dead (both great and small) being raised and brought before the throne, where they are judged according to their deeds of sin and rebellion against Christ. With the generations of excuses as to human failures and inappropriate behavior, all such escapism is futile; for the immense light of God's righteous judgment will illumine all such hidden behavior and motives of darkness!¹²²⁶

At the Great White Throne judgment, there will be several books opened. The set of many books will contain the acts of works and deeds whether good or bad; this factor is assumed—because the lost will be judged according to all they had done (vs. 12, 13). The singular book is the Book of Life to which their name was not written from the foundation of the world.¹²²⁷

¹²²⁵ cf. 5:2-6.

¹²²⁶ cf. Luke 12:2-5.

- I personally believe the Lord will allow the lost to witness the absence of their names from the Book of Life, for the absence of their names as well as their salvation was by their own personal choice; for the Book of Life will be opened for a reason. With the absence of their names from the Book of Life and their sinful deeds documented within the first set of books, they will be shown the reason for their sentence unto hell, in a way of truth that cannot be disputed. The fact of God's knowledge (absolute) and choosing from the foundation of the world (Ephesians and Hebrews passages), directly proves God's knowledge of all things; for He knew each of us and the reality of our existence, even before He made the earth habitable!

All the dead throughout history, who have not trusted God for salvation, will be raised to stand before this Great White Throne. Those whose bodies lie in the seas, oceans, graves and in Sheol (a place of torment) will all be raised to stand before the throne of judgment, and justly judged for the deeds they had done in life (v. 13); for they denied and rejected the beauty and wonderment of eternal salvation which the Lord would have freely rendered (in accordance to His grace), had they only trusted and obeyed Him! It may be noted by the indication of bodies being raised from the sea, that the bodies will be regenerated from whatever state of disintegration they may have reached over the years, so as to stand before the Lord in this judgment.¹²²⁸

After all who have rejected the salvation of the Lord have stood before the Great White Throne of judgment, the physical states of death and Hades will be thrown into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (sulfur). This will be the end to the two states of death and Hades, as none will ever die nor be sent to Hades again; for with the total cleansing of the heavens and earth from sin, the underlying reason (sin) for death and punishment will also have been eliminated (vs. 14, 15). With this casting of death and Hades into the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, will come the final victory to which Jesus spoke when He conquered death once for all; for truly the war was won long ago ("It is finished"—John 19:30)!¹²²⁹

¹²²⁷ cf. Ephesians 1:3-6; Hebrews 4:1-3.

¹²²⁸ cf. Matthew 25:31-46; John 12:48; Acts 10:42; 17:30, 31; 2 Timothy 4:1, 2.

All the denial and excuses which the lost have used during their lives upon the earth will come to naught, on the day they stand at the Great White Throne. They will recall the saints who attempted to lead them in truth, they will recall the way they rebelled, they will recall every aspect of the chances given them by the Lord; evidencing how they chose to remain in sin, while having explained their rebellion with excuses. On this day there will be no escaping the just sentence which will be rendered!

The entire reason that any and all will stand before the Lord at the Great White Throne is because of their filth from sin; having denied the justification, regeneration and reconciliation which He sought to give them by grace.¹²³⁰ The saints are only saved by the cleansing blood of the Lamb (A.D.); while yet still; every person throughout history has been saved by trusting in God for their salvation (B.C.).¹²³¹ With the completion of the Great White Throne judgment, all lost sinners (also Satan and his demons, Antichrist and False Prophet) are in the lake burning with fire and brimstone. Because those dead in sins are now judged, and soon come the new heavens and earth, there will never be another judgment seat of any kind for human beings, as all will be confirmed in righteousness, or condemned to torment after this point.

- Many have asked how a loving God could condemn people to hell. All who are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone (hell), were condemned by their own choosing; for God has sought that all should come to knowledge of truth, hopefully trusting in Him for their salvation (cf. 2 Peter 2:4-16; 3:7-9; 2 Timothy 2:24-26). His lovingkindness and grace have been available to all, yet many have chosen not to accept His free unmerited favor (GRACE) unto eternal life.
- Please consider—hell was prepared for Satan and demons (rebellious and disobedient angels).¹²³² Human beings were never intended for the lake which burns with fire and brimstone; yet chose within themselves to go there, by rejection of the greatest gift ever given—salvation by grace

¹²²⁹ cf. Hebrews 2:14, 15.

¹²³⁰ cf. Isaiah 43:12, 13; Ephesians 2:4-10.

¹²³¹ cf. Titus 3:3-8; Isaiah 45:21-24.

¹²³² cf. Matthew 25:41.

(the un-merited favor of God) through faith. The cost of this mistake is eternal!

Chapter 21

There are two divisions in chapter twenty-one; which are:

1. The New Jerusalem 21:2-8.
2. A detailed examination of the New Jerusalem 21:9-27.

The beginning of this discussion, must be with the fact that all things previous (heavens and earth) will pass away. Because of the sin which had infiltrated the world and the heavens due to the extreme evil of demonic influence and wickedness of man, the resulting unrighteousness must first be totally eradicated, or a renewed nature of righteous and good construction would be subject to the existing elements. It is for this reason that the very elements themselves will be totally purified (intense heat which purifies—v. 12), and a completely new foundation of pure elements will be brought into existence by the Lord, in a state of absolute righteousness.¹²³³

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

It may be noted, that the new earth which is created will be quite different from the one which exists now. It may also be noted that reference to the heavens which pass away and are created anew, are the heavens associated with the earth and the sin territory of Satan's realm. Nowhere in Scripture has any indication been given that the entire universe will be destroyed and rebuilt, and by this we may consider that Satan was restricted in his territorial boundaries to a specific reach of the heavens, and it is this territory which will pass away and be renewed as sin was restricted to Satan's (and mankind's) areas of sinful wandering.

Now with the passing of the old, comes the new as designed by God and witnessed by John (I saw—vs. 1, 2). The first division of chapter twenty-one begins with a description of a new holy city which comes down directly from God. By the emphasis of the city being directly from God, we can only imagine the divine design and nature of the new city, maintaining the fact that God is uniquely holy and

¹²³³ cf. 2 Peter 3:7, 10-13.

glorious (v. 11).¹²³⁴ The city coming down is described as a bride made ready (adorned) for her husband, therefore we can only imagine the beauty—because brides are always so very beautiful (v. 2).

With the coming of the new holy city of Jerusalem, we are made witness to the praise coming forth to God. He will dwell within the new city with His children, and in this new city no signs foundational to sin will ever be present (i.e. crying, mourning, death, etc.) (vs. 4, 5). With the new city upon the earth, a proclamation is made by the Lord as to the complete fulfillment of all that He has said would occur, hence He states the blessing of living water (water of life) upon all who ask for it (v. 6). With this proclamation by God comes words of warning and fulfillment, as those who overcome (have overcome) will inherit this new city with God dwelling with them, yet those who chose the sins and foolishness of the world, or were cowardice to have examined themselves or to stand up for the Lord and His Gospel, will reap eternal destruction and pain (vs. 7, 8).

- This warning is rendered for the sake of all throughout the ages, for the choice of eternal dwelling lies within each of humankind.

The second division comes in vs. 9-27, where the new city is described. It may be noted that the city is described in two separate fashions in these verses; it is described as a city, and as a bride. The first description in this division is of the city as the “bride,” the wife of the Lamb (v. 9). One of the seven angels who held the last bowl judgments (judgments foundational to God’s wrath) is showing John the new city coming down from heaven. The city is aglow with the glory of God; has a very high wall surrounding it, and twelve gates named after the twelve tribes of Israel. The city’s gates are three per side (four sided = north, south, east, west), and the twelve foundation stones are named after the twelve apostles (vs. 13, 14).

The description of the city in the second division continues as the city is measured and described as precious, with beautiful stones and material of which is constructed our dwelling (v. 15). The city will be aglow with the light of the Lord and for this reason no night shall ever

¹²³⁴ cf. 4:8; Isaiah 6:3.

again be known, nor shall there be a temple for worship; as the glory of the Lord will be present throughout the entire structure, for He will dwell with His children (us) (vs. 22-26). The ending description within the second division comes to completion with the presence of the Lord's glory, and the total lack of any sin or any abomination within the city's walls (v. 27).

- The basic differences in the divisions, comes as the city is adorned in its created beauty (thus seen as His bride), in such splendor described in the only way John knew how. By the descriptions given by John regarding the city being as precious stones and pure gold as clear as glass (v. 18), we can only imagine the splendor John is attempting to describe in the detailed examination and description in the second division; in attempts to describe the bride in the first division.
- The important fact of v. 27 must be understood. Because we know that all sin will be eradicated from existence prior to the coming of the New Jerusalem, we must understand the emphasis of this verse to indicate that trusting in God has always been the solely appropriate and acceptable way to have one's name written in the book of life. This verse makes evident that any form or belief involving salvation by works is futile and deceptive; leading only to condemnation and destruction! The works of man are yet apportioned within the "sin" of man; therefore nothing derived from human nature endeavors can bring forth salvation!

1. The Absence of Seas (v. 1)

Scripture is not specific regarding why there will be no more seas upon the earth. It can be reasoned that an entire new basis of structuring will be upon the earth and therefore the old way of things are no longer necessary. If we consider this reasoning, every way of life we presently understand will be no more, therefore the way for the watering of vegetation will be entirely different than anything we have ever known. To consider the eco-system ramification of no sea upon the earth, would be to attempt theories into areas unknown to human intellect, and would therefore be time foolishly wasted. For this reason, speculations of the aspects of comparison and illustration within Scripture regarding

“seas” would be our only option; if the specific is other than actual absence of seas.

- Considering a primary means of investigation in man’s seeking life on other planets has always been based in the presence or absence of water, a world without seas yet booming with life would be far beyond the potential of human science and intellect!
- It should also be considered that with absence of the huge water masses which now upon the earth take up two thirds of the surface of the planet; multitudes may exist comfortably upon the planet, with no potential whatsoever for crowding of any type.

The seas in Scripture many times were descriptive of evil nations and the separation derived from sin. When considering these descriptive uses of the “seas” within Scripture as being illustrations of evil and sin, and then considering the fact that absolutely no sin will be present within the new creation of the Lord, the absence of any seas may be due to the absolute absence of sin and anything even vaguely associated with it. In this context, accepting the statement of the absence of the seas comes easily—as the old will pass away and the new will come. In the aspect of no more sea because of its relational association with sin, we can witness (although not fully understanding) the precise intricate creativity of our Lord, as He creates the earth and heavens truly void of anything bad, evil and harsh (which includes all that may ensue a thought of the same).

- With all aspects of sin being destroyed by the Lord, there will no longer be any weeds or assorted creatures of pestilence throughout the world. Because the aforementioned were brought forth because of the sin of man, they will no longer be present, as all aspects of sin will be removed. Imagine the beauty of lush fields without any weeds. Truly the earth will be the paradise initially intended by the Lord (cf. Genesis 3:17-19, 24).

2. New Jerusalem - Comparison of Beauty

Unlike many brides today who have practiced fornication and improper premarital activities leading to impurity (harlotry), the bride to which the New Jerusalem is compared, is a bride by Biblical standards of purity

and righteousness (virginity). A bride is to be (by Biblical standards) undefiled, fresh and radiant. Just as the bride groom is not to see the bride the day of the wedding until the ceremony, the same principal holds true here as the philosophy of abounding excitement and surprise remains the same; for the beauty will be witnessed upon its being revealed. Although the bride groom has seen his bride prior to her being dressed in her wedding attire and may feel he has seen her at her greatest beauty, the truth remains that a bride is beautiful beyond imagination, even to the one to whom she is betrothed.

Just as this truth of any bride's beauty holds true beyond any conceivable notion, so also will the city of the New Jerusalem stand in radiant beauty beyond our ability to currently understand. The angel proclaiming the city to be a "bride" is to explicitly demonstrate its beauty, purity and radiance, in a way that will cause anticipation and excitement to witness its coming; for the city will be totally prepared for habitation—in righteousness (thus a pure outfitted virgin bride).¹²³⁵

It shall be heaven on earth; literally! There will no longer be any signs of the previous curse brought on the human race by the sinful fall of Adam. Just as Adam brought sin into the world by intentional disobedience, the Lord Jesus Christ will take it out with the passing of the old and the coming of the righteous new (vs. 1, 2).¹²³⁶ Just as pain, suffering, mourning, death, weeping and sorrow entered the world because of sin, all these aspects of sin will vanish via the Lord's righteousness. In an illustration of this total change of events, the angel who brought a bowl of wrathful judgment is now the same angel who brings the vision of the new bride full of splendor; absent of all forms of malice and wretchedness (vs. 9, 10).

Even though many have said that we will be living in heaven somewhere outside our universe, the fact of the matter is that we will dwell with the Lord within the place of His construction, and yet also into the far reaches of heaven; although the actual extent of our existence with Him is not revealed in Scripture. The kingdom of God is a literal kingdom built by the Lord Himself; the potential of which we have no certainty. This kingdom although on the earth, will be fabulous with His presence being all the illumination needed. Our worship and

¹²³⁵ cf. John 14:1-4.

¹²³⁶ cf. Romans 5:12-21.

absolute reverence unto Him will be the center of our existence; gaining potential of which is our duty as His legitimate children now while in the corporeal body. It does not get better than this; for from within the very core of our substance (whatever substance that may be), our complete emphasis will be all about Him!

- As the inevitability has always been that God be all in all; it has always been our responsibility to humbly submit unto the Lord for this reality to begin while yet now in our corporeal bodies (cf. 1 Corinthians 15:27, 28)! It is for this reason that the great commandment was always that we love the Lord with all of our: heart, soul, mind, and strength (cf. Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40)! This could never occur *if* and when living for “self” (cf. Matthew 16:24-26)!
- I will place no specific emphases upon the actual realm of our eternal existence; for the exactness and immensity of our eternity with Him is not specifically defined within Scripture. I will not attempt to hypothesize the reality of our eternal existence with Him, but rather will wait and witness the situation when it occurs; for its certainty is founded upon the immensity and faithfulness of God! Numerous godly individuals of antiquity have awaited existence with the Lord, within this structure created by God Himself (Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16, 32-40).

In days of antiquity, with the ancient oriental monarchs, the monarch of the kingdom was not just considered a leading member, but rather the one who would meet the needs of the kingdom, much as the husband of the household. The ancient ceremonies to bring the new monarch into power, many times included an actual marriage ceremony in which the monarch was literally married to his kingdom. The illustration of this marriage ceremony was to demonstrate the love and protection of the monarch to be centered upon his kingdom so as to protect, nurture, and provide for his people. Just as the monarch was to proclaim the individuals of his kingdom—his children and family, the inhabitants of the kingdom were to respect and obey the monarch. This is how it will be in the kingdom of God, where the Lord Jesus Christ will nurture, lead, and protect us as a husband protects and loves His bride; while

we respect, adore, and serve our God and King in complete devotional submission, as a wife should her husband, when the husband walks in righteousness.

- I have had discussions with many people who center their attention upon the physical aspects of the New Jerusalem. They talk about how they will enjoy walking upon streets of pure gold and being surrounded by fine jewels. I personally find it pathetic that individuals place their greatest considerations upon these described physical aspects of God's kingdom, derived from their continually focusing upon God's blessings as through materialism. The fact that this occurs far too frequently with believers, demonstrates the principles of chapters 17 and 18 to be of realistic truth; for the secular mindset of materialism must be completely eliminated, so as to allow the ushering of the new!
- I figure it will take me quite some time after arriving in God's kingdom to even notice my surroundings, as I will be in absolute awe—having our Lord before us to worship and praise.
- I feel ashamed that so many believers always look to the Lord and His blessings through the standards of the world and its mammon, in accordance to the abominations of Babylon. Why is it that believers (many, not all) look harder at the temporal reward from material things, than they do at God's spiritual blessings and our future home?¹²³⁷ To love mammon is to not love God, and to desire mammon is to miss the true riches which come from God's grace.¹²³⁸ When I listen to folks talking about the material things that they seek in this life; how God's blessings to them should always be via mammon, and how they look more toward the extravagance of God's kingdom rather than being in His presence, I always tell them the same thing—“I would rather shine shoes in God's kingdom where He is present, so that I may praise and worship Him; than to have all the riches in the world!”
- I praise the Lord, that He has taken away my “self”-based motivations (even now—as this is a continual process), and

¹²³⁷ cf. Luke 9:57-62; 2 Corinthians 5:6-9; Matthew 6:19-21.

¹²³⁸ cf. Matthew 6:24-34; Luke 16:9-11-13; 2 Corinthians 12:6-10.

allows me to seek both salvation of souls and speaking Gospel truth more than anything, including riches.¹²³⁹ When I see the spending habits (both time and finances) of many folks (speaking solely of believers; as to expect otherwise from the lost would be foolishness), to be maintained upon “self” primarily; I must wonder the reason their spending is not to proclaim the truth of Christ, and supply bibles and necessities to those in need. I would suppose this occurs due to a maintained secular mindset, which is emphasized and led by the ruler of the world. How many believers truly love the Lord with all of their heart, all of their soul, all of their mind and all of their strength? Unfortunately most believers (much like the lost) appreciate their money more than reaching the lost with the good news of the Gospel, and God’s created kingdom.

- The Christian world today that seeks a God of convenience upsets me greatly; for the blessing of His spiritual calling in many lives is being squandered needlessly on account of that which truly does not matter!¹²⁴⁰ Because the foolishness of riches, ease, comfort, prestige and “self” is taught within many denominations and congregations, I would advise that we should be careful as to who and what we listen to; testing all things according to the Gospel, for indeed it is the standard by which we will all give account!¹²⁴¹ As believers, are we for or against Jesus Christ (Messiah)?¹²⁴²

3. The Walls / Foundation / Gates of the New Jerusalem

- The beauty of the New Jerusalem will (in my opinion) be beyond human comprehension. What follows is what I believe to be the human approximation of the city’s beauty, along with some explanations as to why I believe certain things (measurements) were given in Scripture. I cannot claim complete accuracy in what follows, as I am attempting to render a human aspect of beauty which is divinely created. In the way

¹²³⁹ cf. Romans 10:1-4; Galatians 2:17-21; 2 Timothy 2:3-10; Philippians 3:12-14; 1 Corinthians 9:17, 18.

¹²⁴⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 4:16-18.

¹²⁴¹ cf. John 4:46-50.

¹²⁴² cf. Matthew 12:30.

in which John attempted to describe what he saw in the best way possible; as such I now do the same.

The wall represents an impassable structure, yet a structure where all within can be seen without hindrance (vs. 12-18); for nothing will be of darkness, and thus of un-righteousness! This wall by any standard would be un-scalable and thus impregnable. This great impregnable wall is to demonstrate to all who read and heed Scripture; works of any kind will avail not as to entry past this great barrier of God's kingdom. This impregnable wall will be founded upon the truth of Scripture, as to the witness of the apostles (v. 14); therefore the basis of entry will remain faith in Jesus and the cleansing by His blood, having trusting solely in God for entrance into so great a salvation and kingdom.¹²⁴³

- This in my opinion is emphasis that “works” have nothing whatsoever to do with salvation! Although many manmade religions not only suppose but also endeavor to obtain salvation as by ritual, doctrine, precept, and traditions; the emphasis of this great city is based solely within the wonderment of God's grace, tender mercies, and lovingkindness. God's kingdom is all about: Him, purity, righteousness, holiness, and blessing!

The description given of God's kingdom draws attention as it is beautiful beyond human comprehension. With the love of aesthetics being what it is today, the description draws attention and then desire by the worldly, as they always seek that which they do not have (coveting). The description given the wall as impregnable by human effort is to demonstrate to all that only faith in Jesus will allow entry through any of the twelve gates, and to attempt entry by any other means is futile. This representation of the walls structural strength (72 yards thick) and immense mass (12,000 stadia squared) makes evident the one way which passage may be obtained; yet many throughout history have attempted entrance into His kingdom by human means (works), due the foolishness of man's carnal intentions and motives.¹²⁴⁴ The wall represents this sim-

¹²⁴³ cf. Acts 4:11, 12; 1 Corinthians 1:22-24.

¹²⁴⁴ v. 27; cf. Matthew 7:21-27.

ple beautiful lesson—do not attempt to gain entry by religion, force, wit, manipulation or deception! If you want into this kingdom—you must accept, obey, trust and believe in the One who is Lord of all!¹²⁴⁵ The Lord blessed us with a description of the New Jerusalem so that we may realize (as is humanly possible) the beauty of our eternal dwelling place with Him. The descriptions were given also of the torment of hell for all eternity (v. 8); both descriptions given for the purpose that each person may decide for themselves, beauty or burning!

Each of the four walls will have three gates within them, which will lead into the city. At each of the gates (which are named after the twelve tribes of Israel) an angel will stand, and the twelve gates may very well be aligned by direction just as specified with the millennial city of Jerusalem. The order of the gates, *if* so specified, would be according to the following Scriptural verse:

Ezekiel 48:30-35: “And these are the exits of the city: on the north side, 4,500 cubits by measurement, shall be the gates of the city, named for the tribes of Israel, three gates toward the north: the gate of Reuben, one; the gate of Judah, one; the gate of Levi, one. “And on the east side, 4,500 cubits, shall be three gates: the gate of Joseph, one; the gate of Benjamin, one; the gate of Dan, one. “And on the south side, 4,500 cubits by measurement, shall be three gates: the gate of Simeon, one; the gate of Issachar, one; the gate of Zebulun, one. “On the west side, 4,500 cubits, shall be three gates: the gate of Gad, one; the gate of Asher, one; the gate of Naphtali, one. “The city shall be 18,000 cubits round about; and the name of the city from that day shall be, “The LORD is there.”

The foundations of the wall are sturdy and adorned with the names of the twelve apostles of the Lord. Just as the testimony of the apostles was true and bore strength, so also will the foundation stones which bear their names. The foundation stones are each made of a different type of precious stone. The first foundation stone—jasper; the second—sapphire; the third—chalcedony; the fourth—emerald; the fifth—sardonyx; the

¹²⁴⁵ cf. Romans 10:8-10; Hebrews 5:8-10; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6, emphasis vs. 5, 6.

sixth—sardius; the seventh—chrysolite; the eighth—beryl; the ninth—topaz; the tenth—chrysoptase; the eleventh—jacinth; the twelfth—amethyst (vs. 19, 20).

With precious stones being upon other precious stones, and the glory of God shining brightly all around the structure of the New Jerusalem, the colors reflected from the very foundation of the structure will be as a rainbow of brilliant beauty. The foundation stones will be the only part of the structure that has color other than that of clear. With the foundation stones themselves consisting of precious colored stones, and the structure itself being clear, as nothing will be hidden from sight (for there will be nothing of shame); the foundations will emanate their brilliant colors throughout the entire structure. With the city being in a continual divine state of purity, the beauty of the foundation stones will forever be visible and prevalent to all within the structure. Just as the apostles were at the forefront of the Christian church, so also will their names be at the forefront (foundation) of the New Jerusalem.

The gates themselves will be like pearls, as each gate will be a single pearl. It is by this description of the gates, that the stories of the “pearly gates” have come to be told, and unlike the stories as to a question of entrance being answered at the gates, in this factual situation the decision has already been made (cf. 20:15; 22:12).

It must be noted that all potential for sin has been eradicated by the Lord; with the complete destruction of the old, the building of the new, and the changing of believers! Because all who dwell within the city of God will have the eternal substance body which is necessary for eternal existence, there will no longer be any possibility of anything inappropriate (vs. 25-27). Because nothing of darkness can come into the presence of God (who is in actuality pure: light, holiness, truth and love), and we (his children) will dwell with Him, our eternal bodies being absolutely holy and pure becomes evident (cf. 22:1-5).

4. The New Jerusalem in Perspective

The New Jerusalem will be 12,000 stadia high, 12,000 stadia in length, and 12,000 stadia wide. To attempt the understanding of a structure this size, we can look at the size as distance and better comprehend the immensity of its mass. The following is consideration that 12,000 stadia equal 1500 miles (v. 16); of the specific I have no certainty, beyond Scriptural description; for some state 12,000 stadia to equal 1,380 miles.

A cube (or square—v. 16) 12,000 stadia: wide—would stretch from Canada to the Gulf of Mexico; long—would stretch from Los Angeles to Kansas; high—would be past the Exosphere and well into space.

To look at the cube in light of its sheer immense mass, we can now better understand the following measurements of this mass, and our inheritance (mansion)—please remember this is but human reasoning:

- Approximately 3,375,000,000 cubic miles. If the number of believers was to be 20,000,000,000, and seventy-five percent of the entire structure was utilized for central worship and praise of the Lord, then twenty five percent would be allotted for inhabitancy. This space alone would allow each individual 450 acres or 1/30 cubic mile in which to dwell (wow, what a place of dwelling).
- Although each mansion may not actually be this large, the point to make—is the immensity of God’s gift of dwelling.
- The square footage of this structure would be—4.9679²⁰ feet or approximately 68,250,000,000,000,000 square feet (wow, what a city).

To comprehend the immense size of this structure would be humanly impossible. To comprehend its construction and the foundational requirements would be unfathomable. To attempt to truly understand this immense structure which is built by God Himself, and the sheer beauty of it, would be beyond our realm of thinking and reason. This structure will truly be as immense as it is wondrous! Yet with the blessing of dwelling with the Lord; all the aforementioned characteristics and dimensions of a city built by God, holds no comparison with the glory of God or our adoration and worship for and unto Him!

IT IS DONE

The statement “it is done” holds significance as a statement of final fulfillment. The use of this statement in Scripture within the book of Revelation demonstrates the total (complete) finishing of divine judgment and prophesies. As the new heavens and new earth have been prophesied in the book of Revelation for the purpose of preparing the saints with knowledge of things to come, the statement from the throne “it is done” is to proclaim the complete fulfillment of these prophesies in accordance to the faithfulness of God (cf. 16:17).

In exactly the same manner as “it is finished” was proclaimed by Jesus to prove the fulfillment of the victory against the world, death and Satan; the phrase “it is done” means precisely the same—as it proves (after the fact), the passing of the old and the arrival of the new exactly as prophesied.¹²⁴⁶ The nature of each of the statements “it is finished” / “it is done” remains the same, as the first demonstrated the victory; the second demonstrated the fulfillment of judgment upon the world, and the third will demonstrate the completed work of God to rid the heavens and earth of sin by completely creating all things anew.¹²⁴⁷ Having fulfilled all prophesy, our Father (Abba / Yahweh Shammah—the Lord is there) will dwell with His children (cf. 22:3).¹²⁴⁸

1. More Interesting Points - Revelation Chapters 21 and 22

In order for there to be a “naos” or Holy of Holies, a temple would have to be present. In the New Jerusalem, there will be no material temple as God Himself and the Lamb shall be the temple and thus the center of worship (21:22). The Holy of Holies was the inner most part of the temple and tabernacle which is where the glory of the Lord was present. In the New Jerusalem, the glory of the Lord will be throughout the entire structure and therefore no one part will be blessed with His presence more than any other part. Unlike the time when only the high priest was allowed into the presence of God (Holy of Holies), all will be blessed with His vicinity presence.

Unlike in today’s world where the sun and moon illuminate our world, in the New Jerusalem God the Father and Jesus will be our illumination. Just as Moses was aglow with the glory of God for periods of time during and after being in His presence, the New Jerusalem will be aglow (illuminated) with the glory of God continually (no night—21:25), as He dwells with His children (the saints) and His angels for eternity.¹²⁴⁹ Unlike the way the illumination diminished from Moses after a period of time, the illumination will never wear away because we will never be out of his presence. Unlike the way in which the Israelites were fearful of God, we will be securely blessed dwelling with our Lord.¹²⁵⁰

¹²⁴⁶ cf. John 16:33; 19:30; 1 John 5:4, 5.

¹²⁴⁷ cf. 16:17; 21:6; John 19:30.

¹²⁴⁸ cf. Romans 8:15-17; Galatians 4:6.

¹²⁴⁹ cf. Exodus 34:34, 35.

- In like fashion as Jesus will be the lamp to all dwelling in the New Jerusalem, and the Word we have been given (Scriptures) is the light of truth which remains the basis for illumination within the darkness of our present age, we should attempt adherence to the Word now and stop our excuses. Because there will be only light and truth in God's kingdom, it would be wise for us to allow God to prepare us now by His masterful and righteous leadership; while we speak the truth to others, and worship God in spirit and in truth as we ought.¹²⁵¹

Chapter 22

POSSIBILITIES AND CONSIDERATIONS:

Now with the old ways of evil, sin, wretchedness, and corruption being no more, the description of the living river demonstrates the (crystal) clear, pure and untainted ways of unique holiness and righteousness which flow from our God.

- The “river of the water of life” spoken of in the 22:1 passage, reminds me of the rivers and how they sparkled many years ago, when we could drink from them without the potential of sickness or disease. Through the corruption of the world, the rivers have become polluted and tainted; yet so has the entire world through the corruption of idolatrous humankind in accordance to demonic instigation and influence.¹²⁵²

The river itself is the “river of the water of life” which will flow centrally from the throne of God through the city. This river will be the undefiled water which will feed the trees of life firmly planted along its banks. The water will be like none other ever in the world's history, as it will be filled with the sustenance which will allow the trees to bear twelve kinds of fruit frequently from a divine nature (as only God can create something so wonderful and amazing), thus allowing the fruit to be bountiful, frequently without end (vs. 1, 2).

¹²⁵⁰ cf. Exodus 20:19.

¹²⁵¹ cf. John 4:20-24.

¹²⁵² cf. Colossians 3:5; 1 Peter 5:6-11.

- The “river of the water of life” coming forth from the throne of both God and the Lamb (v. 1), may be the water of divine origin which flows outward upon the entire planet. Within this, we can understand how there will no longer be “seas” upon the earth (if the word “earth” is even pertinent, i.e. no further mention), for all of creation upon the planet may receive the necessities of “water” from this divine source!

The tree of life will be literal in the New Jerusalem, which is quite evident by the description given it as a source of healing (the leaves) to the nations and as a source of sustenance (v. 2; very much like in the millennium—cf. Ezekiel 47:1-12; but now forever). Unlike the beliefs of the new age and Mormon faiths where they take the saints ability to eat of the fruit to mean we will become gods, the fact of the fruits availability is to demonstrate our reliance upon our Lord to supply the sustenance required for our eternal existence.¹²⁵³

Only God is immortal (past and future).¹²⁵⁴ Our eternal existence (future) will be based in His blessings of sustenance and sustainability; for only God can create and maintain an eternal state of being. Although many different religions hope for, and teach an inevitable form of deity to be upon human beings upon entry into the eternal state of being, these philosophies deny further necessity for a relationship with God; as the philosophies teach humans as becoming a god unto themselves. This may seem appropriate according to the boastful pride of life and idolatrous nature (self) within human existence; yet these teachings deny Gospel truth, and thereby the “reality of God,” and the basis of realistic truth regarding our eternal existence (vs. 1-19). In context, it is never wise to make additions or subtractions when regarding the Word of God (vs. 18, 19)!

- It is a shame how through pride and deception, millions take Scripture out of context and righteous meaning, so that they may convince themselves and others that we may evolve into gods. With the love of “self” (human idolatry) becoming what it is in today’s world (narcissism), it is little doubt why these pagan

¹²⁵³ cf. Genesis 3:5; John 6:35.

¹²⁵⁴ cf. 1 Timothy 1:17.

false teachings are drawing many away from the faith.¹²⁵⁵ I praise God, that by His grace he keeps myself and many others strong in our faith and studies; keeping us testing all things, and instructing the same to others according to Gospel truth.¹²⁵⁶

- It seems that discontentment never ceases within the sinful human spirit. No matter how much the Lord blesses us now, including certainty of immense future blessings beyond our current ability to understand, it seems that many always feel the necessity for more; thereby remaining unappreciative and covetous. I cannot believe for a moment, that anyone who has actually enjoyed abundant fellowship with the Lord would have a covetous and discontented spirit; for the indwelling Holy Spirit convicts against such things! It is true—we must test, judge, and examine ourselves in accordance to righteousness to see if we are actually in the faith, or not; for now is the day of salvation!¹²⁵⁷

1. Servant or Bondservant—vs. 3, 4

To be a bondservant to the Lord Jesus Christ, is to be bonded firmly in (identified with) Him, by choice of humble obedience to serve Him and never “self.” Many may choose to serve the Lord (simple servant), and may do so with earnest on occasion when they choose to; yet a bondservant is one who does for the Lord with every opportunity without excuse, variation or compromise (as far is humanly possible). A bondservant of Jesus Christ is not one who seeks a God of convenience (as many do), but rather accepts and serves Him as one’s Lord and Master (as few do—in my opinion); for the bondservant serves even when it leads to the pain of: persecution, suffering, and tribulation. To be a bondservant of the Lord Jesus Christ is to endeavor to walk as He walked—in: humility, obedience, and compassion.¹²⁵⁸ To walk as Jesus walked, is to: place the needs of others as priority over our own,¹²⁵⁹ seek first His heavenly kingdom and to walk in His righteousness,¹²⁶⁰ walk by faith,¹²⁶¹ answer His call in submissive humble obedience,¹²⁶² and

¹²⁵⁵ cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 6:10, 20, 21.

¹²⁵⁶ cf. 2 Timothy 2:1-4.

¹²⁵⁷ cf. 2:2-4; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; 13:5-8; 1 John 4:1-6.

¹²⁵⁸ cf. 1 John 2:4-6; Matthew 5:3-16.

¹²⁵⁹ cf. Philippians 2:3, 4.

¹²⁶⁰ cf. Matthew 6:33; 13:45, 46.

place no confidence in the flesh.¹²⁶³ Although this is not an easy task by any means because we are surrounded by temptation and the ways of the world, it is however a task which is never burdensome—when endeavored in love for the Lord first and foremost!

REVELATION FAITHFUL AND TRUE

Through integrity being known of a man, his spoken word is only as good as his reputation within candor. If a man cannot be trusted in little things, there is no way he will be trusted in bigger more important matters.¹²⁶⁴ Jesus always told the righteous truth in love! Jesus always demonstrated His word with actions, and never showed even the slightest hypocrisy in any way! This fact of Christ's life upon this earth proves the statement of Scripture as to His not only speaking and living the truth, but actually being the essence of truth.¹²⁶⁵

In direct association with Christ's being the truth, He is also the true faithful witness.¹²⁶⁶ By the confirmation of Christ's explicit nature of truth and light, we know that all He says and does is absolutely correct and righteous (faithful and true).¹²⁶⁷ All that He said must occur will in fact occur exactly as stated; although as aforementioned, we may not understand the reality.¹²⁶⁸ The foolish armies of the world will come to this realization when it is too late (as aforementioned). I am hopeful individuals will not have to learn in such a harsh context as the many who will someday gather against the Lord; prior to their inevitable defeat and condemnation.

CONTRASTING – THE LAKE OF FIRE (HELL) WITH THE NEW JERUSALEM:

HELL / NEW JERUSALEM

- Outer darkness / light and glory of God.
- Gnashing of teeth / songs of praise.

¹²⁶¹ cf. 2 Corinthians 5:6-9; 10:3, 4.

¹²⁶² cf. Philippians 2:5-8.

¹²⁶³ cf. Philippians 3:2, 3; Romans 13:13, 14; Colossians 2:20-23.

¹²⁶⁴ cf. Luke 12:26; 16:10.

¹²⁶⁵ cf. John 1:14, 17; 14:6; Luke 20:21.

¹²⁶⁶ cf. 1:5.

¹²⁶⁷ cf. 19:11; John 5:30-33; 8:12.

¹²⁶⁸ cf. 22:6, 7.

- Eternally cursed / no more curse.
- Eternal agony / no more pain.
- Eternal gates closed and locked / gates always open.
- Eternal separation from God / always in vicinity of God.
- Eternal hatred and remorse / eternal love, peace and fellowship.

CHAPTER SEVEN SIMPLICITY OF DEVOTION

Simplicity of Devotion—Grace Is Sufficient

SINCERE DISCIPLINED DEVOTION to the Lord is truly a matter of attitude! The appropriate attitude of placing the Lord first, was and remains the standard of which all believers in the Lord God (one true God) are to adhere. It is for this reason, that throughout the history of those called of God to believe and worship appropriately; first in accordance to physical realm religion (the Levitical Law), secondly by faith within the spiritual relational reality; that the first and foremost commandment by the Lord was to love Him with: all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength.¹²⁶⁹ Although many claim to love the Lord, the truth of the matter is found in our fruits of abiding both in His word and in Him, or not; speaking the truth to one another in love, or not.¹²⁷⁰

Although Christianity may seem complicated, as well as the standards by which we are to minister, in actuality neither is complicated at all.¹²⁷¹ Although different denominational (manmade) bylaws and standards have complicated simplicity of devotion unto God, the Gospel when adhered to—renders the three *basic principles* of our faith (Christianity; not the Christian religion).

1. WE ARE SAVED BY GOD'S GRACE THROUGH FAITH, NOT OF WORKS LEST ANY MAN BOAST.¹²⁷²
2. WE MUST TRULY BELIEVE (WITH KNOWLEDGEABLE FAITH) THAT JESUS IS LORD (KURIOS / LOGOS) AND GOD (THEOS) INCARNATE. WE MUST ALSO TRULY BELIEVE IN THE RESURRECTION, FOR IT IS THE BASIS AND HOPE OF OUR FAITH.¹²⁷³

¹²⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40; cf. Galatians 3:12-29.

¹²⁷⁰ John 8:31, 32; 15:4-17; Ephesians 4:7-16; 1 Peter 4:11-19.

¹²⁷¹ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; cf. Colossians 2:8-14, 18-23.

¹²⁷² Ephesians 2:1-10.

3. OURS IS A MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION. THIS IS THE MINISTRY TITLE OF ALL WHO CLAIM FAITH IN THE LORD JESUS CHRIST. WITHIN THE MINISTRY TITLE OF RECONCILIATION, IS FOUND THE INDIVIDUAL BELIEVER TITLE OF—AMBASSADOR.¹²⁷⁴

1. Saved by Grace through Faith

Unlike lordship Salvationists who believe that a certain stage of repentance and behavior must be accomplished before an individual can come to God and be saved; true Christianity teaches that God's grace alone can accomplish the rebirth.¹²⁷⁵ Key note—the word “repentance” means to stop and turn around, or change one's way of thinking; this in focus upon the Lord God.¹²⁷⁶ For this reason the word “repentance” should never ever be spoken to non-believers, for this absurdly states that they are to turn back to a licentious life and focus upon the flesh; while callusing their spirit to the reality of God's sufficient grace! Speaking the word “repentance” is only appropriate when speaking to someone who once faced (focused upon) the Lord, and for some reason has turned away; it is for this reason that the word was utilized frequently during the initial spoken ministry of both the Apostles and Jesus, for they were sent solely unto the house of Israel, wherever they were to be found!¹²⁷⁷

Unlike Papal Catholicism which believes that God's grace is received through ritualistic acts of worship (the Sacraments), true Christianity teaches that grace is the free unmerited favor of God; which is never earned nor warranted by one's own actions, behavior, or merit. Grace in itself demonstrates God's immense abounding lovingkindness for us; for although we deserve death derived from our own sinful nature, God has made us alive in Christ Jesus our Lord. This reality is all about God; for his grace is in accordance to the fact that the Lord God of all creation is the very essence of love!¹²⁷⁸ It must also be noted, the love of mention here is not a love which is of the flesh; rather this is the “love” which is

¹²⁷³ Romans 6:1-11; 10:8-13; Titus 3:5-8.

¹²⁷⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

¹²⁷⁵ John 3:3-21; 6:44, 45, 65.

¹²⁷⁶ Romans 12:1-3.

¹²⁷⁷ Matthew 10:1-8; 15:24.

¹²⁷⁸ 1 John 4:7-10.

of God's fruits, made manifest by the Lord; this love (agape) being: selfless, sacrificial, and un-conditional!¹²⁷⁹

Unlike all other religions throughout the world which in one fashion or another trust in works or oneself for salvation, Christianity teaches that grace alone delivers us from the penalty of sin which is death. Even within Christianity (mostly the Christian religion) this fact yet eludes many, for if this were not so, then the traditions precepts, philosophies and doctrines of man would not yet be forsaking the ways of God, by insistence upon physical realm acts of worship as being necessary for salvation or the receiving of grace.

Many folks criticize the religion of Islam because of the acts of terrorists who claim to be within the religion. The religion of Islam being one of "works for salvation," believes in doing good with the reward being an eternity in paradise; whereas evil works such as murder of the innocent brings forth an eternity of torment. Just as many claiming faith in the Islamic religion fail to realize the basis of the religion they profess, so it is with many professing believers within the Christian religion who refuse to study the Scriptures so as to gain understanding; instead believing supposed spiritual leaders who themselves have little understanding as to the faith they confess. If we are to claim membership in a form of religion or faith, would it not be prudent to actually know what the religion or faith truly teaches? Many throughout the world may criticize members of the Islamic religion because of the actions of some, yet a remnant within the religion (Islam) seeks to know the one true God; as do a remnant of true believers who bask within the spiritual relational reality which is true Christianity.

Q—How many denominations are there supposed to be within Christianity?

A—One—the Body of Christ. Denominations are derived from the following of human doctrine within the Christian religion!

Everyone has a deep yearning for love! Everyone seeks purpose in life! The deep love which all seek, along with the true purpose all seek, are actually found in the one true God. The world led by Satan seeks that we would attempt to find our answers and purpose in life by our own

¹²⁷⁹ Galatians 5:22, 23; 1 John 4:11-21.

endeavors and ingenuity; which is extremely far from the Gospel truth!¹²⁸⁰ This leads to virtually every conceivable distraction possible, which can and will hold us astray of the truth found only in the loving-kindness of God. His grace (free unmerited favor) surrounds us and empowers us to gain the freedom derived from truth; yet far too many individuals would rather work toward “self” gained answers and prosperity, than appropriate the grace abounding fellowship with our God which leads us to fulfillment in life.

The foolishness of human works for salvation and fulfillment of hope within religiosity has been taught within every known religion throughout the ages, including the Christian religion. This should never have been so within Christianity, for the Gospel plainly states that no other doctrine was ever to be taught except that which was taught by Jesus and the Apostles.¹²⁸¹ This simple rule being violated by the intellectual disobedience of humankind, has led to divisions within the faith which should never have occurred, or even been tolerated! Much of this was due to man’s attempts to foolishly explain God, whereas the Lord asked us to have a simple faith as would a child!¹²⁸² I can understand attempts to better know God, for this is a strong basis of our devotional and relational faith; yet I cannot understand finite creatures attempting to explain the infinite Creator; when all such attempts border on absurd!¹²⁸³

Examples of absurd explanations can be found in human attempts involving the Trinity, heaven, angels, salvation, etc. Although these are matters to be found within the pages of the Gospel; although not the “Trinity”; the truth remains that many aspects of our Lord and His creation will never be fully understood; until He teaches us during our eternity with Him. For more information regarding the “Trinity,” please reference chapter two of the book.

Theological endeavors many times were started with good intention, yet as pride grew within the endeavors, so also did stupidity and foolishness. This of course was derived from the fact that man too many times believes himself to be smarter than he really is; and this arrogance derived from failure to properly utilize the measure of faith rendered

¹²⁸⁰ John 16:13-15; cf. Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

¹²⁸¹ Galatians 1:6-10; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

¹²⁸² Matthew 18:3-7.

¹²⁸³ Isaiah 55:8, 9; Romans 9:18-24.

by God; thus human intellectual endeavor is attempted to understand matters which are actually spiritually appraised when God's personal tutelage is received by humble submission and obedience.¹²⁸⁴ In my theology endeavors I found it necessary to pray continually, so as to avoid the pride which quickly enters into such endeavors; instigated by demonic influence upon the human sinful nature.¹²⁸⁵ Without continual disciplined denial of "self" by devotional diligent prayer, endeavors attempting to explain the reality of God, are easily enticed by demons; for without continual humility during endeavor, the Lord's tutelage is forfeit, which places the endeavor easily within delusive coercion!

My studies led to understanding how division within the faith (varied volition) replaced the unity which was mandated by our Lord.¹²⁸⁶ It is truly hoped that this segment of the book will simplify matters of the faith, so as to eliminate confusion and allow both devotion and a better understanding of God's grace. We all desire purpose, yet it is the purpose of no one (with the exception of Jesus) to completely understand and explain God!¹²⁸⁷ He has always desired the hearts (sincere devotion and loyalty) of those who seek or know Him; for when one's devotion is appropriate then all else gains potential to come into unison, and this by grace!¹²⁸⁸

GRACE IS SUFFICIENT

Although most (not all) Christians understand that it is solely by the unmerited favor of God that we are saved, many yet fail to understand that God's grace abounds with His legitimate children continually for appropriate living and devotion. We must remember that we were saved (if born again) for a purpose; this purpose being to engage in good works; as vassals of God's goodness and righteousness in accordance with His masterful leadership and nurturing!¹²⁸⁹ Since no man does "good" of his own accord on a continual basis, it is the grace of God which allows us to live our lives in a manner pleasing to the Lord.¹²⁹⁰

¹²⁸⁴ Romans 12:1-3. 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

¹²⁸⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; James 4:5-10.

¹²⁸⁶ Ephesians 4:1-6.

¹²⁸⁷ John 1:18; cf. Isaiah 40:12-31.

¹²⁸⁸ Hosea 6:6; Jeremiah 33:3.

¹²⁸⁹ Ephesians 2:4-10; Romans 8:14.

¹²⁹⁰ Romans 3:10-18; 1 Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 1:6- 2:12-16.

God's unmerited favor (GRACE) far surpasses our sin and foolishness! This is the reason why grace abounds where sin has increased.¹²⁹¹ The Christians in Rome could not grasp the unmerited favor of God, just as most Christians today fail to grasp understanding as to His grace. The believers in Rome figured that if grace abounded where sin increased, then they would sin more so as to receive more grace. This very notion was upsetting to the Apostle Paul, which led to his statements found in Romans 6:1-23.

Just as the believers in Rome attempted to take the grace of God for granted, and this by excuses to receive more grace; do believers today also seek to take God's grace for granted? Everyone seems to appreciate the fact that we are saved by the unmerited favor of God, yet how many maintain sincere appreciation of His tremendous gift by endeavoring toward increased devotion and obedience? Three of the distinct characteristics of those who fail to understand the immensity of grace, are coveting, greed, and discontentment. It is understandable that the enemy (Satan and demons) who leads us to such inappropriate behavior are powerful, yet we should also know for a fact that Jesus is ultimately powerful; rendering to us His grace to make us free from inappropriate desires and coercive influence!¹²⁹² When the Lord stated that He would give us the desires of our heart, His statement was made within His hopefulness that our desires remain founded upon Him.¹²⁹³ Let us now take a look at characteristics of those who understand and appreciate God's grace, and those who do not.

THOSE WHO APPRECIATE GRACE

1. Considerate of others: One of the greatest evidences of Christian (Christ-like) behavior is the act of giving from a foundation of selfless sincerity regarding others. This is a characteristic which is centered upon the edification and wellbeing of the recipient of the giving; with no selfish or ulterior motive by the giver. This characteristic; or lack thereof, is that which defines the true nature of many congregations, for if individuals give with expectations of receiving back, then they are selfishly giving. The motivation of a

¹²⁹¹ Romans 5:12-21, specific vs. 20, 21.

¹²⁹² Romans 8:31-37; 1 John 4:1-6; Ephesians 1:3-23, specific vs. 18-23.

¹²⁹³ 1 Timothy 6:6-19; Titus 2:11-15; Matthew 22:36-40; 2 Corinthians 10:3-7.

person appreciative of grace, gives “just because” not “because of any specific”!¹²⁹⁴ A primary consideration of any “Christ-like” individual is for the salvation of others; for as God Himself seeks that none should perish, so also do His legitimate children, as the Lord’s intentions become our own!¹²⁹⁵

2. **Content** Those appreciative of grace are content with the tremendous blessing of what God has already accomplished!¹²⁹⁶ This contentment then leads to godliness; for without the distraction of always seeking more, individuals are pleased with spending time drawing closer to the Lord, with expectations that His authority would become absolute, not only for this time (corporeal) but also for all eternity!¹²⁹⁷ We live in a society which can never seem to have enough, whether this is: riches, fame, power, comfort, or ease; believers who are content have no necessity of wasting time continually seeking these things. This is not to say that we do not seek a better life, this rather is to say that we seek our life of abundance to be Christ centered, and thereby pleasing to God in accordance to His grace; which is our second greatest possession with it having been bestowed; our first greatest possession (blessing) is God Himself!

3. **Spiritually Minded** Those appreciative of grace set their minds upon the things above. This is the actuality of walking by faith in what the Lord has done for us; while seeking spiritual increase within the spiritual relational reality! To set one’s mind upon the things of God, is to take thoughts captive to obedience to Christ; therefore we look often through the spiritual eyes of faith. To be spiritually minded is to stay focused upon the Lord, receptive to His teaching, and hopeful of His return.¹²⁹⁸ Spiritual mindedness denies the flesh regarding its lusts and desires, appropriating the grace necessary to look beyond that which is temporal; focusing instead upon that which is eternal.¹²⁹⁹ Our disciplined focus leads our actions; focus upon the

¹²⁹⁴ Philippians 2:1-4.

¹²⁹⁵ 2 Peter 3:8-13; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 1 Corinthians 2:16.

¹²⁹⁶ Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:3, 4; 1 Peter 1:17-21.

¹²⁹⁷ Colossians 1:13, 14, 19-23.

¹²⁹⁸ 2 Timothy 4:1- 8.

¹²⁹⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.

Lord leads to reception of His will and work within us, whereas focus upon the flesh leads to varied focus and misdirection.¹³⁰⁰

4. Seek to Learn More about God: Those appreciative of God's grace, seek always to humbly and reverently learn more about the holy God who freely gives us unmerited favor (GRACE). The fact that His love is so immense, drives us always forward with great diligence to both study the Gospel and draw closer within our personal relationship with Him; thereby maintaining humility and submission so that He may will and work for His own good pleasure. Our faith like any endeavor which involves learning and growth, involves also disciplined: motivation, steadfastness, and perseverance. These characteristics are derived from loving Him first and foremost; for no other love as is received from the Lord has ever compared nor been so uplifting.¹³⁰¹

5. Not Distracted by Human Religious Doctrines and Traditions
Those appreciative of grace, have no need of the doctrines and traditions of humankind (elemental principles of the world). The doctrines and traditions of humankind were and are derived from those who cling to the physical realm (religiosity); and this in accordance to a lack of faith, or a faith never righteously actuated; having failed to heed Biblical instruction and standards, regarding humility and righteous obedience. This is the basis of Jesus' statement as to having the faith of a mustard seed; for with even a slight amount of true actuated faith, doctrines and traditions in the physical realm are not necessary. This same lack of true faith is the foundational reason why far too many congregations maintain weak un-biblical doctrine, and why true Christians many times stay home and study rather than going to church. When religious doctrines and traditions are maintained, the fact remains that the flesh seeks involvement in one's religious affairs, as "self" has not been denied appropriately so as to follow the Lord; thus religiosity holds captive the multitudes to fleshly indulgences which void all potential for spiritual growth and victory! To prove this point, do most religious

¹³⁰⁰ Romans 8:1-17; Hebrews 12:1-3.

¹³⁰¹ 1 Peter 1:3-9; Philippians 3:7-14.

individuals visit orphans and widows in their distress, and stay from worldly defilement?¹³⁰² The relational reality with God that saves us by adoption, and God's indwelling is spiritual; not carnal; thus all aspects of physical realm religion are futile and inappropriate!¹³⁰³

6. **Testing of All Things** Those appreciative of grace understand that grace can be appropriated so as to abstain from the thinking processes and behavioral actions of the multitudes. Grace accompanied by prayer is our greatest asset to fight the good fight of the faith! Those appreciative of this fact, test all things according to the Gospel, adhering to standards set forth by the Lord; for we know the Lord is powerfully leading us when we do things in accordance to His good, acceptable and perfect will. This is not legalism, but rather God's wisdom and power at work; for we must humbly and obediently submit if we are to actually follow the Lord! This will never occur without primary practiced denial of "self!"¹³⁰⁴

7. **At Peace** Those appreciative of grace, have peace even in the face of adversity and distress. This is not to say that we do not suffer terribly at times, but rather we have peace in knowing that as our Lord suffered terribly in our stead, we can now suffer for His glory while knowing He shall never leave us nor forsake us!¹³⁰⁵ Peace although not always coming in the physical realm, will always be before us in the spiritual and mental realms, when we remember that His love for us is unsurpassed; for within this knowledge we praise and thank our Lord for all things, even the: tribulations, persecutions, and suffering we must endure! This is the essence of trusting God; foundational to a righteous faith-based attitude!¹³⁰⁶

SUMMATION

Those who appreciate God's grace, appropriate it for the good things in humility for which it is abundantly given; praising and rendering

¹³⁰² Colossians 2:20-23; James 1:26, 27.

¹³⁰³ 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; Galatians 3:1-4:11; Colossians 2:1-19; 1 John 5:1-5.

¹³⁰⁴ Proverbs 1:7; 8:13; 9:10; 14:26, 27; 15:16, 31-33; 16:6-9; Matthew 16:24-26; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

¹³⁰⁵ Hebrews 13:5, 6; John 15:18-21.

¹³⁰⁶ Romans 8:1-39; 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:10-4:5.

thanksgiving unto God for all things, including suffering, persecutions and tribulations, which accompany servanthood upon the narrow path of God's righteous good, acceptable, and perfect will, and the kind intention of His will!¹³⁰⁷

THOSE WHO ARE UNAPPRECIATIVE OF GRACE

1. Selfish Those unappreciative of grace are selfish. Failing to realize the abundant grace which Jesus has given them, selfish individuals fail to pass grace onto others. They generally expect others to be gracious to them, yet fail terribly to consider their own behavior in most cases. Being unappreciative of grace many times continues within the life of individuals to the point that they become selfish in every realm, whether: spiritually, mentally or physically; they become complacent and obstinate within their own self-centeredness (narcissistic)!

2. Never content / carnally minded Those unappreciative of grace are never content with anything. They constantly seek more stuff, superhuman health, affections / attention by others and more submission by others to their own point of view; this is blatant carnality! They forget or refuse the fact that "sin" causes great detriment in both the physical and spiritual realms. Let me reiterate:

Stuff—They are rarely content with what they already have, and many times fail in their stewardship of their current possessions. Those unappreciative of grace seek constant fulfillment in the physical realm; mainly because they fail to realize God's blessings in the spiritual realm.¹³⁰⁸

- The foolishness of many pulpit proclamations maintain culpability within this matter; as fleshly whims and desires are taught to be an acceptable norm within those who are actually to seek rewards in heaven. Fleshly minded supposed spirituality is the downfall of multitudes, as many seek teachers in accordance to their carnal desires; thereby finding church leadership who are willing to offend God for the sake of

¹³⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Ephesians 2:1-10; James 4:3-10; 1 Peter 3:8-12.

¹³⁰⁸ Romans 8:31-39; Ephesians 1:3-23, specific vs. 3-12.

appeasing humankind; this due to church leadership serving mammon, not God!¹³⁰⁹

Superhuman Health—Those unappreciative of grace are not willing to accept the fact that sometimes the Lord allows us to be humbled by physical ailments, so as to drive our pride far from us. The Lord seeks for us to be humbly submissive, and this for proper worship and devotion. Those who remain discontent generally expect the Lord to beckon to their call, and this many times when their seeking is sinful, prideful and of fleshly indulgence. They believe that God seeks to heal all believers of all illnesses, although the Gospel never (ever) proclaimed any such promises by the Lord. Far too many believers seek to live forever in the flesh (if this were possible); for they are focused upon the things of this world, while failing to realize that while we are present in the body we are absent from the Lord. Those who focus upon the things of the world, never truly focus upon the Lord; neither do they realize that Christians (God's legitimate children) never die, for we go from life to life!¹³¹⁰

Affections—Those unappreciative of grace, always seek to be liked by everyone. They have failed to realize that when we serve Jesus, we will be hated by many; which includes believers who seek things their own way. This form of discontentment leads to inappropriate marriages and relationships which never edify, as well as inappropriate behavior to appease the inappropriate company being kept. Those unappreciative of grace are always seeking the affections of others, no matter how inappropriate, for they are not content with the agape love which God has for them. The love of the world is received by the flesh, whereas the love of God is received within the spirit of His legitimate children; by faith. The only love which is acceptable to God for proper service and worship is His love manifest and emphasized (returned); which is always accompanied by strict discipline!¹³¹¹

¹³⁰⁹ Matthew 6:19-24; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 4:1-4.

¹³¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; James 4:4, 5; 1 John 2:15-17; 3:1-18.

¹³¹¹ Galatians 5:22, 23; Romans 5:6-8; 1 John 4:7-5:3.

Submission to their own point of view—Those unappreciative of grace are generally self-centered in their decision making processes. They do not seek to agree with others, for they believe that others should always agree with them. This is an area where our giving of grace to others is so imperative! When we are not always seeking things according to our own desires and standards (carnal volition; prejudice), then we are free to better understand the views of others; and this many times leads to agreement rather than strife. This form of discontentment has led to many church congregations seeking church leadership to teach according to their own whims, from a foundation of fleshly desires and emotions!

3. Rarely seek to learn Those unappreciative of grace, rarely seek to learn more about our great Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. They generally believe that giving one hour or so at church once per week is sufficient to grow in understanding; this they do believing that church leadership will teach them all that is necessary for in-depth Scriptural knowledge. Those appreciative of grace understand that a lifetime of study would never fulfill our necessity to better know our Lord, whereas the unappreciative couldn't care less. The ones fully unappreciative are those who go to church only on Christmas or Easter; for they have only conceptual ignorance as to God's lovingkindness and grace; while also remaining blatantly ignorant of the spiritual relational reality!

4. In bondage to human religious doctrine (the doctrine of demons) Those unappreciative of grace are generally held in bondage to religious doctrines, precepts, philosophies, traditions, and ideologies. Having little or no understanding as to God's giving us what we do not deserve (grace); they entrap themselves in what others without understanding deem as necessary to please God. The Gospel warned us not to be taken captive by inappropriate heretical doctrine, yet far too many believers fall prey to demonic influence in this manner!¹³¹² It should be understood, that doctrines which do not hold to strict Gospel standards of obedience and worship, must be avoided! When human doctrines and traditions take precedence

¹³¹² Timothy 4:6-9; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

over appropriate worship of God in spirit and in truth; then the ruler of the world (Satan) gains the battle victory. For reasons such as this, I am personally very grateful that the war has already been won by our Lord!¹³¹³

5. **Go with the status quo** Those unappreciative of grace, generally seek to go with the status quo. As they refuse to be set apart to God (sanctified), they would rather seek to go with the flow of the many, no matter where the path of the flow may take them. This is a terrible shame, for remaining clear of the secular status quo, is that which sets apart true Christians from lukewarm believers. If we act and react in a like manner as the many, then how will we be distinguished as being set apart? How can a non-believer see something in us which points them to the reality of Christ (glory of Christ) as Lord, *if* our behavior cannot be distinguished as different from theirs?

6. **Tormented** Those unappreciative of grace are tormented mentally and spiritually; as distinguished from the peace and joy which are from the Lord. They are tormented because they are ensnared by the same enticements which hold multitudes in bondage. To be free in Christ is to be free indeed!¹³¹⁴ This freedom comes with one's willingness to be set apart and diligent; for within this state of humility comes submission unto the Lord, which allows Him to do His work within us unhindered. The torment comes from continuance upon the broad path which leads to destruction; for the blessings of God are never rendered within disobedience! It is a shame that far too many ministries teach that Christians should always be comfortable, when the Gospel indicates otherwise!¹³¹⁵ If we are content never growing in grace and in knowledge of the truth, after having been born again of the Spirit, then we have denied the Lord's leadership far too long! Righteous correction leads to repentance (turning back to God), for if our relationship with God

¹³¹³ John 19:30; Revelation 21:6, 7.

¹³¹⁴ John 8:31, 32, 36.

¹³¹⁵ 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

is of a righteous nature (within His righteousness), then we turn back to Him and the torment ceases! Torment which continues long enough, turns to complacency; for we no longer realize the predicament of spiritual depravity within which we are trapped.

Summation

Those unappreciative of God's grace—take it for granted! They are rarely content, and thereby seek fulfillment of their own volition in most endeavors. Continually seeking fulfillment of “self” is based in idolatrous carnal love (fleshly narcissism), not the love of God imparted by grace through faith.¹³¹⁶ To focus upon “self” is not to focus upon the Lord, and thereby potentially receive His blessings!

MOTIVATED BY GRACE

I believe the intense, intimate love of God for humanity, has been demonstrated since the very beginning of time.¹³¹⁷ Before He made the earth habitable, He knew each and every one of us; therefore, also those who would accept the reality of Jesus (Lord; Messiah), as well as those who would not!¹³¹⁸ This in itself demonstrates the intricate love of God in that He eagerly loved us, and created the world in a manner so as to be a blessed dwelling for His creation. We miss the immensity of God's omnipotence, omnipresence and omniscience when we look for answers outside of the Bible; for within its pages (through the Holy Spirit) we discover Him, and every answer of utmost value!¹³¹⁹ God is far above all that He has created, yet for our sakes involves Himself within His creation!¹³²⁰ God's involvement with us my brethren—is the ultimate love in the entire universe, which is at this very moment focused upon each of us personally; by grace!

Never have I personally witnessed such a tremendous explanation of God's creation of the world, and the harm upon His creation which the sin of man has caused, as I have by the explanation of Dr. Carl Baugh. Dr. Baugh and his research team strove for many years to derive a cre-

¹³¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 13:4-8, emphasis verse 5.

¹³¹⁷ Romans 1:20.

¹³¹⁸ Matthew 25:34; Ephesians 1:3, 4; 1 Peter 1:20, 21; for information—Christ/Messiah—John 1:41.

¹³¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:12-14; Colossians 1:16, 17.

¹³²⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:16; 2 Timothy 1:13, 14; Hebrews 13:20, 21; 1 John 3:24.

ation model which absolutely fits the explained events within Scripture. Dr. Baugh in his explanation of creation demonstrates: the immense love of God, the intricacy of creation for the sake of mankind and all living creatures, the absolute harmony with His children which He had intended, the harmful damage which man's rebellion and inappropriate sin caused to the earth; which had been created in such splendor. I recommend witnessing Dr. Baugh's model of creation!¹³²¹

To the extent that we witness the abounding love of Jesus in all that He has created, and the extent in which our inappropriate behavior has caused such harm; hopefully will lead to an extent of turning from sin, and a focus upon Him through obedience. I cannot stress enough that God's love for us is so very evident in all things He has created, including each of us! We too many times get caught up in the hustle bustle of life, which keeps us on the path to misunderstanding. We ought to stop, take a look at the beginning (creation—Genesis), then begin again walking with the Creator who has loved us with such immense, intricate and abounding love! To witness God's love through all He has created eliminates the necessity for "signs" (oth; saymeion) and "wonders" (mopheth; teras) which far too many believers feel are needed in order to believe.¹³²²

To understand the love of God is to realize one's necessity to love Him in return. We seek in our life—true love, yet most look for it in all the wrong places. The Lord's love for us is evidenced in all that He has done! Is our love for Him sufficient so as to be evidenced? Is our Christian demeanor evidenced by our actions within God's righteousness, or is our faith solely to be found in words?¹³²³ Please, let us look closely at ourselves and our attitudes in regard to the Lord.¹³²⁴ The love of our Lord has never varied or diminished one iota! His unsurpassed love is the basis for every great thing (or aspect) which we may experience in life. To focus upon Him is to submit to Him; which is to serve Him in thought, word, and deed. All successes within the faith are truly a matter of devotion; focus brings success, distractions bring detriment!

¹³²¹ Creative Evidences Museum, Dr. Carl Baugh - Founder and Director, P.O. Box 309
Glen Rose, TX. 76043 (254) 897-3200.

¹³²² 1 Corinthians 1:21-24; Hebrews 11:1, 2; John 20:29.

¹³²³ James 1:22; cf. Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

¹³²⁴ 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

To better understand the grace of our Lord, is to better understand our position in Him. As believers we all fall far short of the glory of God, yet by His grace there is no need for us to stay in the trenches of wretchedness derived from sin. When we realize our position in Christ (dead to sin), we realize that freedom is truly the potential before us; for this is freedom indeed.¹³²⁵ To gain further understanding as to the grace of God and how it is so very much involved in our salvation and victory as believers, we can gain understanding by examining the aspects of our salvation.

Let us now look at the aspects of our salvation by grace. This is my personal arrangement which I do not claim to be theologically correct according to the many different theologies. I include this now for the sole purpose of pointing out—GOD’S TREMENDOUS GRACE IN SAVING US FROM DEATH IN OUR SINS.

Steps (aspects) of Salvation “Ordo Salutis”

Ordo Salutis is an important issue within Systematic Theology, in understanding the application of redemption. The words “ordo salutis” literally mean—the way (or order) of salvation. This indicates a list of events by which God supplies salvation to the believer. The Ordo Salutis is an attempt to explain (by description) the relationship of the various aspects of salvation, all of which emphasize—GRACE.

The considered importance of the Ordo Salutis within theology—it is an elaborate description of an unsaved individual being brought to salvation. The Ordo Salutis is a way to establish a sequence in the application of redemption, so as to stay individual’s faith from any form of diminishing God’s sovereign grace. While reading the Ordo Salutis, please keep the love and grace of God foremost in your mind; this will allow focus to remain upon His lovingkindness which is truly everlasting.¹³²⁶ From the moment an individual becomes receptive of the Lordship and atonement of Jesus (Messiah), by the “drawing” process which comes from the Father, the love and grace of God carries them forward from that moment onward to all eternity; *if* the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) was accepted appropriately with all sincerity, for this being a matter of acquiescent devotion, stipulates the necessity!¹³²⁷

¹³²⁵ John 8:31, 32, 36.

¹³²⁶ Psalm 136:1-26.

The Bible does not actually give us a structured Ordo Salutis. The Ordo Salutis is the product of theological reflection; to the extent it maintains Biblical truth, it is helpful. To whatever point an Ordo Salutis may serve to obscure Biblical truth, it is no longer helpful. Simply put—the Ordo Salutis is a helpful tool when it allows a clear understanding as to the progression which leads to a true sincere faith and devotional surrender unto the authority of the Lord, and the atoning work which He performed (Savior). The Ordo Salutis lists the providential gifts from God in a more concise way, when all specifics of the Ordo Salutis are accomplished in Christ at the point of union.¹³²⁸

Arranging the Logical Relationship between the Various Elements of Salvation

ELECTION

Election is unto redemption in the Lord Jesus Christ. Election is ultimately by God's grace, and for the praise of His glory. Election is based on God's foreknowledge of those who would and would not believe unto inevitable devotional submission, therefore for those who would say: election violates my free choice; election is unfair; election removes reason for evangelizing; election means the free offer of the gospel is insincere; I would reiterate:

- All have been given a measure of faith for the purpose of sound judgment; proportional with God's will for each individual.¹³²⁹ This allows all individuals potential for knowledge of the truth, and saving faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and this without exception!
- All individuals have had God's laws of good and evil written upon their hearts.¹³³⁰ All who have the ability to comprehend His moral laws, have the potential of obedience to them; this when in conjunction with the measure of faith given to each, increases the potential. This fact is demonstrated in the outstanding moral and considerate behavior of those who live

¹³²⁷ John 6:44-65; 14:6, 7; Romans 10:8-13, specific v. 9.

¹³²⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, emphasis vs. 30, 31; 2 Corinthians 1:20-22; Colossians 1:15-23.

¹³²⁹ Romans 12:3.

¹³³⁰ Romans 2:14-16.

according to the golden rule; yet have no personal relationship with Jesus.¹³³¹

God is the potter and we are the clay; by what authority does the creature question the Creator who possesses eternal knowledge (archetypal) of all things.¹³³² The Lord in accordance to His immense lovingkindness seeks that none should perish, but that all would come—to knowledge of truth (non-believer); or come to repentance (someone who previously faced God)!¹³³³

God our Father seeking that none should perish has allowed all persons a potential to know Him personally. This when combined with the fact that His power and nature can be seen in all which He has created; equals—all individuals have had, have now, or will have opportunity to decide whether or not to accept the lordship and atonement of Christ Jesus unto salvation.¹³³⁴ Salvation—the greatest gift ever given; all persons have only to accept it; this being contingent upon knowledge from God and true devotion; which are characteristics of God’s manifest grace!

Election (in my opinion; this apart from dogmatic theology on the subject) is enveloped within God’s omniscience. The Lord knows all things throughout the entirety of His creation; included in this remains the knowledge of who will, and who will not accept the gift of Christ’s atonement and accept His imperative authority; which are both enveloped within God’s abounding grace. I personally believe that all are capable of knowing Jesus; yet those who choose the imperatives (submission, humility, devotion, knowledge) of “Life” are the elect.¹³³⁵ God the Father draws and teaches us;¹³³⁶ Jesus seeks and finds us;¹³³⁷ and the Holy Spirit guides us.¹³³⁸

EFFECTUAL CALLING

Effectual calling is within the realm of God’s immense, personal and abounding grace. The grace of God far surpasses any act or acts of sin-

¹³³¹ Matthew 7:12.

¹³³² Romans 9:20-29.

¹³³³ Ezekiel 18:19-32, specific vs. 23, 32; 33:1-11, specific v. 11; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; 2 Peter 3:8, 9.

¹³³⁴ Romans 1:16-32, specific vs. 18-23; 10:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; John 3:16-21.

¹³³⁵ John 1:1-5; 11:25, 26; 14:1-11.

¹³³⁶ John 6:44, 45.

¹³³⁷ Luke 19:10.

¹³³⁸ John 16:8-13; cf. James 4:7-10.

fulness to which we are capable.¹³³⁹ This grace given freely by God; within whom is found the essence of pure love, is efficacious in all knowledge and strength.¹³⁴⁰ The effectual calling of God draws the elect to further appropriate choices, guiding them to conversion according to His will.

CONVERSION

Conversion is the point derived from God's effectual drawing on those within whom is found sincerity, which places the individual at a point where a decision for God takes place; for conversion is a point where an individual is brought out from the dominion of darkness into the light of truth, where clarity of understanding allows the individual to make a decision for God foundational to sincerity and submission. Actual sincerity is the area where (unfortunately) far too many individuals fail to enter; for multitudes throughout church history have failed in rendering true sincerity and reverence unto God; this due to self-centered motives, or outright selfishness (narcissism); for true sincerity unto the Lord God, is foundational to volitional selfless submission unto the authority of the King (Jesus)!

There are many (carnal believers) who believe that eloquent words can lead to salvation, or they desire Christ to be their Savior, yet not their Lord. This is not Biblical or spiritually sound! Conversion is the point of sincere acceptance of what God has done for us. The elect enter conversion with sincerity of heart and spirit; realizing that submission unto the authority of God is mandatory and imperative; while multitudes fail to enter because of superficiality and wrong motives. Conversion occurs with understanding the wretchedness of the human sinful nature, and the volitional desire to surrender this nature unto the righteous authority of the Lord.¹³⁴¹ True conversion brings forth cleansing and understanding regarding the imperatives of placing God first and foremost; in addition, understanding regarding the necessity to deny "self!"¹³⁴²

Individuals who are not truly converted due to personal selfish volition, are generally led henceforth upon the broad path of delusion and

¹³³⁹ Romans 5:20, 21.

¹³⁴⁰ 1 John 4:7-21; cf. Isaiah 55:9-11; Jeremiah 33:3.

¹³⁴¹ Acts 26:12-18; cf. Hebrews 5:8-10.

¹³⁴² Matthew 16:24-26.

continued unrighteousness; for any attempts to supposedly accept and submit to God foundational to one's own selfish motives, are attempts which are foundational to double-mindedness and self-centeredness!

ADOPTION

When the elect willfully surrender themselves unto the Lord and His authority, they are brought into God's family by grace. Because it is by grace that we are saved, and it is by God's efficacious grace that we find our way to Him; adoption is therefore the result of "grace"; lest anyone boast in and of themselves.¹³⁴³

Adoption as sons and daughters of God brings us fully into His family, and under His masterful leadership; with actually following the Lord contingent upon times of humble submission and surrender, as "self" must be denied for the imperative of following to be accomplished. We become heirs according to the faithfulness of God, and heirs of righteous service found in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹³⁴⁴ Adoption places us within the very essence of love, which is the Lord; the only question being—will our love for Him motivate us to actually follow His righteous leadership!

JUSTIFICATION / REGENERATION

Justification is to be just or right (righteous) before God. Justification is an act (not a process) of God's free grace; for it involves a pardon from sin, bringing forth righteousness in His sight. Justification (full pardon) is not because of anything inherent to us, but because of the righteousness of Christ imputed (reckoned) unto us. Justification can be determined as a treatment of God unto the elect, for He declares us righteous; for Jesus is righteous and we are in Him. Believers are declared to have the righteousness of God Himself, this by grace through faith in His only begotten Son.¹³⁴⁵ This is determined by God's being just; and the One who justifies.¹³⁴⁶ The Lord justifies even the doers of the Law (Mosaic and Levitical), as obedience to the Law never justified anyone!¹³⁴⁷ The efficacious work of God brought us near from

¹³⁴³ Ephesians 2:1-10; John 6:42-51; 14:5-10; Hebrews 6:13-20.

¹³⁴⁴ Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 3:18-29; 2 Timothy 2:3-13; cf. Philippians 1:27-30.

¹³⁴⁵ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; cf. Romans 10:1-4.

¹³⁴⁶ Psalm 51:1-13; Romans 3:1-6, 19-28.

¹³⁴⁷ Romans 2:1-16.

afar (reconciliation) (Ephesians 2:13); through the gracious atonement (at-one-ment) of Jesus.¹³⁴⁸

Regeneration is the process by which God takes us from the realm of carnal sin and spiritual death (darkness), and brings us to the realm of righteousness and life (light).¹³⁴⁹ When Jesus enters the life of an individual, they at that point (born again) are changed (regenerated, transformed).¹³⁵⁰ At the point of regeneration old things have gone and the possibility for new things has come.¹³⁵¹ Failure to realize the distinct two natures and the fact of deliverance, generally leads to remaining within the old nature of sinful bondage, rather than realizing freedom in the nature of Christ (Christ-likeness); which all true believers can receive by grace.¹³⁵² It must be understood at this point; the blessings of God, i.e. growth within: sanctification, faith, perseverance, and Christ-likeness will only occur during times of appropriate: denial of “self,” humble submission, and disciplined obedience; for although the Lord seeks that we mature and grow appropriately within the spiritual relational reality, we alone cause the hindrances by inappropriate carnality, dysfunctional focus, and the seeking of one’s own volition rather than the good, acceptable and perfect will of God to be fulfilled!¹³⁵³ With this now stated, that which follows will be more easily understood.

SANCTIFICATION

Realizing justification and regeneration to have occurred, leads us to realized humility in submitting to God for progressive sanctification. The Holy Spirit works within us conforming us to the righteous image of Christ, by changing our very nature and demeanor.¹³⁵⁴

WHAT IS SANCTIFICATION?

Two parties are responsible for sanctification occurring in the believer; the Lord and the believer. God set into motion the sanctification of the elect whom He also justified (definitive).¹³⁵⁵ The work of sanctifi-

¹³⁴⁸ Romans 5:1-11; 10:4-13.

¹³⁴⁹ John 1:9-13; Ephesians 2:1-7.

¹³⁵⁰ John 3:1-7; 1 Peter 1:22-25; Colossians 3:1-11; cf. Romans 12:1-3.

¹³⁵¹ 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

¹³⁵² Romans 6:3-7, 15-23; Ephesians 1:3-14.

¹³⁵³ John 3:4-21; Romans 12:1-21; 1 Timothy 6:1-19.

¹³⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 6:17-20; Philippians 1:6; 2:12-18.

¹³⁵⁵ Romans 8:29, 30.

cation (progressive) continuing smoothly or hindered, depending on the willful acceptance and submission to the work by the believer. Sanctification is the act or work of being set apart for God and made holy. Set apart from: the ways of the world; selfish desires and personal volition (individuality).¹³⁵⁶ The work of sanctification leads us to live our life for God and others, this being the difference between those who love Jesus and those who do not (yet think and profess that they do). This work of the Lord in the life of the believer is that which demonstrates the believer's submission to do the will of God; thus we are truly known by His fruits within us. Please reference the difference between the deeds mentioned in Galatians 5:19-21, and the fruits mentioned in Galatians 5:22, 23; signifying the difference by the standard mentioned in Galatians 5:24-26.

We as believers must have faith in order to please God.¹³⁵⁷ We as believers should realize that it is God who both wills and works for His own good pleasure; this diametrically opposed to the volition and works of the flesh! When we realize these facts, we will realize the imperative for our willful submission, which allows Him to guide our steps.¹³⁵⁸ When a believer understands that all goodness comes from God, they can then gain the "assurance" of God's love which is necessary to remain on solid ground.¹³⁵⁹ With the assurance of God's love and a true understanding of His justifying us, we can have peace in having gained a realistic understanding as to His grace, and in this we find "peace of conscience."¹³⁶⁰

When believers have gained peace which is derived from understanding as to God's lovingkindness and grace, we can accept "joy" from the Holy Spirit; this joy allowing us to look beyond the harshness of worldly sin, wretchedness, and who we were prior to God's blessings.¹³⁶¹ With this sense of joy within the believer, we have contentment so as to receive grace more freely, thus allowing us to focus our thoughts upon good and acceptable things.¹³⁶² The believer who has gained as-

¹³⁵⁶ Luke 10:27; Galatians 5:14, 15; Romans 12:18-13:14; James 2:8-20; 4:3-10; 1 John 2:15-17.

¹³⁵⁷ Hebrews 11:6.

¹³⁵⁸ Philippians 2:12, 13; cf. Proverbs 16:9; Jeremiah 10:23, 24.

¹³⁵⁹ James 1:17, 18; Galatians 5:22, 23.

¹³⁶⁰ 1 John 3:21-24.

¹³⁶¹ Philippians 4:6-9.

¹³⁶² Romans 12:2; 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10.

surance of God's love, peace of conscience, joy in the Holy Spirit, and appropriation of grace; then willfully accepts the strength from God so as to persevere to the end. When we practice walking with God through a better understanding and grasp of His blessings, we then respond to Him in a more spontaneous and devotional manner, which then diminishes our fleshly desires and motives. In this we journey further from the flesh; submitting more to the Holy Spirit for spiritual growth and comfort in service; we decrease, and He increases!¹³⁶³

God seeks to bless all believers with abounding grace and loving-kindness, for He called us into such blessings. As believers we can remain adamant regarding the godliness (holiness; abstinence from sin) to which we have been called and led by the Lord, or we can allow the distractions of the world to hinder our growth in grace. This is where "contentment" is so very necessary, lest we fall prey to selfishness and greed.¹³⁶⁴ Appropriate focus leads to increased and improved learning and growth in sanctification, whereas distractions lead to slower less effective growth and knowledge. The Lord's hand is never slow to take us where He wills we go, so it is the devotional motivation of the believer, or lack thereof, within sanctification which allows spiritual growth or stagnation. Two parties are involved in the sanctification process; One is faithful, the other is not!¹³⁶⁵

If individuals have truly died to sin (identified themselves as being crucified with Christ), the imperative follows that they would seek to yield themselves as instruments of God's righteousness. This is the basis of definitive and progressive sanctification working one after the other for the duration of believer's lives; so that grace may be appropriated and utilized for growth into the image of Christ.¹³⁶⁶ The progressive aspect of sanctification includes a continuous seeking to distance oneself from secular desires and sin (carnality), while narrowing gaps which exist in our relationship with the Lord. This progression leads to righteous zeal in maintaining one's renewed life in Christ, which is evidenced (in reality) by one's motivation to remain separated unto God for the purpose of abounding sanctification. Remaining separate (set apart) is a primary lacking desire which causes detriment to the faith of many

¹³⁶³ Romans 8:12-14; John 3:30.

¹³⁶⁴ 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Colossians 3:5.

¹³⁶⁵ 2 Timothy 2:13.

¹³⁶⁶ Romans 6:5-11; Romans 8:12-15.

believers.¹³⁶⁷ Our steps are either toward or away from godliness, as we also endeavor toward or away from the Lord; for there is no reality of doing both simultaneously.

Focus within the life of each individual believer is imperative, if progressive sanctification is to continue without hindrance. Believers should allow the Holy Spirit to bring forth continual purification, to counter the effects of the sinful nature. The believer should seek to be strengthened in the inner being for the purpose of conforming to the image of Christ; therefore believers should seek to grow (come out of spiritual infancy) in the faith.¹³⁶⁸

The victory of the saints (believers) is found only through faith.¹³⁶⁹ True faith leads to submission unto the Holy Spirit for success; for all true believers realize how futile it is to trust in oneself. One's spiritual walk (by faith) is based solely upon one's submission to willfully follow the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Definitive sanctification began the separation process, and progressive sanctification allows believers to be strengthened within by the power, wisdom and understanding of God on a continued basis.¹³⁷⁰ The growth which comes from the beginning (definitive) and continued (progressive) dynamics of sanctification, makes evident the effectiveness of God's grace in the daily walk, and very demeanor of each believer.

All Christians are responsible to progress (grow) in sanctification. Effort should be rendered on the part of all believers, as it is a requirement of our warfare. God has made wonderful promises to all who believe, yet it is the responsibility of each believer to claim the promises. The believers claiming the promises of God was and is ordained by God, who stated that our effort must be one of diligence of which endurance and perseverance are necessary.¹³⁷¹ Although God said that our servanthood would not be easy by any means, He did state that it would not be burdensome; this found in the believer's devotional strenuous effort to walk with God in His work of sanctification from within.¹³⁷²

¹³⁶⁷ 1 Timothy 4:6-11; 6:8-12; 2 Peter 1:5-11.

¹³⁶⁸ Ephesians 4:14-16; 1 Corinthians 3:1-3; 2 Corinthians 4:15-18; Hebrews 5:12-14.

¹³⁶⁹ 1 John 5:4, 5.

¹³⁷⁰ Colossians 1:9-14.

¹³⁷¹ Matthew 10:22; Romans 5:1-5.

¹³⁷² 1 John 5:1-3.

Backsliding—Hindrance to Sanctification

Based on experience and the reality of the many distractions present in the world today, we recognize that Christians can; to a greater or lesser degree; fall away from the gospel pattern of sanctification and the Christian life. This falling away from the standard of holiness set forth by God is witnessed though Scripture accounts such as:

- Abraham lying about Sarah (Genesis 20:1-18).
- David's having committed adultery and murder (2 Samuel 11:3-17).
- Peter's having denied the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 26:69-75).

The Westminster Confession of Faith states the four reasons for backsliding to be: the temptation of Satan (our adversary), the temptation of the world, the corruption that remains within all humans, one's neglect of the means of grace. Within these four reasons are also found: failure to read the Gospel, and failure to pray.

There are several results of backsliding, some include: God is displeased with those who backslide, for He is never pleased by our intentional sin; the Holy Spirit is grieved by sin; there is a loss of physical and spiritual comfort. Some may say that there is a loss of God's grace when an individual commits sin, yet this cannot be so; for where sin increases grace abounds all the more.¹³⁷³ Many of God's blessings will be withdrawn on account of sin; hearts are hardened (calloused) by sin, and conscience wounded by sin. Many times this is increased by the fact of others being made to pay the consequences of our sinfulness.

Too many times the outlying consequences of backsliding is neither considered nor guarded against. Many times the backsliding of a believer is all the excuse non-believing individuals need to stay away from the Gospel truth of salvation. Too many eagerly await the opportunity to catch a Christian in sin, so they can point the finger of blame. It is unfortunate that we quickly forget how our behavior will be witnessed, and in this forgetfulness our light dims inappropriately.

The potential for backsliding continually exists in the lives of all believers. God in His infinite mercy and grace has allowed us the "means" (faith, grace and reverence) necessary to remain shielded from

¹³⁷³ Romans 5:20.

the distractions which are sure to be utilized against believers. The means (tools) of protection given us by God rendered for our spiritual success must be accepted and utilized if they are to be effective. God inspires us to accept and use His gifts for spiritual success; our adversary (Satan) attempts to distract us into using tools of our own devices in the physical realm, which are powerless against foes and influences from the spiritual realm. These distractions and attempts to utilize human devices (pride and arrogance) for success in the spiritual realm, lead only to defeat and further deception unto increased backsliding.

The surety of our (believers) salvation is based upon the faithfulness of God. Christ provided the sacrifice which cleanses our consciences and spirit from sinful acts, for His offering has made all true believers acceptable to God.¹³⁷⁴ God provides believers (His legitimate children) with every good thing so that we may do His will.¹³⁷⁵ When believers backslide they tend to doubt God's faithfulness, as they mistrust themselves and doubt any good thing; this derived from assuming God's faithfulness to be topsy-turvy like our own. It is never wise to compare God with ourselves, for He is always (divinely) faithful! In this we may also understand that as God is faithful to cleanse us from all unrighteousness and forgive us upon our confessing known sin, we should also forgive ourselves and thereby move forward in God's strength and grace.

Backsliding causes physical, mental and spiritual anguish, generally leading to further anguish and increased doubt. This is where trusting in the faithfulness of God is so imperative; for in this (His faithfulness) we understand and receive cleansing, leading to full potential restoration of fellowship with Him; at a time of His choosing; in whom is our victory. When God's legitimate children doubt Him, it is not their salvation which is jeopardized but rather their focus and hope; for we remain stagnant and stationary rather than moving onward toward God's upward call which is in Christ Jesus.¹³⁷⁶

Sanctification is the work of being made holy, and set apart from the world, unto God; leading to spiritual growth in the life of individual believers. In this aspect (sanctification) of the *Ordo Salutis*, the believer plays one important role—this role being “humble submission” (a perse-

¹³⁷⁴ Hebrews 10:14.

¹³⁷⁵ Hebrews 13:20, 21.

¹³⁷⁶ Philippians 3:8-14.

vered act of disciplined devotion) so as to remain “set apart for God!” Due the necessity of God being able to work within actual adopted children, it is imperative for the purpose of unhindered spiritual growth that believers willfully submit for the purpose of change. Although God does His work with absolute perfection, He will not force change upon a believer; but rather gives grace upon grace so we may willfully submit to remain openly accepting of His blessings for spiritual growth. Please remember—the beauty of God’s grace far surpasses the power and wretchedness of sin; therefore we alone are responsible for hindrance within God’s work of sanctification. The primary hindrances occur generally due to foolish failure to deny one’s old nature—“volitional self,” which always seeks to lead; for with denial of the old, the potential for the new—devotion to God obediently follows the masterful leadership of the King, thereby receiving the blessings associated.¹³⁷⁷

The spiritual growth of many believers is hindered throughout the entirety of their corporeal existence! As Christians, we many times are our own worst enemy when it comes to growth into the image of Christ. Too many believers: do not study the Bible so the power of the Word can train them for the purpose of righteous growth; remain ignorant of Satan’s schemes, and thereby remain continually distracted; constantly lose appropriate focus, and thereby clarity of purpose; forgetting the aforementioned aspects of the Ordo Salutis, and therefore forget they are a new creation in Christ, which many times takes them back (again and again) where they were.¹³⁷⁸ PLEASE REMEMBER—OUR VICTORY IS WITHIN OUR BEING IDENTIFIED WITH CHRIST IN DEATH TO CARNALITY; FOR THIS IS THE ESSENCE OF OUR BAPTISM IN THE SPIRIT!¹³⁷⁹

PERSEVERANCE OF THE SAINTS

The Holy Spirit’s work of sanctification is tremendous and filled with grace! This step (sanctification) renders the power necessary to graduate to the step of persevering; the efficiency of this transition being hindered only by inappropriate attitudes, behavior and focus in the life

¹³⁷⁷ Matthew 16:24-26; Romans 5:12-21; 6:1-23; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Colossians 3:1-17.

¹³⁷⁸ Romans 8:1-17; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 2 Timothy 2:20-23.

¹³⁷⁹ Ephesians 4:1-6; Romans 6:1-14; 1 Corinthians 12:12-27; 1 Peter 4:1-19; James 4:3-10; 1 John 2:1-27.

of individuals. The only thing a believer can do which pleases God is to have faith; in faith devotionally submitting so that He may do His work!¹³⁸⁰ When we fail to realize that our success is founded solely in the Lord, we tend to trust in ourselves and thereby fall.¹³⁸¹

The perseverance of the saints is derived from trust and hope in God, for the Lord equips us for righteous service. When a believer places focus elsewhere than upon the Lord, perseverance will not result! Badly distracted believers will not willfully suffer for Christ; therefore perseverance is voided as not necessary. Many believers do not enter into service because their motives are un-righteous, thereby leading to spiritual failures and defeat, for they are without the defensive weaponry to endure.¹³⁸² Many believers, who fail terribly in aspects of servanthood (Christianity), do so because they seek rewards and the blessing of being equipped by attempting to go around the cross rather than to it! This is a form of denial as to one's calling, for we are indeed called to suffer for Christ Jesus.¹³⁸³ This calling makes evident the necessary aspect of the *Ordo Salutis* called "perseverance." Perseverance is the ability to maintain one's appropriate walk for Christ within the trying times of human existence, therefore willful submission to and acceptance of God's strength. Perseverance involves maintaining the ability to look beyond trouble, to one's future with Jesus (utilizing the helmet of salvation), thereby rendering the ability to look past harsh circumstance.¹³⁸⁴

GLORIFICATION

Glorification is the ultimate final aspect (stage) of the *Ordo Salutis*. Glorification is solely the work of God which will occur at the first resurrection, when the temporal will become imperishable. Glorification is the point when we will see Jesus in His glory, for we will be like Him; having our conformity to His image divinely completed.¹³⁸⁵

To be glorified by the Lord, is to never be tempted by sin or the inappropriate again! Ever! Glorification will allow us to witness the absolute glory of the Lord! Glorification is (in my opinion) so immense

¹³⁸⁰ Hebrews 11:1-6; Philippians 1:6; 2:12-16.

¹³⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 3:10-15; 10:1-13, emphasis vs. 12, 13; cf. Proverbs 16:16-25.

¹³⁸² Ephesians 6:10-18.

¹³⁸³ Philippians 1:27-30; 2 Timothy 2:3-10; 3:10-17; 1 Peter 2:18-25.

¹³⁸⁴ Hebrews 12:1-11.

¹³⁸⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 1 John 3:1-3.

and wonderful, that it is beyond human comprehension. Although some may think and teach that we are glorified even now in our corporeal bodies (reference—Romans 8:30), this is as they have failed to realize that every aspect of our salvation is founded upon the faithfulness of God. “It is finished” (John 19:30); “It is done” (Revelation 21:6). To be glorified is to be fully and completely conformed to the image of Christ; which is God’s ultimate purpose for all believers. Truly our surety is founded upon God’s grace and faithfulness, for in His eyes every step of our salvation is certain; therefore considered already complete at the point of our adoption!

More on Grace

God is never begrudging in His giving of grace, for He knows that aside from Him we can do nothing of a righteous or good nature! God’s grace is given freely to all who come with a devotion to receive, yet this is like a tug of war for many believers; for we ask God to take control, while failing to release control to Him. How many times have we asked God to deliver us from a situation, then we continue to fight the battle ourselves? When we tug of war with God, we fail to realize He is for us, not against us; when we are seeking to walk within His will. In cases of tug of war with God, we are against ourselves!¹³⁸⁶

God’s forgiveness is full and complete according to His grace. We may say “how can God forgive such an offense”; this we say forgetting that grace is never deserved (unmerited favor). We are who we are in Christ solely by the grace of God; this is why our justification is an act of God in declaring us righteous. When we realize that God’s grace is giving to us that which we neither deserve nor merit, then we can eliminate the human factor from grace, as there is no human factor involved. We deserve death in sin, yet He makes us alive in Christ; for this has everything to do with the love of God, of which we are the recipients according to His grace. It is just that simple! If you want to receive God’s grace, then thank Him; for His grace is before us at all times. We have but to: appropriate, grasp hold, bask within, and be blessed!¹³⁸⁷

One of the greatest hindrances to our receiving God’s grace is our own motives. *If* our love is first and foremost for God, then our motives

¹³⁸⁶ Romans 8:31-37.

¹³⁸⁷ Psalm 103:10-14; Jeremiah 29:11-13.

will be in conjunction with our relationship with Him.¹³⁸⁸ When our motives are in conjunction with idolatry for oneself or other physical aspects of the world, then we will attempt to gain God's blessing aside from His grace and will.¹³⁸⁹ Why is it so hard for us to realize that God's grace is our second greatest blessing, for His grace freely gives us our greatest potential!¹³⁹⁰ When we fail to realize the simplicity of receiving the grace of God, we then continue our attempts to earn the blessing which is freely given (and is never earned nor merited by human effort).¹³⁹¹ Rather than attempting boldness in our own endeavors, let's place boldness in going to God's throne of grace so He may do His work in and through us. Please remember, our life has everything to do with Him; aside from His loving us and allowing us to be instruments of His righteousness, it has nothing to do with us!¹³⁹² Saying "what is in it for me" brings considerable opposition to the receiving of grace.

Being saved and strengthened by God's grace is where Christianity stands apart from religion. Although many denominations fail to understand and teach this very important fact, the truth remains that works aside from the fruits of the Holy Spirit manifested in a believer's life, are futile in pleasing God or obtaining salvation. Many religions seek to know God while yet seeking to work one's way to heaven, and this as human pride cannot grasp the absence of the human factor in salvation to actually be a good thing. The religion of Islam believes in one true God, yet they remain entrapped in thinking that human endeavors help in achieving salvation. It remains a shame that with the immensity of God's grace, that many yet cannot simply acknowledge salvation by grace through faith; thus many fail to accept life eternal graciously with appropriate thanksgiving.

Many Christian religious denominations fail in regard to acceptance of God's grace through faith; this as denominationalism is in accordance to human religious doctrines (doctrines of demons).¹³⁹³ Many denominations hold to human equations in attempts to please God, while yet

¹³⁸⁸ Proverbs 16:2, 3; 2 Timothy 2:22.

¹³⁸⁹ John 12:42, 43; Colossians 2:18, 19.

¹³⁹⁰ Romans 5:15, 16, 12:1, 2; 1 Corinthians 15:10.

¹³⁹¹ Jeremiah 31:3; 2 Corinthians 5:14, 15.

¹³⁹² Romans 5:18; 6:17, 18; 10:1-4.

¹³⁹³ 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

criticizing other denominations and religions for doing the same. Failure to realize only God can work in us those things pleasing to Him, leads many to criticize others, whereas all attempts to please God aside from His grace working in us, are inappropriate. Some Christian religious denominations (Catholicism and others) believe that measures of God's grace are received by the taking of communion and other ritualistic acts of worship; nothing could be further from the truth!¹³⁹⁴ How can human efforts in the physical realm possibly warrant the giving of grace, when grace is never merited? Grace is given us by God solely according to Christ's atoning work on the cross! Any attempts by man to say grace is manifested by an act of human works, is to associate grace with the Law; for the Law was the way of self-help (and to point out sin), and grace is given as we are incapable of truly helping ourselves. Grace is truly sufficient, for it is based solely in God's lovingkindness and faithfulness!¹³⁹⁵

Our only business is to love God, and delight ourselves in Him.
All kinds of disciplines, no matter how rugged, are quite useless
if not motivated by love for God.

Brother Lawrence,
The Practice of the Presence of God.

Because we know that God's will for all believers is our sanctification, do you suppose that He gives us grace (unmerited favor and strength) for this purpose?¹³⁹⁶ The basis of the perfect moral law which is the Gospel of the Lord Jesus Christ is absolutely different than the basis for the written Mosaic and Levitical Laws given to the Israelites. Too many believers fail to make the distinction between the two, in attempts to make excuses for failure to turn away from sin. To love the Lord is to walk in a manner pleasing to Him, by submission so that He may work grace abounding acts of righteousness and goodness in our lives. To make excuses for failure to submit by inane thinking that we are not under any form of law (antinomianism) is to make excuses as to why we are failing to love our Lord. Although we are not under Law as a

¹³⁹⁴ Isaiah 29:13-16.

¹³⁹⁵ Romans 3:21-31; 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; Ephesians 1:5-10; 4:7; 2 Timothy 1:8-11;
2 Thessalonians 1:11, 12; 2 Peter 1:2-9.

¹³⁹⁶ 1 John 5:2, 3.

basis for our salvation, this does not mean that God has released us to licentious behavior; for anyone to believe that God's grace has given us permission to do so, is to boldly take His grace for granted! He did not render grace to be taken for granted, yet being the free gift which it is, many will surely take it for granted in a manner as they do most things. To accept it for the purpose for which it (GRACE) is given, which is for our progressive sanctification (*if* born again); or to take it for granted on account of selfishness, is a decision we all must make. To accept it for the sake of righteousness unto spiritual successes and deliverance, or take it for granted unto spiritual detriment and stagnation; the choice rests with each of us. God does not remove His grace when it is taken for granted, but rather gives more grace so it may be grasped within His lovingkindness; for our foolishness never nullifies God's grace. To love God is to submit so He may work that which is pleasing to Him.¹³⁹⁷ His lovingkindness is truly everlasting; for He is wonderfully awesome all the time!¹³⁹⁸

To realize the second greatest blessing we can receive to be grace, and this in addition to God himself (first greatest blessing), is to reach out in prayer by faith to appropriate all that is necessary. The Apostle Paul knew this, which is why he said that we should pray without ceasing.¹³⁹⁹ The apostles lived a life surrounded by sinfulness and love of self, just as we do today. They came to realize the necessity of God's grace in every aspect of their lives, just as also we should learn this most important fact! To receive grace in abundance is to receive the strength necessary to succeed in a world of torment and many inappropriate types of behavior; and to stay from un-righteous forms of worship. Being a frail and foolish human being, I know I need all the grace I can get! How about you? When the Lord told Paul that His grace was sufficient, He was instructing Paul to keep his focus in the spiritual realm, for victory in the physical realm (walking by faith). Paul had placed his focus upon his physical ailment at one point, and the Lord was blessing him with the truth of priorities! God must come first; therefore He must remain the center of our focus.¹⁴⁰⁰

¹³⁹⁷ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Ephesians 5:7-10.

¹³⁹⁸ Psalm 136:1-26.

¹³⁹⁹ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

¹⁴⁰⁰ Hebrews 12:1-3.

The grace of God is abounding beyond our ability to understand! This is why His grace is greater than our overwhelming foolishness, pride and arrogance. Why believers are content to grasp the grace necessary in order to be saved, then refuse to accept the strength (power) of God's grace for everyday endeavors, is truly hard to fathom. I could go on and on about the wonderment of God's grace! Truly I hope that spiritual success within the grace of God shall be yours in abundance!

Moral law is more than a test; it is for man's own good. Every law that God has given has been for man's benefit. If man breaks it, he is not only rebelling against God; he is hurting himself.

Billy Graham

Please understand—during this “dispensation of grace,” God is not angry with humanity; but rather seeks to reconcile all unto Himself through the Lord Jesus Christ.¹⁴⁰¹ We are at a special time in Biblical history, for the commandments set before us are but two—love God first and foremost, and others. Never has salvation been so simple, as the decision by all is but to accept the atonement of Christ's tremendous sacrifice, understand who Jesus is (reality of the Christ; glory of Christ), accept and submit to the Lord's authority, and believe in His resurrection in order to be saved.¹⁴⁰² This is entirely by the grace of God, with only the faith of a mustard seed necessary that eternal life may be given freely by God. He has loved us with such great love; this is the ministry of reconciliation which we are to proclaim.¹⁴⁰³ So simple, yet complicated as by the foolishness of manmade doctrine. Please love the Lord, and tell others of His love; for salvation is now closer than when we first believed!¹⁴⁰⁴ Once we are born again of the Holy Spirit at the time of our conversion, the Lord will begin a fabulous work within us, which He also will complete. Once again the beginning and the final result is by God's abounding grace. Please let us keep it simple—GOD'S GRACE IS SUFFICIENT!

¹⁴⁰¹ Romans 5:6-11.

¹⁴⁰² Romans 10:8-13; Hebrews 5:8-10.

¹⁴⁰³ 2 Corinthians 5:17-21.

¹⁴⁰⁴ 2 Corinthians 6:1, 2.

Personal Note: It is hoped that including the Ordo Salutis has been helpful in understanding the immensity of God's grace. It is also hoped that this has made summation as to our not only being saved by grace, but also empowered by grace so as to live the victorious Christian life.¹⁴⁰⁵ Apology, if I have failed to emphasize our necessity of God's grace, for truly it is the greatest gift ever given. Our failure to realize this leads to our always seeking more; as aforementioned, which leads to discontentment. Please ask the Lord for truth; for with reception of truth comes forth contentment in life; for with the rendering and receiving of truth within the spiritual relational reality, the wonderment of His grace will become evident.

Atonement (At-one-ment)

The value of the atonement is based upon the authority and dignity of the Lord Jesus Christ. Being based upon Him who is the foundation of absolute truth, the atonement having meritorious infinite value would save all humanity; had all individuals chosen to accept the free gift of salvation by grace through faith. No man has ever been lost because of any deficiency in the atonement of Christ; the difficulties lie within the wretchedness of the human sinful nature.¹⁴⁰⁶

Armenian doctrine states that Christ came to save all men; that He died and thereby atoned for all, even those that finally perish. Since the atonement was of infinite value as aforementioned, this would essentially be correct. The elect effectually drawn to salvation by God's efficacious grace, will of course come under the atonement of Christ; also shall those who submit to (believe) the truth of the Gospel, as from reception of it. God's efficacious grace brings forth all spiritual reckoning!

It may be argued that the atonement of Christ is solely for the elect. It can easily be defended that the atonement of Christ is for all humanity, as God seeks that none should perish. It can be debated whether there is need of evangelism and the proclamation of the Gospel, *if* indeed only the elect shall be saved. It can be discussed as to whether any of us actually has any part in bringing another to the truth of the Gospel, which can set them free from sin, death and worldly bondage. In all these things we must remember that God's ways are much higher than

¹⁴⁰⁵ 1 Timothy 1:12-17; 6:1-21; 2 Timothy 2:1-26.

¹⁴⁰⁶ Proverbs 4:23-27; 27:19; Psalm 14:1-3; Jeremiah 18:12; Matthew 15:18-20a.

our own! In this we must also remember that the Lord having foreknowledge of all things for all time; knows the outcome from eternity past. The Lord knows: who will reach who with the Gospel of salvation, who will be seen (their demeanor witnessed) by whom, who will be saved and who will not, who will serve with pure motives, and who will serve but themselves, who will walk upright, and who will not! Armed with these facts and the fact that God is not a man who will change His mind, we can deduce that our work must continue without hesitation.¹⁴⁰⁷

We should trust in our Lord (walking by faith) to take us where we must be, lest we walk by sight as do the many. We ought not to debate the ways of the Lord, and thereby fall stagnant in our evangelism. We should never assume nor demand the Lord act according to our volition, but rather we ought to do our best through obedience—knowing the outcome is fully under God’s control (examples—Genesis 18:23-33; Jeremiah 18:7-12). We should step out in faith gently in love, trust God’s love and grace to be available to all—lest we become puffed up believing our endeavors to bring forth salvation fruition; we must exalt God with our heart, soul, mind and strength according to the humility blessed us by Christ’s atonement! We praise God for His divine work, we praise God for His mercy and grace, we praise God and give Him thanks in all things; because this is His will for our lives. Some things are just that simple!

II) DEVOTIONAL FAITH

Unlike the many who believe that eloquent words and superficial belief is acceptable; the truth remains that God witnesses the very essence of our motives! It is unfortunate that many throughout history will find they are destined to be eternally separated from God; having believed some supposed spiritual leader, and this due to the foolishness that our superficial behavior (façade) has somehow fooled God in a like manner as it fooled us and others. The Levitical Law of the Old Testament demonstrated to the Jews that God is absolutely precise in all things (purity, holiness, righteousness, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge); this must be remembered when coming into His presence! We would do well to remember this most important fact when we seek fellowship with the Lord, for He is never mocked or fooled (deceived)!¹⁴⁰⁸ Ever!

¹⁴⁰⁷ 1 Timothy 4:10.

The first and foremost commandment has always been to love the Lord with all of our: heart, soul, mind, and strength!¹⁴⁰⁹ Do you suppose there is a wonderful reason for this? Could it be that *if* our devotion is sincere, then our relationship with Him will maintain sincerity also! It is hoped that the aforementioned in regard to God's grace and loving-kindness toward us, will help in the realization that our relationship with Him should never be taken for granted! It is also hoped that the aforementioned will help in realization regarding necessity of devotional sincerity in all endeavors of life (thought, word, and deed); for our lives ought to be presented for His glory.¹⁴¹⁰

Many personal visitations have been made to many different church services, where at the end of the service they have an altar call. During the altar call, people are asked to come forward if they have never trusted Christ for their salvation. Those coming forward are then asked to repeat a simple prayer which in many different forms basically claims acceptance of Christ's atonement for one's sins; this accepting Jesus solely as Savior. The folks are then told they are now a Christian and thus saved from the penalty of death. This is not correct in any sense of the Biblical standard, for devotional/ faith must be present in order to be born again of the Holy Spirit.¹⁴¹¹ How many folks will have believed themselves to be saved by such foolishness as this, finding out when it is too late that their salvation was never sound, as they had not received the indwelling of the Holy Spirit due to a false confession of faith?¹⁴¹²

Although works are not necessary for salvation; devotional sincerity, knowledge, and faith is mandatory! For a person to understand the foolishness of a simple confession without sincere faith and acceptance in the atonement of Christ, they would first have to realize the curtailment of the altar call. For any supposed spiritual leader to proclaim salvation by a simple confession without actual knowledge and faith of both Christ's identity (Lord of all) and the resurrection is for the supposed spiritual leader to serve Satan by deceiving individuals; as they remain

¹⁴⁰⁸ Galatians 6:1-10; 1 John 1:1-10.

¹⁴⁰⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40.

¹⁴¹⁰ Romans 4:16-5:21; 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:5-11:1; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; Philippians 2:1-11.

¹⁴¹¹ Romans 10:8-13.

¹⁴¹² Matthew 7:13-27; 13:1-23; cf. Luke 8:11-18.

ignorant (without knowledge).¹⁴¹³ One person's deception may lead to hundreds or even thousands of others being deceived; thus the number of converts within a congregation may be terribly bogus. Could this possibly be because of the plethora of ministers and Pastors who serve money, not God; which of course would never happen, if individuals would not choose unto themselves positions of service which are actually designated by the Holy Spirit?¹⁴¹⁴ Could this possibly be because of the pride involved in the claiming of numbers, as one supposed congregational leader attempts to best another; which of course would never happen if focus remained upon God? If a congregation has claimed one thousand to have been converted to Christianity, yet only five were sincere within actual knowledge and devotional faith, then nine hundred and ninety five have been deceived; thus a terrible defeat, yet I would praise God for the five!¹⁴¹⁵

What is it that we must believe and confess, in order to be saved by the grace of God? When the Gospel makes reference to the heart, it makes reference to sincerity and devotion! As aforementioned, there is no place for superficial or nonchalant faith and confessions, or forms of superficial or nonchalant worship in regard to the Lord God of all creation! Although it is simply by God's grace (which includes God's divine work within the "drawing" process) that individuals are saved; not groups of individuals; it must be understood that it is with great difficulty that a single individual is saved, lest it be in vain. This is the reason that actual knowledge must precede one's confession of faith unto God, for a true acceptance of both the authority and resurrection of and in the Lord must be present within the individual or their words mean nothing! A poll was tallied several years ago after discussing the resurrection with hundreds of pastors and ministers, with a large percentage of those polled admitting to uncertainty regarding the resurrection of Jesus Christ. This is pathetic; as *if* these supposed church leaders have no certainty as by devotional faith, how can those within their congregations be led to any form of certainty! Could this be because far too many sermons contain what is desired to be heard (whimsical desires; rhetorical confabulation), rather than adhering to

¹⁴¹³ John 8:31-58, specific vs. 31-44.

¹⁴¹⁴! Corinthians 12:1-31.

¹⁴¹⁵ Philippians 1:12-30, emphasis vs. 15-18.

the Gospel truth at all times?¹⁴¹⁶ Could this also be derived from congregations completely lacking the reality of the Lord's presence?¹⁴¹⁷

The confession which must be made from each individual is Jesus as Lord (Kurios). This is a confession derived from devotional humility and love, for it is a confession of submission to the authority of God; the confession having no selfish or ulterior motive! This is also a confession acknowledging that Jesus is God; for the Hebrew word for Lord is "yhvh" (Yahveh; Yehovah). Sound familiar? This therefore is the simplicity of what must occur; yet only by God's divine preparatory work:

1. When the Lord prepares an individual to come to the reality of the Christ (Jesus; glory of Christ), He: prepares them by righteously activating the measure of faith within them, renders masterful instruction (spiritual teaching) regarding the reality of Jesus being God incarnate in human form, the Savior of all humankind (perfect sacrificial Lamb), and the solely true authority over the church (Body of Christ); this all occurring during His righteous and divine drawing of an individual unto adoption as legitimate children!¹⁴¹⁸ It must be understood and followed, that spiritual leadership are to instruct individuals regarding the aforementioned, prior to any attempts at confessing of one's faith; for ignorance has no place in any endeavor seeking salvation, as ignorance opens the door to a lifetime of delusive and deluding effects. The individual while being drawn by God confesses Jesus as Lord, within understanding from God's teaching (revealing) of the imperative to submit to the authority of Jesus, for all spiritual growth within being led forth hence!¹⁴¹⁹ This is foundational to actual knowledge received from God; which hopefully is preceded by appropriate righteous instruction from spiritual leadership; for this is never possible through religious assumption or conjecture! The confession must be made with full acceptance of the reality of the Christ (Lord and Savior), not simply a confession of an aspect of the reality (Savior); for this knowledge is learned from God during the process of His drawing the individual, and must be confessed (unto God) when

¹⁴¹⁶ Romans 10:14-21, emphasis v. 17.

¹⁴¹⁷ Luke 6:39-49, emphasis 46-49.

¹⁴¹⁸ John 6:44-65.

¹⁴¹⁹ John 14:6, 7; Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14; 10:1-13, specific vs. 8-10; 1 Corinthians 3: 1-11.

received! The confession unto salvation is a spiritual response derived from a spiritual drawing and calling; the confession is not an emotional response derived from a seeking of God in the flesh (religiously)! Any confession made from enticements of the flesh is void of a spiritual reality; for this is not in accordance to God's righteous drawing, but rather according to the devious will of Satan (the Great Deceiver); for he deceives so as to murder spiritually!¹⁴²⁰

- Although the “Doctrine of the Trinity” has caused much confusion; the simple fact remains that there is but one Savior, and He is God!¹⁴²¹ A precise discussion regarding the Trinity is found in chapter two (Gaining Perspective) of the book.
- The truth of the aforementioned matter (reality of the Christ) has not been taught in the church for generations! This occurred according to prophesy from the Lord, in the form of a warning!¹⁴²² Because the warning was not heeded, the church has rejected the reality of the Christ during pulpit proclamations; instead teaching that a simple confession accepting Jesus as Savior is sufficient in order to be saved, although this superficial and superfluous proclamation outright denies and rejects the imperative of the reality of God within salvation!¹⁴²³ Please read again John 6:44-65; which will allow understanding as to why the Lord has been ejected (kept out; door shut) from His own church since A.D. 1954. Because the church denies the reality of God, and refuses to repent of this blatant carnal act of disrespect and disobedience, the Lord desires for sincere individuals who seek the truth and to love Him personally, to invite Him personally; which allows potential for the divine work of God to begin and continue unto completion (salvation; eternal state)!¹⁴²⁴ The reality of seeking salvation by the one true God is never started without a sincere seeking of “truth,” and a submissive willingness to walk in the

¹⁴²⁰ John 8:42-47; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; cf. Revelation 12:9.

¹⁴²¹ Isaiah 9:6, 7; 43:1-11; 45:14-25 / cf. Philippians 2:9-11; Titus 2:11-15; cf. Luke 1:41-50.

¹⁴²² 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

¹⁴²³ John 6:44, 45, 65; Hebrews 5:8-10.

¹⁴²⁴ Matthew 7:7-11; Revelation 3:14-22, specific vs. 19, 20; cf. Philippians 1:6; 2:12-16; Hebrews 13:20, 21; Jeremiah 31:3; 17:5-10.

truth which is revealed! It is for this reason that Jesus must be accepted as “Lord” of one’s existence; for He is the: Way, **truth**, and life (John 14:5-7)!

In straying from the sound doctrine and instruction of the Lord found in the Gospel, the church has journeyed upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction; progressively for generations. The truth makes us free from the deceptive schemes of Satan; yet this being a divine work of God only occurs within those who abide in the Word!¹⁴²⁵ This also is not taught in church; for church teachings void of the reality of God (kept out; door closed) has diminished to the point of appeasing the flesh of individuals, while remaining void of any spiritual reality!¹⁴²⁶ The proof of this matter is easily witnessed in the world today; for there are three consistent imperatives regarding the spiritual relational reality: a righteous activated measure of faith, truth, and discipline; of which all three are led by God; of these multitudes hate pure truth (candor; veracity) and discipline, which evidences avoidance of the reality of God!¹⁴²⁷

2. The individual must believe in the resurrection. Superficiality has no place in this belief; for it must be derived from sincere faith, devotion, and trust in God; which are actually blessings from God, derived from the spiritual growth which is fulfilled within the spiritual relational reality!¹⁴²⁸

To understand that Jesus is God is to know (not assume) that only God Himself could actually save us from the wages of sin which is death. Because no human being has ever existed who could adhere to the standard of absolute holiness which pleases God, the Lord Himself came in human form (Immanuel; “God with us”) to make atonement for all humankind.¹⁴²⁹ Wow—what love! To truly know that only God could be our Savior is to know that Jesus is in fact God incarnate. These facts reiterate the difficulty which exists for individuals to be saved; for none

¹⁴²⁵ John 8:31-36; 15:1-27, specific—vs. 1-10.

¹⁴²⁶ John 4:19-24.

¹⁴²⁷ Hebrews 12:1-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10; cf. Matthew 7:13-27.

¹⁴²⁸ Hebrews 11:1-6; Romans 3:21-26; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19.

¹⁴²⁹ Matthew 1:23; 1 Timothy 4:1-16.

can come to know the Son without the drawing of the Father, and none can come to the Father except through the Son; thus salvation is fully by the grace of God because of who He is, not because of who we are!¹⁴³⁰ As simply stated as possible, the spiritual relational reality which saves individuals from the wages of sin is all about God; as also is the acceptable confession unto salvation (Jesus as Lord)!¹⁴³¹ When pulpit proclamations are made to simply accept Jesus as Savior in order to be saved, a terrible deception goes forth which negates the imperatives of actual knowledge and selfless devotional humble submission (acquiescence); replacing the imperatives with deception which puffs up fleshly human emotions and motives, while maintaining spiritual destitution! This is blatant religious carnality, which will save no one; for the saving relationship is a spiritual reality which involves both knowledge and faith! Foolish and deceptive pulpit proclamations are rendered for the appeasement of human beings, thus appeasement unto the flesh; therefore physical realm delusive attempts to achieve a spiritual reality; this of course being in accordance to the guile and schemes of Satan, who has been murdering human beings spiritually throughout the history of the human race! Satan deceives the whole world (minus the remnant) primarily by physical realm religion; which is but a pathetic attempted mimic of the actual spiritual relational reality!

The Lord our God has always desired the hearts (sincere love and devotion) of those who claim to know Him. Without devotional sincerity and loyalty, faith is useless; this demonstrated by the fact that many individual's fruits never reflect the righteousness of Christ, no matter how many years they have made profession of knowing God. As we are truly known by our fruits, *if* the fruits of the Holy Spirit are not manifested in the life of a believer especially after several years of supposed faith, then something is terribly wrong; for where is the evidence of a nurtured faith according to the reality of God's indwelling! If the deeds of the flesh yet remain dominant, then the deeds have not been displaced by God's fruit; thus God's witnessed fruits prove the relationship, whereas a complete lack of God's fruits disproves the relationship! The imperative of coming to realization of the truth regarding the matter is why all individuals must test themselves to see if they are actually in the faith; for remaining de-

¹⁴³⁰ John 6:28-65; 14:1-31.

¹⁴³¹ Romans 10:8-13, specific v. 9.

ceived will have eternal consequences! This is the essence of the Gospel of James as he speaks of faith without works being useless.¹⁴³² Although some may say that the book of James refers to salvation by works, those who speak thus are unaware of what the Scriptures say, and this generally because they do not study so as to handle the Gospel accurately (*orthotomew*—to cut straight).¹⁴³³ As faith comes from hearing the Word of truth; for sincere faith to exist without knowledge of the truth is generally a far-fetched notion. This is the reason that knowledge is so very important if a person is to sincerely make a confession of faith, and why simple words spoken without conviction results in nothing of spiritual value! The world is full of folks who know of God (conceptual), yet many less know Him personally (relational)! We must know God personally, and be known by God as His legitimate children, or we are illegitimate children and not sons and daughters; the former are saved, the latter are not!¹⁴³⁴

A BEAUTIFUL PROGRESSION OF GOD’S RIGHTEOUS WORK

1. God’s drawing an individual always includes God’s love (agape: selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial—Galatians 5:22, 23). We are blessed with selfless love regarding God during the time of a sincere righteous confession of faith; for God first loved us, which allows the realistic imperative of His love to be the guiding factor of the confession!¹⁴³⁵ God’s love realistically manifest during a moment in time includes the “heavenly gift”; truly the beginning point of the spiritual relational reality within which the individual is drawn, prepared, adopted, and justified by the Lord.¹⁴³⁶ This moment is the beginning point of an individual’s purpose for existence, in accordance to the kind intention of God’s will.¹⁴³⁷
 - What occurs in reality? In the moment that an individual appropriately (“self” denied) responds to God’s drawing, the Lord God in accordance to His sufficient grace and preciseness enlightens the situation with actual fellowship with Him (a taste of the heavenly gift), and His agape (selfless and

¹⁴³² James 2:15-26.

¹⁴³³ 2 Timothy 2:14-19, specific vs. 14, 15.

¹⁴³⁴ Romans 8:1-17; Hebrews 12:4-11, emphasis vs. 7, 8; 1 John 3:1-18.

¹⁴³⁵ John 3:1-21; righteous confession - Romans 10:8-10, specific v. 9.

¹⁴³⁶ Hebrews 6:1-20.

¹⁴³⁷ Hebrews 2:5-18; 5:1-10.

sacrificial) love manifest. The individual is then prepared and led in accordance to God's lovingkindness, to acknowledge "Jesus as Lord"; in doing so receiving the atoning work of the Messiah, and acknowledging the imperative of submission unto the authority of God in Christ, within motive and intent. The confession being solely unto the Lord in acknowledgement of the necessary truth that within the specific moment in time the ordeal is all about God (self-denied); for the drawing by God is a matter of extreme intimacy and precision in accordance to the righteous standard of God's intention! During the confession unto salvation, a devotional acceptance of God occurs; and this as the Lord reveals Himself in truth by His indwelling, for what occurs is truly divine!¹⁴³⁸ God's work of drawing the individual and allowing them into his presence (actual fellowship) is solely and completely foundational to God's lovingkindness and grace; thus the experience is spiritually foundational to the same!

- It must be understood, that coming to acceptance of the Lord Jesus as Messiah, and as holding the full authority of God, is a divine work of God; for tutelage from God leading to actual knowledge of the reality of the Christ (Lord, Messiah, King) is implanted into the individual's spirit by the Lord's indwelling! The cheap mimic of accepting Jesus solely as Savior within religiosity accomplishes nothing; except to place the individual within bondage to Satan's guile, which may continue for the rest of their life, or until they humbly acquiesce so that the Lord may do His divine work!¹⁴³⁹ Simple confessions aloof knowledge and God's divine work generally brings forth an emotional response; which is contradictory away from the necessary spiritual reality of God's presence; it is the emotional response of the flesh which generally holds individuals captive to future religious emotional responses, and holds them to the deception of believing the emotional response constitutes a spiritual reality, although not! The primary carnal aspect of our sinful nature which disallows God's divine work, is foolish

¹⁴³⁸ Luke 15:4-32, specific v. 10.

¹⁴³⁹ John 6:44-65.

adolescent stubborn pride; for this pride of which God is opposed seeks to protect the insecurities of the flesh, which actually creates a rebellious spirit which is against the Lord! When individuals desire only a Savior, and refuse to accept Jesus' lordship (full authority), it is this form of selfish pride which leads their endeavor; thus deluding them, which is revealed with the passing of time as their general demeanor never changes; for the grace of God which brings forth change in righteousness has thus far been rejected! This factor is proven by the doubt and seeking of personal recognition which had remained within several of the Apostles, until they were indwelt by the Holy Spirit!

- The beauty of the “heavenly gift” (actual fellowship with the Lord God of all creation) allows the individual to experience the wonderment of God's presence, while because of the great joy and peace being experienced having motivation to have the fellowship occur time and again. This is a spiritual response; not an emotional one! The wonderment of this experience may be a motivating factor which occurs with great frequency, contingent upon the individual's willingness to keep God first and foremost, derived from continued sincere disciplined devotion.
 - Any confessional statements made unto God from a foundation other than His manifest agape love in an individual's spirit, are superficial (carnally based)! With the abounding selfishness of the human sinful nature, confessional statements are made by multitudes without selfless devotion unto God; thus all such statements are selfish in nature, and not led by the Lord in accordance to His righteous desire and intent!¹⁴⁴⁰ Statements of this type will always be without sincerity regarding acceptance and humble submission to Christ's authority; for foolish attempts to mimic God's divine intentions and actions lead only to deceit!¹⁴⁴¹ It is for this reason that the guile of Satan has led to pulpit proclamations regarding accepting Jesus solely as Savior, not as Lord and Savior by devotional

¹⁴⁴⁰ John 3:16-21; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; 2 Peter 3:1-9; 1 John 1:5-10.

¹⁴⁴¹ Luke 6:39-49; John 14:15-26; James 1:19-25.

submission; and this with but a few spoken words which evade the reality of the Christ (Messiah); thus although wanting to be saved (in the flesh), individuals have absolutely no intention of following and obeying God!¹⁴⁴²

- It is quite shameful that distraction away from sincere devotion for God, even for a moment in time, would ever lead to human beings seeking only a god of convenience; and making professions of faith in conjunction with such selfish desires; this in complete ignorance as to the fact of God's absolute knowledge; even to the essence of motive. The beautiful moment in time aforementioned never occurs if a foundational basis of selfishness is present during the confession; for the confession is not unto the Lord, but rather for "self" within motive. When this occurs, the confession is void of the beauty of the heavenly gift (reality of God's presence), and the individual has inability to realize the terrible error of their attempt; therefore future attempts, if any, will remain obscured; for the light of the Lord which leads the way within actual fellowship with Him is obscured, as the veil remains in place and thus an inability to see clearly the appropriate path of God's righteousness pertaining to His kingdom! The Lord God in His infinite lovingkindness and grace has done all that is possible by Him so that individuals may be saved; the decision yea or nay rests with the individual within motive and intent, which is what is witnessed by God!¹⁴⁴³ Great care must be taken when being drawn by the Lord, for distraction and/or foolishness (by anyone) can destroy adherence to the guidance within the fellowship; thus destroying the beauty of the moment, and thereby the necessary reality of God's indwelling! Although a confession is possible during a gathering of believers, the imperative of God's leading the endeavor must be maintained by each and every individual who is present; for anyone aloof devotional focus upon the Lord can be influenced by evil enticement to cause distraction or disturbance! The drawing, finding, and

¹⁴⁴² Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14; 1 Timothy 4:1-11; 2 Timothy 2:1-4:5.

¹⁴⁴³ Corinthians 3:1-18; Hebrews 6:1-20.

redemption by God is an extremely serious ordeal which must never be interrupted by anyone for any reason; thus individuality has no place during gatherings unto the Lord, for every individual should be united in purpose according to the righteous leadership and teachings of God!¹⁴⁴⁴

NO EXCEPTIONS!

- If a confession for salvation is made from an inappropriate foundation of selfishness, then “self” is leading the endeavor; not the Holy Spirit! For this reason, the potential for entering into a false relationship becomes possible; although we are saved by God’s grace, with such a distinct possibility, the falsehood may continue for the entirety of an individual’s life, leading to the distinction that only God knows the truth as to whether the individual has actually been adopted into God’s family and thereby saved! When attempts to enter into a relationship with God by confession has been led by any form of deception, the reality remains that the individual will not be: led, nurtured, or embraced by God; thus the individual’s spiritual wellbeing will become one of stagnation, and the moment in accordance to God’s drawing lost; for there cannot be any form of darkness within the light of righteousness and truth! When this occurs, the individual may not realize that which has been lost; thereby continuing forth without God’s leadership and nurturing, and thus God’s indwelling and sealing of the individual for the day of redemption will not occur; therefore the individual will proceed forward aloof the foundation which is Christ, and their supposed relationship with God will never journey beyond religious assumption and conjecture; which will never achieve the spiritual relational reality within which is found actual salvation! If an individual’s confession is foundational to the flesh, then the falsehood of a fleshly relationship with God (religiosity) will remain prevalent within the individual; whereas the actual saving relationship with God is spiritual, not carnal! When this has occurred, the individual will never actually be changed by God, for

¹⁴⁴⁴ Romans 10:1-13, specific vs. 1-3; cr. 1 Corinthians 14:36-40, emphasis v. 40.

spiritual growth which is from God alone will never occur; this with the exception that the individual actually acknowledged and accepted God from the appropriate foundation of love of which the drawing of God occurs. Multitudes have been led to false confessions of faith due to the foolish teachings of carnal religion; which are void of the “reality of God”!¹⁴⁴⁵ False worship within physical realm religiosity is actually worshiping in ignorance; worshiping in ignorance is actually worship within deception, which is worship of the Great Deceiver (Satan)! Superficiality in answer to God’s drawing is extremely dangerous, and may have eternal consequences! Praise God that when He witnesses in an individual an earnest and sincere desire to know Him; and this in accordance to being drawn in the light of truth; he will draw them again; for God is truly: merciful, kind, and gracious! The repetition of God’s drawing will generally occur when the individual is alone, and aloof human foolishness and Satan’s guile.

- As God so loved us because of who He is, let us therefore love God for the same reason; for in doing so we will begin the journey upon the path of His righteousness (*if* He wills), which leads inevitably to God being all in all!¹⁴⁴⁶ Within this spiritual relational reality, during the course of an individual’s lifetime, they are nurtured by God to fulfill their purpose according to the kind intention of God’s will. God draws us, finds us, and convicts us according to His good, acceptable, and perfect will; thus there is no place for any form of falsehood, deluding, or delusion; for He is the God who epitomizes truth, light, and love!¹⁴⁴⁷

2. God’s loving embrace to the exclusion of any fleshly and secular motives (carnality); for the saving relationship with God is spiritual, only involving the flesh as a vassal of devotion and appropriate worship for and unto the Lord.¹⁴⁴⁸

¹⁴⁴⁵ John 4:19-24.

¹⁴⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; Ephesians 1:3-23.

¹⁴⁴⁷ John 14:6; 1 John 1:4-7; 1 John 4:7-10; reiteration—John 3:19-21.

¹⁴⁴⁸ John 15:1-27; Romans 12:1-21, specific vs. 1-3; cf. 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

- Because the confession unto salvation is the starting point of the spiritual relational reality which occurs with adoption by God into His family, any and all professions which are secular or fleshly based (carnal) are both denied and useless; thus selfishness creates a barrier between individuals and God which cannot be removed, unless all instigated aspects of “self” first be removed by one’s own determination and choice! It is due the selfish desires of multitudes, which has led to ministers and teachers rendering instruction which is in accordance to the whims of those who intentionally or delusional remain carnal, that has opened the door to Satan’s schemes and guile to become so very profound; thus the foolishness of manmade enticements and religion leads to spiritual destitution and death. It must be understood, the devil does not want individuals to be saved by God; thus he will inflict his deceptions upon anyone who by lack of focus upon the Lord (distracted) is susceptible to the influence!¹⁴⁴⁹ There is absolutely no truth nor excuse in seeking a Savior, with intentional motives to deny the authority of God; yet stubborn pride within narcissism attempts to deny this fact!¹⁴⁵⁰ As can be noted by the Romans 12:3 verse, the second aspect purpose of the measure of faith given to each individual is that we be stayed from “arrogance”; this appropriately, for the Lord God is the Creator and we are of the creation, thus we should never believe (measure of faith) that we are the center of attention or intention! The first aspect of the measure of faith given to each is for the purpose that we may know our Creator, thereby opening the door so as to love, worship, and serve the Lord God of all creation; thus fulfilling the purpose of our mortal and eternal existence. Remembrance of the beauty of fellowship with God experienced within the righteousness of God can be a very strong motive which allows individuals to remain soundly upon the foundation of our faith, which is the Lord! Religious foundations do not accomplish this; for there is no righteousness aloof the spiritual relational reality with God!¹⁴⁵¹ The imperatives of both the drawing of

¹⁴⁴⁹ 1 Timothy 1:3-17; James 4:1-10.

¹⁴⁵⁰ Matthew 23:1-36; Colossians 2:1-23.

God and appropriate worship of God are—disciplined devotional earnestness to deny self (continually), focus upon the Lord (continually), and seek truth with disciplined diligence (continually); for within these imperatives God increases authoritatively and that which is of our carnal nature (earthy and fleshly) decreases, due to intentional devotional humble submission, and the Lord’s ability to work abundantly!¹⁴⁵²

3. God righteously begins a good work in the adopted (saved) individual; bringing forth growth within the individual during times of appropriate reverent submission, and this throughout the entirety of the individuals lifetime.¹⁴⁵³ The imperative factor of the growth which is from God alone is “denial of self”; for spiritual growth which is from God is diametrically opposed to carnal whims, desires, enticements, and influence! The growth which is from God alone emphatically involves discipline; so that the Lord may deal with his legitimate children righteously; for we were created by him and for him!¹⁴⁵⁴
 - The reality of Christianity is—God at work within individuals! God’s work in an individual begins when they are prepared and drawn, then led by the Lord to the aforementioned “righteous confession of faith”; thus the confession being the individual’s answering of God’s drawing and thus submission to follow, begins the good work of God in the individual; thereby setting the foundation (Lord himself) upon which the Lord will build. An existence within which God is not working, is an existence aloof the Lord! The work of God in an individual is emphasized (proven) by increased: faith, discipline, devotion, and integrity (absolute integrity; candor; veracity)!¹⁴⁵⁵ As we are known by our fruits; not our words or delusions; the spiritual relational reality can be witnessed as the adopted (redeemed) individual is changed into the image of Christ; this occurring by the work of God; not as by emotional religiosity! Because the Gospel

¹⁴⁵¹ Romans 10:1-4.

¹⁴⁵² John 3:30-36; 2 Corinthians 13:1-11.

¹⁴⁵³ 1 Corinthians 2:1-3:23; Philipians 1:1-2:18; cf. Proverbs 1:7; 2:1-22; 6:16-19; 9:1-12; 16:1-9.

¹⁴⁵⁴ Colossians 1:9-23, specific vs. 15-17, 21-23; Hebrews 12:1-11, specific v. 7.

¹⁴⁵⁵ Romans 10:17; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8; reiterated - Hebrews 12:1-11.

instructs us to test ourselves to see if we are actually in the faith, the spiritual relational reality can in fact be evinced in witness of an individual's changed nature and demeanor! When the evidence of a person's life shows little or no change regarding being a vassal of God's righteousness, something is terribly wrong! As it is impossible for an individual to remain the same when the Lord God is at work; it is equally impossible for a legitimate child of God to practice sin; attributable to the convictions of the indwelling Holy Spirit!¹⁴⁵⁶ Testing oneself to see *if* we are an actual child of God is exceptionally good advice; lest we regret for all eternity, after being deceived for our entire mortal existence!

- Again, the work of God and the spiritual relational reality begins at the time an individual is drawn and led to righteous confession; *if* the confession is not led by God, foundational to actual knowledge of truth (reality of the Christ; glory of Christ), the distinct possibility exists that the work of God has never begun! When changes from the Lord God do not come forth, even after extended periods of time, the imperative would be for the individual to consider their confession, and the motive and intent of the confession; with consideration of starting over; this time beginning with sincerity of devotion for God and acknowledgement and acceptance of "truth!"¹⁴⁵⁷
- The necessity for strict discipline and immovable adherence to truth being present in an actual legitimate child of God eludes many! As multitudes of individuals have become accustomed to only accepting words which inflates their egotistical flesh, multitudes of humans have come to believe that love is only uplifting when discipline is not involved; this leading to the delusion that only those who speak kind words love. The fact remains however, that the love of God which leads his legitimate children and servants always involves discipline!¹⁴⁵⁸ It is not the person who speaks only desired words who render the

¹⁴⁵⁶ John 3:10-21; Galatians 5:19-6:5; 1 John 1:5-3:18, emphasis.3: 4-18.

¹⁴⁵⁷ 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; cf. 1 John 4:1-11; Luke 6:41-49.

¹⁴⁵⁸ Hebrews 12:5-11.

lovingkindness which is from God, but rather the individuals who speak the truthful words which must be heard (candor; veracity)! Within the delusions of multitudes, the guile of Satan abounds; for as servants of God we speak the disciplined Gospel truth in love, whether or not we are hated for doing so; for vain words which appease bring forth no spiritual edification whatsoever; for the saving relationship is spiritual; not carnal! Who is the loving person, the one who rhetorically pacifies vainly and insincerely, or the one who speaks the necessary truth in love? Knowing the truth about the disciplined love of God is in fact a test which is only passed by the legitimate children of God, or those being drawn by God; this emphasizes the fact that multitudes have no clue whatsoever as to the reality of—“God at work” (actual Christianity)!

- The reality which is witnessed in most congregational settings of recent years, reveals that little emphasis is placed upon the spiritual reality which involves assiduous circumspect and veracity which is emphasized by the Lord; instead that which is emphasized in reality is vain glory, simple intellectual understanding, confabulatory affectation, pedantry; human adulation, blatant individuality, oratory, circumlocution, and ostentation; all of which are abounding with carnal and spiritual insincerity and superficiality, thus circumventing God’s: work, teaching, and masterful leadership; for the sake of human appeasement! The result of this is witnessed by the multitudes who are motivated religiously in accordance to the teachings, leadership, and doctrines of human beings; whereas multitudes are not motivated in accordance to sincere devotion for God, or in accordance to the standard of selflessness set forth by God so as to receive spiritual blessings contingent upon devotional humility!
- What is the reality of “church” (ekklyasia) for mature Christians who are led by the Lord? Each and every individual spends as much devotional time in prayer prior to the gathering as is necessary, so as to achieve actual personal fellowship with God! The individuals then meet together without distraction so as to be masterfully taught by the Lord together as a “church” (unified body of believers)! The Pastor having accomplished

fellowship with the Lord, leads the congregation in accordance to the Lord's instruction unto him; never varying from the Gospel truth which is literally implanted into the spirit of the individuals by the Lord.¹⁴⁵⁹ This is in fact "God at work" in a church setting; when two or more gather together in seeking of the truth, and the Lord joins them! The Gospel truth which is implanted is actually the truthful reality behind the written words; leading to remembrance of Gospel for future proclamation! Although many may say that they are not ministers, the reality exists that all are called to proclaim and defend the hope which is in them!¹⁴⁶⁰ The time for praise music and rejoicing comes after the teaching from the Lord, never prior to the instruction from church leadership which follows God's righteous leadership; as this causes distraction and the loss of actual fellowship with God. After the instruction, great praise and thanksgiving is rendered unto the Lord, in answer to the beauty of the heavenly gift and word implantation which has been bestowed by the Lord; thus the great love of God which abounds is returned unto the Lord with great devotional appreciation! Please read—Hebrews 4:1-6:20.

THE ROOT BASIS OF THE PROBLEM:

"Self" is the root basis of all problems between individuals and God; never can blame fall upon God, or any other source of influence, when by fault of our own in failing to heed and obey the most important commandment to love the Lord first and foremost, blatant love of "self" even unto narcissism occurs! When self-love takes precedence over loving the Lord first and foremost, we idolize "self"! Self is also the root cause of all human insecurities; for our purpose and the necessary answers of our existence are found solely in and through our Creator! Although Satan and his demons will instigate and influence "self" to abound by an emphasized focus upon all that is carnal; this by any form and/or means found upon the earth; the root problem yet remains the decision processes and focus of the individual, for just as a decision for God can be rendered with sincerity within a moment in time, a decision for the grat-

¹⁴⁵⁹ James 1:19-25, specific vs. 21, 22.

¹⁴⁶⁰ Matthew 10:20-40; Romans 5:1-11; 8: 24-28; 1 Peter 3:13-4:6.

ification of “self” can also occupy the exact same moment in time, with the outcome being a denial of God!¹⁴⁶¹ The key to successful spiritual success moment by moment is to take every thought captive to obey the first and foremost commandment—LOVE THE LORD! When denial of “self” is not accomplished by decisive choice, the authoritative nature of human sinfulness leads endeavors; enticed or otherwise; this continuing until a decisive choice is made to—LOVE THE LORD, for reverent sincere love for God is that which motivates to submissively receive God’s masterful leadership upon the narrow path of His righteousness; upon which there is no turning either right or left!¹⁴⁶² By the truth regarding this matter, it is easy to understand the extreme danger which occurs should an individual turn completely around so as to return to compelled gratification of “self!”¹⁴⁶³ When the Lord commanded that we love Him with all of our: heart, soul, mind and strength; this He did knowing with certainty the dangers of our sinful nature, and that He holds the righteous answers and motivations which leads us forward to His upward call which is found in Christ Jesus our Lord!¹⁴⁶⁴ The inevitable reward of following the first and foremost commandment is fulfillment of purpose now and forever! It must be understood that those who seek to save their carnal volitional life shall lose it (Savior only); whereas those who lose their volitional existence unto the righteousness of the Lord as by devotional surrender shall find it (Lord and Savior); this unto fulfillment of purpose according to God’s good, acceptable and perfect will!¹⁴⁶⁵ Is our mortal existence really of such great importance, that the creatures supersede the Creator of the entire universe? Only the blatantly deceived would dare to think so! If following others in seeking what is believed to be “deserved” remains an inappropriate motivation; keep in mind that falling short of God’s glory, we all deserve to be eternally separated from Him! Do we really want what is deserved?¹⁴⁶⁶

The sincerely devotional who have considerable knowledge of the righteous reasons for God’s instructions and commandments, habituate denying “self”; with the culmination of the endeavor becoming an actual

¹⁴⁶¹ Proverbs 3:5, 6.

¹⁴⁶² Proverbs 4:23-27; Matthew 7:13-29.

¹⁴⁶³ Hebrew 6:4-6; cf. 10:23-27.

¹⁴⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40; Philippians 3:1-14.

¹⁴⁶⁵ Matthew 16:21-28.

¹⁴⁶⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

hatred of one's "volitional self" (life devoid the imperative of God's righteousness) for with complete and utter surrender unto the righteousness of God, "self" is crucified and therefore no longer a hindrance within the spiritual relational reality!¹⁴⁶⁷ Please remember—to love anyone or anything more than we love the Lord is to have idols; which is the emphasis of the Luke 14:26, 27 passages! Every day that "self" abounds is yet another day God will not be devotionally loved and followed, for we cannot serve two masters; we will either serve "self" (and mammon) which entice carnal endeavors, or we will serve the Lord who leads spiritually in righteousness unto victory!¹⁴⁶⁸

The sinful and selfish nature of human beings generally entices two things, ease and comfort. These enticements lead to: denial of God and appropriate humble disciplined obedience (which involves much devotional motivation and work), lusts, seeking of riches and sordid gains, lawlessness, idolatry, and religiosity!

1. The Lord God called His legitimate children to: suffering, tribulation, and persecution while in human form; this being completely righteous; for disciplined truth must be both lived and proclaimed! The world being under the instigation and influence of the evil one (Satan) hates both discipline and truth; as children of God we appreciate and proclaim the truth, for not doing so is completely unacceptable!¹⁴⁶⁹
2. The base enthrallment of lusts holds individuals captive to secular / fleshly desires and indulgences; which are very easily influenced by evil!¹⁴⁷⁰ All such indulgences cause enmity between human beings and God; for within is never found actual humble devotional submission unto God, but rather the following of that which is opposed to God!¹⁴⁷¹
 - It is also within carnal lusts, that religiosity has held multitudes captive to the influence and guile of Satan for generations! With understanding that religion is the primary means by which

¹⁴⁶⁷ Luke 14:26, 27.

¹⁴⁶⁸ Romans 8:1-17; 1 Peter 4:1-6.

¹⁴⁶⁹ Mark 4:1-23; John 15:18-16:33; Romans 5:1-11; 8:1-39; 1 Corinthians 2:1-4:5; Hebrews 12:1-11.

¹⁴⁷⁰ Colossians 2:1-23.

¹⁴⁷¹ 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; James 4:1-10; 1 John 2:12-17.

Satan deceives the whole world; with the exception of the remnant who truly and devotionally love God; it is plainly understandable that the flesh under the enticements of evil seeks involvement as by emotional mimic into the spiritual relational reality with God which is true and righteous. This reality is easily witnessed by the repeated emotional ups and downs within religious endeavors, and the necessity for “revival” on frequent occasions. The spiritual reality of a true relationship with God has no need of such things, for the spiritual relational reality is led by God to increased edification by His indwelling; this with the exception of times when we fall away due to inappropriate carnal enticements, when failing to focus upon the author and perfecter of our faith (Jesus)! Although God will never leave nor forsake His legitimate children; when we grieve Him (Holy Spirit), our only blessing from Him will be chastisement, which will continue until we have repented (turned back) away from the inappropriate path we have taken! To the devotionally dedicated of the Lord, the only necessary chastisement from God is the withdrawing of “fellowship”; for those accustomed to intimate fellowship with God, become extremely lonely and discouraged without it!

- The Levitical Law being the only “religion” as designated by God is not included in the aforementioned. The Levitical Law had three basic premises: pointing directly to the blessing of God incarnate (the Messiah), to emphasize the exact holiness and precision of God, to emphasize the necessity of supporting the true servants of the Lord who proclaim the truth! With acceptance of Jesus in full (Lord; King; Messiah), there is no need for the tutorial of the Levitical Law; for we are henceforth taught and led by the Lord God of all creation!¹⁴⁷² The tutorial was fully realized with the coming of the Messiah (Christ)!¹⁴⁷³
3. Focus upon the flesh and the world leads to denial of the imperative regarding devotional righteous focus upon the Lord; who is the author and perfecter of faith!

¹⁴⁷² 1 John 2:27.

¹⁴⁷³ Galatians 2:1-4:11; information—John 1:41.

- Within this again, fleshly indulgence (carnal lusts and desires) holds importance within those who refuse the imperative! The certainty of our existence now and forever is found within the faithfulness of God; His good, acceptable and perfect will; and the kind intention of His will.
- The reality of failure to focus is realized by the seeking of riches and sordid gains, human idolatry, and lawlessness; which is sin! Those who remain unable to realize the error of their ways, do so because the veil which clouds righteous judgment and the ability to see clearly has not been lifted, for the veil is lifted when within the spiritual relational reality with Jesus the Lord!¹⁴⁷⁴ Inappropriate seeking, human idolatry, and lawlessness come to fruition when the laws of good and evil implanted within the hearts of human beings by the Lord are denied by ineffectiveness; this is an area of which evil influence becomes very much involved! Demons entice adherence to the flesh; for victory is by faith, thus spiritual! Without the spiritual reality and growth which is from God alone, our carnal existence continues within the guile of deluding speculation, assumption and conjecture!¹⁴⁷⁵

CONTEMPLATION NOTES:

1. A fact which may assist understanding as to the aforementioned; the kind intention of God's will toward believers is our being trained spiritually, not only for our mortal existence so as to gain and maintain the ability to appraise (walk by faith), but also for His righteous training in preparation for eternity!¹⁴⁷⁶ Truly, the saving relationship with God is a spiritual relational reality; unfortunately, this truth has rarely been taught throughout the history of the church since the fourth century, as those not appropriately trained and/or called of God, have taught only concepts foundational to intellectual assumptive prowess, and carnal ritualistic religion!

¹⁴⁷⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:12-18; Ephesians 4:1-32; Colossians 3:5; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12; 1 Timothy 6:3-19; 1 John 3:4-18.

¹⁴⁷⁵ 1 John 5:1-21; cf. James 1:7, 8, 22-24.

¹⁴⁷⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; reiteration—Ephesians 1:3-14.

2. Referencing Matthew 7:13-27, with emphasis upon vs. 21-23, let us notice that the individuals of mention not only have assumption of knowing God, but also delusion of serving Him.
- *If* in fact those of mention were actually performing miracles (signs and wonders); who was empowering them, if they were never known by God? The answer is simple—the Great Deceiver (Satan); for he has, is, and will continue to use counterfeit signs (*semeiois*) and wonders (*teras*) so as to deceive multitudes! Although God empowered His true servants (Apostles) with the ability to perform signs and wonders for the sake of the Jews, and this only until no further distinction between Jew and Gentile; the realities of God's miracles being performed were signs (*saymaion*) and wonders (*teras*). Please note the distinct difference between the Greek words parenthetically listed, for the former are false whereas the latter are true in regard to righteousness. When Israel was set aside (temporarily), God removed the reality of His miracles performed by human beings, for the miracles of God through His Apostles were for the sake of the Jews; and to authenticate the Apostle Paul's ministry (2 Corinthians 12:12); to accommodate the Israelites (and proselytes) transition from physical realm religion (Levitical Law), to the spiritual relational reality which is foundational to the sacrifice of Christ upon the cross (saved by grace through faith).¹⁴⁷⁷
 - Just because someone desires Jesus to be their Savior, *if* the motive is selfish in nature or foundational to ulterior motives, other than to actually know and love the Lord God opening the way for desired sincere devotion, and hopefully humility and submission; the potential for a relationship with God to be one of delusion, assumption, conjecture, or religious concept remains a very distinct possibility! God draws us, adopts us, redeems us, and guides us according to the kind intention of His will, which is in accordance to His good, acceptable and

¹⁴⁷⁷ Galatians 3:1-29, specific vs. 12-29; Matthew 10:1-6; 15:24; cf. Mark 13:9-31; 16:15-18; John 12:35-50; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-10.

perfect will; never so that chosen carnality may abound! How can anyone ever truly put God first and foremost, when the initial attempt of acceptance was solely foundational to selfish motives? How is it possible to accept the sacrifice and atonement of the Christ, without accepting the: person, authority, example, and embrace of the Christ? Please contemplate these statements carefully; for any path taken in attempts to know God which are aloof the appropriate narrow path of God's intended righteousness, is in fact upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction; for no matter what distance is traveled upon the wrong path of initial choice, the righteous destination will never be reached! Who's intentions will we follow; the Lord God whose attributes include: holiness, righteousness, faithfulness, and justice; or the devil whose attributes include: guile, hatred, deception, pride, and arrogance? The beginning point and path we choose will dictate the destination we arrive at; the Lord's kingdom abounding with: peace, joy, love, understanding, and the immensity of God's glory, or the lake which burns with fire and brimstone which abounds with: torment, suffering, agony, regret, and disgust; both are for eternity!¹⁴⁷⁸ Please read—Psalm 136:1-26; Proverbs 4:23-27; Isaiah 9:1-7.

3. If a confession unto supposed salvation is made from a foundation of chosen carnality (that which is secular and fleshly; not spiritual), then the confession will be falsely based in ignorance; for there is no intention to submit the authority of Christ Jesus! When the Lord God of all creation draws an individual unto the blessing of adoption into His family, the relationship for which the individual is being drawn is spiritual! Within religiosity, the flesh is both enticed and motivated to be involved in decision making processes; for both the devil and the flesh seek to lead with precedence. When the Lord is drawing an individual, He divinely enlightens the individual regarding the truth of the situation to be all about Him; while emphasizing His love for and within the individual. Within this reality, a staunch confession unto actual salvation can be made;

¹⁴⁷⁸ Matthew 22:2-14.

appropriate to God's righteousness, which begins the spiritual relational reality which has as its foundation—"the Lord"¹⁴⁷⁹

When the reality of the actual relationship has not begun, due to carnal or unrighteous confessions of faith, then the supposed relationship is founded upon ignorance; which by further enticements from the demonic realm upon the flesh, will continue without actual knowledge as the individual remains delusional to believe a lie as being foundational to truth; although not! If the individual never realizes the error of their ways, they will continue attempts to know God as by carnal religiosity; this never going beyond assumption and conjecture of God in accordance to fleshly emotions and indulgences!

There are multitudes who supposedly worship God with but assumption of the spiritual realm, where the actual spiritual relational reality occurs! When worship continues foundational to ignorance, then it is the devil who is worshipped; for God cannot be worshipped within delusional ignorance! When Satan would settle for nothing less than being liken the "Most High," his desire was to be worshipped; this occurring in reality when multitudes worship God in ignorance!¹⁴⁸⁰ Because this is true, the wonderful work of God will never start until individuals realize they have fallen prey to deception; and earnestly turn away from it!

The spiritual relational reality necessary for salvation is foundational to knowledge of the truth; the confession unto salvation is also foundational to knowledge of the truth! Anyone who does not realize this is without knowledge of the truth, which is imperative to know Christ Jesus!¹⁴⁸¹ The only thing which displaces ignorance is knowledge; imperative knowledge is from God!

As all human beings (those created in God's image spiritually) are saved by the grace of God, there is always a possibility that individuals without: knowledge of the truth, discipline, integrity, the manifest righteousness of God, and selflessness (thus yet full of "self") may be saved; yet this is not probable nor Biblical! When "God at work" cannot be witnessed by spiritual growth which is

¹⁴⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:1-17.

¹⁴⁸⁰ Isaiah 14:12-14.

¹⁴⁸¹ John 14:6-21.

from Him alone; this differentiated from delusion and/or fantasy regarding the matter; the inevitable reality of an eternity of torment is more feasible than the saving relational reality! Those who are led by God are His legitimate children; no exceptions!¹⁴⁸² Once again, testing oneself to see if we are actually proven legitimate children of God is extremely sound advice; for eternity is a very long time to regret one's cowardice to accept the truth about them!

RELATIONAL TRUTH—AS SIMPLE AS IT GETS

There is no such thing as a superficial and vain relationship with God; in reality! The world is abounding with superficiality, selfishness, carnal intentions and worship; multitudes are guilty of this, including many believers! In order to have a relationship with God which is righteous, and according to His preparation, drawing, and adoption; devotion leading to increased loyalty, humility, and submission is that which proves "God's work" in individuals within the spiritual relational reality which redeems us! Without reception to God's masterful righteous leadership there is no redemption; for the narrow path of God's righteousness upon which few journey, is the path of spiritual growth and salvation!¹⁴⁸³

Human beings, who refuse God's work of righteousness, seek a fantasy conjunctive relationship which in reality remains superficial and vain (delusive; of fantasy); which is in essence the epitome of blatant self-centeredness and selfishness (love of self; narcissism)!¹⁴⁸⁴ This is easily proven as true legitimate children of God study the Gospel so as to handle it accurately; this within devotional dedication to abide in the Word (Lord and Gospel); thereby submitting unto God as His learned pupil (Disciple), within which comes spiritual growth, and implantation of the Gospel truth (Gospel reality), which is from God alone!¹⁴⁸⁵ Without God's anointing (which of course is from God alone) and work, superficiality and vanity continues, even unto exuberance within demonic influence upon the flesh; this causing continuation of living for the flesh; not for God!¹⁴⁸⁶ The reality of this is easily witnessed by the

¹⁴⁸² Romans 8:14.

¹⁴⁸³ Romans 8:1-17, specific vs. 14, 15; cf. Matthew 7:13-27, specific vs. 13-20.

¹⁴⁸⁴ 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

¹⁴⁸⁵ 2 Timothy 2:15, cf. 3:16, 17; John 8:31, 32, 36; 15:1-11; James 1:21; 1 John 2:27.

¹⁴⁸⁶ reiterated—Romans 8:5-8.

plethora of individuals who speak of God vainly, i.e. “Oh my God,” with the laziness within self-centeredness being proven by abbreviation of the vanity for the sake of ease (OMG)! Two more which have been heard many times by professing believers which are not only vain but also slanderous by usage, are —— Christ, and —— damn (I cannot spell them out; for by the usage they absolutely disrespect the Lord). Legitimate children and disciples of God never speak of the Lord vainly, for this action shows no respect or reverence for the reality of God whatsoever; and in reality is sin foundational to disobedience!¹⁴⁸⁷

When never having, even for a moment in time, humbly submitted unto God’s righteousness for the process by God which: prepares, adopts, redeems, leads, and teaches; multitudes have maintained a vain and foolish superficial (bogus) emotional relationship (supposedly with God), from which comes no reality of salvation or God’s masterful leadership, for these are received spiritually, not carnally!¹⁴⁸⁸ Within blatant self-centered foolishness, multitudes want God to be their Savior, yet they do not actually want the reality of Jesus (reality of the Christ, glory of Christ; i.e. Lord of all)!¹⁴⁸⁹ Without “God at work” all that occurs is personal deluded religious endeavors, which never accomplishes the spiritual reality necessary in order to be saved! There is no salvation devoid the reality of God; no exceptions! Aloof the spiritual relational reality, God’s anointing and leadership never occurs unto fulfillment of purpose in the Lord; thus vanity of the flesh denies the reality of God, and thus the imperative of being led upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness!¹⁴⁹⁰ Without the protection by the Lord, contingent upon His faithfulness, upon the narrow path of His righteousness, there is no reality of redemption; for a delusive lifelong endeavor upon the broad path of spiritual destruction, leads only to death in one’s sins, as the broad path of spiritual destruction leads away from God, and therefore away from the narrow path of righteous truth, reality, and salvation!

Those who truly and devotionally love the Lord follow the Lord upon the narrow path of His righteousness; for God set the standards by which we must follow, and in love for Him we follow without: compromise, variation, or excuse (absolute appropriate: loyalty, dedication,

¹⁴⁸⁷ Exodus 20:7; Philippians 2:12, 13.

¹⁴⁸⁸ John 6:44, 45.

¹⁴⁸⁹ Acts 10:36, 37; Romans 10:8-13.

¹⁴⁹⁰ Matthew 7:13-27, emphasis vs. 13, 14.

devotion and obedience)! There is a righteousness within the spiritual relational reality, which is the righteousness of God; which is realized only upon the narrow path, for those who devotionally and humbly submit unto God's masterful leadership therefore never seek to establish righteousness of "self"; for we exist within the righteousness of God, or we do not, for there is no reality of having it both ways (double-mindedness)!¹⁴⁹¹ The way is simple, selflessly and devotionally submit unto the good, acceptable and perfect will of God in accordance to seeking knowledge of the truth, or perish in one's sins! Without complete denial of "self" even within the necessary moment when drawn by God, no spiritual reality will begin or continue; for only the Lord can take us beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality, and thereby begin the good work which He is faithful to complete!¹⁴⁹²

The Lord God of all creation knows every individual precisely, even to the core of motive and intent! The Lord knew who would humbly and devotionally submit to follow Him in the light of truth, and who would not because of "self-centeredness" and blatant carnal vanity; even before He made the earth habitable! Those who God recognized as seeking righteous purpose within the spiritual relational reality (actual devotional relationship with God in the light of absolute truth), are the "remnant" which will be: prepared, adopted, redeemed, and led forth unto eternal spiritual completion; all others who were witnessed (prior to the foundation of the world) to live only for "self" and the ways of the world, are not the "remnant," (few) within whom the good work of God is never allowed to begin or continue! If the good (and righteous) work of God is never allowed to begin, it most certainly cannot continue unto eternal fruition in righteousness!

The reality is simple, the Lord God is astounding righteous and holy, and greater than all that He has created! Yes, God is merciful and gracious, which is why according to His faithfulness He will begin and continue His good work within individuals who He knew would devotionally love Him, while yet waiting patiently for those who He knows will come to this imperative.¹⁴⁹³ God's patience is divine, as also are all aspects of His reality; thus all fault and culpability of wrongdoing (un-

¹⁴⁹¹ Romans 10:1-4; James 1:7-12; 4:3-10; cf. Psalm 119:113, 114.

¹⁴⁹² Philippians 1:6.

¹⁴⁹³ Romans 9:15, 16.

righteousness) fall upon us, for within our selfish and unrighteous ways of existence by personal choice (obeying and following the sinful nature), we are the ones who deny the reality of God, within our evasion of knowledge of the truth necessary in order to be saved and led forth!¹⁴⁹⁴ Although God can never actually be blamed for our blatant foolishness, disobedience and carnality (vanity); multitudes throughout the history of humankind will inevitably seek to blame God, for within the insecurities of our flesh we will habitually refuse to examine and test ourselves and thereby realize and acknowledge the truth that—we are the ones at fault (culpability)!¹⁴⁹⁵ Please submit unto the Lord God by acceptance of the reality of Jesus (glory of Christ; Lord, Savior, King); for nothing of the flesh can lead unto the reality of God, as the spiritual relational reality is the good work of God which can never be emulated or mimicked! Please allow the Lord to lead you forth hence, for His is the masterful righteous leadership of which all have necessity; in the spiritual relational reality and light of truth, without exception!¹⁴⁹⁶ The fact remains that when God is allowed to begin a “good” work in individuals, according to Biblical standards of righteousness (Jesus as Lord); the individuals can then be taken into the spiritual reality by the grace abounding good work of God; which takes them beyond the wretchedness and insecurities of the flesh, unto the righteousness and eternal security found solely within the redeeming relationship! Why do the many fail terribly regarding actual spirituality; because they began selfishly and continued selfishly within un-righteousness! Please choose God through seeking of the truth; for no other avenue can possibly bring forth spiritual success unto righteous eternal fruition!

RENDERING THE TRUTH IN LOVE IS MANY TIMES
DIFFICULT, AS THE TRUTH IS MANY TIMES NOT
RECEIVED WELL; YET RENDERING THE TRUTH IN
LOVE IS NEVER BURDENSOME, FOR THE LOVE OF
GOD SHINES THE LIGHT OF TRUTH AND REALITY
WITHIN WHICH WE MUST EXIST; LEST WE
REMAIN DEFEATED!¹⁴⁹⁷

¹⁴⁹⁴ 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

¹⁴⁹⁵ Ecclesiastes 12:1-14, specific—vs. 8-14.

¹⁴⁹⁶ 1 John 1:1-10.

¹⁴⁹⁷ Romans 8:1-17; 2 Timothy 2:24-3:7; 2 Thessalonians 2:8-12.

III) MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION

Sin caused an estrangement (separation) between humankind and God. The sinfulness of humankind of which pride is at the forefront, brought forth an enmity between mankind and God which the Lord seeks to eliminate by His abounding lovingkindness and grace. The very essence of Biblical reconciliation signifies the removal of the enmity; thus God seeks that humankind would once again draw near to Him from the distancing which sin has caused. This “drawing near from afar” is accomplished by acceptance of Christ’s authority, and atonement for our sins, and sincere faith that God raised Jesus from the dead; within this the Law has been established.¹⁴⁹⁸ The reconciliation is therefore accomplished in full by the Lord, upon an individual’s sincere acceptance of salvation by grace through faith, in accordance to the Biblical righteous confession of faith (Jesus as Lord). This is a free gift, which can never be earned and is never warranted; thus it is given by God’s grace and gratefully accepted by reverent faith and acquiescence (to agree sometimes reluctantly).

All within the Body of Christ having a ministry of reconciliation is a fact which eludes many pastors, ministers, teachers and denominations; when the doctrines of humankind has taken precedence over Biblical righteous truth. Much of this is derived from the fact that most denominations have never accurately aligned (cut out straight) the Gospel truth; this because the pride of humankind has led to failures in differentiating between Biblical customs of antiquity and moral standard, as well as the destination of the writings (hermeneutic). The nation of Israel was chosen by the Lord as a people who were to be set apart from others so as to worship and serve the one true God. This choice was solely by the lovingkindness and grace of God, and was never contingent upon anything that the Israelites themselves had ever done!¹⁴⁹⁹ Failing to realize this, orthodox Jews yet seek to adhere to the Mosaic and Levitical Law, even though in doing so they deny the Lord Jesus Christ who is the Messiah of prophetic promise. If anyone should have been able to identify the Messiah (Christ) it was the Jews, for they had received specific prophesy as to His coming for generations; which occurred exactly as prophesied.

¹⁴⁹⁸ Galatians 3:1-29, emphasis vs. 22-27; cf. Romans 3:21-31, specific vs. 29-31.

¹⁴⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 7:1-11, specific vs. 6-8.

Although there is no distinction between the Jews and all others (Gentiles) during this time period (dispensation) of grace, the fact remains that prior to this time period and during the millennial reign of Christ, the Jews were and will once again be set apart by the Lord according to His “*hesed*” faithfulness. This is mentioned to demonstrate how far too many congregations yet fail to distinguish what was spoken to the Jews and what is pertinent to all of us during this dispensation of grace.¹⁵⁰⁰ The failure of the Body of Christ (church) to distinguish these differences, has led to divisions and inappropriate teachings. Far too many denominations attempt to claim the promises and blessings which the Lord has for Israel alone, while also attempting to revive aspects of the Levitical Law (such as the tithe)¹⁵⁰¹ and Jewish custom (water baptism—Jewish sign of the new covenant)¹⁵⁰² upon the Body of Christ; this of course being inappropriate. The Gospel never makes sense without allegory unless these distinctions are made; allegory from the time of Jesus ascension being eliminated.¹⁵⁰³

When the simple fact of ours being a MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION is forgotten, denied or rejected, then many un-righteous forms of ministry are proclaimed as being necessary. Examples are: ministries which attempt to bring forth conviction (primarily calling non-believers to repent from sin), thereby attempting to do the work of the Holy Spirit;¹⁵⁰⁴ healing ministries which deny the Gospel for the sake of pleasing humankind (explained as follows in description of dispensations); promises, emphases, and standards to and for Israel alone are attributed to the Body of Christ (including signs and wonders), leading believers to covet the blessings for Israel;¹⁵⁰⁵ traditions are emphasized as precedent over Scripture truth and a personal relationship with God;¹⁵⁰⁶ “self,” ease, comfort, prestige and riches take precedence over proclaiming the Gospel truth.¹⁵⁰⁷ Divisions replace unity, as far too many are confused regarding Christian ministry, thus

¹⁵⁰⁰ Romans 3:21-29; 10:11-13; 11: 13, 14; Acts 13:46-48; cf. Matthew 10:1-6; 15:22-24, specific v. 24.

¹⁵⁰¹ Numbers 18:20-28; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15, emphasis vs. 7-9; cf. Hosea 10:12.

¹⁵⁰² Matthew 3:11; 10:1-6; 15:24; Acts 2:38; 10:46-48; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:14-17; Acts 13:45-49; Ephesians 4:4-6.

¹⁵⁰³ John 16:25-33, specific vs. 25-28.

¹⁵⁰⁴ John 16:8-11.

¹⁵⁰⁵ Matthew 12:39, 40; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31, emphasis vs. 22-24.

¹⁵⁰⁶ Galatians 4:1-11, specific vs. 9-11; cf. Matthew 15:3-9; Colossians 2:1-10, specific v. 8.

¹⁵⁰⁷ 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

leading to the seeking of religion rather than a relationship with the Lord—Christ Jesus. Please remember—manmade religion (doctrines of demons) will save no one!¹⁵⁰⁸

There are many distinct differences between the dispensation of the Law and this time period of grace demonstrated in the Gospel! One of these distinctions is reconciliation, which is presented predominantly in Paul's epistles; upon the revelation of the mystery.¹⁵⁰⁹ Nowhere within Paul's writing about reconciliation, does he mention that God had a change of attitude regarding humankind! God has never been mad at us, for He created us in His own image (spiritually). The estrangement (enmity) occurred by our rebellious indifference toward God; therefore in His lovingkindness and grace, God sent His Son to eliminate this problem. Once again God's grace is wondrously sufficient!¹⁵¹⁰

Within the MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION to which actual Christians have been commissioned, is a mandate that we are not to have intended hostility toward anyone! The Lord in reconciling humankind back unto Himself also taught us to put a stop to any and all enmity which may exist between us and others. This is the reason why Christians are never to: maintain anger and un-forgiveness toward others; live for "self" alone; or participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness. If we as Christians (those who are Christ-like) would maintain our focus upon the One whom we claim to know, then the fruits of His Spirit would be more easily manifested and fulfilled within us. Unlike many who believe that we can in some way emulate the righteousness of God, the truth remains that the righteousness is His; we through devotional submission and obedience become instruments of it. The foolishness of seeking victory as believers through our own merits and strength is that which has led to denominational religion and many downfalls. It is by God's nurturing, standards of reconciliation, strength and grace, that we succeed in purpose of life! The battle we face within the simplicity of this fact remains of necessity to deny un-godly behavior, distractions and discouragement; this we do because we love our Lord! Our success begins and ends with obedience to the two New Testament commandments; for Christian obedient submission is based in love!¹⁵¹¹

¹⁵⁰⁸ Acts 4:12; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Jude 1:1-25.

¹⁵⁰⁹ Ephesians 2:11-22; Colossians 1:15-23; specific—Romans 5:11; 11:15; 2 Corinthians 5:18-21.

¹⁵¹⁰ Romans 5:12-21; 2 Corinthians 12:9.

MINISTRY OF RECONCILIATION SUMMATION

1. God is not mad at humankind.
2. God seeks all to come near from afar.
3. God seeks that those who claim to know and love Him, love all others.
4. We are to proclaim God's love to others, as well as His wonderful free gift of salvation by grace through faith; this with imperative instruction regarding "knowledge" of the Christ.
5. We are to defend the hope of salvation which is in us; not wasting time defending human doctrine, religious traditions, or religion itself.
6. We are to assist others in knowledge of the Scriptures, *if* they have the desire to learn.
7. We are never to beat folks over the head with the love story of God for humanity, which is the Gospel of peace. Hearts are never open to accept the Gospel, unless God is present to open the calloused heart!
8. We are not to deceive others into believing the doctrine of demons (manmade doctrinal religion) which has led to divisions within the Body of Christ; for we are all supposed to be one in Christ Jesus our Lord.¹⁵¹²
9. We are not to covet the blessings of Israel; for they are God's chosen people and we (Gentiles) are not. Are not His blessings upon us sufficient?
10. We are not to place distinctions where there are none; yet we are to understand the distinctions which are presented in the Gospel. The portion which follows should help in this endeavor.

¹⁵¹¹ Matthew 22:36-40; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

¹⁵¹² 1 Timothy 4:1-11; cf. Ephesians 4:4-6.

11. We are to submit to God so that His love as well as our own may go forth unto others. Within this endeavor we must come out from the midst of secular society and be separate; lest the distinction between us and them be clouded by obscurity.
12. We are to turn to, trust in, love foremost, and serve Christ Jesus our Lord. This is never accomplished by seeking righteousness of our own nor seeking to emulate His, but rather by walking within the righteousness of God as by His strength and leadership.
13. We must place our human pride (“self”) upon the cross where it belongs (crucified); this we do by devotionally being appreciative of God’s grace!

Note: We speak the necessary truth of reconciliation in love. Should the conversation lean toward more serious matters which involve stern disciplined truth; we speak the necessary truth in love, while never attempting to: convince, convict, or place someone under compulsion.

TRANSITION PERIODS: DISPENSATIONS / EPOCHS

In this section we will go back to the beginning. From this point (beginning), we will look at the instructions and accountability which was set forth by God—pointing directly to the Lord Jesus Christ. Technical reference will not come forth per se, yet attempts will be made to demonstrate how the Lord allowed us every avenue of reason humanly possible, to realize our shortcomings, frailty and inability. If and when we understand how weak we truly are, then we will submit to Him (hopefully), thereby becoming receptive to the love and cleansing our Lord seeks to freely give us.

The following is a basic explanation as to the seven dispensations which have, are, and will be in effect according to God’s immense love for all humanity. The seventh dispensation is a time when Jesus will draw His chosen people (the Jews) back unto Himself.

Note: God’s love for all races and creeds is the same. The Israelites were designated as the chosen of God by grace; this solely by the volition of God. It would be inappropriate for anyone to think they are loved more by God than someone else; for God’s love is everlasting, abounding and unconditional. It is hoped that evidence of God’s immense love

and grace will be witnessed in the following account. Many have said that there is no such thing as dispensations in the Gospel; yet if this were true, the Gospel would not contain the word “epoch” which is the beginning point of a dispensation.¹⁵¹³

Dispensation of Innocence

- Parties of the dispensation “Adam and Eve.”
- The test—fill and subdue;¹⁵¹⁴ do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁵¹⁵
- Failure—ate from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.¹⁵¹⁶
- Judgment by God—cast out of the Garden of Eden; pain in childbirth; toil in working the soil; death.¹⁵¹⁷

This dispensation was the epitome of simple, for the decision was but—one. The Lord walked with His creation and blessed Adam and Eve with every convenience and comfort for a wonderful, fruitful and abundant life. The Lord had put forth but one rule—“do not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.” This was yet too much to ask in the eyes of humankind (Adam and Eve), for humankind is envious of what we do not have, thereby we generally seek more when we fail to be content with our current blessings.

The Lord knows exactly how we are, for He created us! In being created in God’s image—please understand that God is spirit, therefore our creation in His image is a spiritual image (Imago Dei); not a physical one. The Lord stated that death would be the result of disobedience, yet Satan caused Eve to doubt what God had said; this being a strategy he (Satan) yet uses with much success even to this day. Adam not being deceived, or doubtful regarding the words by the Lord sinned willfully; which is why our sinful nature comes through our biological father, not our mother.¹⁵¹⁸ Today as throughout history, men seek to vary (compromise) from what God has instructed, for we in our prideful arrogance

¹⁵¹³ Acts 1:6-11; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

¹⁵¹⁴ Genesis 1:28.

¹⁵¹⁵ Genesis 2:15-17.

¹⁵¹⁶ Genesis 3:9-12.

¹⁵¹⁷ Genesis 3:16-19.

¹⁵¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Corinthians 11:3; 1 Timothy 2:14.

tend to believe our human reason and excuses can detract from devotional obedience. Please remember, at this point man had but one decision to make—to eat a specific (disobedience), or not (obedience).

Dispensation of Conscience

- Parties of the dispensation—“humankind.”
- The test—obey convictions from within (conscience).
- Failure—extreme sinfulness and self-centeredness; wickedness in accordance to evil.
- Judgment—catastrophic flood (deluge).

The progeny of Adam and Eve were to live their lives according to conscience. This is the basis of following God’s laws of morality which have been written upon the hearts of all human beings.¹⁵¹⁹ Humankind’s failure in this regard was to such a degree that wickedness became the prevalent factor throughout the world; this with the exception of one man—Noah.¹⁵²⁰

Throughout this section we will find the blessings of God upon those who are obedient; this derived from their devotion unto God. Just as Noah and seven others were delivered from destruction although all others were destroyed, so has it always been that those who truly love God will be delivered.¹⁵²¹ During the time Noah was building the Ark, the Spirit of the Lord was speaking through Noah in proclaiming the necessity of seeking God to avoid death.¹⁵²² Proclaiming the ways of the Lord although surrounded by wickedness and adversity, as did Noah in his time, is derived from the Holy Spirit’s fruits of love within us.

Let us imagine for a moment the patience of God. All parents have had the discomfort of telling their child to stop doing something; having the child disobey and do exactly the opposite. Imagine now, how we as adults yet disobey our heavenly Father; how many times we have done the exact opposite of what He commanded, and how He yet awaits us to stop and turn back (repent). A little child does not have reason and logic as do adults, so when they disobey immaturity is a factor. As adults—what is our excuse? “Faith” is to face toward God, whereas

¹⁵¹⁹ Romans 2:9-16.

¹⁵²⁰ Genesis 6:5-13.

¹⁵²¹ Genesis 8:15-19; cf. John 3:16-21; 1 Peter 3:18-22; 2 Peter 2:4-9.

¹⁵²² cf. Hebrews 11:7; cf. Matthew 24:38, 39.

“sight” is to face away from God; therefore let us consider walking by faith with God as the focal point of our attention, rather than by sight with the ways of the world distracting us! This was in essence the task of this “Dispensation of Conscience,” as humankind could either focus on doing the right thing by moral stature; or not.

Dispensation of Human Government

- Parties of the dispensation—humankind.
- The test—fill and subdue.¹⁵²³ (Sound familiar?)
- Failure—trusting in self; gathering at Babel.
- Judgment—confusion of languages.

The “dispensation of human government” was a time of considerable importance, for the Lord is allowing man the ability to trust in themselves or in Him; thereby coming to one’s own conclusions. The importance of this—is that man being almost completely destroyed (prior; minus eight), should realize how trusting in God brings forth deliverance and blessing, while trusting in one’s own abilities and intellect brings forth trouble and destruction. Because the love of God far surpasses our repeated intentional wrongdoing (un-righteousness), He made a covenant to never again destroy every living creature of all flesh by water (deluge); even though destruction may be warranted.¹⁵²⁴ Please remember—animals are forced to pay the consequences of human sin; although they are innocent!

Now this “dispensation of human government” comes with a few stipulations which involve specifics of morality which are to be followed.¹⁵²⁵ Please consider that when God tells us something, it is not a request; when we attempt to make it such, we in fact believe ourselves to be smarter than God!¹⁵²⁶ Comparing this with a child’s sassy talking back to a parent; notice a correlation?

Unlike previously during the “dispensation of conscience” when mankind became purely wicked by following the evil intents which arose from demonically influenced self-centered desires, now the people are gathering together for accomplishments of human volition;

¹⁵²³ Genesis 9:1, 2.

¹⁵²⁴ Genesis 9:11-17; cf. Romans 3:21-26, emphasis v. 23.

¹⁵²⁵ Genesis 9:3-7.

¹⁵²⁶ cf. 1 Corinthians 1:25-29.

thus diminished lustful wickedness, with an increase of pride.¹⁵²⁷ The people were told to be fruitful and multiply throughout the earth, yet failed to do so as they gathered together at one central location (Babel). The instruction was simple—“go therefore”; yet once again man believes themselves to be superior to God in intellect, and do the opposite of that instructed. I state “man” by reference that the “men” are to lead their families in obedience to God, therefore the “men” are responsible to follow instructions and thereby lead their families by example.

God is always merciful and abounding in grace! The people had congregated when they were supposed to have gone out into the farthest reaches of the world. God blessed mankind by confusing the one language into many, thereby causing the separation into different directions which was instructed. Is it not wonderful how God can put us back on track, when we intentionally choose to go the wrong way, or remain still when told to move!¹⁵²⁸ He gives us wonderful instruction which is for our betterment and the betterment of future generations (many times), and protects us from the harm of our disobedience; placing us back on track time and time again. Praise God for His wonderful grace!

Please consider—if humankind had been allowed to remain at Babel, and grown outward from the one central location yet trusting in themselves, humankind would have inevitably failed to trust in God. With generation after generation trusting in themselves, pride would have prevailed in blinding humankind to the “reality of God.” Being blinded within themselves, parents would have taught their children to trust in themselves as they (the parents) had, and thereby the children would remain blinded by stubborn adolescent pride also. With pride breeding pride continuing for generations, what would have become of the potential for humankind to humbly submit unto God by faith so as to receive salvation?

Dispensation of Promise

- Parties of the dispensation—Abraham and his descendants of the promise.¹⁵²⁹
- The test—dwell in Canaan (the land shown you); do not go to Egypt.¹⁵³⁰

¹⁵²⁷ Genesis 11:1-9.

¹⁵²⁸ cf. Jonah 1:3-17.

¹⁵²⁹ Genesis 12:1-5; cf. Galatians 3:12-29.

¹⁵³⁰ Genesis 26:1-6.

- Failure—moved to Egypt.¹⁵³¹
- Judgment—400 years of slavery.

Once again the exact opposite of that instructed by God, becomes the end result of man's disobedience. Abram had been instructed to sojourn in the land of Canaan and stay clear of Egypt, yet enacted plans of his own which led to 400 years of bondage. Due to a deception on the part of Abram (Abraham) upon entering Egypt; lands were given him in the area which allowed roots to form where no roots were to be planted (established). Do you suppose God realizes things which we do not, and by His lovingkindness instructs us in the ways we are to go; this to stay us from going astray and from harm?¹⁵³²

With acts of disobedience being the factor of defeat yet once again, the Lord places His grace in front so as to guide and deliver His chosen. The Lord had allowed man: the blessing of one choice (innocence), the ability to listen to one's heart (conscience), the ability to form governmental interaction (human government), the ability to live in an area blessed and protected according to God's faithfulness (promise); yet humankind (in general) have goofed it four out of four times!

Dispensation of the Law

- Parties of the dispensation—"Israel."¹⁵³³
- The test—obey God fully.¹⁵³⁴
- Failure—rejection of Messiah's Kingdom; seeking righteousness within "self."¹⁵³⁵
- Judgment—set aside (temporarily).¹⁵³⁶

Now the Lord in His wonderful love puts forth a new dispensation with many specific guidelines; this to demonstrate that man's greatest efforts can neither save, nor function completely within the realm of obedience. Mankind had been given several opportunities to be obedient in simple ways, yet now matters are much more complicated as by sophistication.

¹⁵³¹ Genesis 12:7-10.

¹⁵³² Proverbs 3:5, 6; 4:23-27; 16:9; Psalms 4:1-8; 37:23, 24.

¹⁵³³ Books of Exodus; Leviticus; Deuteronomy.

¹⁵³⁴ Deuteronomy 7:1-26.

¹⁵³⁵ cf. Romans 9:30-10:4.

¹⁵³⁶ Acts 13:45-48; 18:5, 6; 22:17-22; 28:23-29; Romans 11:1-32.

Man had repeatedly thought that he was smarter than God by choosing his (their) own path, now the Lord will bless mankind (as by Israel) to our necessity in life being found in Him (Jesus). God gave the Law so as to point out sin, this then rendering humankind's necessity to be—God's grace. Israel had knowledge of sin via the Law, and warranted knowledge of redemption; thus their need of a Savior!¹⁵³⁷

The world (secular society) tells us that we must trust in ourselves and/or human government, this of course derived from human pride and arrogance. When we come to know God, a difference (separation) occurs as we must stop trusting in ourselves, human government and human intellect; instead trusting in the faithfulness of God. This is not an easy task; yet by both simple and complicated means God has allowed us the opportunity to witness for ourselves that deliverance and blessing is solely found in trusting Him! The Law was given to Israel so as to render to them the godly wisdom of necessities to please God by human effort. This in itself was a blessing in showing that our greatest efforts fall far short of pleasing Him, therefore He allows us to please Him by His own work (blessings).¹⁵³⁸ Wow, what tremendous lovingkindness!¹⁵³⁹

The Lord had allowed a portion of humankind (Israel) to attempt deliverance by the efforts of complete obedience. Mankind is always seeking to put their two cents worth into everything, including the effectual works of God.¹⁵⁴⁰ The Lord is allowing Israel to personally witness their own inadequacies so that they will turn to and trust in Him; yet once again—failure. The sophistication of the Law to demonstrate the necessity of all to be redeemed from sin; the witnessed necessity finding resolve only in the Lord Jesus Christ; this necessity (the Messiah of promise) yet denied; leading to further rejection of God by those He has chosen.

Praise God that Jesus would reduce the 614 (some say 613) Mosaic and Levitical Laws to the simplicity of two (2), for the next dispensation.¹⁵⁴¹ Jesus was born under (during) the dispensation of the Law so as to redeem those born under the Law.¹⁵⁴² God's intricate perfect timing

¹⁵³⁷ Romans 7:7-12; 8:1-11; Galatians 2:6-4:11, specific vs. 3:10-29.

¹⁵³⁸ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

¹⁵³⁹ Psalm 136:1-26; cf. 1 John 4:7-10.

¹⁵⁴⁰ Example—Genesis 17:15-19.

¹⁵⁴¹ Matthew 22:37-40.

¹⁵⁴² Galatians 4:4, 5.

in sending His Son Jesus at exactly the right time for complete fulfillment of prophesy and everything necessary for the redemption of humankind, proves His love and patience! He allowed every conceivable circumstance to occur so as to demonstrate man's inability, for this was necessary that we may finally realize our being incapable in and of ourselves for any good thing.¹⁵⁴³ In this, God demonstrated that as humans of a sinful nature we will assuredly fall in some manner, therefore we have but one act of success, the act of devotional submission to the authority of God.¹⁵⁴⁴

Throughout these first five dispensations, humankind was allowed to realize the patience of God regarding them, for appreciation of it unto submission. Throughout these dispensations, humankind was either disobedient and/or deceived into seeking excess in and of oneself, coveting the things of God, or attempting righteousness apart from the One who is actually righteous. Throughout these dispensations, the tender mercies and patience of God were present to further emphasize His lovingkindness, and this to point the way of redemption which is found only in the Lord Jesus Christ. As human beings, we tend to rely upon God only when our best and last effort has failed, yet by grace He has allowed us to fall so that we may—look up! Upon looking up, we then have the potential of placing our focus upon Him and thereby receiving His blessings; for our focus, love and trust is that which our dearest heavenly Father (Abba) has desired all along!¹⁵⁴⁵

Dispensation of Grace

- Parties of the dispensation—"humankind."¹⁵⁴⁶
- The test—accept the free gift of salvation; (Jesus—the Redeemer / Lord / Christ).¹⁵⁴⁷
- The failure—reject Jesus atoning work regarding salvation by grace; failure to submit unto the authority and reality of the Christ (glory of Christ)¹⁵⁴⁸
- Judgment—the Great Tribulation; (the time of Jacob's distress); God's wrath during bowl judgments.¹⁵⁴⁹

¹⁵⁴³ Psalm 14:1-7; Romans 3:9-20.

¹⁵⁴⁴ James 2:5-13, emphasis v. 10; 4:3-10.

¹⁵⁴⁵ Hebrews 12:1-3; Hosea 6:6; ABBA (Aramaic word)—Mark 14:36; Romans 8:15; Galatians 4:6.

¹⁵⁴⁶ Acts 15:6-11; Romans 3:21-30; 10:8-13; Colossians 3:5-17.

¹⁵⁴⁷ John 3:3-21; Acts 4:8-12; Romans 5:1-11; 8:1-17.

¹⁵⁴⁸ Matthew 10:33-40; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

Throughout the dispensations of promise and the Law, the Lord had allowed Israel to understand their need of physical salvation (deliverance) which was found only in the strength of God's might and lovingkindness. This training was accomplished by the principles of redemption, which the Lord had set forth unto His chosen people. Redemption was to make emphasis of buying back something which formerly belonged to the original purchaser, yet had passed to another. Although during these dispensations the redemption was emphasized in a physical context, the lesson to be learned was yet to ultimately point out the redemptive work of Christ upon the cross for all humankind; this emphasized in a spiritual context, thus the necessity of "faith."¹⁵⁵⁰ Israel had continually attempted to emphasize their faith via physical means, which is why they constantly sought false gods with forms (images / wood, stone, silver, and gold idols) which could be witnessed in the physical realm.¹⁵⁵¹ This behavior yet exists in the current dispensation (of grace), and will yet continue even into the Tribulation Period.¹⁵⁵² The Lord has now allowed humankind every opportunity to realize that our way simply does not work, for now by our own experiences we realize the imperative to accept the free ultimate redemptive gift—salvation by grace through faith; and this by acceptance of the reality of Jesus (Lord; Messiah; God). Unlike the many periods of bondage necessary for human pride to be driven away so as to receive reconciliation as in times past (emphasized by Israel's sin cycle), the ultimate reconciliation (being brought near from afar) has occurred fully for all time by God's work at the cross.

By the grace of God, we are back to simplicity. Just as there was but one choice to be made during the "dispensation of innocence" (time of Adam and Eve); so now during this "dispensation of grace" we are back to one choice, do we accept salvation by grace through faith foundational to the Messiah; or not. The nation of Israel is now set aside (temporarily), and Jews and Gentiles alike adopted into the family of God; if the decision to accept the free gift is righteously accomplished. No further distinctions between any peoples upon the earth, for all are now under God's immense grace with but one decision to be made.¹⁵⁵³

¹⁵⁴⁹ Matthew 24:4-25; Jeremiah 30:1-7; bowl judgment reference—Revelation 15:1-16:21.

¹⁵⁵⁰ Hebrews 11:1-6; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:42-50.

¹⁵⁵¹ Deuteronomy 29:17-19; Habakkuk 2:18-20.

¹⁵⁵² Revelation 9:20, 21.

The difference between this simple choice and the one during the dispensation of innocence, is that one choice (Christ) leads to eternal joy and peace in God's presence, whereas to deny Jesus (salvation by grace through devotional faith) is to spend eternity in torment and agony. Death in one's sins, or life in Christ; this choice is simple in reality, yet complicated by manmade doctrine (doctrines of demons; religion); to the point that many choose death over life. What a harsh reality that pride and false teaching would lead to such eternal torment for so many, when not only death is conquered in one's relationship with Jesus, but also all fear of death is swallowed up as well.¹⁵⁵⁴

Let us compare and contrast the two eternal states (heaven / hell), so as to emphasize the ramification of one's decision. The Biblical indication is that hell is a very awful place. The Scriptural evidence is that hell (lake of fire and brimstone) is a place of unending misery and eternal torment. Very important is the factual expression "forever" (unto the ages). This expression as used in the Greek New Testament is used for the eternity of heaven and the eternity for hell.¹⁵⁵⁵ It is the exact same expression! Those who would somehow seek to shorten the duration of eternal punishment in hell find themselves forced to reckon with the fact that it is the exact same construction (eternity; for ever and ever); thus attempts to postulate elimination of one is to eliminate the other. To shorten the duration in hell is to bring into danger the Biblical promise concerning eternity in heaven; yet although neither can actually occur, this is but another way in which religious precepts and doctrines cause confusion, and the foolish stubborn pride of humankind causes obscurity pertaining to truth and reality.

There has also been in recent years the supposed need by some evangelicals (annihilationist) to eliminate the eternal punishment which is sure for all who are lost. As humans we like the idea of an eternity of bliss and joy, yet cringe at the thought of eternal punishment. Many seeking to please humankind rather than God would attempt by human reason (and stupidity) to deny the eternity of hell, teaching rather that such a judgment would never be allowed to happen by a loving God. This is but human foolishness based in fear, for Christian love

¹⁵⁵³ Romans 10:8-13; 11:17-24.

¹⁵⁵⁴ 1 John 4:11-21; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58.

¹⁵⁵⁵ 11:15; 14:9-11; 20:10-15; 22:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

seeks to reach all with the good news; as we realize that hell is realistically and eternally terrible. Please remember—“hell” was prepared for Satan and demons, human beings are condemned to this torment by their own choosing!¹⁵⁵⁶

The Redeemed will have an eternity with God in His place of dwelling (New Jerusalem). In this place which is beyond human reason, the glory of God will illumine the entire structure so that the light of the moon and the sun will no longer be necessary factors.¹⁵⁵⁷ The warmth of God’s lovingkindness and presence will surround the Redeemed, and in this state of bliss, joy, and righteousness we will serve and worship the Lord our God for all eternity.

The wicked lost will have no sense of bliss, nor comfort, nor peace. They will be tormented by their own decision to deny Jesus as their Lord and Savior; for their own decision brought forth the just judgment of God upon them. They will be eternally separated from the warmth and light which is found in God’s presence; lying in darkness for all eternity with unending torment. In the light there is comfort and healing, whereas in the darkness only festering sorrow and pain.

Both the Redeemed and the lost will have eternal existence.¹⁵⁵⁸ The phraseology used is: the Redeemed will have everlasting joy and life; the lost will have eternal discomfort and torment.¹⁵⁵⁹ The Redeemed will have eternal bliss away from mourning and misery;¹⁵⁶⁰ the lost will have nothing but eternal mourning and misery.¹⁵⁶¹ The Redeemed will dwell in the company of saints and angels; the lost will have the company of everyone else’s misery.¹⁵⁶² The Redeemed will be in the presence of God’s loving glory, thus illumined; the lost will be in utter darkness accompanied by the pure evil which is Satan and his demons.¹⁵⁶³ The Redeemed will never hunger or thirst; the lost will never have their hunger and thirst quenched.¹⁵⁶⁴ The Redeemed will have exacting comfort; the lost will have burning heat. The Redeemed will have rest; the

¹⁵⁵⁶ Matthew 25:31-46, specific v. 41; cf. Matthew 7:13-27.

¹⁵⁵⁷ Revelation 21:1-22:5.

¹⁵⁵⁸ Matthew 25:46.

¹⁵⁵⁹ John 3:16; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; Revelation 14:9-11.

¹⁵⁶⁰ Revelation 7:16, 17.

¹⁵⁶¹ Matthew 22:2-14, emphasis v. 13; 25:14-30, emphasis v. 30.

¹⁵⁶² Hebrews 12:22-24.

¹⁵⁶³ Revelation 21:3, 4; 22:3-5; Revelation 19:20; 20:10-15.

¹⁵⁶⁴ Revelation 7:9-17; exemplified—Luke 16:19-31, emphasis v. 24.

lost will have troubling anguish. The Redeemed will honor, worship and serve God; the lost will have nothing to do but mourn and live regrets. Bliss to the Redeemed and torment to the lost; wow what a contrast.

In this time of simplicity abounding with God's grace, we must beware that the foolishness of arrogant men (and women) would not lead us astray. Although this section is by no means complete in the many details of each dispensation (so as to keep it simple), I yet trust it evident that God has always simply wanted our devotion and loyalty. It is a large shame that something as simple as a free gift (salvation in accordance with God's grace, received by devotional faith), is considered by many to be insufficient for one's salvation. Let us put this in context:

Romans 5:6, 8: For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly....But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us.

From these passages please note what action (works) was necessary by man for God to freely give salvation. Give up? The answer is—nothing whatsoever! While we were yet helpless sinners Christ died for us; this atonement (at-one-ment) fulfilled once for the entire full price (expiation) for sin in the stead of all who accept the free gift—salvation by grace through faith. Emphasis is being made of man's failings here; for we must learn to sacrificially surrender our carnal volition unto the good, acceptable, and perfect will of our heavenly Father, from whom all true blessings come.¹⁵⁶⁵ What Jesus did for all humankind is described by the word "propitiation," for by the actions of humiliation He suffered—God's wrath and justice were averting fully for all time!

Continually men seek to add stipulations to the simplicity of devotionally loving God, and accepting His free gift of salvation by grace through faith. Many of the traditions practiced by denominationalism as being pleasing to God, are in fact physical aspects of "rote" which are taught as acts of reverence; although not! The Lord wants the loyalty which is derived from love and faith; the loyalty which is righteously appropriate by those appreciative of the many blessings of our Creator! Attempting to please Him aside from simplicity of devotion, leads to

¹⁵⁶⁵ James 1:17, 18; cf. Romans 12:1, 2.

distractions and trusting in oneself to be pleasing to God; this being a cheap physical realm mimic of a spiritual realm relationship, which is sought in the flesh! Faith is necessary to please God, and aside from acts of faith and worshipping God in spirit and in truth, our efforts are futile and wasted! Too many religions are futile for this reason, as loving devotion pleases God, whereas physical aspects of worship (religion) do not! It is this simple, love and humbly submit unto the Lord and He will save you; attempt to do it by the devices of humankind (religious works; physical realm superficiality), and perish in ignorance!

IMPORTANT SUMMATION:

All the religions of the world attempt to find salvation and/or highest levels of consciousness by the efforts of humankind. Because God is the creator of all things, which includes human's ability to know our Creator (righteously activated measure of faith); physical realm efforts make little sense when the comparison is made between the Creator and the created realm. Actual Christianity (as distinguished from the Christian religion) is the only basis of belief (faith) which makes any sense; for as it is impossible for frail created beings to please a powerful holy Creator, the answer lies in the Creator doing that which is necessary for appropriate propitiation to occur. God came in human form to do for us that which we could never do for ourselves; thus salvation by grace through faith. Within this, we know that Jesus is in all reality—the Way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6, 7); thus actual Christianity (as distinguished from the Christian religion) is true and correct, and completely aloof the insidiousness of religion! Our Creator has loved us and shown us un-merited favor (grace); in all context of realistic truth; is this blessing not abundantly sufficient!

Dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom

- Parties of the dispensation—"humankind."¹⁵⁶⁶
- The test—submit to Christ's righteous reign.
- Failure—ultimate rebellion against Christ under the deceptive guidance of Satan.¹⁵⁶⁷
- Judgment—destroyed in final battle (Gog and Magog).¹⁵⁶⁸

¹⁵⁶⁶ Daniel 7:12-14.

¹⁵⁶⁷ Revelation 20:7, 8.

The “dispensation of the Millennial Kingdom” will be much different than the world of present day. There will be no need of evangelism, for all will know of Jesus, for He will be literally upon the earth in physical form reigning from Jerusalem.¹⁵⁶⁹ This will be a time of tremendous justice and peace upon the earth; for the Lord will rule in righteousness without partiality or prejudice.

The peace upon the earth which many have sought throughout the ages will not occur until the millennial reign of Christ! There will be blessing upon all the earth as true peace shall be upon all, even in the animal realm.¹⁵⁷⁰ Unlike now with demonic influence going to and fro tempting individuals, Satan will be bound and his instigated temptations divinely restrained, so as to render full opportunity of accepting Jesus for who He is: Savior, Lord and King. This will be a time when God will gather (draw) the Jews back unto Himself; will deliver them from all forms of oppression, and protect them from further suffering.¹⁵⁷¹ The glory of the Lord will be present at Jerusalem just as His glory had been during the forty year desert wanderings.¹⁵⁷² Signs (saymeion) and wonders (teras) will be reestablished by the Lord for the sake of the Jews, so the previous mistake will not be made again; but rather they (remnant remaining after the Great Tribulation Period) will know that Jesus is indeed the Messiah and Lord of prophetic promise.¹⁵⁷³ What a shame that so many had to perish in unbelief! For an illustration of the: Great Tribulation Period sufferings, the Lord’s return in glory, and the beauty of the restoration of righteousness upon Israel. Please read—Isaiah 24:1-27:13, and chapter six of the book (Big If).

The Lord has always had special plans for Israel. Although some believe this to be favoritism, in actuality this type of thinking is selfishly inappropriate. The nation of Israel was chosen by God’s grace, and as all are chosen unto salvation by God’s grace, there is no justice in adverse thoughts derived from coveting. During the “dispensation of grace” the Jews were set aside due to their rejection of Christ, and through His love for them He will once again show them tremendous mercy and

¹⁵⁶⁸ Revelation 20:8, 9.

¹⁵⁶⁹ Jeremiah 31:33, 34; Isaiah 2:1-4.

¹⁵⁷⁰ Isaiah 4:2-6; 11:1-16; 35:1-10.

¹⁵⁷¹ Zechariah 14:1-21; Isaiah 25:1-12.

¹⁵⁷² Exodus 13:21, 22.

¹⁵⁷³ Joel 2:28-3:21; Zechariah 12:1-13:9; cf. Acts 2:15-21.

abounding grace. To believe that the Body of Christ is an offshoot spiritually of Israel, is to seek association with the Jews so as to gain blessings which are theirs alone. Within the Body of Christ (family of God) we are blessed with eternal life by God's grace through faith; let's be content with such a blessing and stop coveting! Shall we? Why many theologians feel it necessary to make association between the Jews and Gentiles is beyond my ability to reason or understand. Because the two groups are not synonymous aside from this "dispensation of grace" where there is no distinction between them, there is no reason to act as if there are. During this dispensation of grace, believing Jews and Gentiles are all brothers and sisters in Christ, blessed and protected. Wow—simplicity.

Many have stated throughout history, that the Bible contradicts itself. Is this true? The reality of the situation and the basis of the confusion lie within the dispensations (*oikonomia*—a religious economy; stewardship) of the Gospel.¹⁵⁷⁴ During the different dispensations (time periods or movements within), the Lord has issued different responsibilities; and required different accountabilities (principles) to be fulfilled (obeyed) by humankind. Attempts to intermix the dispensations, as *if* the Bible is a long singular story, renders a basis of confusion; where confusion should never have been! The standard set forth by God, is that diligence be put forth to handle accurately (Greek—*orthotomew*; to cut straight) the Gospel; this literally means to place the individual pieces linear, to present the truth straight. When the pieces of each dispensation are placed linear out straight, truth is revealed within each dispensation! Attempts to mix pieces of one dispensation into a different, or series of different dispensations; the picture of the truth within each is obscured and therefore confusing. This can be understood easily by visualizing what would occur should the pieces of different puzzles be hammered together; the picture would be indiscernible.

These responsibilities were to be carried out and fulfilled literally. Many believe (Covenant / Calvinistic Theology) that certain parts or aspects of the Gospel are to be taken literally, while others symbolically. Along these lines as to deeper meanings within the Gospel, Protestant evangelicals believe that the Gospel should be interpreted allegorically; in a spiritual sense within the lives of believers. They believe that certain passages such as promises and prophecies are not to be taken literally.

¹⁵⁷⁴ Ephesians 1:3-14; 3:1-12.

This in itself raises doubts and questions regarding eschatology (theology regarding future events).

The most important aspect of our current dispensation (dispensation of grace), is the responsibility of man to accept the sacrifice (atonement) of the Lord Jesus Christ!¹⁵⁷⁵ The unified agreement of the brethren (brothers and sisters in Christ) consisting of the hope of salvation found only in Christ, should remain the bond which surpasses any disagreement.¹⁵⁷⁶

It is only by taking the Gospel literally that the truth may be understood through the wisdom and discernment of God. Just as the first coming and life of Jesus was fulfilled literally as prophesied; so also will the eschatological events of the Gospel be fulfilled literally also.¹⁵⁷⁷ *If* this is not the case that the Scriptures should be interpreted literally; then who is to interpret the metaphor (a figurative expression), or ascertain (gain and understand) the truth? There is only one interpretation of the Gospel; God's inspired literal interpretation!¹⁵⁷⁸

The truth to be gained by all believers is a necessity for understanding and worship.¹⁵⁷⁹ Example, we no longer make sacrifices as part of our worship services, as such we must understand the necessity for a literal hermeneutic (careful study of specifics), if we are to gain knowledge into the differences between the Nation of Israel and the Body of Christ.¹⁵⁸⁰ This knowledge is imperative if we are to accurately divide, align and handle the Word of Truth (Gospel).¹⁵⁸¹

It would be detrimental for us to interpret the Bible using symbolism and figurative language, for this would lead us to view the Body of Christ as a spiritualized form or offshoot of Israel. This would then make the only option to interpret Scripture figuratively and understand God as working one continuous uniform program. Do all nations yet have animal sacrifices, and circumcise their male young on the eighth day according to the standards set forth for Israel of antiquity? Absolutely not! The Nation of Israel and the Body of Christ are not synonymous!¹⁵⁸²

¹⁵⁷⁵ Romans 10:8-13; John 3:3-21; 10:7-18.

¹⁵⁷⁶ Romans 5:1-6; 8:23-25; 12:9-21; 1 Peter 3:13-4:6.

¹⁵⁷⁷ Isaiah 7:14, 15; 53:1-12; Micah 5:2, 3; Zechariah 14:1-5.

¹⁵⁷⁸ 2 Peter 1:20, 21.

¹⁵⁷⁹ John 4:20-24; 8:31-36; 2 Peter 1:2-19.

¹⁵⁸⁰ Israel - Exodus 19:5, 6; 2 Samuel 7:4-17; Romans 9:1-5 / Body of Christ - Galatians 3:28, 29; Ephesians 2:1-22; Romans 10:1-13.

¹⁵⁸¹ 2 Timothy 2:1-19, emphasis vs. 14, 15; cf. 3:16, 17.

VERTICAL (WITHDRAWN) / HORIZONTAL (CONTINUAL) COMMANDS

A vertical command is an accountability of God's people for a specific dispensation. A horizontal command is an accountability of God's people for all dispensations (ages). An example of this would be the sacrificial system for the dispensation of the Law, or the command not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (vertical commands);¹⁵⁸³ and the commandment not to murder, commit adultery, have other gods... (horizontal commands).¹⁵⁸⁴ Although many Biblical commands are brought forward from dispensation to dispensation (horizontal), many are not (vertical). The unique set of requirements within individual dispensations is many times referred to as a "test," with the term "failure" being the reference to humankind's efforts to conform (continually).

A good reference to differentiate the vertical and horizontal commands of dispensations is to consider the differences by standard. The Lord wills for us to maintain a standard of morality in our Christian walk, those commands which demonstrate this specific will generally be horizontal.¹⁵⁸⁵ The standard of vertical commands will generally be characterized by man's inability to deal righteously in and of himself; thereby always leading to "failure." Throughout the history of humankind, the Lord has allowed us to ascertain the truth that we are not capable in and of ourselves of doing that which is right and good.¹⁵⁸⁶ This leading to our need of His guidance to do right,¹⁵⁸⁷ for apart from Him, no one does good!¹⁵⁸⁸ Most (not all) vertical commands point to Christ; therefore we must always ask—what is written; and to who is it written? Most vertical commands are countermanded or changed in later dispensations!¹⁵⁸⁹

NOTATIONS ON DISPENSATION OF GRACE

It is important to find the beginning point (in general) for this dispensation. This is of great importance because there are many factors which

¹⁵⁸² Romans 2:17-29; 3:1-8, specific vs. 1-3; Galatians 3:17-29; 5:1-10.

¹⁵⁸³ Books of Exodus and Leviticus; Genesis 2:16, 17.

¹⁵⁸⁴ Exodus 20:1-17.

¹⁵⁸⁵ 1 Peter 1:13-16.

¹⁵⁸⁶ Psalm 14:1-3; Romans 3:9-18; 10:2-4 cf. Titus 1:15, 16; 3 John 1:11.

¹⁵⁸⁷ Proverbs 3:5, 6; 4:23-27; Philippians 2:12, 13.

¹⁵⁸⁸ Galatians 2:19-21; Romans 3:23; 6:20-23; John 3:16.

¹⁵⁸⁹ compare—Genesis 9:3; Deuteronomy 14:7-20.

have changed from the former dispensation of the Law. In pinpointing the beginning of the dispensation of grace, we can more accurately understand the dispensation in which we live.

Important Note: All Scripture is inspired by God, to adequately equip the saints; and for instruction.¹⁵⁹⁰ Many may think that the words of Jesus take precedence, yet all Scripture is inspired and therefore of equal importance! Jesus was born and held His earthly ministry during the dispensation of the Law, so that He may redeem those under the Law; in addition, Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (spoken ministry).¹⁵⁹¹ This is an important factor when considering what is, and what is not specifically for this dispensation of grace.¹⁵⁹²

The word church (ekklyasia) cannot be a source of reference as to being a certainty of the dispensation of grace. The word church or assembly (ekklyasia) is utilized to describe a mob;¹⁵⁹³ and the assembly (qahal; congregation) of Israel in the Old Testament.¹⁵⁹⁴ A key word to finding the beginning of this dispensation is the Greek word *musterion*, from which is derived the word—“mystery.”¹⁵⁹⁵

The mystery which was revealed to the Apostle Paul, was the mystery that the nation of Israel was to be set aside due to their rebellion against God and denial of His chosen One (Messiah). The nation had been chosen to be the evangelizing agents for God; yet now the Gentiles were called, and counted as equal within the family of God.¹⁵⁹⁶ Why would this be? The grace of God goes before all of His creation! His grace surpasses our sinfulness; and came forth to the Gentiles due to Israel’s refusal to love, walk with, and serve Him.¹⁵⁹⁷ Although the exact time of the transition between the dispensation of the Law and the dispensation of grace is not known with specific certainty; we can evidence that the transition began with the ministry of the Apostle Paul; this occurring sometime after Acts chapter nine.¹⁵⁹⁸

¹⁵⁹⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; Romans 15:4; 1 Corinthians 10:11.

¹⁵⁹¹ Galatians 4:4, 5; Matthew 15:24.

¹⁵⁹² Matthew 10:1-6; 15:24; Acts 15:7-9; Romans 3:21-26; 10:12, 13; Colossians 3:9-17.

¹⁵⁹³ Acts 19:32, 39, 41.

¹⁵⁹⁴ Acts 7:38.

¹⁵⁹⁵ Ephesians 3:1-7.

¹⁵⁹⁶ Zechariah 8:20-23; Deuteronomy 7:1-10; Colossians 1:25-29; 3:9-11; Galatians 1:11-24; Romans 16:25-27.

¹⁵⁹⁷ Romans 5:17-21; Acts 13:1-3; 26:16-18; 28:25-28; Galatians 1:15-19.

In the book of Thessalonians, we find an important word. This word indicates a distinguishing mark (saymeion), or “sign.” The context in which this is used indicates something a person can see, touch, smell, hear, or taste; therefore a sign (saymeion) is that which the senses can perceive. These “signs” were initiated to guarantee the authenticity of the thing to which it is attached. In the Biblical context, signs were utilized to authenticate one’s testimony as being from God!

To walk by faith, is to test things via one’s knowledge of the Scriptures, and according to personal (special) revelation from the Lord. It is for this reason that we study so as to handle God’s Word accurately (Greek—orthotomew), and pray without ceasing. Those with actual weak faith, many times hold to the flesh by the philosophy that “seeing is believing,” whereas many have a more abounding faith.¹⁵⁹⁹ There is a very important reason for the mention of “signs” at this point in the discussion. The Apostle Paul mentioned the Jews demand miraculous signs, while the Greeks seek for wisdom; true success being found actually by faith in Jesus.¹⁶⁰⁰

It is important that we realize that there are two types of miracles. Direct miracles are those which are performed solely by the Lord; this being something outside the laws of nature (Lot’s wife, creation, etc.). Indirect miracles (saymeion / teras—“wonders”) are those which are performed by the Lord, through an individual which He has chosen. Because Jesus Himself was doing the will of the Father during His earthly ministry, the miracles He performed should be considered to be within the realm of indirect miracles.¹⁶⁰¹ Jesus was sent only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Jews) who seek for signs; thus his ministry as being from God was authenticated by the indirect miracles He performed.¹⁶⁰²

The Jews have, for the most part, always demanded a sign in order to believe. They having been set apart by grace as God’s chosen people; became complacent in their position and thus smug in their expecting signs from the Lord.¹⁶⁰³ Note—this is why the Jews hated Paul to an

¹⁵⁹⁸ Colossians 2:16, 17; Acts 9:15-20; 22:10; Ref. Peter’s behavior in chapter 10 through statement of 11:1-3.

¹⁵⁹⁹ Luke 11:27-30; 1 Peter 1:3-9; John 20:26-31.

¹⁶⁰⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; cf. John 2:13-25; 4:46-54; 6:2, 26-40.

¹⁶⁰¹ John 8:42; 9:3-5; Mark 1:9-13.

¹⁶⁰² Matthew 15:24.

¹⁶⁰³ Exodus 4:1-9.

excessive degree, for he ministered that the Gentiles were now considered as equal with the Jews; who being smug became angered, more so even as Paul had been considered one of the Jewish elite.¹⁶⁰⁴ Prior to Moses being sent to deliver the Jews from captivity in Egypt, there had been no need for indirect miracles (saymeion). After the Lord's patient endeavors with the Jews up to chapter three of Acts, the indirect miracles were ceasing for the most part; for the nation of Israel was being set aside, and the indirect miracles were for their (Jews) benefit.

This is not to say that miracles no longer occur. The Lord yet works miraculously when He wills (direct miracles)! This many times in direct correlation with the prayers of the saints; for God is love, and always concerned for His children! This does however say that indirect miracles are no longer, for indirect miracles were part of God's methodology for dealing with Israel, thus there are no longer individuals sent by God to perform miracles during this dispensation when Jews and Gentiles are equal.¹⁶⁰⁵

There is a lot of money to be made in the area of healing ministries. The Scripture stated that many would seek godliness as a means of financial gain; although contentment is necessary if it is to actually be of value.¹⁶⁰⁶ The Scripture said that many ministries would go forth out of ulterior motives and pretenses; while others would go forth from a sincere love for God and the brethren.¹⁶⁰⁷ It would not be fruitful for us to waste time criticizing that which we probably cannot change; but rather we ought to rejoice that the Word is being proclaimed, and thus individuals saved by God's grace. Please remember the enemy (Satan and demons) will use any means possible to distract us from obedience to the truth and servanthood! Please reference—tongues / baptism 1 Corinthians 1:14-22; 14:22-25.

We ought to ask ourselves—"will our experience judge Scripture or will Scripture judge our experience?" It is the testing of our experiences within the realm of Scripture truth that shines light upon the darkness of deception and the inappropriate. If we expect the Lord to change to suit our whims, desires and greed, we will expect the light to be enveloped by darkness. This simply cannot be!

¹⁶⁰⁴ Acts 23:6-10; 26:4, 5; Philippians 3:1-11.

¹⁶⁰⁵ Romans 10:12, 13.

¹⁶⁰⁶ 1 Timothy 6:3-16; cf. Luke 12:15-21.

¹⁶⁰⁷ Philippians 1:12-24; James 3:13-18.

Many (by no means all) of the illnesses found within humankind in this day and age are psychosomatic in nature. These psychosomatic dysfunctions are those which many times appear to be healed indirectly by supposed spiritual healers. The way out for many of these “healers” is a means of denial as to Scriptural truth; example being—that a demon buffeted Paul; yet this was not (so some say) a physical ailment (cf. Galatians 4:12-15). Please read 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; Galatians 6:11-18, specifically v.11. Paul wrote with large letters because of the eye ailment (thorn in the flesh) which the Lord allowed, so as to humble Paul.

Let us look at some truths. If the thorn which Paul had was indeed a demon, and Paul was known as a true servant of Jesus in the realm of demons; then why did Paul not cast it out?¹⁶⁰⁸ Paul was a somewhat patient individual, who had limits as to how much tribulation from demons he would tolerate.¹⁶⁰⁹ Please consider that although there is much conjecture as to Paul’s ailment, the illness obviously involved his eyes.¹⁶¹⁰ Although Paul usually utilized a scribe for the writing of his epistles to the churches, he would many times write portions to verify that the letter was in deed from him; this noted by these Scriptures—2 Thessalonians 3:16-18; Galatians 4:12-15.

We know that God is all powerful and can do anything not inconsistent with His holy, righteous nature. This means that God can indeed perform indirect miracles through agents if He so wills; yet in this dispensation, this is no longer the case. To demonstrate this fact, let us consider the only reason in which Paul would allow his fellow servant companions to be ill; even to the point of death. This is very important—between the chronology of the Acts narrative and the Epistles written afterwards; we see a transition from methodology which includes elements for the Jews (saymeion; teras) (who were present) to a ministry totally void of these elements; once the transition had occurred and Paul’s witness had been authenticated by signs and wonders.¹⁶¹¹ This done out of God’s abounding love for the Jews; for He yet rendered miracles so they would believe.¹⁶¹²

¹⁶⁰⁸ Acts 19:13-20.

¹⁶⁰⁹ Acts 16:16-18.

¹⁶¹⁰ Galatians 4:15.

¹⁶¹¹ 2 Corinthians 12:12, 13.

¹⁶¹² Romans 15:17-21; Acts 13:44-49; 18:5-11; 28:23-29.

- Acts 14:8-10—Paul healed a man lame from birth.
- Acts 19:11, 12—Extraordinary miracles performed by God through His agent Paul.
- Acts 20:9, 10—Paul raises Eutychus from the dead.

————— TRANSITION COMPLETE —————

- Philippians 2:25-30—Epaphroditus was severely ill. He was healed by God (direct miracle); not Paul.
- 1 Timothy 5:23—Timothy told by Paul to drink wine, so as to avoid the many intestinal illnesses.
- 2 Timothy 4:20—Paul leaves Trophimus behind, for he is ill.

It should be remembered that many who seek signs (indirect miracles—saymeion), are sincere believers who desire God’s fullest blessing in their lives. It should also be remembered that as many are without sincere devotion in the physical realm, they will seek substitutes which many times end up being a deception or false blessing perpetrated by someone willing to cash in on hardship. This is much the reason we as Christians are to love one another in a selfless manner, for in loving God’s way (selflessly), tremendous strength in the realm of truth is performed and received! The reason so many believers have fallen prey to the superficial love of the world and the seeking of signs and wonders (although demonic masquerades [*dymanei*]; i.e. *semeiois*, *terasim*); which are actually produced in accordance to deception one step at a time; is because they have placed their focus upon the temporal things of this world, rather than upon the Lord! Victory is solely by faith; therefore victory is found only in our relationship with the Lord!

Signs will once again take precedence in order for many to believe. Unfortunately for many individuals whom seek for a sign, the signs and wonders (*semeiois*, *terasim*) shown them by the Antichrist will lead them by deception—to worship Satan’s servant. In a like manner as signs had led some to believe where faith was lacking, in this instance it will lead many to believe wrongly (delusively); thereby missing out on the wonderful salvation of the Lord.¹⁶¹³ Far too many believers seek that God

¹⁶¹³ 2 Thessalonians 2:5-9; Revelation 13:1-4.

would reveal Himself to them in a manner of their choosing. This is much the reason why many Jews have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah of promise, for although He came (and will return) exactly as prophesied, they seek a great conquering king to release them from the bondage of their oppressors. This is much the mindset of many believers, as Jesus is sought as someone who will: heal all, make all financially rich, and run to our whimsical calling.

Love is of utmost importance within Christianity; because of its importance—"love" ought to take precedence! Does it? If we as believers will not speak the truth which must be heard, so that many may stay from being deceived; then who will endeavor in this task? Jesus always spoke the truth in love, came to save us from our sins, and suffered terribly in our stead. The work He did upon the cross is completed, yet many continually seek that He would constantly change to suit their earthly desires. We have eternal salvation! We have a God whose love is unsurpassed for each of us! We have a God who in and of Himself saved all who would believe and obey; we have only to accept the blessing, which includes the blessings received by the humbly and devotionally obedient! How much is enough? Must we always seek more? Those who truly understand all that God has done feel terrifically blessed; those who fail to realize God's blessings are never content. Selah (contemplate).

SPECIAL NOTE OF THANKS—I would sincerely like to thank Paul M. Davis, Th.D. Paul gave me permission to utilize his work, which I have done in this portion to a considerable extent. The research involved in the proofs within was considerable, and Paul as usual entered into his research with great zeal for his and our understanding. Thank you, Paul!

Note: The immense research Paul put forth, was condensed down to its simplest form in this writing; this for simplistic understanding. Although the in-depth information is not by any means fully present, the context is Biblically and historically correct. This portion being sufficient for the purpose intended—walking by faith not by sight, walking in the spirit not the flesh, a better understanding as to the time period in which we live, ability to accurately handle the Scriptures and fulfill our ministry of this time period; hopefully helps in making simple some

complicated matters. Please pray for truth regarding that which has been presented here; and for truth regarding all things; please do so with an open mind, heart, and spirit. Please remember—God cannot teach us when we choose to be dogmatic and thereby entrapped by our own intellectual prowess, pride, and arrogance!

Jacob's Ladder—A Demonstration of God's Grace (Genesis 28:11-17)

Many know of Jacob's ladder, yet few realize the immensity of what the dream given to Jacob was all about. At the time of Jacob's dream, he was alone, afraid and journeying toward Paddan-aram, after leaving Beersheba; according to the instruction of his mother (Rebekah) and father (Isaac).¹⁶¹⁴ The Lord in His infinite grace, allowed Jacob to have a dream, which reassured him of God's presence and active work in his life; yet also for the sake of all believers.¹⁶¹⁵ Jacob had believed that he was alone, yet this dream reassured him that he was not (v. 16). Have we ever been in such a situation; when the grace of the Lord would uplift and strengthen us; when we felt alone yet in actuality were not?

To evidence the immensity of Jacob's dream and how God's grace would be fully realized; two keys within these Scriptures should be remembered:

- Angels ascending and descending, actively working for the sake of believers (v. 12).¹⁶¹⁶
- Man upon the earth; God at the top of the ladder in heaven; our true home and place of blessing (v. 13).¹⁶¹⁷

Please consider that there is a means (ladder, bridge; mediator) between man and God.¹⁶¹⁸ A representation was shown to Jacob in a dream, while the actuality of this avenue to God is factually realized in the Lord Christ Jesus; who is the only means by which anyone may come to the Father.¹⁶¹⁹ God blessed Jacob with the grace which he (Jacob) needed

¹⁶¹⁴ cf. Genesis 27:41-28:5.

¹⁶¹⁵ cf. Genesis 28:12-17; cf. Deuteronomy 31:3-8; Matthew 6:25-34; Hebrews 13:1-6.

¹⁶¹⁶ cf. Genesis 32:1; cf. Hebrews 1:13, 14.

¹⁶¹⁷ cf. Ephesians 1:3-14; 2:4-7; 3:8-12; John 14:1-3.

¹⁶¹⁸ Galatians 3:19-29; 1 Timothy 2:1-6; Hebrews 8:1-13; 9:15-28.

¹⁶¹⁹ John 14:6; Acts 4:8-12; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6.

at the time, just as God's grace is truly sufficient in each of our lives; always available for appropriation exactly when necessary. God is never early or late with His grace, for His timing is always perfect; even in the revelation of His abounding grace upon all of humanity, fully realized in Jesus.¹⁶²⁰

The fact that Jesus is in fact the ladder (bridge) between God and man is evidenced within the means by which angels ascend and descend. From the Genesis 28 passages this is noted, as we compare the true means by which angels transverse for fulfillment of God's will.¹⁶²¹ For simplicity of this realization, let us look plainly at two Scripture verses:

Genesis 28:12: And he had a dream, and behold, a ladder was set on the earth with its top reaching to heaven; and behold, *the angels of God were ascending and descending on it* (italics added).

John 1:51: And He said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you shall see the heavens opened, and the *angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man*" (italics added).

Steps to Simplicity of Devotion

1. Love the Lord our God with all of your heart, all of your soul, all of your mind, and all of your strength; for He is our Creator and deserves our highest reverence and greatest devotion!¹⁶²² *If* and when we get this primary step as priority in our life, we then gain the potential of being taught by our Lord to love our neighbor as ourselves; which fulfills the Law of the Prophets.¹⁶²³ Anything which we hold in higher esteem than our Lord is an idol; this includes: "self," spouse, friends, relatives, employment, investments, sports, hobbies, entertainers, finances, retirement, etc.¹⁶²⁴
2. Seek first to do God's will, and walk in His righteousness! Although this is quite simple, most folks do not realize the ramifications of

¹⁶²⁰ Galatians 4:4-7; Romans 5:8-11; John 1:1-14; 6:27-40.

¹⁶²¹ Hebrews 1:5-14.

¹⁶²² Matthew 22:37, 38; Deuteronomy 6:4-9.

¹⁶²³ Matthew 22:36-40; cf. Philippians 2:1-4.

¹⁶²⁴ 1 Corinthians 10:1-33; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Galatians 5:18-23; Ephesians 5:1-17; Colossians 3:5; 1 John 5:21; 1 Timothy 6:10-19.

getting it wrong. We are to seek the Lord God and the pure and undefiled things which come from God; not the things of the world!¹⁶²⁵

I cannot emphasize this fact enough, do not place emphasis upon the things of the world!¹⁶²⁶ We somehow have come to believe that it is possible to serve God and mammon (secular wealth). This is most definitely not the case!¹⁶²⁷ Please understand, my brethren, the ways of the world (secular) and the ways of God (spiritual) are two completely separate paths, in two completely separate realms (physical; spiritual).¹⁶²⁸ The Lord commanded us to seek (*zaytew*: deliberating; demanding; inquire; required; seek after; trying to obtain) that which is above, yet we cannot seem to understand this, as we yet focus our attentive seeking endeavors on the things of this world, and comfort for our flesh.¹⁶²⁹ *If* we volitionally focus on the things of the world, we will lose the tremendous blessings which come only from God through faith and devotional disciplined obedience!¹⁶³⁰

When the Lord said to seek Him, this statement was of course centered in the hopeful fact that our love for our Lord takes precedence over all else; thereby we will seek Him and purpose in life for righteous reasons. *If* our spirit is focused upon our Lord, our lives will reflect the object of our focus; which is evidenced within the lives of the remnant few (in comparison to the many).¹⁶³¹ *If* we allow Satan to turn our attention to mammon (secular wealth), this also will reflect the object of our focus; which unfortunately is evidenced within most lukewarm believers.¹⁶³²

Where is your focus? Please do not be so deceived as to believe you can have it both ways.¹⁶³³ To serve (love) money, is not to serve (love) God!¹⁶³⁴ To serve and love God is not to serve and/or love money!¹⁶³⁵ As humans we tend to go in the direction of our focus, therefore please

¹⁶²⁵ Matthew 6:31-34; 13:44-46; 1 John 2:15-21; James 4:4-6; James 1:17, 18.

¹⁶²⁶ Matthew 6:19-34; James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

¹⁶²⁷ Luke 16:9-14, specific v. 13.

¹⁶²⁸ Matthew 7:13-27; 12:1, 2; Galatians 5:16, 17.

¹⁶²⁹ Colossians 3:1-11; cf. James 3:13-18.

¹⁶³⁰ John 15:1-20; 2 Timothy 2:14-19; 3:10-17; Romans 5:1-5; 8:1-17.

¹⁶³¹ Matthew 5:13-16; Philippians 1:6; 2:12,13.

¹⁶³² 1 Peter 5:1-11; 1 Timothy 6:3-19; James 4:1-10; cf. Matthew 12:33-37; Revelation 3:14-22, specific vs. 17, 18.

¹⁶³³ 1 Thessalonians 2:1-4; James 1:2-2:26.

¹⁶³⁴ Luke 16:14, 15.

¹⁶³⁵ Hebrews 13:5, 6.

focus straight ahead upon the Lord our God, and stop turning aside to the ways of the world.¹⁶³⁶

Note: *If we find that we make statements as to loving things which are not alive, we have focused upon the things of the world to the point of some things becoming idols.*

- Test the teachings of humankind. These teachings may come in the form of precepts, doctrines, philosophies and/or traditions, and heretic forms of worship. As Satan is not so foolish as to outwardly deceive, he will attempt to deceive covertly. With this in mind, it becomes evident why we must not allow the first steps of bondage to gain holds in our lives, by allowing the foolishness of the world to take us captive. Just as the nation of Israel hated going into captivity because of their disobedience, and yet would disobey again upon release from bondage; do not many believers yet act and do the same?

Note: The easiest way to conceal a lie is between two truths. When lies and truths are mixed (which unfortunately is very prevalent in the world), a deception is the end result. For this reason, our Lord warned us to test everything to the Gospel, for as Christians we can do nothing against the truth but only for the truth!¹⁶³⁷ Please remember, an intentional partial truth is an instigated deception! Abstain from sin! I say again “abstain from sin!”¹⁶³⁸ Although many believers use the excuse that nothing can separate us from the love of God (which is absolutely true—Romans 8:35-39) so that they may continue in their sin, the fact remains that sin greatly hinders our spiritual relationship with God! Example being—when I was in need of discipline for my foolish inappropriate behavior, the last person I wanted to converse with was my dad; even though he disciplined me in love. In a like manner, our sin hinders us from wanting to come openly into our Lord’s presence; even though we know factually His discipline is in love; as His love always involves discipline!¹⁶³⁹ When sin has separated us from our Lord in aspects of communication and

¹⁶³⁶ Proverbs 4:23-27.

¹⁶³⁷ 2 Corinthians 13:1-8; 1 John 4:1-6; 3 John 1:3, 4.

¹⁶³⁸ 1 Peter 1:13-16; 1 Corinthians 15:33, 34.

¹⁶³⁹ Hebrews 12:4-11, specific vs. 7, 8.

receiving His anointing, our prayers ought to begin with confession of known sin, so that our avenue of receiving (humble devotional submission) may be opened and unrestricted.¹⁶⁴⁰ Please do not be so foolish as to believe we can have a victorious walk for God while failing to: confess intentional sin, repent (turn back to God), and submit to receive cleansing; for intimate closeness with God takes precedence over all else! The fact remains, although many times denied, that “self” is the root cause of all discrepancies which exist between individuals and God; for when “self” (carnal volition) is not denied so as to achieve and maintain following the Lord upon the narrow path of His righteousness, “self” will continually attempt to lead and deceive, as “self” is the root cause of: pride, arrogance, lusts, selfish ambition, quarrels, delusion and deception; for “self” seeks to protect itself at all costs, with its primary defender being—foolish adolescent (stubborn) pride! Is the creation (“self”) really so important that the beauty of the Creator and His blessings should be denied as by: motive, intent, personal volition, and self-centered actions and motivations; especially when the kind intention of the Creator is for the righteous benefit and betterment of His creation (individuals)?

Too many believers today do not realize the necessity of prayer in our daily walk for God.¹⁶⁴¹ Jesus our Lord realized this fact with absolute certainty!¹⁶⁴² Because we are to walk in a manner as He walked, should we not realize the grave necessity of communication with our heavenly Father; thereby seeking uprightness so as to maintain this necessity.¹⁶⁴³ If you rarely begin your day in prayer, please consider doing so. Each step we take into our day without having prayed so as to trust our Lord in all things, are steps traveled by sight not by faith.¹⁶⁴⁴ Do we truly walk by faith, or by sight; is our walk by faith true, or is it foundational to assumption and delusion? The reality of our very demeanor (fruits) renders the truth in this matter.¹⁶⁴⁵ Do most believers actually make supplication regarding their going forth (anywhere), and actually wait (until God answers, however long that may be) before proceeding? Praying without ceasing is always wise advise!¹⁶⁴⁶

¹⁶⁴⁰ 1 John 1:5-10; Isaiah 59:1, 2; cf. Psalm 66:18.

¹⁶⁴¹ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; Ephesians 1:9-21; 6:10-20.

¹⁶⁴² Matthew 14:23; 26:36-41; Mark 1:35-38; Luke 6:8-12; 22:39-46.

¹⁶⁴³ 1 John 2:4-6; Romans 13:10-14; James 4:7-10.

¹⁶⁴⁴ Proverbs 3:5-8; Psalm 25:1-6; 27:1-14.

¹⁶⁴⁵ Matthew 7:13-27; James 1:19-27.

- Study the Gospel! It is a mandate in Scripture that we study to show ourselves approved unto God; handling accurately the word of truth.¹⁶⁴⁷ This is quite simple, each of us has been given a measure of faith according to God's will for our life.¹⁶⁴⁸ From this initial measure of faith, our faith continues to grow with our continued study and adherence to Scripture; or remains steadily stagnant when we refuse this mandate.¹⁶⁴⁹ Note—simply going to church does not accomplish the mandate; even so by any far extent of imagination or fantasy! Those who are devotional unto God study the Scriptures; for it is within the Gospel that the answers pertaining to all things righteous are found!

To place this in simple terms: If I were to wield a sword in battle with yet little or no practice, the enemy would sit back and allow me to cause greater harm than good in regard to my cause. This is exactly the same in regard to the real enemy we have in Satan and his demons. *If* we refuse to practice accurately handling the Scriptures (Sword of the Spirit) and thereby lean toward novice wielding of the Word, our endeavors will lead to trouble and defeat! When we serve it must be by the strength the Lord provides; therefore when we speak, it must be by His utterances; which is why so many Scriptures are listed within this book, so that the living and active nature of the Gospel may bring forth understanding and spiritual growth, which are blessings accomplished solely by the lovingkindness and wonderment of God!¹⁶⁵⁰ How can we possibly think of victory, aside from the Word of truth and the strength of God?¹⁶⁵¹ We must consider being quite serious about our relationship with the Lord (known by fruits; not by words), and the possibility of Christian victory shall be ours in accordance to our disciplined devotion, and the grace of God.¹⁶⁵² Please remember, we must be known by God as His legitimate adopted children, or we are not actually known righteously (never known); for this is the reality of the spiritual relationship,

¹⁶⁴⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24.

¹⁶⁴⁷ 2 Timothy 2:15; John 17:17.

¹⁶⁴⁸ Romans 12:3.

¹⁶⁴⁹ Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

¹⁶⁵⁰ 1 Peter 4:11-19; cf. Proverbs 30:3-6; Hebrews 4:12-16; Romans 8:26-28.

¹⁶⁵¹ 1 John 4:4-6; 5:1-5; Ephesians 6:10-12.

¹⁶⁵² Matthew 7:16-27; Hebrews 12:4-11; Romans 12:1-3; James 1:22-25.

as the Lord witnesses the essence of our motives and intentions!¹⁶⁵³ You will notice by the summation, that we are back to step one! Submit therefore to God, and allow Him to lead you on the greatest journey you have ever known! In our Lord is found the purpose for our existence, and answers to every major question in and about life itself!

SUMMATION—LOVE THE LORD WHOLLY; WITHOUT COMPROMISE, VARIATION OR EXCUSE; FOR THIS IS THE GREAT COMMANDMENT WHICH IS FOR OUR BETTERMENT (Matthew 22:36-40)!

Uncomplicated Christianity

Please remember, my brethren, *if* by faith we are not overcoming the world; the world is overcoming us!¹⁶⁵⁴ Victory is summed up as a matter of both spirit and attitude, *if* we truly love God we will allow Him to conform us to the image of Christ!¹⁶⁵⁵ The victory is not found in obedience to the Law, nor is it found in the following of religious traditions and/or rituals. The victory is a blessing from God, as individuals through disciplined devotional obedience and submission become instruments of God's righteousness! Discipline and devotional obedience become part of our very demeanor in accordance to His grace, as this begins and is carried forward in accordance to our sincerely loving Him first and foremost! From our love for Him, and His love for us, comes our submission to Him. From our submission to Him, comes our willingness to receive the grace He freely gives. From acceptance and appropriation of His grace, comes victory!

Christianity is not adherence to assorted laws as set forth by denominationalism or religious practices; it is a life lived for Christ, derived from a sincere and foremost love for Him. If the different denominations within the Body of Christ would realize this, there would be but one unified "church"—the Body of Christ! Christianity is not adhered to by conjecture and assumption as to what the Scriptures say, but rather silent devotional submission unto the Lord so as to humbly receive the Gospel truth (reality) implanted into our spirit by our Lord;

¹⁶⁵³ Galatians 4:8-11; Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 2:23; emphasized—1 Chronicles 29:9.

¹⁶⁵⁴ John 16:33; Romans 12:21; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 4:1-6; 5:4, 5; Revelation 2:7, 11, 17, 3:5, 12, 13, 21, 22.

¹⁶⁵⁵ Romans 8:28-30; 2 Corinthians 4:1-11.

yet without denial of personal volition (“self”) this cannot occur, as we reject the goodness and righteousness of the Lord by refusal to be His disciples (learned pupils)!¹⁶⁵⁶

Having God personally teach us is the greatest blessing we could possibly experience (actual intimate personal fellowship); this second only to the free gift of His grace which saves us. Too many believers have never known the blessing of God’s personal teaching, because they do not know the reality of the love that He has for each of us personally. Supposed spiritual leaders who walk by sight, have taught others that the traditions of the forefathers (who also walked by sight) are necessary to please God and receive His grace. They fail to realize that grace is a free gift to those who trust in the Lord within earnest seeking of pure truth, and by their failure have instituted religious ritualistic worship practices which in actuality are completely vain regarding spiritual growth or the spiritual relational reality; proven by God’s powerful indwelling. Christianity dictates love for the Lord first and foremost, and the disciplined humble obedient submission associated; He does the rest, for truly Christianity (as distinguished from the Christian religion) is all about the Lord God!

Summation:

The key to spiritual success is to worship and serve the one true God, Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.¹⁶⁵⁷ This is not the god which needs to be re-crucified daily within Catholicism. This is not the god whose brother is Satan, who is in authority of only a portion of the universe as worshipped in Mormonism. This is not the god who needed Mary to help him with his plan of redemption; nor a human male (Pope) to emphasize and carry out His authority upon the earth (Vicar; Holy See). This is not the god who comes to everyone’s beckon call, as taught by “healing” and “name it claim it” (supposed faith) ministries. This is the Lord Jesus Christ! Lord—God in full authority of all things (Hebrew—yvhv; Greek—kurios). This is Jesus—the name above all names, who created the entire universe; God manifest (Immanuel). This is the Christ (Messiah)—the only begotten; the chosen One—whose mercy, loving-kindness, integrity and grace is both revealed and abounding! This is

¹⁶⁵⁶ James 1:21; John 8:31-36; cf. John 15:1-27.

¹⁶⁵⁷ John 1:1-5, 9-17; 5:19-47; 6:35-45; 20:24-31; Titus 2:11-15; 2 Peter 1:1, 2 cf. Isaiah 43:11-13; Matthew 22:41-46 cf. Psalm 110:1; Mark 2:5-12.

the God who gives us freely all things to enjoy, along with the rules and commandments to enjoy all things properly. This is the Lord Jesus Christ whose grace (free unmerited favor) is truly sufficient!

Just because we cannot fully understand or explain God, as is the endeavor of many intellectuals who abound with individuality and prowess; let's simply believe.¹⁶⁵⁸ Just because Jesus does not change to suit our religious whims and desires, or the times as designated by science and religious manmade doctrine; let's simply believe.¹⁶⁵⁹ Let us simply and sincerely love the Lord and allow Him to lead us; unhindered by man-made religiosity, intellect and doctrine. Shall we simply love and follow him; for this is all that He has requested of us; He fulfills the remainder!

THE UNMERITED FREE GIFT WHICH IS GOD'S GRACE

1. Cleansing from all unrighteousness and full restored fellowship immediately upon confession of known sin.
2. Life from death in sin.
3. Full assurance of salvation.
4. His faithfulness at all times; even though we are rarely faithful.
5. Empowerment to live a spiritually victorious life.
6. Evidenced purpose of our very existence.
7. Unsurpassed love and compassion.
8. The greatest gift we could ever hope for; rendered solely without merit or warrant!

My Friend

My Friend, I stand in judgment now, and feel that you are to blame somehow.

On earth I walked with you day by day, and never did you point the way.

You knew the Lord in truth and glory, but never did you tell the story.

My knowledge then was very dim, yet you could have led me safe to Him.

¹⁶⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 3:1-5; cf. Matthew 17:20; 18:2-6.

¹⁶⁵⁹ Psalm 113; Isaiah 59:21; Hebrews 13:8, 9; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; John 14:1-9.

Though we lived together here on earth, you never told me of
the second birth.

And now I stand this day condemned, because you failed to
mention Him.

You taught me many things, that's true: I called you "friend,"
and trusted you.

But I learn now that it's too late, and you could have kept me
from this fate.

We walked by day, and talked by night, and yet you showed me
not the light.

You let me live, and love, and die, you knew I'd never live on
high.

Yes I called you "friend" in life, and trusted you through joy
and strife.

And yet, on coming to this dreadful end, I cannot now, call you
"My Friend."

Author Unknown

CHAPTER EIGHT GENERAL INFORMATION

Rituals and Traditions

PREFATORY

In this chapter many different things will be mentioned, both for information sake, and for spiritual edification. Many things mentioned may be disagreeable to our flesh, as the flesh has no desire to relinquish worship by rote; yet I am noting these things in love for the sake of spiritual freedom in truth, and general knowledge of the truth. It must be understood, religious ignorance remains until displaced by relational knowledge; knowledge within the saving relationship with God (spiritual relational reality), when adhered to, maintains freedom from the many religious deceptions which cause spiritual detriment or outright spiritual destruction! There are many practices within the publicized Christian religion (as differentiated from actual Christianity; i.e. the Way), and more specifically within denominationalism (i.e. assorted religious: doctrines, traditions, and ordinances) which have been inappropriately dictated by man; proclaimed deceptively as deemed necessary, and portrayed as light although in reality being of darkness.¹⁶⁶⁰ The relational reality (Christianity) is spiritual, for God is Spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; therefore, any and all physical realm (religious; carnal): rituals, traditions, doctrines, ordinances, precepts, and ideology involving the flesh are unacceptable within the spiritual relational reality!¹⁶⁶¹ Within specifics of chapter two where the differences of physical realm religion and the spiritual relational reality are rendered, understanding can come forth regarding the imperative of fully leaving the former (religion) so as to enter into and live the beauty of the latter (spiritual relationship)! Few are those who actually make

¹⁶⁶⁰ Isaiah 5:20, 21; Matthew 6:20-23.

¹⁶⁶¹ John 4:20-24; Galatians 3:1-4:11; Colossians 2:20-23.

the transition from religion to the spiritual relational reality; for having lived carnally in the flesh (walking by sight), the transition to living spiritually (walking by faith) beyond assumption and conjecture is difficult, yet possible when led by the grace abounding righteous work of God!¹⁶⁶² The idealization of the spiritual relational reality is for those created in God's image (spiritually; human beings) to devotionally submit to our Creator, God, and Father (by His adopting us) so that He may both will and work in and through us all things which please Him; thus, all aspects of the elementary things and principles of the world become completely irrelevant, as maturity within the spiritual relationship reality is everything that is necessary for our existence!¹⁶⁶³

WITHIN THIS CHAPTER, I HOPE TO:

1. Shine light upon the darkness of inappropriate traditions (un-righteous high places), doctrines, precepts and philosophies (bases of religion) which use the Lord Jesus Christ as an excuse. Within this, please note:
 - The festivals of obstinacy (traditions of rote) within the Christian religion both precede (Christmas) and follow (Easter) the cross of Christ; yet the emphasis of the Gospel is upon the cross; for it is at the cross whereby Jesus' atoning work was accomplished with completeness (it is finished), and where our carnal tendencies (foundational to "self") are laid to rest (crucified)!¹⁶⁶⁴ It is the work of Satan for believers to avoid these facts; thereby maintaining emphases to be worship in the flesh (i.e. religious: doctrines, precepts, ideologies, traditions, and rituals)!¹⁶⁶⁵ Please remember, secular religion is all about how humans supposedly have need to please or help God, which is based in human pride and arrogance; for our greatest efforts apart from faith, hope and trust in and submissiveness unto God are but wretched foolishness!¹⁶⁶⁶

¹⁶⁶² Matthew 7:13-27; 2 Corinthians 1:12; Colossians 1:3-8; Titus 2:11-15.

¹⁶⁶³ John 3:1-36; Philippians 2:12-16; Matthew 6:25-34; Colossians 2:6-10, 20-3:4; Hebrews 5:12-6:3.

¹⁶⁶⁴ Matthew 16:21-27; John 19:30; Romans 6:5-14; 1 Corinthians 1:22-2:5; Galatians 2:17-21; 5:19-26.

¹⁶⁶⁵ Titus 1:10-16; 1 Corinthians 10:14-22; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 4:1-4; Philippians 3:15-21.

¹⁶⁶⁶ Emphasized—Isaiah 63:1-65:16, emphasis—64:6.

- The fact of the resurrection proves that the Jesus of the Bible is truly the Messiah of promise. Within this fact, and the fact that we are saved by grace through faith (when a righteous confession of faith is rendered—Romans 10:8-10), we have the assurance that within a personal relationship (spiritual relational reality) with the Lord of the Bible we will in fact be saved.
 - As will be discussed, we must also note that the insidious nature of religion in accordance to the will and working of Satan will keep multitudes in bondage, thereby staying them from fighting the good fight of the faith; possibly throughout the entirety of their life as believers. A considerable means by which the multitudes within the Christian religion are held captive, is found within the fact that the traditions (harlotry) of the Christian religion (as distinguished from actual Christianity) were set forth by the “Mother of harlotry” which worships a different Jesus than the One of the Bible; who alone being the King of kings and Lord of lords (Messiah) can save us from our sins.¹⁶⁶⁷
2. Simplify matters of Scripture; so as to eliminate distractions away from simplicity of disciplined devotion to Christ.¹⁶⁶⁸
 3. Place emphasis upon our need for selfless love in all our endeavors. This is reiterated by what the Apostle Paul was stating in 1 Corinthians 9:19-27; 13:1-13; Philippians 1:21-28; with great emphasis being upon purity of motives.¹⁶⁶⁹
 4. Illustrate the wonderment of God’s love and grace; in context of His personal lovingkindness for all of His living creatures; more so those created in His image.¹⁶⁷⁰
 5. Render a basic idea of what Christianity is truly all about! Believe it or not, it is not as complicated as many would make it seem; nor is it burdensome as many choose or are forced to believe, as by the

¹⁶⁶⁷ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15; Acts 4:8-12; John 14:1-31.

¹⁶⁶⁸ Matthew 22:36-40; 2 Timothy 2:1-4:4.

¹⁶⁶⁹ Galatians 6:7, 8; Jeremiah 17:5-10

¹⁶⁷⁰ Psalm 136:1-26; John 13:34, 35; 15:12-17

foolishness (doctrines, precepts, philosophies, ideologies, idealisms, and traditions) of religion!¹⁶⁷¹ Christianity (being Christ-like) is foundational to devotionally submitting unto the Lord so that He may both will and work for His own righteous pleasure; thus the only thing complicated or burdensome is found within insincerity and lacking devotion pertaining to God, as multitudes absolutely reject denying personal volition (“self”) so as to selflessly and devotionally (with all sincerity) love and serve the Lord!¹⁶⁷²

A Basic Understanding of Religious History

Prefatory

The primary imperative to understanding how multitudes have been led astray throughout history, is to realize that there is one true God; and besides Him there is no other!¹⁶⁷³ When this is realized with certainty within the spirit of an individual, knowledge is forthcoming that faith, hope, and trust must be placed solely in and upon the Lord our God! The primary means by which all but a remnant have been led astray throughout history, is that faith, hope, and trust have been placed elsewhere than upon the Lord; in such things as: religion, people, government, riches, prestigious positions, physical strengths, self, human intellect and worldly wisdom (which is actually foolishness before God—1 Corinthians 3:19, 20).

It was due the fact that without focus upon the Lord we assuredly go astray, that God initiated and insisted upon the imperative of the Sabbath Day, for this was necessary to force men and women to stop the direction of their personal choosing (volition), and turn complete restful focus back unto the Lord. If God had not instituted the Sabbath Day with incorporation of strict punishment for violation of its standards, the chosen of God (Israelites) would have wondered far from God their Savior; with little conviction to ever return to the One who alone was their shield and strength. We must remember that the Sabbath Day is for humankind, as a time to return attentiveness and devotion to God, thereby a time of consideration regarding appropriate

¹⁶⁷¹ Matthew 11:28-30

¹⁶⁷² Matthew 16:24-26; Luke 6:46-49

¹⁶⁷³ Deuteronomy 4:35-39; 6:4-9.

focus, priorities and convictions.¹⁶⁷⁴ Although there is no longer a specific day of the week for a Sabbath rest in the Lord, the imperative yet exists that a weekly Sabbath rest continue; lest we (within the Body of Christ) through lost focus and distraction journey far from the Lord, with increasing difficulty to return!¹⁶⁷⁵ We must also remember that there were no rituals or traditions associated with the appointed Sabbath day; for it was a day without work, for the simple purpose of rest and heartfelt individual and family devotional worship of the Lord!¹⁶⁷⁶ The imperative here is not that a specific Sabbath Day must any longer be adhered to, as we are not under the Law but rather within God's grace; the imperative is rather that we make time for God on a frequent regular basis, so the direction of our own volition not carry us to a point of little or no return to the narrow path of God's righteousness.¹⁶⁷⁷ As creatures of habit, we must make time to render: worship, praise, and thanksgiving unto the Lord; or assuredly worldly habits will overtake us!

The fact of this matter is confirmed within the Gospel; as well as the factual imperative of focus upon the Lord by all who actually believe (Jew and Gentile alike).¹⁶⁷⁸ The Lord our God chose a simple peoples (Israelites) derived from His own tender mercies, everlasting lovingkindness and grace, so that they may be witnesses to His goodness in a world of evil influence and the wickedness derived wherefrom.¹⁶⁷⁹ Just as the Israelites never warranted His tenderness upon them, so neither does any believer; for God has mercy upon whom He chooses, and this for the purpose that He may be glorified by the witness of faithful believers.¹⁶⁸⁰ When this is realized, we then gain potential of actual knowledge regarding how the works of God concerning believers has been completed since before the foundation of the world; for all that is good, acceptable and perfect is according to God's will, as believers are blessed immensely to be anointed within the relationship of His choosing.¹⁶⁸¹

¹⁶⁷⁴ Numbers 15:32-41; Mark 2:23-28.

¹⁶⁷⁵ Hebrews 4:1-10.

¹⁶⁷⁶ Exodus 20:8-11; Deuteronomy 5:13-15.

¹⁶⁷⁷ Matthew 7:13-27.

¹⁶⁷⁸ Hebrews 12:1-11.

¹⁶⁷⁹ Deuteronomy 7:7-12.

¹⁶⁸⁰ Romans 9:6-29.

¹⁶⁸¹ 1 John 2:3-27; Ephesians 1:3-23; Hebrews 4:11-16.

“Religion” by definition involves the attitudes, emotions and physical realm beliefs of humankind’s behavioral relationship with the powers of the universe; more specifically the relationship between humankind and a deity or deities. The origins of religion; with the exception of the Levitical Law which was from God; being founded within the conceptual thinking of man, derived from the innate initial measure of faith given to individuals from the Creator, continued forth through traditions (oral communication); for religion predates communication in written form. Although the measure of faith given individuals of the human race by the Creator, was and remains a way by which individuals may come to actually know and love the Creator (when righteously actuated by God), “religion” as set forth by man vaguely has sought understanding aside of actual knowledge. The pride which abounds within the human sinful nature, in seeking spiritual answers in the physical realm as by intellect, reason, assumption, conjecture, elaborate stories (folklore) and fantasy (myths); has blinded the masses throughout history; although a remnant within humility of heart, mind and spirit have come to actual knowledge by the grace of the Creator (God). This is proven by the time period of Job’s existence, which predates the nation of Israel, and the fact that Job both knew and trusted God (actual relationship); whereas his supposed friends had but a concept of God while in reality trusting in human reason and intellect. The emphasis in context therefore remains that although potential for a personal relationship with the Creator (Lord and Savior) exists as by the measure of faith He has rendered to each in accordance to His lovingkindness and tender mercies, the potential for the relationship is greatly hindered, and many times completely destroyed by the inference derived from human pride and arrogance. Please remember, when the measure of faith has not been righteously activated by God during His divine work of drawing an individual unto the spiritual relational reality with Jesus, the measure of faith within human gullibility can be easily enticed and influenced by evil within carnal deceptions!¹⁶⁸²

For the sake of humankind’s realistic and actual spiritual wellbeing, God confused the languages at Babel, so as to bless humankind with potential to break free of the traditions (oral communication) which led humankind to trust one another rather than God.¹⁶⁸³ The bases for

¹⁶⁸² John 6:44, 45.

spiritual downfall within humankind, continues to be found within organization and correlation of human thoughts and reason; for as humans organize, correlate and reason amongst themselves, and thereby trust in themselves, they fail to look beyond themselves through the spiritual eyes of faith so as to trust in God (in actuality). Human inane thinking is the foundation of organized religion, for as the individual religions are organized and adhered to by those of humankind with like thinking or beliefs, so the religion as it seems appropriate to the specific persons is deemed valid through the philosophies, doctrines, precepts, traditions and rituals of the originators; being reasoned also as valid by the participants, as by the ideologies set forth.

Because God exists in factual reality, and this fact cannot actually be denied as by the evinced beauty of intelligent creative design, the potential has always existed that individuals created in God's image could come to know and trust the Creator without necessity of understanding the bases of creation itself. "Religion" being based in man's attempts to understand creation and the Creator apart from relational knowledge of the Creator, has throughout history attempted to explain the created order (universal nature, human experience); which was the origin of mythology (sagas, legends and folktales). "Religion" is the primary means by which humankind remains untrustingly separated from God; for as religion is foundationally organized by humankind as led by Satan and demons, all attempts at explanation or belief, apart from utilization of the actual righteous measure of faith rendered to all by the Lord, remain vague and deceptive. "Religion" is therefore the primary means by which humankind attempts to find God (who is light), while wandering in darkness; thus religion attempts to create a gray zone (mixture of light and darkness) of man's choosing (volition)!¹⁶⁸⁴ This is the reason why most supposed believers (those within the Christian religion) maintain a religious concept of God, without knowledge which is achieved through actual fellowship with God within a personal relationship!¹⁶⁸⁵ If individuals were as adamant to simply adore the Lord and study the Gospel, as they are to adhere to and defend religious beliefs, then those of true Christianity would be far more than an actual remnant!

¹⁶⁸³ Genesis 11:1-9.

¹⁶⁸⁴ Colossians 2:20-23; John 3:3-21.

¹⁶⁸⁵ 2 Corinthians 3:4-4:6.

Bases of Religion

The bases (foundation) of the pantheon (family of gods; polytheistic religion) began in the approximate 5th millennium B.C.; in a land known as Sumer, corresponding to the area of Babylonia in Biblical times. In order to better understand the bases of religion, it is imperative to have knowledge of but a few essentials. Please understand, I will neither make notation nor discuss all aspects of potential religion; rather I am making notation which will allow understanding as to the compromise which led to “The Way” (actual Christianity; which is all about God) becoming the “Christian religion” (which is all about humankind, holding to but a concept of God).

A considerable basis by which “religion” yet attempts to place God within a realm conceivable by human intellect (apart from actual faith), began with the gods and goddesses of the pantheon being superhuman immortal beings who were considered to possess the likeness of humankind; although never having been actually seen. It was believed that the gods and goddesses worked together within the created order, within both the creative origins and upholding of all things.

- It is due the place of origin by which inappropriate (pagan; false) secular religious practices began to defile the chosen and children of the one true God, that “Babylon” is named as the great harlot who filled the world with abominations and immorality.¹⁶⁸⁶ Sumer is not the place named as the “Mother of harlots,” for Babylon was the 1st of the 4 Biblical kingdoms by which those chosen of God were led to defilement.
- It is not the Babylon of antiquity which is of specific mention in the book of Revelation, but rather the secular religion which has for centuries, and even yet to this very day, carried forward defilement from the “Babylonian Mysteries” religion.¹⁶⁸⁷ Specifics regarding this will be discussed later within this chapter, and in chapter six—Notations on Revelation.

1. Pantheism: Is the overall doctrine that the entire universe is God, or that each individual part of the universe is a manifestation of God

¹⁶⁸⁶ Revelation 17:1-5.

¹⁶⁸⁷ Revelation 17:6-18.

(God indwells creation; God is the uncaused substance of all things). The word itself is derived from the Greek words “pan” (all) and “theos” (God).

- Another (different) facet of pantheism is the totality of “all gods” (family of gods); all of which being different, while each having different functions or responsibilities, are yet instrumental for the creation and/or fulfillment of all things (supposedly).
- It is within the aspect of the different gods being instrumental for the fulfillment of all things, that the fertility gods and goddesses of the “Babylonian Mysteries” were contrived within the polytheism of Mesopotamian religion.

Within the “doctrine of pantheism,” it is believed that individuals may begin with a concept of divine reality (god; creator). From this point, humans may then reason by speculation the relationship between the divine (god) and the non-divine (creation); coming eventually to understanding as by human intellectual conjecture and reason. This aspect of the doctrine is referred to as “acosmic pantheism.”

Another aspect of the “doctrine of pantheism,” is referred to as “cosmic pantheism.” This aspect is converse to “acosmic pantheism;” in that cosmic pantheism begins with human arrogance which portrays man as having full understanding pertaining to the entirety of the created order. Within this form of astounding human arrogance, the concept of “god” is attached to human doctrinal philosophy; thus setting an intellectual foundation for “religion” as by human reason and assumption. In simple terms; this is a basis of belief (counterfeit faith), as by the philosophy “Sic et Non”; *I believe that which I may understand.*

From the aforementioned foundational aspects of pantheism, we can better understand how “religion” has grown with great intensity throughout history. The boastful pride of the human sinful nature (self; individuality), leads men and women to think more highly of themselves than they ought to think; allowing variations in forms of religion, in accordance to the different emotions, principles, philosophies and conjecture of individuals; due rarity of human masses to think alike. With the many differences of human reason and understanding, and the fact that smaller groups may think alike in seeking to understand the divine nature, whereas the masses upon the earth would never fully

agree; assorted religions (and religious denominations) are born from the: philosophies, doctrines, precepts and traditions of humankind, and followed by individuals of like mindedness.

2. Polytheism: Whereas “pantheism” is doctrine which encompasses all creation as being a manifestation of God, or the totality of “all gods”; polytheism is the collected order of gods (plural) within a specific religion, culture, or system of belief.

Within Polytheism, in many cases, different kingdoms or cultures upon the earth have associated with and incorporated supposed deities from other nations or cultures; then renaming the supposed deities in an effort to personalize the god (singular or plural) or goddess (singular or plural) to fit their chosen personal or civilization’s system of beliefs. Within this fact of religious history, the same pagan false gods have been worshipped under different names and pretenses; to serve within a specific purpose of human choosing.

- Examples—name alterations of gods and goddesses from kingdom to kingdom:

GREEK	ROMAN
ZEUS (<i>Ruler of the gods</i>)	JUPITER (<i>same</i>)
HERA (<i>Goddess of marriage and childbirth; wife of Zeus</i>)	JUNO (<i>same; wife of Jupiter</i>)
APHRODITE (<i>Goddess of love and sexual desire</i>)	VENUS (<i>Goddess of: love, gardens, and fields</i>)
ARES (<i>God of war</i>)	MARS (<i>same</i>)
URANUS (<i>God of the sky; Father of Titans</i>)	(<i>same name and purpose</i>)
POSEIDON (<i>God of the sea and earthquakes</i>)	NEPTUNE (<i>same</i>)
HADES (<i>God of underworld; Lord of the dead</i>)	PLUTO (<i>same</i>)
GAEA (<i>Mother earth</i>)	TERRA (<i>same</i>)
ASCLEPIUS (<i>God of medicine</i>)	AESCULAPIUS (<i>same</i>)
APOLLO (<i>God of: sun, prophesy, medicine, and archery</i>)	(<i>same name and purpose</i>)

ARTEMIS (<i>Goddess of the and moon</i>)	DIANA (<i>same</i>)
ATHENA (<i>Goddess of: wisdom, arts, crafts, and war</i>)	MINERVA (<i>same</i>)
CRONUS (<i>God of the sky; Ruler of the Titans</i>)	SATURN (<i>God of agriculture</i>)
DEMETER (<i>Goddess of grain</i>)	CERES (<i>same</i>)
DIONYSUS (<i>God of wine and vegetation</i>)	BACCHUS (<i>same</i>)
EROS (<i>God of love</i>)	CUPID (<i>same</i>)
HEPHAESTUS (<i>God of fire; blacksmith of the gods</i>)	VULCAN (<i>same</i>)
HERMES (<i>Messenger of the Gods; Protector of travelers and merchants</i>)	MERCURY (<i>same</i>)
HESTIA (<i>Guardian of the home</i>)	VESTA (<i>same</i>)
HYPNOS (<i>God of sleep</i>)	SOMNUS (<i>same</i>)
RHEA (<i>Wife of Cronus; Mother Goddess</i>)	OPS (<i>Wife of Saturn; Mother Goddess</i>)

In cases where a specific god or goddess was preferred over another, elaborate stories (folklore) were enacted to justify a change of priority superiority; demonstrating (in reality) the frailty and weakness of religions based within epics of human origin, which attempt to explain characteristics of the created order. It is due this fact that many gods and goddesses are associated with aspects of creation; such as: rivers, landscapes, forests, seasons, sun, moon, stars, planets, harvests, weather, water, fertility, specific trades, warfare, earth, sky, etc. The epics of regions upon the earth were generally specialized for the specific regions; with alterations within specifics, when the same gods and goddesses were chosen by other regions as desired deities. At times, the names of acquired deities were maintained, when various peoples were conquered; thus the specific deity of the conquered peoples was said to take the side of the victor.

The fact emphasized by polytheistic religions, is that deities (or levels of consciousness; such as nirvana in Buddhism) are of human specifications; utilized as a means to explain that which was (and remains) misunderstood within the realm of actual knowledge. The basic

premise of “religion” therefore remains that what man cannot explain through human investigation (i.e. philosophy, science, mathematics, etc.), becomes the bases of belief systems; with: epics, traditions, rituals, attained virtues, etc., which allow supposed answers through: striving in the flesh, creative thinking, conjecture, and assumptions which seem to render answers within the spiritual realm; although not in actuality! Within this fact, it can be understood why specific anthropomorphic gods and goddesses are chosen, altered, and manipulated to suit specific civilizations in accordance to geographical location, specifics of human desire, and specific desires of the civilization itself; such as seeking of signs and wonders, philosophical superiority, military superiority, intellectual superiority, wealth superiority, etc. As most civilizations seek to be superior to all others in one form or another, much as one individual religion (or denomination) seeks to be superior to all others in one form or another; the deities of the civilization or religion are created within the hearts and minds of the specific peoples, for the fulfillment of specific purposes! The essence of this becomes creative thinking (idealism) on the part of the cultural or religious leadership (idealists), which is followed by the masses from within a state of intentional ignorance (ideology).

3. **Monotheism:** The belief in only one God.

- This is the basis of belief within both actual Christianity (as greatly distinguished from the Christian religion) and Islam (in Arabic means—‘surrender’).

The major difference between all religions upon planet earth and the beliefs of Islam and actual Christianity remains the seeking of one God and Creator; vice invented gods, goddesses, higher levels of consciousness, and epics (folklore; traditions) of specific human choice. The God of the Israelites (His chosen people), has proven that He alone is the one true God; for the history of creation and of the world is proven (factually) as the Bible (not including the Apocryphal writings) has been evinced to be exactly correct, as by archeology, history, the actual personal relationship with God; more so still by the resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ, and His having risen been witnessed by many.¹⁶⁸⁸

¹⁶⁸⁸ John 20:16-21:14.

The fact of Jesus' existence and the profound effect upon the world by His endeavors in "truth" regarding the reality of God is emphasized by the calendar designations—B.C. (before Christ) and A.D. (Anno Domini; year of the Lord); which cannot change, although the secular world in efforts to deny the fact of the "reality of the Christ," in later times changed the designations to—BCE (before Christ's era) and ACE (after Christ's era), which evinces the reality of absurdity in attempts to deny the "truth"!

With the facts of actual Christianity having been proven by the reality of life itself, and the fact that no god, goddess, or person of ultimate consciousness has ever been witnessed by human ability to have ever emphasized the divine nature of God which is evinced in Jesus alone; the fact remains that the one true God does exist, and can be known personally; completely aloof of religious foolishness! Actual Christianity being completely founded upon the Lord Jesus Christ (Christ translated means Messiah) has no necessity for religious: epics, traditions, doctrines, principals, precepts, ideologies, and philosophies; for as aforementioned, these alterations are necessary only for those who worship without actual knowledge or faith!¹⁶⁸⁹ The primary difference between adherents of actual Christianity (as distinguished from the Christian religion) and adherents of secular religions remains that actual Christians summit to God and remain subject to His righteousness by faith, whereas all others seek to establish their own state or form of righteousness!¹⁶⁹⁰ The fact of this is proven by the emphasis of "religion" to be based within the physical realm, whereas the emphasis of actual Christianity is based solely and completely in the spiritual realm! The Jews of old had necessity for a mindset pertaining to this world, for they shall inherit the earth; whereas the mindset of true believers (Jew and Gentile alike) from the time of Israel's having been set aside (temporarily) must remain beyond the confines of this world, for ours is a heavenly kingdom!¹⁶⁹¹

When the reality of "The Way" (actual Christianity) became the deceptive fantasy of the Christian religion within a short period of time from the founding of the church by the Lord, aspects of religion were

¹⁶⁸⁹ John 4:20-42; Galatians 4:1-11.

¹⁶⁹⁰ Romans 3:1-31; 10:1-13; Mark 10:17-31; cf. Psalm 14:1-7.

¹⁶⁹¹ John 4:20-24; 14:6-14; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; Hebrews 9:15-10:18; 11:1-6; 1 Peter 1:3-9; Matthew 13:34-50; 25:31-46; Ephesians 1:3-23.

forcibly introduced to compensate for the lack of actual faith within the multitudes. When this occurred, leadership within the Christian religion made alterations as by doctrines, precepts, philosophies and traditions (epics); which has hindered individuals from entering into the appropriate personal spiritual relationship with God; for the Lord our Creator has always desired our sincere love, loyalty and devotion, over any form of religious sacrifice, ritual, or flattering words!¹⁶⁹² The basic premise which has led to multitudes within the Christian religion being led astray remains that human beings tend to follow other human beings, as faith is not of necessity so as to learn in this fashion! Because Jesus (God) is actually and factually the One who teaches us the spiritual Gospel truth, the imperative of faith is evident, yet denied within the following of others within the Christian religion; this as “religion” is based within human emotions and fanatical concept, whereas the beauty of Christianity is based within the spirit (led by God)!¹⁶⁹³ The imperative factor of trusting devotion by faith in God is factually evident throughout the New Testament, as the person of Jesus placed major emphasis upon the Father (invisible God)!¹⁶⁹⁴ The emphasis placed by Jesus when He walked upon the earth, was that believers are to focus upon “God” through righteously actuated faith (walking by faith); not seeking spiritual answers in the physical realm, as by persons or religion (walking by sight)!

IMPORTANT PREEMPTIVE NOTES

- Jesus earthly spoken ministry was directed specifically toward the Jews alone; with the exception being His loving involvement with individuals of *faith*; this of course being distinguished from His sacrificial (atoning) work which was once for all. Jesus always adamantly avoided religious teachings void of faith and truth!¹⁶⁹⁵
- The initial spoken ministry of the devoted Apostles (disciples) was also for the sake of the Israelites (God’s chosen people)!¹⁶⁹⁶
- Signs (saymaion) and wonders (teras) were for the sake of the

¹⁶⁹² 1 Thessalonians 2:5-9; Romans 16:17-20; Jude 1:3-25; Colossians 2:1-12.

¹⁶⁹³ Romans 8:1-17, specific vs. 12-14.

¹⁶⁹⁴ Emphasized—Matthew 6:1-34; 13:11-50.

¹⁶⁹⁵ Matthew 15:21-28, specific v. 24; 23:1-36.

¹⁶⁹⁶ Matthew 10:1-8, specific vs. 5, 6.

Jews alone, and for foundational forming of the church as through the affirmation of faithful testimony; for the Jews being of little faith always sought for signs.¹⁶⁹⁷ Being God's chosen people, they have and will continue to receive blessings from the Lord; which are for them alone!

- It is due the fact that signs and wonders were for the sake of the Jews, that actual signs (saymaion) and wonders (teras) from God utilizing human agents, ceased completely when the Jews were set aside (temporarily) upon entrance into the dispensation of grace (the church age).¹⁶⁹⁸ By my own investigative approximation, this occurred sometime during the years A.D. 47-52.
- As witnessed by the Luke 11:21-26 passages, trusting in physical realm means of safety, and physical realm witnessed means of proof regarding spiritual matters, is extremely dangerous! Therefore, to trust in that which is of the world or of importance to the flesh in order to believe, proves a lack of faith and trust in God; from whom comes our actual protection and deliverance!
- The false (counterfeit) signs (semeiois) and wonders (teras) which have been emphasized within the Christian religion since the time of Israel's having been set aside (temporarily), are the work of Satan and demons; for these false signs and wonders have been, and will continue to be a means by which individuals without actual righteous actuated faith will be deceived by the darkness of religion. The primary worldly religion which serves Satan by emphasizing the false signs and wonders is the "Christian religion" (as greatly distinguished from actual Christianity; i.e. the Way)! With understanding of this fact, we can understand that the Christian religion (as distinguished from actual Christianity; i.e. those having the mind of Christ) has and will continue to set the stage for Satan's servant—the Antichrist; this as the Christian religion entices the foolish desires and emotions of the flesh!¹⁶⁹⁹ Simply

¹⁶⁹⁷ Matthew 12:38-45; 16:1-4; Luke 11:16-36; John 6:30-66.

¹⁶⁹⁸ Acts 15:1-29; Romans 3:9-5:21; 9:1-11:36; Colossians 3:1-17; Ephesians 3:1-21.

¹⁶⁹⁹ Revelation 13:11-18; reiterated—Romans 8:1-17.

stated, although “Christianity” is a pure and undefiled relationship which is lived by faith with focus and fulfillment in the spiritual realm, the “Christian religion” is a dung heap of physical realm corruption and compromise derived from religious attempts to gain converts from the paganisms of the world!

Just as actual Christianity being founded upon the Lord had as its premise the seeking of the one true God with a devotional heart and submissive spirit, so also was the initial premise of Islam (Mohammed). Just as actual Christianity was corrupted for the many (masses) by the initiation and instituting of manmade religious doctrines and philosophies derived from variances in focus due to volitional thinking and elemental intentions; so also occurred within Islam, as Islamic leadership were swayed from devotional focus as by the volition of the flesh which was persuaded by evil influence. Although a remnant within both actual Christianity and Islam seek to love God with pure motives and intent, the factious masses within both the Christian religion and Islam have been led to devotions of harlotry due to the corruptions which come forth from volitional (vane) predominant human thinking and leadership. Once human beings believe they hold all the answers, they will no longer humbly submit unto the Lord who has knowledge of all things (thus all the righteous answers regarding every perplexity)!

- The distractions of the flesh (self) remain the primary hindrance within those who seek to know the one true God within Monotheism! This is the reason “self” must be denied, in order to actually and devotionally follow the Lord!¹⁷⁰⁰ Because the reality exists that the God of the Bible (one true God) has been and continues to be proven within all avenues of evidenced reality (such as archaeology and creation itself), the reality also exists that all who seek the one true God (truth) will be subjected to the coercive nature of demonic influence; thus appropriate spiritual focus and success is maintained solely through fighting the good fight of the faith!¹⁷⁰¹

¹⁷⁰⁰ Matthew 16:24, 25.

¹⁷⁰¹ John 14:6, 7; Romans 1:18-23; 1 Timothy 1:18, 19; 6:3-19; 2 Timothy 4:1-8.

- Because salvation is realized only through the Lord of the Bible who alone is God and Savior, discernment brings forth knowledge that all other avenues of expressed eternity remain vain, deceptive, coercive, distractive, and futile; in and of themselves.¹⁷⁰² The fact that multitudes in times of antiquity, and individuals even now, utilize objects created by man as instruments for worship and belief, emphatically demonstrates how easily our flesh is led astray from all forms of righteousness regarding God; gods or lords!¹⁷⁰³

4. Tritheism: The belief in three gods.

- Many Christian religion doctrines regarding the “Trinity,” border on Tritheism!
- Because of disputes and controversies which have arisen throughout church history, philosophical doctrines have been contrived to prove points of controversial interests; all of which bringing forth distraction, confusion, prideful arrogance, and religious precepts. Information regarding the reality of this matter is found in chapter two.

5. Deism: Belief that God created the earth, yet discontinued involvement with the world after its creation.

- The philosophy of Deism eliminates the potential of a personal relationship with the Creator; for in accordance to this philosophy, God does not concern Himself with the continuation of His creation.

6. Atheism: Disbelief in God (monotheism), or gods (polytheism).

- There is actually no such thing as an Atheist, because God has given to each a measure of faith; although within the bitterness of the heart derived from the foolishness of human pride and/or religious complacency, many would claim to be.
- It is an unfortunate fact; many supposed atheists have turned away from knowing God, due the fact of overwhelming religious principles, precepts and harassments.

¹⁷⁰² Romans 10:1-21; Isaiah 43:1-44:27.

¹⁷⁰³ 1 Corinthians 8:1-9.

7. Rationalism: The Philosophy which emphasizes the role of reason alone as necessary for obtaining knowledge.

- This philosophy maintains that the bases for knowledge are innate, thus all knowledge pertaining to philosophy and science could be deductively derived (reasoned) from the discovery of certain universal and self-evident truths.
- Rationalism is a primary foundational basis by which humankind attempts to gain understanding solely by the intellectual prowess innate to human nature. Within this fact, we can better understand why many leaders (including supposed spiritual leaders) throughout the centuries have sought and fought to maintain pedestals, from atop which they view and act condescendingly toward others, while maintaining the mindset of themselves being without error. As pride and rationalism coincide closely one with the other, the potential for imposing leadership to realize truth or actually trust in God is greatly hindered, or destroyed completely!
- Scholastic Theology from the 11th- 16th centuries A.D. was very much founded within the conceptual philosophy of Rationalism.
- Scholasticism attempted to understand Biblical revelation (which is actually spiritually appraised), as by philosophy and reason.¹⁷⁰⁴
- This caused further alterations within the Christian religion; this made evident, as the time of the Reformation came in the 16th century A.D. Within the argumentative debates and stature of the Reformation Period, individuals took the stance of being right and others wrong; leading to divisions with few actually coming to knowledge of Biblical truth (1 Timothy 1:3-11)!

8. Empiricism: The philosophical doctrine that emphasizes that all human knowledge is based upon experience. This denies any possibility for spontaneous ideas or priori thought, although yet emphasizing the key role of sense perception (sensation) within experience leading to knowledge.

¹⁷⁰⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

- Immanuel Kant expounded upon the doctrine of Empiricism, by incorporating sensations as being acceptable within the realm of experience. This combined the philosophies of both Empiricism and Rationalism.
- The basic premise of Empiricism is the foundational basis of both many forms of religion, and Christian religious denominationalism. As by the premise of knowledge being based upon experience, those of like-mindedness gather as by the coinciding nature of their human experiences or sense perceptions.

9. Agnosticism: Denial that humans can actually know whether God exists or not. Within this, some Agnostics conclude that systems of human belief should simply be suspended (agnostic atheism).

- Other Agnostics, conclude belief in God by faith (intuitive understanding); aside from any specifics of religion.
- This form of Agnosticism holds to the basic principle that it is possible to know of God by faith, yet denies the ability of knowing God personally as through a close relationship; which is the actual foundational basis (close relationship) of both non-emphatic Christianity and non-emphatic Islam.

10. Mythology: The collection, study, and interpretation of myths associated with a particular culture. Mythology encompasses narratives which render conceivable explanations as to the perplexities of life and creation; generally passed down through oral communication, with such repetitiveness so as to be believed (epic).

The aforementioned brief explanations of human philosophical thinking render assistance in gaining realization as to the expanded growth of religion due the intellectualizations of humankind. Religion in and of itself, being based in and founded upon human intellect and the fantasies of the flesh, while also holding to a basic concept of God, is in essence a means of mysticism which draws likeminded individuals to believe in the divine (God); without actual wisdom, understanding and knowledge. "Religion" has always been a means by which man seeks enlightenment; apart from illumination which comes from the Holy Spirit, who renders the blessing of actual wisdom, understanding, "truth" and knowledge.

In addition, “religion” is the primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world, minus a remnant, by influencing human assumption, conjecture, and vain thinking; aloof truth and reality!

Important note—it should be remembered and contemplated upon, prior to continuation; God gave to each “a measure of faith,” so that all humans may believe in him spiritually (by faith), and be stayed from the prideful arrogance of the human nature (John 3:1-21; Romans 12:3; James 4:13-17)! “Christianity” is based within an actual measure of righteously actuated faith, being foundational upon and within a personal relationship with Jesus (our lord and creator); without compromise, variation, or excuse (Romans 12:1-21; Colossians 1:3-23; Hebrews 12:1-29)!

It is the inappropriate trusting in the uncertainty of riches and human leadership, and the many ways by which mammon and demonically influenced leadership turns the hearts of individuals to ultimately serve “self,” that is the purpose of explanation within Revelation chapter eighteen. Babylon was the first of the four major kingdoms of Biblical mention. From Babylon (1st kingdom) precept factors centered upon the: lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, and boastful pride of life; entered into and corrupted the spiritual and moral stature of human existence as set forth by the Lord to His chosen people (the Israelites). The precept factors from Babylon began the basis of covert authoritarianism throughout the known world; as freedom for lesser capital gains among the commoners, became the basis of great riches to the ruling authorities. This corruption continued through the Medo-Persian Period (2nd kingdom) which added forms of political doctrine and increased trust in government, then through the Greek Period (3rd kingdom) which added forms of philosophy; bringing forth increased human intellectual feelings of worth. The fourth kingdom—“Rome,” having collected the precepts, doctrines and philosophies of the former kingdoms, then added many traditions which made the forms of secular bondage complete; which yet to this day holds the multitudes captive to carnal affairs, hopes, and trust.

Initially within the Roman Empire, the gods were considered higher powers without form. When the Roman culture came into contact with other cultures of polytheistic beliefs in the 6th century B.C., the Romans

began to identify the gods of their progressive culture in physical forms; which was derived from the associations which were made with the Greeks (and Etruscans) having already done so. It was from the combination of the two civilizations, as by the poetry and writing of Roman scholars who attached the names of Roman gods onto former Greek literary traditions (as by association) that a centralized Greco-Roman form of mythology came into existence. This makes evident how one civilization grafts into its own culture the beliefs and traditions of former cultures, while making alterations for the purpose of prestige, and self-gratification of being the precedent originator of a belief or tradition; although not within any form of actual realism. In many instances, civilizations would search the archives of other nations to ascertain specific gods which were claimed to assist within certain situations, and then the nation would begin worshipping the specific god so as to gain the god's strength for victory or success within the specific desired by the civilization. This lends credence that most people will come to believe anything, and worship foolishly, if and when the emphasis of the matter places them within a position of supposed personal superiority or gains; this derived from the boastful pride of life and/or lustful desires of the flesh, which are of the sinful nature. Please remember, the primary basis of human: meanness, wickedness, failures, frailties, carnal motivations, insincerities and insecurities; has always been "self" and the derivatives there from (i.e. pride, arrogance, selfishness, self-centeredness, greed, bigotry, prejudice, angry endeavors, etc.)!

With the repeated telling of stories within a culture or society, and the fact that most individuals within a culture, society or religion tend to go with the status quo, it becomes inevitable that the masses within a culture or the religion of the culture, tend to follow and eventually believe the stories as being real (epic; circumlocutory); whereas only a remnant maintains adherence to the truth within factuality, as by denial of the fabrication or fantasy! The un-righteous art of rhetoric, duplicity, ostentation and affectation has led multitudes astray from both truth and reality throughout history; as those without actual knowledge derived from seeking of truth, generally remain both ignorant and guilty of credulity! As the Holy Spirit stated within Scripture, the masses have indeed: exchanged the truth for a lie, allowed their love for God to grow cold, become boastful and arrogant as by seeking to establish their own righteousness, become lovers of "self" (narcissistic), placed their own

carnal wants and desires above the necessities of others and sincere seeking of God, chosen to trust in the uncertainties of mammon, seek purpose within the standards set forth by the world, and chosen to walk at a distance from God as by their continual journey within endeavors of darkness.¹⁷⁰⁵ In contrast, the remnant (true Christians) seek to: maintain love for God first and foremost, attempt consistent and persistent denial of “self,” consider others as more important than themselves, immovably submit to the righteousness of God, walk in truth at all times (i.e. maintain absolute integrity; candor; veracity), maintain fellowship with God as by walking in the light of truth and reality habitually, place the salvation of the lost as a precedent, and trust solely in God; thereby gaining knowledge of purpose as by God’s: tutelage, masterful leadership, and grace.¹⁷⁰⁶ The truth of this matter can be evidenced within the life of all; for surely upon close inspection, tests may be forthcoming which prove either salvation within a relationship with God (Holy Spirit’s fruit), or deception and coercion leading to condemnation amongst those held captive by religion and fleshly indulgence (deeds of the flesh).¹⁷⁰⁷ It should always be remembered, going with the masses within the status quo in holding to a simple concept of God is not sufficient for either a life trained in righteousness or salvation; for if God’s seal for the day of redemption is upon a person, then growth in knowledge and righteousness must be forthcoming!¹⁷⁰⁸

- **A simple test:** Those who have gone beyond simple understanding to actual knowledge: realize the agape spiritual love which God has for those created in His image; are without fear, for God’s perfect love casts out fear (1 John 4:11-21); realize the imperative for focus upon the author and perfecter of our faith, as with disciplined devotional focus comes elimination of superficial un-investigated acceptance, and an adamant denial of “self” for the sake of appropriate fellowship with God; the necessity to walk by faith, for all that is religious within the

¹⁷⁰⁵ Matthew 6:19-24; John 3:19-21; 12:35, 36, 46-48; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 John 1:1-10.

¹⁷⁰⁶ Ephesians 2:1-22; 1 Timothy 4:6-16; 6:6-19; 2 Timothy 2:3-4:8; Matthew 22:36-40; Philippians 2:1-18; Jude 1:17-23; James 5:19, 20; 1 Peter 4:7-19.

¹⁷⁰⁷ 1 John 3:1-18; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10; Romans 8:1-17; Colossians 2:20-23; Galatians 5:19-23.

¹⁷⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; Ephesians 4:17-32.

physical realm is according to that which is innate within human nature! The realistic passing of this test as by truthful manifestation is the result of God's both willing and working for His own good pleasure!

Close inspection of historical evidence such as the aforementioned, plays an important role in understanding how different religions may appear as having "light" in its current form, although in essence being a derivative of absolute original "darkness"! To compensate for variances or lapses within an epic which has led to doubt, elaborate stories are comprised by the scholarly sect of a civilization, culture or religion, in efforts to eliminate discrepancies which may be realized by the commoners of the civilization, culture or religion; thus the epic, tradition or belief grows with vigor as by the strength of greater deceived masses who pass the stories (epics, traditions, beliefs) as having actual historical truthful meaning; although not. It is the responsibility of all individuals to investigate what they choose to believe, regarding truth or deception, prior to adherence; for there will assuredly be accountability unto God for believing in falsehood! In an effort to draw individuals from other religions into the Christian religion, aspects of the inappropriate religions previously followed by the new converts were incorporated into the Christian religion (as greatly distinguished from actual Christianity); in the forms of doctrine, precept, philosophy and tradition. When this occurred (unfortunately on a continued basis) the Christian religion became one of deceptive compromise, just had all the other religions upon planet earth (with the exception of the Levitical and Mosaic Laws); for any and all deviations from truth in pure form, become deceptions based within wicked intent. This compromise is made evident by the fact of deviations within Catholicism throughout the generations, and the fact that the Christian religion in many ways follows the harlotry of its mother (Catholicism); which originated the traditions found within Christendom through a mixture of many religions, foundationally including the Babylonian Mysteries Religion; from which came the worship of: Ishtar (queen of heaven), the Ashtaroth, and Baal (Baals—plural), which are repeatedly condemned in Scripture.¹⁷⁰⁹

¹⁷⁰⁹ Numbers 25:3-13; Judges 2:11-19; Jeremiah 7:16-26; 44:15-28.

Mysticism

A basis of many forms of religion upon planet earth is mysticism, which is derived from mysteries which are proclaimed and/or pronounced by individuals who claim a supposed intuitive consciousness of God and truth, as by contemplation and supposed love. As by this basis, individuals proclaim progressive revelation of mysteries, which allows the deceptions of changing eschatological prophecies with the passing of time. Although many scholars have stated that the Apostle Paul was the chief mystic of the Christian religion, due Paul's revealing mysteries kept secret from long ages past; making correlations between mysticism and the revealing of mysteries by God to the Apostle Paul is both unwarranted and inappropriate as by a few reasons:

- Paul was not a member of the Christian religion, but rather a Christian; a bond-servant of Jesus (by choice of acceptance) because of a stewardship entrusted to Him by God.¹⁷¹⁰ Actual Christianity (i.e. the Way) became the now abounding Christian religion, within the lives of multitudes, as through compromise and collections of inappropriate heresies and apostasies early in church history; henceforth maintaining alterations throughout its history, thus having also maintained departure from the truth from the time of its induction.
- That which was revealed through the ministry of the Apostle Paul was in accordance to the Lord's volition pertaining to the saving of Gentiles.¹⁷¹¹ As God knows all things; that which was revealed was not something new derived from any means of man's choosing, but rather was in accordance to God's sovereign will pertaining to those created in His image. This fact renders absolute evidence that the yet not revealed mysteries of God can never be compared with the mysteries of religion (mysticism); for in accordance to the faithfulness of God, the mysteries revealed (revelation) will surely occur; whereas the mysteries of humankind (mysticism) will continue without fulfillment within the realm of reality.¹⁷¹²

¹⁷¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 9:15-19, emphasis v. 17.

¹⁷¹¹ Romans 16:25-27; Ephesians 3:1-12.

¹⁷¹² John 19:30; Revelation 1:1-3; 4:1; 21:6-8; 22:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:9; Isaiah 45:20-25; 47:1-15.

- “The Way” (Body of Christ) is founded upon Jesus (the Rock of our salvation), as there is no other foundation; for Jesus is the head of the body, as well as the Rock which assures the soundness and surety of spiritual stance and victory!¹⁷¹³ All religious foundations set forth by humankind are in accordance to the doctrines of demons, which lead astray from freedom in truth (made free; a blessing from God upon those who abide in the Word); these doctrines are the basis by which the majority of human beings have, and will continue to be held captive to deception by the evil one (Satan) and those within the realm of his command (demons; those demonically influenced)¹⁷¹⁴ The primary problem with all religions; with the exception of the Levitical Law which was designated by God; is that within the deceptions and delusive variations which are founded upon Satan’s guile and evil schemes, the reality of God is denied and rejected, although carnal superficial mention of God remains attached to many of the religions! It is Satan’s will that individuals both deceive and remain deceived, which is why “religion” is the primary means by which Satan’s will is fulfilled, and this so as to spiritually murder as many human beings as possible (eternally)! The primary means within Satan’s deceptive scheming to accomplish the task of spiritual murder is “religious denial of the imperative reality of God” (God at work; God’s imperative righteous leadership), and thus rejection of necessary knowledge pertaining to the reality of eternal salvation!¹⁷¹⁵

Unlike the secular basis of mysticism which leads to progressive revelation of mysteries as through human conduits of supposed wisdom, which potentially never ceases; the Biblical basis regarding revelation of mysteries is that of something hidden during Old Testament times, being revealed in the New Testament. The Biblical basis of revelation (mystery revealed) is in fulfillment of Biblical prophecy or notation, as the reality of God’s sovereign will becomes an object of His revealed will. The assured actuality of God’s revelations occurs within the spirit

¹⁷¹³ Matthew 21:33-46; Acts 4:7-12; Ephesians 2:11-22; 4:7-16; 1 Peter 2:1-10; 1 John 5:4, 5.

¹⁷¹⁴ John 8:31-36; 15:4-14; 1 John 5:18-21; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 6:20, 21; 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

¹⁷¹⁵ Revelation 12:9; John 8:42-47; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Romans 8:14; cf. Hebrews 13:20, 21.

of true believers (legitimate sons and daughters of God), leading to knowledge and devotional acceptance of sound doctrine; for the Lord is truthfully our only Teacher regarding spiritual matters!¹⁷¹⁶ It should be remembered—that which is revealed in the Gospel is never in accordance to a choice rendered by God’s servants, but rather is always in accordance to God’s will (administration) pertaining to the revelation.¹⁷¹⁷ This fact distinguishes the mysteries of the Gospel hugely different than the mysteries of mysticism, as mysticism is greatly contingent upon the whims and/or desires of deceived individuals who fall prey to demonic influence!

Personal Note: Although within God’s administration the Biblical words are inspired of God, it should be realized through strict investigative study, those personal characteristics of the writer can be witnessed; whether righteous or un-righteous. This allows greater understanding of difficulties involving pride and arrogance within the writers, prior to their being drawn by God unto Jesus; and how the former pride and arrogance can continue to cause hindrance, until either dealt with by the individual, or in accordance to the chastisements of the Lord! All of this is for our instructional benefit, so that we may realize that all of us truly fall short of the glory and righteousness of the Lord, and that all things within our relationship with the Lord work together for our betterment and good; especially when the wicked characteristics of our sinful nature (self) have been dealt with righteously, and therefore forced aloof our continued walk and servanthood for the Lord.¹⁷¹⁸ Truly “self” must be denied in order to follow the masterful righteous leadership of the Lord; for without disciplined choice to deny “self” (habitually) the characteristics of our sinful nature can and will continue to hinder our endeavors, until dealt with righteously within disciplined devotional obedience and humble submission! Most of us have fallen prey unto the foolishness of our flesh (“self”) on occasion, yet with increased disciplined strict devotion for the Lord, our foolishness decreases, and the righteousness of the Lord increases; for this is a necessary imperative which proves the divine indwelling of God within His legitimate children!¹⁷¹⁹

¹⁷¹⁶ Matthew 23:1-10; Galatians 1:11, 12; cf. John 14:22-26; James 1:21-25, specific v. 21.

¹⁷¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:10-4:5; Ephesians 1:3-23.

¹⁷¹⁸ Romans 8:28.

¹⁷¹⁹ John 3:3-8, 25-36; Romans 8:1-17; specific vs. 11-14; Hebrews 12:1-11.

Please understand, I am not criticizing the Apostle Paul within this personal note; for having been prideful, arrogant, foolish and outright stupid myself, prior to the actual implantation of the Word into my spirit by the Lord, and having come beyond the foolishness of my flesh by the grace and masterful guidance of the Lord, I am simply emphasizing a reality! The Apostle Paul was a Pharisee of Pharisees, for his personal teacher was Gamaliel, who was highly respected for his knowledge and wisdom pertaining to the Levitical Law.¹⁷²⁰ As can be witnessed within the Gospel New Testament, the Pharisees (not necessarily Gamaliel) were extremely prideful unto the point of blatant arrogance; which is the reason they added spoken laws to the written Law of God, and failing to follow their own teachings expected everyone else to follow their verbal teachings; which Jesus never did, for there is no righteous circumstance by which to add to the written Law of God.¹⁷²¹ The blatant pride which led the Apostle Paul prior to his chastisement (debility illness) allowed by the Lord is emphasized in the Gospel by Paul's constant referring to himself within his epistles, with the culmination being found within his referring to the Gospel of God as being his ("my") gospel.¹⁷²² In addition, the Apostle Paul made reference to "winning" others to Christ and "saving some," which is prideful foolishness; for individuals coming to the reality of the Christ (Jesus) is a divine work of God alone; we simply speak the truth in love, and pray making supplication for God's considerations and blessings!¹⁷²³ Please remember the extent necessary for Paul to realize the error of his misguided ways, so as to come to the reality of the Christ (spiritual relational reality).¹⁷²⁴

Even with such a stern reality necessary in order for Paul to stop and realize the truth, his pride and arrogance yet continued; for he within the pride of his entire past life could yet not grasp the imperative of "denial of self" (personal volition and characteristics past, present, and future); this proven by his frequent referring to himself within his epistles, and this to prove his past accomplishments and suffering; whereas

¹⁷²⁰ Acts 5:34-39; cf. 22:3.

¹⁷²¹ Matthew 23:1-39.

¹⁷²² examples (my gospel)—Philippians 3:2-7; Romans 2:14-16, specific v. 16; 16:25-27, specific v. 25; 2 Timothy 2:8, 9, specific v. 8; chastisement - 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; reality (God's Gospel)—Mark 1:1, 14, 15; Luke 16:16; Acts 20:24; Romans 1:1-10; 15:16-19.

¹⁷²³ 1 Corinthians 9:19-22.

¹⁷²⁴ Acts 9:1-18.

the reality remained that like many of us Paul spoke to “prove himself” unto others, which is derived from the insecurities of the flesh which are foundational to engrained adolescent pride. Speaking of leaving all past characteristics of “oneself” behind, and actually accomplishing the task unto habitual frequency are entirely two different things.¹⁷²⁵

Although the reality of “denial of self” does not happen overnight, the fact remains that “denial of self” must be practiced every moment of everyday; this actually occurring by disciplined devotional submission unto God continually! Paul obviously had a concept of this reality, which is why he stated that we should pray without ceasing.¹⁷²⁶ Having witnessed the same reality of denial regarding the truth of “denial of self” in both myself and a multitude of others, I can personally attest to the abounding hindrance which failing to deny “self” (in reality) causes to our actual submission unto God, and obedience to follow His masterful leadership. I praise God that by His grace I learned the reality which allowed me to actually deny “self” (personal volition and choices) within a short few years after His indwelling; for having literally experienced the Lord God’s personal teaching, and realizing how quickly the beauty of actual fellowship with Him is lost, I came to hate my “self” which allowed increased love for and devotional submission and servanthood unto God, by His grace abounding masterful leadership which occurs primarily during actual intimate fellowship with Him! Within this reality, the person I was as a child, prior to the foolishness of adolescent pride and the behavior foundational there to, became righteously clear (selfless and loving)! Having received and understood God’s anointed purpose for my life, I left behind all that I had hoped, studied for (college), and worked for (chosen profession); as realizing by actual knowledge from the Lord that my purpose in life had nothing to do with me, and everything to do with serving Him, the choice became simple; although the reality of coming to discard all that I had accomplished in the flesh was initially quite harsh, as I was then thirty-seven years old! Like all believers ought, and very few actually do, I chose God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will as precedence; which forced rejection of “self” so as to accomplish the lifelong hence task!¹⁷²⁷ Please

¹⁷²⁵ Philippians 3:1-21, specific v. 13.

¹⁷²⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-18.

¹⁷²⁷ Luke 14:26-35.

understand, when the Lord said that we must give up all our possessions (Luke 14:33), and hate others (father, mother, wife, children, etc.—Luke 14:26); the emphasis of the statements were pertaining to our willingness to surrender all, and our willingness to never allow our relationships with others to ever take precedence over our devotion and loyalty unto the Lord! True disciplined devotion and loyalty for the Lord, holds nothing in reserve for “self”; for *if* we are not willing to put God first and foremost, we will always hold back from the Lord our best devotional efforts, which disallows us the blessings from God which He renders to those who will go forth without hesitation, no matter what the path of our anointing may bring (persecution, suffering, tribulation); for the reality remains that all who hold back for “self” will assuredly fall away at the first signs of trouble!¹⁷²⁸ The immense beauty of my existence by the grace of God is the same potential available to all by the grace of God; for now, after allowing God to work righteously in my existence according to the kind intention of His will, the blessing of understanding pertaining to all things righteously appraised has become a reality!¹⁷²⁹ All the talking conceivable does not bring forth the reality of who we are in Christ; but rather the reality of God’s divine work, which is only received humbly within: a righteous confession of faith, loyalty, submission, spiritual and physical discipline, devotion, obedience, and service; unto the one true God and Savior.¹⁷³⁰

The entire purpose of this “personal note” is to emphasize (by experience) the reality of the imperative to “deny self” with adamancy! Multitudes have never gone beyond a concept of this reality, which is why multitudes have left themselves open to the instigations and influence which is from the demonic realm, which holds them to live for the flesh; not for God!¹⁷³¹ All who do not devotionally, with stern discipline, maintain focus and strict disciplined devotion unto the Lord can and will be deceived (utilized by Satan to be led, and lead others astray); for without the reality of God’s divine work in individuals, the reality of being led by the flesh remains, with but a concept of spirituality, and the reality of being led by God!¹⁷³² This of course is far

¹⁷²⁸ Luke 9:51-62; Mark 4:13-20.

¹⁷²⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 15:10.

¹⁷³⁰ Titus 2:1-15; 2 Peter 1:1-21.

¹⁷³¹ Romans 8:1-39, specifics vs. 1-17.

¹⁷³² Hebrews 12:1-11.

more abounding within human relationships which involve church leadership and supposed church leadership; as multitudes seek answers from those called of God, and those not actually called of God, and in doing so never actually learn to go to God for the answers! The reality of God is realistically true and righteous! The reality of actual fellowship with the one true spiritual Teacher (Jesus) is absolutely true, real, pure, righteous, beautiful, and ineffable! Without actual “denial of self” beginning with God’s divine preparatory and drawing work which takes individuals unto the reality of the Christ (Jesus), the aforementioned realities will never occur!¹⁷³³ This truth which has been denied in the church blatantly for generations, has led to multitudes trusting “religion” and doctrines of demons (religious doctrines) to save them; although no one will ever be saved by “religion” or the doctrines there of!

Although it is my wish that many would come to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) by the divine work of God; realizing the truth of how the world is deceived by Satan to trust in “religion,” while living for the flesh, maintains the reality of very little hope for humankind, with the exception of a remnant, regarding actual salvation. When we continue within the characteristics of the flesh, while holding to but a concept of God through religious teachings and practices; we in fact fight against the Gospel truth, and in doing so fight against the righteousness of God! We cannot come to the reality of God which is realized within the reality of the Christ (Jesus), as long as we refuse to seek and evidence the truth; for without the reality of truth to guide us, we refuse to submit unto the kind intention of God’s: good, acceptable, and perfect will!¹⁷³⁴ The reality of God will save and righteously guide us; yet with but a concept of the reality, by the deceptions of Satan within religious and carnal endeavors, the reality of God remains denied and rejected! If we claim to seek God, and we claim to love God, then the reality must be manifested by God; for without the manifestation of the reality within us by God’s indwelling, only a delusive life and reality remains!¹⁷³⁵ Truly we are known (in reality) by our fruits; not our words, and religious jargon!¹⁷³⁶

Simply stated, whereas the mysteries of the Gospel are blessings

¹⁷³³ John 6:44, 45, 53-58, 63-65.

¹⁷³⁴ John 14:6, 7.

¹⁷³⁵ James 1:21, 22.

¹⁷³⁶ Matthew 7:13-27.

from God hidden until such a time as He wills (chooses) that they be revealed (bestowed in righteousness) upon those created in His image; mysticism is derived from the creativity of the human mind, which is led in accordance to both the distractive sinful nature and the coercion of evil which entices the sinful nature. Whereas the mysteries of the Gospel are blessings at their revelation; mysticism is religion of a mysterious nature, which allows those most greatly deceived (leadership) to deceive the masses who follow after them. Whereas the mysteries of the Gospel are founded upon the light, lovingkindness, and faithfulness of God; mysticism is founded upon the darkness of wickedness and the deceptive distractions of Satan. Whereas the mysteries of the Gospel are inevitably all about a “personal relationship” with the Lord; mysticism is all about “religion”!

The mysteries revealed and/or initiated in the New Testament pertain to:

1. The reality of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 13:3-52; Mark 4:2-34; Luke 8:4-21).
 - Much of Jesus` revelation in this regard was through parables; this as the truth is spiritually discerned and appraised, and can never be realized through conjecture, assumption, or reason (1 Corinthians 2:6-16).
2. The setting aside (rejection) of Israel (temporarily), due the Jew`s rejection of the Messiah (Christ) (Romans 11:1-32).
 - It must always be remembered that God will fulfill His covenant promises regarding Israel (Zechariah 14:1-21; Jeremiah 31:27-40)!
 - It should also be remembered that no one should think more highly of themselves than we ought to think, as by believing the church has replaced Israel as God`s chosen people!
3. The truth of the Gospel, and of the necessity for rebirth (being born again into God`s family; legitimate children); literally manifested (revealed) in the Lord Jesus Christ (Romans 16:25-27; Luke 24:36-49; 1 Peter 1:3-12; John 1:1-51; 3:1-21; Colossians 1:24-2:17; Titus 2:11-15).

4. The change which shall and must occur, for believers to receive the substance (new body) which can enter the eternal state of God's kingdom (1 Corinthians 15:35-58).
 - I refer to the new body which the children of God will receive, as "substance"; for no one knows or can assume as by conjecture the actual form which will be received. Whatever our eternal form may be; it will be magnificent as by the kind intention of God's will!

5. The reality of the personal intimate and accountable relationship which must occur between individual believers and God; for the actuality of eternal salvation for the body (emphasized in context of the combined remnant; i.e. the church, *ekklesia*; body and bride of Christ) to occur (Ephesians 4:1-6:20; John 3:1-21; Matthew 25:1-13).
 - It is due the fact of the body (church) being in actuality a remnant (true Christians; born again believers), that we are to edify, teach, reproof, correct and assist each other in love; as each individual part of the body is utilized in accordance to gifts as rendered (1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40; Romans 12:1-8). It is due the potential for distraction and compromise, that leads true believers (Christians) to humbly submit to God's work of sanctification (being set apart; made holy), thereby avoiding close associations with the world and those of the world; for with inappropriate close associations, comes diminishment of the building potential within the individual parts of the body (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1).
 - Because "religion" foundationally pertains to people attempting to establish their own righteousness derived from the sinful nature (flesh), as "religion" primarily regarding humankind denies the righteousness (rightful work; right doing) of God; a diametrical opposition exists between the Christian religion (individuality; self) and actual Christianity (being Christ-like; i.e.—all about God; selflessness), for true Christians foundationally submit to the actual righteousness of God so that He may both will and work for His own good pleasure (Matthew 22:36-40; John 8:1-59; Philippians 1:1-11; 2:1-18). Because this is a point of fact, the spiritual relational reality can never be achieved through religion, but rather only through

humble reverent submission within the measure of faith rendered to each in accordance to God's graceful divine work. With true faith, no proofs within human nature (i.e. doctrines, philosophies, precepts, traditions, rituals, signs and wonders, idealism, ideology, and intellectual assumptions within conjecture) are necessary; whereas with only conceptual faith, no proof is possible as substantive to actually believe (Luke 16:14-31; Romans 10:1-17)!

MYSTICISM CONCLUSION:

The reality of God's love and grace for humanity was fully and completely revealed with the coming of Jesus (God incarnate—Immanuel). The first century Christians realized this fact, which led to faith in Jesus being referred to as—the Way; for Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life (Acts 9:1, 2; 19:9, 23; John 14:1-10). Within actual knowledge of Jesus' identity (reality of the Christ), and understanding that God's blessings upon His children (true Christians) were completed before the foundation of the world, the remnant (true Christians) maintain love for God first and foremost, leading to disciplined obedience; whereas the multitudes (lukewarm religious believers) do not, evidenced by undisciplined disobedience and living for the flesh (John 14:15-15:27).

Although the sincerity of love and devotion for Jesus (God) remains prevalent within the remnant, with knowledge that there is but one Lord and Savior and He is the God of the Israelites; the masses within the deceptions and distractions of religion are easily and effectively led astray by the many variations brought forth by the coercion of mysticism. When devotional focus upon the Lord is not maintained as by loving Him first and foremost, human minds and emotions are easily led astray in accordance to the sinful nature (individuality; self), which was and continues to be the foundation for the distractions of religious mysticism within the multitudes even to this day. Whereas mysticism is all about how individuals may fit into the scheme of things carnally; actual Christianity is all about God, and how we may fulfill our purpose according to His lovingkindness in having created us.

Because Satan is the ruler of the world (John 14:30), and this with God's permission (although limited), Satan and demons are able to utilize all that is of the world in order to deceive and lead astray; this includes the enticements of the flesh to seek involvement and

precedence in all decision making processes! Because the sinful nature (flesh; self) has no place in a personal spiritual relationship with God, it (our flesh) seeks fulfillment through physical realm means; thus the precedent of religion, which is the primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world (minus the remnant)! Because the saving relationship with God is spiritual, the imperative exists to allow God's work of sanctification to occur abundantly! With being set apart from the world, and all its enticements, we live in the world serving the Lord God within His righteousness; yet we remain not of this world, as we eagerly await our home which is in God's kingdom!¹⁷³⁷ Because what is stated here is absolute truth, it is hoped understanding will come forth as to the necessary imperative to deny—"self"; for while the volition of "self" continues with precedence, and is enticed to do so, the good, acceptable, and perfect volition (will) of God cannot be fulfilled within any individual who remains self-centered!¹⁷³⁸ As freedom in Christ is a blessing of God's righteous work in accordance to the kind intention of His will, our existence must remain founded upon the Rock of our salvation which is the Lord, and trained by the sound doctrine of the Gospel; or spiritual downfall will assuredly occur!¹⁷³⁹ Freedom in Christ, or bondage of and in the world; the choice rests with each of us!

Because the majority of the mystery religions were open only to those of initiation, a profound sense of unity was felt by the religious members; feeding not only the human need to belong (fit in), but also the prideful need to succeed, no matter how inappropriate the endeavor. It is due the unity factor of a more personalized membership within the mysteries religions, as compared with the unity factor of Roman religion which emphasized but a smaller more insignificant part within the confines of the more emphasized religion itself, which led to the growth of the mysteries religions; as well as the spreading of mystic influence into the early Christian church.

Mysticism influence within the Christian religion can be noted by such factors as:

¹⁷³⁷ Hebrews 11:6-26.

¹⁷³⁸ Matthew 16:21-28.

¹⁷³⁹ Matthew 7:13-27; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

- 1. Denominationalism**—Within denominations, a sense of unity with others of like beliefs remains the foundational basis by which individuals are deceived into believing their initiated group holds precedence over all other initiated groups. It is variances upon this basis by which many Christian religion denominations both believe and teach that only their members will inherit the kingdom of God, whereas (according to their teachings and beliefs) all other denominations being upon the wrong path will never reach the eternal destination which is God's kingdom. Denominationalism blatantly violates the Gospel of truth, for there is but one body of believers (Body of Christ); of which Jesus is the head (1 Corinthians 3:1-11; Ephesians 1:3-23; 4:7-16)! Actual Christianity submits to and follows the will of God in one direction upon the narrow path which leads to righteous life indeed; whereas the Christian religion as by the influence of delusive mystical teachings, submits to and follows the volition of humankind, unfortunately in many directions upon the wide path which leads to: confusion, inappropriate focus, and spiritual destruction (1 Timothy 6:3-19).
- 2. Personal Savior-Gods**—The sinful nature of humankind (individuality; self) was and continues to be a basis by which the mystery religions (mysticism) have been a form of deceptive bondage throughout the ages. The individual mystery religions throughout history (which are many), sought and proclaimed gods who would save the immortal souls of individuals who would trust in and worship the god or goddess of the specific form of mysticism. This was very popular in times of antiquity, for human nature generally tends toward the selfish notion of "what is in it for me"! The basis of this form of mystical influence within the Christian religion, can be found in the pulpit proclamations which emphasize acceptance of Jesus as one's "personal savior" in order to be saved, although the emphasis of the Gospel is that a sincere confession of faith must be made regarding "Jesus as Lord," which is an acknowledgement of the glory of Christ (reality of the Christ); with actual knowledge that He is the Savior of all men, especially of believers (John 6:44-65; Romans 10:1-17; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; Ephesians 5:22-30; 1 Timothy 4:6-16). The insidious nature brought forth by mysticism within the Christian religion regarding this subject is therefore that

individuals are taught and continually seek what God will do for them personally on a continual basis (selfishness; individuality), aside of actual primary submission and obedience to God and secondarily consideration for others; whereas actual Christianity is all about faith and trust in God, as well as worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, leading to seeking the edification of others through the disciplined exclusion of “self” (selflessness) (Philippians 2:1-16; 3:15-21; John 4:20-24; Hebrews 12:1-29). The truth regarding the actual Christian confession of faith is explained thoroughly in chapter seven (Simplicity of Devotion) and in chapter eleven (Truth and the Spiritual Relational Reality).

- 3. Religious Doctrine**—In accordance to the foolishness of human fleshly desires, myths have been contrived throughout history. As myths are contrary to both truth and reality; sagas, legends and folktales are elaborately contrived in accordance to the wretched creativity of the human mind. Because any variances from both truth and reality inevitably become exposed, the doctrines (sagas, legends and folktales) of religion must be altered in attempts to once again conceal the deception. These alterations can never actually cease, for the deceptive validity of the doctrine must be maintained; lest the light of truth expose the darkness of the deception. This is the basis by which the doctrines of supposed spiritual scholars are adhered to, and altered as necessary with the passing of time. The simple evidence of fact remains—Biblical sound doctrine stands firmly upon the foundation (and reality) which is the Lord Jesus Christ, and this fact is taught by true servants called of God; whereas the doctrines of religion must be continuously altered by those not called of God, to maintain the doctrinal stance upon the deception from which they were initially founded (1 Corinthians 3:1-4:5; 2 Corinthians 11:1-15; Galatians 1:6-12). Religious doctrines of humankind are alterable in accordance to the whims of the religious doctrinal leadership (supposed spiritual scholars); alterations to the Gospel reality can never actually occur, when the Gospel is handled accurately under the masterful tutelage of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 2:6-16; cf. Isaiah 54:13; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17)!
- The way by which I personally define mysticism, is to say that mystics believe “if it feels right, it must therefore be valid.”

I believe this to be true as by the alterations which occur, when the validity of mystical doctrines within mystery religions are brought into question due contradictions or outdated beliefs. Whereas mystical religious doctrines derived in darkness can and must be altered in accordance to supposed understanding when discrepancies arise, so as to continue the feeling of appropriateness; true Christianity (the Way) can never be altered, for the truth is foundational upon Jesus (truth), which is unalterable and without variance (Hebrews 13:7-9)!

Simply stated—in accordance to the influential teachings of mysticism, the Christian religion places emphasis upon humankind as by vague religious manifesto; whereas actual Christianity, aloof the foolishness of mystical teachings, places emphasis upon God within His evinced existence in accordance to the wonderment of His manifestations (Romans 1:1-32)! This is the reason why traditional celebrations by members of the Christian religion are pertinent to that which occurred prior to and following the atoning work of Jesus upon the cross; whereas actual Christians walk in newness of life and perform one act of remembrance pertinent to the cross (Lord's Supper), until Jesus' return (1 Corinthians 11:17-34; cf. Galatians 4:1-11; Romans 6:1-7:25; Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:5-16).

Personal Note: The way of distinction in these writings between actual Christianity and the Christian religion, has been reiterated several times; this occurring to distinguish between the carnal foolishness of the Christian religion and its practiced physical realm religiosity, and the pure beauty of actual spiritual Christianity which has nothing to do with religion! The spiritual relational reality between individuals and God (Christianity) has no forms of practiced traditions of rote; nor does actual Christianity partake in religious endeavors of any kind! The act of remembrance (the Lord's Supper) being the only celebration of Christianity is not a tradition of rote, nor does it contain any form of darkness; for this is an act of remembrance which emphasizes love for the Lord regarding His atoning work upon the cross, and emphasizes a spiritual eagerness for His triumphant return! The seriousness of proper partaking of the Lord's Supper so as to maintain the celebration of the event in the light of truth and devotion, is found in the

1 Corinthians 11:17-34 passages; this emphasizing that no forms of darkness, including any emphasis upon “self” in a church setting, are allowed in the act of remembrance, with strict and severe judgment for violation! Religious practices are vain and completely without merit and purpose within a spiritual relationship with God; for the flesh (“self”) has no place in a relationship with God, as our bodies are presented as living and holy sacrifices, which is a spiritual service of worship (Romans 11:33-12:2)! Failure within adherence to the imperative of “denial of self” in order to actually follow the Lord, has been the primary spiritual downfall within humankind throughout history! Please understand—the narrow path (Way) of God’s righteousness upon which few find and travel, is the path to righteous salvation, upon which the Lord leads; therefore, only those “led” by God are His legitimate children (Matthew 7:13-27)!

Babylonian Mysteries

The main form of mysticism which has both invaded and corrupted the Christian religion is the Babylonian Mysteries. This form of mysticism entered Christendom through the church at Pergamum, corrupting the purity of the church with the deceptions of demonic influence. It is for this reason that the church at Pergamum was referred to as the place of Satan’s throne (Revelation 2:12-17); for it was at Pergamum where the hearts of many believers were led astray by deception to follow and worship pagan deities such as the Roman emperors, Zeus, Asclepius (Greek god of healing), and inevitably Ishtar (the Babylonian queen of heaven).

Although aspects of compromise came forth which distracted away from sincere devotion unto the Lord, by such means as: offering incense to the Roman emperors upon the censer coals, the harlotry of double-mindedness in worshipping an assortment of pagan gods while claiming love for Jesus, trusting in the supposed miraculous healing found within pagan beliefs (such as in Asclepius); the actual primary aspect of Satan’s deception which had and continues to corrupt the Christian religion is Roman Catholicism. As aspects of the different pagan religions were incorporated into the Christian religion (as greatly distinguished from actual Christianity; i.e. the Way) as a supposed means of gaining converts into the Catholic religion (supposed Christendom), and this in addition to the actual foundational basis which was the Babylonian Mysteries

Religion, full compromise was achieved when the harlotry became the precedent, vice loving and worshipping the Lord in spirit and in truth; thus the induction of but another worldly religion! Inasmuch as the pagan beliefs of worshipping the Roman emperors, Asclepius, and Zeus could never be attributed or connected in any way to the Christian religion; they therefore could never hold aspects of blame as forms of deception (the work of Satan) within supposed Christianity!

Through Babylon (Babel / land of the Chaldeans) of antiquity, came many pagan forms of idol worship, sexually immoral (fertility) religious practices, and other forms of deception against proper worship of God. This false religion (Babylon the Great; Babylonian Mysteries) has maintained many forms of pagan worship throughout its existence; having hidden the essence of its paganism by shrouded mystery (Revelation 17:1-7). Although Catholicism (mother of harlotry) has pretenses of worship to God, the deeds of its worship practices evince the truth of her immorality and deceptive abominations.¹⁷⁴⁰ It must be noted, Rome is the fourth of the four world kingdoms of Scripture mention, which yet maintains the power of delusive coercion throughout the entire world; continuing to do so until the kingdom of the world becomes the kingdom of our Lord (Revelation 11:15-19).

- Note of mention: The original mysticism (mystery) religion within Babylon was derived from the time of Babel being founded by Nimrod.¹⁷⁴¹ Nimrod's wife Semiramis started the religious rites sect of the Babylonian Mysteries; from which worship of Baal was initiated, through a lavish story of supposed divine conception (Tammuz) in false fulfillment regarding the promise of the seed.¹⁷⁴² "Baal" worship derived from Babylon's Mysteries worship of Tammuz and Ishtar, is repeatedly condemned in Scripture (Baal or Peor).
- It is not the original mysteries of Babylon which is emphasized in our current world, but rather the influence brought forward from Babylon which has led to manipulation of Scripture out of context within forms of the Christian religion (heretical and

¹⁷⁴⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 11:3-15; 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

¹⁷⁴¹ cf. Genesis 10:6-12.

¹⁷⁴² cf. Genesis 3:15.

apostate religion); leading to deceptions from a mixture of the Babylonian Mysteries, the misuse (manipulation; adulteration) of Scriptures, forms of idolatry and blatant harlotry; as physical realm religion has been substituted for a personal loving spiritual relationship with God.¹⁷⁴³

- A terrible basis, by which the Babylonian Mysteries have been brought forward through incorporation into the teachings of supposed Christendom by the Mother of harlots, is through the worship of the “Queen of Heaven”; the Assyrian and Babylonian Mysteries goddess—Ishtar. This foolishness when incorporated into supposed Christianity brought forth worship as by devotion for a woman (long past dead); which was substituted for the Babylonian “Queen of Heaven.” Ishtar was a supposed fertility goddess who was married to Tammuz; this union constituting a supposed form of deity. “Ishtar” is yet ignorantly worshipped within most of Christendom in the form of a tradition even to this day (Easter), although only openly worshipped by the Mother of harlots; though insidiously utilizing another name—“Mary.” This rubber stamps the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (and His mother Mary) to a completely pagan form of worship, as a supposed means of justifying the false religion as being “Christian” in nature; although not! Although the religious foundation for pagan Christianity worships openly as they are greatly deceived (Mother of harlotry), the children of the harlot (apostate Christians; members of the Christian religion), yet worship inappropriately through intentional ignorance! This is why the basis of actual Christianity is “abiding in the Word”; for without this imperative we cannot remain founded upon the Rock (foundation) which is the Lord Jesus Christ; thereby staying from deceptive worship practices (apostate religion)!
- It should be noted, when the supposed spiritual leadership with actual understanding of these forms of corruption, refuse to speak the truth in love for the spiritual edification of the

¹⁷⁴³ cf. Jeremiah 7:1-8:22; 44:1-29; Ezekiel 8:1-18.

brethren, and this they refuse to do so as to maintain personal forms of belief, prestige and/or comfort, is it any wonder why the ignorance of the flock remains so prevalent! Can an actual servant called by God continue a perpetrated deception; when as a true servant we can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth! I think not; for legitimate children of God cannot practice sin (2 Corinthians 13:1-11; 1 John 3:1-18)!

- Within the Ezekiel passages (8:7-17) please note aspects for which leadership within “religion” yet remains guilty: openly claiming to worship God, yet actually worshipping false gods when in secret (vs. 10-12); coming supposedly before the Lord, yet maintaining lamentations and worship for those who are falsely attributed with deity (vs. 13-16); placing emphasis upon the physical aspects of worship (religion), rather than achieving the spiritual devotion of actual worship (relational), which is according to faith in the one true God (vs. 16-18). Also please note in v. 17, that taking one’s compromise lightly (“too light a thing”) promotes God’s anger and wrath (v. 18); for “dabbling” with that which is an abomination to God, may seem innocent within foolish ignorance and inane thinking, yet in reality is as serious as it gets! Complacency within delusive religion is the ultimate “abomination” unto the Lord; for those guilty of this, place the “twig” of tether bondage to their own nose (v. 17)!
- Throughout the generations, dabbling with that which is unclean and into the ways of the world, has been a considerable means by which Satan has led multitudes astray as by the insidiousness of religion; for coercion and corruption begin with a place of origin, increasing sequentially unto: convincing, tolerance, acceptance, and deceived mindsets (Romans 8:1-17; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; James 4:1-17).

The mysticism which originated in Babylon, has been maintained through false religion; having continued forth through deceptive insistence upon religious superiority! Leadership of Babylon’s harlotry (Mother of harlots) has believed themselves to have the authority of God on earth, this passed deceptively as true by demanding confessions

be made to them as God's chosen keepers of the bridge, rather than directly to God (who alone is good and righteous, with authority to forgive and cleanse from sin—1 John 1:8-2:6; Mark 2:5-12; 10:17, 18; Luke 5:18-26). This is building oneself an inappropriate pedestal in an unwarranted position, according to the leadership of the one (Satan) who actually leads them to deceive the multitudes (whole world minus the remnant).¹⁷⁴⁴ This position placed by the arrogance of man, as by the enticement and influence of Satan, was in times of antiquity called the position of the "Pontifex Maximus," which means the "Major Keeper of the Bridge"; although pertaining to the bridge between man and Satan. The words of the "Pontifex" were to be considered as inerrant (without error), and thereby absolute law and truth (although not).

A short progression of the "Pontifex" position, for the purpose of following from whence it came to its current position, renders harsh reality as to this false religion (Babylon the Great; Babylonian Mysteries), which is yet strong in leading millions astray! Julius Caesar was made Pontiff of the Etruscan Order in 74 B.C., and "Supreme Pontiff" of the Babylonian Order in 63 B.C. The progression of Pontiff among the Roman Emperors continued until Emperor Gratian refused the position for Christian reasons, which then placed the position of Pontiff unto Damascus, the Bishop of the Church at Rome, whom prideful accepted election to the position. Through the influence of monks at the Mt. Carmel sanctuary (college) of Babylonian religion, Bishop Damascus became the ruler (Supreme Pontiff) of the "Roman Church" in A.D. 378. The combined false religious systems of Rome and Babylon were then united into a foundational form of pagan mysticism. The heretical and apostate pagan worship which had initially entered into the Christian church at Rome through the church at Pergamum, as by being infiltrated by Babylonian religious rites teachers years prior, became the foundation of compromise within the Christian religion (not actual Christianity)! This position "Pontifex," was in later times referred to as "Pontiff"; yet being used within the papacy to this day.

- Although it is easily understood why worldly rulers would participate and seek to lead within pagan forms of religion, it is neither warranted nor acceptable for anyone claiming knowledge of God to do the same! No true servant of God

¹⁷⁴⁴ Isaiah 14:13-15; Revelation 2:12-17; 12:9, 10; cf. 1 John 5:18-21.

could make the assumption and proclamation of having God's authority on earth; for there is but one Lord who has full authority, and His name is Jesus!

- The fact of men claiming God's authority on earth while yet also proclaiming "Jesus is Lord," evinces realistically how anyone can proclaim that "Jesus is Lord" in ignorance; while yet remaining void of actual knowledge pertaining to the exegesis of the words! False proclamations from a foundation of ignorance devoid of truth is only possible by those who are completely aloof the "reality of God"!
- The reality of this is emphasized in Revelation 17:9-15; as the false religion of the Great Tribulation Period arose to power through Roman leadership; which at the time of John; some had fallen, one was, and another (Antichrist) was to come. In context, the former Roman rulers would have been those whose tolerance led ultimately to allowance for and inevitable strengthening of this false religion; which coming through Roman rule would currently exist under the guise of being supposedly Christian in nature. By this emphasis, Rome will be powerfully involved in world affairs, prior to the Antichrist's insistence that the world worship him; which is proven factually by the reverence shown the papacy throughout the world!
- Taking "lightly" the doctrines, precepts, traditions, philosophies, ideologies, and ritualistic worship practices initiated by Roman Catholicism, and now foundational within Christendom; is precisely the "dabbling" with compromise which yet remains an abomination to God even to this day; which destroys the potential for the reality of God amongst the multitudes! Without the "reality of God," there is no means by which to be extrinsic of religious falsehood; thus the multitudes remain in bondage to Satan's will of: deceit, corruption, coercion, and influence.
- This is the area which should be considered, as an additional basis of understanding from whence comes the Antichrist, and the basis by which he will set himself up as being god within the temple of believer's hearts; which was discussed within possibilities and considerations in Revelation chapter 13. This is within chapter six in the book.

ACTS OF THE APOSTLES

A considerable demonstration as to how “religion” continually maintains attempts to worship in the physical realm, apart from actual faith, can be evinced by the mimic of the Acts of the Apostles. Much of the “Christian religion” is based not upon abiding in the living and active Word of God, but rather upon the seeking of signs (*semeiois*) and wonders (*teras*); although the actual signs (*saymaion*) and wonders (*teras*) of God ceased long ago, upon the Israelites being temporarily set aside. Two factors must be understood, if actual understanding of the Gospel is to ever occur:

1. The twelve original Apostles were initially sent solely to the nation of Israel (Matthew 10:1-8); just as Jesus spoken ministry upon the earth was directed only to the lost sheep of Israel (Matthew 15:24).
 - This fact was later confirmed, by Peter’s forceful understanding as to the change which occurred according to God’s will; thus prior to the distinctive change for the Apostles to go forth unto the Gentiles, they had been going forth solely unto the Israelites according to the Lord’s instruction (Acts 10:1-11:24).
 - When this distinction is realized, the Gospel can be appraised correctly according to the appropriate instructive of hermeneutic; for understanding must be forthcoming as to who the message is directed, if actual knowledge is to occur as by handling accurately the Word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15; cf. 3:16, 17).
2. Signs (*saymaion*) and wonders (*teras*) were for the sake of the Jews; for Jews seek and ask for a signs (John 6:30-58; 1 Corinthians 1:18-31)! This fact must be understood in accordance to the specific of instruction unto the initial twelve apostles, and the empowerment from God unto the Apostles within the specific of the instruction (Matthew 10:1, 5-8)!
 - Why then does the Christian religion seek for signs (*semeiois*) and wonders (*teras*); the answer is simple; an evil and perverse generation (both Jew and Gentile alike) craves for signs (Matthew 12:38-45; Luke 11:23-36; 2 Peter 2:1-22), and in doing so actually worship without knowledge. Ignorance remains until displaced by knowledge; spiritual knowledge being rendered solely by the Lord!

- Although God can and will perform miracles solely in accordance to His choosing; human instruments of miracles are no longer sent forth by God. Because this is a matter of truth and fact from the time of Israel's having been set aside (temporarily), all forms of miraculous works by humans are insidious mimics (counterfeits; *dymanei*), to prepare the way for the Antichrist as through continuation of former perpetrated deceptions.
- The standard as set forth in the Gospel is that the children of God are to worship Him in spirit and in truth; for the emphasis is one of a mandatory foundation (i.e. must—John 4:20-24, specific—v. 24). The reality of the Gospel is quite simple when taken literally in context; for appropriate worship of God is within the spirit by faith, which denotes complete avoidance of physical realm (corporeal) worship practices. Within the Christian religion practice of physical realm worship (carnality), and the fact of continuation of perpetrated deceptions which were introduced by the Mother of harlots; the reality exists that portions of truth have been exchanged for lies, just as creation is now worshipped rather than the Creator (Romans 1:16-32). The reality of truth reveals therefore, that the Christian religion in accordance to the practiced perpetrated deceptions and physical realm worship, remains a religion founded upon carnality in accordance to the will of the father of lies (Satan); for the general characteristics of the Christian religion (as distinguished from actual Christianity), is exactly opposite the Scripture mandate of faith-based worship (1 John 3:4-18; Galatians 4:1-31; John 3:1-4:42).
 - Within the John chapter three passages, please note the difficulty which is emphasized in failing to realize the spiritual reality of a relationship with God, by those who have practiced physical realm religion. Nicodemus, who was a Pharisee and also of the Jewish Sanhedrin, went to Jesus at night (v. 2) for two reasons; first, for fear of being seen by other Pharisees or members of the Sanhedrin, and second, because he realized that Jesus was a true teacher of the things of God (Rabbi); for this is evinced by Nicodemus`

statement that Jesus could not perform righteous signs unless God was with Him (v. 2). In the fact that Nicodemus went to Jesus, it can be realized that Nicodemus did in fact seek truth regarding the Messiah of prophesy, and this as all who seek the reality of God with sincerity of devotion, will always investigate to ascertain the truth and walk accordingly! The point to be made here is the difficulty Nicodemus had regarding Jesus' statement pertaining to the imperative of the "rebirth," for he was thinking of being born again in the physical realm (corporeal); whereas Jesus was speaking of being born again of the Spirit, which is of course a spiritual matter (vs. 4-10). This directly shows the difficulty which exists in crossing the threshold from physical realm religion to the spiritual relational reality; which was the point of the verbal teachings of Jesus in conjunction with signs and wonders; which is also the emphasis of the distinction within the New Testament concerning the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit; for the distinction must be made between physical realm religion and the spiritual relational reality in order to answer God's calling to truth, and thereby be saved. The devotional sincerity of Nicodemus to know the truth and to fulfill righteousness in his seeking of truth, can be noted by his defending Jesus before his peers (John 7:44-52), and assisting in preparing the Lord for burial (John 19:38-42). The final point to be made here is that once the threshold from physical realm religion to the spiritual reality has been crossed; thus the distinction from emotional response to spiritual edification; it is inappropriate and foolish to return back across the threshold to once again engage in physical realm religious worship practices, for this creates a double-mindedness as to which is the imperative of proper worship of God. True believers (devotional Christians) have but one choice in this matter; for God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, without compromise, variation, or excuse; or He is not worshipped righteously!

- Two factors which emphasize the difference between the remnant who worships God in spirit and in truth (Christians),

and the masses who worship un-righteously (members of the Christian religion) are:

- The remnant are those who speak the necessary truth in love, although we are hated for doing so. We are hated because we refuse to journey upon the wide path of religious doctrinal and philosophical deception, and because we speak the truth in love so as to cause deterrence for others away from the wide path which leads to spiritual destruction (Colossians 2:1-10; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Jude 1:17-23; Ephesians 4:7-16).
- The remnant prays in the spirit solely within the realm of faith, as the spiritual relational reality is all about God; whereas the masses seek to prove spiritual faith as by physical realm practices and emulous words! A considerable example of this is by the speaking in tongues for the sake of emphasis, as supposedly proving the presence of the Holy Spirit; although not! The truth is simple, the spiritual realm and the physical realm are distinct one from the other, therefore attempts to prove one as by the other is futile, foolish, deceptive, and coercive (Hebrews 11:1-12:29; 1 Corinthians 12:1-14:40). This is the reason “religion” always places emphasis upon itself as by doctrine, ritual, philosophy, traditions and emphatics; whereas actual Christianity places full spiritual emphasis and focus upon the Lord, who is the author and perfecter of our faith. Only the Lord wills and works that which is good, acceptable and perfect; thus our reverent offering is to submit aloof the foolishness of religion, as we place our trust and hope in Him, and Him alone (Philippians 2:1-18; Romans 8:1-39; 12:1-21)! Unlike the Christian religion which attempts to emphasize and force growth through physical realm religious characteristics; true Christianity understands that although we plant and water the seeds of Gospel truth, the Lord alone brings forth all spiritual growth; which reaches fulfillment in the physical realm, only as His works bring forth accomplishment of our purpose in life, which is reverent and devotional submission and obedience (Colossians 1:15-23; Galatians 3:10-4:11; 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21)! The reiterated

truth remains; Christianity is all about—God’s ability to both will and work for His own good pleasure, within His disciplined and devotional legitimate children!

Religion History Summation

- The history of religion demonstrates changes and alterations to suit one’s own agenda, philosophies, doctrines, fantasies, epics and folklore, and/or superiority; whether this be: nations, countries, provinces, cultures, or individuals and groups. Not including the Levitical and Mosaic Laws which were morally and ethically rendered precisely in accordance to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God; all religions contrive means by which the supposed wisdom of man points to salvation or higher levels of consciousness, both of which being capable of change or alteration. The truth can never be changed or altered, or it is no longer the truth!
- The Christian religion is the offspring of the Mother of harlots!
- The Mother of harlots is the Roman Catholic Church; thus the words “Catholic Christianity” are actually contrary one to the other!
- The traditions and practices found within the Christian religion are delusive types of harlotry, for all destroy the potential for actual loving fellowship with the Lord; as they are abominations to the Lord, due their origins from pagan religions. Please read again Ezekiel 8:1-18, and realize the correlation; as well as the fact of double-minded worship practices being abominations!
 - It must be noted—the Lord’s Supper was initiated by the Lord Jesus, as an act of remembrance which should be continued until His return (1 Corinthians 11:17-31). This is the only acceptable action of faith for believers in the physical realm; for this is founded upon the Rock! It must also be noted from verse 26, that the Lord’s Supper is a proclamation of His death; thus the atoning work at the cross!
- Although the Lord’s Supper is acceptable because it is founded within the teachings of both Jesus and the Apostles, all other Christian religion traditions and ritualistic celebrations are in addition to Biblical teachings; which blatantly violates the

Gospel of truth (Galatians 1:6-10; cf. Deuteronomy 4:1, 2; 12:32; Proverbs 30:5-9)!

- It should be reasoned as by Biblical standard, that the Lord's Supper is not a sacrament, which supposedly earns or warrants the unmerited favor (GRACE) of God; it is a simply act of remembrance, which we perform in love!
 - It is rather pathetic, that believers within the Christian religion place such great emphasis upon practicing those things which are abominations to the Lord; while claiming to love Him. It is also pathetic, how the multitudes within the Christian religion follow the leadership of Roman Catholicism, even though Catholicism neither knows nor worships the God of the Bible! These practices demonstrate the efficiency of Satan's schemes!
- When the Reformers differentiated the reality of salvation by grace through faith apart from works, they should have completed the "reform" by proclamation of complete and utter separation from all un-biblical: ideologies, teachings, traditions, doctrines, precepts, philosophies, rituals and celebrations; yet did not! It is due failure to come out from their midst and be separate, and not touch what is unclean, that has caused separation instead between ordinary members of the Christian religion and God (1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; Hebrews 12:12-29)!
- It should be both understood and remembered—the harboring of sin within one's heart is foundational for loss of fellowship with God; without fellowship with the author and perfecter of our faith, spiritual growth remains stagnant or nonexistent! This fact very much includes religious idealisms, which alter devotions to God away from worship of Him in spirit and in truth; for no superficial religious idealistic actualities can mimic sincere love which is rendered within devotional submissive faith, as set forth by the Creator unto those created in His image (spiritually)!
- Doctrines, rituals, traditions, philosophies, precepts, and rhetoric of the Christian religion have become the primary precedence pertaining to worship of God within the religion;

this aloof the standard of “spirit and truth” as set forth in the Gospel.

- The factor of doctrinal precedent can be witnessed greatly from the times of antiquity. It was the denial of supposed “Christian” doctrine which led to many being branded as heretics by Catholic leadership; although the doctrines of Catholicism (supposed Christianity) are heretical according to any and all standards of the Gospel.
- It is due the adamancy of the Catholic religion that all believe and confess their doctrine (ideology) or be branded as heretics, and the fact of the blatant idolatry found within Catholicism (Mariolatry; angelolatry; saintolatry), that has caused such hatred between Muslims and Christians. Because Islam is diametrically opposed to idolatrous worship, and Catholicism is founded upon idolatrous worship (Babylonian Mysteries plus additions), the two are diametrically opposed to one another. Within a matter of reality, true Christians and true Muslims have much in common (aloof the teachings of the Qur`an; Koran), for both seek to know and love God; for there is but one God! This is the reason why the three peoples most persecuted by the armies gathered by the Roman Catholic Church during the Crusades and Inquisition, were Jews, Muslims and true Christians; for all three types remained both confused and opposed to proclaimed Catholic doctrines, while striving to know God apart from specific religious idealistic and doctrinal teachings!
- Consideration should be forthcoming for the sake of understanding, that pietism during the times of the Crusades and Inquisition, was not actually devotions for God; rather “pietism” was regarding the non-Biblical standards as set forth by the Roman Catholic Church, as the multitudes were intimidated to trust in supposed righteous decisions and proclamations of the papacy!
- The factor of traditions precedent can be witnessed by the emphasis within the tradition itself.
 - Although the Israelites looked forward to the coming Messiah in accordance to God’s *hesed* (covenantal loyal) love, in fulfillment of prophesy; the Christian religion continually looks back, thus holding to the past! Holding to what was,

instead of to what is and shall be, is a primary characteristic of religious guile within the deceptions of Satan; for maintaining a religious foundational stance in the past as through elemental physical realm worship and practices, rejects the potential for mature spiritual growth both present and future (Philippians 3:1-21; John 4:20-24).

- Terrible specifics which prove the point of traditionally focusing backward can be found within the practiced adherence to the primary Christian religious celebrations of Easter, and Christmas.
- Within the Christian religion, “Easter” is proclaimed as being proof of eternal life, although the resurrection of the Lord Jesus is the actual proof! The emphasis being placed upon “Easter” demonstrates the insidious nature of Satan’s work within the church; for “Easter” has nothing whatsoever to do with either Jesus or the resurrection!
- Within the Christian religion, “Christmas” (Christes Masse; Christ’s Mass) is proclaimed to have pertinence regarding the birth of Christ, yet in reality has nothing to do with Christ’s birth! The “Christmas season,” is more so derived from the time period of the Saturnalia festival, which honored the Roman god “Saturn,” and the celebration of “Mithra’s” birthday (*sol invictus*—“the invincible sun”) (December 25).
 - The severity of inappropriate worship precedence will become evident within the specifics which follow. It should be understood; all that is necessary for individuals to be held captive to do Satan’s will (of both deceiving and being deceived), is for individuals to be kept from knowledge of the truth; for the truth allows freedom, whereas ignorance of truth maintains forms of bondage (John 8:31-58; 2 Corinthians 13:1-8)!
- The factor of precept precedent can be witnessed within the convictions as put forth by religious leadership.
 - Although the Holy Spirit is the One who convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment; in accordance to religious doctrine, the church has supposedly gained this responsibility, thus becoming responsible to do the work which is God’s alone (Matthew 16:7-16; Romans 10:1-17;

1 Timothy 6:3-19)! The point of man's inane thinking in this regard can be witnessed by the fact of the world having become worse, not better; thus it is also proven that God's convictions are received by the remnant who love Him first and foremost, whereas the masses of religion leave no room for the work of God, because of religious pride and arrogance.

- The first and foremost commandment for the church is to love the Lord! If this primary step is not taken, the path of continuance will be led by the distractions of this world; not by the Holy Spirit! If sincere and devotional love for the Lord is not held as precedent, then a weak faith and lukewarm-ness within religion will seem to suffice (1 Corinthians 3:10-4:5; Revelation 2:1-3:22)!
- Ours is a ministry of reconciliation; for all true Christians are ambassadors of this ministry (2 Corinthians 5:14-21)! When it is realized that the emphasis of the Gospel is that all be reconciled to God, and upon reconciliation with God and being sealed for the day of redemption we are made new creatures in Christ; we can leave behind the foolishness of convictional and ritualistic religion, and simply move forward living our lives within a loving relationship with our Lord and others; within which "truth" remains an imperative at all times (Romans 12:1-21; Hebrews 6:1-20; Philippians 3:1-14)!
 - Without this realization, we remain within the bondage of walking in darkness; which is according to the will of the ruler of the world (Satan).¹⁷⁴⁵ Living one's life with peace, joy, love, and submissive devotional faithfulness unto God, or living one's life within the abominations of worldly religion, or in accordance to the sinful nature; the choice rests with each of us! True sincere devotion and loyalty unto the Lord is the distinguishing factor which leads to spiritual successes; failure in this regard is that which brings forth spiritual stagnancy, degradation, and failure!
- Within the many religions of the world which include Pantheism and Polytheism, the possibility exists to have many

¹⁷⁴⁵ John 14:30; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; 2 Thessalonians 2:5-12.

gods and many lords (1 Corinthians 8:5, 6). This can seem to be a blessing to those within the bondage of religious deception, as they are carried forth emotionally as by the feeling of having one's own personal god and/or savior; yet the fact remains that there is but one God and Savior, who has been proven factually as by His manifested goodness (Genesis 1:1-2:3; Romans 1:18-23), and ascension (John 20:17-31). As the many gods and lords of the masses are received and worshipped emotionally in accordance to the desires of the flesh, the Biblical Lord God of reality is received, known, and worshipped by *faith* within the spirit; for He is spirit, and can be known and worshipped by no other means (John 4:20-24; Hebrews 11:1-40). When all is said and done, the truth remains that those who live according to the flesh (in accordance to religion) shall perish; those who are led by the Spirit (within a personal relationship with God) shall have life indeed (Romans 8:1-39; 1 Timothy 6:1-19)!

- The God of the Bible has been proven factually even so in the physical realm, so that no one will have excuse; thus the truth is evinced within the context of reality!
- The religions of the world have remained foundational to conjecture, folklore, epics, ideologies, idealisms, doctrines, philosophies, human precepts and traditions; thus never having been actually proven, nor is there any basis of evidenced reality within them (religions), beyond the deception derived from demonic influence and fleshly emotion.
- To live according to the flesh and the delusive nature of demonically enticed and influenced religion, can and most times will be an eternally fatal mistake!

Traditions, Doctrines, Precepts and Philosophies of Man (High Places)

Matthew 15:3: And He answered and said to them, "And why do you yourselves transgress the commandment of God for the sake of your tradition?"

Mark 7:6-9, 13: And He said to them, “Rightly did Isaiah prophesy of you hypocrites, as it is written, ‘THIS PEOPLE HONORS ME WITH THEIR LIPS, BUT THEIR HEART IS FAR AWAY FROM ME. ‘BUT IN VAIN DO THEY WORSHIP ME, TEACHING AS DOCTRINES THE PRECEPTS OF MEN.’ “Neglecting the commandment of God, you hold to the tradition of men.” He was also saying to them, “You nicely set aside the commandment of God in order to keep your tradition / thus invalidating the word of God by your tradition which you have handed down; and you do many things such as that.”

Colossians 2:8: See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ.

Isaiah 29:13-16: Then the Lord said, “Because this people draw near with their words And honor Me with their lip service, But they remove their hearts far from Me, And their reverence for Me consists of tradition learned by rote, Therefore behold, I will once again deal marvelously with this people, wondrously marvelous; And the wisdom of their wise men shall perish, And the discernment of their discerning men shall be concealed.” Woe to those who deeply hide their plans from the LORD, And whose deeds are done in a dark place, And they say, “Who sees us?” or “Who knows us?” You turn things around! Shall the potter be considered as equal with the clay, That what is made should say to its maker, “He did not make me”; Or what is formed say to him who formed it, “He has no understanding”?

Easter

I do not know if you are aware of how Easter is on Sunday every year. It is plain to see, that the date of the resurrection of the Lord, although originally on Sunday, could not possibly be on Sunday each year. Sunday being the day for the celebration of Easter is derived from two factors:

- It is on a day which is convenient for humankind.
- It is a day derived from pagan adherence to the lunar calendar.

The celebration of “Easter”; aside from Sunday worship, is the oldest celebrated tradition of the Christian religion (circa A.D. 519). Although the exact date of the tradition` (festival)` beginning is not fully known, and specifics of the event have developed over the years; compromise by attachment of Jesus` name to previous pagan festival events is obvious. Since Christ` resurrection occurred at the time of the Jewish Passover, many Messianic Jews transferred celebration from a specific deliverance from death while in Egypt (Passover); to deliverance from death for all eternity (pascha—the Greek word for Passover; this celebration focused on Christ as the paschal Lamb). To celebrate the Lord in this way is concurrent with human behavior; as being creatures of habit we tend to follow the inertia of former practices (doctrine and tradition by rote), rather than separating ourselves from the elemental principles of the world (ritualistic and doctrinal religion); for the purpose of worshipping God in spirit and in truth.¹⁷⁴⁶ As Jesus (our Lord) ought to be celebrated each moment of each day by walking in newness of life, are celebrations of certain days actually necessary for those who walk by faith?¹⁷⁴⁷

Those who continue to celebrate festivals (traditions) such as “Easter” many times are not aware (ignorant) as to the origins of the event; which is completely inappropriate, as devotion to one’s beliefs dictates investigation of the primary premise and/or origin of the beliefs! As with celebrations and traditions (which will become evident) continued within the Christian religion, most are continuations of that which is insidiously inappropriate; likewise, completely unwarranted in being relational with God who is the foundation of truth and light! Let us now look at the possible origin of the name—Easter:

1. Ishtar—The Babylonian Queen or Mistress of Heaven. A Mesopotamian goddess of fertility and war; which is associated with the pagan god Tammuz.

¹⁷⁴⁶ John 4:19-24; Galatians 4:1-11, specific vs. 8-11.

¹⁷⁴⁷ Romans 6:3-7; Colossians 2:8-23.

2. **Eostre**—Originally an Anglo-Saxon word denoting the month of Easter (April). The word also denoting a Saxon goddess of the morning star; or goddess of the dawn.

According to the Gospel of John, the crucifixion of Christ occurred on 14 Nisan of the Jewish calendar.¹⁷⁴⁸ The resurrection of our Lord therefore would have been on 16 Nisan (the third day—Luke 24:6, 7), which could not possibly fall on Sunday each year. Many Christian religion believers reject celebration days which fall midweek for this would be inconvenient; therefore Christian religion leadership (more specifically Roman Catholic leadership) chose days which appease men and women. Truly we are known by God according to our deeds or fruits and by others according to our fruits or deeds, if indeed our fruits and/or deeds are inspected; for fruits are from the Lord and deeds are of our flesh!¹⁷⁴⁹ Do secular / fleshly (carnal) religious deeds denote a godly spiritual leader? If not, why are they followed; when Jesus is to be the object of our focus, disciplined devotion, reverence, and worship?¹⁷⁵⁰

In general, the date of Easter was originally determined by a complex calculation using the lunar calendar. Generally, Easter is the first Sunday after the first full moon following the spring vernal equinox. Now we notice that the name came from pagan deities either from Babylon, the Saxons, or both. We also now notice that the dates of the celebration are derived from astrology (partial astronomy) for the sake of convenience. To continue suit with the foolishness of manmade religion; springtime symbols of the renewal of nature (fertility) became attached to the Christian religious tradition. Bunnies and eggs are attached to the celebration supposedly for the sake of our children; yet these symbols have been utilized to emphasize fertility for centuries. The reality of this then being—we attach fertility symbols to our celebration supposedly for the sake of our children, and supposedly to emphasize the “new birth,” while attaching the name of Jesus the Lord to the celebration for the sake of our failings in turning away from the inappropriate! The fact remains that the time period of Easter is in the spring, when gods and goddesses were worshipped who supposedly brought forth the rejuvenation of plant

¹⁷⁴⁸ John 19:29-37.

¹⁷⁴⁹ Matthew 7:16-20; Galatians 5:19-23.

¹⁷⁵⁰ Galatians 1:1-10; Romans 10:1-13; Hebrews 12:1-11.

life! This is worship of the creation as by falsehoods and rote; not worship of the Creator; therefore being solely of paganism and blatant carnality is completely unwarranted, un-righteous, and inappropriate!

There are many supposed Christians who go to church but once a year; on Easter. They somehow feel that this big “to do” is pleasing to God, and how blessed God is that they would give a few moments of their precious year to come before Him. How absurd! Those who truly love the Lord in actuality stay entirely clear of such foolishness; as all such rituals and traditions are but distractive forms of delusive compromise which keep many within the confines (bondage) of fleshly indulgence, which is spiritually destructive!¹⁷⁵¹ Physical aspects of worship; including seeking mercy via mutilating one’s own body; have been the custom of pagan forms of worship for millennia.¹⁷⁵² When will we learn that physical aspects of worship are for those who worship in ignorance within little or no faith, for faith has nothing to do with that which is in the physical realm; yet the flesh sure does enjoy being involved, no matter how inappropriate!¹⁷⁵³ The Christian religion which has been compiled for centuries in accordance to assorted doctrines, philosophies and precepts, as well as other forms of pagan rituals (harlotry) as compiled by the “Mother of harlots”; is far reaching from “the Way” (actual Christianity) which is based solely within love and devotion for God by faith in the light of truth! Simply stated—if our flesh is involved in supposed worship of God; “faith” is but a concept, as we worship deceptively within spiritual destitution! Worship in the flesh, is worship within the darkness of deception; thus worship of the Great Deceiver (Satan)!

A good indication of how to submit unto the Lord comes by an example in Acts 13:1-3. While these men of God were praying and fasting; thereby focused upon the Lord in the spiritual realm; the Holy Spirit spoke to them. Being attentive to what the Holy Spirit was saying and seeking to serve with all devotional reverence, the men immediately did as instructed. The lesson to be learned here is simple; remain focused and listen to what the Lord may say; for this is accomplished within the spirit of believers both individually and combined, and when combined this is realistically—church (ekklesia).¹⁷⁵⁴ Within the realm of physical

¹⁷⁵¹ 2 Timothy 2:20-26; 4:1-8.

¹⁷⁵² Colossians 2:20-23; example—1 Kings 18:27-29.

¹⁷⁵³ Hebrews 11:1-40; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.

¹⁷⁵⁴ Matthew 18:20.

celebrations, it is possible for the enemy of Christendom to gain victory in great numbers, when the multitudes follow blindly the instructions (constituted and traditionally passed deceptions) by other human beings; having failed to test the instruction (tradition; festival) according to the Scriptures and/or historical origins.¹⁷⁵⁵ Following constituted religious traditions is a considerable basis of harlotry by most believers; for compromise within the corruption of secular traditions brings forth failed love and devotion for God; as He is denied for the sake of comfort within the status quo of both religion and the world. True Christians realize the necessity of separation from physical realm religion and the ways of the world; whereas deceived believers do not!¹⁷⁵⁶

- A simple example of this is Easter sunrise service. So many voluntarily and blindly involve themselves in this ritual, without realization that “Ishtar” also being considered the goddess of the morning and evening star, was worshipped at sunrise and sunset as these times were believed to be the moments when she (Ishtar) was closest. The Anglo-Saxon goddess “Eostre” was worshipped at dawn, for it was believed she was instrumental in bringing forth the sunrise; this in conjunction with the sun being worshipped (Sol Invictus), within the fact that it brings forth the growth of plants (fertility worship). Are such things pleasing to our God who is present in time—past, present and future simultaneously? We would do well to listen less to those who are blindly and/or foolishly leading us astray, and more to Him who leads us unto righteousness in the pure light of truth!¹⁷⁵⁷
 - **Important Note:** Because Easter is actually derived from worship of pagan gods and goddesses of fertility; it is an abomination to God! Although it is taught within the Christian religion that this ritual (Easter) is of great importance in one’s worship of the Lord, it makes no sense whatsoever to believe committing abominations will have any legitimate value in one’s walk with the God of truth,

¹⁷⁵⁵ 1 John 4:1-6.

¹⁷⁵⁶ Revelations 3:14-22; 1 John 2:12-17; James 4:1-10; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

¹⁷⁵⁷ Hebrews 3:7-19; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

when the rituals are insidious! The Lord God of all creation cannot be worshipped in darkness or deception; for He is the Lord of light and truth, thus intentional worship in ignorance is abominable worship of deception!

- Although most simple believers commit acts of harlotry toward God in ignorance, as through the Christian religion's involvement with pagan worship rituals, which were initiated by Roman Catholicism to attract converts from pagan religions; scholars within the Christian religion (most denominations) continue the perpetrated deceptions intentionally, as intellectual matters, comfort, prideful disputes, controversies, religion itself, and mammon; remain of greater concern to them than the salvation of others, and worshipping the Lord our God with pure motives in spirit and in truth!¹⁷⁵⁸

Prefatory Note

The “mother of harlotry” (Roman Catholic Church) neither knows nor worships the God of the Bible. As will be explained later within the discussion concerning “Masse,” neither does the Roman Catholic Church know or worship the Jesus of the Bible; for the “Jesus” they proclaim must be offered repeatedly (perpetual sacrifice) for the sins of humankind, whereas the Jesus of the Bible died “once for all”!¹⁷⁵⁹ The God of the Bible is: all powerful, all knowing, all inclusive, and completely self-sufficient; whereas the god worshipped within Catholicism has need of man's mediation; thus the Holy See; Vicar of Christ; prayers to: Mary, saints, and angels; homage to the Pope; canonization of saints; the Sacramental System.

Within actual evidenced realization as to the foundation of Catholic doctrinal worship; “works” and “ritual” are the bases of the entire religious structure. Like all forms of secular religion which are void of the necessity for: sincere undefiled love for God, actual faith and trust in God, submission to the Lord's masterful leadership, and subjection to His righteousness; the Christian religion maintains religiosity, external of the reconciliation relationship.¹⁷⁶⁰ Within the reality of being either

¹⁷⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 6:3-21; Romans 10:1-4; John 4:20-24.

¹⁷⁵⁹ Hebrews 5:1-10:39, specific 7:25-28.

¹⁷⁶⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Romans 12:1-21.

for or against the Lord Jesus Christ, with the imperative of knowing and serving Him being “abiding in the Word,” it becomes evident that the “Mother of harlotry” worships and proclaims both a different Jesus and gospel; yet Roman Catholicism is the originator of all Christian religion: celebrations, festivals, traditions, and rituals.¹⁷⁶¹

Let us now gain understanding as to the origins of Catholicism, and who they actually serve. Within this discussion of historical and Biblical fact, please remember—although the Catholic religion serves the devil, which will become evident; there is a remnant within the religion who seeks to know the Lord of the Bible, while yet being held captive to deception and religious doctrines. Although the one true God will never be found within the confines of un-righteous and inappropriate religion; if the heart and spirit of individuals are purged of the poisons placed therein by religion, as the individuals stop attempting to find the love of God in accordance to delusive fleshly indulgences, they may yet be saved by God’s grace through faith; *if* they no longer trust religion to save them! Please remember—only those divinely prepared, drawn, adopted, justified, and led by God are His legitimate children, who will be saved from the wages of sin which is death!¹⁷⁶²

Servants of the Babylonian Mystery Rites Religion

Just as the potential for spiritual defilement was always present within the Israel of antiquity; and this due their failure to abstain from compromise with the pantheon of the surrounding nations; so also the same potential yet remains within the Christian religion due to close associations which should not exist! Although the basis of worship within the Israel of antiquity was that of a physical realm religion, the one true God was yet worshipped; although strict standards were necessary for appropriate physical realm worship to occur (Levitical Law); as the Lord had yet always desired the worship to exemplify the heart (devotional sincerity) of the worshiper.¹⁷⁶³ The primary potential for the defilement of sincere and pure devotion for the one true God within the Israel of antiquity was based upon the Babylonian Mysteries Religion; thus involvement within it by those chosen of God was forbidden! This exact form of defilement

¹⁷⁶¹ Matthew 12:30; John 8:31-36; 15:5-14.

¹⁷⁶² John 6:44, 45, 65; Romans 8:5-9, 12-14.

¹⁷⁶³ Acts 26: 4, 5; Isaiah 1:10-23; Micah 6:1-8; Jeremiah 7:1-8:3.

entered into Christianity through the church at Pergamum quite early in church history, and defiled the purity of the potential relationship between individual believers and God (the Way); altering and destroying the relationship potential within the lives of the multitudes, as the many (apart from the remnant) fell prey to the wiles of Satan through the introduction and continual growth of the “Babylonian Mysteries,” under its new name—the “Christian religion”! Within this fact, we must adamantly make the distinction between actual “Christianity” (the Way) and the “Christian religion” (revised Babylonian Mysteries); for the former is of light, whereas the latter is of blatant delusive darkness!

Satan not willing for multitudes to receive salvation by actually knowing the Jesus of the Bible, sent his servants of darkness into the world for the purpose of introducing subtle deception into the confines of truth; for the most efficient method of deceiving, is to place lies between aspects of truth and thereby create a subtle overall deception (insidious reality)! This was and remains the foundational bases by which the callosity of spirit (harlotry) of the multitudes remains; for as by the darkness of “religion,” the multitudes are led to believe that God will meet believers within a fictitious gray zone which lies between darkness and light. Inasmuch as God is light, within whom there is no darkness whatsoever; the religious concept of having fellowship with the Lord while continuing forth in ritualistic darkness is absurd to the extreme; for religious deception of any kind voids all potential for spiritual fellowship with God in the light of pure truth.¹⁷⁶⁴

Without actual fellowship with the Lord, due aspects of compromise introduced by the deceptions of religion, the forced result became religious traditions learned and practiced by rote. This was easily accomplished by the “Mother of harlotry” in the beginning stages of church history, for most of the Roman inhabitants were illiterate; whereas the religious spiritual leaders were of the upper class, and therefore educated. Because the language of the social elite was Latin, whereas the language of all others was Greek (for the most part; as very few spoke Aramaic or Hebrew), to say that commoners were on a different page from the social elite, and thereby a tremendous language barrier existed, would be an understatement! The acceptable norm pertaining to the Scriptures was the—Latin Vulgate, which could not be read by the

¹⁷⁶⁴ 1 John 1:5-10; Romans 13:8-14; Ephesians 5:1-17.

masses; thus the only basis of understanding the Gospel came from trusting the words of religious leadership, who unfortunately carried out the wiles of Satan as through the harlotry of manmade religion enticed by demons (doctrines of demons)!¹⁷⁶⁵ This “harlotry” was derived from devotions for the “religion” itself and the religious leadership thereof who influenced inappropriate focus, as they enticingly enjoyed focus to remain upon themselves; rather than emphasizing focus upon the Lord and teaching the masses to place full love, trust, hope, and sincere heartfelt devotion unto the Lord! This was of course derived from the “boastful pride of life” from within the sinful nature (self) of both the masses and religious leadership; for this inappropriate form of pride is emphasized by the ruler of the world (Satan) to stay individuals from denial of “self” for the sake of spiritual devotional humble submission and obedience.¹⁷⁶⁶

In simple terms, the difference between the “Christian religion” and actual “Christianity” is this:

1. The “Christian religion” is based in the pride, arrogance, rituals, doctrines, precepts, traditions, philosophies and ideologies of man; derived from the sinful nature (“self”), which only knows the superficial love of this world.
 - The “Christian religion” like all worldly religions which seek after a god or gods within the superficiality of the religion itself, strives to either please or help God in some fashion; yet the God of the Bible is neither led, helped, pleased, nor impressed with the actions of individuals, apart from sincere humble submission, devotion, obedience, and righteous worship (in spirit and in truth)! Religion always places focus upon “people, places, and things,” although the only aspect of human existence which pleases the God of the Bible, is utilization of one’s righteously activated measure of faith!¹⁷⁶⁷
 - Within this fact, “religion” actually denies the Biblical basis regarding undefiled religion; for the ways of the world bring forth stain and blemish, and must therefore (Biblically) be denied!¹⁷⁶⁸

¹⁷⁶⁵ 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

¹⁷⁶⁶ 1 John 2:12-17; John 14:27-16:15; Matthew 16:21-27; 2 Timothy 2:1-26.

¹⁷⁶⁷ Jeremiah 17:5-14; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; Isaiah 64:1-12; Romans 9:6-29; 12:1, 2; John 4:20-5:47; Hebrews 11:1-12:29.

- Secular religion denies (in reality) the two commandments of the Lord concerning the church; for although sincerity and truth are Biblical foundational bases of loving God and others, partial (superficial) love and religious falsehoods (physical realm rituals and traditions) are taught as necessary and sufficient within religion; although void of the spiritual reality!
2. Actual “Christianity” is founded upon the Lord; for within Christianity, spiritual worship and devotion is all about God; which remains aloof all carnal religious emphases!
- The commandments as set forth, being based in pure undefiled (selfless) love for God and others is not burdensome; for the sinful nature is nailed to the cross (crucified; harshly and with difficulty laid to rest), for the sake of devotion.
 - The potential of true believers (Christians) lies within the fact that God first loved us, and through His tender mercies, lovingkindness and grace teaches us to love Him first and foremost, and to consider others as more important than ourselves; for we know that ours is a heavenly kingdom, thus our focus and mindset are beyond “self” and that which is of the present age and world!
 - It is within failure to understand this very important fact that the religious masses upon the earth yet seek to place emphasis of existence upon the current time of human mortality; while also holding to the same forms of reminiscence as those whose future is dreary, as they are without hope. The correlation between non-believers and believers within the Christian religion regarding this matter is that both non-believers and believers of the Christian religion maintain the same mindset, as by the actions and teachings of others; for neither dons the armor of God for appropriate warfare, nor do multitudes test the teachings and spirits to see if they are from God!¹⁷⁶⁹ Whereas true Christians understand the dangers of remaining ignorant of truth, and thereby diligently seek and evidence the truth;

¹⁷⁶⁸ James 1:2-27.

¹⁷⁶⁹ Ephesians 6:10-20; 1 John 4:1-6.

the masses upon the earth (both non-believers and lukewarm “religious” individuals) are content within remaining ignorant; while the religious individuals, as also their leadership, make excuses for having done so. An excuse is an attempt to evade either truth or reality, and is therefore a form of delusion!

- Having personally asked many scholarly Pastors and ministers why they have failed to proclaim the truth regarding deceitfulness during participation in religious traditions and festivals, the answer has remained the same—“everyone compromises”! They told me that the congregation would become angered when presented with the truth; therefore, they refused to proclaim the truth, so as to continue fleshly appeasement! The few Pastors and ministers who did actually proclaim the truths in love were threatened with loss of their position, with any continuance of truthful proclamations; all having kowtowed to the congregation so as to maintain their job! Who is being served in this behavior; God or mammon (worldly prosperity)? We are told to speak the truth in love, so that individuals may make informed decisions regarding compromise and involvement in delusive practices; no one called of God was ever told to deny truth for the sake of appeasement or money! The facts are simple to witness and evidence by those who truly love the Lord; multitudes choose to remain in denial of intentional compromise, and do in fact transgress and forsake the commandments of God and truth, for the sake of fleshly (carnal): ease, comfort, religiosity, and rote!¹⁷⁷⁰ Multitudes remain intentionally ignorant regarding many specifics of what they choose to believe, thinking they will not be accountable to God for what they do not know; although the fact remains that we are all accountable for what we should have known, had we tested the spirits and all teachings according to Biblical standards, as it is the responsibility of all believers to at least read the Gospel, and investigate the truth (and origins) of

¹⁷⁷⁰ Matthew 15:3-9; Mark 7:5-16; cf. Colossians 2:8-10; Isaiah 29:13-16.

one's beliefs! Nowhere in the Gospel pertaining to standards and guidelines, did the Lord ever say—"please!" It is not hard to realize why the behaviors of "lukewarm" believers are sickening to the Lord (spit = *emew*—"to vomit"); for aside actual devotion, what kind of supposed love is exemplified by: laziness, complacency, ease, self-centeredness, and excuses!¹⁷⁷¹

- The un-righteous sinful nature (self; individuality) is denied for the sake of appropriately and devotionally loving our Lord from the very core of our being (heart, soul, mind, and strength); thereby submitting to Him so that He may teach us, and lead our lives by His righteousness in a victorious manner.¹⁷⁷²
 - Within the aforementioned state of ignorance by individuals who remain deceived and in bondage by the excuses set forth individually, and by religious leadership, fellowship with God is forfeit as by the teachings and practices of "religion"; which lead the religious masses upon the earth in attempts to walk spiritually through the flesh (blatant carnality)! This occurs because double-mindedness within one's mindset, although inappropriate, is deemed acceptable; although a wavering (varying) mindset is easily coerced by both the sinful nature and demonic influence.¹⁷⁷³

The questions I have regarding the Christian religion celebration of Easter are:

1. Why would anyone who claims to know God allow themselves to be involved in traditions as set forth by the philosophies and doctrines of humankind (religious harlotry), when the ritualistic traditions are founded upon paganism which is adamantly condemned in the Gospel? Double-mindedness and devotions divided (cup of both the Lord and of demons) has never been acceptable to the Lord God; thus all such endeavors for any reason are: futile, deceptive, filled with guile, and not without relational and spiritual consequences!¹⁷⁷⁴

¹⁷⁷¹ Revelation 3:14-22, specific v. 16.

¹⁷⁷² 1 John 1:1-10; John 1:11-13.

¹⁷⁷³ Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 10:14-22, specific vs. 20-22; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; James 2:18-26.

¹⁷⁷⁴ Emphasized: Jeremiah 7:1-31; 44:1-29; Ezekiel 8:1-18.

2. Since we have Jesus as our Lord, Savior and King, and should desire to walk in a manner as He walked, why do we allow our children to celebrate as the world stipulates we shall, with bunnies and eggs (illustrations of fertility—the Ashtaroth {fertility goddesses}). Please remember—Satan is the ruler of the world, with authorization by God; so that all who will not submit devotionally unto the Lord may remain within delusive darkness!
 - We are told in Scripture to raise our children in the ways they are to go (Proverbs 22:6); yet we in actuality teach our children to follow the ways of the world. We are told to be separate and not conform to the ways of this world (2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Romans 12:1, 2); yet we instead teach our children that it is okay to compromise for the sake of comfort.
 - This is the epitome of causing a child to stumble, which is warned against in the Gospel (Matthew 18:5-14; Mark 9:42-50)! To teach secular variations to a child during the rearing years, is to teach the child to mature within a state of deceitful compromise; thereby leading them into a potential for spiritual bondage, as well as spiritual bondage for generations which follow! What type of love would permit such foolishness?

3. Why do we insist on celebrating Easter on a day which is in accordance with the lunar calendar? If anyone is going to celebrate the resurrection of the Lord, they should be doing it on its anniversary, no matter what day of the week that may be (Romans 14:1-12); better yet, celebrating His resurrection by walking in newness of life each and every day! It amazes me that simple (lukewarm) believers seek the Lord when it is convenient, yet refuse to make changes within themselves when it is not.
 - If anything at all, we must stop making any reference to the resurrection of Jesus as by the name—“Easter”! Because the Christian religion is continually defiled by acts of compromise such as: incorporation of pagan celebrations and names, alterations to supposedly Christianize that which is inappropriate, attempts to draw closer to God (who is spirit) through physical realm (carnal) worship, and pleasing God as through foolish ritual; the poison within the spirit of the masses

is extreme, thus causing spiritual defeat! The only way to remove the poison derived from demonic influence and teaching, is to stop all associations with the world's religions; including names derived from compromise and excuses!

4. Should we not rather teach our children that Jesus loves them and that we are to be different?¹⁷⁷⁵ We must explain to our children that our treasures are to be stored in heaven, rather than on this earth.¹⁷⁷⁶ We should not allow the world to regulate what we shall do or say, but rather Scripture and the Holy Spirit.¹⁷⁷⁷ When will believing individuals learn to seek first His heavenly kingdom and righteousness, and stop attempting to do so by following the ways of the world (religion) which is according to Satan's deceptive schemes?¹⁷⁷⁸ All that we have upon this earth is passing away; our purpose now and our eternity is for and with Jesus, so why then do we seek close associations with a world opposed to our Lord.¹⁷⁷⁹ The world opposed Jesus boldly; we ought to be as bold in standing firm in and for Him!¹⁷⁸⁰ Do we?¹⁷⁸¹

A Note Regarding Lent and Ash Wednesday

In the Old Testament there were times when sincere lamenting was put forth for situations which brought forth great grief.¹⁷⁸² A good example of this can be found in the book of Lamentations, which demonstrates the mourning which came forth because of the fall of Jerusalem in 586 B.C. The people lamented over the destruction of the city, yet had they previously lamented over their rebellion against God, the city would not have been destroyed. It remains amazing how we as humans place such emphasis upon the material things in our lives, yet tend to place little emphasis upon pleasing our Lord within the spiritual realm. The emphasis of the Gospel is to focus upon God through spiritual devotion

¹⁷⁷⁵ Ephesians 5:1-21.

¹⁷⁷⁶ Matthew 6:16-24.

¹⁷⁷⁷ 1 Thessalonians 2:1-9; James 4:3-10; 1 Peter 4:7-19.

¹⁷⁷⁸ Ephesians 6:10-20.

¹⁷⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 10:1-22; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18; 6:14-7:1; 1 John 2:12-17; Ephesians 1:3-2:10.

¹⁷⁸⁰ 2 Corinthians 3:4-18; Philippians 1:21-30.

¹⁷⁸¹ Matthew 6:23, 24; 12:30.

¹⁷⁸² cf. 2 Samuel 13:10-19; Esther 4:1-3; Job 42:1-6; Jeremiah 6:22-30.

and faith, which then allows Him to lead us in our physical lives according to His will. Just as the nation of Israel would not consider their behavior until their physical world was effected when God lifted His protection; so neither do most Christian religion believers consider spiritual matters unless their physical world is affected in a like manner.

When sincere lamenting and/or repentance came forth from within the hearts of those who loved God as documented in the Gospel, many times the donning of sackcloth and the sitting in dirt or ashes was part of their sincere actions. To don sackcloth (burlap) and sit in ashes is a very humbling thing to do; as this was the point of absolute humility before God so as to receive His merciful strength in troubling times.¹⁷⁸³

The tradition of Ash Wednesday places a bit of ash upon one's forehead to supposedly demonstrate humility in understanding that we are created from the elements of the earth, and thereby perishable.¹⁷⁸⁴ The time of forty-day repentance and fasting, called "Quadragesima," was to imitate the forty-day fasts of Jesus, Moses and Elijah; along with the forty-year wanderings of Israel in the desert. This act by many initially was an act of free will from within one's heart, yet with time took on the character of a fixed ordinance (tradition) of the church. As with any tradition, at first much division as to dates prevailed; until in this case Gregory I (A.D. 590-604) fixed the date to be the Wednesday six weeks prior to Easter; Ash Wednesday. The weeks leading up to "Lent" were spent in unrestrained merriment, licentiousness and selfish indulgences. This was supposedly a just practice, for soon forty days would be spent in states of humility and repentance; therefore "go for it" was the mentality prior to the humble state beginning on Ash Wednesday. Does this seem appropriate behavior when approaching a true celebration for the glory of God? During the forty-day (supposed) fast, many were partaking of other forms of food as they avoided certain meats; so it is today as sincere repentance (turning back to God) within one's heart may be within some, yet I can pretty much guarantee not within the hearts of the many! The placing of the ash upon one's head is a far cry from the sackcloth and ashes of a true lament, yet for the sake of

¹⁷⁸³ Psalm 84:8-12; Proverbs 3:21-35.

¹⁷⁸⁴ cf. Genesis 18:17-27.

tradition (comfort) it is considered sufficient (rote). When the personal aspect is removed from one's relationship with Jesus, then at the same time much of the loving devotion is also removed from within the heart and spirit. Anyone who believes that blatant sinfulness is acceptable leading into a ritual fast and period of repentance, is devoid devotion for God, and Biblical understanding; as believers are to be sober minded at all times.¹⁷⁸⁵ Have we become so complacent in our religious practices (abominations) so as to believe that sin is acceptable when everyone else is doing it? Do we really believe that it is acceptable to sin today because of the sufficiency of a ritual repentance tomorrow? Truly I admit to being disgusted as to how any such tradition can help the spiritual growth and personal relationship between any believer and Jesus Christ! I do admit that those who truly love the Lord are neither hindered nor deceived by such practices, as we persevere to remain focused and separate! The potential for extreme harm is always present in such practices, especially within those whom hold to a cold or lukewarm love of God; as "self" (blatant narcissism) remains the leader (god) which is followed and obeyed!

Christmas

There is no sure date as to when the Messiah was born. There are six possible dates: January 6, February 2, March 25, April 19, May 20, October 4, and November 17. The year of Christ Jesus' birth is believed by scholars to have been 6 or 7 B.C.; this determined by the fact that Herod the Great ruled Judea at the time of Jesus' birth, and Herod died in 4 B.C.

The date of December 25 was chosen for practical reasons, more so than theological ones. Throughout the Roman Empire, many varying festivals were held honoring the god of the unconquerable sun (god - Mithra; unconquerable sun—"Sol Invictus"), this during the time of the winter solstice. The "sun" was worshipped at that time; for the days began to get longer as the shortest day and longest night of the year had now passed. This was believed to happen because the sun god was appeased by the many pagan forms of worship; including orgies, the sacrifice of animals and children, and the giving of various gifts...

¹⁷⁸⁵ Romans 6:1-23; 1 Corinthians 15:20-34; Hebrews 10:23-27.

.Emperor Aurelian (Lucius Domitius Aurelianus; A.D. 270-275) quickly capitalized upon the heathen worship of the sun and, in the year A.D. 274, officially declared December 25 as the birthday of the Unconquered Sun (dies natalis solis invicti).¹⁷⁸⁶

The time frame surrounding December 25, was also derived from the festival of Saturnalia; which was to worship the Roman god of agriculture—Saturn. The festival of Saturnalia began on December 17, and continued for seven days. During the festive time, all business, executions and military operations were postponed; while goodwill, the giving of gifts, rendering of visitations, and preferential treatment of servants (slaves) was encouraged.

When supposed Christianity (Catholicism) became the foremost religion of the Roman Empire, the church either had to suppress the festivals or transform them; with failing in the former, the latter became the end result. At this point (A.D. 354) (A.D. = Anno Domini - Year of the Lord), the festival honoring the “sun” (Sol Invictus) became a festival to celebrate the “Son” (Messiah; Christ); as with failure to be separate, alterations must be made.¹⁷⁸⁷ Once again—Jesus our Lord is attached to the failure of the Christian religion to act obediently to the standards of separateness set forth in the Gospel; this occurred within this specific, as Jesus` birth celebration had initial origins within festive tradition in approximately A.D. 336 (Feast of the Nativity)! Do you suppose it was by chance that when Jesus` birth was decided for celebration, that the date of the celebration just happened to fall at the end of the winter solstice celebration—December 25; which also happened to be a time of celebrating “Mithra’s birthday”? This occurred as the church (under Roman Catholic leadership) made the alteration from celebrating Mithra (the ancient Persian god of light and wisdom), to celebrating Jesus (the light of the world—John 1:3-11; 8:12; 9:5; 11:9, 10); all of which was and remains contingent upon gaining converts in accordance to the tactics of mystery religion guile!

Let us consider two important facts:

1. In the area of the Negev (Promised Land) the months of November through January are the most severe in regard to weather. With the

¹⁷⁸⁶ These Times, December, 1981, pg. 22.

¹⁷⁸⁷ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

icy rains of the region during these months, no shepherd in his right mind would jeopardize his entire flock in the open fields, where there is only remnants of grazing pastureland.

2. With the severity of the region's weather during the aforementioned months, no leader would call for a census. This statement is based upon the fact that entire families were to travel to the town or province of the parent's birth, in order to be counted in the census. Traveling with children and infants during wet cold weather, would lead only to sickness and possibly death for many who attempted to make the journey (on foot); therefore, a census would be called only in the warmer months.

Without going into the many calculated dates for Jesus' birth derived from many angles of conjecture (including September 17, 7 B.C. by British physicist David Hughes and German astronomer Johannes Kepler); please understand that by such reasoning many Eastern Orthodox churches celebrate Christ's birth on January 6 (Epiphany). With many hours spent attempting to exactly date Jesus' birth; with date computation errors which were made by a Roman monk named Dionysius Exiguus, and with the fact that many times puritans attempted to stop the inappropriate practice because specifics have never actually been known; the fact remains that Jesus' birth was almost certainly not during the month of December. Since no one knows for sure, why so much conjecture and speculation; for His coming was exactly at the right time, by God's kind intention according to His good, acceptable, and perfect will.¹⁷⁸⁸ With the many different dates yet grasped for the purpose of celebrating Jesus' birth, and this because of indifferences between cultures, creeds and denominations; confusion was the result which brought forth a correspondence by Saint Cyril, bishop of Jerusalem, to Roman bishop Julius. Julius response to Cyril was that he personally preferred (favored) December 25; which was not acceptable to Cyril and the Jerusalem church, for they continued to celebrate Jesus' birth on January 6 (festival of Epiphany; which celebrates the water baptism of Jesus; and the arrival of the wise men from the east after Jesus' birth). The matter was settled two years after Julius' church reign,

¹⁷⁸⁸ Galatians 4:4-6.

when the new Roman bishop “Liberius” ordered December 25 to be the correct day for Christ’s birth celebration. This was A.D. 354, and within a short few years this date (December 25) became the popular day accepted and adopted by most believers within the Christian religion. The twelve days between Christmas and Epiphany (January 6) have often been called the “Twelve Days of Christmas.”

An interesting fact comes forth, as to the celebration of Christ’s birth. During the medieval period the celebration of Christmas was performed at a special midnight mass on the eve of Christ’s supposed birth date. This festive celebration became known in Old English as *Christes Maesse* (Christ’s Mass; festival of Christ); from which came “Christmas.” Two interesting factors arise due to this midnight celebration:

1. Other than for this celebration, a mass at midnight was never allowed. This raises the question as to why supposed rules for the sake of godliness, are only broken where and when Christ is supposedly involved. Jesus was never one to violate rules or commandments for the sake of tradition; so why then would anyone claiming to know Him?¹⁷⁸⁹ Along these lines; when they held the trial for Jesus before the Sanhedrin, the Jews violated rules; for it was illegal to assemble hearings at night. Breaking rules to convict Him, and now supposedly to honor Him! When such things are obviously inappropriate, it is time to stop and simply honor Him loyally each day, by appropriate worship and obedience foundational to “truth”!¹⁷⁹⁰
2. The act of “Mass” in itself is inappropriate for actual Christian practice; for physical ritualistic practices have no place in worshipping God in spirit and in truth! Example of this is demonstrated in the Roman Catholic view regarding the “sacrament of communion.” In the Roman Catholic view, Transubstantiation occurs at the time of partaking of the Lord’s Supper (Eucharist). This is to say that the bread and wine literally become the body and blood of Christ; which is to say that Christ’s human body is omnipresent; whereas the Gospel places His physical form localized in heaven (Acts 7:55, 56). Transubstantiation is not Biblical (John 19:30;

¹⁷⁸⁹ Matthew 15:3-9; cf. Galatians 4:8-11.

¹⁷⁹⁰ Isaiah 29:13, 14; Hosea 6:4-6; John 4:20-24; Romans 13:11-14.

Hebrews 10:10-14), and would cause much turmoil with Jewish converts participating in the Eucharist; as it was forbidden for them to partake of blood (Leviticus 17:10-14). The truth regarding acceptance of the body and blood of Jesus, remains that in accordance to the divine and righteous work of God individuals accept the reality of the Christ (not simply Jesus as Savior); this reality being completely separate and aloof the ritualistic and doctrinal endeavors of religion, which seeks to emulate a spiritual reality as by physical realm (fleshly; carnal) rituals and traditions; which is absolutely impossible!¹⁷⁹¹

To further complicate the matter, “Mass” (Masse; Maesse) emphasizes, in no certain terms, that the sacrifice of Christ is yet incomplete and therefore must be repeated. This raises the serious question as to what lord or god is worshipped within Catholicism, and celebrated within the Christian religion tradition of Christmas! Because the Jesus of the Bible died “once for all,” and the date for Christmas is derived from worship of the sun and other dates derived from pagan worship and ritual; it becomes evident that the God of the Bible is not known, worshipped, honored, nor celebrated within this tradition!¹⁷⁹² This also makes evident what happens within the lives of those who do not have, or fail to realize the actuality of a relationship with God!¹⁷⁹³

- **Interesting note of mention:** The ritual of “Mass” is considered the perpetual sacrifice of Christ; thereby upon the crucifix, the “lord” of Catholicism is yet upon the cross. The Lord (Messiah / Savior) of the Bible died once for all; and has risen (Matthew 28:1-10; Acts 13:29-41)! Selah.

Roman Catholic doctrine which developed during the medieval period, generally assumed a semi-Pelagian stance within doctrine. The Roman Catholic view through human idealism depreciated the fall of man, so that he was no longer considered spiritually dead, but rather only weakened; thereby able to cooperate with God in salvation as by an act of

¹⁷⁹¹ John 6:44-65.

¹⁷⁹² Hebrews 7:4-28; 9:11-10:39.

¹⁷⁹³ 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Galatians 4:1-11.

“works.” Specifically, doctrines such as: purgatory; prayers to—Mary, angels, and other departed (dead) saints; rituals of the Mass and transubstantiation; were initiated during this period. The medieval period was truly a dark period of time, both by the physical atrocities committed and by the heretic religious doctrines which came forth to cause catastrophic detriment to actual spirituality within the members of the Christian religion! Ritualistic physical realm (carnal) religion is diametrically opposed to spiritual worship which is righteous, and acceptable to God!

THE HEIDELBERG CATECHISM QUESTION 81 EXPLAINS:

Q. What difference is there between the Lord’s Supper and the Roman Catholic Mass?

A. The Lord’s Supper testifies to us that we have complete forgiveness of all our sins through the one sacrifice of Jesus Christ which He Himself has accomplished on the cross once for all (Heb. 10:10, 12; 7:26, 27; 9:12, 25; Jn. 19:30; Mt. 26:28; Lk. 22:19); and that through the Holy Spirit we are incorporated into Christ (1 Cor.10:16, 17; 6:17), who according to His human nature is not now on earth but in heaven, at the right hand of the Father (Jn. 20:17; Col. 3:1; Heb. 1:3; 8:1), and is there to be worshipped (Mt. 6:20, 21; Acts 7:55; Phil. 3:20; 1 Th. 1:10). But the Mass teaches that the living and the dead do not have forgiveness of sins through the sufferings of Christ unless He is again offered for them daily by the priest, and that Christ is bodily under the form of bread and wine and is therefore to be worshipped in them. Therefore, the Mass is fundamentally a complete denial of the once for all sacrifice and suffering of Christ and as such an idolatry to be condemned (Heb. 9:26; 10:12, 14).

A few serious questions and statements I feel are necessary at this point are:

1. If the Christian religion celebration of Christmas and Easter are truly of and for the Lord, why are aspects of paganism (darkness) maintained within the celebrations? The celebrations have bunnies and eggs (both signs of fertility), along with pine trees which have

been utilized within pagan rituals for millennia.¹⁷⁹⁴ Why do you suppose that in every celebration of the Christian religion regarding Jesus, that there is maintained some aspect of paganism? Do you suppose this is by chance; or that insidiousness is involved? Although multitudes delude themselves to believe compromise holds no major consequence; the reality remains that compromise from truth is assuredly spiritually destructive!

- We must remember that Satan is the Great Deceiver. He will sneak into the religious nature of individuals any way he can, and is not about to do so openly or truthfully! If indeed different aspects of pagan rituals are being celebrated because current and former religious leaders are and were either to cowardice or deceived to proclaim the truth, do you suppose that Satan is involved; or it just happened this way? Please read these Scriptural verses: (Matthew 13:24-50; 1 Timothy 4:1-11; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:1-10; 11:1-15; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Ephesians 4:7-32).
- As “religion” is a primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world, and compromise within religion is but variation from and denial of truth; “religion” with all its subtle (insidious) forms of corruption denies the necessity of absolute truth, which is foundational for appropriate worship of the one true God (John 14:6; 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10)! When will we learn—worshipping God in spirit and in truth is righteous worship within the spiritual relational reality; physical realm ritualistic worship (carnality) is necessary only for those held captive within the deception of religion (John 4:20-24; Galatians 4:1-11)!
- “Religion” is a cheap physical realm carnal mimic of a wonderful spiritual realm relationship; thus nothing more than a worthless deceptive counterfeit!

2. The Christian religion yet:

- Blindly follows the original dates of pagan celebrations, as designated by religious leadership.
- Continues to use the same fertility symbols as were used in the

¹⁷⁹⁴ cf. Deuteronomy 12:1-4; 2 Kings 16:1-4; Jeremiah 2:17-22; 3:11-16; Ezekiel 6:9-14.

celebrations of the Ashtaroth (Canaanite fertility, war and love gods), and/or Mithra / Molech (sun gods).

- Continues to celebrate as did ancestry, the following of idols. These idols are being taught to children as being real individuals or characters, i.e. Santa Claus, the Easter Bunny, etc. How many Christian religion believers have followed these forms of idol worship, and never even considered the spiritual ramifications upon their children? Describing Santa Claus as knowing all things about all children is attributing to Santa Clause (completely fictitious) an attribute which is God's alone (omniscience; divinity). This is nothing short of claiming Santa Claus to be a god, as by claiming him (Santa) to have a form of deity; as by the ascribed attributes thereof. Generations leading children astray due to secular associations; thus causing children to stumble and potentially fall spiritually, which is the first step toward spiritual depravity leading to spiritual destruction as by denial of the spiritual imperatives (spirit and truth)! Does the Gospel indicate a severe consequence for causing a child to stumble; especially "spiritually," which opens the door for them to go no further than deceptive religion in their seeking God within the delusiveness of the flesh influenced by demons?¹⁷⁹⁵ Being deceptive to children for any reason is completely un-righteous and inappropriate! When parents deceive their children within supposed attachments to God, they in fact openly welcome demonic influence and coercion into the life of their child; which is certainly not an act of love! Please understand, the reason why multitudes have never gone beyond physical realm religion unto the spiritual reality of a righteous relationship with God, is because they were taken captive to blatant carnality during their rearing years; this directly involved with the examples set by their parents! Generation upon generation of families have fallen prey to this form of un-righteous behavior, due the fact of following the beliefs and characteristics of progenitors!

3. Behavior as to teaching fantasy characters to one's children is that which is derived from failure to realize a relationship with the Lord.

¹⁷⁹⁵ Matthew 18:3-14.

The world not knowing God; as also many professing believers do not know the Lord personally, although the spiritual relational reality is the emphasized basis of true faith; seek to replace Him with substitutes. These substitutes then carry aspects of fleshly desires and indulgence, for all such things are generated due man's failure to have faith in God, but rather affects from that which can be conceived of in conjunction with idealisms, ideology, and fantasy.

- This is the inevitable outcome of attempting to un-righteously utilize the measure of faith given to all by the Lord, although contrary to a spiritual reality; as by that which is idiosyncratic to human nature (i.e. the flesh).
4. Why would someone who loves God possibly seek or follow secular forms of ritual or celebration, either purposefully or in ignorance; while also blindly teaching these inappropriate forms of tradition to their children?
- Nowhere in Scripture did the Lord ever render authorization for us to lie to our children, or lead them contrary to the admonitions He set forth! The form of denominationalism (Roman Catholicism) who yet seek to crucify the Lord (perpetual sacrifice—Masse), having obviously remained deceived, are those now blindly followed into supposed ritualistic worship of the Lord; although the traditions are carnal and utilize the Lord as an excuse. Just as the Israelites of the Old Testament continually attempted to utilize “high places” as a means of worship, although obviously not pleasing to God; so now the Christian religion yet does the same under different names and pretenses.
5. When a child or new convert to Christendom is taught to celebrate these things and they are never taught the wrong in them, they in turn teach their children and others the same traditions and deceptions.
- We were never instructed to send our children and others into bondage as by deception!
 - We were never instructed to practice, teach or condone ritual and tradition by rote!
 - Although we have been instructed to be separate and not conform to the ways of the world; the masses instead compromise within the confines (bondage) of the status quo! It

should be understood that the husband and father within all families is directly responsible unto the Lord to investigate truth regarding God; from this they are to lead their families into the light, as God is in the light, and maintain the family in the light of truth at all times! The behavior of progeny once leaving the home in maturity is no longer the husband and father's responsibility; although the beliefs and behavior of the wife yet falls within the responsibility of the husband; for the "husband" and "father" is directly responsible unto God for all spiritual leadership within the home! Please read and consider these passages: John 15:18-16:1; Philippians 3:1-14; Romans 1:18-32; 12:1-21; 1 Peter 1:3-2:10; Ephesians 6:1-18; Hebrews 12:1-11; Colossians 2:1-23.

6. Regarding the human birth of Jesus:

- Although those of antiquity who trusted in the faithfulness of God looked forward to the coming Messiah; members of the Christian religion who fail to trust in the faithfulness of God thereby looking forward to Jesus' triumphant return, look back upon prophesy past fulfilled (Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Timothy 6:3-21)!
- The entirety of Jesus' having come was in fulfillment of the Father's will, in learning, ministering to the Israelites, destroying the works of the devil, and making atonement for all humankind upon the cross (Matthew 15:24; Luke 2:42-52; 4:42-44; John 12:23-36).
- The Lord has always existed (John 1:1-5; 8:56-58; Revelation 1:4-8; 22:12, 13)! His having come in human form was an act of His lovingkindness, mercy and grace upon those created spiritually in His image (John 3:1-21)! For these reasons, it is absurd for anyone claiming to know God to look back for the purpose of celebrating the origin of God's human manifestation; for the blessing of His first coming is complete (finished), and has been for numerous centuries (John 19:30; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21)!
- The actual aspect of religious celebration pertaining to Jesus' birth is neither Biblical nor appropriate; rather it is derived from carnal: mindset, thought, and desire. Just as most individuals

enjoy celebrating their own birthday and the birthday of others, as this is a time of focus upon oneself or another in the physical realm; looking back unto the birth of Jesus in human form is but a physical realm celebration which ought not to occur in the lives of those who are to walk by faith! Because a birthday celebration is centered upon the flesh (“self”), it is most assured that Jesus never allowed any celebration of His human birthday while in human form; for celebration of one’s own birthday is celebration of “self”! (John 5:19-47)!

7. How is it that the world celebrates the same holidays as the church, in basically the same fashion?
- Is it possible that a few times a year, the world surrenders to follow Jesus, or is it more possible that members of the Christian religion surrender to follow the ways of the world? As the world hated our Lord, and Jesus Himself stated that we also would be hated; who is following who?
 - The answer is actually quite simple: the masses refusing to come out into the light within the context of truth, as the Lord is in the light, continues to wander in darkness void of truth; for within “religion” is found deception and bondage, whereas within a personal relationship with the Lord (spiritual relational reality) is truth and freedom! The masses wander to and fro in darkness, without certainty of a righteously assured destination; the remnant journeys forth forward in the light of God’s faithfulness, knowing the certainty of eternal life, and the surety of God’s upward call in Christ during the journey!¹⁷⁹⁶
 - I find it terribly pathetic:
 - That the Christian religion always finds a reason or excuse to continue those things which are desired for the sake of fleshly indulgence! Please read—Joshua 24:14-28.
 - That all of the traditions within the Christian religion today which have certain dates are derived from pagan worship (except Thanksgiving—as this was started as a time to render praise and thanksgiving unto God, amongst peoples of new acquaintance).

¹⁷⁹⁶ John 14:2-7; Philippians 3:1-14.

- The dates followed by the Christian religion today, are followed without investigation of truth, or question.
- The dates derived are all from some type of worship regarding creation or false gods. Compromise leads inevitably to corruption! Please read—Romans 1:18-32.
- That only a remnant of believers (true Christians) maintains separateness from the world so as to worship God in spirit and in truth; without compromise, variation, or excuse!
- I pray for the masses within the confines of religious bondage, in hopes that some may mature and come to be servants of the harvest; which has always remained plentiful, as the Lord cannot lead anyone who continues practice of religious deception (1 Peter 2:1-10; Matthew 9:36-38; Hebrews 5:11-6:8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; 1 John 1:5-10)!

Mistletoe: It was believed in ancient Europe that the mistletoe held magic powers to bring forth life, fertility, and peace; while also protection from disease. Because the northern Europeans associated the plant with “Freya” (the Norse goddess of love), the custom became one of kissing beneath mistletoe branches. This of course became a custom within the Christian religious celebration of Christmas.

Santa Claus (Saint Nicholas in Germany): Initially folklore from European cultures (Dutch—Sinterklaas), was brought to New York by Dutch settlers in the 18th century. Sinterklaas was depicted as a tall, dignified, saintly individual riding upon a horse in the air; accompanied by an elf (Black Peter) who punished disobedient children. It was in North America that Santa Claus became depicted as a fat and jolly old fellow; without further saintly attributes.

The transformation from Sinterklaas to Santa Claus began in A.D. 1823, when a poem from Clement Clark Moore (written to amuse his daughter) was published in a New York newspaper. It was within the poem, that the old saintly fellow (Santa Claus) was introduced as flying in a reindeer-drawn sleigh above the rooftops. The depiction of Santa Claus in his current fat and jolly form was forthcoming further from drawings by Thomas Nast in the 19th century; as also his dwelling at the North Pole along with his elfin toymakers. The folklore of Santa Claus became prevalent to the point of being believed; which was demonstrated when Virginia O’Hanlon in 1897 wrote to the newspaper

asking if Santa was real, and received the answer—“Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus.”

Christmas Tree: Although pine trees had been utilized for centuries of antiquity for sacrifices, and as objects of worship to pagan fertility gods and goddesses, the aspect of alteration regarding pine trees from pagan rituals into the ritualistic traditions of the Christian religion, began in Germany during the 16th century A.D.; when the symbol for fertility was altered to illustrate the rebirth. The folklore tells of how Martin Luther was so moved by the beauty of the starlit evergreen (furry) trees, that he brought one into his home and decorated it with candles; this to emphasize the beauty of God’s creation to his children. As Martin Luther was adamant about Gospel truth, would he actually kill a tree to emphasize appreciation unto God for the beauty of creation?

In 1841, Prince Albert of Germany gave a Christmas tree to his wife (Queen Victoria of England). From that point forward, as Germans immigrated throughout the world, the tradition of the Christmas tree followed them, thus becoming a popular Christmas tradition in many parts of the world. The assorted decorations now found upon Christmas trees, came about as substitutions for the simple candles which Martin Luther supposedly had placed upon the dead tree within his home; having increased throughout the years as a means of adding décor to the already festive occasion.

Personal Note: First, I would like to emphasize that Martin Luther was righteously emphatic in the seeking of truth, therefore strict adherence to Gospel truth and standards; as this is a surety within all individuals who truly love the Lord! It was Martin Luther’s unwavering adamancy regarding Gospel truth and standards, which caused dissension between himself and the Catholic Church; this as love for God first and foremost was the motivation which led Martin Luther to remain unwavering in seeking truth, no matter the consequence.

The epic (folklore) regarding Martin Luther is a primary excuse utilized within the Christian religion to continue practice of Christmas trees within homes; yet reality remains that the use of “green trees” within pagan celebrations and rituals being condemned in the Gospel, has no place in a relationship with the Lord God of truth and light! In addition, to kill evergreen trees because of attachment to paganism, disrespects both God and God’s creation, for to kill God’s creation in

no way indicates respect for the creation or the Creator; especially when due to carnal practice adherence!¹⁷⁹⁷

True Christianity demands separation from the world and its many practices of deceptive darkness; never adherence as by tolerance, acceptance, and excuses!¹⁷⁹⁸ It is blatant disobedience derived from double-mindedness, to believe that engaging in deeds of darkness will not hinder a relationship with the Lord God of truth and light; for to engage in delusive darkness is to worship the creation, not the Creator!¹⁷⁹⁹ Worship of creation rather than the Creator, is worship of the ruler of the world (Satan—"the Great Deceiver") within intentional ignorance; which is in direct opposition to the kind intention of God's will!¹⁸⁰⁰ When "excuses" are forthcoming to justify common adherence to former paganism as by adaptation, the fact of who is worshipped becomes evident; for an excuse is an attempt to evade or deny truth or reality, and is therefore a delusion instigated by the father of lies who entices spiritual destruction; for he has been murdering individuals spiritually throughout the history of humankind!¹⁸⁰¹ Because failure to deny "self" is failure to deny personal volition for the sake of following the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, the flesh is easily influenced from the demonic realm because of disobedience to commandments set forth by the Lord, to both reach and maintain higher standards of righteousness set forth by God for established spiritual edification. Because the kind intention of God's will is that we receive and walk according to spiritual training which prepares us for service both now and for all eternity, the imperative exists that all fleshly desires and indulgences cease entirely; for we must be led spiritually by the indwelling Holy Spirit, and thereby allow eradication of the hindrances which come forth by practiced blatant carnality!¹⁸⁰² When we refuse the masterful guidance of the Holy Spirit within our spirit, which takes captive our carnal desires to the righteousness of God; our flesh being easily enticed and influenced from the demonic realm, stays us from receiving the spiritual blessings of God, and thus also the spiritual growth which is from God alone!

¹⁷⁹⁷ Deuteronomy 12:2; 2 Kings 16:2-4; 17:10-12; Jeremiah 2:20-22; 3:6-10; Ezekiel 6:112-14; Romans 1:18-25.

¹⁷⁹⁸ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

¹⁷⁹⁹ John 12:35, 36.

¹⁸⁰⁰ John 14:28-31; 16:8-11; Ephesians 1:5-23.

¹⁸⁰¹ 1 Peter 5:8-11; John 8:40-44.

¹⁸⁰² Romans 12:1-21, emphasis vs. 1-3.

To engage in religious darkness; either intentionally or in ignorance; disallows our ability to see clearly, as we continue wandering in darkness; this is the reason that one form of compromise generally leads to additional forms of compromise, and generalized complacency in doing so, with no conviction of wrongdoing; for to achieve freedom in Christ, we must walk in the light as He is in the light, to receive His nurturing masterful leadership and strength for continued success! Anyone who engages in religious darkness because of family practices or false teaching is guilty of intentional idolatry; for disobedience to God for any carnal reason, is to place the ways of the world above the good, acceptable and perfect will of God; thus the world and all it contains is of greater importance than the Lord God of all creation! A relationship with God is not about us; the relationship is all about Him; until this is realized, we will always be guilty of forms of idolatry which are contingent upon “self!”¹⁸⁰³

Halloween

This is a celebration of tradition, which no believer in the Lord Jesus Christ should ever condone nor partake of. This is a celebration which those of the world participate in, as they are ignorant of Satan’s schemes to lead astray. Christians are never to be ignorant of Satan’s schemes; for our battle is in the spiritual realm, and defeat is certain *if* and when this important fact is denied or forgotten.¹⁸⁰⁴ Does it not seem inappropriate that children are allowed to dress as goblins, ghosts, witches, devils, etc.; exhibiting forms of wickedness found in Satan’s realm? Instead of teaching our children that such things are to be denied, most parents and congregations have “fall carnivals”; or other such excuses so as to take part; yet supposedly not fully. Does this seem appropriate when we are to worship God in spirit and in truth? Does it seem appropriate when said carnivals promote fear in our children; supposedly in fun? Does it seem appropriate for Christian children to go forth demanding candy; lest they play some inappropriate trick (trick or treat)?

I personally do not believe most believers realize the poisonous ramifications upon the spiritual aspect of youth, which adherence to such

¹⁸⁰³ Colossians 3:5-17; James 4:1-10.

¹⁸⁰⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:3-6; Ephesians 6:10-20.

ritualistic traditions may bring forth. While we are playing games with our children, and making excuses for failing to separate ourselves; Satanists are praying for the destruction of our faith, families and children. Satanists perform sacrifices on October 31; police are on alert for kidnapping, vandalism and other heinous crimes; while many believers yet play games and remain intentionally ignorant.

The Satanist celebration of Halloween began with celebrations by the Druids honoring the “god of the dead” (lord Samhain). The eve of what became a supposed hallow day (All Saints Day - November 1) was called “All Souls Eve” (All Hallows Eve) and was celebrated in many parts of the ancient pagan world. The All Saints Day celebration which was adhered to by many denominations in honoring church martyrs both known and unknown, was (and is) inappropriate as it again attempts to Christianize a pagan celebration. The excuse rendered by church leadership centuries ago to supposedly justify “All Saints Day,” was that the day was taken back for the Lord from whence it was stolen by pagans. This in itself demonstrates the foolishness within Christian religion excuses; for nothing is taken from God which is of necessity to be: recaptured, regained, restored, or retaliated against by man; thus the foolishness remains attempting to please God as by “works,” leading to but another act of foolish ritual and tradition within religion!

Although the church has chosen to continue celebrating certain dates which should have been left to pagans, the fact of the matter remains that individual parents and believers will give account as to why they blindly followed the false leadership of those who claimed to serve God. Just because weak leadership has for generations led millions astray, the fact remains that millions allowed themselves to be led astray by failure to test the spirits to ascertain whether they were (and are) from God.¹⁸⁰⁵ The doctrine of demons warned against in the Scriptures, very much includes excuses (deceptions), for inappropriate behavior and adherence to un-righteous celebrations; as by false teaching and leadership cowardice!¹⁸⁰⁶ For parents and believers to think that dabbling in cult and occult activities of Satan’s realm cannot bring forth spiritual harm, is absurd to the extreme! To think that Satan will not take opportunities such as this to deceive not only us but also our children into taking the

¹⁸⁰⁵ 1 John 4:1-6.

¹⁸⁰⁶ 1 Timothy 4:1-16.

wide path to spiritual destruction, is to fall prey to Satan's schemes and thereby spiritual defeat.¹⁸⁰⁷ Please remember, my brothers and sisters, *if* what we are doing is not for Christ and the salvation of others, then it is against Him and the edification of others; for we either walk in the light of truth with Christ, or the darkness of demonic influence, for we cannot do both!¹⁸⁰⁸ Are believers so immature within their faith that this cannot be realized? It is the responsibility of all believers in God to evidence the truth and walk therein! Are we doing this, or remaining content and complacent within religious delusion and ignorance?

The origins of Halloween within the Christian religion entered by pagan celebrations; as the inappropriate was not denied for the sake of righteousness. Regarding "All Saints Day," Roman Catholic leadership attempted to gain back the day which had been stolen by the Druids in celebration of the dead, by attributing the day to the remembrance of martyred saints, and "Pomona" the Roman goddess of fruit. Gaining back a day stolen by pagans as by their celebrations and doing so by way of excuses; does this sound "Christian" (Christ-like) in reasoning? The celebration unto "Samhain" (lord of the dead), was a celebration to mark the transition from summer to winter. This was the time of year when all aspects of summer harvest and work were being placed into standby for the approaching winter months, and all but the breeding stock of vegetation and beast were being prepared for the winter necessities. The feast was therefore a seasonal celebration which included bonfires, feasts and animal sacrifices; which also included the necessity for divination in contacting the "Otherworld" for help in the transition of the seasons. This celebration was also a time when folks could supposedly connect with ancestors through offerings at the Samhain ritualistic festival.

We must remember that most such festivals were derived from belief that different gods were responsible for the changing seasons. The different ritualistic festivals to pagan gods of such beliefs (Polytheism) have no place within Christianity, which is the basis of faith in one true God. Compromise is truly not an option, lest we fall prey to the ruler of the world (Satan) who definitely gets involved in worldly rituals! The

¹⁸⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 11:2, 3, 12-15.

¹⁸⁰⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:14-11:1.

festivals of Samhain (October 31) and Beltane (May 1) are the two most evil of days in regard to the Celtic pagan world. In the way in which they (Satanists and devil worshippers) hold these days as special in an unholy way; believers within the Christian religion hold Easter and Christmas as special days regarding holiness. Both distinctions are derived from intentional or inadvertent failures to respect God, and/or more so uphold worship of God in spirit and in truth! No such celebrations are of any spiritual benefit, but rather lead only to disruption, distraction, and the wickedness of fleshly delusive indulgence.¹⁸⁰⁹

Another aspect of Halloween which is ignorantly followed is the carving of pumpkins (jack-o-lantern). Initially during the Samhain ritual, turnips (gourds) were carved and then lighted with candles; which was to light the way for deceased loved ones. The turnip (gourd) or pumpkin was carved to resemble the image of the loved one; or a picture (portrait) was placed by the carved lantern. This is the basis for the carving of jack-o-lanterns in the ritual of Halloween. Because this involves divination in supposed attempts to reach deceased loved ones, this obviously has no place anywhere in the life of Christians! With actual understanding as to the origins of carved gourds, turnips and pumpkins; I believe anyone can realize why pumpkins should never be sold at Christian religion congregational structures, so as to assist believers in being led astray within the celebration of Halloween! To step into darkness for any reason, is to journey in darkness until the inappropriate reason has been completed; no one wandering in darkness can see clearly, for the imperative light of truth is intentionally rejected!¹⁸¹⁰

It is terrible how multitudes blindly follow pagan rituals, never having known the reason or ramifications of doing so; for failure to investigate origins prior to participation is blatantly stupid, as multitudes believe falsehoods and follow blindly without consideration of disobedience to: the Lord, the Gospel, commandments, and standards! What kind of love for God does adherence to foolishness emphasize? As with the ritual of Samhain where different aspects of tradition supposedly allow communication with those of the "Otherworld," so also forms of divination and witchcraft yet exist in forms of worldly religion (pur-

¹⁸⁰⁹ Galatians 4:1-11; Colossians 2:20-23.

¹⁸¹⁰ Luke 11:32-36; John 1:1-5; 3:16-21; 8:12; 12:35, 36; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 5:6-17.

gatory; mediums). Please understand that “Christians” are to have no part (nothing whatsoever to do) with the “Otherworld”! There is no exception; for such exceptions are of evil and lead to wicked behavior! Think about it and remember, it does not matter what we have been told to do, or what others would expect or may think of us; what matters is that we test all things in accordance to humble obedience unto God, for we (individually) are the ones who will give account!¹⁸¹¹ In addition, parents will render account unto the Lord for leading or allowing their adolescent children toward delusive deeds of darkness! Which is more important, the thinking processes, emotions, and expectations of others, or the manifestation of God’s righteousness within us?¹⁸¹² Only the devotional and humbly obedient will be led by the Lord; and as only those led righteously by the Lord are His legitimate children, examining oneself in the light of truth is extremely wise advice!

Communion & Baptism

To better understand what is to follow regarding communion and baptism, it is necessary to realize that Jesus was sent solely to the lost sheep of Israel; also, that He sent the Apostles initially (solely) unto the Israelites as well.¹⁸¹³ Because Jesus came during the Biblical dispensation of the “Law” so as to redeem those born under the Law (Israelites and proselytes); a distinction must be made as to a difference between the Jews and the Gentiles during the different dispensations.¹⁸¹⁴ Failure in making this distinction, leads to believing the Body of Christ (Jews and Gentiles alike—Acts 15:7-11; Romans 10:8-13) to be within the same prophesies and blessings which were and will again be for Israel alone.¹⁸¹⁵

The words spoken in the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke and John), are words directed to the nation of Israel; with exception of words regarding moral and ethical standards! Although the Synoptic Gospels hold much information referencing the lineage and ministry of Jesus which is of great importance, many standards set forth in these Gospels are not for the Body of Christ (Church)! What is considered to be the Great Commission for the Body of Christ is actually the Great

¹⁸¹¹ Romans 2:1-16; 2 Corinthians 10:1-5; John 12:46-50; cf. Hebrews 5:8-10.

¹⁸¹² Romans 3:21-31; 2 Corinthians 5:14-6:10; cf. Philippians 1:6-2:16.

¹⁸¹³ Matthew 10:1-6; 15:24.

¹⁸¹⁴ Galatians 4:4, 5; cf. Romans 6:1-23.

¹⁸¹⁵ Romans 11:1-36.

Commission for Messianic believers within the house of Israel (Matthew 28:19, 20); this as the Israelites were to be reached with the good news of the Gospel, throughout the world, to all points of which they had been scattered. Prior to Christ's First Advent, and after Christ's Second Advent, the nation of Israel was and will be set apart from all others according to the purpose and will of God. During this dispensation of grace, the nation of (non-Messianic) Israel has been set aside temporarily; therefore the standards for Israelite evangelism of times past and times future are not necessary standards for evangelism within the Body of Christ. Two different dispensations, thus different standards of "go therefore." The Dispensation of grace (mystery) was revealed with the ministry of the Apostle Paul; along with the mystery being revealed, came a completely new distinction!

- Much of the confusion within most pulpit proclamations, which leads to misunderstanding of the Gospel, comes from arrogance within past church leadership in believing that the church has replaced Israel as God's chosen people. Within this, the appropriate distinctions of the Gospel are rejected; so as to make comparisons with Israel which do not actually exist!

COMMUNION

A great Biblical emphasis within the participation in the Lord's Supper (Communion), is the necessity for unity one with another (common union) within the Body of Christ. This necessity of union amongst believers was greatly emphasized by the Apostle Paul; this demonstrated by the apostle's statements of judging and examining oneself rightly prior to participation.¹⁸¹⁶ Participation in the Lord's Supper is to be as "one" within the Body, therefore emphasis is easily rendered that selfishness and Christianity are opposed one to the other; especially in a church (ekklyasia) setting! The Lord's Supper was reiterated by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians chapter 11, with the specific of unity emphasized for the reason that the Lord Jesus is to be the primary focus and consideration of the act of remembrance; as He is remembered within unity and love.

¹⁸¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 11:17-34.

- Within this physical act of remembering the Lord until His return, it must be understood that this is not a “religious sacrament,” but rather a unified focus and emphasis upon the one true Lord and Savior. The physical realm means and emphasis within this act of remembrance is necessary, in context of the Lord’s Supper being performed with others within the Body of Christ; as by this we lovingly unite in remembrance of our Lord, and proclamation of His death until He returns (vs. 26, 27).

If and when believers cannot band together as one, even in remembrance of our Lord, then further separations derived from selfish ambitions and behavior is sure to occur. “Christians” are all members of the same Body, with greater honor being upon the weaker members; this to illustrate how unity will edify all as through humility.¹⁸¹⁷ If stronger members within the Body of Christ dishonor other members who are considered to be of lesser value (although not), then the dishonor put forth is actually against Christ our Lord. We are all of the same unleavened loaf and Body, therefore disunity ought not to be! Do our actions demonstrate unity or disunity? Does denominationalism demonstrate unity or disunity pertaining to the entire Body of Christ?¹⁸¹⁸ The emphasis made by the Apostle Paul was within his epistles to the Corinth believers, for it was here that disunity (even in the observance of the Lord’s Supper) was prevalent.¹⁸¹⁹ Although disunity exists within the Body of Christ even to this day, when all believers maintain understanding of having worth within the Body only by the grace of God, then this disunity will cease to occur through righteous humility! Pride and arrogance have no place in the Body of Christ; for the former (pride) causes opposition to God, and the latter (arrogance) emphasizes failure to utilize the measure of faith rendered by the Lord!¹⁸²⁰

- May I say before continuing, that the word “Communion” is appropriate within the context that a “common union” should exist between believers; when the common union remains

¹⁸¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 12:1-27.

¹⁸¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:1-11.

¹⁸¹⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:17-22.

¹⁸²⁰ Romans 10:1-4; 12:1-3, specific v. 3; James 4:1-10, specific v. 6.

devotionally focused upon the Lord Jesus. I do not prefer to utilize the word “Communion” but rather the words—“Lord’s Supper,” for the latter is the basis of appropriate focus during the act of remembrance.

- The word “Communion” is more so pertaining to an aspect of Sacrament than actual union (unity) within the body. Within this, Communion pertains more so to religious doctrine regarding: transubstantiation, consubstantiation, and the unbiblical receiving of grace as by merit; thus by concept of the “Communion” origins, it pertains to religion vice sincerity of love within the relationship!
- I could understand utilizing the word “Communion” when pertaining to the Lord’s Supper, *if* the actual union of believers was indwelt within sincere love, devotion, and faith in God; yet with the actual emphasis of the “Sacrament” being one of a religious nature (rote), and thus union within religion rather than the appropriate relationship which should exist between believers without the foolishness of manmade doctrines and rituals, I prefer to utilize the words “Lord’s Supper,” for this negates the necessity for either Catholic or Reformed traditions.

Colossians 2:8-10: See to it that no one takes you captive through philosophy and empty deception, according to the tradition of men, according to the elementary principles of the world, rather than according to Christ. For in Him all the fullness of Deity dwells in bodily form, and in Him you have been made complete, and He is the head over all rule and authority;

The Lord’s Supper is symbolic of the body and blood of Christ. The action is for the purpose of proclaiming what Christ has done for us in the giving of Himself.¹⁸²¹ This is not to say that the bread and wine actually become the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation), for to assume this is to attempt a spiritually based act of remembrance derived from love, as by a physical realm observance considered in the flesh. We celebrate our Lord by faith, not by sight; although aspects in the

¹⁸²¹ 1 Corinthians 11:24-26.

physical realm are utilized within the purpose of remembrance (bread and wine).

The blood of the Lord Jesus was shed for all humanity. The New Covenant was not solely made with the Body of Christ in this context, although the New Covenant is “in His blood.”¹⁸²² Paul understanding this fact identifies that the covenant is truly in the blood of Christ, for no other blood was ever shed for humanity—“once for all.” This illustrates that Paul was not under the standards of evangelism (doctrine and tradition) which were set forth for the Apostles regarding Israelites in the Great Commission! This was proof that Jesus is Lord of all who believe; therefore Gentiles are in the New Covenant by being in Christ; this in a sense of being grafted in, for the blood shed applies to the entirety of redemption.¹⁸²³ We must be careful to distinguish the divisions of the dispensations, while also taking care to distinguish the connections. The Church (Body of Christ) is not in the New Covenant as by religious doctrine; rather by: faith, relationship, and the blood of the Lamb.¹⁸²⁴

Because it is the blood of the One which was shed for all humanity and within the covenant of His blood all are united in Him, the observance of the Lord’s Supper is for all who believe. In this there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile. In the observance of the Lord’s Supper, we are to remember and proclaim Him; looking forward to His future return, for He is the hope of our calling.¹⁸²⁵ Being of those within the Body of Christ (Jews and Gentiles alike), we look forward to His heavenly kingdom; whereas those within the nation of Israel who have not accepted Jesus as the Messiah of promise, look forward to His kingdom upon the earth (millennial kingdom), in fulfillment of covenant promise (triumphant return). In either case—we all look forward to His return unto righteous reign!

BAPTISM / CIRCUMCISION

This is one area, that many divisions have come forth within Christian religious doctrine; this as distinguished from “sound doctrine.”¹⁸²⁶ Water

¹⁸²² Romans 11:25-32; Luke 22:15-20.

¹⁸²³ Ephesians 4:1-6, emphasis v. 5; Romans 3:21-31; 8:12-17; 11:11-24; Galatians 3:15-29.

¹⁸²⁴ 1 Peter 2:1-10; Titus 3:3-8.

¹⁸²⁵ 1 Corinthians 11:26-32; Ephesians 1:1-23.

¹⁸²⁶ 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

baptism is the sign within the New Covenant which replaced the sign of circumcision within the Old Covenant amongst the Jews. The institution of baptism was taught by Jesus to his disciples during His earthly spoken ministry; this during the Dispensation of the Law! The initial baptism taught by Jesus was apparently very similar to the baptism of John the Baptist (John 4:1-3). Clearly and distinctively water baptism for the Jews was instituted by Christ after His resurrection before the ascension.¹⁸²⁷

Baptism was instituted by Jesus as part of the Great Commission immediately prior to His ascension; also water baptism was continually practiced by the Apostles subsequent to that time. The significance of being engrafting into Christ is to receive fully: the forgiveness of sins by His blood, regeneration by the Holy Spirit, adoption, resurrection to everlasting life, and engagement to be the Lord's own. The Biblical data is very good for engrafting into Christ, for this is mentioned in Scripture especially in connection with Jesus' death, burial and resurrection. All believers baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death.¹⁸²⁸ This baptism is the means by which identification is made with Christ; demonstrating having died to sin with Him. The key here is that we are engrafted into Christ through baptism (indwelling) of the Holy Spirit! We are baptized into union with Christ; and in this context of baptism into the Body of Christ by the Holy Spirit, there is no distinction between Jew and Gentile.¹⁸²⁹

In a like manner as we have all been circumcised with Christ in our separation from the sinful nature of the flesh, we have also maintained our identification with Christ by our walking in newness of life.¹⁸³⁰ These passages demonstrate spiritual baptism; not water baptism! There is a close linking in the New Testament between the outward sign of water baptism which signifies purification and cleansing, and the inward washing of the Holy Spirit which effects purification and cleansing from sin. Spiritual baptism of the Holy Spirit allows our union (identification) with Christ; in which all the benefits of redemption are received; in our having been sealed for the day of redemption!¹⁸³¹ The baptism of the

¹⁸²⁷ Mark 16:9-18.

¹⁸²⁸ Romans 6:3-7.

¹⁸²⁹ 1 Corinthians 12:12-14; Galatians 3:21-29.

¹⁸³⁰ Colossians 2:9-17; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

¹⁸³¹ Ephesians 4:30-32.

Holy Spirit and the inward washing and uniting with Christ, is symbolized by the outward washing (water baptism); with this symbol (water baptism) being consistent with rituals and ceremonies of the nation of Israel within the Old Covenant. For this reason water baptism is a part of Christ's Great Commission to the Messianic Jews.

Water baptism being an open sign of repentance and cleansing from one's sins, and circumcision being a separation from the penis of the excess foreskin (prepuce); each indicates a separation regarding the flesh (physical realm). In both the Old and New Testaments, the Lord called upon His people to cleanse their hearts from carnal desires.¹⁸³² In this manner of reference, circumcision is described as regeneration and a cleansing of the heart, for we are to allow ourselves to be circumcised (cut away) from the world and fleshly influence, unto the Lord (Holy Spirit's work of sanctification).¹⁸³³ This must occur within all believers, for the time is coming when the Lord will punish all those who are circumcised only in the flesh; therefore, all who fail to go beyond religious ceremonies involving the flesh within the spiritual potential according to the kind intention of God's volition, will give account for having failed in this regard.¹⁸³⁴ It must be reiterated at this point—within God's drawing process which “draws” individuals to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ), is a divine work which “draws” individuals unto a spiritual reality potential by righteous activation of the measure of faith which was given to each, which “draws” them away from bondage to the flesh (definitive sanctification); whereas, within the spiritual potential individuals are led and nurtured forward to God's upward call in Christ Jesus, which henceforth includes a growth away from the flesh and world (progressive sanctification) which is from the Holy Spirit (God) alone. It is this divine work of God by which we are “circumcised” (cut away) from the bondage to carnality which had denied us the spiritual reality potential; for within God's divine work is found the potential for “devotion” which allows righteous motivation to continue following the Lord's righteous leadership, and receive the nurturing necessary to persevere during further spiritual endeavors!¹⁸³⁵ Without the divine work of God (drawing process; definitive and progressive sanctification)

¹⁸³² Jeremiah 4:1-4; cf. James 4:3-6.

¹⁸³³ Romans 2:23-29; Galatians 5:1-12; Philippians 3:1-6.

¹⁸³⁴ Exemplified—Jeremiah 9:20-26.

¹⁸³⁵ Philippians 3:1-14; John 14:16, 17; 15:13-15; 1 John 4:1-6.

there can be no actual spiritual potential within God's righteousness; for without God's divine spiritual work, individuals only possess that which is of carnal beliefs and endeavor (religiosity), and thus that which is of physical realm worship! Once again—it is wise advice that everyone test, judge and examine themselves, to witness whether they are actually within the spiritual relational reality; within which we are saved and led by the Lord!¹⁸³⁶

Throughout the Old Testament, the ceremonial acts of the Jews were to inevitably point them to the necessity of faith; for the Levitical Law was but a tutor! As afore noted in the Scriptures listed, an inward devotion was to be put forth by all who confessed faith in the Lord; for inward devotion is by faith. The circumcision of the flesh which was the sign of the Old Covenant was replaced with a circumcision of the heart within the dispensation of grace. The water baptism for the Jews within the dispensation of the Law was replaced with the baptism of the Holy Spirit into the death of Christ within the dispensation of grace. The physical aspects of worship were replaced with spiritual worship foundational to disciplined devotion!¹⁸³⁷ This is a point which cannot be emphasized enough; especially when ritualistic religion attempts precedence! God had continually prepared the Jews to walk by faith, yet in their continuation of walking by sight—the lesson had yet continued as by the Great Commission involving water baptism; this only to the point of Israel' having been set aside temporarily. Believers in this Dispensation of Grace are to walk by faith; therefore aside from the one observance of the Lord's Supper in remembrance and proclamation of Jesus' death until He comes, no physical aspects of worship are necessary, appropriate, or required for those under grace!¹⁸³⁸

- It should be understood—when the Israelites were temporarily set aside because of their disobedience in failing to accept the Messiah of promise, water baptism was no longer necessary, warranted, or appropriate within the Body of Christ; for the Gentile church and the nation of Israel are not synonymous within different dispensations; although now during this

¹⁸³⁶ Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14; 2 Corinthians 13:4-8.

¹⁸³⁷ John 4:20-24; Romans 11:1-10;; 12:1-3; Galatians 4:1-11; cf. Hebrews 12:1-11.

¹⁸³⁸ 1 Corinthians 1:10-2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9.

dispensation of grace there is no longer a distinction, as all members (legitimate children) of the Body of Christ must be baptized with the Holy Spirit and thereby sealed for the day of redemption, in order to be saved from the wages of sin which is death!

- It should also be understood—when physical realm religious rituals and traditions continue within worship of God who is spirit, the result actually hinders ability to walk by faith; for such things are temporal, therefore irrelevant regarding the spiritual relational reality.¹⁸³⁹
 - Physical realm worship (religion) fuels the emotional stature of the flesh, thereby hindering growth within the spirit; thus “religion” (although prevalent upon the earth) actually is the greatest hindrance to individual’s spiritual relationships with God; for by religion “walking by faith” is reduced to but a concept!

PERSONAL FINDINGS ON INFANT BAPTISM:

I would like to explain my understanding as to how, from where, and why infant water baptism entered into Christian religious practice within several denominations. I render this so as to clarify ways in which conjecture and assumptions tend to confuse simplicity of devotion to Christ; leading to traditions and observances being practiced by—rote.

Many Christian denominations practice infant baptism. The majority of the churches at the time of the Reformation had obscured and/or abandoned the notion of justification by grace through faith. This led to the idea of merit (works) for a basis of salvation becoming predominant in the church. As Christians who seek to handle accurately the word of truth; we therefore must be careful to seek fulfillment of God’s righteousness, when the many choose to do whatever they feel appropriate (vague thinking / emotional worship / mysticism).¹⁸⁴⁰ Because many do it, we should give heed to our reluctance; while taking the time to test all things to the Gospel! We must make sure if we reject a majority view point, that we do so because the majority has gone astray from the Gospel standards of spiritual reality.

¹⁸³⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:1-3:9; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.

¹⁸⁴⁰ 2 Timothy 2:14-19; Romans 10:1-4.

- “Christianity” being the essence of an individual relationship with God by which the Lord is able to both will and work for His own good pleasure, dictates personal devotion unto one’s Lord, as by evidencing the truth and adherence thereto. With love for one another within the Body of Christ, we speak the truth in love; yet as our love is first and foremost for the Lord our God, we stay from corruption, coercion and compromise, lest having gone astray with the majority we also are no longer able to walk within the light of truth (1 John 1:1-7; Ephesians 5:1-17; Colossians 1:9-23).

During the third century there was widespread performing of infant water baptism. Because water baptism is an open sign of repentance from one’s sins, and children under the age of accountability cannot rightfully or justly comprehend the essence of repentance, baptizing them makes no sense Biblically. The Scripture states clearly how infants and/or children beneath the age of accountability are sanctified:

- Parents are to teach their children in the admonitions of the Lord; equally so as by the fruits of their own relationship with God (Proverbs 22:6; Ephesians 5:22-6:4). This is not a request.
- Children are sanctified by one or both of their believing parents (1 Corinthians 7:10-24; specific v. 14).

VIEWPOINT

The hermeneutics of continuity to the Reformed believer is—whatever is not explicitly fulfilled or done away with in the New Covenant continues to be binding. Whether that refers to promises, obligations or benefits; blessings and obligations of the Old Covenant remain in effect in the New Covenant; unless they are specifically fulfilled or abrogated.

The hermeneutics of discontinuity as practiced by many denominational believers is—the New Covenant is entirely new ground from the Old Covenant. The New Covenant is a replacement for the Old Covenant and anything that is not specifically reiterated in the New Covenant is by definition passé and done away with. It is on this basis that much of the discussion hinges.

- The hermeneutic of discontinuity is basically irrelevant in regard to infant baptism, for righteously dividing the Word of truth is essential and warranted in all situations.
- The hermeneutic of continuity holds true for: proper worship, proper attitude regarding obedience, and proper actions on the part of Christians even in the present age; regarding morality.

The greater distinguishing factor to be considered is in the instructional standards rendered by God for the different dispensations. If the instruction rendered is horizontal and thus applicable for this dispensation of grace, then it is to be heeded. If the instruction is regarding the Mosaic Law or the nation of Israel within the dispensation of the Law, aside from the Ten Commandments (moral and appropriate standards), then it is to be disregarded as a standard for the Body of Christ within this dispensation of grace. The hermeneutics of continuity and discontinuity are confusing when they are considered aside from accurately dividing the Gospel (*orthotomew*—to cut straight), and extreme care must be taken when attempting associations between covenants for the purpose of proving one's own: doctrines, theory, philosophy, or precepts.

The perfect moral law of God found throughout the Scriptures, demonstrates the love, grace, and mercy of God; also guidelines which God has always held as necessary for each of those who trust in Him.¹⁸⁴¹ The hermeneutics of continuity and discontinuity as with all theories of explanation by man must fall within the standards set forth by the Lord our God. In our walk we will both submit and yield to follow Him into understanding, servanthood and blessing, or we will seek our own path which leads to confusion and spiritual failure. With the Scripture stating—a child's sanctification being by the faith of their parent or parents, the matter is settled! Attempting to hold continuity between circumcision on the eighth day after birth and baptism, both of which are Jewish customs, is irrelevant; as circumcision was by Law, water baptism was an ordinance, and both are for Israelites by standard and instruction.¹⁸⁴²

The New Testament evidences eleven instances of Christian baptism, none of which specifically mention the baptizing of infants. This in itself

¹⁸⁴¹ James 1:21-25.

¹⁸⁴² cf. Genesis 17:10-14; Matthew 3:7-9; 10:1-6; 15:24; 28:18-20.

cannot be the basis to rule out infant baptism, for although instances mention men and women being baptized, rarely in Scripture is notation made in regard to specifics about infants. Also in our seeking answers to this question, in no case are infants exclusively excluded when they are assumed to be present. We therefore must seek to answer this question in accordance to that which is revealed within Scripture, by comparison and appropriate context. Water baptism is the baptism of repentance; thus an open sign that someone who had once faced God will volitionally turn back to God.

There are many reasons why some denominations claim that infant baptism is Biblically sound; yet in no specific passage of Scripture is infant baptism noted for reference. There are Scripture passages which speak of groups believing (Acts 10:44-48; 18:5-10; 19:1-5); and three passages reference household baptisms:

- The household of Lydia (Acts 16:14, 15).
- The household of the Philippian jailer (Acts 16:27-34).
- The household of Stephanus (1 Corinthians 1:12-17).

The basis for denominations believing that infants were baptized in the New Testament, is based (in my opinion) on conjecture and misinterpretation. Now stated are views regarding the legitimacy of infant baptism, and personal Biblical observations regarding said views.

1. (View) All who were once under the Law of circumcision in the Old Testament as a sign for believers, were now under the sign (baptism) of the New Testament covenant (Genesis 17:10-14).
 - (Observation) In this case they have failed to realize the difference between the circumcision of the flesh and that of the heart (Colossians 2:9-17; 1 Peter 3:17-22); as these differences are distinctive between physical realm religion (Law; tutor), and the spiritual realm relationship (by faith) (Galatians 3:19-25). Boys were the only infants who participated in the circumcision of the Old Covenant; in baptism there is involvement by both genders.
2. (View) Mention of household baptisms likely included some infants. Pertinent Scriptures aforementioned.

- (Observation) In this case they have failed to realize the necessity of trusting God by faith, of which an infant is not capable (Acts 18:8; Romans 10:8-13; John 3:5-8); nor is an infant capable of personal knowledge of sin, or repentance there from (Acts 2:37-40; Psalm 25:4-10).
3. (View) Jesus' welcomed and blessed children (Mark 10:13-16).
- (Observation) In no way can Jesus welcoming children unto Himself and affectionately embracing them, be construed as a basis for water baptism.
4. (View) In the Old Testament children were expected to participate in covenant renewal ceremonies; for this involved the entire family (Deuteronomy 29:10-13; Joshua 8:32-35).
- (Observation) The covenant renewal ceremonies were for the purpose of sanctification (being set apart) unto the Lord (Joel 2:12-17). Infants are sanctified (made holy) by one or both believing parents (1 Corinthians 7:14). In this, those who believe in infant baptism yet fail to understand the abounding, intricate lovingkindness and grace of God (Psalm 71:1-8); for witnessing the immensity and wonder of God by faith is hindered by a carnal mindset!

I have failed to find any Scripture evidence to verify the legitimacy of infant baptism. Such Scriptures as Acts 2:39 have been sighted (View) to illustrate the blessing children would receive as being—baptism, or being derived from baptism (Observation). This is not correct, for the promise spoken of in this passage is the gift of the Holy Spirit; whom is received by faith.¹⁸⁴³ Is an infant capable of reason regarding sin, and faith in that which is unseen; or are all human infants completely dependent upon their parents? No matter how deeply I searched for meaning as to baptizing infants, I have found no evidence that infant baptism is anything but a human tradition which has no Biblical merit. Our taking focus away from that which is revealed to us by our Lord, leads to many philosophical tangents and other inappropriate things; as human creative thinking (carnal mindset) leads to false hopes being

¹⁸⁴³ Acts 2:33-39, emphasis vs. 33, 38.

rendered within the delusive nature of religion.¹⁸⁴⁴ Please remember, the relational reality within which we are adopted and saved by God is spiritual (Christianity); whereas the Christian religion (as with all religions) is carnal, as it (they) are all physical realm mimics which attempt to emulate the spiritual reality!

Other than by the faith of one or both believing parents, I am unaware Biblically as to how an infant is sanctified; although realizing the immense mercy and lovingkindness of the Lord (spiritually), I am quite certain that a physical realm “sign” (baptism) can render no answers! The compassion that the Lord has for His children (young and old) and infants is abounding with lovingkindness and grace! I do know that God does not want His little ones to perish, and because He is the essence of love they are in His embrace, and in our prayers.¹⁸⁴⁵ Just as many times in the Old Testament accounts of deliverance by the Lord unto His chosen ones, I believe that God delivers infants and toddlers until the age of accountability by His grace; yet beyond the age of accountability the individual must decide for themselves, whether or not they will accept the atonement and authority of Christ. In such a case, our attempts to help are futile and inappropriate, therefore infant baptism (in my opinion) is not Biblical.¹⁸⁴⁶ In addition, the open sign of water baptism which was the sign of the New Covenant for the Jews until the nation was temporarily set aside became null and void at that time; therefore beyond circa 46-52 A.D. the entire matter of water baptism for anyone is irrelevant, for the legitimate children of God are baptized with the Holy Spirit and thereby sealed for the day of redemption!¹⁸⁴⁷ Once again—the divine work of God remains the imperative for salvation, and fulfillment of spiritual potential and successes!

Scripture reiterates that God will bless children through the faith and obedience of one or both parents; Scripture also dictates (demands) that children are to be taught the admonitions of God during rearing.¹⁸⁴⁸ Job was meticulous in offering up sacrifices for his children because he knew not of their transgressions, yet in love offered sacrifices for repentance in their stead. This love of Job for his children, demonstrates

¹⁸⁴⁴ Isaiah 29:8-19; Romans 8:1-30, mindset—vs. 5-11.

¹⁸⁴⁵ 1 John 4:7-19.

¹⁸⁴⁶ Psalm 78:1-8.

¹⁸⁴⁷ Ephesians 4:4-6.

¹⁸⁴⁸ Exemplified—Psalm 103:1-22; Deuteronomy 4:8-10; Genesis 18:17-19; cf. Ephesians 6:1-4.

how God remains our focus even within our love for our own children! Isaac received the blessings from God which had been promised to Abraham, which in fact were passed down.¹⁸⁴⁹ Jacob also received the blessings which were passed then to him from Abraham through Isaac.¹⁸⁵⁰ The blessings of the Davidic Covenant were passed down to David's natural children.¹⁸⁵¹ Presumption was never allowed; parents were to teach their children the instruction (admonitions) of the Lord, and were never to assume the children would learn these things and follow God on their own during the rearing years!¹⁸⁵²

- Teaching one's children the admonitions and instruction of the Lord is truly foundational upon one's devotion for God; for if a parent truly loves the Lord, they will proclaim their love for Him to their children at all times by both word and deed. While a child is yet in the rearing years within the household of the parents, it is the parent's responsibility to discipline the children within the standards as set forth by God; lest the children be led astray by the distractions of the world, and/or by foolish adolescent pride. Laziness and/or cowardice in parenting within a "Christian" household are not an option; lest the ruler of the world (Satan) gain victory within the home!

Old Testament covenant parents were to apply the sign of the covenant to their male children; the sign of—circumcision. All male children who were in covenant with God were to be circumcised as a sign of that covenant union.¹⁸⁵³ Parents were to teach their children the admonitions of God and the necessity of separateness from non-believers; in doing so they would be protecting them from the wiles of unbelief.¹⁸⁵⁴ The Biblical principle is that those who are united with the Lord in covenant faithfulness are to walk in obedience to the moral standards set forth by God; without compromise or excuse!¹⁸⁵⁵ The Lord wants our heart-

¹⁸⁴⁹ Genesis 26:2-6.

¹⁸⁵⁰ Genesis 28:10-16.

¹⁸⁵¹ 1 Kings 11:9-13, 31-39; 15:1-6; 2 Kings 8:16-19; 2 Chronicles 21:4-7; Psalm 89:3-37.

¹⁸⁵² Deuteronomy 6:4-25.

¹⁸⁵³ Genesis 17:9-14; Exodus 4:24-26.

¹⁸⁵⁴ Nehemiah 13:23-31; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

¹⁸⁵⁵ Exemplified—Exodus 20:1-17; Leviticus 26:1-46; Nehemiah 1:8-11; John 14:15-26; 15:1-17.

felt devotion (physical and spiritual loyalty), which we are then to pass to our children as appropriate standards for life! Too many parents throughout history have attempted to bypass their responsibility of living and speaking their faith to their children, instead they rely upon an ordinance (baptism) believing this to sanctify their child. Nothing takes the place of appropriate instruction and discipline to a child, upon their reaching an age by which they may understand!

The New Testament applies the provisions of the Abrahamic Covenant; for by faith believers are adopted into the family of God. It is by being in Christ (by faith) that believers are the offspring of Abraham, for Christ is the offspring and we are in Him!¹⁸⁵⁶ Within 1 Corinthians 10:1-4 passages reference is made to all Israel being baptized into Moses, in the cloud and in the sea. All of Israel included: the adults, young people, and the infants. In this statement by the Apostle Paul, reference is made that the nation of Israel was to be united with (baptized into) Moses as their leader, for his (Moses') leadership and testimony was confirmed by God—in the cloud.¹⁸⁵⁷ This is a basis of spiritual context, for by faith we trust God and those He has sent; although some need signs in order to believe; yet does a necessary physical sign actual indicate “faith”?¹⁸⁵⁸

New Testament believers are buried with Christ into His death and this by faith within one's spirit; for by faith we receive sanctification, which brings forth spiritual growth (maturity) by the grace of God.¹⁸⁵⁹ Through the baptism of the Holy Spirit we are implanted together with Christ, therefore we are crucified with Him. Although the 1 Corinthians 10:2 passage may be used to signify a form of water baptism, in context to what occurred at the Red (Reed) Sea, this would be inappropriate. It was imperative that the Israelites follow Moses to safety; therefore it was imperative that they trust him to be God's servant of deliverance.¹⁸⁶⁰ If the nation had not trusted Moses they would have perished in their stagnancy and unbelief. In context to the surrounding Scripture passages (i.e. 1 Corinthians 10:1-13), the point to be made is that we are never to trust in our own devices, merits, philosophies, precepts, doctrines or

¹⁸⁵⁶ Luke 3:23-38; Romans 4:3, 9, 13-25; cf.

¹⁸⁵⁷ cf. Exodus 14:30, 31; Hebrews 3:1-6; cf. John 9:28-34.

¹⁸⁵⁸ Exodus 4:1-9; Matthew 12:38-45; John 6:30-33; 20:24-29.

¹⁸⁵⁹ Romans 6:1-14; Hebrews 10:1-18; Ephesians 2:1-10; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17.

¹⁸⁶⁰ cf. Exodus 3:11-17.

strengths; but rather in the Lord who is just, righteous, holy, loving, powerful and faithful.¹⁸⁶¹ Thus we trust not in ourselves, but in Him whose grace is sufficient!¹⁸⁶² Our loyalty to God is the context of the passage, for distraction and substitutions from this loyalty will lead to our falling. Have instituted ordinances been utilized for the purpose of evading loyalty rendered by faith? We must proclaim our faith always; sometimes with words!

There are several passages of Scripture used to supposedly justify infant baptism, yet as aforementioned and confirmed by Scripture in context; I can find neither fact nor proof for any such justification of the practice. I try never to add nor take away from the Gospel, but rather seek to study that which has been revealed.¹⁸⁶³ I find spending time studying that which is revealed is time well spent; whereas making insertions, removals, or alterations as to the Gospel for the sake of doctrine is never wise! Too many believers attempt to justify their own assertions by taking Scripture out of context; adult and infant baptism are but two of these examples, as distinction is not properly made between the Nation of Israel (Jews) and the Body of Christ (church).

Tradition

“Tradition” can be defined as the handing down of opinions, doctrines, practices, rites, customs, and intellectual understanding from generation to generation by oral communication. With a generalized definition of tradition afore plainly stated, let us now look to the basis of tradition in the church. Church tradition or the passing of oral standards, doctrines and practices; amount to the same totality as it did within the Jewish nation during the times of Roman dominion. Just as the Pharisees had continually added to the written Mosaic and Levitical Law and expected the nation to obey without question, so also are the traditions of the Christian religion (un-righteously revised church) followed today without question or rebuttal. The Pharisees continually arose against our Lord, because He refused to adhere to the oral law which had been added to the written Law of God. Jesus did not follow the oral law (traditions) of the Jewish leaders, because He knew that these oral laws

¹⁸⁶¹ cf. Deuteronomy 7:1-26; 2 Corinthians 1:12-24; Colossians 2:1-10; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-24; 2 Timothy 2:11-3:17; Ephesians 6:1-18.

¹⁸⁶² cf. 2 Corinthians 10:1-6; 12:1-10.

¹⁸⁶³ Deuteronomy 4:1, 2; 29:29; Proverbs 30:1-14; Revelation 22:18, 19.

were doing little more than keeping the nation in a state of confusion and bondage to their leaders; while causing them to transgress devotional focus upon God.¹⁸⁶⁴ In all this causing the people of the nation to transgress regarding God because of traditions, the leaders themselves did not follow the basis of their own teachings which they commanded of others.¹⁸⁶⁵ Why does anyone listen to and follow hypocrites? The answer is simple, true love for the Lord motivates sincerely devotional individuals to evidence the truth regarding all things at all times; unfortunately multitudes proclaim love for God, yet are without righteous devotional motivation; in this reality, where are the righteous works of God?!¹⁸⁶⁶ We have been warned in the Scriptures not to be held captive by the doctrines, philosophy and elementary principals of the world.¹⁸⁶⁷ Therefore we must pause to consider a few pertinent factors:

1. If the traditions followed within the church are indeed based upon a foundation of human principles as was the oral law (traditions) which the Pharisees and Scribes were passing down; are we not in jeopardy of being led astray from devotion to Christ much as was the nation of Israel?
 - It is evident to see that many orthodox Jews have yet to realize that Jesus is and was the Messiah of promise; because they held (and hold) yet to physical realm religion and traditions.¹⁸⁶⁸ Why then would we seek to be held in bondage by modern day religious doctrines, standards and traditions? With the Jewish nation being the chosen of God, they should have realized the fulfillment of prophesy in the Lord Jesus Christ more so than others; yet did not (Matthew 21:12-17; 23:37-39)! The root cause of disobedience regarding a relationship with God remains the same; for rather than seeking with devotional disciplined diligence the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, multitudes have maintained “self” based expectations foundational to religious assumption and conjecture, thereby holding falsely to wanton desires of what they expect from the

¹⁸⁶⁴ Matthew 5:17-20; 15:1-14; Mark 7:1-16; Luke 11:37-54.

¹⁸⁶⁵ Matthew 23:1-39.

¹⁸⁶⁶ John 1:14-18; 4:20-24; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10; Ephesians 5:1-17; 1 John 4:1-6.

¹⁸⁶⁷ Colossians 2:6-23.

¹⁸⁶⁸ 2 Corinthians 3:4-18; John 1:1-11; John 8:42-47; Matthew 1:20-23.

Lord, completely aloof knowledge of spiritual truth and the righteousness of God's will!

2. Because our Lord is omnipresent and is with us always; we should celebrate His wonderful presence in our lives each and every day by humble submission and devotion (Hebrews 13:1-21). Why do we kowtow to the standards of elemental world religion, by drawing close to our Lord but a few hours per week or days per year, as by following the standards and traditions of man? Are multitudes of believers so deceived and yet immature within religion, and seeking God in the flesh, so as to believe this pleases God (Isaiah 29:13-16; John 4:20-24; Galatians 4:1-11)?
 - The answer to this lies in the fact that we (humans) are creatures of habit. When specific days and dates are set up which are celebrations of mechanical routine (rote); we follow these for it is in our nature (of habit) to do so. Sin is also in our nature, shall we continue to sin for the same reason (habit); may it never be! What does it mean to "COME OUT FROM THEIR MIDST AND BE SEPARATE" (2 Corinthians 6:17)? What does it mean to—"CLEANSE OURSELVES FROM ALL DEFILEMENT OF FLESH AND SPIRIT" (2 Corinthians 7:1; cf. 6:14-7:1)? What does it mean to—"TEST THE SPIRITS TO SEE WHETHER THEY ARE FROM GOD" (1 John 4:1-6)? What does it mean to—"WALK BY FAITH; NOT BY SIGHT" (2 Corinthians 5:1-9)?
3. Because the aforementioned information is a matter of historic and present-day fact; obviously the bases of the traditions have been changed to suit the church's desire to maintain the tradition, rather than being separate from all that distracts away from truth. Can we truly trust that our forefathers passed down appropriate traditions so as to spiritually edify the body of believers (Romans 8:18-30; 1 Corinthians 10:23-11:1)? In traditions as taught, are we being held in bondage to our flesh (creatures of religious habit), or are we gaining victory in our spirit in accordance to God's righteous leadership (which then disciplines the flesh) through faith (1 Corinthians 9:15-27; Hebrews 12:4-11; 1 John 5:1-12)?

4. Many spiritual leaders within the Christian religion insist on being referred to by certain names. Some insist that they be referred to as “Reverend”; yet spiritually our Lord is the only One deserving of reverence. Some insist on being called “father,” yet this is a direct violation of the Gospel and against the Word of our Lord; when stated in regard to human spiritual leadership (Matthew 23:9). Shall we go on listening to those who would insist upon reverence in one form or another, even though their traditions are in violation of Gospel standards; or shall we be transformed by the renewing of our minds (Romans 12:1, 2)? I am not saying that spiritual leadership is not necessary, but rather I am saying that all spiritual leadership is to point beyond “self” and the physical realm, unto the Lord (Who is spirit)! If spiritual leadership does not insist that focus remain upon the Lord, we must walk away from the selfishly foolish, and regain the necessary foundation of focus upon the Lord, through: disciplined devotion, study of the Gospel, and prayer (Romans 10:1-17; John 8:23-58; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; Hebrews 12:1-3)!

- Along the same lines as inappropriate names being utilized for men who have forgotten they are to be the chief servants in the congregation, comes the vanity which is found in many of the repetitions (i.e. Apostolic Greetings; etc.); which precede worship services. These types of repetitions in themselves are not completely inappropriate when one recites the Bible from a sincere heart; yet how many in the church today recite these repetitions each week with a pretense of devotional obedience and submission to God; when in fact there is none (by rote)?
- **Important Note:** Graven (sculpted or carved) images for use in worship is strictly forbidden in the Gospel. The crucifix which is utilized by many in their worship of God does no justice to the omnipotent, omniscient God which we serve. Never ever should a Christian utilize for worship any representation of the Lord, for this act attempts to limit God’s transcendence, or place it in question! Since having and utilizing for worship a crucifix is apostasy which borders on idol worship, any and all such practice of this tradition must cease; as also must any and all speaking or praying to angels or past tense (dead) saints! Brethren—it is not an option, nor open to debate as to

continuing traditions which utilize graven images or involve praying to anyone (dead or alive) other than the Lord God; for both are un-Biblical, while the latter is blatant harlotry and/or divination (praying to the dead)!¹⁸⁶⁹ It must be remembered that an object of prayer is an object of worship!

5. Because the Lord seeks that which is in our hearts (sincerity); must we continue with physical realm ritualistic worship as we have; for the sake of tradition (rote)? Would it not be more appropriate to maintain continual spiritual devotion and servanthood unto our Lord, and obedience to the Gospel (abiding)?¹⁸⁷⁰ Although our priority should be to love and obey the Lord, have we allowed our light for Him to dim because of tradition; seeking favor from men and women, while seeking to establish our own righteousness?¹⁸⁷¹ We know that Scripture is truly the word of God!¹⁸⁷² We know in our spirit that Scripture is rendered truth! Since we are assured of these things within our spirit by righteously actuated faith; do we trust the truth and obey the Lord, or do we doubt and act in disobedience because of the physical realm traditions of humankind?¹⁸⁷³

- After I had realized the truth about physical realm traditions and the rituals which are adhered to within the Christian religion even to this day, and this by much study and historical research, I confirmed the truth with seminary scholars whom confirmed many of the facts which were aforementioned (of which they were aware). Being hopeful that there was a logical reason why the church continually remains within corruption and compromise; I asked why the truth is not proclaimed within congregations so as to allow individuals the opportunity to make their own informed decisions as to following traditions. I had hoped that a reasonable explanation was to be found, but rather was given the truthful statement of “we do

¹⁸⁶⁹ Deuteronomy 4:15-20; Exodus 20:4-6; Isaiah 40:12-31; Romans 1:18-25; Acts 7:39-43.

¹⁸⁷⁰ John 8:31-36; 15:1-14; Philippians 4:4-13; Galatians 1:1-10; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21;
1 John 2:20-29.

¹⁸⁷¹ Matthew 6:19-24; 22:36-40; Romans 10:1-4; 12:1-3.

¹⁸⁷² John 17:17; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

¹⁸⁷³ 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12.

not want to let go of the flesh” by a seminary professor whom I love dearly (for he is a humble man who himself seeks truth at all times). When I have asked church ministers why they refused to proclaim the truth so as to give individuals of the congregation an opportunity to choose for themselves (with actual knowledge), I was told that people would be angered and would not return; thus money (mammon) and seeking favor from men and women has taken precedence over serving the Lord in truth. When will we stop serving mammon and the world within deception, and start serving our Lord of truth and light? I cannot at all condone nor agree with the “ignorance is bliss” mentality which remains prevalent by multitudes within religion; for actual knowledge and adherence to truth is necessary if we are to please the Lord within the spiritual realm, by faith!¹⁸⁷⁴

- Can we be sure of that which we have been told by humankind? Can we be assured that the religious forefathers were not acting out of cowardice or being deceived when they gave in to the multitudes; rather than being more insistent upon necessary separateness from the ways of the world? How can we trust in traditions which have been passed down by individuals who obviously did not test their tradition theories according to the Gospel, before handing them down through the ages? How can any tradition or ritual be followed blindly and without question, when the tradition in itself forsakes the righteous ways of the Lord, violates the Gospel truth, and potentially leads brethren into bondage; according to the elemental principles of the world, rather than according to Christ?¹⁸⁷⁵ Although many religious traditions are considered appropriately authorized because of denominational council findings and proclamations; how can humankind violate the imperative light of truth, for the sake of traditions which are not foundational to Biblical truth and standards! Every step taken away from the spiritual reality of a saving relationship with the Lord God of truth and light, are steps taken carnally in the darkness of evasion, disobedience

¹⁸⁷⁴ Hebrews 11:1-16; John 4:20-24.

¹⁸⁷⁵ Colossians 2:1-10; Galatians 4:3-11.

and deception; thus the volition of humankind as enticed from the demonic realm, once again believes that God can and will change to accept our decisions which do not consider His good, acceptable and perfect will, which is in accordance to God's absolute holiness and righteousness! Any addition to worshipping God in spirit and in truth, are additions which attempt worship carnally in deception! Light or darkness, truth or deception; there is no gray zone within which God's legitimate children may endeavor even for a moment! The Lord God sets the rules, regulations, standards, and commandments upon creation (creatures); it is not the creation (creatures) which designate: rules, regulations, standards, and commandments upon the Creator!¹⁸⁷⁶

- I do not hold the answers, but the Gospel does! In my walk with the Lord (in accordance with His grace abounding masterful leadership), I have come to realize that a true disciple (leaned pupil) turns away from the inappropriate; and stays aloof henceforth; once he/she has come to knowledge of the truth.¹⁸⁷⁷ The information which has been presented here is the truth, and I speak it in love for the edification of my brothers and sisters in Christ. The choices we make either for or against the truth is our decision; while this is also a decision for or against Christ.¹⁸⁷⁸ Please choose wisely whom you will follow, and/or serve; either the flesh or the Holy Spirit; mammon (secular prosperity) or God. The choice is ours to make! Please pray and ask the Lord for guidance in the light of truth, and remember that you are not alone in loving the Lord of truth and light; for a remnant of true disciples has always existed. Although the hearts of the many (multitudes) have grown cold toward our Lord, and this demonstrated by adherence to the inappropriate as by rote and the proclamations of religious humankind; the sincere unwavering love of the few yet makes a difference in this world of evil, self-centeredness, and carnality. Please—let's make a difference; for loving the Lord first and foremost is imperative

¹⁸⁷⁶ emphasis—Isaiah 29:16; 45:9-13; 64:1-12; Jeremiah 18:1-23; Romans 9:1-29; Revelation 2:18-29.

¹⁸⁷⁷ Examples—1 Kings 19:1-18; 2 Kings 22:1-23:33; cf. John 14:16, 17; 16:13-15; 1 John 4:1-6.

¹⁸⁷⁸ Matthew 12:30; 2 Corinthians 13:1-8.

for righteous success!¹⁸⁷⁹ In order to abide in the authority of the Lord, we must abide in the Word; for this reality is assured only by the divine (good) work of God!¹⁸⁸⁰

6. My brethren: Serving the Lord is the greatest blessing we will ever know; the Lord is quite capable of teaching us that which is necessary for our life and ministry; those who truly love the Lord are willing to turn from the inappropriate so as to maintain a truthful walk and proper focus; when we are hated for walking according to the Gospel and the Lord's commandments, we are in fact blessed for doing what is right.¹⁸⁸¹ If you choose continuance within celebrations of manmade religion, please consider the spiritual consequences; for following the multitudes is never for the glory of God, especially when spiritual detriment is the result! If our celebration of tradition and ritual is not improving our spiritual focus upon the Lord by faith, it is hindering our spiritual focus; which eventually leads to spiritual defeat, destitution, and destruction, for emotional response in no way achieves spiritual exultation which is from the Lord!

7. Please consider that we are saved by grace through faith. This is not to say that we are saved by grace through faith plus baptism; ritual; tradition; doctrine; philosophy; ideology; nor trusting in: humankind, mammon, angels, or other past (dead) saints. To be saved by grace through faith means exactly that, and is truly as simple as it appears; although actual knowledge and the divine work of the One saving us is imperative! Humankind feeling left out of helpful responsibility pertaining to this act of God's lovingkindness and grace, rightfully should feel left out; for it is God's grace which saves us, and this with no additions or exceptions! "Religion" has always attempted to add to the simplicity of being saved by grace through faith, and this as by the elemental principles of religiosity; while in the process having led multitudes astray into bondage within carnality for generations. Bondage to the flesh and carnal

¹⁸⁷⁹ Colossians 1:15-23; emphasis vs. 16, 17.

¹⁸⁸⁰ John 1:1-5; 8:31-36; 15:1-17; James 1:21-25; cf. Philippians 1:6; 2:12-16.

¹⁸⁸¹ 2 Timothy 3:10-17; Titus 2:11-15; Romans 5:1-11; 1 John 2:18-3:18.

religiosity, or freedom in Christ; determination makes the difference!¹⁸⁸² Loving the Lord first and foremost is the key imperative of Christianity; for *if* and when we take our thoughts captive to obedience within devotional love for the Lord, He will lead us to both abide in the Word and walk accordingly in a manner which pleases Him, while making us free from all that deceives and takes captive!¹⁸⁸³ Making us free is God's work; thus a blessing upon the devotionally obedient!

TRADITION SUMMATION

Traditions in themselves many times cause no harm, when they are tested by the Gospel, and taken captive to the obedience of Christ; which is selfless and sacrificial.¹⁸⁸⁴ Traditions become dangerous when they: are in fact encompassed in the ways of the world, are adhered to so as to appease ourselves or others, utilize the Lord Jesus as an excuse, are followed within cultural (carnal) standard or mandate, are followed blindly apart from knowledge. We must remember that anything which takes precedence in our hearts over actual love for God is in fact an idol; this includes "self"!¹⁸⁸⁵ By designation and practice of tradition, most believers cannot be distinguished apart from non-believers. How can we demonstrate to a lost and dying world our necessity for God aloof the ways of the world, when our spiritual emphases and fleshly indulgences remain exactly the same as those claiming ignorance or denial of God?

It is because of man's traditions (religious rituals and standards) that the Christian religion has become divided into many separate denominations; which serve congregational and denominational separateness. If we would listen to our Lord and stop insisting on having spiritual matters our own way, the unity of the body would return; thus we would once again edify one another as is the mandate of Scripture.¹⁸⁸⁶ The traditions of humankind have caused great spiritual detriment within the Body of Christ thus far; yet the return to the ways of God is yet an individual matter which expands (or diminishes) one believer at a time.

¹⁸⁸² Philippians 2:1-18; Ephesians 4:1-32; 1 Timothy 4:1-16; 2 Timothy 2:1-3:17.

¹⁸⁸³ reiteration—Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; John 8:31-45; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6.

¹⁸⁸⁴ Romans 12:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 10:3-18, specific v. 5.

¹⁸⁸⁵ Colossians 3:5-17, specific v. 5.

¹⁸⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 14:1-40; Romans 15:1-21; Ephesians 5:1-17.

Please consider gaining the appropriate attitude (mindset) so as to turn to, trust in, love foremost, and serve the Lord! It is solely a matter of chosen attitude; leading to proper focus and decisions! The outcome rests with each of us!

Have you ever noticed how Christian religious organizations tends to be more giving surrounding the time durations of religious celebrations? What does it actually say to the world of non-believers when believers are more giving during certain seasons throughout the year? Religious individuals are to walk in an upright manner each day, and be considerate of others all year round.¹⁸⁸⁷ For members of the Christian religion to show aspects of favoritism by differences according to traditions and dates of celebration; is for the church to demonstrate failure to understand the God whom we claim to know, as well as the Gospel standards as set forth. If what is being done uplifts hearts but for a time, as by the receiving of gifts and rendering of rituals; this seems nice but for a time, yet being in accordance to the superficiality of carnal love and desires, does not last. To give aside of any and all dates and traditions, demonstrates love for the individual “just because” and thereby points to the Lord Jesus Christ; hopefully to acceptance of the gift of salvation which lasts for eternity. Partiality, favoritism, and hearts of giving in accordance to specifics (because of), is secular (worldly) at best!

Religion and religious traditions have held millions in bondage to the ruler of the world (Satan) for generations; for religion is the primary basis by which Satan deceives the whole world (minus a remnant)! As ascertained by aforementioned information, many Polytheistic religions have held to ritualistic traditions since the time of the Babylonian Kingdom. These religions (and myths) may have explained the changing of the seasons, the purpose of storms, the fruitful and unfruitful seasons for crops, etc.; yet we know that these were but attempts of spiritual explanations as by carnal human reason and supposed intellect (fantasy).¹⁸⁸⁸ Too many aspects of paganism have been brought forward from times past; in efforts to allow humankind to feel somehow responsible for God’s loving work upon the earth, and pertaining to salvation. Although it may appease for a time to believe we have helped God, the fact remains that He does not need our help with work for which He

¹⁸⁸⁷ James 1:19-27.

¹⁸⁸⁸ 1 Corinthians 2:3-16.

alone is responsible and capable; so rather, when we submit to follow (not lead)—it is a blessing as well as an urgent necessity!

There have always been manmade religions which have held to foolish reason, folklore, epics, and human intellect. These types of futile religions have always had forms or aspects of human works involved in reaching levels of supposed spiritual growth or consciousness. To gain higher levels of supposed spiritual growth and/or consciousness through supposed love, meditation, and/or one's own merits, is mysticism; as attempts are made to ascertain (reveal) hidden wisdom, understanding, and knowledge (mysteries), through human endeavor. As many throughout history have attempted to work their way to heaven or gain higher spiritual levels, every conceivable way has been attempted to do so aside from trusting in God (Creator) for one's salvation and spiritual growth. The manmade religions of the world are renowned for this philosophy, and thereby followed by those who yet feel that anything is possible if enough human effort is put forth. This has been occurring since "Babel" thousands of years ago! Such efforts as put forth by humankind, then are passed down from generation to generation in the form of traditions, philosophies, precepts and doctrines; generally followed blindly and without question, for many folks do not feel it is their place to question such matters, when intellectuals instigated the endeavors. The truth of the matter results in too many being eternally separated from God, because they remained deceived into believing manmade religion could save them; although not!

Manmade Religion

I have written this portion, in hopes of helping individuals better understand the religion they confess. The Scriptures warned us about falling prey to cults and occult activities, for as humans we are easily led astray.¹⁸⁸⁹ It is an unfortunate fact that many claim to belong to a certain religion, yet have little or no actual understanding as to what their religion teaches. It is also unfortunate that many individuals will defend the religion they profess and actually battle against the truth, many times because of pride, arrogance, spiritual destitution, and ignorance. By comparing the teachings of manmade religion (doctrines of demons) with the Gospel, a better understanding can be obtained,

¹⁸⁸⁹ Deuteronomy 13:1-18; 2 Corinthians 11:1-15; 1 Timothy 6:1-21.

potentially leading to freedom in Christ. This portion will hopefully allow this to occur. Please remember—God wants our devotion and loyalty, for our sincerity is that which He seeks. Man-made religions would seek our attentions and/or affections to be upon them (the leadership; religion itself) in one way or another, or seek that we worship as stipulated by means other than by Gospel truth and actual faith (God at work)! Are we not to walk in a manner pleasing to our Lord? Study of the Gospel and much devotional prayer will help us to accomplish this task; manmade religions will not! Although there are many religions which claim to be “Christian” (Christ-like) in nature, after reading this portion I am certain that you will realize that although claim of Christianity is made by many religions; all will be known by their fruits and doctrine either according to or against the Scriptures.

Catholicism

There is a manmade religion which has been present for millennia. This religion is considered to be Christian, yet within this religion the Gospel is violated continuously and without hesitation or remorse. Within this religion even the simplest truths of the Gospel are misconstrued and/or outright denied and rejected, leading to many non-Biblical teachings and ritualistic practices. Within this religion is found the same basis of wickedness which our Lord found present in the Pharisees.¹⁸⁹⁰ Although millions of individuals follow this religion; this religion denies the truths necessary for salvation, teaching instead that adherence to their doctrine is necessary in order to be saved (grace plus works). Although this religion may have partially emphasized proper worship according to the Gospel in its beginning, it has journeyed greatly into the realms of idolatry, apostasy and heresy away from the sound doctrine and ethics of the Gospel; placing individuals upon pedestals of worship, and incorporation of erroneous teaching and worship practices.

Please consider—no one is allowed to differ from the teachings of Christ and of the apostles within Christian instruction and worship, for additions and subtractions involving the Gospel lead to ungodliness (unrighteousness; deceptions), and the culpable individuals being potentially accursed!¹⁸⁹¹ No one has the right to take away from or add to the

¹⁸⁹⁰ Matthew 16:1-12; 23:1-36; cf. Galatians 5:1-12; 1 Timothy 4:1-5.

¹⁸⁹¹ Romans 10:1-4; Galatians 1:6-10.

Gospel!¹⁸⁹² I am so very glad for those within this religion who yet seek truth, for the possibility for them to come to the reality of the Christ (Jesus) by the divine work of God yet exists; yet I am very saddened by those who do not seek truth—for the religion in and of itself will not save anyone from the wages of sin which is death. My greatest concern for those who love Jesus within this religion, is that they would be made free from the deceptions and inappropriate worship practices which hold them in bondage; that they may see the error of the religion and once again return to simplicity of devotion to Christ.¹⁸⁹³ Anyone held captive to the deceptions of this, or any other supposed “Christian” religion which violate the sound doctrine of the Gospel, are in actuality ensnared by the devil to do his will (deceiving and being deceived)!¹⁸⁹⁴ Because each individual is accountable to test all teachings according to the Gospel truth, individuals and all bogus (sham) leadership will assuredly give account unto the Lord for any and all falsehoods!¹⁸⁹⁵ It is the Gospel truth to which each of us will be held accountable and be judged!¹⁸⁹⁶ Please remember—Jesus is the **Way**, and the **truth**, and the **life**!¹⁸⁹⁷

The religious endeavors of Catholicism can very much be compared with the “sin of Jeroboam.”¹⁸⁹⁸ King Jeroboam in attempts of keeping the inhabitants of the ten Northern Tribes (Ephraim) from going to Jerusalem for proper worship of the Lord did two things:

1. He set up golden calves at Bethel and Dan (items of worship), so the inhabitants would remain within the northern tribe area (place of dwelling) for worship. The reason Jeroboam did this thing, was selfish in nature; for he cared only for himself in accordance to his position as king, thereby placing himself above God within idolatry of “self”! Jeroboam stipulated to the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom to worship according to his kingly demands. Coercing individuals to worship how stipulated is a potential form of bondage for all who follow; depending upon whether individuals are

¹⁸⁹² Deuteronomy 4:2; Proverbs 30:2-6; Revelation 22:18, 19.

¹⁸⁹³ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

¹⁸⁹⁴ 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

¹⁸⁹⁵ 1 John 4:1-6; Hebrews 5:8-10; John 12:46-50.

¹⁸⁹⁶ John 12:46-50; cf. Hebrews 5:8-10; Revelation 19:11-16.

¹⁸⁹⁷ John 14:6.

¹⁸⁹⁸ 1 Kings 12:25-33.

devotional to God or not, and hold to worship standards set forth by God or not! Those with unwavering devotion for God (a remnant) relocated to join the inhabitants of Judah for righteous worship and celebration; for true unwavering devotion unto God promotes righteous behavior, whatever the cost!

2. Jeroboam changed the date for the “Feast of Booths,” from the fifteenth day of the seventh month to the fifteenth day of the eighth month; although according to God’s command the beginning date of this feast was to be exact!¹⁸⁹⁹ By changing the date insistent that the inhabitants celebrate when he (Jeroboam) demanded (1 Kings 12:32, 33), he tightened his grip of influence upon the inhabitants of the Northern Kingdom; seeking to obtain authority which was God’s alone! Leading individuals to worship when and how stipulated by humankind is a potential form of captivity for the individuals; for now in reality, as differentiated from times of antiquity, we are to worship the Lord always according to Biblical standards—in spirit and in truth!¹⁹⁰⁰
 - A believer’s righteous walk with and for the Lord is foundational upon the masterful guidance of the indwelling Holy Spirit; therefore, those without the Spirit’s leadership make stipulations as to places and times, as this is a basis of insidious religion founded within the pride and arrogance of humankind, and the guile of the evil one (Satan)!

Catholicism teaches that Jesus had no siblings, as Mary supposedly had no other children; yet the Gospel states otherwise.¹⁹⁰¹ Within the footnote Scriptures, please note the times the fact of Jesus’ half siblings is mentioned. How can something blatantly evinced then be denied? How can those denying such a simple factual truth (even when written) be expected to have actual understanding about more in-depth matters pertaining to the Gospel and Christianity; all of which are discerned spiritually and devotionally by faith? The Gospel fact of Jesus half

¹⁸⁹⁹ Leviticus 23:37-44.

¹⁹⁰⁰ John 4:19-24.

¹⁹⁰¹ Matthew 12:46-50; 13:53-58; Mark 3:32-35; Luke 8:19-21; John 2:12; 7:3-5; Acts 1:14.

siblings, denies the Catholic doctrine that Mary was forever virgin; yet deceptive doctrine is necessary within the insidious nature of Catholicism, as they yet worship “Ishtar” the Babylonian queen of heaven (under the guise of a name alteration)!¹⁹⁰²

Other erroneous teachings of Catholicism are:

1. **Mary’s human body never died, but rather was raised into heaven;** referred to as—the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary. This teaching was introduced in A.D. 1950 by Pope Pius XI. Is there any Gospel reckoning of this account? This teaching is obviously in addition to the Gospel; as witnessed by the date of its inception. A simple fact of truth, just as the Lord (perfectly righteous and holy) cannot change; neither can the sound doctrine of the Gospel, or the righteous standard of worship commanded by God (in spirit and in truth)! True worship of God cannot have additions or subtractions, for truth cannot change; any alterations from truth are in fact delusive!
2. **Mary was not born into the sin of Adam.**¹⁹⁰³ In order for this to be true, Mary could not have had a human father, as sin enters into the lives of all humans through their progenitor; for as Eve was deceived, Adam sinned intentionally. Jesus was without sin, because His father is God; Mary being a relative of Elizabeth, was obviously of human parents and thus born into the sin of Adam.¹⁹⁰⁴

Mary considered herself to be a servant of the Lord, and counted her servanthood as being Jesus mother a blessing.¹⁹⁰⁵ Mary’s love of God is evidenced by the Luke passages, and especially by her statement of being His bonds slave (v. 48). Yes, Mary was humble and blessed of the Lord; no she was not apart from the sin of Adam. Why such an un-biblical emphasis, when we are blessed by God in accordance to His grace (un-merited favor); which far surpasses our sinful nature?¹⁹⁰⁶ Yes. Mary should be held in esteem; no she should never be placed upon a

¹⁹⁰² Matthew 1:19-25; cf. Jeremiah 7:18, 19; 44:15-28.

¹⁹⁰³ Romans 5:12-21.

¹⁹⁰⁴ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:18-25.

¹⁹⁰⁵ Luke 1:26-56.

¹⁹⁰⁶ Romans 5:12-21.

pedestal!¹⁹⁰⁷ Would a truly devotional bondservant of God appreciate or condone being idolized?¹⁹⁰⁸

3. Mary now reigns at the right hand of Jesus. This teaching was instituted in A.D. 1892. *If* it were Biblically correct that Mary was to reign at Jesus` right hand, would not our Lord have stated this when a controversy arose regarding the matter?¹⁹⁰⁹

4. Mary gives grace to believers from her treasury of grace. This teaching was instituted in A.D. 1892 by Pope Leo XIII; the same year as #3 above. GRACE—the unmerited favor of God was and is fully realized in the Lord Jesus Christ!¹⁹¹⁰ It is impossible for a human being to render the unmerited favor of God (GRACE); therefore to make emphasis that Mary gives grace is to claim apotheosis of Mary. Is there any Biblical account for human beings to become deified (made into gods; worshipped as gods)?¹⁹¹¹ Is this not referred to Biblically as—idolatry?¹⁹¹²

**5. a. Jesus received Mary’s consent prior to her conception of him.
b. no one comes to jesus except through mary.**

Both these teachings were instituted in a.d. 1891.

a. As aforementioned (#2), Mary considered herself to be a bondslave of God, and thereby blessed in servanthood. Now with this teaching, she is emphasized as the one in authority. Would a servant of God ask His permission to serve, or do true servants count God’s utilizing them as a blessing? What did Mary say?¹⁹¹³ From Luke 1:26-56 passages, please note that statements were made and an answer given; not a request followed by contemplation. Do true bondservants of God seek to advise Him? Does anyone actually instruct God at all?¹⁹¹⁴ Mary was a woman who loved the Lord

¹⁹⁰⁷ Romans 3:21-26.

¹⁹⁰⁸ exemplified—Matthew 10:30-38; 1 Corinthians 1:12-17; 2 Corinthians 12:1-10; Philippians 1:15-30.

¹⁹⁰⁹ Matthew 20:20-24; Mark 10:35-41.

¹⁹¹⁰ John 1:1-18; Romans 1:1-7.

¹⁹¹¹ 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6.

¹⁹¹² 1 John 5:18-21.

¹⁹¹³ Luke 1:38, 46-50.

immensely; I cannot for a moment believe that she would feel it necessary to discuss the matter of this tremendous blessing with Him prior to her surrender to do His will! In the following written forms of Catholic doctrine, please note that Mary is referred to as “the Mother of God.” Although Mary was the mother of God incarnate, as she gave birth to Jesus in human form; was she actually the mother of God (the eternal Logos)? Was God a created being, having gone through the birth process; or is He eternal?¹⁹¹⁵ By this claim according to Roman Catholic doctrine, Mary is placed upon a pedestal and thus worshipped; which is the entire intention of Catholicism! Is this appropriate; is it not solely the Lord God who is to be worshipped?¹⁹¹⁶

- b. The Lord Jesus Christ is the One who bridged the gap between man and God; which sin had brought forth.¹⁹¹⁷ It is only through the Lord Jesus that we are allowed to come into the presence of the Father; yet with this teaching another supposed separation has occurred between believers and Christ. How can this be, since Jesus is our means (Way) to the Father, and this teaching states that we are now separated from Jesus? Could this be another gap created so as to trust in the teachings of humankind in order to be saved? *If* we must go through Mary in order to reach Jesus (which is absurd); then what of grace and Jesus being our High Priest?¹⁹¹⁸ Please consider this, *if* we must go through Mary in order to reach our High Priest (who intercedes for us according to the will of God), then we must belong to Catholicism in order to believe this necessary; thus it must be in accordance to their philosophy (ideology) to gain access to Jesus, to gain access to God! I am disgusted as to how this assists in simplicity of devotion to Christ!¹⁹¹⁹

¹⁹¹⁴ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16, emphasis v. 16; cf. Isaiah 40:13, 14.

¹⁹¹⁵ Isaiah 40:18-25; Jeremiah 10:1-10; Habakkuk 1:12.

¹⁹¹⁶ Matthew 4:8-11; Luke 4:5-8.

¹⁹¹⁷ John 14:6.

¹⁹¹⁸ Hebrews 4:11-5:10.

¹⁹¹⁹ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

6. Mary helped in Jesus` act of redeeming mankind. This teaching is derived from the Catholic belief that Mary was promoted to the high position of “restorer of the lost world,” thus according to this teaching Mary is the conciliator between Jesus and the world.¹⁹²⁰ How were we—reconciled to God, and by whom?¹⁹²¹ Was God actually born of a woman, or has He existed from eternity past?¹⁹²²

ADDITIONAL TEACHINGS OF CATHOLICISM

1. Purgatory - A.D. 593

Catholicism teaches that there is a place called Purgatory. This is a supposed place where the dead remain until the complete satisfaction for their sins has been rendered to God. Catholicism teaches of “venial sins,” which are sins committed in ignorance; this apart from the capital sins of pride, covetousness, lust, anger, gluttony, envy, and slothfulness (the seven deadly sins). If we are unaware of a sin which we have committed, how can we repent of the inadvertent sin? In reality, the answer is quite simple—our Lord intercedes for us in these matters! Catholicism fails to realize that at the time of our being born again, we are justified before God thus we are declared righteous by God’s grace; we become the righteousness of God in Christ!¹⁹²³ Failing to realize this fact of Scripture, Catholicism teaches that we must pray for those in Purgatory so that they may come out of this supposed place of cleansing and preparedness to complete their journey to heaven. Once again Catholicism teaches reliance upon them for one’s salvation! We cannot prepare ourselves for heaven, for we are saved by grace through faith by the divine work of God; thus the entire idea of Purgatory is absurd; as also prayer to or for the dead!¹⁹²⁴

Purgatory is derived from the Celtic pagan belief that intercession can be made for departed loved ones in the “Otherworld.” For more information please reference chapter eight information as to the worship of Samhain—the god of the dead. Purgatory is a nonexistent place which is the figment of human imaginative foolishness—of which Catholicism is now (and has been for centuries), based! The Apostle Paul prayed for

¹⁹²⁰ Isaiah 19:20; 43:11-15; 45:20-25; Luke 1:46-55.

¹⁹²¹ Romans 5:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Colossians 1:15-23.

¹⁹²² John 1:1-4; 8:58; Revelation 22:12, 13.

¹⁹²³ 2 Corinthians 5:21.

¹⁹²⁴ Leviticus 20:26, 27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; cf. 1 Peter 1:13-16.

those who are alive upon this earth; for purposeful freedom is found in Christ, through whom (the Way) is life indeed.¹⁹²⁵ When Paul referenced those “under the earth” (Philippians 2:9-11), he makes reference that all will acknowledge Jesus as Lord; including non-believers (those under the earth awaiting judgment - Sheol). If a person is in supposed Purgatory, they are a non-believer or deceived individual in torment awaiting judgment; thus prayer for them is useless, for a decision for Christ must be made during one’s own lifetime!¹⁹²⁶ This thing called Purgatory is nothing less than religious acts of focus upon the dead; this is neither Biblical nor appropriate!¹⁹²⁷

2. Prayer to Mary, saints, and angels - A.D. 600

Catholicism teaches that past (dead) saints can intercede for current living believers. The Gospel tells us that Jesus and the Holy Spirit intercede for us according to the will of God.¹⁹²⁸ The Gospel never states that other dead human beings can intercede for those who are alive; therefore Catholicism teaches the conjuring of the dead. Conjuring of the dead is not an option for those who truly love God, for abominations (detestable acts) are not pleasing to the Lord!¹⁹²⁹ True Christians do not speak to the dead; or even contemplate doing so! Does Christianity teach us to please men (and women) with our volitionally chosen forms of worship; or is it God whom we worship and serve, wholly by devotional obedience in accordance to righteous worship standards set forth by the Lord (in spirit and in truth)?¹⁹³⁰

Any prayer to angels is absolutely inappropriate by anyone claiming to be Christian! Angels are servants of God, who fulfill His will in ministering to the saints.¹⁹³¹ Angels are not the servants of human beings; therefore an attempt to talk to them is a form of idol worship, for we are to pray to no one but the Lord!¹⁹³² It seems ridiculous that folks would have supposed faith to talk to angels and dead individuals, yet

¹⁹²⁵ John 8:31-36; Ephesians 1:15-2:10; 1 Timothy 6:3-19; Philippians 1:3-11.

¹⁹²⁶ 2 Corinthians 12:19-21; Romans 10:1-13.

¹⁹²⁷ Galatians 1:6-9.

¹⁹²⁸ Romans 8:26, 27, 33, 34.

¹⁹²⁹ Leviticus 19:31; 20:6-8, 26, 27; Deuteronomy 18:9-14; example—1 Samuel 28:3-19.

¹⁹³⁰ Joshua 24:14-17; Matthew 4:1-11; John 4:20-24; Philippians 3:1-14; Colossians 2:1-23; Hebrews 9:1-14.

¹⁹³¹ Hebrews 1:13, 14.

¹⁹³² Colossians 2:18, 19; Revelation 19:9, 10; 22:8, 9.

they lack the true faith afforded to have communication directly with the Lord! When the veil between the holy place and holy of holies was torn from top to bottom, all who cleanse themselves from defilement of flesh and spirit could henceforth, with selfless spiritual devotion, go directly into the presence of God; into the spiritual realm where He is found!¹⁹³³ This only by the divine work of God; which is solely performed in His legitimately adopted children!

To pray to someone, is to worship the one being prayed to. A “saint” is anyone who has trusted in God for their salvation; having been set apart to God (sanctified). According to Roman Catholic doctrine regarding prayer to saints, it is only the bishops and believing heroes who are considered saints, and these are those who are worthy to be prayed to. No human being is worthy to be prayed to; neither are Catholic bishops any better than any other saint, for all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory!¹⁹³⁴ Although during the first three centuries of the Christian era martyred saints were remembered for their contributions and bravery for the Gospel, after the Nicene Age (fourth century) the saints were counted as much more and thus refined polytheism and idolatry took the place of simple respectful remembrance. This form of idolatry remains even to this day, within Catholic doctrine and worship. The Lord our God is absolutely capable of hearing the prayers of the saints (present tense) immediately upon their being rendered; *if* sinfulness is not harbored; for God has divine omnipresence and omniscience; therefore why would prayers go forth to past (physically dead) saints and angels who hold no divine attributes.¹⁹³⁵ Just as it is Satan who is worshipped in ignorance, which is what he has desired all along in settling for nothing less than being like the “Most High”; it is demons who are revered when prayers are rendered unto angels (fallen angels)!

What of images being held and prayed to? Within Roman Catholicism, there are patron saints whose images are prayed to; this according to doctrine. Upon the “high places” in the Old Testament, would be found the image of a pagan god who was prayed to and believed to help in times of harvest and trouble. In a like manner as the

¹⁹³³ Matthew 27:51-53.

¹⁹³⁴ Romans 3:21-28.

¹⁹³⁵ Psalm 66:16-20.

Lord was not pleased with the use of “high places” for worship in times of antiquity, as this was according to polytheism (the worship of many gods), so it is today as there is but one true God of our worship; for idolatry is not acceptable in any form, which excludes prayers to any but Him.

3. Kissing the Pope’s foot - a.d. 709

This form of reverence to man, began with bishops of the Roman Church seeking that all show them homage by the kissing of their hand. Along with this came the inappropriate practice of kissing the bishop’s ring, which signified the symbol of the espousal of the bishop to the church. This form of homage to bishops included the ruling powers up to and including the emperor himself, who was expected to pay homage to the church leadership. Is paying exuberant homage to church leadership found anywhere in the Gospel as pertaining to the Body of Christ; or is the emphasis pertaining to leadership, that of selfless and humble servanthood?

Bishops were required to take an oath of allegiance to the Pope, by the time of Pope Gregory IX. The Pope was adorned with a Triple Crown tiara, which was to proclaim his being the father of princes and kings; the ruler of the world; the Vicar of Christ. With this proclaimed position of the Pope, came the bishop’s kissing of the pontiff’s foot as an act of lavish homage, for this was to signify their submission to the Pope as the head of the church. Who is the head of the Christian church?¹⁹³⁶ To whom alone do we pay homage and pledge our allegiance?¹⁹³⁷ Who is the King of kings and Lord of lords?¹⁹³⁸ Roman Catholic doctrine states that the Pope gains authority as by being within the lineage of the Apostle Peter, insistent upon being paid homage; although it was stated that this should never be!¹⁹³⁹ The Lord Jesus Christ washed the feet of His disciples out of respect for them and to demonstrate a servant’s heart; does the Pope believe himself to be better than Christ, as he seeks that all lavishly honor and pay homage to him?¹⁹⁴⁰ Please consider that respect is earned, not bestowed; therefore, all

¹⁹³⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11; 11:2, 3; Ephesians 4:1-16—emphasis vs. 14, 15.

¹⁹³⁷ Matthew 4:8-10.

¹⁹³⁸ 1 Timothy 6:12-16; Revelation 19:11-16.

¹⁹³⁹ 1 Peter 5:1-4.

¹⁹⁴⁰ John 13:1-20.

spiritual leadership should only be respected when they abide in the Word (Lord and Gospel)!¹⁹⁴¹

IMPERATIVE PERSONAL NOTE:

True devotional servants of the Lord do not want nor seek veneration, or any form of reverence which would distract one's focus away from the Lord; for the focus of all believers, especially disciplined devotional servants, must remain upon the Lord, who is the author and perfecter of faith and the One who guides fulfillment of righteous service!¹⁹⁴² Devotional dedication and focus unto and upon the Lord is absolutely necessary if an individual is to walk by faith and not by sight!¹⁹⁴³ As the inheritance of the Levites of antiquity (1 of the 12 tribes) was their devotional servanthood unto the Lord; whereas the remaining eleven tribes had a material possessive inheritance; so it is even to this day, as the spiritual devotional servants of the Lord consider the blessing of sacrificial surrender unto God for service to be superior to any and all material possessions and aspects of physical existence; for in loving and serving Him first and foremost according to His righteous masterful leadership, our purpose is fulfilled by training and servanthood according to the counsel of His will!¹⁹⁴⁴ Receiving of personal reverence within this blessing is an act of selfish reception and therefore completely irrelevant and unrighteous; lest the flesh be allowed to instigate and influence prideful carnal (fleshly) endeavors which should have remained foundational to worshipping and serving God in spirit and in truth; thus all praise and reverence must be directed unto the Lord God!¹⁹⁴⁵ It is because of the enticements of the flesh as by acceptance of personal praise and reverence, that the sacrificial devotion of many servants for the Lord has grown cold, being replaced with selfish ambitions and motives; it is for this reason that the spiritual harvest has always remained plentiful and the disciplined, diligent, and devotional workers few!

Throughout the years and the many students I have been blessed to instruct (only Jesus can “teach” regarding spiritual matters), never once did I ask or insist that anyone “trust” or “believe” me, which is the reason

¹⁹⁴¹ John 8:31-36; Romans 10:1-4; 2 Corinthians 11:12-15.

¹⁹⁴² Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; Hebrews 12:1-11.

¹⁹⁴³ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9.

¹⁹⁴⁴ Numbers 16:1-50; 18:20-32; 1 John 4:7-19.

¹⁹⁴⁵ With emphasis—Romans 12:1-8, individual specific—vs. 1-3; James 4:3-10.

all instruction has been accompanied by numerous Scripture references; within devotion for the Lord, neither did I accept any form of praise for serving my Lord; for all devotion, praise, reverence and focus must remain upon Him (the King of kings and Lord of Lords, who is the author and perfecter of faith)!¹⁹⁴⁶ When many students had stated that “they thank God for me,” they were told to “thank God for Him”; for I am what I am solely by His grace!¹⁹⁴⁷ Several of the students actually showed anger toward me because I am adamant regarding these standards; yet as they matured spiritually, they came to understand; for strict disciplined humility must accompany sincerity of devotion, as our existence and servanthood is all about Him!¹⁹⁴⁸ Because “pride” easily enters into acceptance of praise or reverence, which brings immediate opposition to God’s leadership; the door must never be left ajar for this to occur! True devotion for God first and foremost is highly motivational regarding continual submission and obedience; love void of actual devotion maintains only spiritual weakness and continued spiritual depravity, as the love of the flesh holds no spiritual potential! To be truly devotional unto the Lord is to live the reality of the relationship (Gospel reality is led by God); which is something “religious” individuals know nothing about!¹⁹⁴⁹ For information regarding this reality please reference chapter eleven (Truth and the Spiritual Relational Reality).

PROGRESSION OF FACTS:

4. There is only one foundation (Rock) of Christianity, which is Jesus the Christ; God being the foundation of realistic truth (Christ—John 1:41; 10:25-30; 14:6-9; 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11)! When Jesus made the statement—“And I say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it.” (NASB—Matthew 16:18); Jesus was not referring to Peter (Greek—*Petros*; rock, rock-man) as being the rock (foundation of the church), but rather the statement by Peter—“Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” (Rock: Greek—*Petra*; feminine context, not a name) (NASB—Matthew 16:16; cf. Psalm 118:21-24; Matthew 21:42-44; Mark 12:10, 11; Luke 20:17, 18). When Christ

¹⁹⁴⁶ Hebrews 12:1-11, specific vs. 1-3; Philippians 1:21-24; 1 Corinthians 9:15-23.

¹⁹⁴⁷ 1 Corinthians 15:10.

¹⁹⁴⁸ Luke 14:25-25, specific vs. 26, 27.

¹⁹⁴⁹ Philippians 2:12, 13; Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14.

gave Peter the keys of the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 16:19); He was not rendering authority unto Peter to bind or loose, but rather was emphasizing that the authority to bind or loose was by the power and authority of God alone, with the righteous standards of God to be proclaimed; for God alone holds all authority, and originates standards of which we must adhere (cf. 1 Peter 4:10, 11)! In a like manner, when the Lord made mention to the Apostles of the forgiveness or retaining of sins (John 20:23), this statement was in context of acceptance of Christ's sacrificial atonement, or not; for only God can forgive sin (Mark 2:7)! It is completely absurd to believe that the church would be founded upon the frailty of a human beings, rather than upon the immensity of God (Matthew 26:33-35; cf. vs. 73-75; Hebrews 7:1-10:39); yet many absurdities, atrocities, and abominations, occur when physical realm religion prevails because the flesh remains un-relinquished (prideful stubbornness which rejects denial of "self"), which evades the possibility of entrance into the spiritual relational reality which saves!

Christianity holds as a key imperative—"the seeking of truth!" The seeking of truth is twofold; for when praying and investigating truth, both an increased closeness within a relationship with God, and earnest seeking of reality aloof all forms of deception and delusion are sought; for Jesus is the manifested truth pertaining to God, and actual spirituality is realized only within reality which remains completely separate from: religiosity, conjecture, ideologies, and idealisms which are foundational to human intellectual assumption and fantasy!¹⁹⁵⁰ How many individuals have ever actually studied the Bible; or at least read it in its entirety? How many individuals have ever investigated the origins and foundations of the religion they follow and profess? In order to be an actual pupil (disciple) of the Lord, one must not only study the Bible to demonstrate themselves unto God as workmen (and workwomen) who can accurately handle (cut straight) the Gospel, but must additionally abide (be effectual doers) in the Word; lest remaining only lukewarm hearers they remain deluded or disillusioned!¹⁹⁵¹ Satan does not want human beings to investigate or walk in truth,

¹⁹⁵⁰ John 1:1-14; 14:6-10.

¹⁹⁵¹ John 8:31-45; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17; James 1:19-27; 2:18-26; 1 John 2:3-17.

for he (Satan) is incapable of truth; therefore, when individuals do not love the truth (Lord) and investigate the truth (reality), and this firmly planted upon the foundation which is the spiritual relational reality with God that saves and guides, deception and delusion are easily enticed and followed, being and remaining foundational to carnality! Our only form of victory is by faith in the Lord; faith in creation rather than the Creator can only accomplish carnal evasion of truth, and thereby spiritual defeat!¹⁹⁵²

5. God's redemptive plan involving the rendering of Himself for the salvation of all, is not open for debate or disputable!¹⁹⁵³ Trusting in God with the faith of a child is a primary key, as it is prideful and arrogant to think that we (finite creatures) must be able to explain God (the infinite Creator) in order to believe; for the Way of salvation is either accepted or not, and this far beyond a simple decision in one's mind; rather a choice of trustful submission and surrender unto the divine work of God!¹⁹⁵⁴

6. The first step beyond initial (child-like) faith, of actually following the Lord is denial of "self"; for this is the first step which goes beyond an infant's crawl (Matthew 16:24-27; 18:3-6)! Following the Lord unto maturity is a spiritual reality, which will never begin (or continue) unless "self" is denied primarily; for if "self" is not denied, then all endeavors forward will continue to be originated within "self" which cannot and will not accomplish spiritual edification to higher standards of spiritual faith and obedience!¹⁹⁵⁵ While the flesh leads, the Lord cannot; for the flesh remains trapped within the physical realm of human volition, while the narrow path of God's righteous leadership is spiritual hence forever! Because flesh and Spirit are in opposition to one another, to remain fleshly (religious; carnal) is to remain adolescent within one's mindset and maturity stature; for spiritual maturity (growth) is from God alone, which is rendered and received spiritually (1 Corinthians 14:20)! Never did

¹⁹⁵² 1 John 5:4, 5.

¹⁹⁵³ Hebrews 7:1-10:39, specifics—7:26, 27; 9:11-14; 10:8-10.

¹⁹⁵⁴ Matthew 16:25, 26; 18:1-6; 21:15, 16; Isaiah 45:21-24; Romans 10:8-13, Lord—v. 9; 14:11, 12; Philippians 2:9-11; John 6:44-65; 14:6, 7.

¹⁹⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Hebrews 5:11-16:3.

the Gospel emphasize abounding physical realm growth within practiced carnal endeavors!

7. The truth of the Gospel directly indicates that the “flesh” cannot enter into the spiritual realm where God is found; although these passages refer to the heavenly kingdom, there is a spiritual reality which exists even now (prior)!¹⁹⁵⁶ Just as the Israelite Levitical servants of antiquity had to go through a cleansing prior to coming before the Lord for worship and service; even so with the tearing of the temple veil allowing access by all into the presence of God, a cleansing must occur!¹⁹⁵⁷ The Gentile church (dispensation of grace) must move forward spiritually, or there will not be exultation from the Lord within the church as a unified body!¹⁹⁵⁸ Because the Lord has been closed out of His church (Body of Christ) by the ways of practiced insidious religious darkness and disobedience, the endeavor of personal seeking has fallen upon individuals who will volitionally love the truth and choose devotion!¹⁹⁵⁹ The church era cleansing which must occur prior to entrance into God’s presence beyond the veil, is complete denial of “self”; for no characteristics or deeds of the flesh (which include pride and arrogance) can cross the threshold from the physical to spiritual realm; which is the exact reason why “selflessness” remains an imperative for spiritual growth both individually and in a church setting!¹⁹⁶⁰ It must be understood—the spiritual realm is where actual fellowship with the Lord God occurs; therefore, carnal or physical realm religious attempts to enter are futile and delusive!¹⁹⁶¹ Nothing of darkness can enter into God’s presence; for the presence of God in the spiritual realm is absolutely: holy, righteous, pure, and abounding with light!¹⁹⁶² It is in the presence of God where we receive training, anointing, growth, nurtured guidance, personal (special) revelation, illumination, and righteous inspiration, strength for serving, and His

¹⁹⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 15:35-50.

¹⁹⁵⁷ Leviticus 16:29-34; Numbers 8:5-16; Mark 15:38.

¹⁹⁵⁸ 1 Corinthians chapters 12 and 14.

¹⁹⁵⁹ 1 Peter 5:6-11; Revelation 3:14-22, emphasis vs. 18, 19; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

¹⁹⁶⁰ Galatians 5:19-21; James 4:4-6.

¹⁹⁶¹ Titus 1:15, 16.

¹⁹⁶² 1 John 1:5-10; 3:1-18.

masterful righteous leadership and tutelage for fulfillment of purpose! As was aforementioned, the relationship with God is spiritual; not carnal in accordance to religious teachings, rituals or doctrines, which unfortunately are the prevalent teachings within the current-day church. It is the failure within the current-day church to instruct pertaining to the spiritual reality, which denies and/or rejects the imperative divine work of God; thus the current-day church (Laodicea) instructs no further than physical realm mimic and emulation, which remains devoid of the “reality of God”! The current-day church dictates (by literal actions; example) within ignorance, that God must accept our worship and instruction, no matter how far from the truth the worship and instruction remains! It is for this reason that multitudes believe they can boldly approach God’s throne of grace, while remaining wretched with sin and lawlessness; for but a concept of God remains because of the prevalent carnal teachings and worship practices! There really is no doubt as to why the Lord is kept from His own church; for the current-day church is no longer concerned with the truth, or the “reality of God,” or the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ); rather remaining concerned only for the elemental things of the world (religious concept and fantasy) and comfort of the flesh (blatant carnality)¹⁹⁶³ It is for this reason that multitudes live for the flesh with but a concept of God; which stays them from actual spirituality (righteous faith) pertaining to God; which for this reason rejects God’s righteous leadership, which remains the imperative of our salvation and existence!¹⁹⁶⁴

8. The progression of worship in the flesh never achieves a spiritual reality; for the imperative yet remains a measure of faith righteously activated by the Lord during His “drawing” process!¹⁹⁶⁵ Within investigation of this reality, it can be determined that individuals who have never been “drawn” by the Lord, as they were too self-centered to humbly submit, generally begin seeking God in the flesh for the purpose of salvation; yet never going beyond the flesh by God’s divine

¹⁹⁶³ 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; Revelation 3:14-22.

¹⁹⁶⁴ Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14.

¹⁹⁶⁵ John 6:44, 45; 14:6, 7.

work, which holds them to trust and follow other human beings within proclivity to physical realm religiosity, which is never demonstrable in emphasizing the “reality of God,” due to practiced worship within deceptive darkness! This reality is easily spiritually appraised, which is a gift from God which is never rendered unto those who wander in darkness by completely unrighteous worship practices and false beliefs! Just as multitudes have followed the teachings of unrighteous traditions taught by the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion without question or doubt; so also have multitudes followed the foolishness of religious darkness which has also been taught! Never having been taken beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality by God’s divine work, multitudes within religious emotionalism which is of fleshly indulgence, claim emotional responses to emphasize a spiritual reality; although that which is of the flesh and that which is of the Spirit remain in opposition one to the other!¹⁹⁶⁶ The power of Satan’s schemes within deception is proven by the fact that multiple millions of individuals have remained in bondage to darkness, with no hope of escape; for holding only to a concept of what is spiritual, they remain captive to the wretched leadership of the flesh within religious practices! This reality is proven by the way multitudes have varying emotions during deceptive holidays, while claiming the “spirit of the season” to be of God; although not; while failing to understand why everyone does not hold to the same principles of holiday devotion, within failure to accept the behavior of the remnant who has realized the necessity to remain completely clear of religious darkness! As God cannot and will not have anything to do with religious darkness, although multitudes claim the “spirit of the season” or “spirit of the worship” to be of God; the truth is emphasized and realized in the fact that although many may “feel” joy during practices, many others “feel” depression and sorrow; which directly makes evident that the practices are of the flesh and not of the Spirit! Multiple millions of individuals have never known the difference between emotional responses and actual spiritual edification; for remaining within the proclivity of physical realm carnal desires and practices, and failing to actually submit unto God for revelation of reality, the multitudes

¹⁹⁶⁶ Galatians 5:16-25, specific v. 17.

remain completely complacent within false religiosity while claiming and believing they have a relationship with God! This is the precise reason that complacency within religiosity of deceptive darkness and the practice thereof is a complete and utter abomination unto God; for the very behavior demonstrated within the religious complacency maintains bondage by one's own choosing within ignorance!¹⁹⁶⁷ The Lord seeks that none should perish, but rather come to knowledge of the truth; yet within religious darkness and complacency foundational to ignorance, knowledge cannot be obtained; for ignorance remains until displaced by knowledge, and knowledge regarding the reality of spirituality is solely from the Lord! Without the divine work of God no one can come to the spiritual reality; therefore, all that remains is the fantasy of fleshly indulgence within carnal religiosity; this primarily because the light of truth (Lord) is not welcomed into congregations which intentionally choose to belief and worship within the darkness of Satan's schemes!

Personal Note: *If* "self" is not denied, than the Lord will not be followed upon the narrow path of His righteousness; for "self" will never cease to lead one's endeavors, which negates God's ability to masterfully lead! When God is not followed, an endeavor for Him may or may not be correct by intention, yet always incorrect as not from a foundation of devotional love first and foremost for the Lord; for throughout all endeavors of this kind, many different paths may be taken, most of which being external of God's righteous will, and therefore the potential for wrongdoing is always present. Stern discipline beginning with denial of "self" must be maintained at all times in the life of the Lord's legitimate children while endeavoring to fulfill spiritual: worship, duty and responsibility; this involving volition to sacrifice any and all aspects of one's existence which would hinder or distract away from God's masterful righteous leadership; for this is the essence of walking by faith in the light of truth and reality, which is necessary in order to maintain abounding fellowship with the Lord! Without actual fellowship with the Lord, there is no receiving of: His righteous leadership, special (personal) revelation, perseverance to endure within persecution and tribulation, His strength to proceed victoriously, and receiving righteous

¹⁹⁶⁷ Ezekiel 8:1-18.

illumination and inspiration regarding truth. The reality of God's fruit manifest which displaces the deeds of the flesh proves the presence and work of God; for without proof of the "reality of God," all that remains is assumption and conjecture which are foundational to the darkness of: ignorance, deception, and religious carnal indulgences!

The reality exists that God truly examines the motives of all individuals, this being a matter of pertinence in all endeavors of worship to and service for Him; for aloof the manifestation of His righteousness which occurs only within pure motives and devotional surrender, any endeavor is foundational to carnal assumptive conjecture and fantasy, void of the light of truth and knowledge!¹⁹⁶⁸ As the reality of the relationship with God that saves us by adoption into His family (legitimate children) is all about God in accordance to the kind intention of His will, any and all motives foundational to "self" remain impure and thus hold great potential for the invasion of unfruitful deeds of darkness! *If* and when God witnesses sincere, devotional, and sacrificial surrender for fulfillment of His good, acceptable and perfect will, He is allowed unhindered access to both will and work for His own good pleasure; contrary, without denial of "self" there is no chance or potential whatsoever for this blessing to begin or continue! Although it is very difficult for complete and absolute devotional surrender unto the Lord at all times; with the many distractions which can and/or will occur; the true blessing occurs when God is allowed to bring forth the reality of His precise work; for He is God, from whom all things righteous, pure, holy, appropriate, purposeful, and eternal are possible! When the Lord is allowed to wonderfully; without hindrance from chosen carnality, which very much includes influence and enticements from "self" when not denied; both start and finish the work within individuals of which He alone is capable, individuals will realize and live the spiritual relational reality which many seek and only a few find!¹⁹⁶⁹ Truly, the beauty and wonderment of Christianity is—God at work; whereas the ugliness and harshness of spiritual failure is because of individuals at work within selfish wrong motives or intentions!

If the spiritual relational reality had remained realized and taught throughout the history of the church, instead of being obscured by the reestablishment of physical realm ritualistic religion as by the instiga-

¹⁹⁶⁸ Romans 10:1-4; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Philippians 19-11; Colossians 1:9-14; 2 Peter 1:2-11.

¹⁹⁶⁹ Matthew 7:13-27, specific vs. 13, 14, 21-23.

tion and influence of the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion (Roman Catholicism), the church would have abounded with spiritual unity and devotional love first and foremost for God, and secondly for each other. Had this occurred, the world would have received betterment by the work of God within multitudes of individuals; yet with the light of truth and righteous discipline being obscured by religion, the wretchedness of human sinfulness and lawlessness has led to the necessity of righteous judgment (Tribulation Period).¹⁹⁷⁰ God always knew the latter would occur, because only a remnant would choose appropriate spiritual devotional sacrificial surrender and worship; yet this was never according to the kind intention of His will, as He has always desired that none should perish but rather come to knowledge of the truth (spiritual relational reality)!¹⁹⁷¹ Because a spiritual relationship with God is the greatest imperative of human existence, maximum effort should be put forth to deny all physical realm distractions and formalities which would deter away from the imperative; yet as the many within the nation of Israel chose selfish desires over the blessing of being set apart unto the Lord so others may realize the truth regarding the “reality of God,” so also have multitudes maintained the same culpability which forces scattering away from the Lord, rather than gathering unto Him!¹⁹⁷²

4. Canonization of (dead) saints - A.D. 995

The fact (canonization) of saints was originally decided by the people, whom had known and respected those within the area church who did eminent religious service. This act of respectful remembrance by individuals derived from honor for religious servants was changed from the time of Alexander III (A.D. 1170), so that only the Pope could declare someone as a saint worthy of worship; within this is witnessed simple respectful remembrance becoming veneration within blatant religious unrighteousness! This occurred as by the saint in question being considered by the merits of his servanthood before the Congregation of Rites. At the meeting, the saint was accused by the *Advocatus Diaboli*, and defended by the *Advocatus Dei* according to process of religious

¹⁹⁷⁰ 1 John 2:18- 3:18.

¹⁹⁷¹ 1 Timothy 2:1-4; 2 Peter 3:9.

¹⁹⁷² Matthew 12:30-37.

law. If the saint was shown to: possess the highest quality of sanctity, have the ability to work miracles either by his life or his dead bones, be worthy by the invocation of his aid; the saint would be canonized by the Pope based upon evidence of worthiness as is satisfactory to Roman Catholic believers.

The canonization of a saint supposedly makes the saint an object of potential worship. The saint after being canonized is supposedly capable of hearing the prayers of living saints; thus their canonization allows living believers to pray to them for intercession. In reality, we are made saints by trusting in God for our salvation, yet according to Catholic doctrine a saint is made so based upon works they have done.

God makes us saints according to His grace through faith and trust in Him; having nothing whatsoever to do with our works, for it is God who works in us that which is pleasing to Himself (fruits of the Holy Spirit)!¹⁹⁷³ As believers in the Lord Jesus Christ, are we to ever worship other human beings; is this not to deify the canonized saint? According to Catholic doctrine this is possible; according to the Gospel this is heretical and apostate idolatry! “Christians” can never, ever, pray to the dead; for even speaking to the dead is intuitionally the work of a “medium” (spiritist), which is condemned in the Gospel!¹⁹⁷⁴ Individuals guilty of behavior which is condemned in the Gospel, makes evident that they do as they please, believe as they choose, and being completely aloof any spiritual reality cause disconcertment regarding God’s righteous will for humanity. Because this does in fact occur within individuals claiming to know God; the reality of emotionalism within religiosity completely devoid of the reality of God is proven, within those held captive by Satan to do his will, which is that they remain deceived while deceiving others, which unfortunately many times includes children!

5. Celibacy of the priesthood—a.d. 1079

Although celibacy is considered within the Gospel as a means of escape from certain distractions in one’s devotion to God, nowhere does the Gospel condemn or deny marriage for anyone.¹⁹⁷⁵ According to the Scriptures, if an individual is lustful, it is better for the individual to

¹⁹⁷³ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; Galatians 5:22, 23.

¹⁹⁷⁴ Leviticus 20:26, 27; Deuteronomy 18:10-14.

¹⁹⁷⁵ 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 7:1-9, 25-35.

marry than to commit sin. In recent years, have many atrocities been discovered within the Catholic priesthood; possibly because the church leadership was disallowed marriage? Although it is appropriate for individuals to choose for themselves whether or not to marry, it is completely inappropriate for religious leadership to demand celibacy of anyone; as is commanded in the monastic vow.

In the Roman Catholic attempt to obtain holiness by a demanded vow of poverty and celibacy, it has forgotten that marriage is a Biblical act of holiness between a man and a woman.¹⁹⁷⁶ Considerable men of God such as Job, Abraham and Peter were married, yet as by their trusting God they were considered men of righteousness; therefore being married or unmarried may contain credence, while the imperative remains devotionally trusting God!¹⁹⁷⁷ Did their marriages make them any less holy; absolutely not! Within the insistence of Roman Catholic doctrine to deny marriage, they have placed themselves above laity; therefore distinctions have been made which have no validity in Christianity, as devotion (either married or unmarried) is a matter of personal choice. The only distinctions of sorts, being that leadership will be held to a higher accountability.¹⁹⁷⁸

6. The rosary - A.D. 1090

Although Mariology turned to Mariolatry in the fourth century, when it was claimed that Mary protected Justina's virginity from defilement, as noted by Gregory Nazianzen (A.D. 389); such writings as from Athanasius, Augustine and Basil show no examples of any invocation of Mary. In the manner as Mary gave birth to the Messiah, many speculations and assumptions came forth as to this union between a human and God; leading to much conjecture as to the essence of the union. This was known as Mariology, or the Doctrine of Mary; which through much conjecture and inappropriate worship practices became Mariolatry. The fact that historical accounts of the first three centuries never indicated invocation by Mary nor worship of her, demonstrates such additional teaching and practice to be erroneous and heretical within any form of Christian worship.¹⁹⁷⁹

¹⁹⁷⁶ Genesis 2:22-25; Matthew 19:4-6; Ephesians 5:25-33.

¹⁹⁷⁷ Romans 4:1-12; Galatians 3:6-9.

¹⁹⁷⁸ James 3:1-18, specific v. 1.

¹⁹⁷⁹ Galatians 1:6-9.

With the coming of the fifth century A.D., came the worship of saints; of which Mary was considered predominantly. Justinian I (527-565 A.D.), in a law, implored of Mary for the restoration of the Roman Empire; just as his army commander Narses would implore of Mary for victorious protection before going into battle. As the Middle Ages continued with more individuals imploring of Mary for assorted reasons, worship of her increased to the point of claiming her: to help in Christ's redemption of believers; being the one who renders grace; performing more miracles than even Christ was noted to have performed. At this point Mary became the center of focus, ahead of the Lord who redeemed us; thereby becoming an idol of primary worship and supposed victory!

During the crusades, it is told that Mary instructed Dominic to use the rosary. The rosary consists of fifteen "pater nosters" and one hundred and fifty "Ave Marias," told off in beads. The rosary is told to represent Mary having been exalted to the highest platform of power and glory in heaven. Within the teachings about the rosary, it is said that prayer to the rosary is prayer to Mary for her intercession; that her Son may be softened as to the plights of evil which afflict us. The rosary came about during the Dark Ages which brought forth many forms of ecclesiastical corruption; within doctrine the rosary was transformed from being a symbol, to being a conduit for prayer and blessing. This is the epitome of physical realm worship without actual knowledge; as "religion" alters with time within an insidious nature! It should be remembered—the truth is un-alterable; for any variation from truth, is a form of deception!

7. The Sacramental System of the Roman Catholic Church - The seven sacraments - a.d. 1439

The Lord our God is spirit, and has told us that we must worship Him in spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24). In context of the word "worship" in the John passage, the indication is that we worship with knowledge regarding the worth of the One worshipped. This is evidenced by our worshipping Him by faith apart from physical aspects of worship; thereby never substituting physical techniques to replace the faith necessary to please Him.¹⁹⁸⁰ When spiritual discernment is

¹⁹⁸⁰ Hebrews 11:1-6.

lacking in those who seek to worship, then physical aspects are instituted which may be understandable in the flesh, yet hold no significance in one's faith and spirit.¹⁹⁸¹ This is the basis of the instituting of the seven sacraments. As true faith diminishes, physical acts of worship increase! This dogmatic form of theology (Roman Catholic Theology) was instituted by the Pope, Catholic theologians, and councils of the medieval and Reformation periods. As with any form of pride, papal infallibility was declared, thus stating that the Pope is always right and should never be questioned.

The sacraments are believed within Catholicism to be extensions of Christ's redeeming acts. In this, signs (*semeiois*) are sought, and this with failure to realize that actual signs (*saymaion*) were for the nation of Israel; thus a counterfeit is sought by an evil and perverse generation.¹⁹⁸² Please consider that many choose to focus upon Jesus (solely in His humanity) and His mother Mary in the physical realm, yet Jesus emphasis was always that we place our focus upon the Father as we walk by faith.¹⁹⁸³ Please remember—Jesus is God; the Father is God; the two are One; and we abide in Him.¹⁹⁸⁴

When the Reformers placed emphasis upon salvation by grace through faith, the sacraments were the efforts by Roman Catholic leadership to bring attention back into the physical realm (counter-reformation). This is why “works” are very much a necessity within Catholic doctrine; the emphasis being human works, not the fruit of the Holy Spirit within believers.¹⁹⁸⁵ The Reformers realized what the Gospel was saying as to faith in God bringing forth the fruits of the Holy Spirit by grace, whereas Catholicism has never come to distinguish between one's own works and the works of God within the believer. Unfortunately, Reformation leadership and multitudes of believers (minus the remnant) have not broken free entirely from physical realm ritualistic religion; this is why “sacraments” (and traditions) are yet proclaimed to be of importance within Christian religious worship. The primary reason for millennia of confusion and seeking God through the flesh has always remained the same; failure to love God first and

¹⁹⁸¹ Colossians 2:20-23; Galatians 4:1-11.

¹⁹⁸² Luke 11:27-29.

¹⁹⁸³ John 5:19, 20.

¹⁹⁸⁴ John 10:31-38; 14:6-14; 15:1-17.

¹⁹⁸⁵ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; James 2:14-26.

foremost, and deny “self” foundational to disciplined devotional love! The truth remains that multitudes of individuals claiming to know God, in reality have no “knowledge” of Him whatsoever!

BAPTISM

As believers, we are to be baptized with the Holy Spirit, into the death to sin of which Christ died.¹⁹⁸⁶ Water baptism was an open sign of repentance from sin, and this in the physical realm; being a sign of the New Covenant within the Nation of Israel. Please consider the difference between God indwelling the Temple of old, and now indwelling individual believers. Huge difference; for the old was in the physical realm, and the new in the spiritual realm!¹⁹⁸⁷

According to Catholic doctrine—water baptism frees man from original sin and guilt, and initiates them into the body of Christ. This is actually accomplished upon one’s sincere statement of faith unto the Lord by the divine “drawing” of God and by justification by grace through faith which occurs instantly upon receiving the Holy Spirit’s seal for the day of redemption.¹⁹⁸⁸ The spiritual relational reality and salvation are not based in any form of human works, beyond the appropriate righteous confession of “Jesus as Lord,” but rather solely within God’s loving grace; for it is God who divinely: finds, draws, teaches, and saves us!¹⁹⁸⁹ According to Catholic doctrine: baptism is necessary for salvation; the baptism of infants is legitimate as it creates a measure of faith in the infant, and therefore baptism as an adult is not necessary; keeping the law is mandatory, for faith alone is not adequate. Are we to walk by faith or sight; are we under grace or under the Law?¹⁹⁹⁰ Where does “faith” come from; as well as the measure of faith?¹⁹⁹¹

CONFIRMATION

Baptism supposedly brings the individual into Christian infancy, as Confirmation supposedly brings the individual to maturity in the faith.

¹⁹⁸⁶ Acts 11:15-18; Romans 6:1-14; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:13-17.

¹⁹⁸⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17.

¹⁹⁸⁸ John 6:44, 45; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 1:3-14; 4:30.

¹⁹⁸⁹ Luke 19:9, 10; John 6:44, 45, 65; 14:6; Romans 3:21-30; 10:8-13; Ephesians 2:1-10.

¹⁹⁹⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Romans 6:12-23.

¹⁹⁹¹ Romans 12:3; additionally—10:17.

Baptism is performed by the priest; confirmation by the bishop as by the laying on of hands. Where does actual maturity (growth) within the faith of individuals come from?¹⁹⁹²

THE EUCHARIST (HOLY COMMUNION)

The Eucharist is also referred to as “Mass.” The Eucharist (Mass) is a ritual of the perpetual (ongoing) sacrifice of Christ; for the practiced emphasis of Mass (Eucharist) is the body and blood of Christ, which ritualistically emphasizes Christ’s death, rather than proclaiming it within an act of devotional remembrance (1 Corinthians 11:24-26). Is this a just ritual, since Jesus died once for all?¹⁹⁹³ Mass is a ritualistic form or worship, derived from adding to the Scriptures out of context; whereas “Christian” worship is foundational to—spirit and truth!¹⁹⁹⁴ To further keep this act of remembrance religiously in the physical realm, Catholic doctrine proclaims the “Real Presence” of Jesus in the sacrament; this is called Transubstantiation (originated A.D. 1215). Upon the priest speaking the words of communion, the wafer and wine supposedly become the actual body and blood (essence) of Christ.

Within the Catholic doctrine of the Eucharist, as the wafer and wine supposedly become the essence of the sacrificial Lamb of God, the elements of communion are to be adored and received for eternal life. The Scripture utilized to justify this doctrine is John 6:53-58. According to the doctrine of Eucharist, participation brings forth the forgiveness of venial sins, the hope of eternal glory and salvation, and strengthening against temptation. Is our victory over temptation and sin found in the physical realm?¹⁹⁹⁵ Does not adoring physical aspects of worship rendered by man constitute idolatry?

The doctrine of the Eucharist continues by proclaiming that grace is imparted to the individual by the priest. The Eucharist is to take the believer back to the cross upon which Christ died, and this to confirm the believer dead to sin and thus effects reconciliation to God. The Eucharist is considered to be an un-bloody sacrifice (Transubstantiation); for if it were considered bloody, then Jewish converts could never participate.¹⁹⁹⁶

¹⁹⁹² 1 Corinthians 3:1-11, specifically vs. 6, 9.

¹⁹⁹³ Hebrews 7:23-28; 10:1-18.

¹⁹⁹⁴ John 4:20-24.

¹⁹⁹⁵ 1 John 5:4, 5; cf. Colossians 2:20-23.

CONFESSION (PENANCE)

Roman Catholic doctrine regarding Confession, teaches that Christ forgives sins through the priest (originated A.D. 1215). This is based upon the Biblical statement found in John 20:23. Catholic doctrine accordingly states that the priest can forgive or retain the sins of others, and this by what the priest witnesses in the person at confession....

The sacrament of Penance described—the Council of Florence A.D. 1439:

Catholicism teaches that there are severity differences regarding sin. This is not a Scriptural teaching; for sin is sin, as holiness is abstinence from sin. Sin and holiness are diametrically opposed to one another; sinfulness being opposed to God, who is holy, is therefore forgivable only by God!¹⁹⁹⁷ When the Scripture told us to confess our sins to one another, this is so that we will understand that we are not alone in being sinful; comforting one another with this knowledge. Although I may forgive someone for trespassing against me personally, the person's actual sin can only be forgiven by God upon its being confessed unto Him.¹⁹⁹⁸ Catholicism teaches that the priest can forgive sins, yet this is also contrary to Gospel truth.

To place this statement in actual context, we must remember that only God can ultimately forgive sins.¹⁹⁹⁹ The John 20:23 passage is speaking of our duty to proclaim the Gospel truth, and in this we proclaim God's forgiveness of sins (or not), according to one's acceptance of Christ's atonement (or not). We personally can forgive the transgressions of another against ourselves, yet the sin itself is forgiven only by God; for He alone is perfectly holy, righteous, and just.²⁰⁰⁰ Penance is nothing less than man placing acts of works upon the forgiveness of sins; this is absurd in itself—for God's grace and faithfulness are sufficient! The John 20:23 statement also refers to our choice to forgive or not, although refusal to forgive is not an option; for we ought to render grace to others, as our heavenly Father has been and continues to be so graceful toward us!

¹⁹⁹⁶ Leviticus 17:13, 14.

¹⁹⁹⁷ Matthew 9:4-8; Luke 5:20-26; cf. Leviticus 11:45; 1 Peter 1:13-16.

¹⁹⁹⁸ 1 John 1:6-10, specific v. 9.

¹⁹⁹⁹ Mark 2:7.

²⁰⁰⁰ Matthew 6:14, 15; Hebrews 3:1-6; 7:11-28.

HOLY ORDERS

Holy Orders (Catholic doctrine) involve the ordination of church leadership, conferring to them the power and grace to sanctify others.... In this, it is believed that the priesthood is according to the order of Melchizedek, and therefore acts as Jesus Christ in the giving of Communion. The priest therefore states “this is my blood”; “this is my body.”

To clarify this in the reality of Scripture truth, sanctification is the work of the Holy Spirit.²⁰⁰¹ No man can convey sanctification! I am hopeful that you can witness that a priest cannot act as Christ, for the Lord works in and through us to bring glory to Him. The act of remembrance which is communion (Lord’s Supper), has become secularized by Catholic doctrine, and brought almost fully into the physical realm as by religious ritual.²⁰⁰² Where in this is our worship of God (by faith) in spirit and in truth?²⁰⁰³ Christ is a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek, and therefore our only mediator; Catholic doctrine inappropriately proclaims this authority to be also upon church leadership.²⁰⁰⁴ Jesus is Lord (God; the One with full authority); no one else!

MATRIMONY

Matrimony (marriage) is designated in the Scripture as a covenant (vowed) relationship between a man and a woman; as the two become one flesh. This is to keep sanctity within marriage; as in any sexual relationship, sin is the prevalent factor when outside the confines of marriage.²⁰⁰⁵ Although it may be construed that marriage mimics the relationship between Christ and the church, this would stipulate that through marriage humankind would somehow emulate the faithfulness of Christ. The truth remains—God is faithful; humankind is not!²⁰⁰⁶ This is not to say that we should not be faithful in marriage; for becoming one flesh with our spouse (mate) illustrates faithfulness. Rather this is to say that we do as God commanded, yet never proclaiming our actions to mimic the holy, righteous and faithful acts of Christ.

²⁰⁰¹ 1 Corinthians 1:18-31; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

²⁰⁰² 1 Corinthians 11:23-32.

²⁰⁰³ John 4:20-24.

²⁰⁰⁴ Hebrews 5:1-10; 9:1-28; 1 Timothy 2:1-6.

²⁰⁰⁵ Genesis 2:18-25; 1 Corinthians 7:1-9; Hebrews 13:4.

²⁰⁰⁶ 2 Timothy 2:11-13.

Our victory is solely by God's grace; to theorize other ways of victory would be foolish.

Although the Roman Catholic Church states that divorce is never an option, the Scriptures state otherwise.²⁰⁰⁷ Individuals, who marry, should neither make divorce nor infidelity an option. The bonds of marriage when kept according to Biblical standards are broken only by the death of either the husband or wife; at which time the remaining individual may marry again without guilt or sin.²⁰⁰⁸ Dissolving of marriage is Biblically sound only if by death or unfaithfulness; therefore any statement which emphasizes that divorce can never happen is incorrect.

ANOINTING THE SICK (EXTREME UNCTION)

Catholicism also has as one of its sacraments something called "extreme unction." Extreme unction as first introduced, was the final act of the Church supposedly assisting the soul of a dying individual to enter eternity (the complement and completion of penance). Through Vatican II reform, extreme unction became an act of assisting sick or dying believers with prayer and bible reading (anointing of the sick). Extreme unction is believed to be a conveyor of grace as through man's works. Catholicism also teaches that the amount of grace received is contingent upon the individual's disposition; this of course being an indication that grace (unmerited favor) can be deserved as by demeanor and personal works.

As can be witnessed by the aforementioned statement, Extreme Unction claims to be a cause of invisible grace. Although the Scripture states that we are to pray for the sick; Extreme Unction takes this to the extreme by proclaiming that the anointing itself confers grace. Noticed within all the sacraments, Catholic doctrine proclaims that actions (works) by man confer the gift of God's grace. Within the book of James (5:13-16), we are indeed told to pray for the sick and anoint them with oil. The anointing with oil is to symbolize the presence of God (Psalm 23:5); yet oil being used to treat some ailments should never be construed to heal all sicknesses. Yes, we are to pray for healing, and render assistance to our brothers and sisters in Christ whenever possible. In all these things, we must remember that the works of God (including healing) are according to His will.²⁰⁰⁹

²⁰⁰⁷ 1 Corinthians 7:10-17; Matthew 5:31, 32; Mark 10:1-12.

²⁰⁰⁸ Romans 7:1-6; 1 Corinthians 7:39, 40.

The Roman Catholic doctrine of Extreme Unction was derived from the James 5:13-16 passages. The doctrine of Extreme Unction as a sacrament is focused not upon healing or treatment, but rather upon impending death. The James 5:14 passage when taken in context with vs. 13 and 15, demonstrates the healing mentioned to be in a spiritual context. When we are lacking (backsliding) physically, this is because we have become ill spiritually. Praying for one another demonstrates compassion and love; within these comes healing. Yes, God heals the sick; when it is His will to do so! Yes, God's mercy and grace are available to all who believe. Yes, God's lovingkindness is everlasting. In all these wonderful aspects of our Lord's compassion for us, do we yet demand more; even to the point of believing ourselves to have the ability to convey God's grace (unmerited favor)?

The largest difference between Protestantism and Catholicism regarding matters of the faith, are found in matters of authority within Catholicism. According to Roman Catholic doctrine, traditions passed down by church Fathers as well as papal pronouncements; hold as much authority as the Bible, and this aside of the Catholic Bible having fifteen books beyond the sixty six books of the Scripture canon which is held by Protestants. At the Council of Trent in A.D. 1546, Roman Catholic leadership announced the authority of traditions, the Latin Vulgate of the Scriptures, as well as the Roman church as interpreters of the Gospel.

With the aforementioned regarding the traditions followed within Christendom (the Christian religion) even to this day, can any of these traditions be found to have been mentioned by Christ to the apostles within the pages of the Gospel?! Roman Catholicism proclaims the church (ekklesia—an assembly) to be the “The Holy Mother Church,” and by this statement proclaims the church to have divine qualities as does Christ. In this proclamation by Catholic leadership; as itself having this divine sanctioned quality; came the statement that aside from the universal Church of believers (Apostolic Roman Church) none can be saved. By them claiming themselves to be infallible (without error), the prideful door to apostasy opened wide; for they make proclamations, expecting and demanding that all follow without question lest they be condemned to hell.

²⁰⁰⁹ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10.

THE PAPACY

First let us realize what is meant by a reference to the Pope as “Pontiff.” The title of Pontiff for the Pope came about when the church joined itself with the ruling authorities of Rome in the third and fourth centuries. With the union of the church with the state (Roman ruling authorities), came an end to religious freedoms involving acts of worship and faith; for the “church” had become an established entity governed by the state. With this union, came severe persecution and civil punishment to any who refused adherence to the doctrine of the established church. With the union came rendered authority from the state to church leadership, which led to certain forms of freedom and actions by church leaders; yet at the expense of spiritual liberty and self-discipline. The church leadership became arrogant in their newly founded authority from the state! The outward lowliness and oppression which had been long lived during the first three centuries; along with the internal gratefulness to God by faith, diminished as organized state-religion replaced true worship from one’s heart. From this point forward up to the sixth century, departure from the state-church’s authority was met with civil penalties; banishment, confiscation, and occasionally with death. The severe harshness of the Roman church leadership became better known to commoners, than the Roman church heretical teachings. Although the believing Emperor Constantine (surnamed the Great A.D. 306-337) had ordered religious freedom for all (A.D. 312), in his attempts to stop persecutions upon Christians and put an end to idolatry in the empire, as he maintained reverence for God; his successors the Popes were not so lenient, for they insisted that all religious activities and worship was either according to their doctrine, or the practice of the secular world which would never be saved. Remember, according to Roman Catholic leadership (the papacy) it’s their way, or damnation.

Pope Gregory the Great repudiated the title “Ecumenical Bishop” as an anti-Christian assumption; and yet it is comparatively harmless as compared with the official titles of his successors, who claim to be: the Vicars of Christ, the vice-regents of God Almighty on earth, and the infallible organs of the Holy Spirit in all matters of faith and discipline.

As the supposed authority of the pontiff within Catholicism grew, many world rulers would show undue homage to the Pope in attempts to gain entrance into God’s kingdom as by the Pope’s blessing. Can a man bless someone else into heaven? Originally the Pontiff (pontifex)

was the emperor or king who was in supreme command of the nation or country. The pontiff of a country or nation is quite different from someone who claims to be the supreme leader (pontiff maximi) of a religious order. Just as the pontiff of many nations sought homage from the inhabitants of the land, so also does the pontiff maximi (Pope) seek that homage would also be rendered to him. Does this seem appropriate behavior for a spiritual leader? This instance can be compared with Mordecai's refusal to pay homage to Haman, for Haman desired inappropriate homage to be paid to him from someone who reverently feared God.²⁰¹⁰ Is it appropriate for believers to pay homage due God to any human being? Is it appropriate that a supposed spiritual leader would ever expect such homage to be rendered?

Let us consider other names by which the Pope seeks homage:

1. Holy Father—Are we to call any spiritual leader our “father”? We have but one spiritual Father, who is in heaven!²⁰¹¹ This fact given us by Christ Jesus!
2. Holy See—This is to claim that the Pope (Vatican) is the head of all priests (subordinate spiritual leadership); whether Cardinals, Bishops, etc. Who is the head of the church (all who are called)?²⁰¹²

Are there actually any priests within the Body of Christ other than Jesus Christ? Please remember—the Body of Christ and the Nation of Israel are not synonymous; priests of the Levitical priesthood from the lineage of Aaron are not priestly within the Body of Christ; therefore neither is anyone else! Priests of the Old Testament were priests of the Old Covenant; the old is gone, behold the new has come which holds but One who is our mediator and High Priest!²⁰¹³

During the scholastic period, the papacy claimed supreme authority over the entire world. This concept arose from the notion that Christ had given the Apostle Peter authority over the other apostles, as the papacy believed that Peter was the rock upon which Christ would build His church. When Jesus made the statement to Peter, His statement

²⁰¹⁰ Esther 5:9-14.

²⁰¹¹ Matthew 23:8-10.

²⁰¹² Ephesians 1:18-23; 4:14-16; Colossians 1:15-20.

²⁰¹³ Hebrews 3:1-6; 5:1-10; 7:4-8:13; 9:15-28.

was regarding Peter's name (Petros: rock or boulder, masculine) and (upon this rock: petra, feminine); one acknowledging Peter's accurate statement about Him (the Christ; chosen One—Son of the living God), and the other to emphasize that the church would be built upon Christ Himself (cf. 1 Corinthians 3:11).²⁰¹⁴ Even if the statement had been that the church would be built upon Peter (although not), would the gathering of believers within God's grace (church) been founded upon a frail human being whose weakness was demonstrated shortly thereafter when Peter denied Christ three times!²⁰¹⁵ If the statement was as the papacy proclaimed, then the church was founded upon weakness, and would have been destined to fail; for only the grace and power of God Himself could bring sustained victory.

Both Gratian and Thomas Aquinas taught that the Pope is the supreme head who guarantees purity of morals and teaching, therefore to disobey any word spoken by the Pope is to disobey God. This truly places the Pope as "Vicar of Christ" (within Catholic doctrine) with authority over the earth; yet is not our Lord present Himself and in full authority (Greek - kuros; kurios). If a misconstrued statement as aforementioned could lead to humans believing themselves to hold the power of Christ (God); how could they possibly lead others to freedom in the truth, when they themselves obviously remain captive to both delusion and deception? How can those spiritually stagnant by delusion and deception, teach spiritual accountability to others? The papacy in no certain terms stated that we are all Roman Catholic in submission to the Pope, or we are doomed to eternal condemnation. At this point it should be remembered, the Roman Catholic priesthood is actually the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mystery Rites Religion, which is shrouded in mystery; thus a religion of mysticism (vague thinking and ritual).

The papacy proclamation of authority went further, as Innocent III declared that all civil authority should be subject to the Pope. This does not take into account that Satan was given authority over the earth at the time of Adam's fall, and yet deceives those who claim authority in and of themselves.²⁰¹⁶ In A.D. 1302 Pope Boniface VIII stated that the Pope had authority over two realms, as the Pope wielded the spiritual

²⁰¹⁴ Matthew 16:13-20.

²⁰¹⁵ Matthew 26:31-34, 69-75.

²⁰¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:1-18.

sword as well as the temporal sword. Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand) claimed that he was accountable to God for the kingdoms of the earth. This is the Hildebrand considered by many to be an impure and selfish man, now proclaiming the world's kingdoms accountable to him, as he (supposedly) was accountable to God for all earthly kingdoms. Pope Gregory VII believed that all kingdoms were to bow to his authority.

Pope Boniface VIII declared that all human creatures were to be subject to the Roman Pontiff (Pope) (Unam sanctam), if they are to be redeemed (A.D. 1299). This is to say that the salvation of all humans, is a matter of decision by the Pope; is this not also to believe that a man (Pope) councils God regarding the salvation of His (God's) children?²⁰¹⁷ The first Vatican Council, in A.D. 1870 proclaimed:

Peter, the Prince and Chief of the Apostles, the pillar of faith and foundation of the Catholic Church, received the keys of the kingdom from our Lord Jesus Christ, the Saviour and Redeemer of mankind, and lives, presides, and judges, to this day and always, in his successors the Bishops of the Holy See of Rome which was founded by him and consecrated by his blood. Whence, whoever succeeds to Peter in this See, does by the institution of Christ himself obtain the primacy of Peter over the whole Church. . . . blessed Peter, abiding in the strength of the Rock that he received, has not given up the direction of the Church undertaken by him. . . . the Roman Pontiff possess the primacy over the whole world, and that the Roman Pontiff is the successor of Blessed Peter, Prince of the Apostles, and is true Vicar of Christ, and Head of the whole Church, and Father and Teacher of all Christians; and that full power was given to him in Blessed Peter to feed, rule, and govern the Universal Church by Jesus Christ our Lord.²⁰¹⁸

Please note by the aforementioned Vatican Council proclamation—Peter supposedly guides the Pope in his leadership of the church. Are there any Biblical accounts whatsoever that would indicate that a past (dead) saint yet renders guidance in the present age? Are there any

²⁰¹⁷ Romans 11:33-36.

²⁰¹⁸ Kenneth Scott Latourette, *A History of Christianity* (New York: Harper, 1953), pp. 223-24.

Biblical accounts whatsoever which state that the Lord has allocated His personal authority as God to a single individual or group of human beings?²⁰¹⁹ The tenth century A.D. brought the darkest time period of the papacy. From the combination of the state and church, demoralization began within the state and quickly passed to the Latin Church and inevitably to the papacy; for arrogance and superstition replaced worshipping God in spirit and in truth! Within the demoralization which came forth, was included the pride within the papacy which led them to proclaim themselves to have the power of Christ's authority on earth. By the maintaining of this secular inappropriate pride, the papacy has proclaimed authority to do as they choose; proclaiming that all believers are under the authority of their (Roman Catholic) laws, which they yet dictate as necessary in order to be saved. With Roman Catholicism praying and seeking guidance from Mary, Peter, saints and angels; it seems the only One they do not seek guidance from is the Lord! Does this seem appropriate for a "Christian" organization; when prayers are made to many, except the One (God) who actually hears and warns from heaven?²⁰²⁰ The fact that the Lord's chastisements have never come upon those within Catholicism, proves the fact that God has no involvement whatsoever within the darkness of the religion; nor can He, as religion of the flesh remains diametrically opposed to the light of truth which is foundational to the Lord!

Let us now look at the progression of pride which laid cause for Satan to be cast from heaven. Please note similarities between Satan's initial desire to be above the angels (stars), and how the progression of pride did not cease until his (Satan's) desire was nothing less than being like the Most High. Do you notice any similarities between Satan's pride to be above all other angels, and the pride of the papacy to be above all other humans? NOTE—The recesses of the north (v. 13), in pagan literature was an indication of the abode of the gods of Babylon who supposedly ruled over the entire universe. Please also note in the 1 Timothy 3 passages, the general demeanor which is to be present in church leadership; lest they fall prey to the snares of the devil. As you read the Timothy passages, please keep in mind the demeanor and proclamations of Pope Gregory VII (Hildebrand).

²⁰¹⁹ Isaiah 42:1-25, specific v. 8.

²⁰²⁰ Hebrews 12:25-29.

Isaiah 14:12-14: “How you have fallen from heaven, O star of the morning, son of the dawn! You have been cut down to the earth, You who have weakened the nations! “But you said in your heart, ‘I will ascend to heaven; I will raise my throne above the stars of God, And I will sit on the mount of assembly In the recesses of the north. ‘I will ascend above the heights of the clouds; I will make myself like the Most High.’

1 Timothy 3:1-7: It is a trustworthy statement: if any man aspires to the office of overseer, it is a fine work he desires to do. An overseer, then, must be above reproach, the husband of one wife, temperate, prudent, respectable, hospitable, able to teach, not addicted to wine or pugnacious, but gentle, un-contentious, free from the love of money. He must be one who manages his own household well, keeping his children under control with all dignity (but if a man does not know how to manage his own household, how will he take care of the church of God?); and not a new convert, lest he become conceited and fall into the condemnation incurred by the devil. And he must have a good reputation with those outside the church, so that he may not fall into reproach and the snare of the devil.

SUMMATION

Is there any *Biblical* account for the teachings of the Roman Catholic Church; or has accountability to Gospel realistic truth even been a factor within the religious traditions as instituted and proclaimed? Insidious beliefs and teachings demonstrate how terribly the wiles of Satan can invade lives, when “religion” takes precedence over loving the Lord with all submissive sincerity.²⁰²¹ Can Catholicism be construed as “Christian” in nature; or does the evidence of Gospel truth illustrate Catholic teachings to be of a detestable nature?²⁰²² Although it may have held aspects (few) of “Christianity” originally, the many facets of the religion have been built with the passing of time as by following the Pope rather than Christ; all facets of the religion (Catholicism) now

²⁰²¹ Ephesians 6:10-20; Matthew 22:36-40.

²⁰²² Galatians 1:6-10; 1 Timothy 4:1-5, specific vs. 1-3; 1 John 4:1-6.

being contrary to Scripture? Just as individuals have followed human leadership either toward or away from God for generations; this of course not including the remnant who always follow God as by His standards of worship and devotional service; so also occurred within Catholicism as from (more so) the fifth and sixth centuries during the Dark Ages. From the time of Emperor Constantine with the inauguration of the imperial state-church in the fourth century, far too many tangents away from true worship of God were taken, with far too many individuals following blindly due fear instilled by intimidation. It should be understood, the only reason why the Babylonian Mysteries Religion (Roman Catholicism) held to any aspect of Christianity initially upon covert entry through the church at Pergamum, was for attachment to Christianity so as to begin the deception for the purpose of tolerance; which occurred during the time period of Thyatira.²⁰²³ After the religion was tolerated and accepted fully, there was no longer any necessity to continue the façade; for the purpose of the religion was always to deceive those within Christianity so they would become converts of the Christian religion (initiated, instigated and influenced by the Babylonian Mysteries; Roman Catholicism), which was according to Satan's schemes and influential commands!

Please consider this, the most self-delusive and deluding form of pride, is false humility! Because Jesus had not returned by a time deemed appropriate by Catholic leadership, it was reasoned by Catholic leaders that the Lord wanted church leadership to initiate and establish His kingdom upon the earth; although this was actually but a part of the façade. In conjunction with this inane form of reasoning, came the assumption that the Jews had been set aside permanently, and the church replaced them as God's chosen people. The Jews have always been the chosen of God, and He (Jesus) will again draw them unto Himself exactly when God chooses. The book of Revelation, as well as many other prophecies from Scripture make this fact perfectly clear! Rather than waiting patiently upon the Lord; which they had no intention of ever doing; men of the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries stepped out in their selfish stubborn pride and arrogance, where they have remained serving "self" and the Great Deceiver (Satan); for as God is opposed to the proudly foolish, it was not Him they ever intended to serve or worship!

²⁰²³ Revelation 2:12-29.

By close examination of the inappropriate physical acts of ritualistic worship which take precedence within Roman Catholicism, it is clear to anyone who has studied the Gospel and Biblical history, that Catholic leadership indeed believe they will inherit the earth under their own authority! The Jews have followed many forms of physical worship throughout their history, for theirs is an earthly (physical) kingdom; the Body of Christ (true born again believers) will inherit a spiritual heavenly kingdom.²⁰²⁴ The Jews walked by sight, Christians are to walk by faith; yet many do not, as they seek to replace God's chosen people (the Jews), which will never (ever) happen! As aforementioned within the portion regarding the Papacy, extreme arrogance derived from pride has led Catholic leadership continually toward the ultimate form of human individuality (blatant self-centeredness; narcissism; religious superiority); which is an abomination to God! The initiator of this ultimate form of "self," would settle for nothing less than being like the Most High, and this also becomes the goal of those who follow the initiator (Satan). Satan's ultimate volition of "self" resulted in his being cast from heaven; those who follow him (Satan) as by their beliefs and behavior will neither enter the kingdom of God! The very gall of frail, weak human beings attempting to establish a kingdom which only the power and wisdom of God can bring forth, makes evident the same ultimate foolishness of individuality (self) as was initiated and then established unto human beings through Adam and Eve. This is quite simple, *if* the person leading you is not patiently trusting in God, you have no spiritual basis by which to trust in them!

The Lord Jesus Christ has told us that He will one day return. The Scriptures make it plainly clear that we are to look forward to His appearing, at which time He will take us home. Is this a basis of continued teaching within Catholicism, or is their teaching continually in regard to ritualistic worship and always looking back for the sake of traditions upon this earth? Please do not misunderstand me, even though it is true that I abhor Catholicism, especially because it is considered and proclaimed "Christian" in nature; I yet love dearly the deceived individuals, who have strayed from the truth of the Gospel.²⁰²⁵ Catholicism being considered "Christian" leads me to ask the question—"what lord are

²⁰²⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:35-58.

²⁰²⁵ Ephesians 6:12; 1 Peter 5:6-11; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10; James 5:19, 20.

they serving”; he is obviously not the God of the Bible?”²⁰²⁶ The Lord Jesus Christ of the bible died once for all; yet the Jesus worshipped within Catholicism needs to be re-crucified daily (Mass); this proven by worship which emphasizes the body and blood of Jesus (Lord’s Supper; proclamation of His death), as the primary basis of ritualistic religious practice.²⁰²⁷ The Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible intercedes for believers with the full authority of His position (God); Catholicism teaches that Mary and the Pope also have this authority. To study Catholicism is to find that the religious ritualistic acts they perform and all of their teachings are not Biblical! How can this be *if* the Lord Jesus Christ, the chosen One of God (Messiah) is whom they worship; the answer of course being that the God of the Bible has no place within Catholicism! Rubber stamping the name of Jesus to this evinced blatant form of false faith and worship is what I abhor! Many nuns & brothers within Catholicism I truly respect, for several I have known personally are reverent of God and loving in heart. What a shame that these loving individuals are entangled in such false worship and heretical doctrine! Having attempted to reach several with the truth regarding the spiritual relational reality, and having but a few accept the truth; evidence directly reveals the power of Satan’s deceptions within the religion, and how by Satan’s power and guile the many were incapable of coming to reality of truth!²⁰²⁸ Anyone who does not believe the brain washing potential within religion led by Satan is completely without understanding as to the primary foe of the spiritual relational reality (righteous Christianity); and this due to endeavors to find and know God through the flesh, which achieves only delusion and failure!²⁰²⁹

Please consider the following factors:

1. There are two *basic* principles (three sources) of “faith” followed by most men regarding the existence of God (Scholastic Theology).
 - **Corpus Juris Canonici** (Gratian) - *I believe in order that I may know*. This is a potential basis of walking by faith, for we must never attribute faith to only those things we personally can

²⁰²⁶ 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6; 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

²⁰²⁷ Hebrews 7:26, 27; 9:11-14; 10:5-14; 1 Peter 3:13-4:6.

²⁰²⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:1-4; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; Hebrews 5:8-10; 1 Peter 5:6-11.

²⁰²⁹ Ephesians 6:10-18, specific vs. 10-12.

explain and/or fully understand. When we trust God for growth and increase, we then submit to Him so as to learn.²⁰³⁰

- **Sic et Non** (yes or no) (Abaelard) - *I believe that which I may understand.*

Abaelard was a bit confusing in his belief system. Although he had stated that belief was necessary in order to know (*Corpus Juris Canonici*), he also stated that faith had to be founded upon inquiry and experience; this obviously contradictory. Abaelard's philosophy borders on the teachings of Immanuel Kant (A.D. 1724-1804), who believed that knowledge, could not exist apart from human reason and scientific investigation. Kant believed that God is solely a postulate of human consciousness; therefore God is but a subjective function of the human mind. In a like manner as Kant went to the extreme believing we can reason and thereby fully understand God; this is but the work of pride and arrogance, in seeking to understand God in the flesh. On far too many occasions, men have started out to accomplish something effective in regard to better knowing God, yet failing to beware in their endeavors as by appropriate spiritual focus, soon fell short of godly intent as by distraction, carnal motive, and human intellectual prowess.²⁰³¹ It should always be remembered—without faith it is impossible to please God, as God is opposed to the proud but gives grace to the humble; therefore, God's giving of grace is preceded by an individual's humble submission by faith, which is preceded by denial of "self" (all that is foundational to human volition; including pride and arrogance).

The teachings of Abaelard came forth from the foundation of human reason, which is a basis of Papal Catholicism; in addition to the origins from the Babylonian Mysteries Religion, from which came belief in the Baals and Goddesses of the Ashtaroth. Although Abaelard was not liberally close minded as was Kant, he yet placed emphatic insistence upon that which is fully understood; therefore the efficiency of the sacraments.

- **Libri Quatour Sententiarum** (Four Books of Sentences) (Peter the Lombard). Peter the Lombard was the father of Systematic Theology in the Catholic religion. The

²⁰³⁰ 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; Hebrews 11:1-6.

²⁰³¹ 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; 1 Timothy 1:3-11.

Lombard produced the most popular theological textbook referencing dogmatic theology of the Middle Ages; much of this derived from his being a proponent of both Abaelard (more so) and Gratian. The seven sacraments were emphasized by Peter the Lombard; with the elements being transmuted into the body and blood of Christ (transubstantiation) during the sacrament of communion (Eucharist). Peter taught that communion is a sacrifice; although the Scripture states that it (Lord's Supper) is an act of remembrance.²⁰³²

Most traditions followed within Christendom (actually the Christian religion), were originated by Roman Catholicism. The Roman Catholic Church has always believed that acts of works are necessary for one's salvation; which is the heretical teaching of the church (Roman Catholic) which was protested by the Reformers, such as Martin Luther, John Calvin, and John Knox. The reformers realized that the salvation of believers is solely by the grace of God through faith, and this completely apart from works (Ephesians 2:4-9). The Roman Catholic leadership prior to the Reformation Period being furious that normal lay persons would dare question and protest against its authority, as by actually reading the Bible and thereby coming to knowledge of the truth, went forth and murdered thousands of Christians to stop any attempts at reform, which was known as the Inquisition. The Roman Catholic Church had adulterated the Bible to suit their own philosophies of religion which involves works for salvation, and this they accomplished by the sacraments and by the festive traditions now adhered to by the church (Christian religion). This is manmade religion (mysticism), which holds to the philosophy that—if it feels right it must therefore be valid. Of course manmade religion seems right to those who wrote it; yet Biblically all such religion is worthless for any good thing, including salvation.²⁰³³ Once Catholic leadership fell prey to the ultimate wretchedness of individuality which proclaims “I will be like the Most High,” they intentionally remained aloof the narrow path of God's righteousness upon the wide path of spiritual destruction; upon

²⁰³² 1 Corinthians 11:23-32.

²⁰³³ Romans 10:1-13; Colossians 2:20-23.

which they yet remain and lead others! Catholicism has never been Christian (Christ-like); rather only a delusive physical realm ritualistic emulator of Satan's prideful guile!

The draw of Satan to adhere to such traditions and practices is made evident by the multitudes that have followed such foolishness blindly and without question. Even the Reformers (Martin Luther, Theodore Beza, John Calvin, Berengarius, Peter Waldo) many times failed to completely separate themselves from Roman Catholic doctrine; thus they remained adherent to certain traditions which have no Biblical merit. The Reformers were brave in their emphatic endeavors of teaching salvation by grace through faith, for they realized the total depravity which exists within human (carnal) endeavor regarding salvation. This is not saying that all humans are totally depraved within their demeanor, but rather we all are depraved within our sinful nature as all have sinned and fallen short of God's glory.²⁰³⁴ The Reformers understood that God's grace was necessary to redeem fallen man; this completely opposed by the Roman Catholic leadership, who believe (even to this day) that man was only weakened by sin and thus can work to be uplifted from it (salvation by works). When the Reformers carried forward traditions of rote which were started by the Roman Catholic Church, they maintained and taught acts of continued harlotry and deception; for they had failed to completely separate themselves from the teachings of the Mother of harlots. These failings can be witnessed in the celebrations of water baptism, Christmas, Easter, Lent, and assorted sacraments, as millions of individuals follow these traditions as by ritual and rote; never having actually sought nor gained knowledge as to the basis of pagan ritual from whence they came. This is the essence of bondage within perpetual perpetrated deception (insidious religion)! God cannot and will not bless anything or anyone which/who intentionally wanders in darkness and deception and remains there foundational to complacency, for He is the Lord God of light and truth whose absolute holiness forbids it! God cannot (impossibility) change His nature for anything or anyone; thus it is our responsibility to be transformed by the renewing of our minds, and walk accordingly by the strength and leadership of the Lord!²⁰³⁵

²⁰³⁴ Romans 3:21-31.

²⁰³⁵ Romans 12:1-3; Ephesians 1:13-23; 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:1-26.

TRANSUBSTANTIATION / CONSUBSTANTIATION

The Catholic religion teaches that at the time of the Eucharist (the Mass), the elements of the bread and wine become the actual body and blood of Jesus during communion (Transubstantiation - change of substance).

The Creed of Pope Pius IV stated: “I profess that in the Mass is offered to God a true, proper, and propitiatory sacrifice for the living and the dead; . . . there is truly, really, and substantially, the body and blood, together with the soul and divinity, of our Lord Jesus Christ; and that there is a conversion of the whole substance of the bread into the body, and of the whole substance of the wine into the blood.”²⁰³⁶

John O’Brien, a Roman Catholic, has stated, “The Mass with its colorful vestments and vivid ceremonies is a dramatic re-enactment in an un-bloody manner of the sacrifice of Christ on Calvary.”²⁰³⁷

Martin Luther not in agreement, used the term—Consubstantiation. Luther did agree that Jesus body and blood were actually present during communion, yet believed that the bread and wine remained such. Luther used words such as “in, with, and under” to explain the presence of the body and blood of Jesus in the celebration. Luther insisted that by participation in the sacrament, individuals receive forgiveness of sin and confirmation of faith. Luther failed to realize that communion (Lord’s Supper) is an act of remembrance; for to truly love Jesus is to remember His tremendous atoning sacrifice for us, until He one day returns.²⁰³⁸

Luther, Calvin and others of the Reformation period, failed to understand the simplicity of what the Gospel says; this due the way in which holding to prior religious teachings, when not completely rejected, maintains a form of philosophical bondage upon individuals which hinders future investigation and beliefs! God’s grace is the free unmerited favor of God; therefore it cannot be earned, bestowed nor merited in any way.

²⁰³⁶ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism* (Philadelphia: Presbyterian and Reformed, 1965), pp. 168-69.

²⁰³⁷ Loraine Boettner, *Roman Catholicism*, p. 114.

²⁰³⁸ 1 Corinthians 11:17-34, specific vs. 24-26.

Worship as taught by the Roman Catholic Church teaches that God's grace is given and received by physical acts of worship (sacraments); therefore according to Catholic teachings, these acts are necessary to receive grace. This is not at all correct according to the Gospel; for if grace can be earned, or deservedly bestowed, then it is no longer grace!²⁰³⁹ Many doctrines such as this passed down by the Roman Catholic Church were carried forward by the Reformers in altered forms; having been continued by many denominations even to this day; thus the harlotry continues, for hearts are led away from simplicity of devotion to Christ as by ritualistic rote which is continued with neither actual knowledge nor devotional faith! Physical realm mimics which attempt emulation of faith (which is spiritual), are in actualities attempts to worship God in the flesh (carnality); for as flesh and Spirit are opposed to one another, attempts by opposition are in fact worship attempts which are opposed to God and the standards of worship He has set forth!²⁰⁴⁰ Our bodies are to be presented to God as living and holy sacrifices, which is our spiritual service of worship; without denial of "self" the flesh (sinful nature) is not crucified, therefore no sacrifice is rendered unto God; which denies all potential for spiritual: edification, training, and growth.²⁰⁴¹ When we attempt to worship God by opposition, can this truly be considered an act of devotional love; or are we insistent upon doing as we please, while deluding ourselves to believe self-centered behavior can please God?²⁰⁴² True sincere devotional love for God has the manifestation in reality that we humbly submit to follow the Lord (spiritually); carnal love for God has no manifestations in reality beyond the flesh, which cannot please God! Disciplined devotion and submission unto the Lord evinces sincerity and love; what does carnal worship and self-centeredness evince?

**PERSONAL NOTES REGARDING CATHOLICISM
AND RELIGIOSITY:**

The simple reality exists that Catholicism has nothing whatsoever to do with the God of the Bible; as it is the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion which worships "Ishtar," the "queen of

²⁰³⁹ Romans 11:1-6.

²⁰⁴⁰ Galatians 5:17-26; John 4:20-24.

²⁰⁴¹ Romans 12:1-3; Romans 6:1-14; Galatians 2:15-3:9; 6:6-10.

²⁰⁴² Colossians 2:8-17; James 1:16-25; 2:18-26.

heaven”; which was always condemned in the Gospel!²⁰⁴³ The Babylonian Mysteries Religion has been the primary religion utilized by Satan throughout history, to lead those who seek after God astray of the truth; this reality continues even to this day! The harsh animosity between Islam and actual Christianity was instigated and influenced by Roman Catholicism throughout the generations; for Catholicism was proclaimed as the “Christian Church” since the fourth century A.D., and this because it was tolerated unto full acceptance of it! The God of the Bible is simply utilized as an excuse within Catholicism, for attachment to Christianity, to lead multitudes astray of the truth; thus away from the one true God and Savior of the Bible from whom comes salvation! This is in essence the influenced deceptive coercion of Satan; for his servants both deceive and remain deceived, many by choice!²⁰⁴⁴ Each and every aspect of Catholic doctrine and ritualistic worship violates Biblical standards for the Body of Christ; thus Catholicism is not “Christian” (Christ-like) in the least! If individuals within this pagan form of religion actually studied the Bible, they would realize that they and the religion itself are all held captive by Satan to do his will (being deceived and deceiving others)!²⁰⁴⁵

Although it is true that I absolutely abhor the deceptive Catholic religion, I yet love everyone held captive by its deceptive doctrines and ritualistic worship practices; for being concerned for the salvation of all human beings (mind of Christ), the sheer numbers of the plethora of individuals who will remain eternally separated from God (condemned) because of this insidious religion is extremely disheartening!²⁰⁴⁶ The fact of Satan’s influence (leadership) in Catholicism is proven by the fact of how multitudes of Catholics argue adamantly against the truth; in defense of their religion (ignorantly); for this directly evidences the power of deception which Satan holds over them! The cowardice of many scholars, who have understanding of the reality of Catholicism, is proven, as they will not proclaim the truth regarding Catholicism; this proving that “personal comfort and safety” is more important to oneself within multitudes, than the salvation of others! I agree with the summation by the Apostle John, when considering the blatant meanness

²⁰⁴³ Jeremiah 7:18, 19; 44:16-29.

²⁰⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

²⁰⁴⁵ 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

²⁰⁴⁶ Revelation 2:20-23.

and deceptions of carnal religiosity, cowardice, and selfish human ambition; for the conclusion is this—“Amen Come, Lord Jesus!”²⁰⁴⁷

Having continued to proclaim the truth to Catholics to whom I have come in contact; a few received and thereby came to knowledge of the Biblical truth, whereas the greater numbers never did. Please understand, when reaching out to those held captive by Satan to believe falsehoods (blatant religious deceptions), conversations were forthcoming in love (on my part); although many of them have hated me hence that time! Although we must respect people’s decisions regarding religions they have and/or continue to follow; only those who are selfish would deter from speaking the truth; and this seeking personal comfort, by avoidance of the persecution which comes forth when the truth is proclaimed (the truth hurts)!²⁰⁴⁸ If and when we refuse to speak the Gospel truth in love, we in fact turn against Christ (Jesus); for proclamation of Gospel truth is proclamation of the “reality of God!”²⁰⁴⁹

Those who are truly loving study the Gospel diligently, so as to speak the necessary Gospel truth; whereas those who remain abounding with “self” deny the truth for the sake of personal comfort, affectation, duplicity, and ostentation! Multitudes may say that it is not our place to offend, yet it is the truth that offends those held captive; yet which is worse, the offence brought forth by Gospel truth which can bring forth the potential for freedom in Christ, or an eternity of regret and suffering in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (hell)! A true and realistic relationship with God is all about God primarily, and secondly about the salvation of all others; it is for this reason that we must proclaim the Gospel truth in love! Anyone who has never had actual intimate fellowship with the Lord will deny the aforementioned factors; for without the reality of God’s indwelling, only selfish religious deceptions, laziness, assumption, conjecture, and concept remains!

It is an unfortunate fact that multitudes of individuals will put forth great effort regarding aspects of life in corporeal form, such as: “self,” finances, credit scores, employment, enjoyment, careers, games, fantasy, vacations, sports, family, relatives, friends, material objects, retirement, etc.; yet put forth very little effort to investigate the religion or belief

²⁰⁴⁷ Revelation 22:21.

²⁰⁴⁸ 1 John 4:1-6; Romans 8:1-21; Ephesians 4:4-32; James 5:19, 20; 1 Peter 4:8-19.

²⁰⁴⁹ Matthew 12:30; Luke 12:8, 9.

system which they adhere to or follow. Within the Gospel, many warnings are rendered as to false teachers and teachings, and the many ways in which individuals can be led astray from simplicity of devotion, and proper righteous worship. Because the only way to joyful eternal life with the Lord God is from within the spiritual relational reality, it seems that one's relationship with the Lord should be of the highest priority and effort in an individual's life; yet within religion, and even with many within the spiritual relational reality which is foundational to the reality of God, most individuals put forth the least effort and motivation. This is due to the difficulty within the transition between the physical and spiritual realms, especially when the reality of the Gospel truth and the work of God have been bypassed (rejected) through fleshly attempts (religiosity; intellectual prowess) to achieve a relationship with God! The primary reason for this is because of foolish stubborn and rebellious pride, which obscures any spiritual reality; this due primarily because the imperative regarding "denial of self" is also rejected as not necessary! Because foolish adolescent pride is the primary defense mechanism which seeks to protect human insecurities and because the imperatives from God are denied and/or rejected; a stalemate exists, as God cannot work when He is denied and/or rejected! When the Gospel is adhered to by seeking of the truth, and submitting to by following the Biblical standards and guidelines pertaining to the reality of the Christ (Jesus), God can begin and continue the good work of which He alone is capable, un-hindered by fleshly indulgences within religious endeavor.

A primary basis, by which Catholicism and the many denominations within the Christian religion are exactly alike, is that they all deny the reality of God and the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) within habitual denial of Biblical truth which is imperative for salvation.²⁰⁵⁰ Catholicism is designed (according to Satan's deceitful scheming) to keep individuals from coming to the reality of the Christ by placing the Christ (Jesus) subordinate to Mary within the salvation process; this by denying the deity of Jesus, by comparison with the supposed authority of corporeal human leadership, although the former is of Spirit and the latter of the flesh; the two being in opposition one to the other, this by both Spirit / flesh and truth / deception, respectively!²⁰⁵¹ Just as Catholic

²⁰⁵⁰ John 12:46-50; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

²⁰⁵¹ Galatians 1:6-9; 5:16-25, specific vs. 16, 17.

leadership proclaims Mary to hold authority in the heavens (although not), the leadership believes themselves to hold authority in the heavens; although their beliefs and proclamations are of blatant deceptions: Pontiff, Holy See, Vicar of Christ; ability to forgive sins, infallibility! Just as the reality of God is denied within Catholicism leading to a blatant denial of the Christ as aforementioned, so also is the reality of God denied within the denominations of the Christian religion, as the primary pulpit proclamation is to accept Jesus as Savior for salvation (simple speaking of words); although within this falsehood the reality of God's divine work (preparing, drawing, and teaching) is rejected, by the reality that He is completely bypassed within the false proclamations, and the actions which follow! God is almighty, Jesus holds full authority; thus no one comes to the reality of the Christ and salvation, unless drawn by God's powerful divine work, with fulfillment by the authority of the King unto righteous fruition!²⁰⁵² Although this is the Biblical fact; Catholic leadership believes they hold the power and authority of salvation; while the Christian religion denominations believe they can achieve salvation aloof the reality of God's powerful divine work (which is the "power" of Christianity)!²⁰⁵³ Within these completely unrighteous and religious behaviors and practices, the aforementioned (Catholicism / Christian religious denominations) believe themselves to be greater than God; for by their actions they do as they please, belief as they choose, and continue practices which are neither Biblical nor righteous; for being aloof the reality of God and the "reality of the Christ," they yet continue to seek God through carnal endeavor; although in two completely separate realms (physical / Spirit)! The reality of God and the reality of the Christ can never be understood in the flesh; therefore, those who continue to seek Jesus in the flesh will never come to the spiritual relational reality, as the veil of obscurity remains; for the veil is removed within the relationship, and the relationship is started and carried forth by the divine work of God, with fulfillment by the sacrifice and authority of the Lord Jesus Christ unto eternal fruition!²⁰⁵⁴ Everything which is done within the religiosity of both Catholicism and Christian religion denominations is according to Satan's schemes

²⁰⁵² John 6:44, 45; 14:6, 7; cf. Jeremiah 31:3; Ephesians 2:13-22.

²⁰⁵³ 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

²⁰⁵⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:1-18, specific vs. 5-18.

to stay individuals from any spiritual reality; for a spiritual reality is contrary to the ritualistic practices of Catholicism, and the traditions and doctrinal practices of rote which are flagrant within both (Catholicism / Christian religion); for “practicing” religion foundational to the flesh is “practice” of darkness, which is absolutely contrary to the light of truth, worshipping God in spirit and in truth, and the kind intention of God’s will which leads individuals unto the spiritual reality away from the ways of the flesh and elemental principles of the world!²⁰⁵⁵ With the multitudes held captive to “practice” that which is of the flesh and world, and in doing so “practicing” lawlessness, the reality of God is rejected and outright denied; for legitimate children of God cannot “practice” sin, as sin is lawlessness!²⁰⁵⁶ The Levitical Law set forth by God pointed directly to the coming Messiah (Christ), for it was a “tutor” which taught the imperative of faith-based acceptance of the Christ (Messiah); which upon acceptance of the truth regarding the glory of Christ (reality of the Christ), all use of “religion” became irrelevant and futile, as after actual acceptance of the glory of Christ by faith the Law was fully realized and established within the few (remnant) who submitted to the “reality of God’s divine work, and followed Him upon the narrow path of His righteousness!”²⁰⁵⁷ These facts are contrary to the carnality of religiosity and seeking God through the flesh, with but a concept of faith; yet those who seek comfort and ease within the flesh as by adherence and acceptance of the ways of the world, reject the spiritual reality for the sake of continued carnality which rejects all that is of the kind intention of God’s will!²⁰⁵⁸ The Biblical fact remains that those who are led by God away from the flesh and ways of the world unto the spiritual reality are His legitimate children; whereas those who remain fleshly and earthy, having rejected the imperative reality of God’s divine spiritual work, remain solely of the flesh, with only assumption and conjecture of actual spirituality, and this because of blatant disobedience regarding the Biblical standards set forth by God!²⁰⁵⁹ Although multitudes claim to know and love God; the reality remains

²⁰⁵⁵ Galatians 4:3-11; Colossians 2:8-10, 20-23; Hebrews 5:12-6:6.

²⁰⁵⁶ 1 John 1:5-10; 3:4-24.

²⁰⁵⁷ Galatians 3:19-29; Matthew 7:13-27.

²⁰⁵⁸ Ephesians 1:3-23.

²⁰⁵⁹ John 12:46-50; Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14; 12:1-21 ; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 3:1-23; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Hebrews 5:8-10; 12:1-11.

that without diligent seeking of truth, and humble acquiescence unto the authority of God in the light of truth, no spiritual reality will come forth; for the “spiritual relational reality” is solely by God’s divine work, which when denied or rejected rebels against righteous adoption as God’s legitimate children! We are truly known by our fruits and motives; not by our delusional and deluded words and beliefs! Being a legitimate child of God is proven in reality by the divine work of the indwelling Holy Spirit; can this reality be witnessed amongst the many?! Is the Bible just a gathering of words and emphases, or is the implanted Gospel truth a reality; the former is the only evidenced truth regarding multitudes, whereas the latter is the evidenced truth of God’s divine work within the remnant; for the former continue to live for the flesh, whereas the latter having denied the flesh (“self”) live for God!²⁰⁶⁰ As God will assuredly be “all in all”; the remnant humbly submits unto the Lord for this reality to be manifested by His divine work even now while in our corporeal bodies; for this is God’s purpose for us according to the kind intention of His good, acceptable and perfect will, as He renders “spiritual growth” preparing us for the eternal reality!²⁰⁶¹

The literal truth remains that God is the One who takes us beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality, yet His divine and gracious work is terribly hindered whenever an individual continues or returns to living in and for the flesh! Eternity is a very long time to regret being foolish in one’s endeavors pertaining to a relationship with the Lord; especially when intentional ignorance was the one factor of which many individuals put forth the greatest effort! There really is no excuse for this to be occurring in the lives of multitudes; yet the individual is always culpable in the matter, as God in the Gospel rendered the righteous standards (mandates) which lead to success! In the Gospel the Lord God revealed Himself, and rendered by inspiration true factors of His lovingkindness and grace, in addition to the immensity of who He is in reality; yet how many individuals have read and believed the experiences of mention in the Gospel, so as to truly and devotionally submit unto the one true God of all creation!

Actual intimate fellowship with God is absolutely true, correct, and real! It is absolutely true that within intimate fellowship with the Lord,

²⁰⁶⁰ James 1:1-5:20; Hebrews 4:1-16.

²⁰⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 15:20-34; reiterated—Ephesians 1:3-23.

He personally teaches, nurtures, guides, and reveals the spiritual reality pertaining to all things both now, and future tense!²⁰⁶² The spiritual growth which is from God alone comes only during times of intimate fellowship with Him, which never occurs while any aspect of the flesh is involved; for nothing of our flesh can enter into the presence of God; which is why Satan instigates physical realm religion, for within religion only a concept of the spiritual reality can exist; as God is not allowed to carry us forth unto spiritual fulfillment, success, and victory! Denial of “self” is of the highest priority for this reality to begin and continue unto spiritual maturity; yet I must praise God that individuals can yet be saved, even though they have no intention beyond the initial spiritual experience of submitting for God’s “drawing” process; which does not happen unless the Biblical standards are followed unto acquiescence to the Lord!²⁰⁶³ When individuals are prepared and drawn by God unto adoption into the spiritual relational reality which saves us, due to God’s divine work, the individual experiences complete selflessness and humility during the righteous confession of faith, which occurs within an enlightened taste of the heavenly gift (actual fellowship with God), leading to submission; this then allows also the motivation which comes from the spiritual experience, so that the reality being realized may lead to further spiritual endeavors! The salvation of human beings is fulfillment of God’s righteousness within the kind intention of His good, acceptable and perfect will; for this reason our salvation is according to His righteous instruction and standards! This is the reason that the Biblical confession of faith unto salvation is “Jesus as Lord” (Romans 10:8-10); for this confession selflessly and humbly acknowledges, accepts, and submits to the divine spiritual nature and authority of God!

The reason futile “religion” is so abounding upon the earth, and has been throughout history (except the Mosaic and Levitical Laws which were from God), is because we as human beings want everything according to the instigations and influences of our flesh; which unfortunately is easily coerced from the demonic realm. The Lord desires to be our God, and have us as His legitimate children; because this is the truth of the spiritual relational reality, it is our responsibility to submit unto the standards of the Lord; for without this submission we

²⁰⁶² 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 1 John 1:1-10; Hebrews 5:8-10.

²⁰⁶³ Romans 10:8-10; John 1:12, 13; 6:44-65; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-10.

never actually go beyond to submit unto the Lord (in reality)! Our salvation is the ultimate blessing of our submission, acceptance and obedience regarding the Lord; and this because of who He is and the work of which He alone is capable; not because of who we are in and of ourselves! We are blessed with salvation as the result of seeking the truth and receiving knowledge of it from the Lord, who is the reality of pure truth and light; thus our salvation is contingent upon the relationship of the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ)!²⁰⁶⁴ Our salvation is not contingent upon seeking eternal salvation in our flesh, by holding to but a concept of the reality of the Christ; which is the foundational basis of all religions which claim Jesus simply as Savior! This matter is discussed in detail in chapter eleven.

Jehovah's Witnesses

Jehovah's Witnesses are shunned by most believers. Jehovah's Witnesses separate themselves from the inappropriate traditions (of darkness) passed down by Roman Catholicism, more so than multitudes claiming Christianity (the Christian religion). It is quite pathetic that those who practice traditions of darkness by rote render criticism toward those who refuse to do the same (rightfully so)! The three mistakes by the Jehovah's Witnesses are: they deny the deity of Christ (spiritually fatal doctrine as proclaimed by Arius who so endeavored to prove Christ's humanity that he denied Christ's deity) (Unitarianism—placing opinion of deity solely upon the Father);²⁰⁶⁵ they have altered their Bible (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures), to suit this doctrine; they hold to aspects of Jewish law regarding blood, and utilize the Gospel to deny lifesaving blood transfusions, although far reaching from the Biblical context regarding the eating of blood, due respect for the life of animals which were shed for sustenance and atonement.²⁰⁶⁶

Regarding Jesus Christ, the Jehovah's Witnesses believe that Jesus is the Messiah, yet they believe also that He was the first created being; from whom then all other creation came into existence. They have failed to realize that Jesus created all things, and as nothing came into existence

²⁰⁶⁴ John 1:1-11; 14:5-11; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; Hebrews 5:8-10.

²⁰⁶⁵ Revelation 1:17, 18; 22:12, 13; cf. Isaiah 41:4; 46:9, 10.

²⁰⁶⁶ Genesis 9:3, 4; Leviticus 17:10-14; Deuteronomy 12:16-28.

which He did not create; He could not have created Himself, for God is without beginning or end (Alpha and Omega).²⁰⁶⁷ The Scripture verse which the Witnesses have failed to understand is:

Colossians 1:15, 16: And He is the image of the invisible God, the first-born of all creation. For by Him all things were created, both in the heavens and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or rulers or authorities—all things have been created by Him and for Him.

The failure by the Witnesses to understand the Colossians passages, is derived from failure to take the passages in context with verses 17-20, then aligning these passages with other passages which confirm that Jesus is the firstborn of all creation regarding—“resurrection”; not of creation itself!²⁰⁶⁸ These passages also illustrate Jesus’ having all the rights belonging to the firstborn, thus He is truly the One who is heir of all things.²⁰⁶⁹ The Witnesses fail to realize the preexistence of Christ; for they do not align the Scriptures which emphasize the fact! Examples: John the Baptist was six months older than Jesus (God incarnate), yet proclaimed that Jesus was before him;²⁰⁷⁰ Jesus was not only with God in the beginning, He was God;²⁰⁷¹ Jesus existed in the form of God, which never changed, although He humbled Himself for the sake of those created in His image;²⁰⁷² Jesus predated the world itself, and Abraham—the human patriarch of all believers.²⁰⁷³

In addition to not realizing the immortality of Christ, the Witnesses deny His deity; for to realize the one is to understand and acknowledge the other.²⁰⁷⁴ As man was made in the image of God (spiritually), so also God took the image of man so as to redeem humankind from sin.²⁰⁷⁵ Jesus had two distinct natures; one divine and one of man (by choice).²⁰⁷⁶

²⁰⁶⁷ John 1:1-3; 1 John 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-23; Revelation 1:4-8; 21:3-7; 22:10-17; I am—Exodus 3:14; John 8:58.

²⁰⁶⁸ Revelation 1:4-6; 1 Corinthians 15:21, 22; Philippians 3:8-11.

²⁰⁶⁹ Hebrews 1:1-14.

²⁰⁷⁰ Luke 1:35-37; John 1:15-18, 27-30.

²⁰⁷¹ John 1:1, 2.

²⁰⁷² Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 1:17-21.

²⁰⁷³ John 8:54-58, specific v. 58; 17:1-26, specific—5, 23, 24; Galatians 3:22-29.

²⁰⁷⁴ 1 John 1:1-4.

²⁰⁷⁵ Genesis 1:26, 27; cf. John 1:18; 4:24; 5:37; 1 John 4:12.

²⁰⁷⁶ Philippians 2:5-11; cf. Hebrews 4:14-16.

Just because we cannot fully understand the immensity of the Lord Jesus Christ in His two natures; each in its integrity and completeness; we have no right to deny either. When the Lord said that His ways were far above ours, this demonstrates that we cannot while on this earth fully understand God, therefore we trust in Him and worship Him in spirit and in truth by faith, while understanding He has many attributes and righteous capabilities. We do not attempt to fully understand or explain Him as a basis to believe; for He (infinite Creator) is not understandable by mortal men and women (finite creatures).²⁰⁷⁷ It must be understood that the confession unto salvation is—“Jesus as Lord!”²⁰⁷⁸ The teaching to deny the reality of the Christ (Lord—*kurios*; full authority of God; and Savior) is an eternally fatal mistake; for actual knowledge from God must precede the confession, and the Jehovah’s witnesses deny this reality, which denies the “reality of God!”²⁰⁷⁹ Proclaiming “Jesus as Lord” in ignorance is completely futile and un-righteous; yet the Jehovah’s Witnesses are not alone in this spiritually destitute error, as multitudes within the Christian religion (who criticize the Witnesses) have and continue to do the same (Lord—Hebrew = *yhvh*; Greek = *kurios*)!

The Witnesses say: the Father (Jehovah; *yhvh*—Yahweh) is God, Jesus is the firstborn of creation (literally), and the Holy Spirit is the power by which God performs His tasks. According to the Witness Bible—the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures, reference is made of the Holy Spirit as “it.” This reference to the Holy Spirit makes no sense, by such verses in their Bible as:

1 Corinthians 12:4-7, 11: Now there are varieties of gifts, but there is the same Spirit; and there are varieties of ministries, and yet there is the same Lord; and there are varieties of operations, and yet it is the same God who performs all the operations in all persons. But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for a beneficial purpose...But all these operations the one and the same Spirit performs, making a distribution to each one respectively just as it wills.

²⁰⁷⁷ Isaiah 55:1-13, specific vs. 8, 9.

²⁰⁷⁸ Romans 10:8-10.

²⁰⁷⁹ John 1:1-5; 6:44-65, emphasis vs. 44, 45; 14:1-11; cf. “I am”—Exodus 3:14; John 8:57, 58.

Please note the last word in the Scripture verses—“wills.” How can a power or instrument that performs “will” for something to happen? Does it not take intelligence of person and volition of choice to “will” for something? By their changing the words of Scripture to fit their philosophy that the Holy Spirit is simply the power of God by which He carries out tasks, they fail to realize that the Holy Spirit “wills” because He is God; just as also the Father and Son, which is emphasized in verses 4-7 as He is described as Spirit, Lord, and God! When Arius could not explain the immensity of God, he (Arius) denied the deity of Christ and the Holy Spirit; which is the same human intellectual foolishness which is yet followed by the Jehovah’s Witnesses. This is based upon the philosophy of **Sic et Non** (yes or no) (Abaelard)—I believe that which I may understand.

The current-day followers of the teachings of Arius; the Jehovah’s Witnesses; were founded by Charles Taze Russell (A.D. 1851-1916). Mr. Russell stated that it would be far better to listen to his teachings and comments about the Bible, and leave the Bible unread, then to read the Bible and not pay heed to his (Russell’s) comments. Does this seem like the behavior of someone who wants his followers to understand the Scriptures, or does this seem the behavior of someone who claims to care about his followers; although not? The first step to leading others astray is to convince them not to read the Bible! Anyone who would tell us to trust them and not read the Bible, have obvious selfish motives; thus the only proper course of action is to walk away and pray for them!

Personal Note: Failure to realize the Gospel truth due to failure to accurately handle (Greek—*orthotomew*; to cut straight) the Scriptures, emphasizes the necessity of appropriate diligent study so as not to make mistakes which lead to continued mistakes and false beliefs. Throughout the book (Big If), I have listed thousands of Scriptures, to demonstrate how to put the different Scriptures together (appropriately in context); this to demonstrate and instruct what the specific—accurately handle the word of truth (2 Timothy 2:15) actually means, and how to accomplish the task. Many have stated that the Gospel has contradictions, yet this is not correct when the Gospel is properly aligned (cut straight); therefore, diligent study is required in order to place the specifics together so as to witness (evidence) the reality of the Gospel, by proper division and alignment of specifics which comprise the overall truth of

the combined specifics which were “cut straight”! When we remain diligent to study the Scriptures, God becomes involved and shows us the reality behind the words; which is the actual—“Gospel truth”! If we enter into study with preconceived notions as to what we want to believe, or only study the Scriptures which are emotionally uplifting, we deny the Gospel reality for the sake of our flesh; therefore, God will not involve Himself in the endeavors, for by our own actions and motives we seek to deny the overall reality and thus place ourselves in a position to be deluded, delusional, or both! Anyone who truly loves the Lord must diligently study the Gospel without personal motive or ambition foundational to the flesh; for the flesh must remain external of spiritual endeavors, especially when the Scriptures must be spiritually appraised and discerned (New Testament); for God must be allowed access as He is the only actual teacher regarding spiritual matters.²⁰⁸⁰ Although the Old Testament can be studied by intellectual endeavor, as the history rendered is not spiritually appraised, although we believe the history by faith; the New Testament having necessity of spiritual appraisal and discernment can never be reasoned by intellectual endeavor or prowess, or the best that can be accomplished is simple understanding of the words, which remains devoid of actual knowledge!²⁰⁸¹ I truly hope that accurately handling the Scriptures by illustration and demonstration will assist with seeking God’s involvement not only within diligent study, but also with living life as an instrument and witness of God by His masterful involvement and leadership! By having discussions with the Jehovah’s Witnesses who have come to my door, and by aligning the Gospel appropriately, some (not all) of the witnesses who came to my door (over the years) were shown the Gospel reality by example (proper alignment; cut straight), and a few allowed freedom (*if* the Lord permits) from the misgivings of the religion they professed! Having come to my door with religion; some left with Gospel truth, having received loving prayer prior to their departure!²⁰⁸² With this having happened on a few occasions, most congregational Witnesses have been told to avoid my residence; for some of their leaders brought a group with them, and were incapable

²⁰⁸⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

²⁰⁸¹ 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

²⁰⁸² 2 Timothy 2:20-26.

of accomplishing their task, by my (with God's guidance and embrace) presenting the Gospel in context, with conformation of the Scriptures by additional Scriptures which were integral parts of the presented truth! Upon departure of the group, two of the witnesses stayed behind to receive instruction; this leading to their edification in truth and freedom from religious jargon, and my being shunned by the leadership. The Gospel truth can in fact make us free from the deceptions of religion, *if* and when the truth is sought; this proven by the two who devotionally desired to know the Lord God of truth and light, who were seeking Him through religion rather than relationally! Praise God for His deliverance of them! FYI—I have read the New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures (Jehovah's Witness Bible), so as to have the understanding necessary to compare and contradict the Biblical changes which were made by Charles Taze Russell; for loving the Lord, we must do all we can for presentation of truth, as we (like our Lord) seek that none should perish, but rather come to knowledge of the truth! Prior to all endeavors prayer is of necessity, for the Lord makes individuals free by the righteous guidance and strength of the living and active nature of the Gospel; they are not set free by our well contrived words!²⁰⁸³ Out of devotional love for the Lord, it is appropriate to familiarize ourselves with the foundations of other people's religious beliefs; for we cannot have informed conversations in ignorance!

144,000

The Jehovah's Witnesses believe that they are the 144,000 who will reign with Christ in the millennial kingdom.²⁰⁸⁴ This belief raises much doubt as to their philosophies, for the Scriptures makes it plainly clear that the 144,000 will be 12,000 righteous individuals from each of the twelve tribes of Israel.²⁰⁸⁵

Although many have said that the 144,000 must be considered symbolically, as many state that the entire book of Revelation must be taken symbolically (metaphorically), the truth remains that the warning in Revelation not to add nor take away indicates that it must be taken literally; for anyone can add to and take away from a metaphor!²⁰⁸⁶

²⁰⁸³ exemplified—Luke 21:13-15; Titus 1:7-9.

²⁰⁸⁴ Revelation 14:1-5.

²⁰⁸⁵ Revelation 7:1-8; cf. 14:4, 5.

²⁰⁸⁶ Revelation 1:1-3; 22:18-20.

The tribulation period found within the book of Revelation, will be a period of torment as never before known by humankind.²⁰⁸⁷ This will be a period of judgment upon the sinfulness of humans, and judgment upon the world due the flagrant unrighteousness which will be profound upon the earth during the end times. All non-believers who accept the “mark of the beast” will come under judgment for not having accepted the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ), and this during the “bowl judgments”; yet *if* anyone should have known Him at His first coming, it was the Jews, thus it is for this reason that the Israelites are specifics of mention in many cases within prophetic Scripture. Because of denial of God’s chosen One (Jesus) and increased lawlessness, the inhabitants of the world will be forced to endure the time of Jacob’s distress, yet many will survive and come to believe according to God’s merciful intervention.²⁰⁸⁸ The 144,000 will be divinely protected by God so as not to be eradicated, as these (144,000) will be the first fruits of the renewed nation of Israel entering into the millennial kingdom; during which time Christ will literally reign from the area of Jerusalem (Zion).

Because we are saved by grace through faith, and all who submit (truly and sincerely) to God’s divine work and faithfulness for their salvation will be saved, why so much commotion with the Witnesses in their endeavors to insist they are the 144,000?! Could it be that they believe that only the 144,000 will be saved? Could it be that as the 144,000 will reign with Christ during His millennial reign, they are seeking some form of authority and exaltation above that of God’s chosen (Israelites)? With the aforementioned attitude and teachings of Charles Taze Russell, it really is hard to understand exactly what they think or hope for; as the tangents taken by the Witnesses do not test according to the Gospel truth, which is why it was rewritten to suit Russell’s doctrinal beliefs (New World Translation of the Holy Scriptures).

Although the Jehovah’s Witnesses instruct and proclaim an eternally fatal flaw which denies Jesus` deity, they yet do not participate in the religious delusive traditions of the Christian religion, for which they are shunned and rejected. Inasmuch as no one claiming to love the Lord should ever practice religion which holds to forms of deception, as this

²⁰⁸⁷ Matthew 24:4-25:46.

²⁰⁸⁸ Jeremiah 30:1-31:40; Zechariah 14:1-21.

is the work of the Great Deceiver (Satan), there is no righteous reason to reject the individuals held captive to a eternally fatal flaw, when those who criticize generally practice religious deception; rather by ignorance or intentionally makes no difference; as God is worshipped in spirit and in truth or He is not appropriately (righteously) worshipped at all! Having spoken to a plethora of individuals asking them what their confession unto salvation was, I have evidenced little difference between the Jehovah's Witnesses and most others who claim to know the Lord. In the majority of Christian religion churches it is stated that acceptance of Jesus as Savior is sufficient for salvation, yet this is not Biblically correct; for the confession unto salvation is—"Jesus as Lord!"²⁰⁸⁹ The difference between the Witnesses and most Christians is that the Witnesses cannot proclaim Jesus as Lord while they deny His deity, for the fact that Jesus is Lord specifies His deity (Lord; Greek—*Kurios*), specifically—the Master who has full authority (God); whereas, most Christians proclaim Jesus as Savior which violates the Gospel specific regarding the righteous confession of faith! Everyone must awaken from their spiritual slumber and test themselves by Biblical standards to see if they are actually in the faith; for criticisms are not beneficial to anyone, when multitudes remain ignorant in their beliefs in one form or another!

Note of interest regarding Charles Taze Russell: Mr. Russell's initial rejection of orthodox Protestant teachings, led to his founding the International Bible Students Association; which later became known as the Jehovah's Witnesses. In 1872, Mr. Russell proclaimed that Jesus would return invisibly in 1874, and that the world would end in 1914. Due the fact that these prophecies by Mr. Russell never occurred, and the fact that a true prophet of God can never prophesy wrongly, the reality evidences Mr. Russell to be a false prophet; therefore he should have been rejected as such, and his teachings denied! Mr. Russell's initial congregations were referred to as Russellites, which emphasizes a form of focused idolatry; from which arose the International Bible Students Association. Overall, the teaching of Charles Taze Russell makes little sense when the focus foundation was upon an individual who placed lesser emphasis upon the reading of the Gospel, than upon adherence to his teachings!

²⁰⁸⁹ Romans 10:8-10.

THE LAKE OF FIRE AND BRIMSTONE

The Jehovah's Witnesses are annihilationist in philosophy; for they do not believe in the eternity of hell. The Witnesses believe that all non-believers (non-Witnesses) will someday be un-created by God (annihilated); and by this there will not be a state of eternal torment and separation from God, for those who have failed to sincerely and devotionally trust in Him for their salvation. This is refuted by such Scriptures as Matthew 7:21-23; 25:32-46; Revelation 14:9-13. The same word (Greek - aiwnios) for the eternity of heaven is the same word for the eternity of hell; therefore it is foolishness to believe in one without the other!²⁰⁹⁰

Mormons

Mormonism is another false religion which claims to worship Jesus Christ. Mormonism teaches that Jesus and Satan are brothers. How can the Creator of all things (Jesus), be the sibling of one of His creations (Satan)?²⁰⁹¹ This makes no sense whatsoever! To believe that righteousness and evil are related is absurd! Mormonism also teaches that human beings can become gods through marriage; then they will be a god of their own planet as they claim the one true God is. Once again human-kind's desire to become godlike, falsely attaches the name of Jesus. What lord is worshipped within Mormonism? *If* it is true that Joseph Smith (prophet?) was given further prophesy which was quoted and abridged by a prophet and historian named Mormon, who passed this prophesy to his son Moroni (a supposed glorified being), who passed the furthered prophesy to Joseph Smith on September 21, 1823; then what type of prophet was Mormon? Hint—false prophet. What type of glorified being (angel) was Moroni if he passed furthered prophesy contrary to the Bible? Hint—fallen angel.²⁰⁹²

After Mormon completed his writings, he delivered the account to his son Moroni, who added a few words of his own and hid up the plates in the hill Cumorah. On September 21, 1823, the same Moroni, then a glorified, resurrected being,

²⁰⁹⁰ Matthew 18:7-11; 25:46.

²⁰⁹¹ John 1:1-3; Ezekiel 28:13-15.

²⁰⁹² Hebrews 1:1, 2; Revelation 1:1-3; 22:18, 19.

appeared to the Prophet Joseph Smith and instructed him relative to the ancient record and its destined translation into the English Language. In due course the plates were delivered to Joseph Smith, who translated them by the gift and power of God. The record is now published in many languages as a *new and additional witness* that Jesus Christ is the Son of the living God and that all will come unto him *and obey the laws and ordinances* of his Gospel may be saved²⁰⁹³ (italics added).

Mormonism as well as certain denominations of the Christian religion, have failed to realize that there is no expounded prophecy from that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and there are no works involved in being saved by grace through faith; beyond selfless humility and submission during a righteous confession of faith. Within the Mormon writings aforementioned, please note that obedience to laws and ordinances are necessary in order to be saved; which is not Biblical!²⁰⁹⁴ In times of antiquity God spoke through prophets, yet in these last days has spoken to us through His Son (Hebrews 1:1, 2). To look at Revelation 1:1-2, we note that this is indeed the prophecy of the Lord Jesus Christ; confirming the Hebrews 1:1, 2 passages. The prophecy of the book of Revelation finds fulfillment from the time of its being rendered, through the tribulation period, through the millennial reign of Christ upon the earth, and unto our entrance into eternity with God. The revelation of Jesus is complete in all that He has chosen to reveal to us, therefore there is neither place nor need of furthered prophecy (eschatology) beyond that given us by the Lord. All such endeavors by man are un-biblical, unrighteous and superfluous!

Mormons by their *professions of faith* lay evident their false doctrine as by proclaiming the Book of Mormon to be divinely inspired and as authoritative as the Bible. With the Book of Mormon rendering further eschatology from that of the Lord Jesus Christ, and thereby claiming updated revelation from God, it demonstrates not only a futile knowledge of actual Scripture, but also a dim understanding of the eternal finality of God's plan for His legitimate children.

²⁰⁹³ Translated by Joseph Smith, Jun., The Book of Mormon, The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City, Utah, U.S.A. 1981, p. introduction.

²⁰⁹⁴ Ephesians 2:1-10.

For much of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, many religions and denominations have concluded that Scripture is errant as not revealing God's plan thus far. By their consideration that Scripture is both incomplete and inadequate in accordance to human designation; they have added to and taken away from the Gospel, so as to suit an agenda as set forth in and of the "flesh"; this demonstrating the prideful obstinacy of religious ideology and doctrine. Religious strategy of supposed understanding is never wise, for it opens the door for heresy and apostasy within religion which leads away from God and His plan of redemption; while bringing forth confusion regarding God's yet unrevealed will pertaining to the state of eternity. God's plan is perfect, which is sufficiently evidenced by an in-depth study of the Scriptures as revealed; yet many always attempt insight by: speculation, conjecture and human intellectual reasoning; none of which actually gains understanding or knowledge as to the one true God, or those things yet hidden (secret).²⁰⁹⁵ Faith comes by hearing and studying the word of God; therefore great care must be taken to prevent the wolves from within church organizations (influenced by Satan) from harming the sheep, by the introduction of false teaching and apostate practices.²⁰⁹⁶ Actual faith involves waiting patiently upon the Lord; for He will reveal things at a time of His choosing, including the manifested reality of eternity!²⁰⁹⁷

Mormonism is a works centered religion. Just as they teach that individuals can become gods as through marriage, they also teach that adherence to the Book of Mormon is necessary in order to have understanding necessary for salvation. Do you suppose that God in His infinite wisdom left gaps in our ability to believe, so that human beings would have necessity to fill in the gaps? I cannot believe this for a moment; for *God* is love, and thus complete in His supplying all that is necessary in order to believe and be saved! The primary basis, by which religion continually goes astray of truthful devotion, is by denial regarding the sufficiency of God; thus religion attempts additions and subtractions from that which is perfect (God; and His good, acceptable and perfect will)!²⁰⁹⁸

²⁰⁹⁵ Deuteronomy 29:29; Daniel 2:20-23; Acts 1:6-8.

²⁰⁹⁶ Jude 1:2-4; Acts 20:25-32.

²⁰⁹⁷ 1 John 3:1-3; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18.

²⁰⁹⁸ Romans 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 13:8-13; Philippians 3:8-14.

Personal Note: Please remember, avenues in many directions are possible when aloof the reality of God within religion! As has been mentioned in other areas of the book, the primary culprit of distraction and spiritual detriment is “self”! When “self” is not denied, the outcome is failure to go beyond the flesh, so as to realize and fulfill one’s spiritual purpose in the Lord; this being Biblically stated as—“holding to a form of godliness, although they have denied its power” (2 Timothy 3:1-5); with the outcome being the carnal behavior of verses 2-4. The reality is therefore, in failure to deny “self” (personal volition), an individual cannot go beyond the flesh to live within the spiritual relational reality which is the essence of walking by faith and not by sight; for God takes us beyond carnality by implantation of the spiritual reality (His indwelling)! When God is sought within fleshly delusion, although He is not found, conjecture and assumption contrived from demonic instigation and influence entices the flesh to belief the lies foundational to Satan’s guile and schemes; thus multitudes remain religious through the flesh, while deluding themselves to deny the reality of being held captive by Satan to do his will, which is that humans remain deceived, deceive others, and maintain spiritually depravity by adhesion to the flesh (2 Timothy 2:24-26)! This being a reality is the reason “self” must be denied in order to actually follow the Lord; for without denial of “self” the flesh prevails which maintains captivity to the physical realm; this is why religion also prevails, as religion entices the flesh to seek emotional responses which never achieves spiritual realistic edification and purpose! God’s work is the power of Christianity, which is denied by multitudes who delude themselves; for effectual doers of the Word are the legitimate children of God who are led by the Holy Spirit, whereas delusional hearers of the Word are not led by God but rather by the flesh within deception!²⁰⁹⁹ A relationship with God is sacrificial; God sacrificed Himself for us, which leaves all further sacrifice to be rendered by believers; with sacrifice of personal volition (self) so as to learn and follow the good, acceptable and perfect will of God (Romans 12:1-3)! While multitudes continue to accomplish fulfillment of carnal purpose in the flesh while on the earth, the blessing of spiritual growth, nurturing and guidance never occur; for the kind intention of God’s will is our spiritual forward and upward momentum which takes maturity and dil-

²⁰⁹⁹ Romans 8:1-17; James 1:19-25.

igent strict discipline by the power of our faith which is the Lord God!²¹⁰⁰ Living for “self” while claiming to be led by the Lord is delusive; Satan does in fact deceive the whole world, minus the remnant who have crossed the threshold into the spiritual realm where God is found, worshipped, and adored; it is in the spiritual realm where God righteously leads, and trains us henceforth in preparation for the state of eternity!²¹⁰¹ The Scriptures state the necessary standard for all who would seek to love and worship God in the flesh (religiously; carnally); this standard being to visit orphans and widows in their distress, and keep oneself unstained by the world (James 1:27). How many religious individuals actually follow this standard of religiosity, which would evidence a minimal love and obedience unto God? How many individuals’ love for the Lord has actually grown cold (below minimal) due to involvement with the world which is lawless and abounding with “self”?²¹⁰² Anyone who refuses to deny personal volition (self) loves the Lord carnally; for true love for the Lord is spiritual and sacrificial, as also worship of God is spiritual, not selfishly carnal!

Mormonism was originated by Joseph Smith (A.D. 1805-1844), who taught the “latter day” prophecies as necessary in order to know God and be saved. This as with Charles Taze Russell of the Jehovah’s Witnesses, was obviously derived from a selfish demeanor which sought self-exaltation to take precedence over remaining humble so as to receive exaltation from God at the proper time.²¹⁰³ We were warned that Satan would attempt to deceive us, by doubting what the Lord stated in the Gospel; for as it is within the state of humility that we are capable of learning from the Lord, as by receiving of His grace; to be kept from devotional humility by pride is to be held in bondage away from the truth.

Although it is not easy to remain vigilant at all times in order to remain founded upon the Rock which is Christ, it remains our earnest necessity (imperative)! The fact that Mormonism has attempted to fracture the foundation of marriage by reviving polygamy, demonstrates the macho male mentality which comprises much of Joseph Smith’s

²¹⁰⁰ Philippians 3:1-14; Hebrews 12:1-11.

²¹⁰¹ Matthew 6:19-24; 16:24-27; John 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35-50; Romans 13:12-14; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Ephesians 5:1-17; Colossians 1:9-14; Revelation 12:9.

²¹⁰² Matthew 24:10-13; James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

²¹⁰³ 1 Peter 5:1-11.

intent of—if we try hard enough, we can obtain whatever is desired.²¹⁰⁴ Because Mormons consider the Book of Mormon equally as important as the Bible, and thus have very confused priorities; I will not go into individual teachings of Mormonism, for the Jesus they claim to know is not the Jesus of the Bible.²¹⁰⁵

Notes about Islam (Mohammedanism)

Islamic believers (Muslims) are believers in one true God. Inasmuch as they do believe in one true God, Islam is more “Christian in nature” than many other supposed Christian organizations who by their teaching indicate polytheism; as by forms of idolatry, doctrine, and rituals of rote. A person Muslims hold in high regard along with Mohammed, is Jesus Christ; for they believe Jesus to have been a true prophet, for Mohammed himself made statements to this effect. The fact remains that Muslims believe in one true God; the difference between Islamic and Christian teachings being—salvation based upon works vice grace; Mohammed being a prophet and Jesus being the Messiah. Both religions realize the necessity of knowing God; one attempt to gain His favor by works, the other accepting of His grace as works are of no avail in attempts to please Him. *If* it is said that Muslims are not believers as they believe in salvation by works, then it must also be said that many forms of denominational Christian beliefs are also inappropriate, as works are also stringently enforced as by emphasized behavior (i.e. do this; don’t do that—Colossians 2:20-23)!

Just as many Muslims do not actually understand the Islamic religion they profess, so also are many Christian religious believers ignorant of Christianity. The primary reason for the downfall of the many within both Islam and the Christian religion is that focus is placed upon human leadership within the “religion,” rather than upon the Lord from within the “relationship”; for most focus with physical eyes (carnal religiosity), whereas the remnant focuses through faith, placing full trust and hope in the Lord (relational).

When going forth during the Crusades, it was taught—“death to the infidels.” Just as supposed Christians were committing murder under the guise of doing so for God, so also some supposed Muslims did so

²¹⁰⁴ Matthew 19:3-12.

²¹⁰⁵ 1 Corinthians 8:1-13; Romans 10:1-13.

for the same reason.²¹⁰⁶ By definition, the word “infidel” indicates someone who does not believe in God; this definition being changed in accordance with the arrogance of specific forms of religion. The supposed Christians called Islamic believers “infidels” because they were not Christian, and the supposed Muslims called Christians “infidels” because they were not Muslim. As neither Muslims nor Christians are actually “infidels” as both (1 religion; 1 relational) teach belief in one true God; the whole notion of members of either being actual “infidels” is utterly absurd! Please consider, although Muslims do not believe that Jesus is the way, and the truth, and the life (John 14:6), this in no way indicates that they are not seeking to know the one true God; therefore it can be noted that some individuals seeking God, are killing other individuals seeking God! Believers killing believers, under demonic instigation and influence!

The reason the congregation of Islam so very much hates Christians, is because by the sword of supposed Christians many within Islam were slain; this evidencing truth that Muslims hate actual Christians because of the behavior of those who are not “Christian” (Christ-like) at all! During the Crusades, it was proclaimed that Mohammedans (Muslims) were a people of extreme idolatry and heresy; this against the fact that Muslims abhor idolatry. Rather than actually gaining knowledge as to what was believed within Islam, Roman Catholics backed by ruling powers sought out those considered heretics, and killed them. Those bearing the sword supposedly for Christianity, failed to listen to the warning which Jesus rendered as to living by the sword.²¹⁰⁷ The onslaught of Christian religious polemics upon Islam began in the eighth century, and continued sporadically until the seventeenth century; initially headed up by John of Damascus in A.D. 750. Is it not amazing that the onslaught by Christian religious polemics was upon those who believed in the power of the one true God, and refused to acknowledge God’s power to be found anywhere else? We must remember—the Roman Catholics were insistent that everyone acknowledge the full authority of Christ to be upon the Pope (Vicar of Christ); which is why Martin Luther asked whether the Pope or Mohammed be worse; then making the statement:

²¹⁰⁶ John 16:2, 3.

²¹⁰⁷ Matthew 26:49-56.

“God grant us his grace and punish both the Pope and Mohammed, together with their devils. I have done my part as a true prophet and teacher. Those who won’t listen may leave it alone.”²¹⁰⁸

Although Martin Luther had the right idea, as we are to speak the truth in love; the Christian religious polemics did not!

Mohammed began his trek as an honest individual seeking reform against the many forms of idolatry present in his time. During his time in Mecca, he lived his life in a modest fashion, sought to be simplistic and humble in his endeavors to better know God, was terribly persecuted for his faith, and was never known as one to seek sordid gains. After moving to Medina, Mohammed (Mahomet) became a polygamist during his final twelve years, during which time his teachings became more confusing, he took up the sword against others for territorial expansion and personal gains, he was without remorse for the many slain, and considered himself to be the most favored in heaven. After moving to Medina, Mohammed’s entire demeanor changed; for with the exchange of peaceful endeavors for violence, Mohammed claimed to be divinely sanctioned and commanded. Mohammed started out peaceably seeking after God, and ended placing himself upon a pedestal; self-deluded and without remorse for wrongdoing. What a difference one’s focus truly makes; for with focus upon the Lord God the potential for consistent righteousness is maintained by His leadership, whereas focus upon individuals and religious doctrines holds only the potential for variations and deceptions!

“When once he had dared to forge the name of the Most High God as the seal and authority of his own words and actions, the germ was laid from which the errors of his afterlife freely and fatally developed themselves.”²¹⁰⁹

In certain ways, Mormonism is an offshoot of Islam. Just as Mohammed claimed to receive divine revelations from an angel, once moving to Medina; so also did Brigham Young and Joseph Smith claim

²¹⁰⁸ Martin Luther, the *Confutatio Alcorani*, A.D. 1540.

²¹⁰⁹ *Life of Mab.*, IV, p. 322.

revelations from an angel (Moroni). Just as Islam claimed the new revelations were to supersede the old, so also was done in the “Church of Jesus Christ of Latter Day Saints.” Both have books which claim to hold the embodiment of the revelations; Koran and Book of Mormon, both of which contain apostate and sectarian Christian elements. Both Islam and Mormonism teach polygamy; Mohammed had many wives (number unknown), and Brigham Young had seventeen wives at the time of his death.

Although many scholars state that the God sought by Muslims is a different God than the One sought within Christianity, the fact remains that Ishmael, Esau, Isaac, and Jacob had but one God; which is the God of the Bible! If only all of us would get beyond “self,” we could in a unified fashion seek the one true God together; without the distractions and spiritual detriment derived from differing religious doctrines and philosophies! The Lord God set the standards by which we are to live, serve and worship; why then must we continue our disobedience by insistence upon our own ways of doing things!

The problem which arose within Mohammed’s seeking of God, is the same problem which has stopped multitudes from coming to the spiritual relational reality! Within the seeking of truth during endeavors to discover and know God, and even more so be known by God as His legitimate children, multitudes throughout history fell far short of being drawn by God unto the reality of the Christ (Jesus), by returning to one’s “self” endeavors! With the coming of praise and adoration by followers of individuals unto those they have chosen to follow, such as Mohammed, pride tends to coerce away from the humility necessary in order to actually submit unto the Lord God; this then ceasing the humble endeavor of original intent, which would have allowed the possibility of the divine work of God to begin and continue. This is the exact same reality witnessed within Catholicism; for the practices within this religion specifically stays individuals from going past the religion unto God! Once we accept reverence from others which should always remain upon the Lord, we then tend to attempt prideful leadership positions; although God is the only leader for spiritual endeavors! Followers tend to idolize those they have chosen to believe in and follow, which allows adolescent pride to obscure all further endeavors; which stops all concerned, with rare exceptions, from continuing upon a path of reverence and humble submission unto the Lord! The inappropriate

reverence generally leads to forms of idolatry, which in the case of Mohammed was proven by the epic of Mohammed being raised into the heavens from the location of the Dome of the Rock in Jerusalem; although a matter of historic fact documents Mohammed's death on June 8, 632, from a sudden illness which led to his death. With the forms of corruption and idolatry within the Christian religion being numerous, no religious person or group has the right to criticize others of different beliefs and religions; especially when a plethora of individuals have fallen short of the "reality of God within the spiritual relational reality," because of countless reasons, all of which involved abounding adherence to the flesh ("self")!

Personal Note: I was "religious" myself for four years prior to being brought to the reality of the Christ (Jesus) by God. It was not until diligence within seeking of the truth, by discovering correlations between the Christian religion and other pagan religions that I went before the Lord in prayer. Within prayer, with bitter tears foundational to disgust due discoveries, supplication was made unto the Lord for one thing—"truth"! It was that very day when I was drawn by God unto the spiritual relational reality, and from that day hence the seeking of the truth has increased by God's grace; with the path of servanthood unto increased truth being led by the Lord! The point to be made is that when we seek pure truth during endeavors to actually know the truth regarding the reality of God; which far surpasses religious assumption, conjecture or concept; the Lord becomes involved; whereas seeking God religiously or from a foundation other than "truth" is a seeking which leads only to furthered endeavors within former beliefs and preconceptions. God can be found, yet only by His divine work and nurturing; for this reason we must never allow distractions during our personal endeavor to know Him, lest we fall short of receiving His divine work and embrace! Mohammed had stated that he believed Jesus to be a true prophet; which means that Mohammed believed Jesus to speak the truth!²¹¹⁰ As Jesus proved to be the Messiah (Christ) of prophesy, even by His own statements, the reality was before Mohammed for acceptance; yet as aforementioned, Mohammed fell short of the reality because of distractions. We must always remember that Satan as the ruler of the world

²¹¹⁰ John 14:6, 7.

can utilize anything of the world in order to distract or discourage us, prior to coming to the spiritual reality of the Christ; for Satan is a murderer, who murders individuals spiritually!

Healing (Supposed Faith) Ministries

Although many ministries such as “healing” and “name it claim it” may seem Scriptural; they are not! Although the Lord yet heals individuals when it is His will to do so, He no longer uses human agents for this purpose, nor has He promised to give us all that we desire (healing and riches); this truth being Biblically contrary to the teaching of these ministries.²¹¹¹ These types of ministries seek to adulterate the Scriptures according to fleshly indulgences, gathering unto themselves others who seek the same; all within the realm of Biblical ignorance!²¹¹² All such ministries are deceptively derived from foundations other than Christ; for the foundations of these ministries are those of: love of money, love of self, fleshly desires along with the temptations thereof, a god of convenience (which is not the God of the Bible), double-mindedness, self-centeredness and greed; mostly due failure to realize and appreciate what the Lord has truly and fully done for believers.²¹¹³ It must also be evidenced, that many ministries intentionally both deceive and cheat believers; derived from selfish and personal motives, which have nothing to do with either Jesus nor the spiritual wellbeing of those who follow!²¹¹⁴

When individuals fail to realize that God’s grace is the most wonderful gift we can receive and possess, they continually seek more in the physical realm; generally remaining spiritually stagnant, and unfruitful. We can come to knowledge of the truth and remain focused, or we can follow many others into worldly lusts and desires; the former is Christian (Christ-like) behavior, whereas the latter is not! The moral rule book has already been written, it is our responsibility to study it in context and walk accordingly; by faith, under the masterful leadership of the Holy Spirit!²¹¹⁵ Our successful journey begins with understanding

²¹¹¹ Romans 9:6-33.

²¹¹² Matthew 6:19-34; 24:4-13; 2 Timothy 3:10-17; 4:1-4.

²¹¹³ John 19:30; 1 Peter 2:18-25; Ephesians 1:3-23; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23; Colossians 3:1-7.

²¹¹⁴ 1 Timothy 6:3-19, please contemplate vs. 3-5.

²¹¹⁵ 2 Timothy 2:14-19; Romans 1:16, 17; 8:1-17; Hebrews 4:11-16; John 17:1-26; James 1:19-27.

that God's grace is sufficient! With full understanding of this fact, which is learned from the Lord as through humble submission before His throne of grace, we seek to remain simplistically devoted to the One who has done so very much for us. Without full understanding to the fact of sufficient grace, our journeys will carry us everywhere except upon the narrow path which leads to righteousness; for our physical existence (corporeality) generally remains our focus.

Unlike during times of antiquity when a manifestation of God was physically present for the benefit of His chosen people (the Israelites); during this dispensation (economy at a given time; providentially ordained fate) of grace physical manifestations of the Lord are not necessary or rendered!²¹¹⁶ The reason for this is because the Jews walked by sight during the dispensation of the Law, whereas during this dispensation of grace we are to walk by faith; as we have the Holy Spirit indwelling us; *if* we are God's legitimate children.²¹¹⁷ When the Holy Spirit was upon an individual during times of antiquity prior to Christ's atonement, He withdrew from the individual after His efficacious will for the situation was fulfilled.²¹¹⁸ During this dispensation (GRACE), the Holy Spirit indwells believers and never withdraws; thus our situation is completely different from that of antiquity.²¹¹⁹ There was one exception, John the Baptist, who was indwelled by the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb; thus living his entire life completely fulfilling God's will, preparing the way for the coming Messiah.²¹²⁰ With fulfillment of Malachi's ministry, circa 430-400 B.C., the Lord remained silent until the ministry of John the Baptist; for John's ministry was in fact the Lord once again speaking to draw His chosen people (the Jews) back unto Himself. This proven by John's being an instrument of God's righteousness throughout his life; for he was indwelled, trained, and led by the Holy Spirit in all his endeavors!

Because the Nation of Israel walked by sight, there was necessity for signs (Hebrew - *oth*; Greek - *seymeion*) and wonders (Hebrew- *mopheth*; Greek - *teras*). The first sign given by God was the "rainbow," (bow) to

²¹¹⁶ Exodus 13:21, 22; John 4:20-24, 47-54; 10:24-30; Luke 8:4-18.

²¹¹⁷ John 20:22; Galatians 3:1-9; Hebrews 11:1-6.

²¹¹⁸ examples: Samson and other judges of Israel—The Book of Judges; Samson specifics—Judges 13:24-16:31 / Workers of different sorts—Exodus 31:3-11; 35:30-35; Numbers 11:17-29; 24:2-13; 27:16-23.

²¹¹⁹ Romans 8:11; Hebrews 13:5, 6.

²¹²⁰ Luke 1:15; John 1:19-23.

emphasize God's faithfulness to never again destroy the world by deluge.²¹²¹ The next sign was that of the "burning bush," which was witnessed by Moses; gaining Moses' attention to go forth for the physical salvation of Israel from Egyptian bondage.²¹²² These examples are given to render understanding that The Nation of Israel (God's chosen people) were in need of signs and wonders from God in order to believe God's blessings to be upon them. In a like manner, in many cases when "salvation" is mentioned in the Old Testament, it is mentioned in a physical sense regarding a specific; yet in the New Testament, salvation is spoken of in a spiritual and eternal context.

Although the Nation of Israel was (and is) in need of signs and wonders in order to believe, which will fall many of them prey to the wiles of Satan through the Antichrist during the Tribulation Period; it is an evil and adulterous peoples who are in need of signs and wonders in order to believe during this time period of the Holy Spirit's indwelling believers; this after the testimony of the Apostles had been confirmed by them (signs and wonders).²¹²³ During this dispensation of grace, we are not to seek for signs and wonders, but rather we are to walk by faith, not by sight; seek for God's heavenly kingdom, not concerning ourselves with the matters of the flesh; allow the difference within us by the indwelling Holy Spirit (light) to go forth bringing illumination to a dark and gloomy world.²¹²⁴

To focus upon the desires of the flesh, is to place one's focus almost entirely upon the physical realm which ends at the grave; gaining neither spiritual growth nor heavenly rewards. To focus upon God's heavenly kingdom and righteousness is to have victory by faith; not only in the physical realm as ambassadors for Christ, but also in the spiritual realm for all eternity; gaining rewards in heaven where our treasures ought to have been stored. Although many ministries claim that we can have our treasures and rewards both now and in heaven, this also is not Biblically correct; for we either serve God and others in a selfless and sacrificial manner or ourselves selfishly!²¹²⁵ This is not to say that we

²¹²¹ Genesis 9:8-17.

²¹²² Exodus 3:2-22.

²¹²³ Revelation 13:11-18; 16:12-16; 19:17-21; Matthew 10:1-6; 12:38-45; 24:4-28; Mark 8:11-13; 13:19-23; John 4:43-54; Romans 15:15-19; 2 Corinthians 12:11, 12; Hebrews 2:1-4.

²¹²⁴ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Luke 12:13-34; Philippians 2:1-30.

²¹²⁵ Luke 6:17-49.

are to be paupers per se, but rather this indicates a matter of personal focus and intent; are we willing to surrender all for the Lord, as this devotion never allows the distraction of seeking or maintaining excess. Because God knows the actual motives of our existence, the only one potentially deceived is us; never God!²¹²⁶

Here is a simple test as to what is being proclaimed in “Name it Claim it” and “Healing” ministries. They both claim that God wants all believers to be financially secure and without any form of ailment; this of course being what people want to hear.²¹²⁷ These type ministries many times utilize the following Scriptural verse in their proclamation that God seeks that all believers are to lay claim to the aforementioned, by stating that “there is no partiality with God” (Romans 2:11). Let us look at the actual Biblical context in which “there is no partiality with God,” and we will find how foolishly these ministries take Scripture out of context, in order to fulfill their own volitional intentions; which generally involves money.

Romans 2:4-11: Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who WILL RENDER TO EVERY MAN ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God.

As can be witnessed in the Romans 2:4-11 passages, “there is no partiality with God” as all human beings will give account for their deeds while in the flesh. Jesus summed up our potential in this manner, “He

²¹²⁶ Galatians 6:1-10.

²¹²⁷ 2 Timothy 3:1-5; 4:1-4.

who is not with Me is against Me; and he who does not gather with Me scatters” (Matthew 12:30). Our rewards in heaven will be in accordance to what we have done for the glory of God and the proclamation of the Gospel truth (with Christ). If the endeavor is of a self-centered nature (individuality), or of the flesh (mammon), then it is not actually to gather others to Christ; thus the endeavor is against Christ! If ministries can easily take one simple Scripture out of context so as to appease the listener, do you suppose they take many Scriptures out of context for the same reason?! Such demonic teachings within the Body of Christ today, is why we must study the Scriptures so as to test all things in context, and why we must get our priorities straight if we are to ever walk upon the narrow path which leads to righteousness! We can seek to appease and be appeased now while in our physical bodies, and not receive heavenly rewards because of fleshly indulgences, while yet being saved by God’s grace (possibly); or we can act appropriately by placing our focus upon spiritual matters (God’s heavenly kingdom and righteousness, while worshipping Him in spirit and in truth), and actually receive rewards in heaven.²¹²⁸ Although many ministries claim we can have it both ways; the reality exists that double-mindedness leads only to distractions and spiritual depravity!²¹²⁹

SUMMATION

“Healing” and “Name it Claim it” (supposed faith) ministries seek and proclaim God’s blessings in the flesh; this is done as they choose to believe according to the flesh. They place great emphasis upon physical: health, riches, comfort, prestige and “individuality,” as *if* one’s life in the flesh were to compare with life eternal; which is life indeed.²¹³⁰ As believers in the Lord, trusting in Him for our salvation, we are to be always considerate of others and seek first to walk in the righteousness of Christ; storing our treasures in heaven. The focus of believers during this dispensation of grace is to be one of a spiritual nature, as we focus upon Jesus who is the author and perfecter of our faith; whereas the aforementioned ministry types constantly attempt to bring our attention into the physical realm, as by focusing upon our bodily comfort.

²¹²⁸ 1 Corinthians 3:10-23; Matthew 6:1-15.

²¹²⁹ James 1:7, 8; 4:7-10.

²¹³⁰ 1 Timothy 6:3-19.

This is not Biblical and therefore should not be allowed within the lives of those claiming Christianity! Believers who follow these types of ministries may proclaim love for the Lord, yet their focus is absolutely inappropriate for spiritual fortitude, growth, and servanthood unto the Lord; for it is either His will or our will be done, not both simultaneously! True love is submissive and sacrificial; not demanding and selfish!

Simply spoken—*if* a ministry is insistent upon signs and wonders, riches, prestige, comfort and other fleshly indulgences, turn away immediately; for the Lord does not bless carnality and ignorance! If we are going to claim to love the Lord, then it is appropriate that we walk in a manner as He walked; placing our focus upon God, thereby denying the desires of our flesh.²¹³¹ The decision rests with each of us; we can either focus upon God through faith unto victory with the remnant of true devotional Christians, or be led astray with the multitudes who walk continually within the wretchedness of “self,” who claim themselves “Christian,” while actually denying Gospel truth! Anyone who truly loves the Lord seeks to evidence and walk in truth; diligent study of Scripture (Word of truth) is therefore mandatory!

Evidencing the truth and walking therein is an area which many Christian religious leaders have failed to understand! Supposed “healing (faith) ministries” fail to realize that the statements of 1 Peter 2:24 and Isaiah 53:5 are in reference to the atoning (redemptive healing) work of Christ regarding the salvation of believers; thus the Biblical context of “healing” within these key verses of their ministry proclamations, actually pertains wholly to the spiritual realm! In the context of the writing, the action of “healing” was and is a completed act! Having failed to realize completeness in Christ, this “healing” is taught to be in a physical context, when in fact it is not (context—1 Peter 2:21-25; Isaiah 53:1-12 = work of the cross; i.e. salvation). This in itself demonstrates why so many believers have fallen prey to this form of false teaching, for many yet: seek physical healing to take precedence over spiritual reality; remain frightened by sickness and suffering; maintain their focus in the physical realm (signs, wonders); fearing death. Because perfect love casts our fear and it is God’s perfect love which

²¹³¹ Romans 1:24-32; 6:1-14; 13:1-14; Ephesians 2:1-10; 4:17-32; 2 Timothy 2:20-26; Titus 3:1-11; 1 Peter 1:3-2:25; 4:1-19; 1 John 2:1-3:18; James 4:1-17.

has saved us from our sins and made us complete in Christ, true understanding of this eliminates fear of death and therefore shines light upon the darkness of false teaching. We are complete in Christ, for “it is finished” (John 19:30)!²¹³²

FINAL NOTE

Catholicism as with many other religions, including the “Christian religion,” draws focus upon itself, not the Lord; this being the reason for harlotry, as love and devotions in fulfillment of the first and foremost commandment are no longer reserved for God alone.²¹³³ Any religion or supposed spiritual leaders, who would seek our attention and focus, are either inadvertent or intentional instruments of Satan, who seeks to lead us astray from simplicity of devotion to Christ! A great example of how our mindset should change once coming to knowledge of the truth can be found in the life of James, Jesus half-brother.²¹³⁴ James did not initially believe in who Jesus was (Lord—Kurios / Logos; God), for James had grown up with our Lord and knew Him as his human brother.²¹³⁵ Upon coming to knowledge of the truth, James referred to Jesus as his Lord (kurios; master); referenced by his statement of being a bondservant of Jesus (James 1:1). James did not any longer consider Jesus as who He was in the flesh (human brother); for to truly know Him is to realize that He is indeed the King of kings and Lord of lords (God).²¹³⁶ The Apostle Paul knew this as well!²¹³⁷ This demonstrates the epitome of changing the way in which we think, once knowledge and proper focus have been obtained within disciplined sacrificial devotion.²¹³⁸ This changing of one’s mindset and focus is the essence of humble simplicity of devotion; for without appropriate devotional focus a true submission unto the Lord cannot occur, and without knowledgeable humility grace is not received.²¹³⁹ Simplicity of devotion is focus upon the Lord and no other, leading to a walk by faith, no longer by sight; thus victory through faith within the knowl-

²¹³² 1 Corinthians 1:4-17; Romans 3:21-31; Hebrews 2:5-18; 1 John 4:7-21.

²¹³³ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40.

²¹³⁴ Galatians 1:19.

²¹³⁵ John 7:1-9, specific v. 5.

²¹³⁶ 1 Timothy 6:13-16; cf. John 10:27-30.

²¹³⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:14-21, specific vs. 16, 17.

²¹³⁸ Romans 12:1-3.

²¹³⁹ 1 Peter 5:1-11; James 4:3-10.

edgeable relationship.²¹⁴⁰ Although many religions teach that a concept of God (specific aspect of the Christ—“Savior”) is sufficient for salvation, and this as by weak teachings which utilize manipulation of Scripture out of context; the fact remains that actual knowledge is necessary within a personal relationship with God (being known by God), aloof the foolishness of religion!²¹⁴¹

The Jehovah’s Witnesses, Mormons and many within Catholicism and other supposed “Christian” forms of religion, have been deceived into believing a lie! Are our fruits any better *if* we too remain deceived while shunning those yet wandering in darkness? We as Christians are to lead those in darkness into the light of truth; this is not to say that we are to oppose them by argumentation and rejection; but rather by speaking knowledgeable Gospel truth! Spiritual knowledge is rendered by God and God alone! If we fail to evidence our own failures according to the Gospel truth, who are we to judge the failures of others?²¹⁴² Although we are to judge ourselves and others within Christianity according to Gospel moral standards (confessed faith); we are never to judge current non-believers, for there is no Biblical standard by which to judge those who do not believe!²¹⁴³ We are to speak the Gospel truth in love, within the confines of a ministry of “reconciliation,” in hopes of allowing others to obtain freedom in Christ. Although I abhor the falsehoods taught by the aforementioned which claim to be “Christ centered,” I yet love the individuals and attempt to show them Biblically the error of insidious and doctrinal religion. This is why we must study the Gospel, for it is God’s truth which allows freedom; never the doctrines, works or words of humankind!²¹⁴⁴ Is it not pathetically inappropriate that the most widely sold book of all time (the Bible), remains the least read!

In order to gain true knowledge and understanding of God and pure truth, the only sound foundation remains trusting God by devotional submissiveness. When endeavors proceed forth from a foundation of human reason and logic (manmade religion), intellect and emotions

²¹⁴⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; 1 John 5:1-13.

²¹⁴¹ 1 John 4:1-6; Galatians 4:1-11; Matthew 7:13-27; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Philippians 1:9-11; cf. John 6:44, 45

²¹⁴² example—Romans 2:17-29.

²¹⁴³ 1 Corinthians 5:3-13.

²¹⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 12:6-10; 1 Peter 4:7-19, specific mention—v. 11.

have taken the place of faith and spiritual devotion. This then leads to un-biblical doctrines being taught and followed as being pleasing to God, yet in actuality remain but postulates of human inane (religious) thinking. Spiritual defeat is the end result of most presupposition, for care in such cases was not taken to remain standing firm (abiding) upon the foundations of pure truth which are the Gospel and Christ.²¹⁴⁵ In most endeavors to justify one's own doctrine, or the doctrine of others, the foundation remains sinking sand and thus subject to the futility of the human mind. We are to have the mind of Christ; for this is the actuality of difference between "simple believers," and "Christians," as "Christians" are Christ-like!²¹⁴⁶ To have the mind of Christ is to submit to the Holy Spirit within devotional humility, so as to learn that which is pure and acceptable to God.²¹⁴⁷ Those who would attempt to please God as through the flesh seek and demand aspects of worship in the physical realm, in attempts to show oneself approved in the spiritual realm. This leads to many fruitless endeavors, regulations and acts of ritualistic worship, which actually violate the revealed truth of God. Rather than presupposition to account for doctrine, would it not be prudent to presuppose the Gospel as absolute truth (inerrant in its original languages) and abide therein!²¹⁴⁸

We must ask ourselves—what Jesus is it that is worshipped in many supposed Christian religions? Is it the "good man" Jesus who was appreciated in certain ways and then killed; is it the Jesus who the Jews considered to be a fabulous teacher because of His absolute knowledge of the Law; is it the Jesus who is but "a god" proclaimed by the Jehovah's Witnesses, which is actually polytheism; is it the Jesus who needs the help of human beings to carry out his plan of redemption, and needs to be re-crucified daily? He is the Lord Jesus Christ, the King of kings and Lord of lords, who saves us from the wages of sin which is death! Please understand, there are many lords and many gods, according to chosen beliefs; yet there is only one true God who can create, bless and save humanity; thus the deviations within religion cause unwarranted distractions and detriment!²¹⁴⁹ Although it may appease the many to

²¹⁴⁵ John 8:31-36; 15:1-17; 1 John 2:18-29; 2 John 1:7-11.

²¹⁴⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

²¹⁴⁷ Romans 12:1-21.

²¹⁴⁸ John 8:31-47.

²¹⁴⁹ 1 Corinthians 8:1-13.

belong to religions that make changes according to the times, please remember that there is always a lot of room to change direction when upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction! Just because the name “Jesus” is proclaimed or attached in a religion; it is only the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible who can save us from our sins, and lead us forth into eternity!

Step out courageously in love; asking your minister or pastor for the truth, and hold them accountable to speak it! Many may say that we are not to question our spiritual leaders, yet are we not all frail human beings; are we not to hold each other accountable according to the standards of our confessed faith; are we not to shine light upon darkness; are we not to speak the truth in love so that all (including spiritual leadership) may grow in aspects of Christ?²¹⁵⁰ Now is the time for humble submission! Now is the time to stop our excuses, and live in the light of Christ’s righteousness! Now is the time to lay aside the unfruitful deeds of darkness, and walk in the light as God is in the light!²¹⁵¹ NOW IS THE ACCEPTABLE TIME!²¹⁵²

Heed of Warning

The Scriptures have rendered warning signs of manmade religion (the doctrine of demons) to stay us from heretical teachings and beliefs, as well as apostate worship practices.²¹⁵³ Heed should be paid to these warnings, so as to achieve and maintain freedom in Christ! Any religion which denies Gospel truth and warnings should be avoided; for God seeks our sincerest devotion, apart from physical acts of religious worship derived from human: emotionalism, intellect, ideology, reason, and rote.²¹⁵⁴ Please remember—our deeds of the flesh are not pleasing to the Lord; but rather His efficacious manifested fruit within us, for the truth of “God at work” is the imperative reality which must be realized!²¹⁵⁵

²¹⁵⁰ Romans 13:1-14; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; Ephesians 4:7-5:21.

²¹⁵¹ 1 John 1:5-2:11.

²¹⁵² 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

²¹⁵³ 1 Timothy 1:3-11; 4:1-16.

²¹⁵⁴ Romans 10:1-13; emphasized—Hosea 6:1-11.

²¹⁵⁵ Galatians 5:19-26; Philippians 1:6-11, emphasis v. 6; 2:5-18, emphasis vs. 12, 13; cf. Hebrews 13:20, 21.

KEY FACTORS TO REMEMBER:

1. The Body of Christ and the Nation of Israel are not synonymous; as we are not under Law but rather under grace, any predication to adhere to Jewish Law is inappropriate.²¹⁵⁶
2. Any insistence or demand of abstinence from certain types of foods or from marriage is inappropriate.²¹⁵⁷ The specific calling of individuals is solely in accordance to God's anointing; it is never in accordance to man's volition or doctrine!²¹⁵⁸
3. Adding to or taking away from the Gospel is neither warranted nor appropriate!²¹⁵⁹
4. The use of likenesses of the Lord (graven images) for worship is forbidden in the Gospel!²¹⁶⁰
5. There are many gods and many lords, yet only One King of kings and Lord of lords; the one true God and Savior. Many religions may claim to know and serve the Lord Jesus; yet the teaching and fruits of the specific religion will render the truth as to whether theirs is the Jesus of the Bible, who can save us from our sins and lead us to victory.²¹⁶¹
6. There are no longer any prophets of future events (eschatology) aside of the Lord Jesus, for His revelation carries forth into eternity!²¹⁶² Anyone claiming to be a prophet of this type (eschatology) should be decisively avoided!²¹⁶³
7. The Bible states that our endeavors are for the purpose of edification; spiritual edification taking precedence, as our victory is by faith. If a

²¹⁵⁶ Romans 6:1-23.

²¹⁵⁷ 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Corinthians 7:1-24.

²¹⁵⁸ 1 John 2:21-27.

²¹⁵⁹ Deuteronomy 12:32; Revelation 22:18, 19; Galatians 1:8, 9.

²¹⁶⁰ Exodus 20:4-6.

²¹⁶¹ 1 Corinthians 8:5, 6; Matthew 7:16-27.

²¹⁶² Hebrews 1:1-4; Revelation 1:1-3; 22:1-21.

²¹⁶³ Matthew 7:15; 24:11-13, 23-27; Luke 6:26; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 4:1-6.

ministry places focus or precedent upon physical aspects of human existence (corporeal) or worship (emotional); this is not righteous (Christian; Christ-like), neither Biblical nor spiritually ethical.²¹⁶⁴

Many have asked the question—what would Jesus do (WWJD)? There is only one answer to this question—“the will of the Father”!²¹⁶⁵ Jesus walked solely upon the narrow path of righteousness; according to the will of the Father, seeking nothing of His own accord.²¹⁶⁶ When people ask what Jesus would do in any certain circumstance, they many times make conjecture as to what Jesus would do in that specific situation. As Christians we are not to contemplate by conjecture, but rather to submit to God and follow Him upon the same narrow path of which Jesus walked; for this is the calling of all who claim Christianity (being Christ-like).²¹⁶⁷ Far too many believers, denominations, and congregations seek to follow God with ulterior motives; other than to walk upon the narrow path of Jesus righteousness; which are motives foundational to self-righteous religiosity! Whether these distractive motives are money (mammon), or the lusts, desires, and emotions of the flesh; all such distractions are secular and temporal in nature, which ends at the grave. Shall we not rather seek God for who He is: holy, righteous, just, merciful, abounding in lovingkindness, faithfulness, and grace; for when we do so, our walk is primarily for Him and secondarily for others. This is the epitome of being “Christ-like”!

SUMMATION: RITUALS AND TRADITIONS; MANMADE RELIGION

1. Religion:

- a. Was utilized by the Lord as a tutor to emphasize the unrighteousness of man to be incomparable with the absolute holiness of God; while directly pointing to—Christ! Mention of “religion” in the Gospel—Acts 25:18-21; 26:1-7; Colossians 2:20-23; James 1:19-27. Please note, each occurrence references the physical realm!
- This was the purpose of the Levitical Law, for it acted as a *tutor* for realization of necessity to trust fully in God, inevitably within

²¹⁶⁴ Romans 8:1-39.

²¹⁶⁵ John 5:19-47.

²¹⁶⁶ 1 John 5:19-23.

²¹⁶⁷ 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:9.

the spiritual realm—by faith; which was instituted fully by Christ Jesus, with foundation within the faithfulness of God toward the children of promise, soundly forthright fulfilled by the indwelling Holy Spirit (Galatians 2:11-3:29; John 14:15-16:15).

- Failure to realize the actual necessity of “faith” for the purpose of spiritual maturity, multitudes (minus the remnant) have maintained focus upon the tutorial basis (religion; elemental principles) as by carnal concepts; vice actually maturing (growing spiritually), as by the masterful teaching and leadership of the Lord from within a personal relationship with Him (emphasized—John 4:20-24; 1 John 4:1-6; Romans 10:1-11; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9).
- Emotional responses to religious stimuli is delusive within the flesh; for true devotional faith foundational to sacrificial love for God mandates the seeking of truth, without focus upon anything of the physical realm; for the saving relational reality is spiritual and is not discovered or realized through the flesh; this being the reason that “self” must be denied, for “self” (flesh) is unwarranted and disruptive during any spiritual endeavor! It is due the tolerance and acceptance of blatant carnal religiosity within the current-day church, that the Lord has been ejected and kept from the majority of congregational structures; for within the seeking of God in the flesh, the spiritual reality is evaded and denied, thus the truth of the spiritual imperative is no longer accepted but rather rejected! God is spirit and must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, or He is not righteously worshipped at all!
- b. Is a primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world (Revelation 12:9); with the exception of the remnant, who by obedience in accordance to Gospel mandate and distinction, necessitate worship of God in spirit and in truth (John 4:20-24)!
- Humankind’s refusal to relinquish the flesh for the purpose of worshipping God appropriately (in spirit and in truth), has led to maintained emphasis upon “religion.” This then holds the masses within the bondage of Satan’s schemes of deception (insidious religion); thus that which was utilized by God (physical

realm religion) as a tutor leading to acceptance of Christ Jesus, and to emphasize the necessity of full hope and trust to be in God—by faith; since the coming of the Messiah has been utilized by Satan as a maintained physical realm carnal distraction (Galatians 3:19-4:11). The basis of victory or defeat within this distinctive realization is—mindset; for we can set our minds upon seeking and evidencing the truth as by prayer and abiding in the Word, or we can choose the supposed sufficiency of “religion” and thereby abide in the world, ignorantly worshipping God without actual knowledge (John 17:1-26; James 4:3-17; 1 John 2:12-3:3)! When individuals choose to be “religious,” they in fact choose to remain focused upon the tutor rather than learning the lesson which was emphasized by the tutorial; thus remaining in bondage to physical realm ignorance, regarding a spiritual realm relationship!

- Within religion, many are taught concepts of both God and walking by faith; yet a simple concept of God is not substantive for salvation, nor is a simple concept of walking by faith substantive for extrication from the elemental principles of the world from which “religion” is derived (Romans 10:1-13; Colossians 2:1-23; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21).
 - It is due failure to realize the distinction of difference between the old (Law; religion) and new (GRACE; faith), that the masses throughout church history have maintained the rituals and traditions of fleshly indulgence within “religion”; thus they remain infants spiritually, as by denial of necessity to journey on the narrow path upon which the Lord leads (Galatians 3:20-24; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Hebrews 5:11-6:20; Matthew 7:13-27).
 - Failure to relinquish rituals and traditions directly indicates religiosity, foundational to physical realm worship, which is generally superficially based upon rote as by habit; therefore, continuation of religiously walking by sight and not by faith, while deluding ourselves to deny the truth regarding the endeavors!
2. “Religion” holds no value against fleshly indulgence (Colossians 2:20-23); thus victory over the flesh is obtained solely by the power and masterful leadership of the Holy Spirit (Romans 8:1-17)!

- This fact confirms the necessity of walking by faith and not by sight; which directly mandates the necessity to be set apart (sanctified) from the weak and elemental things of the world; for our victory (in reality) is solely by faith (Romans 6:15-23; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 1 John 5:1-5)!
3. With the exception of the Lord's Supper being an act of remembrance which proclaims the Lord's death until He comes; all Christian religion ideologies, rituals and traditions are pagan in origin, and thus actions of corruptive delusive compromise aloof that which is pure and undefiled (actual Christianity; righteous truth).
 4. The emphasis of the New Testament is upon the cross of Christ! The primary Christian religion traditions and rituals pertain to that which is prior to (Christmas) and following (Easter) the cross; thus are inappropriate, unwarranted, and unacceptable! Within this, I will make no mention of such foolishness as: Lent, Ash Wednesday, etc.; for these are ritualistic ideologies foundationally from the priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries Rites Religion (Roman Catholicism).
 5. Saturnalia and the winter solstice celebrations of the Unconquerable Sun (*sol invictus*—the invincible sun) are the actual foundational pagan forms of worship from which Christmas was derived; and Easter being foundational upon the pagan fertility rituals of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion; are abominations to God! The fact of compromised worship being an abomination to God is emphasized within the passages of—Ezekiel 8:1-18, thus proving that religious rituals and traditions are extremely detrimental; bringing forth spiritual destruction of the relational potential involving fellowship with God, within the lives of multiple millions of individuals throughout history! When church leadership teaches according to the deceptive traditions of rote, rather than teaching the truth regarding the deceptive traditions, they actually sin against their congregation as they lead them in darkness; while sinning against the Lord by involvement and leadership within deceptions!

- It must be understood, that participation in religious traditions of delusive rote is sin; participating in religious traditions of rote foundational to the darkness of deception (paganism) is an abomination unto God! Complacent participation in deceptive traditions of rote is the epitome of abomination unto God; for within this individuals place the twig of tethered bondage to their own noses (vs. 15-17)! As all of the traditions of the Christian religion are foundational to pagan dates and aspects of celebration, while holding no merit whatsoever in worship of God in spirit and in truth; all are thus abominations! Please remember, the Lord's Supper is an act of remembrance, not a tradition; except as utilized within the instigations and influence of Roman Catholicism (mother of harlotry [Jezebel] and Christian religion abominations)!²¹⁶⁸
- When anyone participates in religious traditions, even in ignorance, they remain guilty of sin and/or abominations! A plethora of multitudes throughout history have been guilty of this reality; with the ultimate abomination being considering these practices to be "no big deal" (too light a thing), even when the light of truth has exposed the deceptions (v. 17)! Having revealed the truth regarding Christian religion practices of deceptive rote to many, and having them remain within the deceptions (with the exception of a few), as they seek to continue what they have always done, is the essence of "too light a thing"; for within the instigations and influence from the demonic realm, individuals refuse to acknowledge any wrongdoing within the practices, and therefore refuse to acknowledge any sin regarding their practices! This is in fact the reality of saying (believing) that we have no sin; when the rejection of truth actually proclaims God to be the liar, as by personal practiced deluded deceptions (1 John 1:8-10)! The truth of the matter remains that when this reality is continued without repentance (turning back to God in the light of truth) and confession of wrongdoing; the Lord God will not listen to any prayers from the individual; all possibility for fellowship with God is forfeit; and the possibility of God's good and righteous work which leads an individual is lost (v. 18; 1

²¹⁶⁸ Revelation 2:20-23; 21:27.

John 1:5-7)! Is practicing deceptive traditions of rote really “too light a thing”? The entire problem remains that when led by “self” within the superficiality of religion, the highest priority of our existence is denied and/or rejected; the highest priority or our existence being the “reality of God”! The primary foe which must be faced is foolish adolescent stubborn pride, for as “pride” seeks to protect human insecurities, we refuse to acknowledge the reality, strength and potential of our human sinful nature; which is the actuality of being personally deluded which is evidenced in multitudes! When deluding oneself, responsibility (culpability) is solely upon the individual; for within maintaining practices in the darkness of deception, and considering the matter to be “too light a thing” (no big deal), the individual puts the “twig” of bondage tethering to their own nose, which leaves them open to further captivity within delusive practices; which openly rejects any help, strength, or masterful leadership from the Lord (vs. 17, 18)! Is denial of “self” of great importance? Is practicing traditions of delusive rote really “no big deal” (too light a thing); when Satan is worshipped within the darkness of deception, with no motivation by the individual to submit to the Lord for correction and change in righteousness? The sins and abominations unto God only gains potential when individuals have left their first love; for leaving one’s first love for Jesus is the first step toward spiritual decline and depravity! Although multitudes consider these matters to be “too light a thing,” (no big deal), the reality exists that the spiritual detriment and depravity which occurs is abundantly huge!

6. The insecurities of humankind derived from failure to have or realize the imperative spiritual relationship with God necessary in order to achieve purpose, has led to “religion” being pronounced by humankind upon the earth throughout history! It is only when individuals realize the necessity and blessing of the “sincere personal spiritual relationship,” that the foolishness of doctrinal and ritualistic religion will become evident. Until the day comes within the life of individuals whereas the imperative of truth is realized, superficial religion and human insecurities will remain at the forefront of supposed spiritual endeavors; thus religious rote will prevail!

- Most individual human beings upon planet earth seek to ascertain their purpose in life. Many attempt this through: religion, mammon, the ways and things of the world, relationships with other living creatures; whereas the actual purpose of humans is to know and worship the Lord personally. When those who know and serve the Lord personally come together with others who know and serve the Lord, then unity prevails as by the imperative of focus upon the One we all know and serve; thus church (ekklesia) is a time of spiritual edification and fellowship, with the primary intent remaining thanksgiving and worship toward the One for whom we were created.²¹⁶⁹
 - Superficial religion and human insecurities are the end result of all endeavors, when the priority precedence is other than the Lord our God; thus weakness and confusion replace the righteousness of actual purpose and hope in the Lord. Within this, spiritual growth is stunted or remains stagnant, for the diminishment derived from distraction remains predominant within the endeavor; thus purpose is rarely achieved, leading to a repeated cycle of attempts without any righteous harmonious outcome.
7. Religions throughout history have incorporated aspects (human: precepts, philosophies, traditions, doctrines, idealisms and ideologies) of other religions so as to ease conversion from the former to the latter. The Christian religion is no different, which led to the incorporated corruptive compromise which yet exists to this day. Actual Christianity (primary basis of relational: faith, hope and trust) was founded by, and is therefore all about God; thus is: unalterable, unchangeable, undefiled, true and pure.
- a. Although “the Way” (actual Christianity) has always remained firmly planted within the righteousness of God who founded it, the alterations initiated for the sake of conversion ease led to just another “religion” (Christian religion) upon planet earth; therefore another means by which Satan deceives (insidiously) another massive group of individuals so they attempt to ignorantly establish their own

²¹⁶⁹ Colossians 1:16-23, specific v. 16.

righteousness; apart from God's righteousness, and actual knowledge (Romans 10:1-11).

- I praise God that we are saved by grace through His divine drawing us unto the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ), which began by His righteous activation of our measure of faith (John 6:44, 45; cf. 14:6, 7)! No one comes to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) without God's divine drawing (good) work; which includes drawing unto the spiritual reality of Christ's glory, preparation for progressive sanctification by the primary blessings of "definitive sanctification" and "justification," and a taste of the heavenly gift which is actual intimate fellowship with God by which His teaching unto spiritual growth is initiated! Within all the physical realm religious jargon and unrighteous worship, multitudes having believed false pulpit proclamations leading to false confessions of faith, have never actually humbly acquiesced unto God for His divine (good) work to begin; thus multitudes have believed the deception that they are saved, although completely aloof the reality of God and "glory of Christ"! The reality of the spiritual depravity of multitudes is evidenced by their never having achieved a spiritual reality; which is proven by their continuous failure to grow spiritually in the Lord, while deluding themselves to believe emotional religious responses to contrive spiritual edification!
- b. We can either journey forth with the Lord within an actual relationship with Him (spiritual relational reality), or we can remain religiously in bondage; for "religion" is a foolish status-quo physical realm mimicked emulation, of a wonderful personal spiritual realm relationship (Matthew 7:13-20; 1 Timothy 1:3-11; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; 10:14-22)!

8. As the ministry of actual Christianity is one of reconciliation, let us return to loving God with all of our heart, soul, mind and strength; for His love for us is faithfully sure (2 Corinthians 5:14-6:10)! When our love for Him has returned to an appropriate and acceptable state of being, then He will bring forth the spiritual reality which forthright abides in the Word (relational); aloof provision for the flesh (religion)!

9. The repeated and many times continual spiritual downfall of the multitudes pertaining to gaining actual knowledge of the truth, remains—idoltrous behavior, which very much includes idolatry of “self.” As long as individuals are willing to love anyone or anything to greater extents than loving the Lord, Satan will cause involution within the inappropriate priority of one’s own choosing (obscurity through personal volition).

- The reason many millions have chosen to deny the truth and thereby remain deceived within “religion,” is because of their concerns as to what others (most specifically—family members) may think. This of course indicates that others are idols, for anything which takes precedence in our lives over loving the Lord first and foremost, is in fact an idol. A considerable spiritual downfall of multitudes within the church is “individuality” (“self”); for the mandated unity has been replaced with individual motives which deny the leadership of our Master and Lord!
 - How pathetically inappropriate it remains, when individuals concern themselves with what others may think or say, with primary concern as to not offend other human beings; while simultaneously offending and denying God, without remorse or concern. It would behoove us to remember—our accountability is unto the Lord (1 Peter 1:3-9; emphasized—Matthew 10:24-40; Romans 2:1-11)!
- This is a primary reason why very few believers have ever actually had intimate personal fellowship with the Lord!
 - Prayer is—communication, thus listening is more important than speaking; as we have much to learn, whereas our Lord has knowledge of all things (an emphasis to Jeremiah—Jeremiah 33:1-3)!
 - Jesus is the only one who can actually teach a believer’s spirit; for men can instruct within the physical realm to the senses, yet the imperative growth must be in the spirit or it remains temporal (Matthew 23:8-12; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18)!

10. The difficult battle which believers face each moment of each day, for the remainder of our corporeal existence, is—denial of the flesh (“self”) as by the leadership of the Holy Spirit from within our own

spirit; for this is the essence of—walking by faith (Romans 8:1-17; 14:1-23).

- Yes, we must live in the flesh during our earthly existence; yet we do not live in accordance to the flesh (individual volition), nor do we battle according to the flesh; for we were created in the image of God (spiritually), so as to walk with the Lord our Creator spiritually (2 Corinthians 5:1-13; 10:1-18; Ephesians 4:17-32; Colossians 1:15-23).
- Those who are led by the Holy Spirit are the legitimate children of God; all others are illegitimate children and not heirs according to promise (Romans 4:1-25; 8:1-17, specific v. 14; Hebrews 12:1-29, specifically vs. 1-11; 1 John 2:28-3:24; Titus 3:1-8)!
 - True evidence of a legitimate child of God is—denial of “self.” Without denial of “self” there can be no submission to follow the Holy Spirit; for where “self” remains, so also the enticements of the flesh remains, which is easily coerced by demonic influence! Two primary aspects of the flesh which cause spiritual blindness due to obscurity of the light of truth are pride and arrogance. “Pride” is the primary protector of the sinful nature, and “arrogance” (thinking too highly of oneself) is that which proves the depraved protection of pride. Because these two aspects of the flesh cause opposition (pride) and diversion away from righteous spiritual focus (arrogance), multitudes of individuals have continually sought the Lord in the flesh; within which He will not be found (James 4:5, 6; 1 Peter 5:5-7)! The measure of faith given to each created in God’s image (spiritually) has two purposes, first so that we may know and be known by God as His legitimate children, and secondly to stay us from fleshly (carnal) arrogance; which returns us to the continued enticements of the flesh (Romans 12:3; Galatians 4:8-11)! The major spiritual downfall of multitudes is repeated return to the flesh, for with each return to the flesh is repeated denial of the spiritual imperative, which occurs with greater efficiency and accountability each time this blunder is performed; for return to the flesh displaces the “reality of God,” who then is not allowed to lead (Romans 8:6-8, 14)!

- Within this fact, it would behoove us to remember—“religion” will save no one; for individual spiritual relationships with God our Lord and Savior are of necessity for the outcome of blessed eternity (Hebrews 5:11-6:20)!
- Within the context of “pure and undefiled religion” as emphasized within the Gospel (James 1:26, 27), it should be noted that the convictions of physical realm “religion” should lead to compassionate caring and concerns for others in need, and an earnest desire to remain undefiled by the world. Within Biblical knowledge that “religion” holds no value against fleshly indulgence (Colossians 2:20-23), it is understandable why multitudes are capable of rendering kindness to others, while simultaneously being inept at turning from the desires of the sinful nature within their personal lives.
- The personal human precedence for a righteous walk with God is primarily denial of self, and secondarily abiding in the Word (Matthew 16:24-27; John 8:31-36; 15:1-27)!
 - Personal perseverance and diligence in seeking the truth and walking therein is imperative within this endeavor; for it is the Lord of truth whom we seek to know and worship! The only harmonious outcome for believers of diligence remains undistracted devotional focus upon the Lord, and this within sincere foremost love for Him; basking in the righteousness of His personal embrace, as our purpose is fulfilled in knowledge that all of importance is truly found in God!
 - Although continual denial of “self” is a difficult task, it is yet a task which is founded within the strength, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and righteousness of the Lord; thus the battle belongs to the Lord, whereas the believer’s victory by faith is foundational within devotion for God first and foremost, and humble submissiveness!
 - Abiding in the Word is an imperative which can never be understated! Simply reading the entire Bible is important, as the Scriptures are where God has revealed Himself and proper standards of human existence; yet abiding in the Word (Gospel truth) allows God to manifest (implant) the

reality of the Gospel truth so that it may be living and active within individuals, for this is the reality of “God at work” (James 1:19-25; Hebrews 4:12, 13)!

- Failure to realize this fact, “religious” individuals and organizations attempt to establish their own righteousness, goodness and kindness; for truth evades them that actual righteousness, goodness and kindness are manifested traits within the children of promise, as by God’s indwelling (Mark 10:17, 18; Romans 3:1-31; 8:1-39)! Emulation of the righteousness of God is a carnal delusion; the actual righteousness of God is made manifest within disciplined, devotional, and humbly obedient legitimate children, or it is but a façade!

Whether the rituals and traditions of religion, or physical realm (man-made) religion itself; the corruptive compromise thereof is neither appropriate nor biblical. “the way” was pure and undefiled (holy) in its original context of love and devotional worship for the lord; yet the “christian religion” as with all secular religion is impure and defiled; for alterations from that which is holy, leads to that which is unholy, just as alterations from the truth lead to deceptions. the Lord must be worshipped in spirit and in truth, or he is not righteously worshipped at all! all worship aloof “in spirit and in truth,” is deluded worship of the evil one within ignorance!

Christianity - Begins and Ends with Looking Beyond Oneself!

The entire theme of the Bible finds summation in four parts:

- Introduction to our God; this including foremost love of the creatures for the Creator.
- Demonstration of our sin and our need of a Lord, Savior and Redeemer. This was emphasized in the Old Testament by the sacrifices and worship ceremonies for the cleansing of sin, and by prophesy concerning the Messiah; in the New Testament by acknowledgment and acceptance of the “glory of Christ” (Jesus as Lord) and the receiving of cleansing by His blood.

- God's plan of redemption proving our need for Him as our Savior (Genesis 3:15; Job 19:25; Psalms 78:35; Isaiah 41:14; 45:21-23).
- The complete fulfillment of God's plan of redemption when He comes in glory, cleanses the heavens and earth from all defilement, and takes His legitimate children home to His kingdom (Book of Revelation).

The theme of the Bible being the fulfillment of God's plan of redemption by the coming (First Advent) and return (Second Advent) of the Lord Jesus Christ, places emphasis of how the saints should remain focused upon the things of God in preparation.²¹⁷⁰ With this consideration, the statement in Revelation 22:7 of blessing to those who not only listen, but also heed (Greek = *tayrew* - to watch over, to guard continually) the word given them, makes absolute contextual sense.

The book of Revelation is the only book in Scripture that mentions a blessing to all who not only read, but heed the words of the prophesy (Revelation 1:3) and act accordingly.²¹⁷¹ The Revelation 22:7 passage is the central theme throughout Revelation and all of Scripture, because the statement made here sums up the quickness of His coming and the need for all to be prepared at all times. Just as the statement of Scripture is explicit in regards to His coming, this statement places emphasis upon the need to disregard the "manyana" (tomorrow) attitude of the world, as tomorrow may be too late!

A beautiful aspect of the Revelation 22:7 passage, is that it plainly sums up the attitude which should be central within all believers. This attitude should be one of eagerly awaiting His return, and seeking to reach the lost with great perseverance and appropriate righteous zeal! It is unfortunate that many believers are content with seeking the things of the world, and seeking the Lord only out of necessity when the world has let them down.²¹⁷² Rather than spending our greatest amount of time and effort seeking to obtain our riches and rewards in this life, we should place our greatest effort into being constantly prepared for His return, so as not to lose focus and be caught off guard.²¹⁷³ Righteous

²¹⁷⁰ 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 1:13-16.

²¹⁷¹ Revelation 22:14.

²¹⁷² 1 Corinthians 1:26-29.

²¹⁷³ Matthew 5:12-16; 6:1-8; 2 Timothy 4:6-8.

focus upon the Lord is foundational to first and foremost love for Him, which is foundational to righteous gratitude for God's many considerations and blessings; which are in accordance to His faithfulness from the foundation of the world!²¹⁷⁴

If ever a believer was to prepare (and stay prepared) for something, it is Christ's return! In the moment that Christ returns, His reward is with Him to render to all according to their deeds (what we have done for or against Him).²¹⁷⁵ This statement in Scripture indicates that in that very moment—all is said and done; therefore nothing else can be done regarding one's repentance, salvation, or reaching of the lost. Please understand my brethren, do not put off speaking forth the Gospel in this day, for tomorrow may be too late and the loved ones we have failed to reach will be forlorn to endure an unchangeable reality, and possibly eternity in torment!

Being watchful and loving has always been the order of the day for those known and called by God.²¹⁷⁶ He has always called His chosen to a higher standard of vigilance and righteous concern; this demonstrated by how quickly destruction has been allowed to come upon those who rebel, and walk blindly according to the flesh and the foolish teachings of man. Similar to the days prior to the flood of Noah and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, the inhabitants were going about their normal carnal routine when suddenly destruction was upon them. This is the way it will be also prior to, and at the time of Christ's coming.²¹⁷⁷ Many folks having told me that they do not read the Book of Revelation because it frightens them; having failed to realize that the Lord gave us the book of prophesy so as to allow us knowledge of what must take place. Having been warned repeatedly in Scripture of how quickly destruction can be upon us, we ought not be frightened but rather all the more vigilant to please our Lord in this day; thereby having no cause for regret tomorrow or at the time of His return.²¹⁷⁸

Just as faith comes from hearing and hearing by the word of God, and no one I know can learn from osmosis by touching their Bible, an

²¹⁷⁴ Matthew 25:34.

²¹⁷⁵ Revelation 22:12; cf. Matthew 12:30.

²¹⁷⁶ Romans 12:10-21.

²¹⁷⁷ Jude 1:11-16; Matthew 24:38, 39; Luke 17:26-30.

²¹⁷⁸ Romans 6:1-4; 13:11-14; 1 Timothy 4:16; Hebrews 3:13-15; 10:36-39; James 4:13-17; 1 John 2:28-3:3.

effort (action) is required to study and thus grow in faith.²¹⁷⁹ In a like manner as our faith grows when we are diligent to present ourselves approved as workmen (and workwomen) to our Lord, so the blessings from Scripture come when we heed (action) what we have witnessed by the Holy Spirit, for all inspiration comes from Him.²¹⁸⁰ In accordance with the truth that one must heed to be blessed when studying the Word of God, it becomes evident why multitudes read and yet never understand nor comprehend the Gospel; for those who are not effectual doers of the Word, delude themselves!²¹⁸¹ Many enter into the Gospel with the intent to criticize the validity of the book, in order to justify their lack of blessing and understanding; this indicates entering in with a calloused spirit and intent, which blocks the illumination of truth given by the Holy Spirit!

Many believers (whether Jew or Gentile) are content with being saved by God's grace, and never seek to remain pleasing to the Lord, as they seek Him to be a convenience rather than Lord of all. Many believers flock to supposed spiritual leaders whom appear to be righteous, as folks think righteousness can rub off onto them if and when they get close enough. Nothing could be farther from the truth, as: many spiritual leaders are not godly leaders at all; nor can the righteousness of one individual benefit another, unless an attitude for focus upon the Lord is within the receiving individual. God saves individuals, not groups; nor one person on account of another person's decisions. The Lord is a personal God, whom seeks and is quite capable of having an individual relationship with every human being simultaneously! We would do well to focus upon Him and stay our focus from others in regard to our faith. This is not saying we should not have fellowship with others, but rather never make another human being the object of our spiritual focus! If a supposed spiritual leader is content with your focus resting upon them instead of going beyond to be centered upon Jesus; walk away immediately! Christianity has everything to do with the Lord Jesus, and only has to do with us in accordance to His abounding grace and the kind intention of His will. To realize this, is to realize Christianity!

²¹⁷⁹ Romans 10:17; 2 Timothy 2:15.

²¹⁸⁰ 2 Timothy 3:16, 17.

²¹⁸¹ James 1:22-25.

When I first became a believer, I took things yet very much for granted. By God's grace there can be continual changing to become the legitimate child He wills that we become; His priorities become our priorities, void of all prior excuses and self-centered intent! I can speak from personal experience, when I say that we must be submissively involved in leaning and doing God's will, if the spiritual blessings of the Lord are to be upon us. We must cast our excuses, exceptions, deceptions, pride, arrogance and foolishness before the throne of grace and receive cleansing, if we are to ever truly walk in the light of truth, and stay our faith upon God!²¹⁸² To receive the blessings from God's lovingkindness and abounding grace given for victory, we must walk our talk (if faith is proclaimed) and abide (remain firm under, adhere to, remain faithful—thus heed) in the faith according to Scripture! God gives us a greater grace for this purpose, and in our love for Him we receive it for the righteous purpose intended! It is unfortunate that this is a truth millions of believers throughout history have not wanted to hear, yet this is the truth that begins our trek (in faith—by God's grace) to be free.²¹⁸³ God's love for us is not the varying issue; our love for Him is that which comes into question, when our victories in the faith have turned to defeat!

The invitation given in Revelation 22:17 is like a yodel, as it starts and just keeps going until it has been heard by all within its reach. Unlike a human yodel which is restricted by the power of the person's voice from whom it came, this invitation of

God's free gift is unrestricted as its originator is the Holy Spirit.²¹⁸⁴ In a like manner as a chain reaction, the invitation should progress without hindrance or interruption, as it is passed from the Spirit and the bride (saints) to those within range of the calling; then to the next, then the next, etc.²¹⁸⁵ This progression of the invitation being proclaimed, will not cease until all who have thirst (for light, truth and salvation) have heard the invitation which proclaims the free gift from God (the hope which is in us).²¹⁸⁶ It must be understood, we speak the Gospel truth in love (instruction); we cannot draw anyone to Christ,

²¹⁸² John 12:36; 1 John 1:6, 7; Revelation 2:4.

²¹⁸³ John 8:31-37.

²¹⁸⁴ cf. Luke 24:49.

²¹⁸⁵ John 14:12-14.

²¹⁸⁶ 1 Peter 3:14-16.

win anyone to Christ, teach spiritual matters, or force implantation of the Word into someone's spirit; for all righteousness in others coming to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) is by the divine work of God! We humbly and submissively serve; He works righteously with great power and precision!

The threefold invitation of Revelation 22:17, holds truth which should be noted. The free gift from God (the water of life) is the salvation given freely by the grace of God to all who believe in and accept the Lord Jesus Christ.²¹⁸⁷ Just as the invitation is emphasized to come from the Spirit then to the saints/church, and inevitably to all creation, it should be noted that each and every believer is responsible for their own link in the chain!²¹⁸⁸ Because evidence indicates that many believers are "Simple Christians" (called lukewarm in Scripture—Revelation 3:16, 17), who do nothing to grow in their faith nor for Christ to fulfill a ministry, we (the working believers; as faith without works is useless—James 2:20), must scream the word "come" all the louder to everyone we meet, so all may hear the good news of the heavenly kingdom before it is too late; for no one knows what tomorrow will bring forth according to God's good, acceptable and perfect will!²¹⁸⁹

The wonderful part of the invitation of Revelation 22:17, is that God's grace and free gift of eternal life is awesome beyond comprehension! The bad part of the works involved in the invitation's spreading is that many are afraid of rejection, sarcasm and/or tribulation, and thus do not pass on the invitation.²¹⁹⁰ Now back to the wonderment of God—as He will provide a way through all circumstances (because He is awesome) that the invitation will reach all who may thirst!²¹⁹¹ God has offered the free gift of salvation to all human-kind. To deny this wonderful gift and thereby the love of God is to call wrath upon oneself; as this denial is "the unforgivable sin"; therefore, we have only ourselves to blame! How can a loving God choose to send someone to hell? He did not make the choice; the individual made the choice by failure to accept the gift (acknowledge and receive the reality of the Christ)! The matter of folks hearing the good news

²¹⁸⁷ cf. John 3:16; 6:40; 11:25, 26.

²¹⁸⁸ cf. cf. Luke 4:18, 19; 9:58-62; 1 Peter 2:9, 10; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

²¹⁸⁹ cf. Hebrews 5:12-14; Matthew 9:37, 38; 10:27, 28; James 4:13-17.

²¹⁹⁰ cf. 1 Peter 3:14-17.

²¹⁹¹ John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9; 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

is not helped by the excuses of many who refuse to go forth and serve! Please do your part, by reaching all to whom you come in contact with the good news of God's love, grace and work, and the salvation there from!

Personal Note: It must be realized and remembered, that there are many false servants of the Lord; and supposed servants who make proclamations in ignorance (without actual Biblical knowledge)! There are many who bash individuals with religiosity, which causes callusing; this is an unfortunate yet real problem which must be dealt with by love and actual knowledge. Having this work (by demonic influence; selfish conceit; or both) accomplished prior to our arrival, we must pray before any and all endeavors for the Lord; for God alone can remove the callusing and poisonous effects of false evangelism and deceptive religiosity! It must also be realized that individuals not being drawn by God, will not be receptive to the truth; once again the imperative of prayer prior to righteous endeavors, so that individuals may (*if* the Lord permits) be prepared to receive the light of righteous truth!²¹⁹² True salvation start to finish is in accordance to the immense lovingkindness and grace of God; therefore, always leave intentional and considerable room by disciplined and devotional humble submissiveness, for God to fulfill the righteous work of which He alone is capable!

²¹⁹² John 6:44; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

CHAPTER NINE

ADDITIONS FOR BETTER UNDERSTANDING

Overview of the Book of Romans

PLEASE CONSIDER—this is but an overview of the book of Romans. This is not by any means an in-depth presentation, but rather information for spiritual sustenance. Within this presentation for consideration, please note that there will be aspects of truth which have been gathered from without the book; this for better understanding in witnessing the truth.

CHAPTER ONE

Chapter one of the book of Romans evidences the truth that God exists. This truth is so overwhelming, that none will have excuse for denial of it; therefore there is no actual basis that a true atheist exists (vs. 18-23)! When this truth (God exists) is denied, then the Lord releases those in denial to every conceivable form of human wretchedness; which includes the condoning of all such behavior, and acceptance of it by those who should know better (vs. 24-32).

CHAPTER TWO

Although some may say that they are not guilty of the forms of human wretchedness mentioned in chapter one, chapter two emphasizes that all humans are guilty of sin before the Lord, thus none of us are any better than anyone else. It is only by God's grace in writing moral laws upon our hearts that we may abstain from the inappropriate to do the right thing; for even the motives of our hearts are seen by the Lord (vs. 1-16).

An emphasis is rendered regarding the laws given the Jews by the Lord. Within the emphasis, the indication is made that hypocrisy and prejudice are prevalent factors within those who know God, as tendency toward judging others is predominant when focus remains upon outward forms of worship, instead of forms within the spirit derived from

love and submissive devotion (vs. 17-29). This renders the truth that outward forms of worship are not pleasing to the Lord, when inward love and devotion are not witnessed within one's demeanor. This again confirms the fact that the traditions of man mean nothing, when they attempt to replace by emulation proper worship in spirit and in truth (cf. John 4:23, 24).

Please note that in the emphasis that we will all give account for our deeds while in the flesh, as there is no partiality with God; our accountability is pertaining to whether our deeds have been for or against the Lord (vs. 5-11). As we have been justified by the Lord and thereby found not guilty of our sins, our accountability is not for sin but rather for the motives of our endeavors.²¹⁹³ A simple evidence of the truth is this, *if* our endeavors in life are in essence for "self"; we are against the Lord, not for Him!²¹⁹⁴

CHAPTER THREE

Many Jews did not come to truly believe in the Lord, although they had received His oracles. The emphasis here is that although the Jews had received the information in order to believe, many had yet failed; although in this failure the faithfulness of God was never placed in jeopardy, for He renders all that is necessary. Spiritual defeat comes in failure to evidence the truth, therefore the condemnation of non-believers is just (vs. 1-8); as evidenced in chapter one verses 18-21.

Demonstration is made that Jews, who have denied the Messiah of promise, will not be saved just because they are of the Nation of Israel. Although the Jews had received the Mosaic Law which rendered knowledge of sin and thereby knowledge that no man (or woman) does "good" at all times, and although they knew that a sacrifice for atonement had to be made for cleansing from sin; many have yet failed to realize the ultimate sacrifice which Jesus rendered once for all encompassed all mankind. In this failure to trust in the Lord by understanding of His oracles, many yet seek to justify themselves as by the Law, even though the Scriptures state that any such attempt is futile (vs. 9-20).

Our basis of right doing (righteousness) is founded in devotionally trusting in the Lord. When we fail to trust in the Lord to fulfill His

²¹⁹³ cf. Matthew 12:30-37; 1 Corinthians 3:4-4:5.

²¹⁹⁴ cf. Matthew 16:22-28; Philippians 2:1-6.

work of conforming us to Christ's image, we tend to trust in ourselves. In trusting in ourselves, we attempt to gain justification apart from the grace of God through His atoning work, thus we remain in our sins as the "not guilty" verdict of justification has not been rendered by the Lord. No matter how much effort is put forth by man in attempts to be justified by human actions, the end result remains condemnation within the penalty of sin (vs. 21-31). The result is the Law is established by faith, for the necessity of the atoning work of the Messiah remains the imperative which must be accepted.

CHAPTER FOUR

Justification is found solely within the grace of God! By the mention that Abraham was considered righteous by faith in God long before the Messiah had come, we know that no one is justified by works (vs. 1-3). Trusting God is the first step in right doing (righteousness), therefore it is only by trusting in God by faith that any form of Biblical righteousness may be manifest in human beings (vs. 4-8).

To further emphasize the fact of being justified by faith apart from works, Abraham's being justified by God came prior to his having been circumcised (vs. 9-12). We also can deduce that neither the Mosaic or Levitical Laws justify anyone, for Abraham who lived long before the Law was given to Moses by God, is the father of all believers; for Abraham truly placed his trust in God by faith, just as all must do in order to be saved by grace (vs. 13-25). Please note—although some may say that we are saved by faith, the truth remains that we are saved by grace through faith; thus saving grace is received solely by faith and trust in God (cf. 5:17).

CHAPTER FIVE

Chapter five brings forth a tremendous truth which many (possibly most) believers do not understand. There is a progression of things which upon occurrence of them brings forth true hope in God. Most believers may say that they hope in God, yet they attempt to bypass aspects of true hope which bring forth the actuality of it. Let us look at the progression which leads to true hope in the Lord:

Romans 5:3-5: And not only this, but we also exult in our tribulations, knowing that tribulation brings about perseverance;

and perseverance, proven character; and proven character, hope; and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

As can be witnessed in the aforementioned Scriptures, the first step to sincere hope in the Lord is exulting in our tribulations. It is from entering into tribulation for the sake of proclaiming the Gospel truth for the glory of God, that perseverance comes forth. As perseverance comes forth in tribulation, proven character is manifest in the believer by God as a blessing for having gone forth even in the face of adversity. As proven character becomes manifest in the believer; as God does that which is edifying and righteous; sincere hope in God becomes the end result. Far too many believers refuse to suffer tribulation for the Lord, and thus never take the first step which leads to true hope. When true hope in the Lord is not manifested by receiving God's blessing for having stepped out to serve, hope does not result; thus many tend to blame God when times become troublesome. Blaming God and trusting in God are opposites, thus our walk and obedience by faith is evidenced by the outcome of troubling situations; for Jesus rendered example to this fact!²¹⁹⁵ This is but one way in which we may test ourselves to witness whether we are actually trusting God by faith; allowing Him to draw us near from afar (reconciliation), thus also setting us apart through fulfillment of our duty, which is humble obedience in persevering through suffering (sanctification) (vs. 6-11)!²¹⁹⁶

Please note the immensity of God's grace, for while we were yet helpless sinners; Christ died for us (vs. 6-8). Also note that by the atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ, all those who accept God's wonderful free gift (GRACE) have been acquitted of all penalties derived from sin. Within this blessing we have been brought near from afar (reconciled), and saved for all eternity. It would behoove us to gain true knowledge (surety) of the tremendous grace (un-merited favor) which brought this forth in accordance to God's lovingkindness for those created in His image. Failure to gain this knowledge with surety is the foundation (sinking sand; cf. Matthew 7:24-27) from which many

²¹⁹⁵ cf. Hebrews 5:8.

²¹⁹⁶ cf. 8:15-17.

heresies and apostasies come forth within manmade religion, and ritualistic worship practices. God's grace is the greatest gift both given and received, yet the foolishness of manmade doctrines of religion have attempted to complicate the receiving of this gift (GRACE), to the point that many believers perceive it has to be earned through forms of works. Nothing could be farther from the truth (vs. 9-21; cf. 11:6)!

CHAPTER SIX: IDENTIFYING WITH CHRIST

Within chapter six is found the truth of Christianity which most believers fail to realize. This truth for spiritual freedom and victory is—we have died to sin with Christ Jesus (vs. 1-7)! If we truly love the Lord, we have no need of defense regarding sin; for in love we confess when guilty of wrongdoing (unrighteousness) and generally seek to abstain from it! Failing to realize this very important fact, many (possibly most) believers intentionally live in sin on a continual and/or habitual basis; having failed to realize that we are to be dead to it. Failure to realize the potential of grace within our lives, by failure to actually focus upon the author and perfecter of our faith (Jesus), tendency has leaned toward ritualistic worship practices, such as baptism with water.²¹⁹⁷ Complacency within the elemental principles of the world (religion of physical realm based superficiality), generally leads to obscurity regarding any “spiritual reality”; as living for the flesh primarily, with but short amounts of time per week seeking spiritual essence (generally in church), leads to practiced carnal endeavor, as the potential for submission unto the Holy Spirit is virtually nonexistent! The “baptism” of the Body of Christ is not performed with water, but rather performed as we are baptized with the Holy Spirit into death to sin, and are led away from the ways of the world which entices sinful behavior (progressive sanctification); thus we walk in newness of life as individuals dead to sin, yet alive in the Spirit!²¹⁹⁸ There are two different baptisms; one for the Jews (water), as by always seeking “signs” water baptism openly renders emphasis of their willingness to believe; and one for overall believers in the Body of Christ (with the Holy Spirit).²¹⁹⁹ Failure to realize the potential of grace which blesses us with the victory through faith, leads

²¹⁹⁷ cf. Hebrews 12:1-3.

²¹⁹⁸ cf. 8:3-14; James 4:3-6.

²¹⁹⁹ cf. Mark 1:4-8; Luke 7:24-35; Acts 1:1-5; 2:37-47; 1 Corinthians 1:10-17.

many to be mastered by the sinful nature (“self”), rather than being masters over it through the strength and guidance of the Holy Spirit.²²⁰⁰

We have been buried with Him through baptism into death, no longer to walk as those dying in sin, but rather as those alive in Christ. This is the behavior which sets us apart from non-believers and thus points to our true hope being in the Lord. When our behavior is no different than the condemned who are without Christ, then we have failed to submit to the Lord so that progressive sanctification may continue unhindered. To witness the fruits of many believers, it becomes evident that “death to sin with Christ” is not understood with any certainty, thus freedom has not been achieved (vs. 8-23). Simple fact, if we do not walk the words spoken regarding our faith, we remain ignorant and carnal!²²⁰¹

CHAPTER SEVEN

Chapter seven brings us to a truth which is not discerned by those who fail to realize death to sin, and baptism with the Holy Spirit; we have been delivered from the Law by the grace given us by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Law pointed out the wretched nature of sin in accordance to God’s standards of holy living. When we fail to realize our death to sin, then the Law seems important; yet death to sin means we are released from the Law as it is no longer necessary, for we no longer have necessity of that which points to sin for which we have died. By the surety of this knowledge, we understand that our potential is to walk in newness of life by the Holy Spirit’s power and leading, therefore we no longer live under the oldness of the Law (vs. 1-12). The Law was but a tutor to point us to Christ; with acceptance of Lord Jesus, the tutorial is no longer valid or necessary!²²⁰² In actuality, with the coming of the Messiah, the Law was made null and void; for the coming of the Messiah was prophesied with distinction!

When death to sin and release from the Law is not realized, then aspects of the Law are yet claimed as necessary; such as the tithe and water baptism. When the grace of God is not understood, then ritualistic worship practices are performed so as to mimic the receiving of grace

²²⁰⁰ cf. Titus 2:11-15.

²²⁰¹ cf. James 2:14-26.

²²⁰² cf. Galatians 3:10-29, specific vs. 21-26.

through acts of human works; thus the sacraments. Grace is the most misunderstood aspect of our Lord's everlasting lovingkindness; this is why it is taken for granted, or denied, which leads to manmade specifications for worship practices within the church. When will we realize that our Lord is the essence of pure love, and through this realization stop attempting to earn His love and grace? Our faith, or lack thereof, is proven by the nature of our existence; either walking by faith, or by sight.²²⁰³ Fantasy regarding this matter will not suffice!

Even though true knowledge and realization of death to sin gives us the potential to abstain from intentional sin; sin yet dwells within our mortal bodies, and therefore must be dealt with by faith moment by moment through disciplined focus upon the Lord. By the grace of God we can but put forth our best effort to deny and fight against the wretched nature of sin within us, and this we do by taking our thoughts captive to obedience to Christ quickly and efficiently; lest the thought become temptation, and the temptation become sin. When we learn to deny speculations and doctrines as set forth by those who do not understand the aforementioned facts, and the Gospel in general, we then gain the potential of knowing who we are in Christ and thereby the potential of our victory by faith and trust in Him. This is the essence of walking by faith in Christ Jesus, trusting Him for Christian success in this life (vs. 13-25)!²²⁰⁴ We can consider ourselves but wretched sinners and thereby remain in bondage, or we can understand that we are children of the one true God, and thereby maintain freedom and victory; the choice rests with each of us. Please remember, although we are no longer under the written Law, the necessity exists for submission to the moral and ethical laws which God has written upon our hearts! This humble submission is actually unto the Holy Spirit who blesses us with conviction.

CHAPTER EIGHT

With chapter eight comes the Biblical truth of Christian fruits, as God both wills and works for His own good pleasure within us; or not. The wonderment of salvation by grace through faith is realized first and foremost in this chapter, as there is no form of condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus (vs. 1-4).

²²⁰³ cf. 1 John 4:1-21; Ephesians 2:1-10.

²²⁰⁴ cf. John 8:31-36; 1 John 5:1-5; James 1:2-18, specific vs. 13-15.

As the chapter continues from this point, we come to realize that true Christianity is witnessed in the very demeanor of believers. This realization is not so much as to whether we are truly saved, as some believe they are and only God knows they are not; but rather the truth of the Holy Spirit's indwelling presence can be witnessed and thereby verified as having sealed us for the day of redemption; or not. The reality of a believer's focus and demeanor makes evident the truth of the matter; unless we are so clouded by the darkness of deception that we are no longer able to see clearly through spiritual obscurity (vs. 7-25).²²⁰⁵

Just as we must humbly submit unto the Lord to maintain appropriate focus for Christian freedom from the desires of the flesh, we must also submit in humble silence so that the Holy Spirit may pray in our stead, when the words seem to elude us. Silent time spent in prayer (praying in the spirit) is a blessing which most believers have never experienced. It is during this time that God's individual will for our lives becomes known with certainty (as He chooses to reveal it), and a time when His wisdom is manifest for future endeavors. Many believers do not understand the will of God for themselves individually and for humankind in general; this being why most believers do not pray according to God's will, but rather according to the desires of the flesh.²²⁰⁶ According to many forms of bogus teachings within the church today, it is seemingly difficult to know that God's will very much includes individuals; yet it does! Although many may say that God's will is solely that which is presented in the Gospel, this also is bogus; for He is a personal God who seeks an intimate relationship with each of us (vs. 26-35)! To understand this important fact, is to realize that our relationship with Him is the very essence of our existence as believers; for His personal anointing of individuals assures this reality (vs. 37-39)!

CHAPTER NINE

Chapter nine begins with the Apostle Paul being perplexed as to why God's chosen people (the Jews) were unwilling to accept the Gospel of truth. The Israelites had received the Law, the blessing of temple service, and promises of God throughout their history; yet now failed to successfully grasp the fulfillment of the promise which was realized in

²²⁰⁵ cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-3:7; 2 Peter 2:1-22.

²²⁰⁶ cf. 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

Christ Jesus, the promised Messiah. Because it was promised to Abraham that he would be the father of many nations, and by this we realize that believers are considered the children of Abraham, Paul specified that believing Jews were descendants of Isaac according to the sovereign selection of God, not children according to the flesh through genealogy; for God's choices distinguished between those of fleshly genealogy and those within the reality of faith-based spirituality, regarding the offspring of Abraham (vs. 1-8). Descendants according to progeny and descendants (children) according to promise, are completely different in this context; as the former walk by sight trusting in the Law (carnality), whereas the latter walk by faith trusting in God, as had Abraham (and Isaac) (spirituality). The distinction is therefore Isaac (spirit), not Ishmael (flesh); Jacob (spirit), not Esau (flesh).

Continuing on within the chapter, we come to realize that God had rendered all that was necessary for His chosen people, and all others (Gentiles), to believe. If anyone should have known the Messiah, it was the Jews, for they had received prophesy which eliminated any doubt as to who He was, and how He would come to be among them. According to the power of the Word which God inspired, the necessary truth was presented; yet denied by many. We also must note that God is merciful and renders His mercy upon whom He chooses, therefore none may claim priority or favor in the rendering or receiving of God's mercy. Simply put—we have no right to expect favor, for although only a remnant within the Nation of Israel and the Body of Christ actually remain focused upon the Lord and thereby deny the foolishness of worldly doctrine and standard, we are yet no better than anyone else, but rather appropriate recipients of grace leading to freedom and victory in Christ. Please remember that although the same grace is available to all who believe, and this according to God's lovingkindness, only a remnant chooses to receive the grace necessary for denial of the inappropriate; thereby gaining spiritual deliverance and success (vs. 9-33)²²⁰⁷.

CHAPTER TEN

Chapter ten reiterates Paul's earnest desire that his Israelite kinsman would come to have the personal relationship with the Lord, which comes by faith. The Israelites continued to seek a righteousness derived

²²⁰⁷ cf. 11:30-32; Ephesians 2:1-10.

from the Law, rather than submitting to the truth regarding Jesus, which brings forth the righteousness of God through faith. They were in essence attempting salvation by works (adherence to the Levitical Law), rather than accepting salvation by grace through faith apart from works (vs. 1-11). This being the reason why Paul's primary concern was for their salvation (v. 1); which proves that practiced beliefs according to past experience, stays individuals from the reality which occurs when change is brought forth by the Lord.

There are basically two main reasons why the non-believing Jews refused to submit to the truth regarding Jesus the Messiah:

1. The Israelites had become complacent in their being God's chosen people, and in this complacency had forgotten that they were called according to God's gracious choice.²²⁰⁸ Within their complacency, the Israelites were refusing to hear any words which were spoken about Jesus being the Messiah, and in this they (the Orthodox Jews) were remaining intentionally ignorant of the truth regarding imperative "faith"; thus rejecting the grace of God which could save them, while yet holding to the Law which could not. Pride within Jewish leadership was very much the culprit of their intentional ignorance, for the thought of Gentiles being equal with them within God's plan of salvation, was absolutely detestable. The Israelites, who listened to reason, came to understand the immense love of God for all; yes even the Gentiles; whereas many refused to look past themselves to gain this understanding. This is the same type of pride which has caused each of us to deny truth at some point in our lives, yet denial of Messianic truth leads to condemnation and an eternity of remorse (vs. 12-21).
2. Jesus had come exactly as prophesied, as a humble servant to bring God's Word to the Jews and to make expiation for the sins of all who accept the gift.²²⁰⁹ Because He had not come in power as a conquering king who would release the Israelites from Roman tyranny, as was the hope of many Jews, He was rejected by those who denied prophecy as by the darkness of selfish expectations.

²²⁰⁸ cf. Deuteronomy 7:6-8.

²²⁰⁹ cf. Zechariah 9:9, 10; Matthew 15:24; 21:5-11; Hebrews 7:26-28; 9:11-14; 10:1-29; 1 Peter 3:18-22.

Although Jesus will return to once again draw His chosen people (the Jews) back unto Himself, this will not occur until after the Great Tribulation Period (the millennial reign).

Also in chapter ten, is found the Biblical specific regarding—righteous confession of faith unto salvation (vs. 8-10, specific v. 9). The specific confession is “Jesus as Lord”; not Jesus as Savior! As has been reiterated in many portions of the book (Big If); the divine work of God righteously activates individual’s measure of faith, prepares, draws, and teaches the “glory of Christ (reality of the Christ), which leads to the righteous confession of faith; for the authority of Christ (God) is realized, accepted, and confirmed through righteous confession! This divine work of God never occurs when individuals seek a Savior through the flesh; for the divine work of God begins a “good” spiritual transformation, by which individuals are taken beyond beliefs in the flesh foundational to spiritual ignorance, unto faith-baseda faith-based spiritual reality which is foundational to spiritual knowledge, which is rendered solely by the Lord within His divine righteous work! This matter is confirmed within the book of Philippians (vs. 1:6; 2:12-16); placing emphasis upon maintaining spiritual focus and reverent devotion, hence the confession for the entirety of one’s corporeal existence!

CHAPTER ELEVEN

Chapter eleven brings forth many important truths, one of which is greatly misunderstood. When Jesus had not returned to reign in the second century A.D.; it was assumed (conjecture) by the Roman Catholic Church that two things had occurred:

1. The Jews had been set aside permanently, and the church had taken their place as God’s chosen people. It must be questioned as to whether this was actually assumed; for Roman Catholicism never held intention to submit unto God, but rather held intention to coerce Christianity with the many falsehoods of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion!
2. Jesus intended to rule over the earth through the church. It is from this form of inane human thinking that it was assumed that a man could have the authority of Jesus (God) upon the earth. From this

came Papal Catholicism, believing the Pope to be the Vicar (substitute) of Christ. This demonstrates the inability of many within Catholicism to walk by faith knowing that Jesus is in full authority; for now a man is assumed to command with the authority of God, and is considered inerrant (without error or fault). This is exactly the form of pride which led to Satan being cast from heaven, for Satan would settle for nothing less than being like the Most High God.

Within chapter eleven, we find the truth that the church has not taken the place of the Jews as God's chosen people! We also find that the church has never been entitled to claim the blessings of Israel which are presented in the Old Testament. Although many of the Jews had gone astray from the truth, instead holding to aspects of human works (the Law); for the church to believe them (the Jews) as being set apart permanently is completely inappropriate. Many within the Body of Christ (church) are also far astray within "self" complacency of somehow believing we are more deserving of God's grace than are they; this being the reason many believe the church merits the favor shown Israel.

We (the Gentiles) were called by God (grafted in) so as to cause His chosen people (the Jews) jealousy leading to repentance. Just as many Jews have fallen prey to spiritual corruption which led to their failure to believe, so also have many within the Body of Christ. When attention and focus is placed upon human beings who render empty deceptions, bondage becomes the end result; whereas attention and focus placed upon Jesus renders freedom and victory. The former are of the many, the latter are of the remnant (vs. 1-36)!²²¹⁰

CHAPTER TWELVE

Chapter twelve brings us to a decision—will we present our bodies a living and holy sacrifice (which is a "spiritual" service of worship), acceptable to God; or not. A quick rehash of former chapters will assist us in making our decision:

1. God exists. Denial of this truth which is blatantly evident throughout human history, leads to wretchedness in human behavior.

²²¹⁰ cf. Colossians 2:1-10; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18.

2. All human beings have sinned, and will give account for their deeds while in the flesh; were the “deeds” for or against Christ, thus spiritual or carnal (respectively).
3. We are not justified by the Law or any other form of human religious works, but rather solely by God’s grace through the redemptive sacrifice of the Lord Jesus Christ.
4. We are pleasing to God solely because of Jesus’ atoning sacrifice; therefore our only pleasing action for God is our trusting in Him by faith (cf. Hebrews 11:1, 2, 6).
5. God has justified believers as a free gift of His grace; therefore we have peace with God through Christ Jesus. Knowledge (surety) of this leads us through the progression which allows us true hope in the Lord.
6. We have been baptized into death to sin with Jesus; therefore we can walk in newness of life, having been freed from sin by God’s grace.
7. We have no need of the Law which emphasized sin; for although sin dwells in our mortal bodies, God’s grace gives us the victory.
8. Focus and mindset are the keys to true “spiritual” success while in the body.
9. Although all human beings have juncture to the side of err, the sincere grasping of Gospel truth eliminates the potential of eternal err.
10. All who know (and are known by) the Lord Jesus Christ will be saved.
11. Although the Jews were set aside because of their rejection of the Messiah, they will one day be drawn once again unto the Lord. They have always been God’s chosen people (by gracious choice).

I have reiterated a basic outline of the first eleven chapters of Romans, and included various truths from outside the book to emphasize the reality of what is presented in chapter twelve. The progression through the book of Romans, beginning in chapter one, leads us to understanding that focus upon the Lord by faith is mandatory, *if* we are to obtain and maintain spiritual victory by disciplined faith while in our mortal bodies. Understanding as to the progression allows us the potential for knowledge necessary to understand what Christianity is all about! Our faith teaches us that God is all important, and that our important purpose is found within our relationship with Him. To remain doubtful as to what is presented in the book of Romans, is to remain doubtful as to our position in Christ; thus our flesh remains in control as we submit to it inappropriately, thereby denying the leadership of the Holy Spirit. This is the prevalent downfall within most believers!

Paul urges us to present our bodies appropriately unto the Lord, for the actuality of doing so is our spiritual service of proper worship (v. 1). We are reminded that focus is key to success, *if* we are to actually deny conformation with the world, as by changing the way we think (v. 2). This goes further by emphasis that righteous thinking places asunder inane forms of thinking; thus allowing us the focus necessary to gain understanding as to God's good, acceptable and perfect will.

Note—Within Catholicism and its offshoot denominations (i.e. Methodist and Lutheran), conformation is required; this being conformation within human doctrine, thus a direct violation of verse two. This evidences how inappropriate (inane) thinking and focus do indeed lead us astray of the Gospel truth.

God has given to each a measure of faith, and grace abounding divine work to make our faith successful. This measure of faith has a dual purpose, as it both points us to God and allows us to abstain from arrogance. By examination we can see that by denial of arrogance as by the measure of faith given us, we gain the ability to have sound judgment as by realization of our human frailties, and God-given strengths. We also note that the talents given us in accordance to God's measure of faith are to be utilized in conjunction with the talents of all other believers; thus we all grow in aspects of Christ together (vs. 3-8).²²¹¹

²²¹¹ cf. Ephesians 4:11-16.

The measure of faith given us, along with the abundant grace to make our faith successful, does not stop at working together so that all believers may be edified. The measure of faith when strengthened by God's grace, allows us to: love without hypocrisy; live devoid of bigotry and prejudice; abhor what is evil, while clinging to what is good; remain selfless to honor one another; remain diligent in serving the Lord with spiritual fervor; rejoice in hope; persevere in tribulation; remain devoted to prayer; be hospitable in contributing to the needs of others. In this we return good for evil; place hope and blessing upon others; exercise appropriate sincerity and rendering of grace to others; abstain from conceit and exuberant love of "self"; relinquish our right to retaliate for a wrong suffered (forgiveness); overcome evil, rather than being overcome by it (vv. 9-21).

By that which is presented in chapter twelve, we gain further understanding of that which is revealed in chapter eight. We can allow our focus and mindset to wander because of the ways of the world, and the foolishness of manmade religious doctrine; or we can remain focused upon the Lord, and thereby learn how to love as He does, while remaining victorious in our walk by faith. As focus and mindset are truly key to spiritual success, the decision rests with each of us as to whether we will be spiritually victorious or suffer spiritual defeat. This is an area in the life of each believer which gains parameters from within; by the masterful leadership of the Lord, or the wretched leadership of our flesh; thus the actions of others can never realistically guide us within spiritual endeavor, for our relationship with the Lord is the only factor which can actually accomplish this task.

Note—The imperative of spiritual victory derived from remaining focused upon the Lord, leads to reason that distractions must be dealt with immediately. Because our enemy does not want us focused and thereby serving by the strength and wisdom which God provides, they (Satan and demons) will use any means possible to distract us from appropriate Christian servanthood and worship. *If* we have remained stagnant in offering our bodies as living sacrifices, which is evidenced by pride, arrogance and assorted other deeds of the flesh yet remaining predominant in our lives; distraction yet remains a serious issue to be dealt with! Taking all thoughts captive to obedience unto the Lord is imperative to continued spiritual growth and selfless sincere devotion; knowledge of,

and obedience to Biblical standards greatly assists in all endeavors while in our mortal bodies! Time past is sufficient to have obeyed all that is of our sinful nature: pride, lusts, carnal desires, selfishness, abominable idolatry, confabulation, etc., is realized to cause distraction, disturbance, spiritual detriment, and discouragement; thus taking thoughts captive to obedience must be a moment by moment endeavor of high caliber, the beginning point of this being—denial of volitional “self”!²²¹²

CHAPTER THIRTEEN

Chapter thirteen brings forth further truth as to the behavior which should be present within believers. The way, in which we submit, love, act, and consider others as more important than ourselves, demonstrates whether we are led by the Holy Spirit; or the desires of the flesh; the boastful pride of life; and/or the standards of the world by inappropriate failure to separate ourselves. This proves that we are known by our fruits, therefore testing ourselves is continually important, lest we remain upon the wrong path for extended periods of time.²²¹³

Chapter thirteen brings forth the truth that we must submit to the governing authorities, for there are no governing authorities except those established by God; this with the only exception that human expectations and demands violate strict Gospel standards!²²¹⁴ It behooves us to remember that God’s revealed will for humankind, is to lead us to the return of the Lord Jesus Christ! In keeping this truth as a reality which must occur, and realizing that the Gospel states that the affairs of the world will reach terrible wicked proportions prior to Christ’s return, we can submit with understanding that God is in control according to His good, acceptable and perfect will, thus our trust remains in and upon the Lord! When we fight against the ruling authorities, pride has invaded our ability to submit by faith; in this our flesh calls us to rebel against the ordinance of God (v. 2). This is not to say that we cannot speak out against injustice, but rather this states that we are not to outright rebel in matters which we cannot change, when in doing so our ability to love becomes hindered and thereby nonexistent. We allow the Lord to lead us by faith, thereby denying the prideful desires of our flesh (vs. 1-14).²²¹⁵

²²¹² cf. Matthew 16:24-27; 1 Peter 4:1-10.

²²¹³ cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Corinthians 13:1-9.

²²¹⁴ cf. examples—James 5:12, cf. Matthew 5:34-37; Matthew 7:1-5, cf. 12:34-37.

²²¹⁵ cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; Philippians 4:4-9.

Please remember, when we remain obedient to the standards set forth by God; thus obedient to God; He will righteously work in us so that all things will work together for inevitable good (cf. 8:28-39).

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Chapter fourteen brings forth the truth that we must not be judgmental about petty things. Although we are to judge the behavior of those who claim Christianity, and this according to the God-given standards of the faith which they confess; we yet must be careful not to judge others by standards which we personally have set, while always being considerate of the opinions of others which seem to guide them (vs. 1-4).²²¹⁶

Within this chapter we also find the reasons to have celebrations of certain days; or not. Although I no longer celebrate Christmas or Easter; having come to knowledge that these celebrations actually have nothing to do with the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ), except to attach His name to dates associated with pagan celebrations (Sol Invictus; fertility goddesses, respectively) which should have been denied by the church; I yet do not criticize those who participate in these celebrations, but rather hope and pray they would instead celebrate the goodness and righteousness of the Lord! Within this chapter we find that to celebrate, or not, is the decision of individuals. The question to be asked is—are they in fact celebrated for reasons considerate of the Lord, or solely by rote? Because each of us will give account as to whether our actions were for, or against the Lord Jesus Christ; this question holds much importance, as nothing of deceptive darkness is ever for the Lord, but rather against Him (vs. 5-12).²²¹⁷

When we judge others in matters which are not of necessity for spiritual growth and edification, we tend to cause them to stumble out of confusion or unwarranted concern. When we are inappropriately focused, we tend to overly concern ourselves with what others may think, instead of maintaining our confidence in the One who knows all things about us. When we fall prey to this type of concern, we tend to place emphasis upon inappropriately pleasing others, which generally leads us to further distractions which are without love; as the love of God manifest always involves strict discipline. In the type of unloving

²²¹⁶ cf. 1 Corinthians 5:6-13.

²²¹⁷ cf. Galatians 4:1-11.

behavior which comes forth, we tend to cause harm to others, while remaining blinded to the detriment our actions have caused. Our calling is to remain focused upon and victorious in the Lord; for the edification of all! Within this calling, we understand that although something may not be inappropriate for us personally, we must consider others who are present, and thereby allow love to prevail in all situations (vs. 13-23).

Please remember—it is not necessary for us to impress others, for our only goodness comes from the Lord who indwells us. When we remember this, we have no need of inappropriate actions derived from what others may think.

CHAPTER FIFTEEN

Chapter fifteen reiterates that by the grace given us, we ought to selflessly consider others. Paul states that we who are strong in our relationship with the Lord, should bear the weaknesses of those without strength, thus we should count our strength as something to be grasped, yet rendered for the edification of others. In this type of behavior, we do indeed walk as our Lord walked, for there is no reality of a strong faith without the works which prove the realistic faith (vs. 1-7)!²²¹⁸ This is the essence of passing tests, as to being in the faith!

God had known all along that His chosen people would reject the Messiah. He had also always intended that Gentiles would be blessed being within His family through faith. Although many Jews had become complacent in knowledge that they were God's chosen people, it was due this complacency that many had been angered by the fact that God has called Gentiles as well (yet differently—"grafted in"). This is the same type of selfish behavior which holds many believers into serving themselves only, while denying blessings upon others; lest their own blessing be somehow diminished. As selfishness and serving God are exact opposites, our potential of servanthood for God and others begins with denial of "self," which is also the first step to truly placing our hope in God (vs. 8-13)!²²¹⁹ Paul, who initially was a zealous Jew who focused upon the Law, came to realize that we are all under God's grace, revealed fully in Christ Jesus our Lord. Paul realized that we are to help one

²²¹⁸ cf. 1 John 2:3-11; James 2:15-26.

²²¹⁹ cf. reiterated Matthew 16:24-27; Titus 1:10-16; 2:11-15.

another; whether Jew or Gentile, makes no difference; for as children of the one true God we are all blessed in Christ. This is a lesson which we all must learn, for as the Jews were blinded by their complacency, so also are many denominations within the Christian religion, as they seek to take the place of the Jews; having failed to realize that during this dispensation of grace there is no distinction between the two, for we are all one in Christ Jesus (vs. 14-33; cf. 10:6-13).²²²⁰

When we fail to realize that we are all brethren by God's grace through faith, we also fail to realize that God's sufficient grace is our greatest blessing. Many within both the Nation of Israel and the Body of Christ yet fail to realize this, and for this reason selfishness and self-centeredness have caused great hindrance to the love and unity which should yet be prevalent! Many have yet to get beyond themselves, for the sake of all! God be praised, that He was never selfish in His calling, for without His grace and selflessness we would all be doomed unto condemnation!

Personal Note: The truth of Christian unity can be compared with a hive of honey bees. As honey bees are united in purpose, selflessly hard working for the benefit of all; so also should all Christians be selflessly united intentionally for one purpose—"the glory of God," which is for the edification and salvation of all!²²²¹ As any kingdom, city or house divided against itself cannot stand nor function with righteous efficiency, so also the church now being divided as by distinctly different teachings aloof sound doctrine, and denominations is no longer righteously efficient as the unification has been destroyed by the foolishness of blatant carnal individuality! Just as with the unification of bees, pollination occurs which renders blessing from God upon plant life and all living creatures who receive the sustenance derived there from, so also would God's blessings have been upon the living creatures of the world; most specifically those created in His spiritual image (human beings); had all the individuals within all congregations denied "self" so that unification and purpose would have been maintained; thereby all worshipping and serving God according to both His good, acceptable, and perfect will and the kind intention of His will! With all the individuality which has come

²²²⁰ cf. John 1:1-14.

²²²¹ cf. Philippians 2:1-18.

forth predominately since the time of the scholastic period (and supposed “Great Reformation Period”); it is quite easily understandable why the Lord has been closed out of the church since the A.D. 1950s! With blatant carnality comes blatant selfish individuality, and individualized seeking of all that is of the world; this causing enmity with God brings forth absolute disunity and downfall of the many; which is why the Lord knocking at the door of the current-day church is not asking that the door be opened, but rather that the few (remnant) who truly want to devotionally love and serve Him in the light of truth would personally invite the Lord into their life, external of the places where the truth is no longer wanted! If the church had actually reformed by returning to and immovably maintaining the truth of the Gospel, and accomplished this within absolute Biblical unity as set forth in accordance to the Lord’s standards regarding congregational settings, then the wonderful spiritual sustenance of the Word of Truth (Gospel) would have accomplished the desire of God that none should perish (for the most part)! Although many human beings by choice would and will never accept God as their Lord and Savior, none would have turned away because of the bitterness of religiosity and selfish human atrocities! All of the fantasy and delusional denial of these facts will not change the harsh reality; rather all who refuse to acknowledge reality will be further deceived by the evil one, to the point of a calloused and/or poisoned spirit which will no longer accept truth nor reverently fear and worship God!²²²²

CHAPTER SIXTEEN

Within the first several verses, we note that Paul is admonishing the church at Rome to greet others of the faith which they may or may not have previously known. This is a tremendous set of greetings, as we must greet with love all within the household of the faith, having no preconceived notions of what to expect; lest we fail to love one another as Christ has loved us. An emphasis of greeting those whom have not yet been met, can be potentially witnessed by Phoebe (v. 1) having come from Cenchrea; an eastern port of Corinth (vs. 1-16).

The chapter continues by rendering warning to beware of falsehoods which others may bring into the church. This is important to realize,

²²²² cf. John 4:9-38; 14:1-14; 1 Timothy 4:1-11; 2 Timothy 2:1-4:5; James 4:1-17; 1 John 1:1-10; 2:3-29; Revelation 3:14-22.

for although we must greet others with love and no preconceived notions, we must also be careful to examine the fruits and teachings of all; lest little by little a wolf in sheep's clothing enter in to devour the sheep. This is sound advice which has not been heeded within the Body of Christ to this day; for many false teachings, doctrines, precepts, traditions and forms of worship have entered into the church leading many astray of the truth. Victory and freedom are maintained by focus upon the Lord of discipline, truth and grace (vs. 17-20).²²²³

The chapter concludes with mention of the mystery which was revealed. This mystery (as indicated) is twofold in its nature, for revealed was the reality of Christ's coming according to prophesy, and God's calling of Gentiles to be saved. Please note that although Jesus' coming was prophesied from times long past, the distinction between His first coming unto suffering (Isaiah 53), and His second coming unto glory (Isaiah 11) were not distinguished by the prophet. The mystery of the Gentiles being called by God was revealed through the Apostle Paul's ministry (vs. 25-27).²²²⁴

This concludes this overview of the book of Romans. It is sincerely hoped that the information presented has helped in realizing what Christianity is all about. As aforementioned, tidbits of information have been included for the sake of clarification. Please understand, although I mention Roman Catholicism in a negative context, I yet love the individuals held captive by the falsehoods presented by this form of manmade religion. Please also consider that manmade religion will never save anyone, for the reality of the relationship with Jesus necessary to be saved is blatantly obvious within the Book of Romans; and the New Testament throughout.

The teachings of the Roman Catholic Church have brought forth many forms of harlotry within the church even to this day. Failing to understand the grace of God, the teaching of Catholicism continually attempts human works to achieve God's favor; denying justification, sanctification, and reconciliation to be the work of the Holy Spirit; instead believing and teaching these aspects of God's grace to be derivatives of human works and ritualistic religion. Within the evidenced

²²²³ cf. Matthew 7:15-20; Hebrews 12:1-11.

²²²⁴ cf. 1 Peter 1:10-12; Ephesians 3:1-21.

truth as by the deeds of Catholicism, we can note that as they deny the righteousness of God and yet seek to establish their own (ritualistic religion); in doing so, they remain incapable of understanding the Gospel, which is for the most part (New Testament) spiritually appraised!²²²⁵ Please remember that this is exactly the type behavior of the Jews who claimed that both adherence to the Law and believe in Christ were necessary in order to be saved (Judaism). We must be very careful who and what we choose to follow, lest we fail to come to knowledge of the truth and thus remain in bondage to delusive practices. We are called to be free and victorious, yet it is our decision whether we will grasp these blessings in accordance to God's grace; or not! The truth of baptism into death, and walking in newness of life according to God's grace, is only realized when grasped by devotional faith; yes with but the faith of a mustard seed.

It is hoped that notice was upon the considerable emphasis of God's grace. The book of Romans is filled with information pertaining to grace, and this because understanding of it leads to potential for victory, whereas misunderstanding leads to bondage and spiritual defeat; for truly we can do nothing appropriate aloof God's gracious leadership and nurturing!²²²⁶

God gives us grace because He loves us. When we attempt to warrant or earn His grace, we in actuality demonstrate that we are ungrateful of His lovingkindness, by feeling we must somehow pay Him for His gift. This is exactly as harsh as it seems; for how would we feel if we gave a gift in love, and the person insisted on paying us for it. This type of behavior is insulting at best, and completely inappropriate when responding to our Lord. Are we so prideful that we cannot simply thank and praise Him for His immense free gift? Have we failed to utilize the measure of faith He gave us, to the extent that we cannot understand, through our arrogance, that He is the very essence of pure love? Have we entangled ourselves so badly into "religion," that we can no longer understand that God did for us what we were incapable of doing for ourselves? SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH, NOTHING COULD BE SIMPLER! Saved by grace, led by grace, uplifted and strengthened by grace; praise God for His wonderful gift! Selah.

²²²⁵ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Colossians 2:20-23.

²²²⁶ John 15:1-17.

SIMPLICITY - A SIMPLE PATH FOR LOVE AND OBEDIENCE UNTO GOD

The Apostle Paul was a man who truly loved and trusted God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.²²²⁷ For an individual such as Paul to fear, was an illustration of that which could be extremely detrimental. The Apostle Paul was an individual who from the depths of his heart and spirit trusted the Lord for the appropriate outcome for any situation, demonstrated by these Scriptural verses (Acts 16:22-30; Philippians 1:12-14). With this knowledge in mind, we can better understand Paul's concern with the potential of Satan leading us astray from simplicity of devotion to Christ.²²²⁸

Ultimatum

Necessary steps for moving beyond adolescent
(immature; un-disciplined; self-centered) Christianity;
unto servanthood as a soldier for Christ
(2 Timothy 2:1-3:7)

The following will allow us to focus our priorities appropriately so as to allow our motivations to be Christ centered; therefore guided by grace.²²²⁹ The progression as follows, allows us the potential victory of faith through maintaining our focus upon (identification with) the Lord.²²³⁰ Watchful building from the foundation of our faith which is the Lord Jesus, is the beginning and ending of all Christian victories.²²³¹ To fail in taking the first steps within the elementary principles of the faith, is to bring forth potential regression with each step thereafter.²²³²

PREFATORY

Inasmuch as most individuals have little or no actual knowledge regarding the faith they confess; this pertaining to most religions; the specific imperative exists (regarding this document) to understand—what it means to be a “Christian”? The word “Christian” was first utilized at

²²²⁷ 2 Corinthians 1:3, 4.

²²²⁸ 2 Corinthians 11:1-15; cf. Ephesians 6:9-12.

²²²⁹ 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10; Philippians 1:19-21.

²²³⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:56-58; 1 John 5:4, 5.

²²³¹ 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11; Ephesians 6:10-12.

²²³² 2 Timothy 3:1-7; Hebrews 6:1-6.

Antioch; the specific of the term meaning—to be Christ-like (Acts 11:25, 26). What then is the meaning? Although the ignorance of the multitudes would consider the definition to indicate simply an individual who is saved by grace through faith, and this by Biblical standard aloof all other foolishness of Christian religious: doctrines, precepts, and philosophies; the reality directly dictates—individuals who by disciplined humble submission allow God un-hindered access so as to both will and work for His own good pleasure.²²³³ Disciplined humble submission remains an absolute imperative during the duration of a believer's life; for the work of sanctification by the Holy Spirit (God) is the means by which transition to higher levels of training and devotional servanthood occur; for this is the essence of “growth” which comes solely from God.²²³⁴ The greatest hindrance to the growth which comes from God yet remains the believer themselves, for personal volitional endeavors in most cases is precedent over humble submission unto the Lord; thus God's will remains second to the idolatrous volition of the believer, as they have refused to “deny self” for the purpose of actually following the Lord!²²³⁵

The evidence of the ignorance which yet remains dominant within the majority of professing “Christian” believers can be noted by:

1. The many who believe and confess to be “Christian” yet they neither abide in the Gospel or in the Lord as by disciplined diligence and humble submission (John 8:31, 32; 15:4-8).
2. The many who believe being a Christian is simply accepting Jesus as Savior; yet deny Him as Lord. In this, the fruition of God's presence cannot be evinced (Philippians 1:6; 2: 12, 13)!
3. The many who believe that journeys to a congregational setting will bring forth inevitable instruction suitable for all higher levels of learning and training. This is the essence of laxity; trusting in humankind and religion for spiritual growth (Colossians 2:20-23)!

²²³³ Philippians 2:1-16, specific vs. 12, 13.

²²³⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; Ephesians 4:7-16.

²²³⁵ Matthew 16:24-27; John 8:1-59, specific vs. 31-36; John 15:1-27, specific vs. 1-14; 2 John 1:7-11.

4. The many who believe that other human beings in the physical realm can teach them regarding the spiritual realm. Spiritual training can be emphasized (instructed) by human beings; the actual teaching (implantation) of the spiritual reality comes solely from God (James 1:21, 22; 1 John 2:20-29)!
5. The many who believe that righteousness within Christianity can be achieved as by association with other believers (emulation). This fallacy is far from the truth (Ezekiel 14:12-23)!
6. The multitudes who believe that a relationship with God is an emotional matter (supposed spirituality); thus the constant attempts at emotional exultation (revival) within religion. An actual nurtured personal relationship with God is a spiritual matter; receiving and achieving growth which is from God alone, denies the peaks and valleys of emotional responses, for they are vain and futile within the spiritual relational reality (Romans 8:5-11; 1 Corinthians 2:11-15)!
7. The multitudes who believe that religious traditions and doctrines hold importance for appropriate worship of God. This fallacy is also far from the truth, for the traditions and doctrines of humankind incorporate pride, arrogance, intellectual prowess, and fabrication; all of which are diametrically opposed to worship of God in spirit and in truth (Galatians 2:1-4:11; 5:17-26)!

What then is the lesson to be learned? The lesson curtails not knowing of God; but rather being known by God! Although God has knowledge of all things and all persons, the imperative unto salvation is being known by God as His adopted child! When a person is drawn by the Lord unto a personal spiritual relationship with Him, great care must be forthcoming continuously not to be taken captive by false: leadership, doctrines, precepts, philosophies, and traditions; or by Satan to ensnarement within delusion (fantasy, assumption, conjecture; aloof reality); which would potentially hold the believer within forms of bondage henceforth! It should be remembered—only one form of bondage need be present to hold an individual captive away from the light of truth; thus disciplined devotional love and submission for and unto the Lord remains the focal point of success!

- It must be realized—“religion” is a primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world; for aloof of the spiritual relational reality with God which is the salvation imperative, those trusting “religion” to save them as by the aforementioned wretchedness of humankind (and Satan), are murdered spiritually in accordance to Satan’s work of deception by which he has and continues to murder multiple millions (John 8:39-47)! If spiritual growth is to ever occur as by God’s work of sanctification, individuals must stop trusting humankind for answers and learn to listen when they pray; for an actual relationship with the Lord our teacher is absolutely realistically true and correct!

GAINING POTENTIAL AND IMPETUS

The first reality which must be considered is the various levels of Christianity (spiritual relational reality) which exist. Because it is according to these levels that individual believers will achieve capability of actual: fellowship with God, availability of His merciful patience, availability of the strength of His might, ability to follow His masterful leadership, and ability for submission unto Him for the increased levels of correction (the latter two in conjunction with the strength of His grace); the best way to describe the various levels is by association with levels of education.

- Within this analogy, it should be considered that levels of spirituality are in essence levels of Christian maturity in accordance to God’s work of sanctification. This in conjunction with an individual’s: strict discipline, denial of “self,” sincerity of devotion, submission to God, and subjection to His righteousness; for the greatest hindrance to God’s work within an individual (sanctification; exultation) is the individual’s decisions against the Lord’s good, acceptable and perfect will, and the spiritual kind intention of His will!

The first and only step which leads to potential spiritual success is—**SINCERE DEVOTION FOR GOD**; for without actual sincerity of devotion, the believer will never journey forth except within the realm of delusive carnality; for the Lord does not protect or guide superficial,

self-centered, and insincere individuals whose life is portrayed insidiously as by fictitious whims and desires. Most supposed believers are so delusional as to think that God is fooled and/or mocked, because other humans can be bamboozled; yet the fact remains that God makes notice of reality even to the core of motive! Anyone who has desire to ascertain and actually fulfill purpose as by their creation, must with all sincerity seek truth in its purest form; for God is the essence of: truth, light and love!²²³⁶

With understanding that we can love God only because He first loved us, it should always be maintained as “knowledge” that the beginning of all that is good came from the Lord! The elemental principles of the world have two aspects:

1. Religion; this aloof any understandable reality of the born-again adoptive relationship foundational to sincerity, devotion, and knowledge.
2. The importance of self; this aloof any understanding of its sinful nature, and powerful influence.

It is only from understanding these things that we can obtain knowledge as to the elementary teaching about the Christ, and the fact that an individual cannot go beyond elementary teaching unless God permits it as by His grace and examination of the individual’s motives.²²³⁷ When sincerity regarding potential devotion has been found within the individual by the Lord, they are then blessed with the “heavenly gift” which is fellowship with Him; for this allows the individual the potential righteous motivation to move forward, yet the forward motion is considerably based upon the individual’s continued sincerity and devotion (and this yet by degree), or not.²²³⁸

It should be noted—those sent forth by God to instruct regarding the spiritual relational reality necessary in order to be saved, must speak from actual knowledge; which comes from our one and only spiritual teacher—Jesus; instructed unto infants and adolescents who are

²²³⁶ John 1:1-14; 14:6, 7; 1 John 1:1-10; 4:7-21; Galatians 6:1-10.

²²³⁷ Hebrews 6:1-3.

²²³⁸ Hebrews 6:4-9.

generally yet ignorant of Scripture due to lacking Biblical studies and many falsehoods; the primary being former religious teachings.²²³⁹ Because we speak from mature knowledge of Gospel truth, which is actually the Gospel reality taught us by the Lord, and our instruction is unto those with little or no Gospel understanding, many times we may seem foolish because what we are saying cannot be spiritually discerned or appraised (for this ability comes from the Holy Spirit); yet in doing our best across the chasm which separates ignorance from actual knowledge, only those who strive to remain focused upon the Lord as by sincerity of devotion will be tolerant of our foolishness as by God's embrace upon them.²²⁴⁰ Those of us who have strived with diligence to better know and serve our Lord realize that our adequacy is from Him; whereas infants and adolescents (unknowledgeable workers) yet attempt adequacy of spiritual understanding by human effort and mental ingenuity.²²⁴¹

Elementary School

In order for a believer to go beyond spiritual elementary school, they must deal with the fact that apart from God we can do nothing good or righteous!²²⁴² In order to come to this reality with conviction, the individual must realize that the importance of "self" taught by the world (under the influence of both the sinful nature and Satan/demons) is part of a deception instigated to keep human beings in bondage away from truth (the Lord). Within dealing with the aforementioned deception, there are specifics which should be dealt with efficiently; if the individual is ever to move forward to spiritual middle school, which is the beginning point of forward motion unto God's upward call which is in Christ Jesus.

1. Deny "self" (personal volition and behavior)! An understanding of crucifying the sinful nature with all of its characteristics must be forthcoming; also disciplined effort derived from the understanding!²²⁴³ Anyone who believes themselves to have capability of serving the Lord while yet walking by emphasized personal volition is but a

²²³⁹ Matthew 23:1-33; specific vs. 8-10.

²²⁴⁰ 2 Corinthians 5:10-13; 11:1-15, emphasis vs. 3, 6, 12-15.

²²⁴¹ 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:5; 2 Corinthians 3:1-5:21.

²²⁴² Psalm 14:1-7; John 15:1-16:1; example—3 John 1:9-11.

²²⁴³ Matthew 16:21-27; Ephesians 5:1-17; Colossians 1:9-23.

blinded individual who seeks to journey forward while obscured (inability to see clearly) as by the work of carnal volition and/or once again believing the importance of “self”! Until an individual is brought to the glory of Christ (reality of the Christ) by God’s divine work, a veil of obscurity remains; which makes void any spiritual growth potential, which is then depraved by any return to personal volition (“self”)!²²⁴⁴ Soldiers for Christ (high school level students) walk by faith (within all reality); while blinded individuals walk by sight within the insidiousness of religious concept and assumption, for they remain captive within the schemes of the Great Deceiver (Satan)!²²⁴⁵ Multitudes are spiritually inept because of complacency within ignorance of truth; for they fail to realize once again that “self” (as by its nature) is not important; for our importance and purpose are discovered and fulfilled within a devotionally sound relationship with our Creator!

2. Personal pride (foundational to adolescence) is not an option; for the Lord is opposed to this form of pride (adolescent; stubborn and rebellious)!²²⁴⁶ Self-centered volitional pride is an extremely formidable foe during any effort to draw closer to God; for its blinding effects obscure the light of truth necessary to walk upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness, as reconciliation is greatly hindered while remaining in opposition!²²⁴⁷
 - Boastful Pride (self-pride) in various levels is the primary human generated factor which hinders multitudes from ever going beyond spiritual elementary school!
 - A prideful believer will question and/or outright reject righteous instruction; then generally make excuses for having done so! If a believer cannot follow instruction (without self-pride and arrogance) from another human being who has been anointed by God to train regarding the admonitions of the Lord, they will not be able to muster the humility necessary so as to receive the Lord’s manifested teaching (knowledge) within their spirit (which manifests

²²⁴⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:7-18.

²²⁴⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

²²⁴⁶ James 4:3-6; 1 Peter 5:1-11.

²²⁴⁷ Galatians 5:16-26, specific vs. 16, 17.

actual growth); thus they will remain spiritually destitute and blinded to the fact of their predicament!²²⁴⁸

- There are very few (remnant of the remnant) soldiers (high school and beyond level students) for Christ among the remnant of actual Christians on planet earth! Although many believe themselves to be soldiers for the Lord, the truth remains that only the diligent, disciplined, and courageous have the fortitude to be submissive unto the Lord and in subjection to His righteousness so as to actually receive His tutelage unto spiritual success. For this reason, most Christians remain children fantasizing spiritual warfare and devotion; yet double-mindedness holds them in bondage to both spiritual cowardice and apathetic self-centeredness. There is a huge difference between being an actual soldier trained for spiritual battle and servitude, and a child who fantasizes about being a trained soldier; for the former actually follow the King into battle, whereas the latter only notion soldiering, while going in a direction of their own volition!²²⁴⁹
- A considerable reason why most Christians remain spiritually destitute is due to a lack of “emphasized discipline.” Although the multitudes believe that love can nurture youth for mature fruition beyond adolescence, the truth remains that without godly discipline the youth grows to adulthood in a manner which is without lasting discipline leading to righteousness; this being the reason most adult Christians never achieve the mind of Christ (college graduate level), thus henceforth they remain spiritual adolescence void of potential for devotional sacrificial submission (high school level training) unto the Lord for discipline; this being why most grow very little spiritually during the entire duration of their mortal lives on earth. Who so ever the Lord loves He disciplines; yet this is only upon those who are spiritually mature enough to receive the blessing!
 - It should be remembered, growing “religiously,” and growing “spiritually,” are not synonymous; for the only

²²⁴⁸ Hebrews 10:19-39.

²²⁴⁹ Matthew 7:13-27.

religion designated by God (Levitical Law) pointed specifically to the Messiah (Christ), and this prior to the necessity for faith which was revealed with the coming of the Christ. Those who learned by the tutor (God's designated physical realm religion—the Levitical Law) have and will accept and confess Jesus as Lord, thus potentially moving forward and upward within the imperative of faith; those who failed to learn the tutorial regarding faith remain stagnant within religion, yet attempting to mimic the spiritual relationship as by physical realm religious mimic and emulation.²²⁵⁰

Spiritual maturity (abounding sanctification—1 Thessalonians 4:1-8) is the will of God for all His children; this maturity is accomplished in three ways:

- 1. The pupil (disciple) must read the bible!** Because faith is increased only by the Word of God, any pupil wishing to gain increased understanding must strive toward full potential; this accomplished by reading the Bible from Genesis 1:1-Revelation 22:20, and this to begin the learning endeavor (Romans 10:17). The Bible is the most sold book on planet earth; yet also the least read! Although there are millions of people who claim to be “Christian” (Christ-like), the reality is that there are millions of supposed Christians who are so delusional that they believe they can journey forth in ignorance; hence they go in a direction of their own volition because they did not read the instructions!²²⁵¹ With reading the entire Bible as a beginning of the learning process, comes a blessing from God, *if* the endeavor is foundational to disciplined diligent devotion! With continued selfless disciplined devotion; when accompanied by humble obedience and diligence; the Lord will begin to literally teach His child (pupil) through spiritual discernment and appraisal, while also showing correlation between the individual truths of the Scriptures which form a foundation of specific truth regarding subject matter; for in doing this the Lord

²²⁵⁰ Galatians 2:1-4:11, tutorial specific 3:15-29.

²²⁵¹ Romans 15:1-13, specific v. 4; 1 Corinthians 10:1-22, specific vs. 20-22.

teaches us how to accurately handle (cut straight) the Word of truth.²²⁵² This is a blessing which is only bestowed upon selfless: disciplined, diligent, and devotional pupils (disciples)!²²⁵³

2. Human beings are sent by the Lord to render instruction in love with a spirit of gentleness, and/or a rod (sternness) of discipline; whichever is necessary within the need of the circumstance!²²⁵⁴ Those who are carnally minded generally do not realize that true sincere love (God's love manifested) always includes necessary discipline!²²⁵⁵
3. Those who by earnest devotion for God go beyond spiritual effeminacy (undisciplined cowardice) receive the blessing of God's chastisements with whatever severity is necessary, for continued growth within their current grade level. If individuals cannot cope with the severity of human discipline, they will never be able to cope with the chastisements of God, for His chastisements reach to the core of an individual's motives and intentions; many times with a severity which is unsurpassed by the strictest of human effort! Spiritual adolescence and most Christian adults cannot even conceive of the correcting abilities which God alone possesses; for they have never endured as from devotional love for the Lord, to maintain the forward momentum to His upward call through the pain suffered from lesser correction and rebuke. It is from personal sincere disciplined devotion for God, or not, that spiritual students will endure, or not, the punishments so as to surmount the threshold hurdle of the next grade level. Strict righteous discipline from God, including stern chastisement when necessary, is for our betterment; therefore, being disciplined by the Lord is a righteous working of His goodness!

The reality is this, in the race which is our walk with God, there are many hurdles!²²⁵⁶ This race must be run according to the rules, *if* success

²²⁵² 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 27.

²²⁵³ John 8:31, 32.

²²⁵⁴ 1 Corinthians 4:19-21; 2 Corinthians 2:1-11; 7:8-12.

²²⁵⁵ Hebrews 12:4-11; 2 Corinthians 13:5-10; Galatians 5:22, 23; cf. Romans 8:1-17.

²²⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:24-27; Hebrews 12:1-11.

is to be achieved! When individuals are adopted into the family of God (born again), and are but spiritual infants, the Lord in accordance to His grace sets the hurdles very low so that they can be crawled over. Upon the individuals entering spiritual school (as by the analogy) the hurdles are raised to force exaltation (uplifting) to higher levels pertinent to the upward call of God which is in Christ Jesus.²²⁵⁷ Because the forcefulness necessary involves personal motivation derived from “disciplined devotion” for the Lord, only those who are sincere in striving forward to His upward call muster the strength of His grace to surmount the higher hurdles. Those whose motivation is contingent to their double-mindedness and waning sincerity seek to revert backward due to spiritual laziness (spiritual infancy); thus they crawl under the hurdle, vice surmounting it (which is according to the rules). This is a primary way in which individuals deceive themselves, for they convince themselves that having passed beyond the hurdle they are further along in the race; having failed by personal deluding to realize that they are now disqualified!²²⁵⁸ Disqualification from the race which is God’s upward call does not have necessity of being permanent, yet the individual must go back and proceed henceforth according to the rules, *if* they are to succeed; lest they continue in a race within which they have been disqualified, believing themselves to have been successful within the depravity of their own mind! It is unfortunate that multitudes of believers are effeminate wimps, as they have believed the fables that all Christians are to be passionate and loving; this occurring because they have failed to realize that godly love always involves strict discipline, thus righteous indignation!

Failure to understand the aforementioned is the reason why the multitudes within Christianity never journey forward of spiritual elementary school! Although many claim to “deny self,” the reality can be noted in their demeanor; for as long as a person asks—“what’s in it for me,” or how does this fit into my scheme of things, they have not denied “self”! Without the actuality of “denial of self,” individuals cannot enter middle school levels of training; although many believe they can, for pride and arrogance co-exist within the continuation of allowing the sinful nature to yet remain insidiously in control.

²²⁵⁷ Philippians 3:1-14.

²²⁵⁸ James 2:18-26.

Many (most) elementary school level Christians have no idea the patience and fortitude which is required by those sent to instruct them; especially when those sent are of college levels regarding spiritual growth, who have been trained to literally have the mind of Christ, thus appraising all things according to absolute realistic truth. The lower level students rarely realize the humility the instructor must put forth to remain instructing at lower levels of spiritual immaturity for the sake of the students; for elementary level students cannot conceive of selfless humility, because of physical adolescent pride.²²⁵⁹ Through the earthy (carnal) immaturity of pride and arrogance, the lower level students fanaticize equality with the instructors at levels which are actually inconceivable to them; then when snapped back to reality as to the need to get busy and stop procrastination, the students whine, moan and groan because within their obstinacy to reject denial of “self,” they attempt to blame the instructor for their failure to mature. The fact remains that with refusal (disobedience; rejection) to deny “self,” there will be no realistic humble submission to allow the Lord to take them beyond the flesh; which is imperative to begin the trek which leads to spiritual maturity! This is extremely common amongst elementary school level Christians, which is why the multitudes accumulate for themselves lukewarm teachers who will teach according to the whims and desires of the earthy (carnal) students, who abound with the pride of adolescence; which can be witnessed in individuals even during later years of life! When this occurs, the higher level instructor actually sent by the Lord must walk away; which generally brings further whining from the students as they attempt to blame the instructor by accusation that the instructor has given up on them; yet as the harvest is plentiful and the workers few, the instructor cannot waste further time on lazy, complacent, and immature believers who refuse to put forth the appropriate effort to move forward! The world unfortunately is full of ignorant, complacent and obstinate lukewarm believers; who, speaking from experience; never mature beyond elementary levels of training, even after years of instruction; and this generally because they refuse to “deny self.”²²⁶⁰ Any highly trained un-compromising servant of the Lord, who is a Pastor, will generally have a very small congregation; for

²²⁵⁹ 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

²²⁶⁰ Revelation 3:14-22.

spiritual infants abounding with “self” (prideful adolescent mindset) hate words such as strict discipline, imperative diligence and effort, follow instructions, imperative to investigate truth which includes testing oneself and the judging of one’s demeanor (words and deeds) rightly, imperative to “deny self,” etc.! The fact is apparent, that bodily adolescent pride which remains for years or decades is a primary reason why multitudes have never been led by the Lord beyond spiritual adolescence; for as God is opposed to the proud, and pride remains a formidable foe against righteous spirituality, “self” must be denied *if* a trek toward spiritual maturity is to ever begin! This is the reason that a primary responsibility of all Christian parents, remains that “pride” must never be allowed to abound or continue during child rearing; for this is not a request!²²⁶¹

The problem which causes habitually maintained spiritual adolescence within the multitudes; second only to the insidious nature of “religion,” is the avoided fact that Christianity is a spiritual matter aloof the physical realm, with the exception being God’s manifested fruits which go forth from within His servants to without. Because the “Christian religion” is a foolish physical realm mimic of the spiritual realm relationship necessary in order to worship God righteously, multitudes remain ignorant of spiritual understanding and truth; which is imperative for freedom from the bondage of physical realm worship.²²⁶² It is because of not only ignorance, but also obstinate complacency within ignorance, that the multitudes who call themselves “Christian” remain void of understanding regarding spiritual matters; thus their endeavors are pursuant to the physical realm mimic of the spiritual relationship, which holds them captive to attempting spiritual matters within physical realm intelligence and postulated human thinking processes. This is the reason multitudes never grow as by the Lord’s work of sanctification, for they either do not understand how, or they are too un-devotional to put forth the diligence necessary to make the transition. This is the reason that the first and foremost commandment has always been to love the Lord with all of one’s heart, soul, mind, and strength!²²⁶³ The Levitical Law was the tutor which pointed to Christ;

²²⁶¹ (Proverbs 13:24; 19:27; 22:6, 15; 23:12-16; 29:15.

²²⁶² John 4:20-38.

²²⁶³ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40.

the Holy Spirit teaches how to make the transition, which initially involved signs, wonders and the emphases of the distinct works of God (later referred to as the “Trinity”). Because making the transition is difficult although absolutely possible as by the indwelling Holy Spirit, multitudes attempt to hold onto human leadership to carry them across the threshold between the physical and spiritual realms; yet no human being is capable of leading others where only individuals can go as by the Lord’s masterful leadership! Without disciplined devotional humble submission, which cannot occur without denial of “self,” the Lord’s righteous leadership is rejected because of prideful adolescent disobedience!

- Of the multitudes I have attempted to convey this truth to, only a remnant has ever made the transition into the spiritual realm where the Lord is found (glory of Christ), and where personal fellowship with Him leads, teaches, exults, and nurtures the individual. Multitudes tend to cling to others so as to be carried along, because they cannot release their fleshly mindset; except by postulated conjecture!²²⁶⁴ Many more having been blessed with a small amount (taste) of fellowship with God, as by His measure for adolescence, immediately become arrogant so as to believe themselves to have reached full fellowship potential; this being the result of the adolescent pride initiated within their sinful natures. A simple “taste” of fellowship with the Lord (ineffable heavenly gift) is seriously lacking from the seven (number of completeness) course meal which is the furthest extent (spiritual nourishment) of fellowship potential possible at college levels of spiritual growth! Volition (willingness) to deny “self” can never be overstated, for *if* individuals are not capable of volition to deny “self,” then their actions (fruits) emphasize plainly that they have no intention of following God unto the purposeful abounding spiritual reality; which is according to the kind intention of God’s good, acceptable and perfect will! The Lord seeks to train us for the eternal spiritual reality, even now while in our corporeal bodies, which is why we are to seek first His heavenly kingdom; which very much includes taking us

²²⁶⁴ Romans 8:1-17.

beyond all that is of the flesh (“self”; sinful nature) so that we may walk by faith and no longer by sight!²²⁶⁵ Without “denial of self” there can be no humble submission unto the Lord; without humble submission unto the Lord, He cannot work His righteousness within us; therefore, we remain fleshly and earthy (carnal), with nary a concern for the spiritual consequences! Failure in this regard is the primary reason that multitudes never go beyond elementary levels of spirituality within their relationship with the Lord! It is this continuous elementary mindset and actions (carnality; fruits) there from which constitutes “lukewarm” Christianity; this behavior is the reason the Lord is sickened (spew = *emew*—to vomit), for He is unable to take the infants beyond the flesh to the potential of the spiritual relational reality within which their purpose may be fulfilled!²²⁶⁶

- A relationship with God is not an emotional matter! Emotions are inherent to our corporality; thus attempts at spiritual discernment as by emotional responses, remains an integral part of both religious deception and personal delusion! Those who remain deceived in this manner, tend to need repeated “revival” in order to maintain levels of emotional stature within the illusion; while never actually being able to come to knowledge of the truth!

**MANDATORY STEPS TO MOVE BEYOND
SPIRITUAL ELEMENTARY SCHOOL:**

1. Deny “self”; reject personal volition which contradicts or rebels against God’s good, acceptable and perfect will, and the kind intention of His will! For this to occur, the child of God must learn the various ways in which the sinful nature controls them; such as pride; arrogance; self-centeredness; fear of truth and discipline; refusal to admit one’s frailty, limits, and double-mindedness; carnal mindedness; etc.
- An imperative exists to exert effort to gain understanding as to the many facets of the sinful nature which would seek to

²²⁶⁵ Matthew 6:30-34; 2 Corinthians 4:13-18; 5:1-9; 10:1-18, specific vs. 1-5.

²²⁶⁶ Revelation 3:14-19; cf. 1 Corinthians 3:1-11; Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

maintain control; for but one form of bondage can hold human beings captive to the mastery of the sinful nature, adolescent pride being foremost! For this reason all “Christians” must seek to recognize the sinful nature and all its facets; lest denial of specifics remain when the Lord seeks to bring the individual’s darkness to light, which would bring forth potential freedom for the spiritual growth necessary to move forward to God’s upward call in Christ Jesus.²²⁶⁷ It is generally the aspects of individual’s sinful nature which they refuse to acknowledge, that holds them in bondage to darkness; within which demonic instigation becomes influential! As God knows everything about each of us; when we hide from the reality of our sinful nature, we delude ourselves; thereby living a deception as we seek to hide from the reality of our existence! The Lord desires to take us beyond all that is inappropriate (unrighteous), yet within our deluded existence we refuse to allow Him to work!²²⁶⁸

2. Realize the war has been won; yet many individual battles must yet be fought. Children of God who cannot muster the fortitude to approach God’s throne of grace to receive the strength necessary in accordance to the need of the moment within a battle, cannot move forward; as practice to approach God’s throne with humble boldness is very much a part of middle school levels of training.
3. Begin to stand on one’s own spiritual feet upon the rock which is our Lord; this occurs by willingness to devotionally surrender! Any child of God who feels the need to hold onto other humans for strength of spiritual stamina, on a constant basis, is yet to immature to surmount the hurdle test for movement forward to higher levels of training. As all such immature insecurities are derived from failure to know one’s place in a personal righteous relationship with the Lord; and this many times because of a continued “religious” (physical realm) mindset; personal surrender has yet to occur and must be forthcoming; this occurring only by trusting God by faith, which is a disciplined spiritual matter!

²²⁶⁷ Philippians 3:8-14.

²²⁶⁸ Philippians 2:1-16; Colossians 2:1-10; James 1 19-25.

- This is an area where the individual's fruits will emphasize the reality as to whether they actually walk by faith, or only profess walking by faith while remaining prideful and complacent during the simplest difficulties!
4. A primary matter which must be dealt with is acceptance of truth!
- Because most human beings cannot face the fact of personal volitional wretchedness before God, forms of denial hold them captive away from humble surrender so they may journey in the light of truth as He is in the light!²²⁶⁹
 - Anyone who is not willing to face the real and factual truth about themselves, as they would seek to dwell within a fantasy of their own volition, will never be able to proceed forward from spiritual elementary school; for middle school level Christians must be willing to frequently taste of the heavenly gift which is actual fellowship with God, so as to gain wisdom, understanding and knowledge; for frequency of reception motivates to increased journeys in the light of truth, so as to move forward and upward; yet this will never occur for those who choose to live in denial! Anyone who refuses to investigate truth and walk therein is a spiritual infant; of which the world contains multitudes!
 - The greatest moment in the life of a human being is the moment they submit to God fully, so as to have the deeds of their flesh exposed (brought into the light of truth)! Why we fear this occurring is hard to understand, since the Lord our Creator knows all things about us; yet we seek to hide from Him, leading to our failure to achieve purpose as by creation.²²⁷⁰ This greatest moment is realized by very few; for adolescent pride and arrogance leads the multitudes to think more highly of themselves than they ought, and this because they refuse the second imperative of the measure of faith rendered unto them!²²⁷¹ It is very painful to have one's deeds fully exposed; this being the reason most humans

²²⁶⁹ John 3:1-21; 1 John 1:5-10.

²²⁷⁰ Colossians 1:15-23; John 15:1-16:1; Matthew 25:32-46; Ephesians 1:3-2:22.

²²⁷¹ Romans 12:1-3.

come to a complete stop and revert backward spiritually, at some point during elementary and middle school levels of training! When the Lord convicts us of even the least of the problematic deeds, we whimper and cringe; yet the remnant who assuredly have decided to love the Lord first and foremost, endure the pain and continue to submit for full deed revelation, whereas the multitudes tuck tail and return to the darkness of their fleshly deeds, as they lack the courage and fortitude to go the distance; which would have allowed going beyond the deeds of the flesh so as to become instruments of the righteous fruits of God!²²⁷² God's revelatory exposures are actions within His righteous goodness, and should therefore be accepted with gratitude; never rejected because of foolish adolescent stubborn and rebellious pride! The cowardly retreat occurs mostly at elementary levels of training, within adolescent believers who have yet not realized the imperatives of strict discipline to deny personal volition ("self"), and walking in truth at all times! No one who is willing to journey in the darkness of deception or delusion will ever enter middle school or higher levels of training! Ever! It is unfortunate, but many supposed servants of the Lord are guilty of the adolescence (spiritual infancy) explained here; which certainty causes severe spiritual detriment to all who follow them!²²⁷³

MIDDLE SCHOOL

During the middle school level of Christian training, individuals learn the importance of sincere selfless love for others; even so to the point of considering others to be more important than themselves.²²⁷⁴ If a person cannot deny their own volition to a point so as to accomplish selfless love (God's love manifested), they cannot proceed forward from lower levels of middle school spiritual edification, so as to receive continued training with a righteous effect!

²²⁷² Galatians 5:16-26.

²²⁷³ 2 Peter 2:1-22.

²²⁷⁴ Philippians 2:1-16.

- The essence of denying “self” so as to have devotion for God sufficient for forward progress beyond elementary levels of Christianity, is evidenced (proven) within a decision to place God first and foremost in one’s corporeal existence! If a human being cannot deny “self” so as to accomplish absolute sincerity of devotion for God, they will never be able to actually be sincerely devoted to anyone; for actual sincerity of love is the result of God’s love having gone forth unto fruition! Double-mindedness is diametrically opposed to decisions of assured certainty; thus anyone incapable of disciplined decisions of certainty will inevitably slow to an outcome of spiritually stagnancy, which returns them to elementary school. True devotional love within humans wavers only slightly when moving forward with the Lord, as by human frailties; whereas idolatrous (self-centered, carnal) love wavers greatly and is uncertain at best, when remaining aloof God’s masterful guidance and nurturing!²²⁷⁵ To understand the love of the Lord is to understand how to love others selflessly! This lesson is of great spiritual importance during middle school levels of training; for we must sincerely love all others if we are to ever serve the Lord!

Although due to human pride and arrogance, multitudes believe themselves to be ready and accessible to higher levels of spiritual education, the reality remains that they are running the race under disqualification because they have continued to crawl beneath the hurdles; vice surmounting them! Without disciplined sincerity of devotion for God, individuals will never receive the strength and guidance from God which allows them to go further than their current grade level; for God blesses diligence derived from sincere disciplined devotion, and nothing less!²²⁷⁶ With the mindset of spiritual infancy which the multitudes retain (physical realm religiosity leading to spiritual depravity), the majority seek God’s blessing with little or no effort on the part of the individual; thus complacency breeds delusional spiritual depravity which is maintained by intentional ignorance!

²²⁷⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:1-13.

²²⁷⁶ Hebrews 12:7, 8.

Because only God can implant selfless love and the Gospel reality, the imperative of middle school levels of training is devotional discipline for submission to the Lord!²²⁷⁷ This discipline imperative is twofold:

1. First and foremost for the seeking of strength from God to deny “self” on a more continuous basis; first for increased devotion for the Lord, and secondly to learn actual love for others, which never seeks personal gains from within the devotion.
 - From the acceptance of appropriate strength comes the placing of increased trust and hope in the Lord, thus trusting less in oneself and one’s human accomplishments; therefore the individual must decrease, for the Lord must increase.²²⁷⁸ The increase of the Lord and the decrease of the disciple (learned pupil) within an immovably determined attitude is necessary during middle school levels of training; for during the duration of this training period the students must learn the humility necessary in order to be attentive to the teaching from God regarding the Gospel. The living and active nature of the Gospel is in actuality the truth behind the words; this being spiritually appraised, must be taught the student by the Lord, or actual knowledge of Gospel truth will not occur.²²⁷⁹ For this reason the seeking of fellowship with the Lord by the student must be of considerable repeated mention, for this is an area of imperative for future ability which will come under attack from the demonic realm; as to go forward to high school levels of training and actual servanthood by God’s masterful righteous leadership, now makes the student a threat to the forces of darkness! Satan has little concern for the spiritual ineffectiveness of individuals who do not receive God’s righteous leadership through actual intimate fellowship with Him; for anyone who seeks establishment of their own righteousness as by rejection of God’s righteous strength and work, remains powerless against powerful forces of darkness!²²⁸⁰ Anyone who believes they are immune to Satan’s powerful

²²⁷⁷ James 4:1-10; 1 John 2:3-17.

²²⁷⁸ emphasized—John 3:25-36; Ephesians 6:10-18.

²²⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

²²⁸⁰ 2 Timothy 2:1-3:17.

scheming is already held captive to delusive disbelief; for doubting or rejecting God's standards for spiritual maturity, individuals remain within the realm of delusive religious fantasy! The spiritual relational reality within which we are saved and led by the Lord is all about Him; therefore spiritual growth remains a key imperative, which mandates humble submissive obedience and disciplined devotional diligence!

2. For the purpose of gaining understanding regarding the distinction between inappropriate physical realm religious emulation, and actual spiritual realm worship of God which is righteous and acceptable.
 - Satan and his demons are not threatened by religious believers who have neither actual Scriptural knowledge, nor fellowship with the Lord for appropriate victorious service; for Christians only become a threat to spiritual forces of evil through actual knowledge and humble submission to serve as by the Lord's masterful leadership and strength. For this reason, middle school level students must motivationally abide in the Gospel and don the full armor of God; lest they fall away when attacked!
 - It is from diligence regarding this discipline imperative that a student may gain momentum toward higher levels of training, or not; as disciplined devotion even to the core of righteous motive is that which is rewarded by the Lord, when maintained within God's guidance!²²⁸¹ The reality remains, that *if* and when we immovably decide to be devoted to the Lord first and foremost, He will implant the righteousness within individuals which leads them to spiritual maturity and success! Failures are determined within individuals who cannot maintain: discipline, devotion, diligence, and spiritual fortitude; because of carnal double-mindedness!²²⁸²

Because it is during the middle school time frame that individual believers will either muster further motivation derived from disciplined

²²⁸¹ Romans 10:1-4.

²²⁸² James 1:2-12; 4:1-10.

sincere devotion for God, or not; leading to growth or reversion; disciplined patience must be rendered by the human instructors, yet the patience must remain stern with emphasis upon continued forward motion. If the patience rendered to middle school level students is too lax or lenient, reversion will generally result; for a considerable instigation of the human sinful nature is to return to a more relaxed comfortable state of physical realm existence, which leads to spiritual laziness; spiritual laziness in most cases leads individuals back to states of “walking by sight,” which inevitably leads back to elementary levels of self-centeredness and selfishness; thus reversion back to square one minus the born again experience! If discipline wanes during the middle school training period, the individual’s forward motion will slow considerably; therefore discipline must never diminish during this period of training!²²⁸³ Those believers who were whiny due to discipline during the elementary school duration of training will generally quit shortly after entrance into middle school, for they cannot muster the personal fortitude to continue! **It must be understood, the levels of discipline and correction by the Lord increase as the grade levels progress; for the kind intention of God’s will is that strict spiritual maturity and fortitude cause complete rejection of all carnal motives, intentions and actions; for He seeks to train us for the absolute righteousness which is yet to come!**²²⁸⁴

If all the aforementioned appropriate emphases are not forthcoming continually, and there has been a decrease in appropriate discipline, the door to inappropriate pride will be left ajar, thus the student may begin to believe the spiritual accomplishments to be derivatives of personal effort. When this occurs, the student generally reverts back to forgetfulness of where spiritual growth comes from, because pride obscures the light of truth.²²⁸⁵ Even small blunders of this sort can be seriously detrimental, for it is during the middle school duration of training that students are taught the importance of receiving spiritual teaching within the heavenly gift which is actual fellowship with God; for ultimately, knowledge must come forth that the saving relationship and fulfillment of purpose is all about the Lord! Therefore, through disciplined training

²²⁸³ Hebrews 12:1-29, specific vs. 6-11.

²²⁸⁴ Romans 13:10-14; Hebrews 10:19-39; 1 Peter 1:3-16.

²²⁸⁵ 1 Corinthians 4:6-21, emphasis v. 7.

which emphasizes increased trust in God, a student motivationally decreases progressively regarding “self”; for with the introduction of foolish mistakes, the student would tend toward an increased trust in “self” and a decreased trust in God *if* it were not for the discipline imperative! It is during the middle school training period that students learn to submit to God so as to receive His personal tutelage, and this with the assistance and by the example of the instructor; thus they learn the imperative of a maintained appropriate mindset, which leads to submissive righteous actions!²²⁸⁶ *If* the appropriate mindset is not forthcoming continually (for any reason whatsoever) students yet being susceptible to the sinful nature, and the influence of demons, tend toward the seeking of understanding through personal intellectual prowess; thus they revert back to carnal ambition and personal pride, which places them in opposition to both God and furthered growth.

When a spiritual middle school student has learned: the imperative for disciplined devotional submission to God, the importance of walking by faith (in all reality; learned by experiencing fellowship with God), the necessity of increased hope and trust in God, and also the need of personal decrease so as to receive growth from the Lord; they are now prepared to cross the threshold for high school levels of spiritual training.

Important Note: Although tastes of the heavenly gift of actual fellowship between individuals and the Lord will come from God so as to emphasize necessary spirituality and fulfill specific purposes (such as the born-again experience; personal anointing), it is during the middle school rearing years that students motivated toward progression will strive for the fellowship experience more abundantly! Middle school level students who do not strive with diligence for increased fellowship with God, will generally not progress well within any higher grade levels; this generally leading to regression or outright quitting due to waning spiritual strength, for strength regarding continuance comes from the Lord! Please remember—**it never gets easier, only tougher**; which is why the multitudes within Christianity are effeminate quitters, except to supposedly serve God as by concept and assumption within false humility and arrogance!

²²⁸⁶ Romans 8:1-30; specific vs. 1-17.

It must be understood, from the beginning of middle school levels of training and above, the instructor must be within God's righteousness; for those aloof the Lord's righteousness and actual fellowship with Him, most certainly cannot instruct others pertaining to the spiritual reality, when they have never experienced it themselves! Only true servants of the Lord called and anointed by God for the purpose of instructing the spiritual reality, have capability of instructing higher levels of training; for the instructors must instruct in accordance to the Lord's leadership, which is the reason they must achieve abounding fellowship with the Lord specific to the students, as the Lord alone knows the immediate training necessities of the student(s), which is then passed to the instructor prior to class! Anyone aloof the reality of God and the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) who attempts to instruct regarding advanced training, is but foolishly attempting to "teach" from a foundational basis which is devoid of God's masterful leadership and nurtured embrace. The students, who are forced to pay the consequences of such selfish behavior, will never go beyond personal sustained (carnal) endeavor; for the instructor remained within the carnality of "self," and thus so also will their students, as the reality of being taught by God personally is neither known or accepted. The spiritual relational reality is extremely serious, and must never be taken lightly; for complacency within considering the matter to be "too light a thing" is an abomination to God, and thus renders void the Lord's embrace during all attempted endeavors!²²⁸⁷

MANDATORY STEPS TO MOVE BEYOND SPIRITUAL MIDDLE SCHOOL

1. Sincere appreciation of the truth; even when it hurts! The child of God having been trained to evidence the truth and walk therein must remain susceptible to the convictions of the Holy Spirit when at the threshold of walking in darkness. As no lie is of the truth, any student who is yet willing to make excuses cannot move forward; for an excuse is an attempt to avoid or evade truth or reality, thus of darkness. As we must walk in the light as He is in the light for appropriate fellowship with Him to occur, walking in darkness must cease to be an option at this point; for abounding fellowship with the Lord is mandatory during high school levels of spiritual training,

²²⁸⁷ Ezekiel 8:1-18, specific vs. 16-18.

as by personal training from the Lord, the learned pupil (disciple) is being trained to move beyond instruction from other human beings!²²⁸⁸ A key factor which must be continually forthcoming within students at this level is disciplined earnestness to evidence the truth; for during higher levels of training, humble submission becomes imperative so as to receive realistic truth manifest within the individual's spirit personally from the Lord God! Continued prayer with supplication for "truth" being imperative becomes a disciplined distinction; for God's work of sanctification abounds during hence higher levels of training!

- Actual knowledge regarding this factor brings forth realization why an individual cannot reach this level of training, unless they have achieved the valiance necessary for complete revelation of their sinful deeds. Anyone who has remained effeminate due the pain of revelation will never move forward to the upward levels of servanthood training; for they have chosen to remain within the comfort of cowardice! It must be remembered, our sinful nature seeks primarily "ease" and "comfort"; thus to achieve higher levels of training, we must never give into the desires and influence of our sinful nature!
2. Ability to stand alone upon the rock which is our Lord! Any child of God, who cannot be immovable enough to stand upon the rock without the help of other human beings, cannot move forward from this point; for high school levels of training are solely for the spiritually mature!
 3. Increased ability to study the word of God (Bible), including etymology understanding. If a child of God cannot study the Gospel with increased understanding of the words from original forms or meaning, they will be unable to study the Gospel exegetically and hermeneutically, which are imperative for higher levels of spiritual training. Pupils must learn the word specifics singularly and combined, to understand the intense meaning of what has been rendered by the Lord, and why!

²²⁸⁸ 1 John 2:20-27.

4. Ability (by choice and God's strength) to separate from close relationships with non-believers and those who hold to a form of godliness yet deny the power thereof.²²⁸⁹

- Students at this level have given up the foolish notion that God's instructions are by request, or debatable!

HIGH SCHOOL

Having learned to: be sincerely devoted to God, deny "self" at all times and thus abstain from pride and arrogance, not only accept the imperative of strict discipline but also consider it to be a necessary relational factor, love others with sincerity and pure motives, strive for selfless devotional humility so as to obtain abounding fellowship with God, make time daily for prayer and study of the Bible; students are now at the threshold of high school levels of spiritual training.²²⁹⁰

- Very few believers (a remnant of the remnant) ever make it to this level of training; for most have crawled beneath the imperative hurdles prior to this stage of spiritual maturity, and been disqualified! "Self" and the attributes thereof are the foundational bases of this failure; for pride, arrogance, and personal volition are not denied to the point of absolute rejection by the multitudes, who remain believing that the spiritual relational reality is all about them; whereas the truth remains that the spiritual relational reality is all about God (infinite Creator) by the choice of His devotional legitimate children (finite creatures)!
- A harsh reality, all believers who do not reach this level of training are actually lukewarm believers who remain displeasing to the Lord; for they have yet to seek that which is pure and undefiled!²²⁹¹ This is not to say that the Lord will give up on an individual; for if a lukewarm believer turns from foolish double-mindedness and returns to selfless sincerity of devotion, the Lord can and may draw them back into higher levels of training to His upward call.²²⁹² Selfish and/or prideful complacency are

²²⁸⁹ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-17, specific vs. 1-5, 12-17.

²²⁹⁰ 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:16; Ephesians 4:1-32; Hebrews 5:11-14; 12:1-11; 1 Peter 3:13-4:6.

²²⁹¹ Revelation 3:14-22; specific vs. 15-19; cf. Hosea 6:4-6.

²²⁹² Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

the primary dangerous foes which keeps the multitudes from the repentance necessary for return to training; thus a key to avoiding complacency within ignorance is to never stop striving to move forward toward God's upward call (highest levels of training), for true diligent and devotional obedience unto God demands nothing less!²²⁹³

High school level training can be compared with ROTC, for training now begins regarding the ability to receive strength and render instruction unto others in service to the King (Jesus); the big difference being that this training teaches how to fight spiritual foes in the spiritual realm.²²⁹⁴ A student of half-hearted devotion would not have made it this far through the training process; yet now seriousness for personal stern discipline becomes of great importance, second only to the imperative of sustained devotional fellowship with the Lord, for now He is Master and King.

- It is personal motivation derived from disciplined loving devotion to know and serve the one true God, which carries the student forward through the high school level of spiritual training.
- It is generally due lack of sincere devotion for the Lord that stops the large majority of Christians from ever reaching the spiritual maturity necessary to journey this far and beyond. Whether the lack of devotion is from pride, failure to deny self, worldly distractions, marriage, idolatry, following others, religion, or inability to believe in that which cannot be seen; the result remains the same, for most individuals having conception of walking by faith never actually do! Because God gave to each a measure of faith, and because He is plainly noticeable by that which He has created; there will be no acceptable excuse by anyone on the day we each give account for our deeds and behavior, even so to the core of our motives!²²⁹⁵

²²⁹³ Philipians 3:1-16.

²²⁹⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; Ephesians 6:10-18; 2 Timothy 2:1-4.

²²⁹⁵ Romans 1:18-23; Titus 1:15, 16; 3:3-11; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 1 Peter 4:1-6; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; 1 Thessalonians 2:1-12; Revelation 3:14-19.

- The essence of self-centeredness and idolatry within the human sinful nature can be plainly noted by the fact that our Creator had to command love and respect from those created in His image.²²⁹⁶ It should never have been this way, yet the justice of God is demonstrated in how He created us with the ability to both have faith and volition; therefore, the ability to be for or against Him! Inasmuch as we should have disciplined devotion to love the Lord our: God, Savior, Master, King, and Creator; God's love even by our Creation is emphasized, as also our foolishness in thinking too highly of ourselves (arrogance), should we decide to be against Him by exuberant love of "self" (narcissism) which denounces sincere love for God!

During the high school level of spiritual training, prayer and earnest study of the Gospel are of the highest priority; with emphasis remaining upon trusting God with increased: zeal, dedication, discipline, and diligence. The students days begin with prayer, with prayer emphasized throughout the day as the student learns to render their praise, adoration, thanksgiving, concerns, troubles, anxiety, confusion, lack of understanding and yes even their all in all unto the Lord, and before His throne of grace.²²⁹⁷ The living and active reality of the Gospel is received (manifest; implanted) in a believer's spirit by personal blessing from God, therefore request for truth, inspiration, and illumination is requested frequently during study of the Gospel; which is studied to a much deeper level than ever before! At this level of training, God's wisdom, understanding, and knowledge are rendered and received; for the imperative of forward momentum to God's upward call now very much includes the ability to spiritually appraise and discern (blessings from God), all of which are foundational to devotional reverent fear of the Lord.²²⁹⁸

Students who have reached this level know with certainty that the purpose of human existence is to know, love, and serve God our Creator! When a student of this appropriate spiritual stature maintains focus upon the author and perfecter of faith, growth from the Lord is increased to the point that personal training from God abounds to the

²²⁹⁶ Deuteronomy 6:5-7; 13:1-4; Matthew 22:36-40; Colossians 3:1-7, specific v. 5.

²²⁹⁷ Hebrews 4:12-16; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24.

²²⁹⁸ Proverbs 1:7; 4:1-9, 20-27; 9:10-12; Jeremiah 33:3.

internal level of spiritual soundness which is directed by the Master. A factor which keeps high school level students from going forth to the highest college levels of training is marriage; yet from the attained level of training, the student learns how to love their spouse and children in a sacrificial and selfless manner; thus love abounds to the levels God intended, for true love is a spiritual matter which controls the emotional aspects of the human nature. Students at this level learn that human emotions have no place in ministry, for Christianity is a matter of a spiritual mindset and function ability which is controlled to fulfillment by the Holy Spirit!

- The two distinct children of God within a marriage (husband and wife) will only progress to the highest level of training (college level), *if and only if* they have truly become “one flesh” in being devotional to the Lord; for without complete unity in their relational endeavors for the Lord, either one of the distinct two individuals may become a distraction unto the other!²²⁹⁹ A pair of individuals, who have become one through devotional unification (marriage devoted to God), can receive special and abounding blessings from the Lord, which render strength and blessing to their offspring as by the presence of the Holy Spirit!

High school level students through endurance, diligence, fortitude and focus pass beyond elementary levels of military training to become spiritual tacticians who efficiently utilize the full armor of God so as to fight powerful foes in the spiritual realm.²³⁰⁰ Because God tests the hearts and minds of all who seek Him; and even more so those who seek Him diligently; those who have achieved higher levels of servanthood and obedience are blessed with the strength of God’s might, so as to obtain victory through trusting in God when most others have fallen away due to trivial trials, persecutions, tribulations, and sufferings. Students at this level become taciturn regarding worldly and empty chatter, instead serving by the strength which God supplies while speaking as it were the utterances of God; for His words have power,

²²⁹⁹ Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:4-6; Mark 10:1-12; Ephesians 5:22-33.

²³⁰⁰ Ephesians 6:10-20.

whereas human words are most times weak and frail! Simply put, students at this level of training have distinctively changed lives as God is allowed to both will and work for His own good pleasure!²³⁰¹ Students at this level of training have actual discernment as to why most believers do not have changed lives; for now they live the truth of how disciplined submissive obedience leads to surrender unto actual spiritual growth, which the Lord puts forth within the “Christians” as an action of righteous goodness!²³⁰² Students at this level have learned the extreme difference between the emulation of righteousness which is of the Christian religion, and actual Christianity which is solely within the righteousness of God!

Only students at this level of training will ever be anointed by the Lord to train others as soldiers for Christ.²³⁰³ Students at this level; if married; will train their children regarding the admonitions of the Lord; for they are aware of the dangers their children will face in a world ruled by Satan, knowing also that righteous deliverance comes only from God.²³⁰⁴ Although there are many individuals who claim servanthood according to God’s anointing in training others; the fact remains that very few (remnant of the remnant) actually have been called by the Lord to train others righteously from God’s masterful leadership of them! Students at this level of training are true “Christians”; for they trust in God, have confidence in God, focus upon God, and submit to God in all things!

MANDATORY STEPS TO MOVE BEYOND SPIRITUAL HIGH SCHOOL

1. No longer trusting in one’s own potential, rather trusting fully in the Lord; as is humanly possible within relational distractions (spouse, children, friends, lukewarm believers, etc.).
2. Willingness to be fully separated from the world and that which is considered of importance by the world.²³⁰⁵ Students of further training openly and completely accept God’s work of sanctification;

²³⁰¹ Philippians 1:1-11; 2:1-18, specific 1:6; 2:12, 13.

²³⁰² Mark 10:17, 18.

²³⁰³ 2 Timothy 2:1-26, specific v. 2.

²³⁰⁴ 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

²³⁰⁵ 2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1.

putting aside all that would hinder His righteous work!²³⁰⁶ It is because of this absolute surrender that married individuals will generally not progress forward, as concerns for their spouse and family cause distraction. This does not hinder them from appropriate servanthood deemed the level of their accomplishment by God's grace; this stipulates only that they cannot move forward to be wholly submissive in surrender unto the Lord for a life entirely pertinent to soldiering within God's righteousness.

- I have never personally known a married couple who were completely unified in devotion for the Lord, who have ever gone forward to the highest level of training. This of course is not to say that the unified endeavor is impossible; for all things righteous and holy are possible with the Lord, within unified individuals who maintain the proper and appropriate mindset, along with disciplined diligent devotion and obedience!
3. Ability to accept discipline and chastisement from the Lord to the intricate level of motive and intent! Students at this level are appreciative of God's chastisements; for these chastisements bring forth the ability to appraise the essence of not only one's own existence, but also the necessary appropriate loving correction regarding the servant's family and friends. Friends at this level of training are far and few between, for with training from the Lord regarding the imperatives of strict discipline, adamant focus, obedience, and righteous dedication; all who are not sincerely devotional and dedicated to the Lord find offense toward those who immovably put God first and foremost over all else, which is proven by their speaking the utterances of God and avoidance of worldly and empty chatter (chitchat)!²³⁰⁷ Those of high school and college levels of training live the reality of being conformed to the image of Christ; whereas those stopped at lower levels of training, have only concept and assumption of this reality; although the kind intention of the Lord's will has always been that all achieve the higher levels of training!²³⁰⁸

²³⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 6:9-20.

²³⁰⁷ 2 Timothy 2:1-26, specific vs. 16-19.

²³⁰⁸ Romans 8:26-30; 12:1-3; Philippians 3:15-21.

COLLEGE

Having been called personally to a life of service by the Lord God, denied “self” to the furthest extent—“volition” (which is a never ending battle), placed the salvation of others as their highest priority, second only to God and spouse, separated from the world and inappropriate relationships by seeking first God’s kingdom with righteous focus and motive, chosen to exchange an earthy mindset for a spiritual mindset, praising and thanking God for all things (whether difficult, easy, peaceful, troublesome, good or bad, etc.), denied personal comfort and wealth; an individual can now move forward to God’s highest upward call, while yet in corporeal form.²³⁰⁹

One of the greatest disappointments which has kept individuals from reaching this point of training, who were given a heart of devotional servanthood by the Lord even so from their birth, is “religious bondage”! An emphasized example of this can be noted within the humbled hearts of some Catholic servants (nuns; friars, brothers); who sought a life of servanthood for God, yet were drawn immediately into the insidious nature of Catholicism, and thereby held prey to the wiles of Satan; being therefore entrapped in the darkness of religious deception. Because it is the job of any Christian to evidence the truth and walk therein, the individual is ultimately responsible for having failed to appropriately worship the God of the Bible; who alone can actually save individuals from the wages of sin which is death. Any Christian who celebrates “Easter” is guilty of having failed to evidence the truth; for “Easter” is actually insidious worship of Ishtar—the Babylonian Queen of Heaven! This is the form of religion from which came the Baals and goddesses of the Ashtaroth (goddesses of fertility) which are adamantly condemned in the Gospel!²³¹⁰ No one who worships God within the darkness of deceptive pagan religion can ever go beyond elementary levels of spiritual training; for God cannot and will not bless any form of practiced deception (sin), therefore His strength is not rendered for deliverance!²³¹¹ Sincere devotion for the Lord must be maintained continuously if upward levels of spiritual training are to ever be achieved! This is not debatable; for the absolute holiness and righteousness of

²³⁰⁹ Jude 1:1-25; John 15:1-16:1; Romans 8:1-39; 10:1-21; Matthew 6:1-34; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-28; 2 Corinthians 3:1-4:6; 6:14-7:1; 12:1-10; Philippians 4:1-20; 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

²³¹⁰ Judges 2:13-19; 10:6-16; Jeremiah 44:17-30.

²³¹¹ 1 John 3:1-18.

God cannot be varied to accommodate human foolish unrighteous desires and carnal whims!

Students at this highest level of training have realized that prayers of praise and thanksgiving unto the Lord are of extreme importance and value; this righteous action is imperative no matter what the circumstance, whether love, peace, joy, goodness, kindness, gentleness, harshness, tribulation, suffering, persecution, illness, or wellbeing; we thank and praise God throughout them all!²³¹² Students at this level realize that any form of religion is futile and deceptive; for abiding in the Lord and in His Word (Scriptures) brings forth light and truth, whereas any variance from light and truth brings forth delusion both from within and without.²³¹³ Because being immovable within a personal relationship with God is imperative for continuous fellowship with Him; students at this level of training are taught discipline to the core of conscious thought.²³¹⁴ God is all in all for students at the college level of spiritual training; without: compromise, variation, or excuse!

Students at this level of training have been blessed with God's gift of "distinguishing of spirits."²³¹⁵ This gift (distinguishing of spirits) coincides with the blessings of "appraising" and "discernment."²³¹⁶ Although the ability to appraise all things is a blessing from the Lord unto those who have remained diligent to place and keep God first and foremost at all times; the ability to discern is a blessing from God which many times coincides with the Christian doing his or her job—evidencing the truth! Students at this level having the ability to "distinguish spirits" live in torment because of the abounding demonic influence which is upon the earth; for the presence of demons is diametrically opposed to the Holy Spirit which indwells us; thus causing a harsh reality of adversity due the extreme harm going forth upon the multitudes held captive who surround us, for we can do nothing for them! Because we have certainty that our adequacy is from God and all that we have acquired in righteousness is also from God, we have torment within the knowledge that the multitudes have failed

²³¹² 1 Thessalonians 5:16-22.

²³¹³ John 8:31-47; John 15:1-17; 1 John 2:18-29.

²³¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 10:1-18.

²³¹⁵ 1 Corinthians 12:10.

²³¹⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Isaiah 29:13-16; Philippians 1:1-11; Hebrews 5:11-6:20; reverence emphasized—Proverbs 2:1-22.

terribly in receiving truth from God due to any or all of the aforementioned carnal characteristics; which have kept the multitudes in darkness away from the light of the truth, and thus within the obscurity of spiritual adolescence. The world is full of individuals who have misguided zeal for God; for contrary to being in accordance to knowledge and actual disciplined devotional obedience, the zeal of the many remains foundational to carnality, pride and arrogance!

Students at the college level of training have received the blessing of “distinguishing of spirits” for a very important reason; as students at this level are taught the Gospel truth (reality of truth behind the words) by the Lord’s implantation of it personally! Many times in accordance to necessity, “special revelation” comes forth unto the student; thus the student must always distinguish the origin of all “special revelation,” by testing the spirits according to knowledge of the Gospel, for the enemy (Satan and demons) will with God’s permission attempt to deceive!²³¹⁷ Holding to the imperative of personal fellowship with the Lord God is of utmost importance at all times; for apart from study of: Biblical history, etymology, exegesis, and hermeneutics, students at this level can only be taught by God in the spiritual realm, as they have passed beyond physical realm instruction from other humans.²³¹⁸

Students at this highest level of training are alienated from most relationships with other human beings! Because most of the teaching upon planet earth is of an insidious religious nature, or is at a level which does not exceed adolescence, students at this level of training remain aloof of all teaching and instruction which may cause detriment or reversion; for absolute discipline must be maintained at all times! Students at this level of training are receiving manifest (implanted) tutelage to achieve the “mind of Christ”; thus they are set apart from most unto the Lord for service, and willfully journey forth with diligence on the narrow path of God’s righteousness upon which growth is achieved by God’s works of personal tutelage, correction, special revelation, sanctification, and masterful leadership! Distractions are no longer optional for students at this highest level of training; for even social associations aloof speaking the utterances of God, have become: irrelevant, vain, and futile!²³¹⁹

²³¹⁷ 1 John 4:1-6.

²³¹⁸ 1 John 2:27.

²³¹⁹ Proverbs 8:1-17; 1 Peter 4:1-19.

At the highest levels of training, the imperatives are reduced to one specific, OUR PURPOSE AND SIGNIFICANCE IN ACCORDANCE TO OUR CREATION IS ALL ABOUT THE LORD OUR GOD; WE WILL FULFILL OUR SIGNIFICANT PURPOSE WITHOUT COMPROMISE, VARIATION, OR EXCUSE!

FINAL NOTES

Because all true Christians are trained and given growth pertinent to eternity; anyone claiming to be a Christian (Christ-like) should strive with diligence to reach the highest level of training possible in accordance to God's anointing upon them! Because there is no exception to this fact, all individuals claiming to be "Christian" should seek higher levels of spiritual growth during the entirety of their existence in human form; maintaining forward motion unto God's upward call which is in Christ Jesus.²³²⁰ As the current earth is not our home, and our mortal body is not capable of eternal existence, we must stop acting as if they are!²³²¹

- A simple fact—Those who do not have realization as to the immense, intimate relationship with God which is in accordance to the kind intention of His good, acceptable, and perfect will, generally stop forward motion and look back for the purpose of celebration, regret and/or reminiscence; for failing to realize the actuality of Christianity (spiritual relational reality), they fall prey to distractions of this life, religious foolishness, and the sinful nature; due to a continued fleshly and worldly mindset (blatant carnality)! This blatant carnality begins within the lives of multitudes shortly after acceptance of Jesus as Savior; for they have a zeal which is not in accordance to knowledge of the truth, as they have never acclaimed Jesus as Lord, or submitted to His absolute authority with disciplined devotional obedience and dedication! Pride, arrogance, and religiosity are guiding factors in the lives of multitudes, for the entirety of their earthy existence!
- The key to success is actual sincere disciplined devotion for the Lord; thereby a decision is made with certainty for Him which

²³²⁰ Philippians 3:1-14, specific—vs. 12-14.

²³²¹ Hebrews 11:8-16; 1 Corinthians 15:46-50.

begins the relational journey. If a decision is not made with certainty, but rather only an assumptive decision (double-mindedness), the believer will generally (as has repeatedly been proven to be the case) remain indecisive for the entirety of their lifetime; this leading to ignorant, complacent lukewarm Christianity which is inappropriate and disgusting!²³²² Loving the Lord in word only is foolish and leads to a self-deluding state of being; for the way of the sinful nature is evident inasmuch as a commandment was rendered throughout the ages to **LOVE THE LORD**, with one's all in all (heart, soul, mind and strength); which leads to righteous action of devotion.²³²³ Because we as created beings should have sincere desire to love our Creator, and this derived specifically from the measure of faith that He gave to each and all created in His image (spiritually); a commandment should never have been of necessity, yet the commandment being rendered directly indicates the wretchedness of the human sinful nature, which remains aloof of God's goodness!

- A foremost means of deception which has kept multiple millions of individuals from not only the relational journey but also the actual saving relationship is the farce of accepting Jesus solely as Savior in order to be saved. This deception was derived from Greek Mythology prior to the coming of the Christ, when within the polytheism of antiquity multitudes of individuals felt comfortable in having their own "personal savior gods." This dangerous farce entered into the church early in church history; thus beginning the "Christian religion," which was and has remained diametrically opposed to actual Christianity. With the sinful nature being extremely powerful when kept aloof of: wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and the power of God for deliverance from it, multitudes throughout the history of the Church have never denied "self" so as to confess "Jesus as "Lord"; thus Satan has been successful in spiritually murdering millions! Inasmuch as most human beings seek to be served, rather than serve,

²³²² Revelation 3:15-22; specific vs. 15, 16.

²³²³ Deuteronomy 6:5-9; Matthew 22:36-40; James 1:7-12, 21-25; 2:14-26.

the multitudes have continually sought a god of convenience who will be their servant; thus in many cases only God actually knows if many persons are saved, for many who believe they are will hear—"I never knew you; depart from me, you who practice lawlessness."²³²⁴

- In a like manner as multitudes who believe themselves to be saved will in actuality be eternally separated from God due to their personal selfish: volition, insincerity, and motives (illegitimate children), so also most of God's actual children (legitimate children) will never journey beyond elementary school levels of training because of the same reason. It is a very good and wonderful work of God that we are saved by grace through faith, for numerous individuals would not have salvation except that God guided them to be selflessly sincere in the moment of their confession of faith (Jesus as Lord); for many return to carnality immediately following the moment of the Holy Spirit's indwelling (born again reality), and thus return to spiritual laziness and complacency, self-centeredness, delusion, and lukewarm Christianity! The point of failure was the point at which double-minded insincerity replaced disciplined sincerity of devotion and focus; for as aforementioned, without disciplined sincerity of devotion and strict focus, forward motion ceases, and this many (possibly most) times for the duration of the individual's lifetime on this earth. This can be distinguished easily by those who have the blessing of ability to appraise and discern (a gift from the Lord), for lukewarm, self-centered, complacent Christianity void of knowledge evinces the reality that individuals are not Christ-like; for these characteristics do not emphasize God's nurtured work of sanctification, which is in accordance to the kind intention of His will! The insidious foolishness taught from many pulpits of the Christian religion renders no assistance or help; for numerous pulpits are occupied by pastors who instruct according to the whims and desires of both complacent believers and deceived non-believers, who

²³²⁴ Matthew 7:15-23, specific v. 23; 25:31-46.

believe they are saved, when in actuality there is no evidence to indicate the “born again” experience or reality. Blatant evidence of insidious pulpit teaching is easily discerned by Christians who have reached higher levels of spiritual training, and also understandable to anyone who has a fair knowledge of the Gospel; for within the Christian religion many pulpits are occupied by female pastors, although being a blatant violation of Gospel standard as designated by God, for women are never to make proclamation from church pulpits; thus those congregations are void of God’s instruction, for He never blesses disobedience!²³²⁵ This one example (female pastors and ministers) was rendered as a simple way to distinguish (even in the flesh), the blatant disobedience found in the current-day church, which believes nothing is unrighteous in their behavior; although strictly contradicted in the Gospel!

- The church of today is within the time of revelation fulfillment emphasized as—the church of Laodicea (A.D. 1954 - present; Revelation 3:14-22). This as prophesied, allows us to discern why most believers are carnally minded, and why numerous congregations are void of the instruction of the Lord; for although He continues to patiently knock seeking individuals to be intimate with Him, He is yet kept outside of His own church, with the door intentionally shut before Him!²³²⁶ The exegesis of the statement indicates that the Lord seeks for any one person within the deceptive enclosure to personally open up to Him for intimacy (dine with); for as always the intimate spiritual saving relationship is an individual matter, as God does not save groups of people, but rather individuals from within groups, when the group as a whole by choice remains in darkness as by denial of truth! This is an area where inappropriate close relational ties with others has caused spiritual detriment to multitudes;

²³²⁵ 1 Corinthians 14:34-40, specifics vs. 34, 35, 37; 1 Timothy 2:9-15.

²³²⁶ Revelation 3:20.

for although many believe the statement of being at the door knocking to regard God's seeking of non-believers, the reality is plain to see that He is knocking at the door of the current-day church, where someone is seeking Him in spirit and in truth; having believed that He is found in church (a building; inanimate object)! In the present age (last days), an individual has greater potential to know and love Jesus personally when alone in a closet, then at a structure which has closed the door to keep the Lord (truth) out!²³²⁷ Those who are truly devoted to the Lord can be found by their seeking to receive fellowship in truth; then the two or more can have church (ekklesia) together, with the strengthening of the Lord's presence and tutelage, without the distractions of lukewarm behavior and characteristics which cause spiritual detriment!²³²⁸ It is among these few (remnant) who truly desire to know and love the Lord, that higher levels of training is possible; for these few seek the Lord external of "self," whereas the multitudes seek God contingent upon "self"!

- To love the Lord (or anyone) with actual selfless sincerity, a human being must place the subject of the sincere love as being of a higher precedent than even "self." This is why the first infant step in following the Lord is "denial of self"; for "self" which remains precedent is idolatrous, which is the primary form of idolatry which hinders God's work of sanctification on an individual basis, and thereby also detriment to spiritual relational growth.²³²⁹ This is the foremost reason most believers are hindered during the entirety of their "Christian" existence; for actual sincere devotion for God is the key to spiritual success and growth, and delusional double-mindedness brings forth only failure and stagnancy!

²³²⁷ John 14:6.

²³²⁸ Matthew 18:20.

²³²⁹ Colossians 3:1-17, Selah v. 5.

The way to victory is simple DENY “SELF,” SO AS TO DEVOTIONALLY LOVE THE LORD; STOP THE DOUBLE-MINDEDNESS AND DECIDE WITH IMMOVABILITY (ABSOLUTE CERTAINTY) TO LOVE THE LORD FIRST AND FOREMOST!

Loving Devotion - A Lesson from the Book of Esther

Within the book of Esther are found many wonderful truths as to what loving God and others selflessly is all about. Love being the emphasized decisive factor which leads when present; is that which demonstrates the difference between those who claim to know God, and those who actually are known by God! Many times we will not know the exact purpose of our calling until after the fact; for hindsight is always 20/20; whereas foresight in going forth for the Lord is many times blurry at best, as in this we must trust in Him! The only way we will gain knowledge into our actual calling according to God’s grace, is to maintain our focus upon Him and seek sincere godly influences in our lives; for truly, bad company corrupts good morals!²³³⁰ Godly influences are known by the manner in which they do not violate the moral nor worship standards found in the Gospel; for these influences always point to the righteous spiritual needs of the many, and primarily to Christ!

The time of Esther is 479-474 B.C., the place is Susa. Those who remained in the area of Babylon (Esther, Mordecai, etc.) are those who did not return to Jerusalem upon the edict from Cyrus of Persia (559-530 B.C.). King Xerxes I (Ahasuerus 486-465 B.C.) is ruler of 127 provinces from India to Ethiopia, within the Medo-Persian Empire. Many Jews remained within the Persian Empire as their captivity was one of peace and prosperity, thus very much different than their bondage in Egypt (Esther 1:1-3). The driving motivation for those who chose to return to Jerusalem was their earnest desire to return to proper worship of God at the Temple. Those who remained behind along with their offspring did not share this motivation; therefore, this is a distinguishing factor regarding missing acts of Israelite worship within the book of Esther.

To hold to certain aspects of morality and not to others, is basically the same as telling little white lies. By this statement I am referring to

²³³⁰ cf. 1 Corinthians 15:30-34; Hebrews 12:1-3.

the way in which so many live their lives boldly inconsistent, by the manner in which their focus is never upon anything for any length of time. This is to say that no consistency can be rendered for the edification of others, when sporadic behavior stays edification from one's own life. An example of standing strong within one's own moral standards no matter what the cost is demonstrated by the behavior of Queen Vashti. Although the law stated that none were to be under compulsion in regards to drinking alcohol, yet it was expected that women would do whatever asked of them, no matter how inappropriate (Esther 1:8-12).

Most times believers tend to forget that the Lord shapes us first from without (Esther 2:15), then *if* we answer His calling, He begins a continual work to shape us from within; both without and within being for fulfillment of righteous purpose within the relational reality. With the shaping by the Lord which occurs within our spirit and demeanor, come forms of consistency leading to godliness; therefore, outward appearance must be in conjunction with the Lord's work within, lest aestheticism become an inordinate primary concern which would demand a return to a carnal mindset leading to spiritual depravity! Clay is without value apart from the work of the Potter, thus it is the art not the material which gives the vessel its beauty and true value.²³³¹ This is the basis of realizing that our purpose in the Lord is that which renders our purpose in life! In realizing our purpose to be that which reflects the love of our Lord, sometimes we must remain silent as to our faith and allow the Lord to be seen in us! This will many times draw others to us and to the faith via the beauty of the Potter's work in us, whereas to speak out at the wrong time or with the wrong emphasis, may drive others away (Esther 2:7). A faith unseen is indeed an insincere faith which is lukewarm at best; we must proclaim our faith always, sometimes with words (Esther 2:9, 10)!²³³²

We should remember to love others for who they are by creation; we must love them without personal intentions (graciously). To be satisfied solely by someone's outward appearance, is to never truly know the individual; for the inward reality is where the truth is discovered. Such superficial (worldly; aesthetic) love never edifies (Esther 2:12-14)! The Lord allows His servants to be exalted, so they may fulfill His will

²³³¹ cf. Isaiah 29:15, 16; 45:9-11; 64:5-8; Romans 9:19-24.

²³³² cf. James 1:22-25; 2:18-26.

for their life and existence.²³³³ Esther was blessed by the Lord with the beauty, faith, conviction, and discipline necessary to fulfill His will for her life—regarding the many (His chosen people) (Esther 2:17, 20; 4:14).

We should uphold the standard of morality which has been set forth by the Lord; for anyone who refuses righteous standards and morals is not rejecting that demanded, but rather the Lord who sets forth moral standards in righteousness for the benefit of all! Many within the church today will go with the status quo so as to avoid conflict and tribulation; yet we must remember that it is the Lord we worship and serve, who called us to selfless suffering and persecution if necessary!²³³⁴ In the instance of Mordecai refusing to bow before Haman, the fact of the matter was that Haman sought to be honored to the point of worship. It was for this reason that Mordecai refused, for as believers we never bow in worship except to the Lord our God (Esther 3:2-8). In a like manner as Mordecai refused to bow before Haman, we also must never bow before human beings so as to show homage in worship; for only prideful and arrogant individuals would ever expect or demand inappropriate homage!²³³⁵ How foolish it is to render unrighteous homage to human beings, when in doing so we oppose the Lord God of all creation, who desires (and deserves) both devotional loyalty and selfless humble obedience!²³³⁶ Is not the Lord God deserving of our all in all?

Many human beings will be utilized by Satan to accomplish his evil in the world (Esther 3:10); anyone who is prideful, arrogant, devious, delusive, undisciplined, lacking sincere devotion for God, or serves mammon, can be easily enticed and influenced to fight against the good, acceptable and perfect will of the Lord!²³³⁷ We ought to remember that our battle is against a very powerful enemy, while also remembering that our victory is assured in Christ; therefore we must focus on the interests of God, and fulfill our duties and responsibilities in accordance!²³³⁸ We should investigate matters carefully in the light of truth; thereby staying from the darkness of controversy. To step out blindly is to make the same potential mistake as was made by King

²³³³ cf. Romans 8:28.

²³³⁴ cf. Matthew 5:10-12; John 15:18-23; 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

²³³⁵ cf. Deuteronomy 6:13-19.

²³³⁶ cf. Proverbs 21:21; Hosea 6:4-6.

²³³⁷ cf. Proverbs 16:4; 1 Peter 5:8-11; example—Luke 22:3.

²³³⁸ cf. Romans 8:37; Mark 8:33; 1 John 5:4, 5; Philippians 2:12, 13.

Ahasuerus (Esther 3:10). Satan has continually attempted to annihilate the Jews, in an attempt to stop God's covenant with the Jews (Esther 3:9-15). Do you suppose believers ignorantly serve Satan, when they jump into false doctrine and pretense before testing the ground (foundation) upon which they leap?²³³⁹ False doctrine and pretense is like quicksand, how quickly we can sink into it and how efficiently it can choke our spiritual life from us!

The dangers of serving the Lord in truth may very well lead to death; yet whom shall we fear!²³⁴⁰ We never know when we will be called to serve the Lord, therefore we must be prepared at all times to fulfill His anointing for our lives (Esther 4:11-14)! The necessity of prayer, reverent devotion and fasting, is evident to those who take servanthood seriously. Prayer can make the difference between life and death, sickness and health, being hot or cold in one's service to the Lord, and being in the right or wrong place.²³⁴¹

It is important to trust in God for the outcome of all situations; for in failing to do so, we may be found fighting against God in seeking to render our own volition or defense (Esther 5:1, 2).²³⁴² Because people do not care what we know, until they know that we care; when we trust in God for the appropriate words in the appropriate moment, we can then maintain our focus upon loving the individual, thereby allowing God to bring forth fulfillment in righteousness (Esther 5:4-8).²³⁴³ Our existence is to love, serve and worship God, and be patient; God does the rest!²³⁴⁴ To trust God is to trust one's life to Him; this then eliminating any and all fear of death, thereby opening the door to courageous servanthood and love (Esther 4:15-17).²³⁴⁵

Do we count our blessings and successes by our riches or our faith in and walk for the Lord? Trusting in that which may appear to be prosperous (mammon), leaves the opportunity for deception and discontentment to enter into our lives (Esther 5:11-14).²³⁴⁶ The importance of our endeavors must be founded upon the truth in itself; for

²³³⁹ cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11.

²³⁴⁰ cf. Psalms 27:1; Romans 8:15-17, 31-34; 1 Peter 3:14-16; Hebrews 13:5, 6.

²³⁴¹ cf. Proverbs 3:5, 6.

²³⁴² cf. Hebrews 2:13-18; Mark 13:11.

²³⁴³ cf. 1 Corinthians 3:6-9; Luke 21:13-15.

²³⁴⁴ cf. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

²³⁴⁵ cf. Ephesians 6:18-20.

²³⁴⁶ cf. 1 Timothy 6:6-8; Philippians 4:8-11.

truth stands upon its own merits, remaining firmly founded upon the Rock. Although the focus of many is upon circumstances, it does us well to trust in the Lord who controls the circumstances (Esther 6:1-3; 8:7-9:4).²³⁴⁷ Do we place ourselves into a position of exaltation and seek our reward according to our own selfish desires, or do we allow the Lord to exalt and bless even our circumstances as we humbly seek and serve Him (Esther 6:1-11)? To focus upon the Lord is to understand that His blessings will be centered upon spiritual growth and betterment, which may include other forms of prosperity.

Note: If what we are seeking will lead to further distractions away from our devotion to Christ, it would be futile to ask God for more of it (whatever it may be)!

To seek harm to come to others is to seek vengeance (Esther 6:4). Although vengeance was many times sought by those in the Old Testament, it is not allowed under this “dispensation of grace”! Seeking the spiritual betterment of others, never from selfish conceit but rather from a sincere heart and motives, is the standard of today by which we live according to our faith.²³⁴⁸ What do we do in times of severe stress and discomfort? With those of the world being confused at best because of their failure to see the truth (Christ), they will mostly jump to conclusions rather than patiently investigate to evidence the truth (Esther 7:8).²³⁴⁹ This is a distinguishing factor which separates Christians from lukewarm believers and non-believers.²³⁵⁰ When we seek harm to come to others, is it not amazing how confused we are when that very harm occurs to us instead (Esther 7:10; 9:25). What of our family (Esther 9:13, 14)? We are not alone on this planet, so we must therefore consider those around us so that our foolishness does not cause undo harm to others; nor to the brethren!²³⁵¹

We will be uplifted by the Lord when we do not lose heart and fall into compromise (Esther 8:2).²³⁵² Just as Esther made a choice to serve God for the sake of others, so also must we make our own choice; will

²³⁴⁷ cf. Philippians 1:12-14.

²³⁴⁸ cf. Philippians 2:3, 4; Romans 12:19-21.

²³⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 3:12-18.

²³⁵⁰ cf. Psalm 37:7, 8.

²³⁵¹ cf. 1 Corinthians 14:26, 40; Galatians 6:10.

²³⁵² cf. 2 Corinthians 4:1, 2, 16-18.

we be for or against Christ, by being against or for “self” (respectively)! Even if we think ourselves to be a servant of the Lord, could our own selfish desires possibly be showing emphasis that we seek to be our own master? The fruits of God made manifest in our lives, or not; which displaces the deeds of our flesh, or not, will make evident the truth.²³⁵³ The Lord is absolutely capable of turning the tides (Esther 8:11). Do we seek a position and thus strive for the position ourselves, or do we allow the Lord to exalt us to the position He knows we efficiently will fulfill for His glory (Esther 8:8, 9; 10:3).²³⁵⁴ Although our authority may be presented via our superiors or piers, we must remember that it is the Lord who is actually in authority, and thus we should act accordingly (Esther 8:10, 16, 17). Is what the Lord has done for us sufficient, or do we also seek more (Esther 8:11; 9:10, 15, 16)?

The event of Puram (Esther 9:20-22). How do we thank God for delivering us from our troubles? Do we appreciate the peace and serenity of deliverance with renewed focus and devotion unto our Lord, or do we return to wallowing in our: self-centeredness, greed, and unbelief?

Who / What / When / Where / How / Why

- Whom do we serve: Ephesians 3:14-21; Jude 1:24, 25
- What is our victory, and the outcome thereof: 1 Corinthians 15:56-58; Romans 5:1-5; 1 John 5:4, 5
- When do we serve: Romans 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10; 1 Peter 3:14-16; Hebrews 3:13-19
- Where do we serve: 1 Corinthians 7:20-24; Colossians 3:1-17; 1 Peter 4:12-19
- How do we achieve victory: Ephesians 6:10-18; 1 Peter 4:11; 1 Thessalonians 2:3, 4; Hebrews 13:5, 6; 1 Timothy 6:17-19
- Why: 1 Thessalonians 2:5-9; 2 Timothy 2:1-4, 24-26; 2 Peter 3:8-18

Full Armor of God for Spiritual Warfare

I have included this portion on the full armor of God, because of the aforementioned traditions, rituals, doctrines, and excuses which yet hold millions of believers in bondage to secular religion (chapter eight). As

²³⁵³ cf. Galatians 5:19-23.

²³⁵⁴ cf. James 3:14-18; Philippians 1:15-17; Luke 12:47, 48; Matthew 13:12.

can be witnessed by the actual dates and original purposes within darkness of the traditions adhered to within the Christian religion even to this day, it becomes obvious that Satan and demons are working effectively in leading many of the elect astray. Please consider the necessity of the full armor daily in our lives; especially when we have failed to separate ourselves from even simple traditions and excuses which bring no glory to our Lord! Although most individuals do not celebrate the traditions and rituals blatantly according to the pagan purposes originally intended, the fact remains that even in celebrating them pretentiously under different names, or for different reasons, our behavior yet hinders the Lord's work of sanctification within our lives; for we cannot both partake of the cup of the Lord, and the cup of demons!²³⁵⁵ Any practiced form of walking in darkness, will hinder and possibly destroy all potential of walking in the light where the Lord remains at all times! God cannot and will not bless endeavors and journeys in darkness; for His absolute holiness forbids it!

If believers are not willing to don the armor so as to fend off attacks in things as simply understood as inappropriate traditions and practices, how can we possibly win battles which involve in-depth principals and moral standards within our faith; involving the complex truth of Scripture? Our Lord teaches us to “come out from their midst and be separate”!²³⁵⁶ Our righteously actuated faith teaches us to disallow the defilement of the world to take us captive, and hold us in bondage to secular defilement and standards.²³⁵⁷ Since this is the Biblical standard by which we are to live in regards to the world, we must learn to put on the armor of God; keeping it on at all times! Please remember—pride is a chief weapon of our enemy which is used to keep us in bondage, this primarily as Satan entices and influences individuals who refuse to “deny self,” which is a personal choice which maintains captivity to foolish adolescent stubborn and rebellious pride; please deny this form of bondage, so as to allow the Lord to guide you in humility; personal volition to “deny self” is the first step of this endeavor, which will never occur when individuals focus upon the flesh! The only certain way of conquering the bondage of adolescent pride, is to “deny self,” vehemently *if necessary*;

²³⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 10:19-22; cf. 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

²³⁵⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

²³⁵⁷ Colossians 2:1-3:17.

as “self” is the foundation from which adolescent pride arises, obscures, and misleads! Which is truly our necessity, to continue practices by prideful rote, or don the full armor of our Lord so as to be victorious?

Personal Note: It is blatantly unrighteous that the truth regarding the traditions of the Christian religion which are practiced by rote is not rendered from pulpits, so that individuals may learn of the darkness of which they have partaken.²³⁵⁸ Cowards, who are congregational leaders, are not serving the Lord; for where truth is not proclaimed, the darkness of deception remains, as well as evidenced reality of who is being served (Great Deceiver; Satan)!²³⁵⁹ Cowards will not inherit God’s kingdom!²³⁶⁰ It must be mentioned at this point, that legitimate children of God cannot practice sin because of the indwelling Holy Spirit; as practice within the darkness of deception is “practiced sin,” please consider the ramifications of practicing those things which are in opposition to the righteousness of God in the light of truth!

- We should remember that our fight is not against flesh and blood (people).²³⁶¹
- We should remember that our weapons of warfare are extremely powerful; when utilized correctly in accordance to God’s mighty strength.²³⁶²
- We must never look to ourselves as having the power to fight an extremely powerful foe!²³⁶³ We must look to and trust in the One who is abounding in power, and thereby gain victories.²³⁶⁴
- How is it that our spiritual weapons work? Why must we put on the full armor of God?²³⁶⁵

Girdle of Truth (Ephesians 6:14)

This is the first and foremost defensive weapon which we have. The girdle was that which held the thigh, breastplate, and back armor into

²³⁵⁸ Isaiah 29:13-15.

²³⁵⁹ John 8:38-45; 8 cf. Matthew 15:7-9; 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

²³⁶⁰ Revelation 21:8.

²³⁶¹ Ephesians 6:12.

²³⁶² 2 Corinthians 10:3-7; Ephesians 6:13.

²³⁶³ 1 Peter 5:8-11; 2 Corinthians 2:10, 11; Ephesians 2:1-7; 4:25-32; Hebrews 4:16.

²³⁶⁴ Ephesians 6:10; 1 John 5:4, 5; Romans 13:12-14; James 4:7-10.

²³⁶⁵ Ephesians 6:11.

place. The girdle was also the belt from which the sword scabbard was girded. The girdle was therefore the piece of armor which connected the other pieces tightly together, thus securing the protective barriers against attack. The sword of Christians secured by the girdle of truth is the sword of the Spirit (Word of God) which should never be carried or wielded loosely (inappropriately); it is for this reason that the Gospel must be studied and handled accurately, for proclamation from ignorance is delusive!²³⁶⁶ This fact is of utmost importance in the life of any Christian, as truth is necessary for righteous usage of God's armor! Without strict candor/veracity there is no defense; this strict truth being the Gospel truth, not the supposed truth of carnal: philosophy, doctrine, tradition and/or precept.²³⁶⁷ Because this basis of complete truth without compromise has been violated in many congregational denominations as initially set forth by the mother of Christian harlotry; unrighteous teachings and traditions of darkness have entered in, weakening multitudes as by practiced apostasy! An example of such a human precept utilized to gather men against Gospel truth, can be found in how men during the time of the Crusades were told that taking up the sword against Muslims would guarantee their salvation. Because our salvation is solely by God's grace, any attempt to change or diminish this fact is against the Gospel and thereby sin.

Please remember—no lie, excuse or deception of any kind is of the truth! Although many proclamations have been made throughout history that “God wills it,” this statement has never been made correctly when in contradiction to the Word of God! As each of us is accountable to study and thereby gain knowledge of God's Word, such deceptions which have led many astray should never have been allowed nor followed! If we would trust less in the teachings of humankind through whom the doctrines of demons have come forth, and rather place our focus and trust upon Jesus who is the essence of pure truth, such heresies, apostasies, and unrighteousness would cease and no longer occur in the lives of multitudes. Please remember, my brothers and sisters, the broad path of unrighteousness begins with the first step, and is continued one step in the wrong direction at a time. The truth remains

²³⁶⁶ cf. Ephesians 6:17; 2 Timothy 2:15-19, 3:16, 17; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8; James 3:13-18.

²³⁶⁷ cf. 2 Corinthians 13:7-9; John 8:44 -47; Matthew 12:25-30; Luke 1:1-4; John 1:17, 18; 3:19-21; 4:23, 24; Romans 1:18, 19; 2:5-11; 1 Corinthians 5:6-8; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; 6:1-10; Ephesians 4:14-16; James 5:19, 20; Colossians 2:8.

that God eagerly awaits our repentance from such wrongful journeys; accepting and cleansing us instantly upon our return; when confession of the unrighteousness has been rendered with devotional sincerity.²³⁶⁸ The narrow path of righteousness and truth is not an easy path by any means, yet it is the only acceptable path for those who believe and seek to please God! Ostentatious behavior is neither warranted nor acceptable; for it is God whom we must please, and no other! The spiritual relational reality within which we are saved and led by God is extremely righteous, as it is God's righteousness which must always be considered and submitted unto; considering the relationship to be "too light a thing" to warrant one's greatest effort regarding loyalty and obedience unto God in truth, is an abomination to God, as it is foundational to delusive selfish behavior!

Breastplate of Righteousness (Ephesians 6:14)

Protecting one's heart via God's righteousness is of great importance.²³⁶⁹ When we do not walk in the righteousness of Christ, we tend to seek our own righteousness; which brings forth: deluding influence, pride, arrogance, complacency, and failure.²³⁷⁰ The supposed righteousness of men and women is foundational to the flesh, as the motive is generally present which asks the question "what is in it for me"; for this is in accordance to delusive emulation! This is the selfish love known by the world, not the selfless love which being of the Lord is received by faith and thereby presented outward unto others.²³⁷¹

Righteousness is defined as "right doing." As no human being commits goodness by their own initiative on a continual basis, it is the work of God within us that brings forth all forms of righteous goodness and deeds.²³⁷² When we realize this fact, we then submit to the Lord so that He may both will and work for His own good pleasure within us; thus others are blessed by God's working in and through us for the sake of all! When this is accomplished, unity is the prevailing factor; thus all within unification are edified and strengthened in the Lord!²³⁷³

²³⁶⁸ cf. 1 John 1:5-3:24.

²³⁶⁹ cf. Matthew 6:31-34; Romans 1:16, 17; 6:12-19; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Proverbs 4:23-27.

²³⁷⁰ cf. Matthew 6:1; Romans 10:1-4; 1 Corinthians 1:30, 31.

²³⁷¹ cf. Romans 12:1, 2.

²³⁷² Psalm 14:1-6; Ecclesiastes 7:19-29; Romans 9:30-33; Ephesians 4:17-24.

²³⁷³ cf. Philippians 2:12-18; Romans 8:18-30; 1 John 4:4-6.

To gain better understanding as to putting on the Breastplate of Righteousness so as to protect our hearts, let us consider differences between lust and love.

LUST (GALATIANS 5:19-21)

1. Is of the flesh, not from the spirit of a person. Lust always seeks its own, although this many times is under the delusion of behavior for the sake of others. An indication of this is evidenced by a person's habitually seeking to be recognized for that which they have done; especially when their actions involve others. Their intentions are for the purpose of self-gratification; many times believing that human works can please God, and this many times according to human doctrines of works for salvation.²³⁷⁴
2. Always asks the question—"what is in it for me." In this lust is selfish, for the flesh seeks its own pleasures in one form or another. It is for this reason that lust is argumentative and causes strife, for one's worldly lust is not concerned with anyone else's edification or fulfillment.
3. Is involved with the physical realm. The lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the boastful pride of life are not from the Father but rather of this world, which seeks its own.²³⁷⁵ This is why fleshly lusts always seek fulfillment and rewards in this world, rather than in heaven; thus an individual's fruit (deeds) in seeking rewards will always indicate the truth of the matter.²³⁷⁶
4. Does not lead a person to seek after God. Lust seeking that which is of the moment, does not submit to the Lord so as to seek first His kingdom and righteousness. Seeking only in the moment does not allow an individual to seek for His inevitable return to reign in righteousness from Zion, thus the eternal kingdom of God is rarely even a passing thought. It is by failure to put on the Breastplate of Righteousness, that many believers are entangled in the lusts of the

²³⁷⁴ cf. Romans 10:1-4.

²³⁷⁵ cf. 1 John 2:16, 17.

²³⁷⁶ cf. Matthew 6:19-24; 7:13-27.

world; for they continually err in failing to put on the armor necessary to protect their physical emotions, thus losing battles of the faith day after day, week after week and year after year.

5. Lust:

- Does not edify; for not even the lustful person is edified with anything acceptable to God.
- Does not make indication of God's presence within the individual.
- Does not seek to be of sincere benefit to others.
- Does not gain reward beyond the grave.
- Causes incapability of goodness to come forth from a person entangled by it; for goodness is from the Lord, who is unable to work.
- Leads inevitably to divisions and disunity within relationships.
- Seeks its own gratification.

TRUE LOVE (1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-8A, 13; GALATIANS 5:22, 23)

1. True love is of the spirit; for true love is the selfless, unconditional, and sacrificial love of God's fruit manifest! It is that which comes forth from within a person which uplifts and edifies others; for the edifying factor is the indwelling Holy Spirit!²³⁷⁷ An indication of agape love in one's demeanor is witnessed in how they seek to do for others, never seeking recognition for that which they have done. Their actions are solely for the sake of the receiving party or parties. True spiritual love is selfless; not selfish!
2. Never asks the question—"what is in it for me"; for true love never seeks its own! Love is always concerned with others solely for their sake; for the rendering of love in itself is that which brings edification and fulfillment to the giving party.
3. Is involved in both the spiritual and physical realms. In the spiritual realm, the love which God has poured out into our hearts (agape) abounds to the point of overflowing; which brings it out into the physical realm as we are led to love all others because of our

²³⁷⁷ cf. Matthew 12:33-37; John 14:16, 17; 16:13-15.

devotional love for the Lord.²³⁷⁸ In this our “love of self” is appropriate, for we are appreciative of God for creating us to be an instrument of His righteousness and love upon others. An exuberant love of self (narcissism) is not righteously derived from God’s love in our spirit (heart), but rather from the lust of the flesh; this being the form of self-love spoken of as by warning in Scripture.²³⁷⁹

4. Leads a person to persevere in seeking after God, for to realize the immensity of God’s love in our spirit is to realize the necessity to better know the One who has blessed us so abundantly! Realizing the love of God to be present in our lives, leads us to seek after His eternal kingdom and righteousness, for our understanding of His love leads to knowledge as to our purpose being found in Him. It is by experiencing God’s selfless and sacrificial love that we seek earnestly to stay clear of the entanglements which lust brings to our lives; thus we don the Breastplate of Righteousness to stay our heart (and spirit) from the harm which the world entices and influences. The true love which is from God is that which motivates us to reach out and love everyone regarding their salvation; this we do even though we may neither respect or like an individual due to their blatant wretchedness!²³⁸⁰

5. True Love:

- Brings edification to all who dwell in the light of truth.
- Makes indication of God’s presence in our life, for only the true love of God can go forth asking nothing in return. Our strength comes from being an instrument of His love unto others.²³⁸¹
- Gains us rewards beyond the grave, for our intentions and actions are for His glory as we rejoice in the truth.
- Allows the fruits of the Holy Spirit to come forth from within us. As the flesh (“self”) is denied, submission is made unto the Holy Spirit whom then allows us to be instruments of righteous servanthood.
- Leads to unity with others; not only those within the faith, but

²³⁷⁸ cf. Matthew 22:36-40; Philippians 2:1-4.

²³⁷⁹ cf. 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

²³⁸⁰ cf. Jude 1:17-23.

²³⁸¹ cf. James 1:16-18.

all others as we accept them for who they are by creation. In this we may hate sin and abhor that which is evil, yet we love the sinner with the love of God within our spirit; for love bears all things and never fails. We maintain closer relationships such as within marriage, for our concern is for the other person.

- Love does not seek gratification of “self”; the insincerity of lust is replaced by the selfless sincerity of compassion for the spiritual and physical wellbeing of others.

Shoes of the Gospel of Peace (Ephesians 6:15)

Each step we take should be protected by the reality of the Gospel truth which is foundational to the “reality of God,” as the preparatory of the Gospel is to train us spiritually for God’s eternal righteous kingdom; the peace aspect being foundational to the faithfulness of God to both will and work for His own good pleasure, during our corporeal nurtured life of disciplined devotional submission and obedience.²³⁸² Without standing upon the Gospel reality, which is foundational to the faithfulness and inspiration of the Lord, we are incapable of standing firm; thus we teeter spiritually, and waver in our corporeal and spiritual walk for the Lord.²³⁸³

Because the Scriptures very much associate with each of our lives, it is imperative that we walk within the stature of Scripture. The standards of both morality and obedience have been set forth by our Lord, so that our mortal bodies may be presented as living sacrifices for His glory.²³⁸⁴ The standards are accomplished as we humbly and devotionally submit within loyalty, allowing the Lord to lead us upon the narrow path of His righteousness! When we walk outside the standards of Scripture, we allow the enemy to distract and divert us from God’s anointing for our existence, which must remain in the light of truth and reality; lest we journey into darkness, thereby failing to see clearly the path before us. It is for this reason that considering our relationship with God to be “too light a thing” to warrant diligent devotional effort is a disgusting abomination; for this behavior directly indicates a life lived devoid the “reality of God”!

²³⁸² cf. 2 Timothy 2:15, 16, 19, 3:16, 17; Hebrews 4:12-16; Philippians 1:6, 2:12-16.

²³⁸³ cf. 1 Corinthians 10:5-13; John 14:15; Matthew 13:20-23.

²³⁸⁴ cf. Romans 12:1, 2.

Knowing that the path before us is one of “love,” the Gospel preparatory of peace must be the guide book which leads our life. When the steps we take are within the kind intention of God’s will, others will not only benefit from our actions in the present tense, but also potentially for all eternity, *if* they come to know the One unto whom we submit for service. When folks understand the love of God, it would behoove them to bask within His love themselves, and thereby portray His love further unto others; this love always involves truth and strict spiritual discipline! Because of the potential for spiritual awakening in others, or the hindrance thereto by our behavior, it is imperative that we never badger someone with the Gospel. This is why the shoes we wear are the shoes of Gospel preparation, for although the Gospel truth may hurt for a time, as the truth many times hurts, it should never cause any form of lasting harm or torment upon anyone because of the way it is presented! It must be understood; the Gospel must be presented in truthful context, lest the power of the Gospel truth be diminished by adulterating manipulation.²³⁸⁵

The steps we take for the Lord are sturdy steps which do not falter, *if* the steps were ordained and led by the Lord. The steps we take without His leadership are steps which lead in many directions; for upon the broad path which leads to destruction, there is no certain destination apart from spiritual detriment and damage! Let us step out in faith, devotionally submissive to the Lord’s leadership and strength, thereby reaching the righteous destination He has set forth for our success and inevitable victory!

- It must be noted—the Gospel must be proclaimed; this always in a disciplined and direct manner! God’s word (utterances) makes the difference in righteousness, our personal words hold little value except for the purpose of reiteration or to further explain that which is misunderstood; our words therefore should be minimally utilized lest confusion or distraction result! As the love which is from God (agape) always involves stern discipline, the disciplined manner by which the Gospel is presented (God’s utterances) may anger or upset undisciplined or childish individuals; yet as strict discipline is one of the three

²³⁸⁵ cf. Hebrews 4:12, 13.

imperatives of serving God, it must be maintained at all times.²³⁸⁶ The other two imperatives of the spiritual relational reality and servitude with and unto God are—faith and unwavering truth (integrity; candor; veracity).

- The result of speaking passively without discipline, inevitably leads to speaking weak and distractive words for the purpose of appeasing the recipient of the words. When this continues for extended periods of time, the result becomes portions of Scripture rendered now and again only for the purpose of emotionally puffing up the recipient of the words; this inevitably leads to proclamations which are according to the whims and carnal desires of the recipients, which violates Gospel standards; bringing forth no spiritual edification whatsoever!²³⁸⁷ No true servant of God ever crosses the line so as to appease humans with foolish confabulation; for we speak the Gospel truth in love, always remembering whom we serve! **Emotional puffing up renders has no spiritual significance; the relational reality is spiritual, not carnal!**

Shield of Faith (Ephesians 6:16)

A shield is only effective, when it is placed in front of the soldier! If we walk by faith, then let us walk with the shield of faith before us.²³⁸⁸ How can the shield of our faith protect us, if we insist on walking in front of it; trusting in ourselves?²³⁸⁹

The shield of faith is the shield which is placed before us as we trust in the Lord; for in servitude we have been instructed to expect: tribulation, suffering, and persecution.²³⁹⁰ As He is our shield and our strength, our refuge and fortress; it is surety of His faithfulness upon those who trust in him, that guards us forward through potential harm.²³⁹¹ Because our battle is against very powerful foes within the spiritual realm, the shield of faith must be utilized effectively by knowing that the Lord is greater and more powerful than all the evil forces

²³⁸⁶ cf. Hebrews 12:4-11; 1 Peter 4:7-19.

²³⁸⁷ cf. Galatians 1:1-10; 2 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10.

²³⁸⁸ cf. 2 Corinthians 5:6-9; Hebrews 11:1, 2, 6; Romans 11:17-22; 1 Corinthians 2:4, 5; James 1:2-4; 2:18-26; 1 Peter 1:6-9; 2 Peter 1:5-11; Ephesians 1:3, 4.

²³⁸⁹ cf. 2 Corinthians 4:17, 18; Romans 8:35-39.

²³⁹⁰ John 15:20, 21, 16:33; Romans 8:14-17; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4, 3:12; 1 Peter 3:14-17.

²³⁹¹ cf. Psalms 18:1-3; 91:1-16.

combined.²³⁹² When we fail to realize that God is for us; *if* we are upon the narrow path of His righteousness; we fail to take up the shield of faith, which leaves us vulnerable to attack! Please remember—the enemy will always attempt to cause us to doubt the faithfulness of God; if we succumb to this deception, we lower the shield of faith and fall prey to spiritual harm.

Please consider this, my brethren, *if* Satan can deceive us into doubting the faithfulness of God, he can then deceive us into doubting the truth of the Gospel! When we then doubt the Gospel truth, we fail to don the shoes of the Gospel which prepares us; which leads us to walk upon shaky ground with uncertainty of the path before us, and the truth which must be proclaimed! The first step to major defeat is to doubt the faithfulness of God; for this reason we must always expect attacks in this regard, and thus hold the shield of true faith before us soundly! It is unfortunate that the enemy through carnal teachings would attempt to convince us to trust in ourselves or in others who are without true faith; yet this reality can be prevalently witnessed, as Scripture is taken out of context for the purpose of appeasement. When Scripture is manipulated (adulterated), the strength of the Gospel is jeopardized by doubt and obscurity, thus leading to successful attacks by the enemy as by elimination of our spiritual safety barrier—the shield of faith! Never put down the shield of faith for anyone or anything, nor should anyone be followed who has failed to take up the shield of faith themselves; this including all who have no need of the shield of faith, as they are not of God although they claim to be!

Many of the doctrines of works within Christendom have come forth from the enemy, through people who have failed to trust in the Lord; as they have never been known by Him. As aforementioned when atrocities and deceptions have been committed under the rouse that “God wills it,” or “thus says the Lord,” this occurs because supposed spiritual men and women have led others; all of which having failed to understand and trust in the truth and faithfulness of God and His Word, test all things according to Gospel truth, listen and wait for what the Lord may say. Having failed to place the shield before them; if actually known by God; the arrows of temptation from the enemy hit the target of men’s hearts, which then lead to the sinfulness of: arrogance, pride,

²³⁹² cf. 1 John 4:1-6; Romans 8:1-39.

desertion from the faith, and the serving of “self.” Discipline to take up the shield of faith is imperative at all times, lest temptation become sin and distraction quickly and efficiently; causing spiritual hindrance upon not only ourselves, but also others.

Note- Anyone, who manipulates the Gospel or teaches it out of context, should be denied immediately; lest the fiery dart of deception which has struck them, should strike others also. False doctrines (doctrines of demons) is easily inflicted upon anyone whose mindset is upon the flesh or world (carnally minded); therefore, all spiritual leadership must be examined carefully utilizing Gospel truth, for anyone seeking a righteousness of their own are incapable of submission unto the righteousness of God, and should be tested; this of course including the testing of oneself! The shield of faith which is of God, does not and cannot protect the carnal (illegitimate children), for the shield of faith is to protect those who are known by God (legitimate children); for it is by true disciplined devotional faith in God and God alone, that the shield of faith functions, and this by the power of the Lord which is rendered by grace! The shield is wielded derived from a blessing of God in the nurturing of an individual’s faith.

Helmet of Salvation (Ephesians 6:17)

In the actuality of form upon one’s head, the battle helmet was to protect the head from harm. This is in essence the same principle of the helmet of salvation, yet this is of a spiritual design within the realm of “faith,” so as to protect one’s thoughts.²³⁹³

When we allow ourselves to focus upon the things of the world, we allow our thoughts to be misguided and varied. When we allow ourselves to focus upon the things of the world rather than the things of God, we set ourselves up to fail terribly!²³⁹⁴ The helmet of salvation is the protection afforded us *by God’s* grace; so that we may focus upon the Lord and the wonderful gift of salvation which the Lord has given to all who humbly, submissively, devotionally and obediently believe.²³⁹⁵ Please consider—salvation by grace is the greatest gift ever

²³⁹³ cf. 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; Philippians 4:4-8.

²³⁹⁴ cf. 1 John 2:12-17; James 4:1-6.

²³⁹⁵ cf. Luke 1:77-80; Philippians 3:7-14; Ephesians 2:4-10; 2 Corinthians 10:3-6, specific vs. 3-5.

given or conceived of; and how the doctrines of humankind and deceptions of organized religion have caused hindrance so that millions have failed to accept the free gift through rejection or delusive endeavor. What a shame!

Imagine being able to see the Lord Jesus in all of His glory; being likened to Him in purity in our glorified state (final element of salvation); these will be two wonderful aspects of our eternity with Him!²³⁹⁶ When the attack comes, please attempt to think of “salvation by grace”! In this fashion the helmet of salvation will not only protect from bad influences without; but will also protect the good thoughts within.

When the understanding of one’s salvation according to God’s grace is fully realized, the individual realizes also the dire need of loyal obedience.²³⁹⁷ Once loyalty has been founded within one’s heart and spirit (devotional choice), then the appropriate walk can become manifest to the humbled disciplined believer.²³⁹⁸ The appropriate walk then leads the disciple (learned pupil) to lead others in the ways of truth; thus allowing the potential for all involved to focus upon the Lord in every aspect of life (thought, word and deed).²³⁹⁹

When salvation by grace is but a passing or vague thought within us, then the helmet of salvation has not been donned so as to ward off attack. When the attack comes, as it surely will, it becomes virtually impossible to set our minds on things which are acceptable and pleasing to God; unless the Lord is maintained as our first and foremost imperative!²⁴⁰⁰ If we then become tormented within our thoughts, the torment is sure to come forward as by our impatience, testiness, and aggressive demeanor. If we are to exhibit God’s blessings in our life, we must first realize His blessings, for cleansing from our sins and salvation are surely the greatest blessings we (or anyone) could ever hope for; these second only to being known by God (legitimate children; greatest blessing)! Because many of the enemy’s attacks will come in the form of distracting and/or disturbing thoughts, the helmet of salvation must never be taken off! With the attacks sure to come, defeat will predominately be the end result *if* we enter into battle failing to protect our thoughts; which leads

²³⁹⁶ cf. 1 John 3:21-3; 1 Corinthians 13:12; 15:53-58.

²³⁹⁷ cf. 1 Thessalonians 5:8-11; Ephesians 1:13-17; Hosea 6:6; Hebrews 5:8-10, specific v. 9.

²³⁹⁸ cf. Hebrews 6:10-12.

²³⁹⁹ cf. 1 Peter 3:14-17; 1 Timothy 4:16; Proverbs 3:5, 6; 4:23-27.

²⁴⁰⁰ cf. Philippians 4:4-9; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; Hebrews 12:1-3.

assuredly to a lack of the appropriate focus upon the Lord necessary for righteous success.²⁴⁰¹

Personal Note: In Philippians 4:8 we find a sound base upon which we should allow our minds to dwell. This base being—whatever is true, honorable, right, pure, lovely, and of good repute (reputation; especially good reputation); additionally, anything of excellence and praise worthy. The one place where all of these righteous (right) things are found is in the Lord God of all creation (our: Creator, Savior, Lord, and King)! Because God is the author of salvation foundational to the measure of faith given to those created in His image spiritually (human beings), to allow our thoughts to dwell upon Him and His absolute: holiness, righteousness, purity, goodness, and brilliant creativity; allows a foundation of sound mind, thought, and actions, which deny the inappropriateness of the world and flesh. There is no foundation of our faith except Christ Jesus; therefore, please consider the importance of this “note statement,” and the strength to firmly wear the helmet of salvation that is made possible! Two other Scriptures worthy of mental thought processes are Matthew 22:36-40 and 2 Corinthians 10:5; if we take every thought captive to obedience regarding the first and foremost commandment, which is to love the Lord with all of our: heart, soul, mind, and strength, then our thoughts will remain permeable regarding the author and perfecter of our faith and salvation.

Sword of the Spirit (Word of God) (Ephesians 6:17)

Just as a sword was utilized both to attack and defend, so also the sword of spiritual warfare is also utilized to attack deception and defend the hope that is in us.²⁴⁰² The Sword of the Spirit (Word of God) is extremely powerful and must be utilized with precision and grace; precision against the spiritual forces of evil which we fight, and grace upon the human beings caught up in the conflict.²⁴⁰³ As with any weapon of warfare, when the weapon is utilized properly (with true faith and love) it brings forth success; yet when utilized inappropriately brings forth defeat and/or harm.²⁴⁰⁴ True faith is necessary in order to receive

²⁴⁰¹ cf. 1 Peter 4:7-19.

²⁴⁰² cf. Luke 21:10-15; Acts 26:16-18.

²⁴⁰³ cf. Hebrews 4:12; 2 Timothy 2:15, 16; 3:16-4:4; 2 Peter 1:5-11.

²⁴⁰⁴ cf. 1 Corinthians 2:4, 5.

the strength of the Lord to fight spiritual battles, and love is necessary as the spiritual battles are brought into the physical realm!

The Word of God is the only offensive weapon found in the full armor of God. It is a stumbling block to the un-saved; the power of God to the drawn and saved.²⁴⁰⁵ Learn it, practice it, and utilize it! If anyone does not believe the gospel themselves, how can they make proclamation devotionally? Simple fact, if anyone is not obedient to the Word of Truth, then they do not truly believe it; if it is not devotionally believed, it will not be wielded with disciplined precision!²⁴⁰⁶

As aforementioned within the segment on the shoes of preparatory Gospel peace, the Word of God is never to be used as an attack weapon upon people! There are many religious zealots who utilize the Gospel in attempts to convince, convict, condemn, and justify; this is absolutely inappropriate and wrong, thus against Christ! The Scriptures are a love story pertaining to the Creator / creature distinction and relationship; which renders truth about all aspects of our lives in accordance to this distinctive relationship. When the Gospel is utilized inappropriately as by pride, arrogance, selfishness and brutality; the love story is diminished, whereby the relationship becomes lost in confusion and human foolishness. As ambassadors for Christ, we are to emphasize God's holiness, righteousness, love, and spiritual blessings to others; variations on the central theme of God's purity, immensity, love, and grace cause lasting misunderstanding as to the reality of "reconciliation," and therefore are not acceptable! Although we are to speak the Gospel truth to others in love, it would behoove us to remember that "love" is the key factor of our endeavors; love for God, love of the truth, and love for others regarding their salvation!²⁴⁰⁷

Although many ministries throughout history have placed complete emphasis upon what believers should and should not do; our relationship with the Lord is that which brings forth all such convictions, as God is allowed to both will and work for His own good pleasure!²⁴⁰⁸ We speak the Gospel truth in love, yet human beings can never actually bring forth conviction upon another; for God alone is capable of changing the human heart, by nurturing through an individual's spirit! As His

²⁴⁰⁵ cf. Romans 1:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-29.

²⁴⁰⁶ cf. James 1:22-25; 2:14-26; Matthew 15:8-20.

²⁴⁰⁷ 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

²⁴⁰⁸ cf. Proverbs 3:11, 12; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; Hebrews 12:1-11.

love is factually realized during His divine “drawing” process, love for Him becomes the result; thus in love we seek Him with disciplined submissive diligence, and He fulfills the remainder!²⁴⁰⁹ The convictions brought forth by the living nature of the Gospel, is confirmed in our spirit by the Holy Spirit; yet with all submissiveness of spirit, a personal devotional surrender must precede the learning process; for we must prepare to receive God’s blessings, thus “denial of self” (personal carnal volition)! Our relationship with God is very intimate; He is never slow to teach and lead us, when we have prepared ourselves to learn and be led as by realization of His sovereignty and love. The Gospel is very powerful, yet the power must be received with disciplined humility and gratitude, in order to receive appropriate growth in righteousness! Please pray that you may submissively accept the Gospel truth, and the changes it will bring as you abide therein.²⁴¹⁰ Individuals who refuse to gratefully accept Gospel truth within their essence (spirit), remain open to deception and the lustful desires of the flesh.²⁴¹¹ This is not necessary, if we would only deny “self” so as to allow proper focus upon the Lord; remain focused, and don the armor necessary for success, freedom and victory! Without “denial of self,” there cannot be focus upon the Lord; for where “self” (physical realm: focus, volition, and desires) remains, there can be no spiritual journeys or endeavors, as that which is of the Spirit and that which is of the flesh are in opposition one to the other!²⁴¹² Without denial of “self” there is no actual spiritual reality, only carnal: assumption, conjecture, delusion, and deception!

Prayer (Ephesians 6:18)

Prayer is an area within Christianity which very few have understanding; for prayer is not for the purpose of praying for oneself and one’s possessions, nor speaking many words from practiced rote! Prayer is communication with God, for the purpose of praise, supplication; thanksgiving, and worship; gaining wisdom, understanding, knowledge, instruction, and special revelation; for fulfillment of purpose in accordance to God’s righteous leadership, nurturing, and anointing! Unlike the prevalent belief within believers that prayer is a time for making

²⁴⁰⁹ John 6:44-65, specific vs. 44, 45; 14:6.

²⁴¹⁰ cf. John 8:31-36.

²⁴¹¹ cf. Romans 1:26-32; Colossians 2:18-23.

²⁴¹² cf. Galatians 5:16-26, specific v. 17.

selfish request of God for personal pleasures and benefits, the fact remains that prayer in a personal context is a time for supplication regarding increased faith, servanthood and humility. As God's grace is sufficient to meet our needs, failure to realize this fact leads to focusing upon the physical realm (flesh; earthy), which leads to walking by sight; not by faith.²⁴¹³

I find it hideous that most believers pray for "things" in the physical realm, or they always expect to receive answers to prayer regarding their own volition; whereas the Scriptures state that our prayers are to be aligned with God's good, acceptable and perfect will, and therefore the kind intention of His will, which directs us "spiritually."²⁴¹⁴ When we pray for, and expect most or all of God's blessings to be in the physical realm, we are guilty of idolatry! When our focus and desires are upon our own flesh and upon the world, we are not seeking to walk within God's will for our sanctification; this being a sign of walking by sight, not by faith. Let us take a generalized look at what God's will is for humanity, and for individuals.

HUMANITY

1. That none should perish, but that all may come to a knowledge of truth and/or repentance; non-believers (former), those who had once faced toward God (latter); for the purpose of understanding regarding our necessity for Jesus (Messiah / Savior / Lord / King) and thereby salvation (former), or the necessity to return focus upon the Lord (latter)!²⁴¹⁵
2. The return of the Lord Jesus Christ. It is the revealed will of God that Christ return to once again draw His chosen people (the Jews) unto Himself, and bring peace and righteousness to this world currently abounding with torment and lawlessness; this will occur during Jesus' millennial reign. By the behavior of many believers, it is made difficult for those without Scripture knowledge to realize that there is yet prophesy to be fulfilled.²⁴¹⁶ Although we are to be at peace with all others, so far as it depends on us; for believers to

²⁴¹³ cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; 12:7-10.

²⁴¹⁴ cf. 1 Corinthians 2:1-4:5; Ephesians 1:3-2:22; 1 Thessalonians 5:12-25; 1 John 5:14-21.

²⁴¹⁵ cf. John 3:3-21; 2 Timothy 2:3-13; 2 Peter 3:8, 9.

²⁴¹⁶ cf. Revelation 1:1-22:21; 1 Corinthians 15:1-58; Matthew 24:1-25:46; 1 Thessalonians 4:13-18; 2 Thessalonians 2:1-17.

hope for peace on this earth without Christ's glorious return, is absurd.²⁴¹⁷ For believers to attempt to change the government, yet believing peace can be obtained through Christian effort on a planetary scale, is also absurd. The Scriptures state that the world will become a place of great: distress, selfishness, sexual immorality, usage of sorcery (Greek—*pharmakeia*; from which is derived—pharmacy, pharmaceuticals) during the end times.²⁴¹⁸ The Scriptures also state that many will continue to study and yet fail in coming to knowledge of the truth; this because of continued focus upon secular things, including fleshly indulgences, rather than upon our glorious Lord! These are realities which cannot be denied; although many would attempt to do so as by wishful thinking, fantasy, being deceived, and/or fear of the truth!

As believers, we are to reach other individuals with the good news of the Gospel. Because it is true that God saves individuals and not groups or categories of peoples, many believers waste valuable time in their attempts to evade the inevitable return of Christ, as by denying prophecy yet to be fulfilled. I have never read in the Scriptures where it says that we are to fight or pray against God's will, nor attempt to change the harshness of the world for the sake of our own carnal comforts. I do note in Scripture that God said we would have suffering, tribulation and persecution as His legitimate children, and that we are to seek comfort from Him within our affliction.²⁴¹⁹ Because His return is nearer now than when we first believed, I think we should stop wasting valuable time in conjecture, assumption, and religiosity; rather reaching others with the truth of the Gospel, while saying with sincerity "Amen. Come, Lord Jesus!"²⁴²⁰

INDIVIDUALS

1. That in sorrow of what is occurring in the world; we would become disciplined humbled servants, and seekers of God's righteous will to be accomplished in our lives and in the lives of others; thus focusing our prayers accordingly.²⁴²¹

²⁴¹⁷ cf. Romans 12:1-21.

²⁴¹⁸ cf. Luke 17:26-37; Galatians 5:19-21; 1 Timothy 4:1-3; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; 4:1-4.

²⁴¹⁹ cf. 2 Timothy 3:10-17.

²⁴²⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 1:3-7; 2 Thessalonians 2:13-17; Philippians 1:27-30; 3:7-14; 2 Timothy 1:8-14; Hebrews 2:10-18; 1 Peter 2:18-25; 3:13-5:11; quote—Revelation 22:20.

2. Individual sanctification. Sanctification, being made holy and separate from the ways of the world as His beloved legitimate adopted children is commanded; not requested! At the point of our conversion by faith, we were “set apart unto Him” (definitive sanctification). Upon true knowledge of the experience, we then submit to receive His grace to live a holy life, which demonstrates our position in Him to be a reality as by our changed mindset and demeanor; for we become students and servants of the truth, unwavering in our obedience to it (progressive sanctification).²⁴²²
3. That believers place their focus upon the Lord. Although there are many distractions which surround us, the harm comes when the distractions unfortunately become our focus. There is but one God, Lord and Savior, by no other means than His grace can we be saved! We are not saved by doctrine, human programs nor teachings, any form of human works, organized secular religion, human intellect nor prowess; for it is solely by a personal relationship with Jesus (spiritual relational reality) and the giving and receiving of His grace, that we are saved and empowered for freedom and victory!²⁴²³

When the Lord indicated to us that He willed us to separate ourselves from the ways of the world so as to draw closer unto Him, He intended that we were never to allow our relationship with Him to be jeopardized by friendship with the world. It amazes me how multitudes of believers have no concern for the desolation of their faith and relationship with God; beyond deluded religious assumption; yet rather concern themselves only with how they may fit into this world; this is the direct result of never sacrificially loving the Lord, for without disciplined sacrifice of personal volition there is never an actual motive to submit unto God, which is the initial stage of resisting the devil!²⁴²⁴ This directly evidences the truth that multitudes of confessing believers have no idea whatsoever of the imperative of God’s spiritual preparatory and continuous work!

²⁴²¹ cf. 2 Corinthians 7:9-11; Galatians 1:3-10; James 4:7-5:20.

²⁴²² cf. John 18:36, 37; Romans 12:1-21; 15:1-13; Ephesians 4:11-32; 6:1-24; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-12; 1 Timothy 6:1-21; 2 Timothy 2:5-4:8; 2 Peter 2:1-22; 1 John 3:1-24; 2 John 1:1-11; Mark 3:32-35.

²⁴²³ cf. Matthew 22:1-14, 36-40; Romans 8:1-39; John 8:31-36; Galatians 5:1-26; 1 Peter 1:13-2:25; 1 Corinthians 15:51-58; 1 John 5:4, 5; Hebrews 10:1-39.

²⁴²⁴ cf. James 4:7-10, specific v. 7.

This is the reason why many (I contend—most) believers never make supplication unto the Lord for guidance prior to stepping forth, but rather do as they wish or will (personal volition) and expect God to go along for the ride; as if He would be their acquaintance upon the broad path which leads to carnal spiritual destruction! Although there are many things in this life which believers are not to participate in, the many (most) couldn't seem to care less as they move forward, never having made supplication for guidance nor rendering a moment of their precious time eagerly listening for what the Lord may say. Far too many believers go through life never having received the Lord's guidance, for they are not concerned with holiness, righteousness, disciplined obedience, or the will of the one true God. Most believers seek fulfillment of their own volition, and thereby remain deceived into believing the wrong standards of success as set forth by the world; which forces hostility with God, as the carnal individuals actually make themselves enemies of God by selfish choice; by ignorance or not, this reality exists!²⁴²⁵

I find it pathetic that most believers believe that prayer is a one sided aspect of conversation, whereas they choose to always speak and never listen! The fact of the matter is that prayer is communication, which signifies that both parties both speak and listen; thus as God is greater than us in every way, it would be wise if we would listen more than we talk when in prayer, yet this is rarely the case.²⁴²⁶ Do we learn while talking, or listening; who has greater wisdom, understanding, and knowledge, us or God?

Something wonderful happens when we learn to listen diligently for what the Lord may say! Although I will not discuss personal fellowship with the Lord, for this is an aspect of one's personal relationship with God that is actually ineffable; I will mention communication regarding our heavenly Teacher.²⁴²⁷ In regards to study of the Gospel, it is absolutely true that the Lord will teach us great and mighty things which we do not currently know; by implantation of the Gospel truth (Gospel reality) into our spirit!²⁴²⁸ Although many (I would tend to think most) believers have no idea as to the blessing of being taught personally by the Lord (within actual fellowship with Him), some (dare I say few,

²⁴²⁵ cf. James 4:3-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

²⁴²⁶ cf. James 1:19-25; emphasized—Isaiah 55:1-13.

²⁴²⁷ cf. Matthew 23:8-12.

²⁴²⁸ cf. Jeremiah 33:3; James 1:21.

remnant; disciplined devotional Christians) have come to realize the tremendous blessing received when He does! The greatest difficulties regarding receiving from God, is the fact that most believers do not listen when they pray, pray with wrong motives, pray contrary to God's will, pray selfishly.

Personal Note: Having spoken to countless individuals who claim abounding understanding of the Gospel and fellowship with God; and this many times after only a short period following accepting Jesus as Savior; the more they speak and I listen, the truth is revealed that most have little understanding at all regarding God and the Gospel; although in prideful arrogance they refuse to admit the truth. Upon saying—let us continue this conversation taking every statement captive to the Gospel, only a tiny few were willing; lest the truth of their prideful arrogance be instantly exposed. Only a tiny few (remnant) of the tiny few who were courageous enough to go forth conversing with the backing of Gospel truth, were mature enough to confess their ignorance of the Gospel, which on occasion allowed an open door for continued discussion and learning; for most have never read the Bible, nonetheless actually studied it, and in pride refuse to admit the fact even to themselves (fatuity)! How it is that multitudes are willing to lie regarding their understanding of Scripture torments me; for *if* deception comes forth so easily by the many, how can they possibly believe they have an appropriate righteous relationship with the Lord God of truth and light?²⁴²⁹ Lying is not an option for true disciplined assiduous and veracious Christians; therefore, it is truly good advice that each of us test ourselves to see if we are actually God's legitimate child!²⁴³⁰ I have never done this to be mean or spiteful, or because of: vain glory, efficacy, pedantry, or to emphasize any specific, but rather out of altruism to keep all conversations regarding the Gospel out in the light of Gospel reality; for any and all deceptive behavior is against God, and opens the door to both delusion, and demonic influence! I simply hope that folks will awaken from their spiritual slumber, so as to come out into the light of truth where God can work and the reality imperatives be realized (Romans 13:10-14)! Most believers have no idea the plethora of lies

²⁴²⁹ cf. 1 John 1:6-8.

²⁴³⁰ cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

which are vomited out toward God's devotional servants, and the patience we must maintain in love; nor do they realize who is holding them captive to do his will, and why we (God's veracious servants) must show the err of deception; by severity *if* necessary, as we cannot resort to subterfuge when there is evidence of captivity to demonic influence!²⁴³¹ To God's anointed servants of truth and light, God is first and foremost (everything), without exception, compromise or excuse; therefore, in love we will do what we must!

A considerable amount of the torment which is felt by us (Lord's servants) when treated deceptively, is the fact of prevalent pride which is evident in those who lie without remorse or conviction of wrongdoing; this more so when they are deceptive regarding God and the Scriptures! The individual themselves cause only a portion of the torment, as they are obviously unaware of the dangers which they face, because of the blinding effects of foolish adolescent (stubborn) pride which accompanies a lifetime of carnal insecurity; the greater portion of the torment being that we realize how easily and effectively demons can attack and take individuals captive through pride based deception; which obscures all ability to see clearly the dangers of the battle being faced! The evidence of these encounters also brings forth the harsh reality that the individual may not be a legitimate child of God; for God is opposed to foolish adolescent stubborn and rebellious pride, because of its effects regarding obscurity of the light of truth! This is why childish stubborn pride must be driven from children during rearing years; lest the pride continue to adversely affect a righteous relationship with the Lord, even from the very beginning!²⁴³² It must be understood, *if* an individual makes a confession of faith from a foundation of selfish (adolescent; stubborn) pride and motive, the confession will not be accepted by the Lord unto salvation; for as pride causes opposition against God, all confessions unto salvation must be made during a moment of acquiescence, for only humility will confess the imperative need to succumb unto the authority of Christ (Jesus as Lord—Romans 10:8-13, specific v. 9; cf. John 6:44, 45; Hebrews 5:9, 10)! *If* the time of the confession of faith is factually foundational to adolescent pride and selfishness solely to save "oneself," then demons

²⁴³¹ cf. Romans 11:20-24; 2 Corinthians 13:9, 10; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 5:19, 20.

²⁴³² cf. Proverbs 8:13; 11:2, 3; 16:4, 5, 18-20; 21:23, 24; 22:6, 15; 23:11-14.

will immediately invade the mindset of the individual so that they believe themselves to be saved, although not; this is directly because the “confession” was made completely aloof the reality of God and the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ)!²⁴³³ This is easily evinced in a person who maintains adolescent (stubborn) pride throughout their lifetime; when there is no evidence of a changed life which is from God even after years of a professed relationship! “Pride” is truly a very powerful foe which has led multiple millions astray of truth and reality throughout the generations; this is why God is opposed to it, and why “self” (and all of its characteristics) must be denied, if a relationship with the Lord is to begin or continue!

Attempts to pray while abounding with self-centered pride is useless; for without acquiescence the fact of the maintained pride is sin, and when sin remains within an individual without remorse or a willingness to turn from it, the Lord will not hear!²⁴³⁴ If anyone’s supposed relationship with God is all about “self,” it is deluded and delusive; for God renders grace by which we are saved and led in righteousness because of who He is; not because of who we are, or think we are (arrogance)! Foolish adolescent pride is an aspect of our sinful nature which has and will continue to lead to the eternal demise of multitudes!

I have known very few believers (including pastors, ministers and teachers) who have persevered past the distractions instigated by demonic enemies, so as to receive the wonderful blessing of God personally teaching them. This blessing is such that *if* it has been received once; diligent persistence becomes necessary within the individual, lest it never occur again. When we enter into study of God’s Word (the Gospel) the enemy attacks with every conceivable distraction and/or form of compromising thought; this of course because Satan does not want us to submit to the power of the Word of God; which could lead to our abiding in the Lord!²⁴³⁵ *If* and when we persevere beyond the distractions and forms of compromise (generally derived from a foundation of “self”), we enter into a realm of complete peace and focus. This may take several hours to accomplish, yet this is time well spent! At a point of God’s choosing, if a criterion is met (disciplined ac-

²⁴³³ cf. Matthew 16:24-27; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6, specific vs. 3, 4.

²⁴³⁴ cf. Psalm 66:18-20; James 4:13-17.

²⁴³⁵ cf. Hebrews 4:12, 13; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; John 8:31-36; 15:1-10; 1 John 2:21-29; 4:12, 13; 2 John 1:8-11.

quiescence and humility), the Lord Himself begins to teach us, leading to surety of the meaning behind the words; thus certainty and clarity of truth.²⁴³⁶ The criterion aforementioned begins with: prayer, confession of known sin, and supplication for truth.²⁴³⁷ When the criterion is met and the Lord has begun to teach His child, many Scriptures which had never held sound meaning for us or confused us, become clear and concise; leading to our wondering why we never understood the reality of the context before this point. When the Lord teaches us the essence of His Word (Gospel reality), certainty of knowledge becomes the prevalent factor; for although we know in part many things, those things taught us by the Lord are known with precise certainty. This is the essence of Biblical knowledge!

If you have never made time for God in your life, I would request that you do so; for with minimal effort to find time, demonic influence will assuredly cause distractions to deter from this righteous expenditure of time! If you have never spent an entire day or more in prayer and in the study of the Gospel, please consider doing so. There is no greater blessing then to have the Lord God of all creation personally teach you, and guide you upon the path He has chosen specifically for you! Not I, nor anyone else can guide nor lead another upon the path God has chosen for them; only the Lord Himself can accomplish such a blessing which leads to an individual's sanctification and growth.²⁴³⁸ If you regularly go forth without first asking the Lord's guidance, please learn to begin your day in prayer and wait patiently for the Lord's instruction; prior to going forth, lest stumbling blindly become the outcome. Far too many believers go through life never having received the Lord's masterful guidance and instruction! Please dare to be of the few (remnant) that truly trust in the Lord as by disciplined submission, obedience, humility, and faith; for although multitudes may do according to the standards of the world, the Lord told His legitimate children—"come out from their midst and be separate" (2 Corinthians 6:17b), and thus the answer is given! Are we willing to wait patiently to receive the appropriate answer and walk accordingly upon the narrow path of God's righteousness, or will we continue to walk blindly upon the wide path which leads to carnal spiritual

²⁴³⁶ cf. Psalm 66:16-20; John 4:16, 17; 16:13-15; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

²⁴³⁷ cf. 1 John 1:8-2:2; James 1:2-12; 4:3-10.

²⁴³⁸ cf. James 1:16-27; 1 John 2:27-29.

destruction? The answer rests with each of us individually! Please don the full armor of God, remaining separate from a lost and dying world, secure within the grace, strength, lovingkindness, and mercies of the Lord!

The Son of Man Is Our Example

Jesus our Lord was fully God and fully man.²⁴³⁹ He was raised to be a carpenter, as had his dad.²⁴⁴⁰ As a carpenter, Jesus had slivers in His hands, blisters, calluses, pains, and the same temptations as any layman.²⁴⁴¹

The aforementioned pieces of God's armor are only complete when joined by the most powerful piece of armor available to both Jesus and us. This piece of armor was utilized by Jesus habitually throughout His physical existence upon the earth, which demonstrated to each of us the necessity of its use in all that we do. What is it? Answer = Praying in the Spirit!²⁴⁴² Although some have said that "praying in the Spirit" is "speaking in tongues," this is not at all correct! Speaking in tongues was a necessity during times long ago, when the language barrier between towns and provinces caused hindrance to the spreading of the Gospel. Although speaking in tongues yet occurs for appropriate reasons, it no longer holds necessity in outward manifestations as it once did; nor does it have anything whatsoever to do with praying in the Spirit.²⁴⁴³ Because we now have bibles written in most known languages, open manifestations of praying in tongues is not of consequence as it once was. Some denominations say that speaking in tongues is the manifested proof that we have the Holy Spirit; yet this is a deception, as evil and perverse generations seek for a sign because they have placed their focus upon the physical realm (religiosity), while lacking the faith of a mustard seed.²⁴⁴⁴ Praying in the Holy Spirit is to focus upon the Lord, and allow Him to perform the conversation for both parties in and of Himself; in this the believer remains focused and is quiet, submissive, and blessed.²⁴⁴⁵

The fact that Jesus Himself utilized the full armor of God is evident in all that He did.²⁴⁴⁶ He utilized the Sword of the Spirit,²⁴⁴⁷ the

²⁴³⁹ ref. The Son of Man - Matthew 13:37-43, John 1:1, 2; 14:9, 10; Philippians 2:5-11.

²⁴⁴⁰ Matthew 13:55; Mark 6:3.

²⁴⁴¹ Hebrews 2:18; 4:15.

²⁴⁴² ref. Ephesians 6:18-20.

²⁴⁴³ 1 Corinthians 12: 28-31; 13:8-10; 14:5-40.

²⁴⁴⁴ Luke 11:21-36.

²⁴⁴⁵ Romans 8:18-30, specific vs. 26, 27.

²⁴⁴⁶ John 5:19-23.

Breastplate of Righteousness and the Helmet of Salvation,²⁴⁴⁸ the Shoes of the preparatory Gospel of Peace,²⁴⁴⁹ the Girdle of Truth,²⁴⁵⁰ the Shield of Faith,²⁴⁵¹ and prayer.²⁴⁵² If Jesus utilized the full armor of God even though He had within Himself the complete power of God; we would be foolish to believe we can fight spiritual battles and very powerful spiritual foes, without donning (continually) the armor ourselves!²⁴⁵³

Jesus was a man of compassion and love.²⁴⁵⁴ This is demonstrated in how He felt the sorrow of others;²⁴⁵⁵ His anger when supposed spiritual leaders led others astray;²⁴⁵⁶ the way in which He through love endured such humiliation, pain, and suffering when He accepted the punishment for our sins in our stead.²⁴⁵⁷

In all things that our Lord did, He demonstrated without hypocrisy the entirety He called each of us to be accountable for.²⁴⁵⁸ He never: lied, stole, had illicit sex, dishonored His mother and Father, coveted, worshipped false gods, murdered, violated the law, or involved Himself with inappropriate traditions and rituals! The human aspect of our Lord was true in every detail, as He never deceived anyone at any time; this He did by properly utilizing the measure of faith fully and completely! This is the Lord I pray all would come to know and serve! We are truly blessed when we are obedient to this One who has loved us, and shown (by example) the way which we should go!²⁴⁵⁹ Although Jesus was perfect in His human walk upon the earth, and we are not by any means; the fact remains that we can humbly submit to Him, be prayerful and obedient in following Him, and stayed from the different forms of permanent harm brought forth by the world. Please be humbled in the Lord, and don the full armor of God for true: success, freedom, and victory.

²⁴⁴⁷ Matthew 4:4-11.

²⁴⁴⁸ Isaiah 59:16, 17; Hebrews 4:14-16; 12:1-3.

²⁴⁴⁹ Mark 1:15, 39; Luke 8:1-3.

²⁴⁵⁰ Matthew 22:16; John 8:45; 14:6; 17:17.

²⁴⁵¹ John 19:11.

²⁴⁵² Matthew 14:23; Mark 6:46; 14:34-39; Luke 6:12.

²⁴⁵³ 2 Peter 3:17, 18; 1 Corinthians 15:1, 2; 16:13; Ephesians 6:11-13; Philippians 2:5-7; 4:1; 1 Thessalonians 3:6-8; 2 Thessalonians 2:16, 17; 1 John 2:1-6; John 17:7-26.

²⁴⁵⁴ 1 John 4:8-10; Revelation 1:4-6.

²⁴⁵⁵ John 11:5, 35.

²⁴⁵⁶ Matthew 23:1-36.

²⁴⁵⁷ Hebrews 2:14-18; 5:7-10; John 10:11-18; Romans 3:21-31; 1 John 4:7-10.

²⁴⁵⁸ 1 John 2:3-7; 1 Peter 2:21-25.

²⁴⁵⁹ James 1:25; John 10:1-5; 15:1-16:33; Colossians 2:6-10; Romans 13:11-14.

CHAPTER TEN

TESTING OURSELVES

WE SHOULD TEST OURSELVES to see if we are in the faith.²⁴⁶⁰ It would not be pleasurable to hear we were never known by the Lord, when all has been said and done! Let us consider carefully the characteristics of a non-believer with those of a Christian, and thus gain understanding as to the behavior which the Lord seeks to be prevalent in the lives of His adopted legitimate children; as He conforms us to the image of Jesus. With the forthcoming Biblical characteristics, please remember that our victory is by faith; therefore it is God's work within us which conforms us to the behavior which is pleasing to Him.²⁴⁶¹ IT IS NOT OUR DOING, BUT RATHER HIS ACTIONS; BEING ACHIEVED ONLY BY FAITH AND TRUST IN THE LORD, AND THE HUMBLE RECEIVING OF HIS GRACE!

I have had many professing believers say that they believe being “born again” was some sort of religious fad. Being “born again” is not only not a religious fad, it is an absolute necessity if we are to inherit the kingdom of God.²⁴⁶² Being “born again” of the Spirit is necessary, lest we remain illegitimate children and not sons and daughters of God; for illegitimacy is to be outside the marriage supper of the Lamb, and thus also the kingdom of heaven!²⁴⁶³ Please consider the warning by our Lord to those who believed themselves to be serving Him, when in fact they were never known by the Lord as being His own. This is in fact a warning to professing (supposed) believers, for non-believers would not consider themselves to be servants of Christ.

Matthew 7:21-23: “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and

²⁴⁶⁰ 2 Corinthians 13:4-8.

²⁴⁶¹ Philippians 1:2-11; 2:5-16.

²⁴⁶² John 3:3-7.

²⁴⁶³ Revelation 19:7-9; 22:11-17.

in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’”

MINDSET

Increased knowing and serving the Lord, begins with placing our thoughts to be in line with His good, acceptable and perfect will; this is accomplished by strict discipline, and humble devotional obedience to the first and foremost commandment!²⁴⁶⁴ This is the imperative of placing “self” aside, so as to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.²⁴⁶⁵ God’s prophetic will for mankind is to lead us to the return of Jesus Christ; this made evident as the prophecy of Revelation describes that which must occur. The Lord rendered this prophecy so that we may be prepared for the inevitable, thereby allowing us the necessary knowledge so as to stay from fighting against His will; as do many! The mindset of all believers in Christ should be upon the “blessed hope” of His return (thus upon Christ); for this blessed occurrence of God’s intervention, ushers in His kingdom and also our eternity with Him.²⁴⁶⁶

Most believers remain busy placing full focus upon aspects of their current lives while yet in the corporeal body; thus serving “self”! The Scriptures state that our focus (mindset) is to be upon Him, His destruction of sin, and the coming of His eternal kingdom which He will bring forth after His millennial reign.²⁴⁶⁷ It is by focus upon Him that our minds will dwell upon those things which are excellent and worthy of praise; for as can be witnessed by the footnote Philippians passages, the Lord is in fact: true, honorable, righteous, pure, lovely and of good repute!²⁴⁶⁸ Most believers behave like non-believers, because they set their minds upon the same carnal lusts and secular desires. If the Lord is truly our focus, then we look beyond our current life by donning the helmet of salvation daily! Are we reminded of our “blessed hope” of eternity with him in churches today, or do we constantly hear of that which involves our flesh? Are we led to focus our minds upon the Lord,

²⁴⁶⁴ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40.

²⁴⁶⁵ Matthew 16:24-27.

²⁴⁶⁶ Revelation 11:15-17.

²⁴⁶⁷ Philippians 3:15-21; 1 Peter 1:13-16; Hebrews 12:1-11; 2 Corinthians 4:13-18.

²⁴⁶⁸ Philippians 4:4-9.

or are we instructed by church leadership to live for “self” in the moment? Listening to most church sermons in our current age (Laodicean church), it is hard to remember that God has prophecy yet to be fulfilled; thus we fail to look to God’s incredible bringing forth of righteousness and peace.²⁴⁶⁹ Please remember—*if* what is taught you in church is not helping you to focus spiritually upon the Lord, it is generally teaching you to focus upon the physical realm, which entices a foundation of human endeavor which is very displeasing to God. All sin is derived from the desires of “self,” as it is “self” which allows temptation to become sin! Seeking that which is for the “here and now” rather than God’s kingdom and righteousness, is actually the exact opposite of God’s instruction to us; therefore being opposite Scripture instruction—it is sin; as “self” wants it both ways! This emphasized by the mindset of the carnal and apostate church at Laodicea (the current-day church, A.D.1954 - present—Revelation 3:14-22).

To walk by faith is to set one’s mind upon the Lord; including His return. To walk by sight is to set one’s mind on the things of the flesh, and of this world.²⁴⁷⁰ Walking by faith is truly a matter of one’s mindset and motivation, for as human beings we will definitely go in the direction of which we have set our minds and hearts. Are we so fearful of the truth that we would choose not to set our minds upon the things of God? Are we fearful that God may see the reality of our fleshly existence, should we turn toward Him? The fact remains that He sees all things from heaven, thus He already knows the very essence (motives) of our mindset and demeanor! As He knows the wretched results of inappropriate focus, He has blessed us with the standards necessary to avoid such behavior; for truly His grace is sufficient!²⁴⁷¹ Are we paying heed to His warnings, or falling prey to the wiles of Satan (ruler of this world) on a regular basis? If we will choose to set our minds upon the Lord, He will cleanse us from our unrighteousness; teaching us our purpose of life through personal anointing!²⁴⁷² We can fear, or we can dwell within the most powerful love in the universe—His love! His attention is upon us, shall we not bountifully and devotionally set our attention fully upon Him! We need not walk in ignorance or fear, for the reality

²⁴⁶⁹ cf. Revelation 3:14-22.

²⁴⁷⁰ Romans 8:5-11; Philippians 1:25-30.

²⁴⁷¹ Romans 1:16-2:16.

²⁴⁷² 1 John 2:27.

of saving faith can in fact be witnessed when we focus upon Him; and are led to walk accordingly!²⁴⁷³ Knowledge of Him and of the reality His perfect love casts out both ignorance and fear, respectively; replacing them (ignorance and fear) with surety of His faithfulness! The spiritual relational reality (actual saving relationship) is far reaching from the religious conjecture and assumption of multitudes!

Are we prepared for Christ's return to take us home (caught up; Rapture), or will we be taken by surprise and feel ashamed when He comes?²⁴⁷⁴ Note—although many religious denominations claim that Christ now rules from heaven through the “Church,” Scripture makes it evident that this is incorrect; as He reigns within the spirit of His legitimate children currently (indwelling), and will personally reign in righteousness and peace upon this earth after the Tribulation Period.²⁴⁷⁵ Believers who think this world is being ruled in righteousness and peace under human leadership, or that humankind can in any way bring such a reign to this earth; should awaken from their fantasy slumber; for they believe contrary to the revealed Gospel truth!²⁴⁷⁶ Only the One who is omnipotent (all powerful), omniscient (all knowing), and omnipresent (everywhere present) can bring peace to His creation (the earth and living creatures)! Preparedness is a matter of one's mindset, for minds set upon the Lord seek His blessings in ways far reaching from one's corporeal existence; thus claiming victory by reliance upon the promises (faithfulness) of God!

As a man or woman thinks; so they are. If we maintain the mindset of being the children of God, then our thoughts will be maintained upon pleasing Him; thus in all our ways we acknowledge Him, so He may make our paths straight. If we maintain a mindset of being just another individual upon this planet, then our thoughts will wander within the carnal mindset of attempting to prove our worth as by comfort, prestige, riches, or physical strength. If our mindset is upon the Lord, then our lives will be led in a manner so as to demonstrate that He is our focus and strength, and serving Him our desire! If our mindset is upon “self” or the secular world, then our actions will demonstrate that God is neither our focus nor desire; thus our lives will be lived in

²⁴⁷³ Romans 8:12-17.

²⁴⁷⁴ Hebrews 12:25-29; 1 Peter 3:10-12; 2 Peter 3:3-9; 1 John 2:28-3:3.

²⁴⁷⁵ Isaiah 65:17-25.

²⁴⁷⁶ 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11; John 4:22-26.

a manner which displeases God, as friendship with the world causes enmity with God.²⁴⁷⁷ The choice is ours, being derived from our reality of being God's legitimate children, or failure thereof.²⁴⁷⁸ Although individuals may be saved by God's grace (legitimate children), *if* both mindset and behavior never indicate the saving relational reality, the potential always exists that the individuals are not actually saved and therefore—illegitimate children, who have remained deceived during the entirety of their lifetime, regarding being within a relationship which never existed in reality! *If* God is present in an individual, there will be change as they are conformed to the image of Christ; *if* change never occurs, something is terribly wrong and investigation (testing) of oneself should be forthcoming immediately; for God's ability to both will and work for His own good pleasure must be evident in His legitimate children!²⁴⁷⁹

TRUE LOVE OPPOSES CARNAL EMOTIONS

The love which is from God is spiritual in nature (agape); this completely different than the three forms of emotional love which are of the world and flesh (Greek—philew, agapaw, eros)! The love which is of God's fruit (agape—unconditional, selfless, and sacrificial), cannot be taught or perceived in the physical realm of this earth; but rather is implanted by God Himself into His legitimate children in accordance to His immense and intimate grace and lovingkindness.²⁴⁸⁰ When we attempt to emulate God's agape love, we fail terribly; for this love is received humbly through faith, and then rendered by the believer in their very demeanor as exhibited by the masterful leadership of God through His grace. This form of love is that which sets true Christians apart from others; for we love “just because,” not “because of”! The manifested love of God within humble believers is pure and undefiled; holding to no aspect of “self”! The love of this world is foundational to “self”; for worldly love always desires something in return! Which form of love is most expressed by individuals for others? If the love emphasized in our character (very demeanor) is one of the physical realm alone (wanton, selfish, and lustful), then we are not exhibiting the love of God

²⁴⁷⁷ James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

²⁴⁷⁸ John 1:12, 13; Romans 8:12-30; Ephesians 5:1-21; Hebrews 12:7-11.

²⁴⁷⁹ Hebrews 5:8-6:6, emphasis vs. 5:9, 10 and 6:3; 12:7, 8.

²⁴⁸⁰ 1 John 4:11-5:3.

(pure, undefiled and selfless); thus—heed of warning should take place! Do many professing believers have superficial, short lasting relationships; demonstrating only the selfish love of the world? Should not the selfless characteristics of Christian love be far different from the selfish characteristics of a worldly love? This is the Apostle Paul’s emphasis of the love necessary for appropriate Christian service; for individuality (personal volitional desire; carnal emotions) has no place in true Christian servitude or ministry.²⁴⁸¹

When we seek our own volitional emotions to take precedence over doing all for the glory of God and edification for others, we in fact seek and accept recognition for our actions. When seeking to obtain recognition for ourselves, we allow the focus of others which should always remain upon the Lord by faith, to be brought into the physical realm; leading others to walk by sight. It is this type of inappropriate behavior which leads others to focus upon their pastors, ministers, teachers and other assorted religious leaders, for supposed spiritual victory. In reality, this leads to bondage in the physical realm, having failed to trust in God who is the only surety of our spiritual existence! Please remember—our victory over the ways of the world is solely by faith; thus without focusing our trust and hope in God by faith, we will be ensnared into the ways of the world.²⁴⁸² Please consider God’s commandments to all within the Body of Christ—to love Him first and foremost, and all others as much, if not more, than we love ourselves.²⁴⁸³ These confirmed by the eleventh commandment—“love one another.”²⁴⁸⁴ Our failures into sin begin with our disobedience to the aforementioned two commandments for the Body of Christ. Victory begins with placing “self” aside for the glory of God and the edification of others, as the “denial of self” is the first step in following Jesus! If this initial first step is not taken, then all progressive steps thereafter will be steps of one’s own volition; not according to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God! Pride in attempts to lead, or humility to follow Jesus; the choice rests with each of us, and is truly a matter of our insincere or sincere choices; respectively. The words of individuals may deceive both “self” and others; fruits evidence truth!²⁴⁸⁵

²⁴⁸¹ 1 Corinthians 13:1-13, emphasis vs. 4-7.

²⁴⁸² 1 John 2:12-17; 5:1-5; James 4:1-17.

²⁴⁸³ Matthew 22:36-40; Philipppians 2:1-4.

²⁴⁸⁴ John 13:34, 35.

PHYSICAL ACTIONS

Some have said “let go and let God.” In one very important context, this is correct; for we must “let go” of our pride and selfish volition at His throne of grace, and thereby allow Him to bring forth change according to the kind intention of His will, conforming us to the image of Jesus!²⁴⁸⁶ This phrase “let go and let God,” is not correct in any context when we feel He should lead our lives aside from walking within His righteousness, imputed to us by grace through faith.²⁴⁸⁷ It is also incorrect *if* and when we feel we have no decisions to be made, for it is our choice whether to: submit to the Holy Spirit, or not; commit sin or not; live lustfully or not; allow temptation to become sin or not; etc. We can allow God to nurture us and exalt us at the proper time, or we can choose our own volition of the flesh; thereby denying (our choice) spiritual growth and the reception of God’s blessings. This is a very fine line upon which we tread; for we cannot seek to establish our own righteousness, nor deny walking within His, *if* we are to gain and maintain victory in the faith.²⁴⁸⁸ The Lord has blessed true (assiduous; acquiscent) believers with abounding grace, which enables and empowers us to take our thoughts captive to obedience to Christ; this as God’s power is rendered in accordance to the manifestation of His righteousness involved within the kind intention of His will!²⁴⁸⁹ Apart from God’s manifest righteousness and power, we can do nothing appropriately pleasing to Him; for it is God who wills and works for His own good pleasure within His legitimate children!²⁴⁹⁰ The Lord’s grace can be grasped for the purposeful intent of His freely giving it; or it can be taken for granted and thereby denied or rejected, resulting in further willful sin and disobedience.²⁴⁹¹ **There is no emulation of God’s righteousness; only walking within His righteousness in accordance to His grace!**²⁴⁹²

A very important factor of our physical existence upon this earth, which demonstrates our being known by God, is the presence of strict

²⁴⁸⁵ Matthew 7:16-20.

²⁴⁸⁶ Romans 8:28-30; James 4:3-10; 1 Peter 5:6-10.

²⁴⁸⁷ Matthew 7:13-27; John 15:1-27.

²⁴⁸⁸ Romans 3:1-31; 10:1-4; 1 John 5:4, 5.

²⁴⁸⁹ 2 Corinthians 10:1-18.

²⁴⁹⁰ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; Hebrews 12:4-11.

²⁴⁹¹ Romans 5:19-6:14; Ephesians 2:1-10.

²⁴⁹² Romans 10:1-21, specific vs. 1-4.

discipline in our lives! The presence of stern discipline or lack thereof in the life of an individual, demonstrates the current work of God when it is present, or His absence when it is not! As true children of God, we endure for the purpose of strict discipline, so that the Lord may deal with us as His legitimate children! When a void for this purpose is all that is to be found within an individual claiming to know Jesus; heed of warning should take place!²⁴⁹³

Testing ourselves to see if we are in the faith is of utmost importance! It is by the evidence as to the work of God being present, which allows us to realize our salvation while still in our corporeal body! If the evidence demonstrates that we are without the Holy Spirit, then heed of warning should take place; lest we remain deceived into believing we are saved from the wages of sin, when in fact we may not be! Being a legitimate child of God can be evidenced and thus proven; in reality!

I have heard from many individuals who say they will wait until they stand before the Lord, before making the decision as to acceptance or denial of Christ's atoning sacrifice. The decision must be made in life as to whether or not to accept the free gift of salvation by grace through faith; or condemnation is the result!²⁴⁹⁴ This of course does not include those with mental defects, which make decision making impossible; for God's grace far surpasses human deficiencies and weaknesses! Evidencing the truth is mandatory for all who claim to know God, therefore refusal to test oneself in order to determine whether we are sincerely in the faith, is a fairly sure determination that we are not. Please remember—the truth makes us free, when within the spiritual relational reality, as this is a blessing from the Lord to stay us from deception; whereas, denial of truth holds no blessings! There is absolutely no excuse for cowardice to test oneself; for hiding behind our own delusive façade in order to deny the reality of our sinful nature and inappropriate behavior is an act of absolute cowardly selfish stupidity; which seeks to make the one true (all knowledgeable) God a liar!²⁴⁹⁵

When the Holy Spirit is present within us, we are convicted of sin and wrongdoing when it occurs; this fact is not debatable, therefore to practice sin without conviction of wrongdoing is impossible for a le-

²⁴⁹³ Hebrews 12 (entire chapter); 1 John 2:3-17; cf. Hebrews 2:10-18.

²⁴⁹⁴ Romans 8:1-5.

²⁴⁹⁵ 1 John 1:6-10; cf. Revelation 21:8.

gitimate child of God!²⁴⁹⁶ When the Holy Spirit is not present, our actions may seem just even though any evidence of the truth would demonstrate otherwise.²⁴⁹⁷ A sure indication as to the Lord being present is the absence of inappropriate cursive and slanderous words of speech coming forth from an individual; except by haphazard (stumbling); for such speech creates extreme detriment to ministry potential. As we will give account for idle words, and the Scripture states that a person with an unbridled tongue has a religion which is useless; the reality as to one's speech practices renders indication as to the truth regarding their being for or against Christ²⁴⁹⁸ This is righteously appropriate; for if a supposed believer utilizes cursive and slanderous speech frequently, is this for or against Christ; does this behavior draw others to the Lord, or repel them! Many times, inappropriate behavior of word and deed within professing believers is due to the fact that the Holy Spirit is not present! Far too many individuals place their trust in "religion" to save them, and thus never receive the indwelling Holy Spirit; for He is received within one's personal relationship with the Lord. Selah

To have the Holy Spirit present within us is proof of our being Abraham's offspring, thus proving we are heirs according to promise; whereas His absence demonstrates that we are deceived and destined to be eternally separated from God! If our trust in God brings forth change conforming us to the image of Christ, then God is at work within those who are His own! If our supposed faith has never brought forth changes conforming us to the image of Christ, then heed of warning should take place!²⁴⁹⁹ The book of James has been shunned because some say—it speaks of salvation by works. This is not correct by any means; for the book of James, especially chapter two, renders the truth that faith should be active within one's life as by works; which demonstrates the presence of God.²⁵⁰⁰ Could the reason change does not occur within many professing believers, be accounted to the Holy Spirit's not being present? At no time, have I stated that any person is perfect in any way whatsoever. The point to be made here is—although we all make

²⁴⁹⁶ John 16:8-11; 1 John 3:1-18.

²⁴⁹⁷ Isaiah 5:20-235.

²⁴⁹⁸ Matthew 12:30-37; James 1:19-26.

²⁴⁹⁹ James 2:1-26.

²⁵⁰⁰ cf. Matthew 25:31-46.

mistakes in life, a terrible mistake which can be evidenced, is one's failure to sincerely accept salvation by grace through faith; this by humble acquiescent confession of "Jesus as Lord!"²⁵⁰¹ At the instance we are accepted into God's family by grace, the Holy Spirit comes to indwell the son or daughter of God. With the Holy Spirit's presence, comes the individual's being sealed for the day of redemption. Along with the seal of God upon the individual, comes conviction of sin and chastisement for wrongdoing; this as God chastises those whom He loves.²⁵⁰² These wonderful blessings by God, factually evidence one's being saved from the penalty of sin which is death. The truth can in fact be witnessed with the passing of time, if the Lord wills we have continued life, therefore we will be truly known by our fruits. Testing oneself to see if we are in the faith is of great importance, thus as we may not have tomorrow; now is the time to test, judge, and examine ourselves righteously!

Are we so entangled in the ways of the world, that we cannot lay witness to the reality of our own existence as saved or not? Are we so deceived, that we refuse to trust in God and also the higher standards and instruction which He has rendered so that we may obtain true freedom in Christ?²⁵⁰³ Are we so sure of our own abilities that we fail daily to trust in the Lord of all righteousness; whose faithfulness is absolute? Are we so arrogant, that we refuse to test, judge, and examine ourselves to evidence whether we are truly His legitimate children of promise? The Lord gave each of us a measure of faith to allow us to stay from pride and arrogance; thus the ability to move beyond "self" so as to follow and obey the Lord; is it not righteous that we utilize the measure of faith for the purpose for which it was rendered!²⁵⁰⁴ Shall we gratefully accept His strength which is rendered by grace for this purpose, or shall we continue in our own self-centered complacency?²⁵⁰⁵ His immense lovingkindness and grace are as close as our stopping to turn back to Him (repentance); now and hence is the time! The Lord our Savior has given us our beginning (faith), and our potential (GRACE); shall we not utilize them to run the race so as to gain the victory!²⁵⁰⁶

²⁵⁰¹ Romans 10:8-13, specific vs. 9, 10.

²⁵⁰² Hebrews 12:4-8.

²⁵⁰³ John 8:31-47.

²⁵⁰⁴ Romans 12:1-21, looking intently at vs. 1-3.

²⁵⁰⁵ 1 Peter 4:7-19.

²⁵⁰⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:15-27; 1 Peter 4:1-6.

SUMMATION

If each of us would test, judge, and examine ourselves to see if we are truly in the faith: there will not be so many deceived into believing themselves to be saved, when in fact they are not; we would potentially walk in the light of Christ, rather than the darkness of deluding influence and deception; we would humbly submit and be receptive of God's saving grace, if we have yet to do so; we would potentially walk as children of light, rather than instruments of darkness; we would be accepting of the truth which makes us free, and thereby no longer remain in the bondage of Satan's guile; we would don God's armor for victory, for although the war has been won by our Lord, the individual battles have yet to be fought by faith.

Please consider—the path before us following Jesus, begins with “denial of self” and by humble disciplined submission (selflessness); this beginning with our willingness to submit (acquiesce) to the authority of Christ during a righteous confession of “Jesus as Lord”!²⁵⁰⁷ When Jesus stated that we are not worthy of Him should we fail to deny ourselves, He was referring to our un-worthiness to serve; for the Lord cannot utilize prideful, self-centered, idolatrous, double-minded individuals for righteous service which glorifies God! Many believers I know seek continually that the Lord would serve them, for their motives are constantly centered upon themselves. This is not the calling of a believer in Christ, for we are led by the Holy Spirit to consider others as more important than ourselves; God taking precedence over all else.²⁵⁰⁸ We should ask ourselves: do our efforts for others seek forms of gain or attention in return; are our prayers centered upon the things of the flesh and of the world (carnality); is our retirement and personal financial status of greater concern than the salvation of others; does our comfort take precedence over persecution and tribulation for the glory of God; do inappropriate words such as “me,” “myself,” and “I” take precedence over appropriate words such as “we,” “us,” and “our” on a regular basis? If the answer to these questions is “yes,” then we are living for “self” rather than “denying self” so as to follow Jesus. This type of selfish behavior is the exact opposite of our calling as believers in Christ, and is inexcusable! Although true believers will not give account for sins committed in the body, as

²⁵⁰⁷ Matthew 10:37-39; 16:24-27; cf. Hebrews 5:7-10; 10:23-27.

²⁵⁰⁸ Philippians 2:3-13.

we have been justified by God's grace; account will yet be given by all for our deeds while in the flesh! Deeds of accountability being deeds of "self" (against Christ); or selfless servanthood (for Christ); the latter gains us heavenly reward, the former does not.²⁵⁰⁹ Multitudes desire a Savior and to live carnally, although this does not evidence any form of devotional love for the Lord God our Creator and Savior! Please remember—we will all give account for whether our lives were lived for Christ, or not; this, even to the in-depth reality of our motives.²⁵¹⁰ Do not be deceived, God is neither mocked nor fooled; no matter how conniving an individual may be with "self" and others!

Please consider this, my brothers and sisters, the central problem of sinful temptation which leads to selfish acts, is individuality! There is no "I" in teamwork, thus we are to edify and grow in aspects of Christ together; selfish behavior is carnally unacceptable and thereby spiritually unedifying for all parties!²⁵¹¹ Failing to look beyond ourselves so as to maintain the unity mandated in Scripture, is the downfall within the Body of Christ which has ensnared far too many individuals into bondage away from devotionally serving God! If we are to ever follow and serve our Lord, we must first "get over ourselves"; then and only then will we be prepared to follow rather than seeking to lead. Even though we may (if legitimate) be truly saved by the grace of our Lord, habitual selfishness on the part of believers demonstrates that we are in fact worshipping "self" (idolatry), and not the Lord.²⁵¹² The number one form of idolatry throughout the history of humanity, is the idolizing of "self"! Not only must we test, examine and judge ourselves to see if we are in the faith, we must also test ourselves to evidence who or what we are serving. If we continually serve ourselves, then Satan is influencing our behavior of "individuality"; for the "deeds of the flesh make this evident, when in comparison with the fruit of the Holy Spirit who seeks to guide us by His indwelling."²⁵¹³ All forms of worship and idolatry which remain in darkness, is worship and idolatry unto Satan; settling for nothing less than being like the Most High, Satan has sought to be worshipped and idolized since being cast from heaven, which is exactly what multitudes

²⁵⁰⁹ Matthew 12:30; Luke 6:20-38; 1 Corinthians 3:10-23; 9:16-27; Hebrews 10:29-39.

²⁵¹⁰ Romans 2:1-16; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; James 4:1-10.

²⁵¹¹ Ephesians 4:11-16.

²⁵¹² Colossians 3:1-15.

²⁵¹³ Galatians 5:19-23; Ephesians 6:12; 2 Timothy 2:1-4:8; cf. Romans 8:12-17; James 4:4-6.

have done throughout history because of religious ignorance! The spiritual relational reality which saves us is a relationship which is in the light of truth; there can be no remaining in the light, as God is in the light, *if* forms of darkness are tolerated and therefore accepted!

Let us evidence the reality of the deeds of the flesh, and thereby gain understanding as to whether these traits are those which surround us in this world. It is from such traits as these, that we are to remain separate for the glory of God! Note, only the more complex words will be listed, as many fleshly deeds are simply understood (i.e.—outbursts of anger, drunkenness, envy, carousing). Please note the immense difference between the deeds of our flesh, and the fruit of God; which He seeks to implant unto precedence in our lives, as He both wills and works for His own good pleasure.

DEEDS OF THE FLESH

Galatians 5:19-21: Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I forewarn you just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. (Underlining Mine)

- Immorality (porneia)—fornication, sexual immorality, unchastity (adultery).²⁵¹⁴
- Sensuality (aselgeia)—licentiousness, wantonness.
- Idolatry (eidwloatria)—image worship; including “self” worship (narcissism); this also includes “loving” anything which does not have the breath of life.
- Sorcery (pharmakeia)—the use of medicine, drugs or spells for other than appropriate medical reasons.
- Enmities (echthra)—hostility.
- Strife (eris)—quarrels.
- Jealousy (zaylos)—jealous: fury.

²⁵¹⁴ Definitions taken from the New American Standard Bible Concordance, Parsons Technology Inc., 1992-1996.

- Disputes (eritheia)—selfish ambition: hence rivalry.
- Dissensions (dichostasia)—standing apart; disunity.²⁵¹⁵
- Factions (haireisis)—personal choice and opinion, heresies.

FRUIT OF THE SPIRIT

Galatians 5:22, 23: But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such things there is no law.

Fellowship with God

For that which is presented now for edification in truth, please read these Scripture verses: Psalm 66:16-20; John 14:6; 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 5:16-24; 1 Corinthians 3:1-4:5; 2 Corinthians 10:1-18; 1 John 1:1-5:5; Hebrews 11:1-12:29; 1 Peter 1:1-5:14; 2 Timothy 2:1-3:7; Galatians 5:19-23; Ephesians 4:1-32.

Although there are many Scriptures listed for initial preparedness reading; please read all Scripture references. Before proceeding, please pray and submit to the Lord with a humble heart; for mature spiritual understanding in this matter is necessary, to break the bonds of spiritual infancy which holds most believers (including most spiritual leadership) captive.²⁵¹⁶

Understanding as to what follows is extremely important, if we are to walk the narrow path of righteousness with the Lord; therefore procrastination and complacency have no place here! If we are to increase in faith, we must never be content with our current levels of: faith, understanding, and knowledge; rather we must obtain and maintain fellowship with the Lord, thereby walking within the always increasing maturity of faith He renders to us on a continual basis, or not; depending upon our willingness to humbly submit and follow, or not!²⁵¹⁷

Self

Entrapment of most believers within the ways of the world remains insistence upon individuality, which is derived from the boastful pride of

²⁵¹⁵ cf. Proverbs 6:16-19.

²⁵¹⁶ Hebrews 5:11-6:20; 1 Timothy 4:1-5; 2 Timothy 4:1-4.

²⁵¹⁷ Romans 10:14-21, specific v. 17; 1 Corinthians 3:1-9; 1 John 1:5-10.

life; this in fact being the self-centered and rebellious pride of adolescence. When we fail to “get over ourselves,” we pray for that which is derived from personal whims and desires (fleshly indulgences; i.e. carnality); this being apart from any seeking of God’s good, acceptable and perfect will. When we remain complacent in our own little world of pride and assorted arrogance, the potential of fellowship with God is jeopardized; many times for the entire lifetime of individuals. Please remember—the first step in following Jesus is “denial of self!”²⁵¹⁸ Until we decide to stop the personally assigned precedence of our own volition, we will never actually submit unto the Lord, or decide to abide in God and in His Word; therefore the potential of being a disciple of Christ Jesus becomes virtually nonexistent.²⁵¹⁹

It seems that with the passing of time, the tendency of many believers is to imagine (delusive) changing the standards of God, to suit “self”; not that this is actually possible, for the good, acceptable and perfect will of the Lord God of all creation cannot and will not change in accordance to the volition of creatures!²⁵²⁰ Because as human beings we are easily influenced, we can either submit to the influence of the Holy Spirit thus gaining freedom and victory, or we can allow: Satan, demons, the desires of the flesh, the boastful pride of life, and religious false teachings and practices to hold us in bondage. Although many believers have learned little bits of Gospel truth as by times of submission; and some Christians large amounts of Gospel truth as by consistent submission with disciplined devotional diligence; the fact remains that we must all stop taking our existence for granted (which is an act of selfishness), and gain increased consistency in seeking the will of God.²⁵²¹ Abstinence from sin and fellowship with God are the imperative factors of this endeavor!²⁵²²

If we are to submit to the Lord so that He may both will and work in us, we must never step aside of reality; for a life lived in fantasy, is a life lived in deception. It would not be well to hear—“I never knew you; depart from me”; when it is too late to actually become a legitimate child of God!²⁵²³ Although many may hear—“well done, My good and faithful

²⁵¹⁸ Matthew 16:24-27.

²⁵¹⁹ John 8:31-36; 15:1-17, specific v. 4; Colossians 2:20-3:17.

²⁵²⁰ Hebrews 13:7-19, specific v. 8.

²⁵²¹ James 4:1-17.

²⁵²² 1 Peter 4:1-6.

servant”; many will enter heaven with no rewards, as they have been saved by the grace of God, yet built their human existence upon foundations other than Christ Jesus.²⁵²⁴ Please remember, although we (legitimate children) will not give account for sin, as we have been justified by God’s grace; we will all give account for our deeds while in the flesh. Were our deeds (including spoken words) for or against the Lord; were our deeds selfish in nature, or were they selflessly for the glory of God and the edification of others?²⁵²⁵ Far too many professing believers have been building upon foundations derived from “me,” “myself” and “I” (individuality; self-centeredness); having fallen prey to the same carnal mindset of those who will inherit condemnation, having lived for “self” during their entire human existence. Because the essence of Christianity involves separation unto God (sanctification; set apart), all that we do should demonstrate aspects of ministry so that others may know Jesus. Believers tend to forget this very important fact, along with the fact that ours is a heavenly kingdom! While Christians are looking forward to God’s kingdom, misguided believers are seeking to be residents of the “kingdom of moi”; thus serving themselves, rather than the Lord. “Christians” have all been called to be separated from the world and its ways; why then do we allow so much toleration and collaboration with foolishness!²⁵²⁶ Because God’s legitimate children will not be condemned to the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, along with those who have denied God’s wonderful gift of salvation by grace through faith; why would we seek to be partakers with them now, within a secular temporal mindset (carnality) that leads to seeking that which ends at the grave! Christianity is truly a matter of both sincere humble disciplined devotion unto God, and righteous attitude accordingly; double-mindedness leading to compromise within “self” destroys both!

Personal Note: “Self” has no place in congregational (church) settings; for true Biblically based “church” is all about God and the spiritual blessings which are from the Lord pertaining to preparation for the eternal state of righteousness!²⁵²⁷ This is proven by the fact of personal righteous

²⁵²³ Hebrews 12:1-11, Matthew 7:13-27, quote specific v. 23.

²⁵²⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, specific vs. 10-14.

²⁵²⁵ Philippians 2:1-16; Matthew 12:25-37.

²⁵²⁶ Proverbs 24:1-34; 1 Timothy 6:1-21; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Romans 1:28-32.

²⁵²⁷ Ephesians 1:3-23.

judgment and examination of one's "self" prior to participation in the act (action) of the Lord's Supper; for the Lord's Supper is an act (action) of remembrance regarding the Lord which proclaims His sacrificial death, until His return. Anyone who partakes of the act of remembrance with a motive pertaining to—individuality, rather than proclamation of the Lord's atoning sacrificial death with devotional zeal regarding the Lord's return in righteousness, partakes in such a way as to warrant judgment upon themselves; for congregational settings (church) is supposed to be all about unity within devotion for the Lord!²⁵²⁸

The fact of blatant individuality within "church" settings is proven when pulpit proclamations are made regarding personal financial gains, and how multitudes seek personal financial gains in return for their giving to ministry! All monies received by ministries are to be utilized for proclamation of Gospel truth, and supplying the necessities for those who are truly in need of financial assistance in order to survive! When individuals render money unto ministries with expectance of receiving back, they in fact render finances foundational to "individuality" ("self"); which in fact is the basis for which judgment upon them will inevitably be justly warranted; exactly the same as partaking of the Lord's Supper in a "selfish" manner, as all actions and motivations are to be directly for the glory of God and proclamation of the Gospel truth! During the generations, and more specifically the "church" (Laodicea) of these last days, financial gains has been an evidenced reality which proves the blatantly carnal mindset of multitudes whose focus has always been upon "self," even in church (congregational) settings.²⁵²⁹ This reality has become so pronounced in later years, that many congregations have been told to "invest" in ministry endeavors; which blatantly denies and rejects the spiritual imperative of devotional worship of God in spirit and in truth, which is the Biblical basis of righteous worship! This reality proves the continuous and abounding carnality which is exhibited by those who although claiming to know and love God, remain completely aloof the reality of God and the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ); for those who remain carnally minded actually believe a relationship with God is all about them, although the spiritual relational reality (saving relationship) is all about the Lord!²⁵³⁰ It is relationally pathetic to have

²⁵²⁸ 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 2 Timothy 4:1-8.

²⁵²⁹ Romans 8:1-17.

remorse for anyone who “invested” their money into ministries, with expectation to gain financially, who then lost considerable amounts of “invested” monies; for this is the behavior of those held captive to Satan’s will within—selfish religiosity!²⁵³¹ This book (Big If) was written to assist individuals to understand the huge difference between the spiritual relationship and the foolishness of carnal religious endeavor; for those who seek the spiritual relational reality foundational to the glory of Christ (reality of the Christ), are those who God seeks to be His worshippers, which is righteously appropriate!²⁵³² For information regarding an actual spiritual relationship with God within which is found salvation and the masterful leadership of the Lord, please reference chapter eleven—“Truth and the Spiritual Relational Reality.”

Is America a Christian Nation?

It is imperative that we guard the way we think (mindset), moment by moment; righteous increase regarding this matter is one of the aspects of growth which is from God alone, upon those who are humbly sincere and devotional submissive!²⁵³³ I notice that some of the worst drivers on the road have the IXOYE FISH (Christian symbol), and license plates such as “respect life” on their cars. This demonstrates that they believe themselves to be concerned about others, yet their deeds demonstrated by their selfishly dangerous driving renders the truth. This type of inspection of fruits, demonstrates that many individuals think of themselves far reaching from their actual evinced behavior and demeanor; thus they are both deluded and delusive. If I have a Christian symbol upon my car and drive dangerously out of self-centeredness, what is the message (ministry) I may be sending to the non-believer I endangered? To witness the way a person drives, many times is to witness the truth of what is coming forth from the person’s heart; consideration for others, or dangerous selfishness and a complete lack of concern for overall safety! *If* the United States was truly a Christian nation, then most individuals would be law-abiding citizens who place great emphasis upon the safety and welfare of others; therefore, only non-believers would be dangerous and selfish; yet this is certainly not

²⁵³⁰ John 14:1-16:33.

²⁵³¹ 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

²⁵³² John 4:20-24; 2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1; cf. Revelation 3:14-22.

²⁵³³ Romans 8:1-17; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

the case, as many non-believers are kind and considerate and multitudes of professing believers are not! Please consider—“self” is the basis of all human insecurities and wretchedness, as “self” leads us to find priority within ourselves; blindly making us susceptible to demonic influence. When we do whatever we desire in the moment, we blatantly refuse to submit to the Lord while resisting the devil; in this we act against Christ! Moment by moment, we are either for or against the Lord, so moment by moment we must guard our hearts and minds, lest moment by moment we fall further into the snare of un-disciplined individuality (prideful self-centeredness; narcissism).²⁵³⁴

Although many may say that America is a Christian nation, this is a farce; as this is a nation of many believers (who believe in something), of which very few (remnant) seek to be Christ-like! The United States reacts when there is something to be gained, yet sits idly by while atrocities are committed, when potential for personal gains and acknowledgments do not exist. This is the behavior of many believers, and many non-believers; not Christians! This is demonstrated by the supposed war on terror after the September 11 incident. If America was truly concerned about terrorism in the world, we would have intervened prior to terrorism striking our shores; for many nations have suffered from forms of terrorism and tyranny for decades. After the September 11 incident, “God Bless America” sprang up everywhere; this as the carnal pride of most Americans somehow thought God to be more considerate of American believers, than any other believers in the world. Complete hogwash! Although a remnant of the remnant of born again believers are truly “Christians” within the United States, and in other countries; most are not; this is also true within individual congregations and denominations. Far too many believers seek a god of convenience, rather than a Lord; remaining complacent in their weak faith, while believing they are better than others. It is one thing to be saved by grace through faith within Christianity; it is something else entirely to be a “Christian,” who is a legitimate submissive and obedient child of God; not our will, but rather His will be done!

Let us look at how words take captive, when they are spoken in ignorance or with little concern as to the consequences or content. The pledge of allegiance—I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States

²⁵³⁴ Psalm 7:8-17; Romans 8:5-8; 1 Peter 1:13-25; Hebrews 12:1-11.

of America and to the republic for which it stands: one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all. What is the reality here? The reality is that allegiance is being pledged to—the flag and a form of human government. The flag is an inanimate object, therefore to pledge allegiance to it—is idolatry! This example was given to demonstrate how we accept and proclaim inappropriate allegiance to things, which as “Christians” we should know to be wrong! How many times have we fallen prey to such inappropriate behavior, and taught the same to our children? What does the Bible say about causing a child to stumble?²⁵³⁵ What are believers instructed to do in such cases?²⁵³⁶ Although it is appropriate to stand strong in the fight for freedom within truth, and therefore godly forms of patriotism are acceptable; speaking words of idolatry are not! We will be accountable for every careless word, and since words of worldly foolishness (idolatry) are not edifying to anyone in the spiritual realm, let us dare to be different and separate unto our Lord. Shall we; for the Bible renders instructions and standards, not requests which are open for debate.

Additionally, in the United States and in several other countries, oaths by swearing are insisted upon; even so by law. When: accepting governmental office, accepting positions of law enforcement, and rendering witness in court; it is insisted upon that the individual be “sworn in.” Within the Gospel there are many one or two verse standards set forth which are never to be violated by Christians, and are not open to debate; the specific regarding “oath by swearing” is found in 1 James 5:12. This specific is certain that to “swear” for any reason will bring forth the certainty of judgment; for our yes is to be yes, and our no is to be no; oaths are therefore neither warranted or valid Biblically!²⁵³⁷ The very important reason that specifics of Scripture are to be obediently followed, such as the specific to avoid “oaths” or “swearing,” is not only because of the certain expectation of judgment because of violation, but also because violation of these standards welcomes demonic influences designed to lead away from service which is to be rendered in the light of truth at all times! Although it is righteously appropriate to speak the truth insistent and consistently (integrity, candor, verac-

²⁵³⁵ Matthew 18:5-7; 1 John 5:18-21.

²⁵³⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

²⁵³⁷ cf. Matthew 5:37.

ity), as “Christians” we do this as a matter of course in our walk with the Lord; while never violating Gospel standards for which we will certainly be judged, for whatever is not for the Lord is actually against the Lord!²⁵³⁸ *If* America was truly a Christian nation, Gospel standards would have been studied and thereby not foolishly violated in ignorance! Most certainly, *if* America was a Christian nation, violations of Gospel standard would never be legally forced upon others! Has the swearing process which is so prevalent in America ever actually kept someone from deception or violation of standards set forth by the oath? Absolutely not; integrity and adherence to standard is a matter of personal attitude and in the case of “Christians,” a matter of devotion unto the Lord of absolute truth and light! The beauty of actual fellowship with God is absolutely real; with God at work within individuals, and the knowledge which comes forth from God’s expert tutelage, we are led by the Lord’s masterful leadership as He both wills and works for His own good pleasure; this being only during times of acquiescent obedience!²⁵³⁹ More regarding the reality of fellowship with God will be forthcoming.

Within the United States and many other countries, sex has become such a past time event that it is no longer considered inappropriate by most believers. The Gospel tells us that but a few essentials would allow us to do well; these essentials being abstinence from anything having to do with idolatry (including narcissism), and abstinence from sexual immorality; i.e. adultery, homosexuality, and fornication.²⁵⁴⁰ Fornication being mutual consenting sex outside the covenant relationship of marriage is so prevalent in the world today, that even believers do not consider it wrong to engage in such practices; yet abstinence from such things is that which sets those who sincerely love the Lord apart from all others. What is the difference between believers and non-believers, when wrongdoing is no longer considered inappropriate? Television demonstrates that sex is commonplace within this nation, as the communications media leads Americans astray of the standards set forth by God; demonstrating that this nation enjoys serving the desires of the flesh! With the spirit yet willing and the flesh being weak, it is all the

²⁵³⁸ Matthew 12:30-37; Luke 12:10-12; 2 Corinthians 13:1-8.

²⁵³⁹ Philipians 1:6-2-16; Romans 8:12-14.

²⁵⁴⁰ Acts 15:28, 29; 1 Corinthians 6:9-12.

more imperative to maintain fellowship with God, in a country where the desires of the flesh are emphasized by every means possible.

Believing in God does not make us a “Christian”; being known by God, and seeking to be like our Lord is the key to this endeavor. If we are not willing to turn from governmental and media philosophies and doctrines which are in violation of Gospel standards, we have no right to claim Christianity to be an intricate part of our existence; for how does intentional disobedience show our love for God! The first and foremost commandment for the church is to love the Lord! Adherence to this commandment is an absolute imperative, if we are to gain and maintain the attitude necessary to follow and serve our Lord. If we cannot love the Lord most of all, we will never achieve freedom in Christ, nor will we ever achieve successes through faith; for the necessary focus and devotion has not been achieved, thus endeavors in godliness will not be forthcoming. Is America truly a Christian nation?

Church Settings

Because supposed Christianity has become a tremendous money making enterprise in the past few decades, is it any wonder why men not called of God have called themselves to the pulpit to proclaim ungodly sermons and deceptions! Those truly called of God do not vary from Biblical truth; for they know the imperative of Gospel truth, not religious practices, brings forth freedom from the bondage of Satan’s guile and fleshly indulgences.²⁵⁴¹ Those who seek financial gain as through religion couldn’t care less whether they lead others to remain in bondage; for their primary concern remains riches, fame, and notice, which are contingent upon “self.” The truth is quite easy to evidence, *if* a spiritual leader insists that all praise and focus remain upon the Lord, they have had a stewardship entrusted to them; *if* a supposed spiritual leader allows focus and praise to rest upon them, they have their own agenda!²⁵⁴² Christians seek out true spiritual leadership; most believers seek leadership which will proclaim what they want to hear, therefore having their own selfish agenda apart from godliness.

The fact of the matter is emphasized further in recent years, as many believers tend to flock to large expensive church structures, somehow

²⁵⁴¹ Colossians 2:20-3:17.

²⁵⁴² 1 Corinthians 9:11-11:1; Philippians 3:15-21.

thinking that size of structure, congregation, or ministry is of consequence to God. The deception of worldly focus continues, as many believers somehow think that large structures and congregations indicates a blessing from God, when this actually in most cases is not true at all. These types of conjecture are derived from somehow believing financial stature is an indication of spiritual growth potential; yet God looks to the motive of individuals, thus large meeting structures or ministries make no indication of changed lives toward individual spiritual growth and devotion! Servanthood is a personal matter between the believer and the Lord; the meeting place means nothing in this regard! To further emphasize this fact, most true Christians have ceased going to congregational settings where money remains the focus, and now gather together in homes to study the Gospel truth; hopefully and appropriately under the expert tutelage of the Lord.

The truth of actual Biblical *ekklesia* (church) is far different than what is commonly practiced in carnal congregational settings. Truly Biblical church is a gathering of sincerely devotional legitimate children of God, who gather together to praise and worship the Lord God in spirit and in truth!²⁵⁴³ This is actually accomplished by each individual starting their day in earnest prayer to achieve personal fellowship with God, then they journey undistracted to the meeting place where all other individuals involved have done the same; for this is the only avenue of appropriate preparation within expectation of being taught the Gospel truth by the Lord in a unified fashion, acceptable to the only Teacher regarding spiritual matters!²⁵⁴⁴ Each individual achieves fellowship with God; not for selfish reasons, as any aspect of “self” in the endeavor voids all fellowship potential; but rather so that they and all others may learn from the Lord when combined, and in this receive the Lord’s protection from distraction or spiritual discouragement; which demonic influence can bring forth when each individual does not stand firm upon the foundation which is Christ! It should be known and understood that the actual Gospel truth is the reality which is behind the written words; this reality is taught solely by the Lord, and is in fact the implantation of the Gospel reality into the spirit of each and every devotional child of God who worships appropriately in spirit and in truth,

²⁵⁴³ John 4:20-24; cf. Romans 12:1-3.

²⁵⁴⁴ Matthew 23:1-12, specific v. 8; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23.

while endeavoring at all times to remain within truth so as to stay free and separate from all that is derived from a carnal mindset.²⁵⁴⁵ The person called upon to lead these appropriate endeavors (Biblical *ekklyasia*), is called upon to do so by the Lord, and therefore is the one who has prepared with all disciplined diligence to receive from the Lord the guidance necessary for the specific instruction as designated by the Lord, for the purpose of spiritual edification for each and every attendee; this many times includes specific truth of which one or more individuals have imperative necessity, for the Lord moves intimately regarding the spiritual necessity of individuals! This is the essence of being “in the spirit” during training in a unified manner!

Within carnal congregational settings, distraction is standard operating procedure! Individuals do not do what is personally necessary to achieve fellowship with God prior to departure to the congregational setting, and therefore begin their day with distraction away from appropriate focus upon the Lord. They then journey to the congregational setting, where they remain distracted by confabulation, music, and religious jargon; which are void of the Spirit and therefore completely irrelevant in attempts to receive the Lord’s instruction and growth! All music and distraction must occur after the Lord’s working has been accomplished; for the imperative of spiritual growth which is from the Lord must never be hindered in a church setting!

CHURCH TANGENTS

Tangents away from the teachings of Jesus and of the Apostles, are never wise, yet seem to be occurring with far greater frequency.²⁵⁴⁶ Fellowship with the Lord leads us to consistency within our faith, as we seek to never vary from the truth; doing all things properly and in an orderly manner.²⁵⁴⁷ This is not saying that we are perfect by any means, yet this does emphasize that God has utilized normal men throughout history, to accomplish His will in proclamation of the truth (prophesying; not eschatology). Yes, we all make mistakes; illustrated in the lives of Abraham, Job, David, Moses (and myself); yet these men of God made up their minds to follow the Lord (devotional attitude and focus), and so can we.

²⁵⁴⁵ James 1:19-25; John 8:31-36; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Romans 8:5-8, 12-14.

²⁵⁴⁶ Galatians 1:3-10.

²⁵⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 13:1-10; 1 Corinthians 14:40.

1. Supposed prophets of future events are springing up all over this nation, and in other parts of the world. God stated that although He had once spoken to us through human prophets, He in these last days has spoken to us prophetically (eschatology) through His Son; who alone holds all things together.²⁵⁴⁸ Because the Book of Revelation is indeed the “written” revelation of the Lord Jesus Christ, which takes us forward through the Tribulation Period, Millennial reign of Jesus, and on into eternity; there is absolutely no place for additions by anyone at any time!²⁵⁴⁹ Although this is the Biblical truth, many are being led astray and away from fellowship potential with the Lord, as they seek to follow other humans upon tangents which journey on the wide path of spiritual destruction. This should not be; yet is becoming more pronounced and prevalent as individuals wander in darkness, looking for answers which are found only through fellowship with God, which occurs solely in the light of truth!²⁵⁵⁰
2. Many Evangelical churches place great emphasis upon the supposed necessity for speaking in tongues in order to prove the presence of the Holy Spirit; denying in the process Scriptural guidelines for tongue usage in congregational settings.²⁵⁵¹ When only certain passages of Scripture become a basis of focus, rather than focus being maintained upon the Lord primarily, and accurate handling of Scripture secondarily; the imperative of actual fellowship with God is rejected for the sake of acceptance by others. This is absurd also in the aspect that if signs and wonders are of great importance in order to believe, then walking by sight is the prevalent factor; not walking by faith as instructed by the Lord. In this, the instruction of other human beings takes precedence over God’s masterful leadership, leading to fellowship with the Lord being lost through denial.

To listen to the supposed speaking in tongues within evangelical congregational settings today, it can be noted that chanting is actually being performed; not speaking in tongues; as tongues is a complete language,

²⁵⁴⁸ Hebrews 1:1-4; Colossians 1:15-23, specific v. 17.

²⁵⁴⁹ Revelation 1:1-3.

²⁵⁵⁰ 1 John 1:5-3:18.

²⁵⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 14:1-28.

not assorted groupings of a couple dozen words! Although the speaking in tongues was once necessary so that communication was possible between the peoples of different cultures and provinces, this is no longer necessary as the Bible is now available in almost every language and dialect. Although the speaking in tongues has value initially to allow individuals to come to the reality of actual fellowship with the Lord by His divine intervention; once actual fellowship has been obtained and sought frequently through disciplined and devotional “selfless” loyalty for God, personal tongue usage becomes completely irrelevant, as within the actual fellowship “praying in the Spirit,” which has nothing to do with speaking in tongues, becomes the norm! What is proclaimed from pulpits and practiced by many congregations as “speaking in tongues,” in most cases is actually a deceptive distraction by the enemy (demonically instigated and influenced); for signs and wonders (from the Lord) were for the benefit of the Jews, and ceased long ago when Israel was temporarily set aside. If the enemy can hold individuals captive in their seeking of what is now actually counterfeit signs and wonders, and by doing so keep them from the essential relationship necessary to be saved (spiritual relational reality); inevitable condemnation will result!

3. Although the Scriptures state that a woman is never to pastor a church or teach from the pulpit, this yet is occurring in the church today.²⁵⁵² This standard for the Christian church was set forth by the Lord, and is not open for debate! Just because we do not understand God’s reasons for certain standards set forth, we yet have no right to question the Lord of Hosts; ours is to submit and obey. If the church today cannot submit to easily understandable instruction from the Lord, how can we possibly go beyond simple instruction to gain understanding as to the depth of confident access! God has exact reasons for the standards which He put forth for the church, variations and violations of these standards have held thousands; if not millions; in bondage to the elementary principles of the world for generations (religiosity); this also including bondage to corporeal palpability under the guise and delusion of supposed spirituality! Freedom from deceptive bondage is an individual matter between the believer and God, for freedom in truth is the essence

²⁵⁵² 1 Corinthians 14:34-40.

of the personal relationship He seeks to have with each of us; therefore, variation and violation of standards set forth by God is but the darkness of delusion with pretense of being the light of truth!

4. From the pulpit of many supposed Christian churches, reliance upon “self” and others is taught, rather than instruction placing emphasis of full trust in the Lord. I fail to understand why this is taught, as others have let us down in many ways; the Lord has never let anyone down at any time! If we were to say that the Lord has let us down during trying times, we must be failing to realize that He cannot bless our disobedience; therefore we are ultimately to blame when the Lord refuses to be our shield and our strength. With failure to proclaim trust and reliance upon the Lord from the pulpit, many believe they must maintain assorted human strengths in order to succeed. Within this, we fail to realize that it is sufficient to be meek, for when we are weak “of self” we then have the potential to be strong in the Lord. Although our true strength comes from within; this is not personal strength, but rather the strength of God’s grace in accordance to His indwelling; for His grace is sufficient!
5. Within many congregations, “self” is being taught in exuberant quantities. Emphasis is being made of “self”: esteem, comfort, prestige, riches, ease, and gratification. Because the very first step in following the Lord Jesus Christ is denial of “self,” the congregations are actually being taught not to follow Jesus, but rather the desires of the flesh according to personal volition and emotional response! Because of such supposed Christian teachings as these, is it any wonder why the truth based harvest is plentiful and the workers few!²⁵⁵³
6. The Lord seeks that we give financially according to what is in our hearts; which is never burdensome, *if* love for the Lord first and foremost permeates our existence!²⁵⁵⁴ The love of money within the church today can be noted by habitual mention of the tithe, which no longer exists; exuberant expenditures of ministry funds to build expensive structures, with money that could have been distributed

²⁵⁵³ Matthew 9:36-38.

²⁵⁵⁴ 2 Corinthians 9:6-15.

as alms; ministry funds being spent by non-servanthood ministers, so as to live extravagantly; counting financial gains to be a sign of God's blessings, instead of witnessing the blessings of God as by changed lives and demeanor; counting success as by the same standard of "stuff," which is the focus of the world. When believers in the Lord Jesus Christ continually act the same, and follow the same standards of financial gains as non-believers; who is following who, and upon which path (narrow or wide)?²⁵⁵⁵ By the standards rendered in the Scriptures, it can be noted that our giving is in accordance to God's grace, for the purpose of good works fulfilled in righteousness! How often do we hear the actual Biblical emphasis concerning money proclaimed from the pulpit; which is actually expenditures for the sake of the righteous expansion of Gospel truth, and for the necessities of those in need?

7. A lot of rituals and traditions by some supposed Christian religions are based upon books of the Apocrypha which were written during the Intertestamental Period; during which time God was silent. These books are not inspired of God, therefore God will not confirm; by fellowship means; any content of these books. Because the Lord will not teach us concerning books of the Apocrypha which have been introduced into Christendom by Roman Catholicism, why would their contents be considered as pertinent within faith in Christ? When Jesus said that He was our only Teacher; which is absolutely correct regarding righteous spiritual matters; why would anyone seek to learn from information which falls outside the teachings of Christ?²⁵⁵⁶

Loving the Lord first and foremost is an area within congregational settings, which may be evidenced; or not. Devotional submission to the Lord becomes the emphases of the Holy Spirit's manifested presence, which leads the individual Christian to a continual conforming to the image of Christ. Please remember—individuals follow the Lord; rarely entire groups, with the exception of Biblical ekklaysia as aforementioned. When a stature of being conformed to Christ's image is not an actual manifested trait of a born again believer's demeanor, then the Holy

²⁵⁵⁵ Matthew 7:13-27.

²⁵⁵⁶ Matthew 23:1-12; Galatians 1:6-10.

Spirit is being grieved and hindered in His work of sanctification within the believer; thus stagnancy becomes the result, generally because of adolescent and rebellious pride and arrogance. The fault of stagnancy falls upon the believer; never can this fault be attributed to the Holy Spirit! Within stagnancy of faith comes the seeking of human endeavors in attempts to please the Lord; these being endeavors such as: philosophies, doctrines, precepts, and traditions which remain vain labors of rote.²⁵⁵⁷ This is an area within our relationship with God, when involving others within the faith, which evidences whether our Lord is truly the focus of all parties involved. If the emphases of our spiritual endeavors remains upon the aforementioned traits of humanistic religion, which are aside of devotional submission so that God may both will and work for His own good pleasure, heed of warning should take place as to whether we are continuing to journey upon the narrow path which dictates direct focus upon the Lord! Although most believers tend to journey upon ritualistic carnal paths seeking spiritual enlightenment; true Christians being sound and secure within their relationship with Jesus, thereby gaining spiritual discernment, have no need whatsoever to follow any form of human leadership in such endeavors. If the Lord is truly the desire of our existence, it is Him alone whom we seek to follow! Following those who journey outside of fellowship with God, leads to fellowship failure in our lives as well; therefore it would behoove us to be very careful who or what we follow! Although many believe that being around true Christians will somehow make them a better Christian by transference, this is completely foolish; for God blesses disciplined devotionally obedient individuals, not groups because of rituals, traditions, doctrines, size, gender or denominational affiliation!

The persistent problem with gaining the blessing of God's personal tutelage, within the church today, remains our failure to wait patiently upon the Lord. In a fast paced world where instant gratification is sought consistently, and taught from the pulpit, most believers fail to realize they have been clothed with Christ Jesus, and remain infants in the faith yet relying upon human tutors; who are many times infants in the faith themselves.²⁵⁵⁸ This is the reason observance of dates and rituals is so prevalent within the church today, and why aspects of the Law are yet

²⁵⁵⁷ Colossians 2:1-23; 1 Timothy 4:6-16; Isaiah 29:13-16.

²⁵⁵⁸ 1 Timothy 1:3-11.

taught as necessary; although not. In times of antiquity, the Israelites were people of little faith, therefore physical aspects were necessary in their worship of God; this also because the imperative of “faith” was not revealed until the coming of the Messiah.²⁵⁵⁹ Most believers yet remain blinded by the same form of mindset; failing to walk by faith they remain reliant upon ritualistic religion in order to believe, although physical realm religion and the spiritual relational reality are diametrically opposed one to the other!²⁵⁶⁰

If the church today was in actuality focused upon the Lord, and thereby within fellowship with Him, proper priorities would be at the forefront of all endeavors! When supposed spiritual leaders criticize the sinner rather than the sin, they themselves are guilty of falling prey to demonic influence the same as the sinner which is criticized, although in a different fashion (foolish pride). Christians realize that our fight is not against flesh and blood, but rather against the forces of evil which influence adherence to the desires of human nature. In this knowledge we fight against the influence rendered by the forces of evil, while loving the sinner who has fallen prey. When we criticize the sinner rather than the sin, we become hypocrites; for all have sinned and fallen short of God’s glory! It would behoove us to realize where the battle front lies, and fight the battle appropriately; for it does us no good to fight the battle in the wrong place, at the wrong time, and in an inappropriate manner. With far more people falling prey to demonic influence throughout the world, and this primarily due to adherence to carnal whims and desires, evidence of truth exists that without humble submission leading to prevalent fellowship with God, all the more will be deceived by demonic instigation and influence; leaving the harvest exuberantly more plentiful and the actual workers even fewer. This proves that we are in the end times, for God allows this to happen so that only those who maintain devotional focus upon Him will be divinely protected.

SCRIPTURAL FOCUS

Please remember—the Scriptures must be studied systematically in context; for the Gospel truth makes us free (a work of God), not bits and pieces of Scripture utilized to justify religious doctrine or pro-

²⁵⁵⁹ Galatians 3:22-26.

²⁵⁶⁰ Galatians 5:16-26.

claimed jargon.²⁵⁶¹ At many times during the study of Scripture, consideration must be maintained as to who are the recipients of the spoken words, and what the words meant to the audience (Hermeneutics; Exegesis). Although all of Scripture is for our informational understanding, much is not specifically for or to the Body of Christ. Because the Nation of Israel is not synonymous with the Body of Christ, it should never be assumed that a synonymous relationship exists during study of the Gospel. Distinctions must be made, or actual understanding will not be forthcoming! Failure to realize this truth has led to separations within the Body of Christ (church), causing detriment to the unity which would have led to the strength of the Lord being upon the masses of individuals throughout the world. Distinctive differences and disunity have taken the place of speaking the truth one to another; replacing unity with dissension and contentiousness, thus causing weakness within the faith of many. The actions of those who have caused dissension leading to disunity, have committed an abomination unto the Lord; for this, accountability for wrongdoing is assured!²⁵⁶²

Please consider carefully the many traditions, precepts, philosophies, doctrines, idealisms and ideologies of humankind, which are actually useless for spiritual growth in the faith. Every human being wants something to believe in, although believing in the Way (Christ) is the only actual saving aspect of our human existence. Within the frailty of human insecurity, comes the tragedy that many follow the inappropriate; although the Lord waits patiently for each person to look unto Him, hopeful that we will invite His masterful leadership and authority. Please consider—the door to which the Lord patiently knocks, is the door to the current-day church (Laodicea) which has closed Him out; seeking individuals to gain intimacy with Him so as to become true Christians, prepared to receive the spiritual blessings which are in accordance to the kind intention of His will!²⁵⁶³ It should be noted from the Revelation 3:14-22 passages, specific v. 20; the Lord is not expecting the church which has closed Him out to open the door, but rather individuals within the structure who truly desire to know Him to come out so that personal intimacy with the Lord may occur (dine with)!

²⁵⁶¹ John 8:31-36.

²⁵⁶² Proverbs 6:16-19.

²⁵⁶³ Revelation 3:14-22; Ephesians 1:3-23.

When the Gospel truth does not become actual “knowledge” as by fellowship with the Lord, human assumptions and conjecture gain supposed necessity within religious doctrines and rituals. Those who fail to learn from the Lord are not actually capable of truly knowing the Gospel truth; for the Gospel is spiritually discerned and appraised, and must be taught by the Holy Spirit! The immense blessing of having the Lord teach us His Word is ineffable, I can only say that absolute certainty (knowledge) is the end result; we know with absolute surety—the Gospel truth, when the Lord has implanted it into our spirit! Humble devotional submission, selflessness (absolute denial of “self”), a quiet spirit, abstinence from carnality, and patient perseverance are necessary to receive this blessing.

Is the emphasis imperative within most congregations—speaking the Gospel truth in love? Have tangents away from Gospel truth taken precedence to the point of leading many astray? Have simple sermons replaced in-depth diligent study of the Gospel; and this so as to appease the flesh of those who hear? Have simple sermons led the congregational members to become doers of the Word, or simply hearers who delude themselves? True Christianity rejoices in the truth, not in the unrighteousness of manmade tangents and religious jargon! The actual emphasis of the Gospel is that God wants our love, loyalty, and devotion; which is realistically realized through our submission unto disciplined obedience, and by our reverent worship of Him in spirit and in truth.²⁵⁶⁴ The reality is made evident as God truly works in us all things together for our good; yet tangents away from simplistic disciplined devotion for the Lord have placed appropriate worship and love for Him in terrible peril! Let’s just devotionally love Him as we ought, in a unified fashion; He will work the remainder in righteousness!

Prayer

Far too many believers do not realize the blessing which occurred when the temple veil was torn from top to bottom.²⁵⁶⁵ With the atonement of Jesus, a new living way was presented by God Himself (top to bottom), so that believers can go directly into His presence. Only the Jewish High Priest was allowed into the Holy of Holies prior to this

²⁵⁶⁴ John 4:20-24.

²⁵⁶⁵ Matthew 27:51-54.

blessing, and this only once per year; yet now by God's grace all believers may come, yet many do not, because they would rather walk in the darkness of: indecision, double-mindedness, ignorance, and religiosity. Whatever darkness we may have in our life, is cleansed by the Lord when we come to the cross and receive cleansing after confession of our foolishly having strayed from the path of righteous truth! Since we cannot confess inadvertent sin; as we are not aware of it; the Lord intervenes for us and we are cleansed from all unrighteousness and able to come into His holy presence; *if* certain specific conditions are met. Please consider, although the way to God's throne of grace has been opened to all believers by the Lord; this is the holy place where God dwells, therefore carnal attempts to enter are not: just, warranted, or welcomed. The relational reality between true believers (Christians) and God is spiritual; fleshly attempts to worship God or enter into His presence are vain and futile!

When the Lord looks at us through the atoning work of Christ upon the cross, He sees us as beautiful and cleansed. When our prayers go before Him; having left our sin at the cross by confession of it, our prayers are pleasing to Him. Prayers coming from un-repentant believers stop short of the cross, for to go beyond the cross is to come into the light; therefore any attempts to reach God in prayer without coming to the cross, are attempts to come into the light while simultaneously wandering in darkness! Prayers rendered by those claiming to be without sin (un-repentant believers / liars) remain in darkness, for God is neither mocked nor fooled by our denial of reality!

When we seek to pray to our heavenly Father, we must do so through the cross of Christ. Because we have been crucified to sin with our Lord upon the cross, our known sin must be confessed and nailed to the cross prior to approach attempts to God's throne of grace.²⁵⁶⁶ In addition, all aspects of "self" must be denied, for approach to God's throne; for the flesh is not welcome! This is the essence of being able to approach God throne of grace boldly! When we attempt to go into the holy presence of God within carnality, we attempt to by-pass the cross, feeling that somehow God will allow our darkness into His presence; only those pure in spirit may journey beyond the cross! An attempt to approach God with secular or fleshly motives is extremely

²⁵⁶⁶ Romans 6:1-14.

absurd; attempts in this regard show no respect or reverence for God's holiness whatsoever! God is light; therefore those who come to the Lord must come into the light, which illumines all aspects of darkness within us! If we are afraid to come into the light; as God is in the light; we are fearful to come to the cross where our death to sin occurs; this because of prideful arrogance in failing to realize the wretchedness of "self."²⁵⁶⁷ God knows every aspect of our existence, even to the essence of motive and intention; pride and arrogance keeps multitudes intentionally ignorant regarding themselves, and this due to failure to appropriately utilize the measure of faith the Lord has rendered!²⁵⁶⁸ In order to have fellowship with the Lord, we must come into the realm of His holiness, thus we are to be holy as He is holy, and walk in the light as He is in the light!²⁵⁶⁹

To have had fellowship with the Lord is to realize the wonderful blessing it holds; to never have had it is to remain ignorant of the blessing. When fellowship has been witnessed as by reality, understanding comes forth that sin and carnality disrupts the blessing, which leads to quick denial of "self" and all that is associated, so as not to be without God's blessing. This is a driving force within a true Christian's relationship with God! When God commanded denial of "self" in order to follow Him, this He did realizing the absolute imperative; which unfortunately most folks refuse to understand! Fellowship is lost instantly when we are led by "self," thereby engaging the desires of the flesh; for the Lord cannot and will not bless intentional disobedience and self-centeredness, except to render conviction and chastisement; which is not received when intentional individuality remains prevalent. To never have had fellowship with God is to not realize the potential of the blessing, because it has never been experienced. Many believers have never experienced fellowship with the Lord, beyond assumption and conjecture, although the potential to do so always exists; focus upon Him with a humble spirit and denial of the foolishness of manmade carnal religion are important to this endeavor.

Because God is faithful to cleanse us from all unrighteousness when we confess our known sins, it is imperative that we show proper regard

²⁵⁶⁷ Matthew 16:24-27.

²⁵⁶⁸ Romans 12:1-3, specific v. 3.

²⁵⁶⁹ Romans 13:8-14; 2 Corinthians 4:1-18; Colossians 1:9-14; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

for His holiness; preceding attempts to communicate with Him beyond the initial steps of repentance. To have fellowship with the Lord is to have communication with the God of all creation, thus we must come into the light of His holy presence, and learn to listen; for although our understanding and knowledge is quite limited, God's understanding and knowledge are limitless and abounding with truth! This cannot be achieved if we are not willing to participate in His endeavors to both will and work within us those things pleasing in His sight; choosing instead to remain in the darkness of our own carnal volition. Please understand, although nothing can separate us from God's love, sin does separate us from His blessings, such as: being our shield and our strength, being our help in times of trouble, peace, joy, times of refreshing, wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and spiritual discernment.²⁵⁷⁰ All believers want God's blessings; yet many intentionally remain disobedient, thereby expecting God to bless their disobedience! I have no idea what god they are seeking to worship; the God I know, and who knows me, personally works all things together for my betterment within spiritual growth and servanthood; so also He blesses me with discipline and chastisement when necessary, so as to be obediently prepared to receive the blessings of correction and training in righteousness. As I have no entitlement from God which is not available to all devotional believers; as I am no better than anyone else; why others refuse devotional submission so as to receive true blessings is beyond my ability to reason or understand.

Most believers personally known generally pray for everything which is secular and fleshly, while failing to pray for: maturity in the faith, blessing to be upon others, God's guidance and instruction to lead them forth, spiritual discernment within study (abiding in the Word), strength to serve, help to submit more thoroughly, discipline to have pride driven far from them, conviction and correction. Multitudes have become complacent in self-centeredness, pride, greed, and love of self, love of money, comfort, prestige, riches, fleshly desires, and a complete lack of focus upon the Lord. Although every good and perfect gift comes down from the Father of lights, many believers actually ask the Lord to send them continued darkness! How absurd! God loves us, thus He never renders that which further holds individuals in darkness to the things of the

²⁵⁷⁰ ref. Psalm 43:1-5; Acts 3:18-26; Philipians 4:4-9.

world! True devotional Christians seek to remain focused upon the Lord, worshipping Him in spirit and in truth; accepting of His: discipline, correction, chastisements, and blessings for increased faith and Scripture knowledge, spiritual growth, and better servanthood; for true Christianity is all about God!

Christianity

REALITY

Far too many believers are not “Christian” at all! By definition, the word “Christian” signifies behavior and attitude which is—“Christ-like” (selfless servitude).²⁵⁷¹ This signifies that the believer seeks minimally to be an adherent of Christ Jesus; therefore, the individual decides to deny “self” so as to follow Jesus; this being a matter of attitude and devotional choice! When a simple attempt to follow Jesus (adherent) becomes an earnest devotional desire, the believer can then be more fervid in their attachment to Jesus, which is the threshold of being a learned Christian. When the devotionally earnest follower of the Lord submits to learn and serve with a humble spirit, they then may reach the designation of being a disciple of Christ; for a disciple (learned pupil) dwells within a “pupil-teacher” relationship; abiding in the Gospel and in the Word.²⁵⁷² From this position of being a disciple of Christ, comes true servitude as a supporter of the truth regarding God in a world of deceptive darkness.²⁵⁷³ This is an area where only a remnant of believers (true Christians) have journeyed, for it is here that the reality of fellowship with the Lord is imperative; as God’s wisdom and leadership are of necessity for success and victory on a moment by moment basis! Although most professing believers claim to love God and seek to better know Him, the reality remains that our fruition endeavors; or lack thereof; evidence the truth of the matter.²⁵⁷⁴ Anyone can say they are a “Christian,” yet only the Holy Spirit’s fruits and convictions within the individual make it a reality!

²⁵⁷¹ John 12:23-27.

²⁵⁷² John 1:1, 2; 8:31-58, specific vs. 31, 32, 36; 15:4-12.

²⁵⁷³ Romans 1:8-32.

²⁵⁷⁴ James 2:1-26.

Personal Note: Having stated to all of my students (hundreds) that they should read the Bible in its entirety, so as to realize the immensity and precision of God as emphasized by God's written revelation of Himself; the true heart of the majority of the students regarding God was evidenced by two factors. First by their acknowledgement that reading the Bible held importance, and second by their statements that they would begin to do so, and continue until the endeavor was accomplished. The reason "reading" the Bible in its entirety is so very important, is because this is undistracted time seeking understanding of that which God chose to reveal regarding Himself and standards He has set forth; in addition, this endeavor can lead to actual devotion for God, which allows the Lord to displace the fleshly indulgences (including carnal religiosity) which has previously led one's life endeavors!²⁵⁷⁵ "With very few exceptions, the majority of the students purchased the Bible on tape or compact discs, so as to listen to the Gospel while doing others things! What then is the reality? The students lied both to themselves and to me, as their supposed love for God never went beyond spoken words; for the majority was incapable of loving the Lord so as to become undistracted effectual doers of the word, rather than hearers who deluded themselves!²⁵⁷⁶ Within double-minded self-centeredness, the majority were incapable of giving God undistracted attention and devotion, while lying continually about how they love the Lord; which is the deluding effects of foolish adolescent stubborn and rebellious pride, which blinds individuals from any light of truth regarding an actual devotional relationship with God; for God is opposed to stubborn adolescent pride because of its blinding effects! A primary behavior which evinces this reality is "false humility," which is a primary means by which individuals delude themselves while denying they are prideful; this is easily evinced when individuals immediately defend their deceptions by additional deception (excuses), when held accountable for their spoken words! This is a reality of multitudes, as they continue within complacent self-centeredness and double-mindedness, because of self-delusion; which holds them in bondage to Satan's schemes to obscure the light of truth and necessity

²⁵⁷⁵ Colossians 2:1-23.

²⁵⁷⁶ James 1:19-25.

regarding the spiritual relational reality! The reality is in fact, that the majority of believers are only willing to give God what minute amount of their time remains after fulfilling their own carnal volitions; for indeed the love of the multitudes has grown cold because of seeking all that is of the world, and the pleasures of the flesh; which amounts to lawlessness!²⁵⁷⁷ The reason the multitudes in these last days refuse to test themselves, is because the truth would interfere with the fantasy (delusion) they have chosen for themselves; which is why the majority will never journey beyond manmade religion which appeases the flesh, and why the masses have chosen for themselves teachers who instruct according to the whims of the sinful nature! Satan does in fact deceive the entire world; minus the remnant of true disciplined devotional believers; this proven by multitudes who practice deception with no conviction of wrongdoing, or remorse!²⁵⁷⁸

Our walk with the Lord remains the utmost importance of our existence; this is the reality of Christianity, as we prepare for the state of eternity when God will be all in all!²⁵⁷⁹ When we attempt to go forth pleasing God as by human effort, rather than submitting by faith trusting in God to will and work within us that which is pleasing in His sight, we tend to go from foolish to absurd.²⁵⁸⁰ This can be witnessed in the behavior of many denominations as they maintain tangents derived from a few select Scripture verses, or place great emphasis upon rituals, signs, and wonders. This can also be witnessed in some forms of religion, as absurd acts of violence are committed by ungodly fanatic individuals, and claimed to be for God.²⁵⁸¹ Once tangents are taken away from the imperative of the fellowship with the Lord necessary to actually follow Him, instead of attempting to lead, the wretchedness of human nature becomes precedent; in this the behavior of individuals continues forth only as further acts of “self” attempted righteousness, which is actually un-righteousness.²⁵⁸² Although there is a remnant of individuals within two forms of religion (Christian religion; Islam) who truly want to love and seek God; the masses do not actually love God,

²⁵⁷⁷ Romans 3:9-31; 6:15-23; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; 1 John 2:18-3:18.

²⁵⁷⁸ Revelation 12:9.

²⁵⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; cf. Ephesians 1:3-23.

²⁵⁸⁰ ref. Isaiah 64:3-7.

²⁵⁸¹ John 16:2, 3.

²⁵⁸² Romans 10:1-4; 1 Timothy 1:3-11; 2 Timothy 2:1-26; Titus 2:11-15;
1 Corinthians 15:32-34.

but rather only the thought of Him as Savior, and how He will fit into the life they have chosen for themselves. The god the masses seek is not the Lord Jesus Christ, for He loves us enough to lead our lives, and truly devotional believers personally love Him enough to submit so that He may do so. The Lord teaches us that He must be the desire of our existence; thus abstinence from defilement and submission for the purpose of fellowship with Him become imperative, therefore our lives are to be lived for Him!²⁵⁸³ This is actually the purpose of our existence! Although several religions claim to be “Christian” in nature, or claim to serve the Lord God, the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) when manifested by the indwelling Holy Spirit, proves the reality of Christianity, within individuals who are led by God for fulfillment of righteous purpose! This is proven by the “reality of the Christ,” both physically and spiritually; for as “Messiah” of Old Testament promise directly translated means “Christ,” the Lord Jesus Christ is the manifest reality of God in fulfillment of the “Messiah” of promise! No religion on planet earth has the manifest reality of God which is evinced in Christ; therefore, He is truly the Way, and the truth, and the life, which is proven within those who alone by God’s masterful leadership are Christ-like (Christian)!²⁵⁸⁴ With the ascension of the Lord, the reality of Christianity became solely spiritual; for the spiritual relational reality within which we are saved and led righteously by the Lord is foundational to knowledgeable “faith” within all aspects of the relationship!²⁵⁸⁵ This is a proven reality within those who greatly appreciate and enjoy actual fellowship with the Lord, and why by the immensity of the experience is ineffable; for the reality of God although not explainable, is a manifested reality within the experience, which is spiritually edifying and completely apart from the emotional responses of the flesh! Spiritually relational; not religious!

If we achieve knowledge that God must be the desire of our existence, and we thereby maintain the attitude necessary for disciplined persistent and diligent focus; the Lord will guide us upon the narrow path which allows righteous fulfillment of purpose; for it is His righteousness, within which we worship and serve!²⁵⁸⁶ Yes, a congregational

²⁵⁸³ 1 Peter 1:13-16.

²⁵⁸⁴ John 6:44-65; 14:6-11; cf. Romans 8:1-17, specific v. 14.

²⁵⁸⁵ Romans 12:1-3; Galatians 3:19-29.

²⁵⁸⁶ Matthew 7:13-27.

setting is necessary in the aspect that it allows us fellowship with other believers, allowing us to hear the Gospel together; yet we do not need the doctrines of religion, when that which is practiced and considered as necessary actually distracts us away from loving God first and foremost! The question must be asked, is the purpose that most believers fellowship together endeavors to draw closer to God in a unified fashion, or is the fellowship for the purpose of being solely with others, with little consideration being placed upon appropriate focus on the Lord? Because a relationship is necessary in order to submit to God, and a church setting will many times bring folks to make a decision of acceptance regarding salvation by grace through faith and the necessity of submission unto the authority of God, fellowship with other believers is necessary in many cases; yet focus upon the Lord during fellowship with others must remain the imperative!

Although the Lord has declared us righteous as an aspect of salvation through faith in the atonement of Christ (propitiation; expiation; justification), this is in regard to our being found innocent of sin at the time we will all give account for our deeds while in the flesh. That which is discussed here is not referring to our justification, but rather the hindrance which darkness (intentional sin; lawlessness) causes to our fellowship with God. Anyone who believes that sin does not hinder fellowship with God, is guilty of: never having had true fellowship with God, little or no understanding of the Bible, a complete lack of appropriate righteous focus, being self-deluding, being deceived; or all five. God blesses us with His grace so we may go forth while making the right decisions, confess sin, and come into His holy presence.²⁵⁸⁷ Sin greatly hinders our receiving of His blessings; for although He is never slow to freely give grace; our sinfulness makes us reluctant to receive it, as we attempt to bypass the cross within the shame of our behavior.

IMPERATIVES OF THE FAITH

The imperative of fellowship with God is known by true Christians, yet unrealized by most believers; this proven as “Christian” is defined—“Christ-like”; and by the pain suffered when fellowship with God is lost due to unacceptable behavior and sin! Although we as Christians are at fault when fellowship with God is lost; when the Lord Jesus lost fel-

²⁵⁸⁷ Ephesians 2:1-10.

lowship with the Father, it was because of the sin of all humankind which He took upon Himself in our stead (“ELI, ELI, LAMA SABACHTHANI?” THAT IS, “MY GOD, MY GOD, WHY HAST THOU FORSAKEN ME?”—Matthew 27:46). Understanding the imperative of righteous fellowship with God leads to changed lives within Christians (those submitting to be Christ-like), as this understanding leads to humility and disciplined devotion so as to receive the blessing; failing to understand and submit, most believers have unchanged lives year after year, as they continue to trust in themselves and unwise religious leadership. This is why most believers act exactly the same as most others (including non-believers); and Christians are truly known and disliked by and for their disciplined devotion and fruitful righteous endeavors!²⁵⁸⁸ Most believers refuse to submit their bodies as a living sacrifice, because they refuse to change the way they think (a matter of attitude and devotion), thus they remain indecisive, and disregard the fellowship with God necessary to receive His life changing: masterful leadership, tutelage, and nurturing.

Having had a plethora of students over the years, the one thing which has remained at the forefront of spiritual downfall and defeat is indecisiveness! The greater number of students make statements to become earnest in better understanding of the Gospel and devotional submission unto the Lord God; yet remaining carnally emotional rather than submitting unto God for spiritual awakening and growth, they remain fleshly and worldly due to repeated double-mindedness and complacent deluding (of themselves)! A decision to devotionally submit to and seek God happens in a moment in time, if absolute sincerity is at the forefront of the decision; insincerity dictates that when actual effort must come forth, all that proceeds is excuses and denial of former statements, and this as the flesh is weak although the spirit is willing; if in fact a spiritual reality exists beyond assumption and conjecture!²⁵⁸⁹ It is understandable that becoming a spiritual individual is difficult, and this after walking according to the flesh (by sight) prior in one’s life; yet the fact remains that a life of spirituality is absolutely possible when and where God is at work! What then is the root of the problem? Failure to deny “self” and therefore the desires and volition of the flesh,

²⁵⁸⁸ Matthew 10:17-28, specific vs. 22-26.

²⁵⁸⁹ example—Matthew 26:38-46; cf. Acts 5:32; Hebrews 5:9, 10.

remains the root of spiritual destitution and ultimate eternal destruction! If individuals refuse to put forth the effort to deny “self” on a disciplined habitual basis, and this due to double-mindedness, they delude themselves and repeatedly return to assumption, conjecture and spiritual laziness, rather than insistently offering their bodies as living and holy sacrifices unto the Lord for training and growth!²⁵⁹⁰

The reality is quite simple, failing to love the Lord God first and foremost (with all our heart, soul, mind and strength), we desire a relationship with God which is spiritual; while holding to the flesh, as we also desire to hold to practiced carnality while simultaneously wanting God to make us spiritual! The Lord God is absolutely holy and just; He cannot and will not bless fleshly and secular endeavors when the kind intention of His will is to create in us spirituality which is for the benefit of our current existence (mortal), and for our spiritual existence which is for eternity! Is the brevity of our mortal existence really so important that we are willing to deny the imperative of training for our eternal existence? Is living in our flesh according to carnal volition really so important that the good, acceptable and perfect will of God should remain secondary? Must we remain so arrogant that we would expect the Lord God of all creation to change all that is perfect, so as to appease us within imperfection? Are we really so important that idolatry of “self” must be maintained at all cost? Or rather, should we not love and humbly submit unto the Lord God who cannot change, for a righteous existence now and forever; which in reality fulfills our purpose of existence! In the life of a plethora of believers, God is simply an aspect of their existence, along with all that is of the flesh and world; this rendering proof that the Lord God is not actually known, for that which is of the flesh and world is diametrically opposed to the spiritual “reality of God”!²⁵⁹¹

- **The beginning point of importance regarding spiritual success is simple, when making a decision for God, humbly hold true to the decision with absolute disciplined devotional persistence!**

²⁵⁹⁰ Romans 12:1-21, specific vs. 1-3; 2 Corinthians 6:1-7:1; Ephesians 5:1-17; James 1:2-12; 4:1-10.

²⁵⁹¹ Galatians 5:16-26; cf. James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

The first and foremost commandment within Christendom is to love the Lord! When this primary step is not taken, idolatry becomes the result; for we seek to love ourselves, other people, or things with precedence. When love for the Lord is not the primary desire of our existence, we fall prey to the foolishness of manmade religion, which teaches human efforts as pleasing to God; although not. Christians understand this to be factual, and focus upon the Lord; lest the boastful pride of life enter in, along with various lusts and ungodly desires. Most believers, having failed to “get over themselves,” allow pride to be their guide in most aspects of life; thereby remaining in bondage to the elementary principles of this world. We fail to go beyond elementary principles, because it is God who brings forth mature Christian growth; therefore the necessity for fellowship with Him becomes not only evident, but also imperative!²⁵⁹² Christians understand that we have been called to be separate; although we are in the world, we are not of it; therefore we have no reason to act as if we are.²⁵⁹³

It is imperative that we test ourselves to witness *if* we are truly in the faith called—Christianity! Our fruits in accordance to the Lord’s masterful righteous leadership makes evident the truth; not our words spoken aloof the manifest “reality of God”! We should not keep wondering and worrying about what everyone else is doing or thinking, we should concern ourselves with our personal relationship with the Lord; He will lead us in appropriate concerns for others, and discipline us concerning that which is inappropriate. We judge those of the faith according to God’s standards of the faith which is confessed; we do not judge non-believers (outsiders) for there is no standard by which to judge them; therefore God will judge non-believers! If we as believers do not act accordingly with God’s leadership in righteousness, who are we to judge others, when we have failed to appropriately judge ourselves?²⁵⁹⁴

Two other imperatives of the faith are truth and discipline. If we are to continually walk with the Lord, we must maintain strict discipline and integrity (scrupulous probity)!²⁵⁹⁵ The narrow path of God’s righteousness is in the light of truth; for God is the essence of light, truth, and love! It is absolutely impossible to maintain walking with God in

²⁵⁹² Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

²⁵⁹³ Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16.

²⁵⁹⁴ 1 Corinthians 5:3-13; cf. Romans 2:1-29; warning—1 Corinthians 11:23-31.

²⁵⁹⁵ 2 Corinthians 13:1-10; Hebrews 12:4-11.

the light of imperative truth and righteousness, while yet maintaining willingness to walk in the darkness of: deceit, deception, delusion, fantasy, and idolatry! Place and maintain God as first and foremost decisively, or fail terribly; the narrow path of God's righteousness and the broad path which leads to destruction cannot be traveled simultaneously or alternated!

CHRISTIANITY INVOLVES APPROPRIATE FOCUS

Being a Christian is truly a matter of focus and attitude! Focus upon the author and perfecter of our faith, and strength of Christian character (attitude) to guard over our hearts and minds so as to allow sanctification (being set apart and made holy); for this is God's will for our existence!²⁵⁹⁶ Although the Lord seeks to guide all who believe, He only guides those who humbly submit to follow; thus disciplined devotional Christians! The Lord does not want automatons, but rather wills for us to earnestly and devotionally desire His presence in our lives first and foremost; from this devotional desire comes focus and submission (matter of attitude), bringing forth victory in the faith by God's grace. Most believers understand small portions of the Gospel, because it is small portions of their lives which are submitted to God; small portions of time well spent. Disciplined devotional Christians understand the Gospel to a much larger degree, because of the imperative of determined study, and submission for the purpose of receiving from the Lord that which is good, acceptable, and pure; larger portions of time well spent. God being high (Christian), or low (simple lukewarm believer) on one's priority list, is a matter of personal choice and precise decision!

To be "Christ-like" (Christian) is to seek fulfillment of God's will; for this is a matter of fact, which negates double-mindedness, doubt, or debate! Although religion in the United States and elsewhere has grown immensely, it is religion that has grown; not personal relationships with God, as this is a personal matter of selfless devotion rarely found in group settings. People are taught the supposed necessity of the rituals, yet are not taught submission and the actual necessity of the spiritual relational reality; this as God in no longer allowed access to most church congregations (church of Laodicea—Revelation 3:14-22)! People come to believe that God will be displeased with them if they do not partici-

²⁵⁹⁶ 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8.

pate in traditions and rituals (rote); leading multitudes to religion, yet staying many from the saving relationship which God seeks to have with individual believers. Fellowship with God is imperative to our relationship with Him, therefore any form of religion which does not teach this important fact is futile and vane! The spiritual reality is all about a personal relationship; not ritualistic religion of rote! God wants our devotional sincerity, which involves appropriate focus and priorities; not behavior in harlotry, because we choose to remain double-minded or self-centered.²⁵⁹⁷

DECISIONS MUST BE MADE

If as believers we insist upon walking in darkness by habitually holding to all that is carnal, we cannot by any Biblical standard expect to have fellowship with God; for He is God and we must act accordingly (humbly: reverent, submissive, and obedient). To be “Christ-like” (Christian) is to realize we have been crucified with Christ, therefore how shall we who have died to sin seek to live within it again!²⁵⁹⁸ Many believers I know are mastered by sin, thus by definition they are not Christians; for many choose to grieve the Holy Spirit (*if* present) by causing Him to dwell within the filth of intentional human wretchedness; denying the necessity of His fruits in the process.²⁵⁹⁹ This in many (or most) cases proves that the saving relationship does not exist!²⁶⁰⁰ Although the Lord knows with certainty who is and who is not saved, it is prudent that individuals have certainty while in our mortal bodies; for without the manifest proof of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, what will be the inevitable outcome?!

Very few believers personally known ever wait patiently upon the Lord; this including: Pastors, ministers, and teachers. When supplication is made to the Lord, patient waiting is necessary so as to receive the answer; for He answers us in accordance to His perfect timing; which also includes our willingness to accept the answer. Most believers and many Christians fail to wait for God’s answer before going forth, and this contingent upon whether supplication was rendered at all! Most believers personally known do not actually make supplication for

²⁵⁹⁷ Colossians 3:5; James 1:2-12; 4:3-10.

²⁵⁹⁸ Galatians 2:15-21.

²⁵⁹⁹ Romans 6:1-8:39; Galatians 5:19-26; 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

²⁶⁰⁰ 1 John 5:18-21.

appropriate growth from the Lord, for they believe themselves to have the ingenuity and religious potential necessary to succeed in life without God's righteous leadership!²⁶⁰¹ Because actual wisdom comes from the Lord, it is our dutiful responsibility to wait patiently upon Him, and this after making supplication according to His will; which always involves sanctification and stern discipline. If what we seek does not involve sanctification; which is God's will for all believers; we have in an undisciplined manner decided to seek that which is unrighteous according to the standards of the faith we profess!²⁶⁰² In all our ways we must acknowledge God and His good, acceptable and perfect will, for God's way is the righteous way; our path which is aloof God's masterful leadership and guidance is the wrong way! How many believers by personal volition and choice constantly choose the wrong way; while claiming to love God? What kind of love is that?

CHRISTIANITY HAS A RIGHTEOUS OUTCOME

When we have fellowship with the Lord, He leads us in—right doing (righteousness); this as He both wills and works in us that which is pleasing to Himself. Submission to allow God's sanctifying work is the essence of walking in His righteousness, not a righteousness conceived of and fulfilled by our own human endeavors! Although some may say that we may emulate God's righteousness; this is incorrect; for only God can perform truly righteous actions, thus He leads and we follow (or not)!

This is not legalism whatsoever! By His grace He leads and strengthens us in every aspect of our lives, with only our personal volition causing hindrance. The big difference between Christians and believers in this matter, is that Christians do not intentionally hinder God's work of sanctification by denial of His necessary presence, whereas most believers allow idolatry of "self" to denounce obedience, humble submission, and abiding in the Word to be of necessity. When we deny "self" so as to follow the Lord, He has potential to lead us within our: marriages, jobs, family life, leisure activities, and moment by moment choices; for we become instruments of His righteousness in a more insistent and consistent way; this of course contingent upon practiced denial of "self"! In allowing idolatry of "self" and friendship with the world to lead us astray of the

²⁶⁰¹ Romans 8:14.

²⁶⁰² James 4:3-6, specific v. 3, reason v. 4.

necessary truth that we need God for victory and true freedom, stubborn and rebellious (adolescent) pride becomes precedent; causing enmity and opposition between us and God.²⁶⁰³

God gives His grace for a righteous reason! God ripped the temple curtain from top to bottom for a righteous reason! He wills for us to come into fellowship with Him, and appropriate His grace so that we may live our lives seeking to do the right thing for the right reasons as by disciplined humble submission. We can take His grace for granted, or we can allow the immensity of His grace to form us into the beautifully obedient sons and daughters He wills for us to be! Until we are willing to deny “self” we will not be willing to follow the Lord! Most people will submit to follow *if* consequences of disobedience effect their physical world, yet only Christians submit to eliminate the harsh consequences which befall our spiritual life; for we cannot allow hindrance within our walk for our Lord! What a shame that most believers care only about the physical aspects of their life (blatant carnality); all of which end at the grave! Many speak (word only) of God’s kingdom and deliverance from the wages of sin which is death; a remnant actually awaits His kingdom expectantly, in thought, word, and deed!²⁶⁰⁴

SPIRITUAL DEFEAT

Without fellowship with God, we fail to don the full armor daily. When the armor of God is not donned, we seek the same secular standards of success (sinking sand) as non-believers; although the Scriptures tell us not to be envious of non-believers for they are of the world, and all that is of the world is passing away.²⁶⁰⁵ Friendship with the world causes enmity with God; fellowship with God leads us to actual success, which is founded upon the Rock.

1. We must don the “helmet of salvation” so as to maintain our thoughts upon the true blessings of God which last for eternity. When we understand what our dear Lord has done for us, we will stop concentrating upon that which ends at the grave.

²⁶⁰³ James 4:3-10.

²⁶⁰⁴ 2 Timothy 4:1-8.

²⁶⁰⁵ Psalm 73:1-28; 1 John 2:15-17.

2. We must don the “breastplate of righteousness” so as to stay from selfish desires within our hearts. By appropriate donning of the breastplate, that which is of the world which would defile our stature within God’s righteousness is blocked from entering.
3. We must don the “preparation of the Gospel of peace” so as to walk within Gospel standards of morality at all times. By appropriate donning of the preparation of the Gospel of peace, our steps are firmly planted upon the faithfulness of God; thus our steps are appropriate to the faith we confess.
4. We must don the “girdle of truth” so as to maintain consistent and insistent honesty (probity, candor, veracity) at all times. By appropriate donning of the girdle of truth, we stay from all forms of deception and delusion; thus staying from captivity to Satan’s unrighteous will (the father of lies).
5. We must take up the “shield of faith” so as to defend against the secular world which is utilized by Satan to cause us spiritual harm or death. When we wield the shield properly, the fiery darts of temptation cannot enter in to start fires of inappropriate lust, desires, and sin.
6. We must take up the “sword of the Spirit” so as to speak the utterances of God. Although we many times think that our words can make a difference; it is God’s word which changes lives! The “sword of the Spirit” is our only offensive weapon!
7. We must remain prayerful at all times so as to maintain our fellowship with God. Our success moment by moment is contingent upon our continual fellowship with the Lord; lest in a moment of time we fall prey to the inappropriate.

Spiritual defeat is derived from allowing demonic influence to overtake us; this many times from the beginning point of seeking God! When we are drawn by the Father to know the Son; as no one can actually come to Christ without being drawn to do so; we are allowed a righteous foundation by which to humbly confess and submit unto the

authority of Christ, who is Lord; as this is the only basis by which the grace of God is given for the purpose of both salvation and spiritual success and victory!²⁶⁰⁶ With this knowledge, we must be very careful who or what we allow to be influential in our lives, for the enemy (Satan) will utilize any means possible to cause us to stumble; this absolutely includes the disunity of denominational religion, and seeking God through selfish motives aloof selfless disciplined devotion! The spiritual relational reality with God which saves us by His grace is because of the uniqueness and faithfulness of God; not because of who we are apart from the relationship!²⁶⁰⁷

Once coming to the relationship, the choice remains to focus upon and obey the Lord by earnest prayer and righteous supplication, or loose righteous focus to all that is carnal and distractive; which is the intention and influence from the demonic realm, that the spiritual growth which is from God alone would no longer be given and received, thereby placing the believer into a state of spiritual stagnancy henceforth! As believers in God, why do we submit to the influence of those who surround us, and refuse submission to the influence of the Holy Spirit who indwells us? Having the blessing of the Lord's presence within, why would we desire to submit to the influence of demons within other human beings without; which very much includes religious doctrine and traditions? Because the Lord indwells us, no influence should be stronger to us than His; fellowship with Him makes this a reality! Please remember, although human beings will be utilized (influenced) by Satan and demons to cause us to stumble, the humans are not our enemy, but rather the forces of influential evil, and the unrighteous decisions we make.²⁶⁰⁸

Imperative Note: We must remain separate from that which is of the world, if we are to receive the blessing of fellowship with God! To volitionally connect with the world or walk according to the flesh, is to disconnect from the Lord; for friendship with the world and adherence to the flesh causes enmity toward God. When volitional connection with the world comes to pass, the inappropriate action directly dictates

²⁶⁰⁶ John 6:44, 45; Romans 10:8-13; Hebrews 5:8-10.

²⁶⁰⁷ Matthew 19:21-26; Mark 10:17-31; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 3:1-11.

²⁶⁰⁸ Ephesians 5:1-6:20.

by our disobedience that our love for God first and foremost has ceased; this initial step leads to inevitable spiritual suicide!²⁶⁰⁹

CHRISTIANITY CONCLUSION

It is this simple, if we believe we can have fellowship and devotional communication with God while remaining in darkness, we are deceiving ourselves, and living a lie.²⁶¹⁰ Because no lie is of the truth, we in essence become self-deluding; as no matter what the influence without, we allow the influence to overtake us within! To walk in truth is to walk in the light, where all things are exposed!²⁶¹¹ To abstain from intentional sin and be repentant when we have turned away is foundational to loving the Lord. If we have become so complacent within sin that we no longer have conviction and remorse, something is terribly wrong! When we truly realize we have died to sin, we then refuse to allow sin to be master over us; it is at this point that the masterful leadership and nurturing of the Lord can be rendered and received! When sin no longer holds us in bondage, we are then free to walk in the light with the Lord, which is a true blessing of fellowship with Him; for our union with Him is no longer hindered. Testing ourselves in regard to godliness is truly the test of Christianity; therefore, how can victory in the faith become a reality aside of fellowship with the Lord! Please read Psalm 3:1-8; Proverbs 3:1-35.

STEPS TO FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD

- God must be loved first and foremost, wholly without exception; all else must remain secondary!²⁶¹²
- Individual must maintain walking in the light of truth; without compromise, variation or excuse!²⁶¹³
- Individual must be humbly devotional, disciplined, and diligent regarding prayer and study of the Gospel; as abiding is imperative!²⁶¹⁴ Initial stages of fellowship with God occur during this specific; therefore, acquiescence must precede the

²⁶⁰⁹ James 4:1-10; 1 John 2:12-17.

²⁶¹⁰ 1 John 1:5-10.

²⁶¹¹ Matthew 10:22-42; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12; Revelation 3:14-22.

²⁶¹² Matthew 22:36-40.

²⁶¹³ 1 John 1:1-10; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

²⁶¹⁴ John 8:31-36; 15:1-27; 2 Timothy 2:1-26; 3:16, 17.

endeavor, as the beautiful destination is accomplished only by God's grace and righteousness in fulfillment of the kind intention of His will.

- Individual must abstain from fleshly sin and inappropriate connection with the world!²⁶¹⁵
- Individual must deny "self," for no aspect of the flesh can enter into God's presence!²⁶¹⁶

The blessing of fellowship with God is foundational to His everlasting lovingkindness, holiness, righteousness, and the kind intention of His will; by which we are led, nurtured, and trained spiritually now and for all eternity. Although the Lord will render a taste of the heavenly gift (fellowship with Him) so that an individual may sample the reality of His spiritual presence during a humble, correct, and righteous confession of faith (**Jesus as Lord**), the Lord will repeatedly render this blessing for nothing less than disciplined devotional obedience and diligence! The beauty of fellowship with God (heavenly gift) is initiated by God in accordance to an individual's motive (God first and foremost); no motive involving "self" will suffice! Although the reality of fellowship with God is ineffable, I personally believe it to be the greatest received blessing experienced in human form; ascribable only when received!²⁶¹⁷ Christianity is all about love, faith, truth, discipline, obedience, diligence, and selfless servitude; which negate laziness, deception, delusion (which includes excuses), self-centeredness, and all that is nefarious! **FELLOWSHIP WITH GOD IS ASTOUNDINGLY BEAUTIFUL, AND WONDERFUL; TRULY WORTHY OF MAXIMUM DEVOTIONAL EFFORT!**

Personal Note: The beginning stages of actual personal fellowship with God; beyond the blessing from God for the purpose of a righteous confession of faith; are very difficult, as making the transition from a practiced carnal existence to the spiritual relational reality is arduous; yet never burdensome *if* a selfless devotional love for God is actively present. Please remember, the Lord looks to the core of motive; for

²⁶¹⁵ James 4:1-17; 1 John 2:3-3:18.

²⁶¹⁶ Matthew 16:21-28; Philippians 2:12-16.

²⁶¹⁷ Ephesians 1:3-23; Hebrews 6:1-20.

the spiritual relational reality is all about God, and we are blessed in active acceptance of this fact! The difficulty in continued accomplishment of intimate fellowship with God, comes when “self” is not denied on a devotionally habitual basis; for without denial of “self” we quickly return to attempting to love God in the flesh, rather than in spirit! Just as we learned living according to the flesh by all that surrounds us and by failing to be taught and practice the admonitions of God at an early age, we must now reject a life time of unrighteous learning so as to realize and actively accomplish the spiritual reality which is pleasing to God (John 4:20-24)! This is accomplished only by realization and acknowledgment of our carnal wretched ways (Isaiah 64:4-6), and rebellion against it (constantly testing ourselves) by abiding in the Word; this leading to abiding in the Lord by acquiescence and humble disciplined obedience, which allows the Lord to take us from the darkness of the wide path which leads to destruction by placing us upon the brilliantly lit narrow path of His righteousness! Initially this is very difficult, yet is accomplished with increased ease as we “get over ourselves” (total denial of personal volition and all that is of the flesh) so as to present our bodies as a living sacrifice which is our spiritual service of righteous worship and devotion (Romans 12:1-3)! Very few individuals ever transcend personal volition (“self”) to frequent intimate fellowship with God, because the devotional diligence necessary is denied for the sake of carnal ease and comfort; which takes us once again captive to the flesh (“self”)! As God knows every aspect of our existence, and the only one we are hiding from is ourselves; volitional surrender unto the Lord God of all creation is the only righteous course of action, lest we repeatedly return to bondage by selfish lazy cowardice! It takes great courage to allow sanctification away from the world and its ways, so as to abound within the spiritual relational reality; the task being both great and abounding within God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will is of wonderful distinction, yet harsh due to rejection by those who remain intentionally carnal and prideful (stubborn and/or rebellious); thus the imperative of the courage! Talking about this does not accomplish the spiritual reality; for disciplined devotional surrender is the imperative for accomplishment of the righteous task of coming to the beautifully intimate spiritual relationship which God seeks, which is absolutely possible by God’s grace for those who earnestly seek Him with continual selfless, disciplined, diligent, and devotional effort; which is actual ful-

fillment of purpose!²⁶¹⁸ The beauty of constant intimate fellowship with our Creator and Lord is absolutely possible and worthy of maximum diligent and devotional effort; which is why loving the Lord first and foremost with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength remains the foundation of the endeavor! God knows this; thus the first and foremost commandment in the Law!²⁶¹⁹ Deludingly claiming to love the Lord aloof reality is easily evinced, by abundant talk (boasting) and little effort; for true sincere devotional love for God receives righteous motivation for action, which is from God's grace according to the kind intention of His will! The spiritual relational reality is a personal matter of active devotional love; therefore, an intimate matter between individuals and God, of which no human being can assist or lead. We must sincerely love and trust the Lord God; for only He can make this happen, when (and only when) we have fulfilled our duty and responsibility to actively submit and follow! The reality exists that by God's manifest righteousness, we can do the right thing for the right reason; with the only hindrances being un-denied "self" and cowardice!

Denial of Fellowship Taught from the Pulpit

SCRIPTURE IN CONTEXT

It would be wonderful, *if* all teachings from the pulpit held Gospel accuracy and truth; yet this is rarely the case. From the pulpit believers are taught to sin, and are blatantly led astray by being taught to receive Scripture out of context. Let me reiterate:

1. In many (not all) sermons I have heard coming from supposed Christian pulpits, a few Scriptures are stated; usually far reaching one from another and rarely within the same line of truth (handle accurately, *orthotomew*—to cut straight; 2 Timothy 2:15); with the interim time between the bits of Gospel being expended with affectation, pedantry, ostentation, and efficacy. Because the easiest way to camouflage deception and evasion is between bits of truth, the oratory spoken in the interim is assumed to be contextual with the few Scriptures; although many times without righteous association!

²⁶¹⁸ James 1:19-25; 2:18-26.

²⁶¹⁹ Deuteronomy 6:1-9; Matthew 22:36-40; Romans 3:21-31.

In congregational settings, I have repeatedly heard Scripture taken out of context, in efforts to confirm the minister's bogus attempts to reason their way through Scripture, or tickle ears; unfortunately dragging the congregation along down the wide path which leads to wretched distraction and inevitable spiritual destruction! As spiritual discernment comes from the Lord, and the Scriptures are either spiritually discerned and appraised or not understood, carnal congregational leadership without spiritual discernment or ability to appraise (i.e. void of fellowship with God; or void of the reality of God entirely) tends to reason Scripture by human intellect. Although this may seem impressive to many, no one will find their way to freedom in Christ when the blind are leading the blinded!²⁶²⁰ Here is a great idea, let's proclaim Gospel in righteous context from the pulpit (Gospel truth), without the foolishness of man's intellect and confabulation; doing so with the imperative regarding the spiritual relational reality remaining at the forefront! Even *if* we lived to be one hundred years old, having studied the Bible every day, we would still have much to learn from the Lord, for His training is for all eternity and involves the reality behind the written words; thus seeking of abounding wisdom, understanding and knowledge is a terrifically righteous motivation and endeavor! Let's get started shall we; for the beauty of instruction and training from the Lord is quite: personal, edifying, and wonderful!

As it is the responsibility of all believers to test the teachings of others, the only person responsible for allowing the deception to befall us is ultimately ourselves. The definition of "Amen" is—"truly." When information is misleading from the pulpit, and we give the "amen," not having tested what was said; we acknowledge a lie to be the truth. This is the essence of acknowledging evil to be good and good evil.²⁶²¹ When we make acknowledgements in this way, we literally open the door so that the enemy (Satan and demons) can enter to further deceive us! If ministers or pastors tend to render sermons in this way, please read the entire chapter from which the tidbits of Scripture were extracted, thus gaining understanding as to the actual context of the Scripture; before rendering the "amen"; and this only when warranted! *If* in fact the Scriptures are habitually being taken out of context, walk away; for many supposed Christian leaders are actually serving Satan!²⁶²² The

²⁶²⁰ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16.

²⁶²¹ Isaiah 5:16-21.

Lord has given each of us a measure of faith; let's utilize it, and stop succumbing to falsehoods! Please read Isaiah 5:1-30 and Ezekiel 8:1-18, carefully, noting the comparison regarding the aforementioned; for it is very unwise to think we know, when we can actually come to knowledge of truth when our walk with God is appropriately righteous, and those who deceive kept far from us!

SIN BEING TAUGHT AS APPROPRIATE

2. In many congregations today, coveting is actually taught as acceptable and appropriate; although not. Coveting is sin; therefore congregations are actually being taught to sin! I cannot even count the times reference to Abraham and Job have been proclaimed in context that others may have entitlement to their blessings of financial gains.

Within the accounts of both Abraham and Job, failure comes (in most cases) to realize that these men were lovingly devoted to the Lord. In Abraham's case, he doubted the Lord and was guilty of lying (frailties of the flesh); yet his heart was for the Lord.²⁶²³ In the case of Job, there was no mentioned sin committed by Job prior to the test, yet the emphasis remained upon God's allowing him to be tested through suffering. It must also be of mention regarding Job that he was the most righteous human being on planet earth; yet this fact is never included in the falsehoods which lead to coveting Job's blessings! Please note that God blessed Job, as Job prayed for others even during times of great personal suffering!²⁶²⁴ In both accounts, emphasis is made that love for the Lord leads to God's blessings upon individuals; both blessings of financial gains and blessings of suffering and persecution for God's glory! Do many believers count suffering and persecutions for God's glory to be blessings from God? Do many believers even care that these men walked uprightly trusting in God (for the most part); or does the concern of the many remain upon seeking the financial gains, without the devotion for God which these men held? The answer is simple, as one's desires and endeavors evidence the truth! That which is emphasized in the accounts of both men, is that they were normal human beings blessed of God; making mistakes

²⁶²² Matthew 7:13-29; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:1-15.

²⁶²³ Genesis 12:13-20; 17:15-18; 22:1-18.

²⁶²⁴ Job chapters 1, 38-42.

yet earnestly seeking to love the Lord first and foremost, and receive His council. How often do you hear this emphasis from the pulpit?

When it is taught from the pulpit that the financial gains of Abraham and Job can be obtained by others (coveted); this remains a deception which conveys sin as appropriate Christian behavior. What is the tenth commandment (Exodus 20:17)? When darkness is portrayed as light from the pulpit, and believers do not test what is said by the Scriptures; a multitude remaining deceived is the end result! Although most believers seek to remain deceived as by seeking only that which is temporal (generally riches; comfort and ease); true Christians remain focused in seeking that which is eternal, by donning the helmet of salvation, and the remaining full armor of God daily.²⁶²⁵ Christians test all things according to the Scriptures, whereas most believers do not; thus Christians obtain freedom through the Word (in Christ), whereas most believers maintain forms of bondage according to the desires of the flesh. I state “most” when speaking of these downfalls within Christendom befalling believers, because most believers I personally know seek the same worldly possessions, and maintain the same worldly desires and mindset as non-believers! I note little difference between believers and non-believers in most cases; as Christians make the time to study and diligently seek God with disciplined sincere devotion, and most believers make only excuses for having failed to do so. Actual Christianity (the spiritual relational reality) is true and righteous; for actual Christianity is—**God at work**; this never occurring when believers intentionally remain carnal, with motivation foundational to all that is of the world and flesh!

INAPPROPRIATE BEHAVIOR

Far too many supposed spiritual leaders seek to do the work for which God alone is responsible! It is the Lord who convicts of: sin, judgment, and of righteousness.²⁶²⁶ Ours is to defend the hope of eternal life, proclaim the love of God to all others, speak the Gospel truth in love, plant seed and water the seed; it is God’s work to bring forth righteous fruition and all growth.²⁶²⁷ When from the pulpit we continually hear: do this, don’t do that, give more money, never question church leadership, ad-

²⁶²⁵ 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.

²⁶²⁶ John 16:7-15.

²⁶²⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:1-23.

here to religious doctrine, worship according to tradition; millions fall prey to demonically influenced manmade religion, derived from foolish human beings who seek to do God's work, and this attempted in the flesh!²⁶²⁸ Nowhere in all such teachings, is fellowship with the Lord taught as imperative; for foolish religious teachers have no understanding regarding fellowship with God; nonetheless can they teach the necessity to others! Spiritual growth comes from the Lord alone; therefore, fellowship with Him is the threshold of all appropriate growth within Christianity, which includes our purposeful existence!

Because of the materialism taught from the pulpit, many believers do not think they have been blessed of God. The Scriptures instruct us that we are to be content with food and covering in the physical realm.²⁶²⁹ When we learn to be content in a Biblical context, we then gaze with more intensity to God's many spiritual blessings! Are we healthy? Are our children and parents healthy? Can we see, hear, taste, and speak? The aforementioned blessings are but a few, which others may not have; although they have other blessings from God. When we learn to count the many aspects of our existence for God as blessings, we learn to be content in all circumstances, including: weaknesses, distresses, persecutions, suffering, and difficulties; for in all things we learn to trust in the Lord, as we can do all things through Him who strengthens us.²⁶³⁰

**UNDERSTANDING WITHIN THOSE KNOWN BY GOD
(CF. GALATIANS 4:1-11)**

There is a huge difference between "Christianity" and the "Christian religion"! "Christianity" consists of personal devotional relationships between individual believers and the Lord, and gatherings of believing individuals (ekklesia; church); all of whom maintain focus and attention upon the one true God; for within "Christianity" the emphasis is always upon reverent fear of the Lord and evidence of the truth! Within the "Christian religion," the emphasis is upon the rituals, doctrines, traditions, precepts, and philosophies of man; along with individuality; which actually evinces the "Christian religion" to be no different than any other religion in the world!²⁶³¹

²⁶²⁸ Galatians 5:16-26.

²⁶²⁹ 1 Timothy 6:6-19, specific v. 8.

²⁶³⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 4:10-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-12.

²⁶³¹ Colossians 2:1-23; 1 Timothy 4:1-16; 2 Timothy 4:1-8.

The emphasis of “Christianity” is always upon God, as He is the only foundation for both the structuring and building of “the Way” (Body of Christ; Church; reality of God); for human beings are incapable of actual godly righteousness, and saving ourselves from the wages of sin, which is death.²⁶³² The emphasized foundation of all “religion” upon planet earth (including the Christian religion), is upon forms of pleasing or helping God as by human effort, or reaching levels of consciousness by which salvation may be achieved; solely by self-effort and following the teachings of other deceived human beings. Because all forms of secular (worldly) religion is based upon futile attempts to lead others, although simultaneously refusing to follow God, the outcome is human emotional obstinate adamancy which remains void of actual knowledge pertaining to God.²⁶³³ Although the beautiful relationship between individual believers with God (Christianity) was for a short time pronounced within the intimacy of “the Way,” upon entrance of Mesopotamian pagan religions into the Christian church at Pergamum in the second century A.D. (cf. Revelation 2:12-15), the beautiful reality of “the Way” (within the hearts and minds of many) was transformed into the “Christian religion”; which remains void of the Holy Spirit. Although a remnant has always dwelt within a beautiful relationship with God (the Way; spiritual relational reality), the masses have unfortunately fallen prey to the guile of Satan’s influence (religion); this being the reason that loving the things of the world (religiosity), causes enmity toward God! A relationship with God is based in: faith, truth, trust and discipline; which is far reaching from the simple human emotions and fleshly superficiality preyed upon by worldly religion.

The personal relationship with God (Christianity) aside of all ritualistic and doctrinal foolishness (the Christian religion), is the greatest blessing achievable within human existence! The ritualistic, doctrinal, and philosophical foolishness of “religion,” is derived from the innateness of human nature (lust of the eyes, lust of the flesh, the boastful pride of life, pride, arrogance, and self-centeredness), which when followed leads to the inanity of ritualistic religion void of the Holy Spirit’s leadership. Although “Christianity” has but one performed act of re-

²⁶³² Acts 9:1, 2; 19:9:23; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; John 14:6, 7; Romans 6:1-23.

²⁶³³ Romans 8:1-17; 10:1-21; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

membrance (Lord's Supper), the "Christian religion" has abundant rituals and traditions such as the Sacraments, Christmas, Easter, Lent, Good Friday, etc.; the former trusts fully in God, whereas the latter trusts in the accomplishments and religiosity of humankind (enticements and doctrines of demons)! The personal relationship which is "Christianity" is destined for spiritual growth within a remnant of individuals, derived from the blessings received when God is first and foremost (veil lifted); whereas the foolishness of religion is destined for spiritual failure and death, derived from trusting in humankind within the guile of Satan (veil remains)!²⁶³⁴

Summation

The Lord Jesus Christ refused to adhere to the traditions which were verbally passed down by the Pharisees.²⁶³⁵ Jesus refused to do this, for He knew that the traditions were in addition to the standards as set forth by God, and was proclaimed so as to build pedestals from which religious leadership could act condescendingly toward others.²⁶³⁶ Traditions which are set forth by humankind; for the most part; cause confusion and distract away from focus upon the Lord in a spiritual sense; leading to individuals walking by sight, not by faith, in the darkness of religious deception, rather than in the light of truth! Within religious traditions, the focus generally becomes one of following others who engage in vain attempts to please God (rote).²⁶³⁷ Without the necessary fellowship with God for spiritual success and victory, spiritual stagnancy remains, leading to repetitive inane thinking and vain endeavors of rote. Traditions in most cases, lead only to bondage within manmade religion, as they have no value against fleshly indulgence! Failure to understand God's unmerited favor (GRACE) toward those created in His image (spiritually), leads to foolish attempts to please God, rather than devotional submission and obedience with thanksgiving.

The Lord has always sought our love, loyalty, and devotion (Hosea 6:4-7). With the many other precedences taught from the pulpit, such as riches, comfort, self, traditions, rituals, man's precepts and doctrines; it becomes increasingly more difficult to realize that worship is all about

²⁶³⁴ 2 Corinthians 3:1-18.

²⁶³⁵ Mark 7:1-23.

²⁶³⁶ Matthew 23:1-36.

²⁶³⁷ Isaiah 29:10-21.

the Lord (spirit and truth), with our purpose being found within thanksgiving to Him for His many splendid gifts and spiritual blessings. The church today does not consider the many spiritual blessings of God, because religious leadership has fallen prey to considering God's blessings according to carnal physical realm standards (mammon).²⁶³⁸ When will we realize that loving the Lord is our purpose of life; now and forever! When will we stop chasing after the world, so the Lord's sanctifying work may occur unhindered?²⁶³⁹ When will we return to learning Gospel truth in context; staying from seeking that God change to suit our standards of incompetence? When will we "get over ourselves" so as to love the Lord and others as we ought? With appropriate agape love being received and rendered by God's legitimate children, comes the end of the selfish love of the world being pronounced in the lives of lukewarm believers. The world actually hates the pure love which is from God; for His love very much involves—"love of the truth," which is necessary for actual salvation!²⁶⁴⁰ True change unto being conformed to the image of our Lord is possible; yet remaining a personal matter between the individual believer and God. The choice is ours individually; for only God Himself can lead us upon the path He has chosen for us personally. Proper devotional worship and love comes forth from the spirit of individuals who are righteously "drawn" by God, and is many times not found in church environments; therefore devotional love for the Lord is found in our response to His manifest love in us.

Considering that our actual foes are very powerful and should never be underestimated, we must remain on guard having donned God's full armor daily. Because the Lord will allow us to be tested throughout our lifetime, fellowship with Him remains the imperative; which when absent allows downfall and defeat, yet when present brings forth potential freedom in Christ and victory through faith. We would be foolish to doubt the onslaught of harm a powerful foe can bring forth during attack; therefore we must be always vigilant to remain focused when we stand, lest we fall! The Lord allows the influence of the enemy to come forth, to test us; will our decisions be for or against God, will they be centered upon "self" (defeat in the flesh) or upon the Lord and others

²⁶³⁸ Matthew 6:19-24.

²⁶³⁹ James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

²⁶⁴⁰ 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12; cf. 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

(potential victory)? The choice is ours to make, for no one else can be blamed for our choices!

Many believers choose to remain ignorant of the battle we face against powerful foes, somehow believing the enemy will simply go away; this occurs when aloof the reality of God (spiritual relational reality)! When believers are doing nothing for the Lord as they continually serve themselves or remain spiritually deceived, there is no threat to the enemy; for Satan has only to keep us in bondage efficiently in one way (usually: pride, arrogance, fleshly insecurities, sexual immorality, and religiosity), to eliminate us as a threat; as those who are dead spiritually hold no spiritual significance! Christians remain diligent to don the armor and step out upon the battlefield daily, for we know our servitude unto God's righteousness makes us a threat to the enemy, and the attacks are certain to come; thus we remain clothed appropriately!²⁶⁴¹ Christians also know that although we must fight in the battle, the battle belongs to the Lord; thus we must maintain focus upon our King so that He may lead us to victory! Defeat in the flesh, or victory spiritually by faith; most believers maintain the former, while Christians are upheld in the latter!

Truth for actual believers—the one true God indwells us; the one true God who abounds with lovingkindness, mercy, strength and grace! If we would maintain actual realization of this fact, and receive the blessing of His presence, we would not continually look for fulfillment and purpose elsewhere. Most believers look to the secular world in attempts to find purpose, because they either do not actually have a relationship with God (as they are deceived), or they fall prey constantly to the influence of the enemy who renders distractions leading to unfruitful secular deeds. We are complete in Christ Jesus our Lord; nowhere else can the purpose of our existence be found and fulfilled! The truth remains, we must be divinely “drawn” by God to come to the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ), and we must be within the authority (divinity and glory) of Christ in order to be known by God as His legitimate children; for all others are illegitimate children who remain within the religious deceptions of the evil one (Satan)! This fact is proven as those who worship (in any way) foundational to the darkness of deception, are worshipping Satan through the darkness of

²⁶⁴¹ Romans 13:1-14; Ephesians 4:17-32; 6:10-20; Colossians 3:5-17; 1 Thessalonians 5:1-11.

his deceptive religious schemes; for God is worshipped solely in spirit and in truth, or He is not actually worshipped at all! Being within the reality of God and the reality of the Christ is everything; for being aloof holds us to eternal judgment and torment!

EITHER / OR

We can either continue to follow other human beings; or we can follow the Lord who seeks to lead each of us to salvation “personally.” We can either go with the status quo of humanity continuing to walk in darkness; or we can come out into the light of truth and have fellowship with the Lord. We can either count success by foolish worldly standards (carnality); or we can walk victoriously by faith. We can either go out onto tangents with the many away from the Holy Spirit’s leadership; or we can allow Him to conform us to the image of Christ. We can either “get over ourselves” and learn to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord as by His expert leadership and tutelage; or we can remain in bondage to “self” and thus suffer continual spiritual defeat. We can either continue to seek our rewards on this earth, and thus lose our rewards in God’s kingdom; or we can serve the Lord, and store for ourselves treasures in heaven (our actual home). We can either continue to look to others for answers to our purpose in life; or we can humbly submit to the Lord who will guide us to our purpose. We can either remain complacent to maintain a weak faith by failing to read the Scriptures and fellowship with the Lord; or we can make the time to study the Gospel and fellowship with the Lord, thereby allowing the power of the Word and guidance of God to lead us to “abide” in both.²⁶⁴² We can either study and pray with devotional diligence and receive the Gospel truth implanted into our spirit by the Lord; or we can continue within complacency and ignorance and receive deception and downfall. The choice rests with each of us; for no human leadership in the world can make this decision for us, nor lead us upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness; upon which the Lord leads His legitimate children personally. It is time to enter into the intimate, intricate, grace abounding relationship God has chosen for each of us; **NOW IS THE TIME!**²⁶⁴³

²⁶⁴² Hebrews 4:1-16; 2 Timothy 2:1-3:17; cf. John 8:31-36; 14:1-16:15, specific 15:1-17.

²⁶⁴³ 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

Heed This Warning: Only the Lord God our Creator can render to us the specifics of His purpose for our individual lives. We must never allow other human beings to specify or insist upon our purpose, for all such insistence is in accordance to their carnal and foolish volition! People following and listening to other people, regarding spiritual matters, has led to multitudes being led astray for generations; this would not happen *if* individuals would humbly submit to and wait devotionally so as to receive the Lord's blessings! It is the Lord (and the Lord alone) whom: anoints, teaches, nurtures, enlightens, inspires, brings forth spiritual growth, and guides righteously and masterfully; it is the Lord God of all creation we are to love, worship, follow, and serve in a disciplined, devotional, and spiritual context!²⁶⁴⁴ No exceptions!

Within the current-day church (Laodicea—Revelation 3:14-22) the reality of God's divine work is neither taught nor emphasized! The reality of the Lord's indwelling is denied and or rejected; which is proven by the fact that Scripture imperatives are neither taught nor obeyed! The Holy Spirit convicts the world concerning sin, righteousness, and judgment; yet within the practiced behavior of both church congregations and congregational parishioners who maintain walking in the darkness of deception, what evidence is there of the Holy Spirit's convictions! Multitudes are truly completely separate from the spiritual "reality of God," the spiritual "reality of the Christ," and the spiritual convictions of the Holy Spirit; yet this remains un-noticed, as Satan's schemes involving religious endeavor truly deceives the whole world, with the exception of the remnant called and chosen of God!

²⁶⁴⁴ Matthew 23:1-36; John 1:1-18; 1 Corinthians 2:1-3:23.

CHAPTER ELEVEN
**TRUTH AND THE
SPIRITUAL RELATIONAL REALITY**

Systematic Investigation, Aligning Distinct Associations

**The Imperatives Regarding Salvation and the
Spiritual Relational Reality**

1. Righteousness and fruition of God; which is **God at work** (John 6:37-48, 65; 14:6)!
2. Faith (Hebrews 11:6).
3. Truth (John 14:6; 17:17-19; 2 Corinthians 13:1-10).
4. Discipline (Hebrews 12:4-11).
5. Selfless devotional diligence (2 Peter 1:2-11).
6. Knowledge (Ephesians 1:3-23).

Scripture Reference Key Note: Although throughout the book large groups of Scripture verses have been listed, so as to evidence the truth of Scripture pertaining to specifics; and this also to demonstrate the subject matter to be in context to Scripture specifics, not vice versa; henceforth within this chapter (for the most part) only precise specific verses will be listed, so as to present precisely the Gospel truth regarding the reality of the spiritual relationship and the associated fruition! This holds an imperative regarding the—**TRUTH AND THE SPIRITUAL RELATIONAL REALITY**; for far too many deceptions have gone forth throughout the generations, so as to appease and deceive according to carnal human whims and desires, and the schemes of Satan; which are aloof the work and reality of God! As God and salvation (respectively) are the two highest priorities now (corporeity; mortal existence) and for all eternity (spirituality), and no lie is of the truth; the pure truth must be presented to fend off the guile of religion and human foolishness which has and continues to lead multitudes astray!

Additional Key Notes: Truth, righteous discipline, and knowledge being three imperatives of true salvation in the Lord, mandates diligence in seeking of the truth; for no one will be saved through or by ignorance or delusive endeavor! In addition, in many parts of the book, mention regarding “self” has been rendered; with several distinctions of the spiritual detriment caused by “self” being of mention; therefore, in this chapter an aligning of Scripture will show and explain the harshness and dangers of “self” in a more concise way, so as to emphasize the imperative that “self” (wretched nature of human volition and behavior) must be volitionally and devotionally denied (intentionally abandoned), lest our physical aspects of existence squander or outright destroy our spiritual potential which is found solely in the Lord!

In addition, the transition from living according to the physical aspects of our existence (corporeality), to living for and being led by God within the spiritual aspect of our existence is extremely difficult initially; for with the exception of John the Baptist who was indwelt by the Holy Spirit prior to his birth, all humans being born of the world in the flesh, must learn from the Lord how to exist in the Spirit (walk by faith; one’s spirit obediently submissive to the leadership of the Holy Spirit). Because two distinct realms exist (physical / spiritual), attempts will be forthcoming to explain the reality of how through spiritual diligent seeking which allows approach to the threshold of the spiritual realm (where God is found), individuals led by the divine and masterful work of God can cross the threshold to enter the spiritual realm, to actually walk with God by faith in accordance to the kind intention of God’s will. It is in the spiritual realm where God is found, that actual fellowship with God occurs; nothing of the flesh, including “self” is allowed to enter the spiritual realm at any time!

Throughout the Scriptures, the reality can be witnessed that without the presence of God, or His godly (devoted) servants, individuals and groups of individuals tend to go astray; quickly returning to the ways of the world, and living for the flesh! The measure of faith which God graciously gave to all human beings, has two purposes; for the measure of faith activates the spiritual aspect of our existence, and allows the righteous potential to: submit to, know, love, worship, and walk with the Lord our Creator; while also allowing the Lord God to know, adopt, nurture, strengthen, mercifully embrace, and lead us in His righteousness; *if* and only *if* we through understanding within relational purpose

come to seek and realize the reality of God, thereby seeking Him spiritually with: sincerity, gratitude, reverence, and devotion.²⁶⁴⁵ This does not occur according to any religious standard; although each of us should examine, judge, and test ourselves rightly pertaining to motive (carnal or spiritual; selfish or selfless; insincere or devotional).²⁶⁴⁶

Personal Note: During the time of antiquity regarding the Israelites, there was but a remnant within the nation who refused to compromise; the reason for this being that the remnant was individually devotional unto God; whereas the multitudes were not! The reality of this can be witnessed within the plight of Elijah, when Jezebel sought to have his life taken from Him; for although there were a few million individuals within the nation at that time, yet only seven thousand remained devotionally without compromise.²⁶⁴⁷ In the Garden of Eden, the Lord had supplied Adam and Eve with much delicious sustenance to enjoy, within only one rule to be upheld; abstinence from eating from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.²⁶⁴⁸ What was the outcome? Although Eve sinned in ignorance due to Satan's having deceived her, Adam quite to the contrary sinned intentionally!²⁶⁴⁹ Had both Adam and Eve been sincerely devotional unto God, then they both would have listened precisely to God's instruction, and remained obedient no matter the extent of the temptation, or deception (regarding Eve). The point to be made by this personal note is that without personal sincere devotion unto the Lord, we tend to follow the desires of our flesh, or seek to follow the status quo of the many; even into delusive behavior and teachings! Although multitudes claim to know and love God, the truth regarding their devotion or lack thereof can be witnessed by their "fruits"; for true devotion leads to humility and obedience, whereas insincerity within supposed devotion, just like adherence unto religiosity, are of no value against fleshly indulgence!²⁶⁵⁰ If we are truly appreciative unto the Lord for whom He is and the many spiritual blessings He is willing to bestow upon us, then we will pay heed to His instructions and commandments;

²⁶⁴⁵ Psalm 14:1-3; Acts 17:24-28.

²⁶⁴⁶ 2 Chronicles 30:17-20.

²⁶⁴⁷ 1 Kings 19:1-18; cf. Romans 11:1-10.

²⁶⁴⁸ Genesis 2:9-17.

²⁶⁴⁹ Genesis 3:1-7; cf. 2 Timothy 2:13, 14.

²⁶⁵⁰ Colossians 2:20-23; Hebrews 5:8-10.

without the compromise of which multitudes are blatantly guilty! During the time of antiquity when the imperative of “faith” had not yet been revealed, the faith of the devotional was divinely actuated by God; this due the fact that the Lord searches the hearts and minds of everyone, and blesses those within whom He witnesses “selfless” purity for devotion.²⁶⁵¹ This reality has never changed, for the divine work of God (drawing process) is yet upon those within whom is found purity of motive and devotional seeking of “truth”; whereas His blessing are not upon those whose superficiality is witnessed, along with their delusive behavior. *If* those around us cannot witness the reality of God in our existence by our Christian character and demeanor (walking in truth), then what is witnessed places opposition to the divine work of God; which benefits no one!

In accordance to the measure of faith given to each by God, something or someone will be sought as a foundation within which “faith” can be placed. Human children and adolescents have a greater potential to place their faith in God, *if* their parents taught them the admonitions of God; and especially *if* the parents exemplified the presence of God in them by their devotional submission and obedience, which is proven only when they are effectual doers of the Word by the grace of God.²⁶⁵² *If* parents of children or adolescents do not raise their offspring according to the admonitions of God, as they do not know or follow God themselves, the children or adolescents tend to witness and mimic the someone or something of which their parents have placed their faith and focus; all of which will generally be of carnality (fleshly and/or secular), and therefore void of any actual spiritual possibility. All human beings having a notion of the reality of God by the measure of faith given them, and by the beauty and masterful design of creation, have the possibility within them to seek the reality of God through conversations, church attendance, or study of the Bible.²⁶⁵³ Seeking the reality of God through church attendance and through conversations can be extremely dangerous, *if* within the situation the sound doctrine of the Bible is not followed or proclaimed!²⁶⁵⁴ *If* the individual’s motives are of selfless sincerity to discover God personally, they through personal

²⁶⁵¹ Galatians 3:1-29.

²⁶⁵² James 1:22-25.

²⁶⁵³ Romans 1:20; cf. Acts 17:24-28.

²⁶⁵⁴ 1 Timothy 4:6-11; 2 Timothy 4:3, 4.

spiritual diligent endeavor can approach the threshold of the spiritual reality; which is the threshold of the spiritual realm where God is found, yet of personal accord or endeavor cannot cross the threshold, as crossing the threshold into the spiritual reality is solely by the gracious divine work of God. Any attempts to discover God in accordance to selfish motive or desire, will not achieve approach to the threshold; for any attempts by carnality will never succeed, this including physical realm religiosity (elemental principles of the world)!²⁶⁵⁵ Any or all human endeavors within selfless seeking of God are limited to approaching the threshold of the spiritual realm; for actual knowledge of the reality of God is solely foundational to the divine work of God and glory of Christ!²⁶⁵⁶

Being drawn by the Father to know the Son is a divine work of God's righteousness; which is accordant to His grace! The blessings rendered by God in accordance to His grace (unmerited favor) are solely contingent upon the mercy, lovingkindness, and righteousness of God; therefore, it is only by devotional humble acquiescence that the blessings can be received, as "self" (carnal volition) holds neither precedence nor purpose within the kind intention of God's good, acceptable and perfect will! The reality of God's blessings both rendered and received is thus foundational to the Lord's love (unconditional, selfless, sacrificial), both rendered and received; this being the reason why believers must love God first and foremost, as God's love can never be brought into question, as it is a very part of God's perfect nature! The reality of God's divine work within human individuals is fully foundational to the Lord; for He is either accepted spiritually for the reality of whom He is (Lord of lords with full authority, God of all creation), or He is never actually accepted; for within the wretchedness of carnal "self," understanding regarding the reality of God and of His divine work will never occur! The truth regarding this matter is quite simple; the divine work of God is absolutely righteous (right doing for right reason without exception; perfect); whereas intervening by the flesh ("self") which is not capable of actual righteousness (only God is righteous) can only mimic the beauty of a spiritual reality because of its imperfections (mimicked right thing for wrong reason; unrighteousness)!²⁶⁵⁷ The reality of this fact is

²⁶⁵⁵ Matthew 10:37-40; cf. Galatians 4:3-11; Colossians 2:8-10, 20-23; Hebrews 5:12-6:3.

²⁶⁵⁶ John 6:44, 45; 14:6, 7; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

realized only within the spiritual relational reality; for in Christ we obtain clear spiritual sight (discernment; ability to appraise), as we literally become capable of the righteousness of God in Christ, as the Lord is allowed and able to work within the divine righteousness of which He alone is capable!²⁶⁵⁸ The spiritual relational reality is all about God; our blessings come by way of our involvement by the grace of God, as instruments of His righteousness, according to the kind intention of His good, acceptable and perfect will! Any thoughts or attempts aloof this reality are actions of unrighteousness, as through “self” we seek credibility within the beauty of God’s reality, and the divine work of God for which no assistance can be rendered!²⁶⁵⁹ Within love for God first and foremost; which is only possible because He first loved us, we spiritually with devotional and humble acquiesce surrender unto the spiritual reality of God within the spiritual relational reality, or not; for pertaining to God, only spirituality and truth of reality is acceptable within God’s righteousness; therefore, the flesh (“self”) must remain totally aloof the relationship, as carnality being in opposition to God creates only confusion, irrelevance, irreverence (lack of respect), and enmity, while allowing the darkness of deception and fantasy to coerce! Failure is primarily because of double-mindedness, by attempts to intermix flesh and spirit which are opposed to each other; as we foolishly believe a matter of “self-importance” necessary within the spiritual relational reality; although nothing is further from the truth! Our corporeal bodies have only one righteous purpose, to be presented unto God as holy and living sacrifices which are acceptable to God; for this is actually a spiritual service of our worship!²⁶⁶⁰

Although many believe they can draw or win other human beings to know Jesus, this is completely incorrect; for although we can speak of the Lord Jesus (God) to others, and make proclamation of Gospel truth (prophecy; tell forth; not eschatology), there cannot and will not be a righteous effect through endeavors of “self,” but rather only by the fruition (work) of God!²⁶⁶¹ The primary spiritually detrimental aspect of our corporeal existence is “self” (carnal centered volition) from which

²⁶⁵⁷ Romans 10:1-4.

²⁶⁵⁸ Romans 1:16, 17; 3:1-6, 21-31; 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 2 Corinthians 3:5-18; 5:14-21.

²⁶⁵⁹ Ephesians 1:18-23; 4:4-6, 14-16; 1 John 2:27.

²⁶⁶⁰ Romans 12:1-3; cf. Colossians 1:16-23.

²⁶⁶¹ John 6:44; 16:13-15; Ephesians 4:14-16; example—1 Corinthians 9:19-24.

comes the boastful and arrogant pride of life and involvement with the world; which are in opposition to God!²⁶⁶² Human pride being foundational to the flesh and the world, in addition to the lust of the flesh (pleasure desire), and the lust of the eyes (wanton desire), is easily enticed and influenced by the ruler of the world (Satan; the Great Deceiver), and his followers (demons; humans held captive to do Satan's will).²⁶⁶³ Because Satan is the ruler of this world by the authority of God, because of the initial sin of Adam in the Garden of Eden, he can and will utilize every available aspect of the flesh and of the world as a means of enslavement to deception, away from any spiritual reality!²⁶⁶⁴ The personal means of bondage of which Satan has no need to cause entrapment is foolish adolescent pride, which can remain active throughout a corporeal existence; for it is the foundation of: arrogance, stubbornness, rebellion, contempt, idolatry, haughtiness, and self-importance; all of which cause opposition to God, and therefore opposition to the spiritual potential of our existence (spiritual relational reality led by God)!²⁶⁶⁵ This being a matter of fact demonstrates the obscurity pride causes to the light of truth, thereby causing enmity with God; for as a spiritual reality is destroyed, all that remains within which to falsely hope is physical realm religion (worldly beliefs within the flesh).²⁶⁶⁶ The only "religion" designated by God being the Law (Levitical), ended with the coming of the Messiah; therefore, as salvation is no longer contingent upon physical realm religion, but rather upon a spiritual reality foundational to "faith," the obscurity caused by stubborn pride eliminates the possibility for salvation by grace through faith!²⁶⁶⁷ When the supposed relationship with God has never actually begun, all continuance aloof the reality is foundational to physical realm emotions; therefore, emotionalism which misleads away from any spiritual reality; as within the spiritual relational reality, God's authority and leadership must be constantly followed and obeyed!²⁶⁶⁸ So what then is the truth of mention regarding "pride"; we can seek God through "religion" (any) which causes enmity, or we can

²⁶⁶² Romans 8:5-8, 12-14; Galatians 5:17; James 4:3-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

²⁶⁶³ ref. John 14:30, 31; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 2 Corinthians 11:2-4, 12-15.

²⁶⁶⁴ Galatians 6:3; James 1:26, 27; Revelation 12:9.

²⁶⁶⁵ James 4:3-10; Colossians 3:5.

²⁶⁶⁶ Ephesians 2:11-16.

²⁶⁶⁷ Galatians 3:19-26.

²⁶⁶⁸ Proverbs 3:5, 6; 4:23-27; Hebrews 5:8-10.

seek a relationship with Jesus without being drawn to the relationship by God, because of selfish ambition and emotionalism foundational to “carnal pride” which causes opposition; or we can practice denial of “self” which is the foundation of the obscuring pride, so as to have the potential of being drawn by God to the spiritual relational reality as by humble acquiescence!

When God draws an individual to come to Jesus within a personal saving relationship, He does so divinely; for the necessity of: knowledge, humility and submission are required to confess—“Jesus as Lord”; thus the imperative of knowledge, as we must know who it is to which we must humbly submit!²⁶⁶⁹ God works this reality within the individual to fruition, for even within reluctance the reality must occur for eternal salvation to exist!²⁶⁷⁰ This reality is in fact the beginning “good” work of God within an individual, with continuance of growth which is from God alone coming only during repetition of acknowledgement of God, humility and submission; for the Lord cannot and will not bless times of disobedience and double-mindedness (carnal mixed with spiritual), as the blessings of God according to the kind intention of His will are solely spiritual; not carnal!²⁶⁷¹ Simply stated, endeavors in the Lord cannot start within the spirit and find fruition in the flesh, any more than endeavors for the Lord can start within the flesh and find fruition in the spirit; for that which is of the flesh is fleshly (carnal) and that which is of the spirit is spiritual, the opposition between the two distinct natures of existence cannot be removed or relinquished by any form of endeavor, as there is no possible conjunction between the two! We can either be led spiritually by God in righteousness, by disciplined rejection of the flesh (denial of self) and submission to the Holy Spirit; or we can be led by the flesh which causes unrighteous denouement by rejection of the Lord within self-importance!

Although some may say that God shows favoritism by His divine choice, the truth remains that God has always known the motives and intentions of all human beings; therefore, although He desires that none should perish but that all would come to knowledge of the truth, He knows who would and who would not submit (acquiesce) through

²⁶⁶⁹ Romans 10:8-10.

²⁶⁷⁰ Hebrews 5:8-10, specific v. 9; Romans 8:14, 29, 30; cf. Matthew 25:32-34; Ephesians 1:3-6.

²⁶⁷¹ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; Ephesians 1:3-14; James 1:4-8; 4:3-10.

knowledge unto obedience of the faith; thus His righteousness prevails!²⁶⁷² Humbly submitting unto the authority of God during a righteous confession of faith—“Jesus as Lord,” is not an act of works; but rather this is the necessary action within reverence of an individual accepting what God has done for them in preparation to His righteous and divine drawing, thereby acknowledging and confessing the imperative of God’s masterful leadership (authority) unto righteousness; the confession being solely of selfless humility and acquiescence!²⁶⁷³ Multitudes know nothing of this reality, because they have never sought pure truth pertaining to God, with a selfless humble and contrite spirit!

In order to be drawn by God to know Jesus, a matter of knowledge is imperative! When God came in human form (Immanuel; God with us), He did so with complete rejection (emptied) of divine power; for this was necessary so that Jesus could be fully tempted, as we are tempted; yet living a sinless life so as to become the perfect sacrificial lamb and High Priest.²⁶⁷⁴ Although within theology it is believed and taught that Jesus was always empowered with divine righteousness and power, and was therefore incapable of sin; the reality remains that God must be found true, and the foolishness of humankind to hold delusion!²⁶⁷⁵ When individuals reject or have no understanding of the reality of God’s existence, they attempt to reason through human intellect and prowess, the actuality of God, which places fleshly endeavor as precedent to explain even the simplest revealed realities; which proves the blinding effects (obscurity; veil remains) of carnality regarding matters of a spiritual nature!²⁶⁷⁶ The knowledge which is necessary in order to be drawn by God to know (and be known by) Jesus, pertains to the facts that Jesus is God incarnate, has demonstrated in reality the possibility of a righteous devotional life, exemplified the success and victory which is possible when “faith” is placed solely upon the reality of God, and holds the full authority and power of God (after His baptism)! The spiritual relational reality is therefore contingent upon endeavor to accept the reality of God and what He has done for all humanity; this without attempts to carnally explain or reason the existence of God, as His existence is

²⁶⁷² 1 Timothy 2:3, 4.

²⁶⁷³ Romans 8:3-17, specific v. 14; 10:1-4.

²⁶⁷⁴ John 1:29; Philippians 2:5-11; 1 Peter 1:17-21; Hebrews 4:14, 15; 5:1-10.

²⁶⁷⁵ Romans 3:3, 4; Philippians 2:5-11, specific—vs. 6, 7.

²⁶⁷⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:12-16; cf. 1 Corinthians 2:12-16.

actualized by all that He has created.²⁶⁷⁷ Therefore, knowledge must be forthcoming to emphasize a devotional spiritual desire for God; this by endeavor which acknowledges the reality of God as Lord and Savior. To seek acceptance of certain aspects of Jesus for personal selfish reasons, without acceptance of the reality of God in the only begotten Son, which is accordant to the measure of faith and preparation which is from God unto the spiritual reality, is to accept only accordant to the desires of the flesh which is to seek God through carnality; which is a contradiction through opposition. Having someone say that simply accepting Jesus as Savior in order to be saved is futile and deceptive; for Jesus must be accepted for the reality of who He is (reality of the Christ; glory of Christ; Lord; God), or He is not actually accepted at all! The divine work of God in the salvation process (preparing and drawing) eliminates all vanity and deception; therefore, any variations or violations of Biblical standards regarding the matter, are devious, dubious, and deceptive attempts to coerce or mock God, which is of course foolish to the extreme; yet within false ministry in attempts to appease or seek financial gains, the enticed and influential work of the devil must be expected! Simply stated, a devotional seeking of the reality of God as Lord and Savior is accordant to the earnest seeking of the truth; for in the Lord is found the essence of truth, thus He must be sought in the light of reality! The fact of the reality of God incarnate (Jesus; Immanuel), although proven, is denied by false pulpit proclamations that acceptance of Jesus as Savior alone is sufficient for salvation; the power of this deception is demonstrated by the many who although believing themselves to be saved, maintain that Jesus was a man sent by God as Savior; which blatantly denies both the reality of God, the glory of Christ, and the spiritual relational reality!²⁶⁷⁸ Once again, when divinely prepared and drawn by God to adoption into the spiritual relational reality which saves, nurtures, and guides us, knowledge is imperative; for Jesus (Immanuel; translated means God with us) was not simply a man, but rather the begotten of God!²⁶⁷⁹ Within the theological doctrine of Christology, rhetoric comes forth of how Jesus was always begotten of the Father; this stated in many terms with many words; yet

²⁶⁷⁷ Romans 1:20-23.

²⁶⁷⁸ Isaiah 45:18-23; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

²⁶⁷⁹ Isaiah 7:14; Matthew 1:23; cf. John 1:14, 18; 3:16-21.

this is just another case of attempts to explain God (spiritual matters) through carnal intellect; although within the reality of God, Jesus being the “begotten” of God simply states that God has only taken one human form, which is the form (precise likeness) of Jesus, even so in the form of “the angel of the Lord” who appeared several times in the Old Testament, when God came in human form with full authority to fulfill specifics!²⁶⁸⁰ Although several angels of the Lord were sent forth by God in times of antiquity for fulfillment of righteous purpose, by examination of each occurrence, the specific of “the angel of the Lord” which was God incarnate can be determined. The point to be made here is that God is capable of all things righteous; therefore, God must be accepted for His reality, without attempts at explanation; for Jesus, the Father, and the Holy Spirit are in fact the one true God, Who must be believed, trusted, and obeyed by faith! This is explained in chapter two of the book. Because false religious doctrines and traditions of rote have replaced worship and servitude to God in spirit and in truth during the past sixty years, the Lord has been kept from His own church (congregational settings; with but few exceptions); the reason for this being that congregational settings no longer instruct pertaining to the reality of God which is accordant solely to sound Biblical doctrine, choosing instead to appease the wretchedness of the flesh through rhetoric which is aloof the guidance and spiritual instruction of the Lord; as within blatant carnality void of spiritual substance, simple occasional mention of Scripture and a simple concept of God has been deemed sufficient by the majority (multitudes)!²⁶⁸¹

When an individual decides for themselves that they want a Savior (only), and this they do with a motive and intention to continue prideful rebellious living for the flesh, while seeking to be saved from the wages of sin which is death, the beginning “good” work of God has never occurred in reality; for God is opposed to personal pride and selfish carnal motivations and intentions!²⁶⁸² *If* an individual cannot humbly submit even for a few moments for the Biblical righteous confession of faith to occur (Romans 10:8-10, v. 9—“Jesus as Lord”), the individual’s motives are obviously prideful and selfish in nature, and therefore based

²⁶⁸⁰ cf. Genesis 32:24-28; Judges 2:1-5; 13:3, 13-21.

²⁶⁸¹ 2 Corinthians 3:1-6; Colossians 2:9-23; 1 Timothy 4:1-11; Revelation 3:14-22.

²⁶⁸² Matthew 16:23-27; 1 Corinthians 4:4, 5; James 4:3-6.

in opposition!²⁶⁸³ When this action of prideful foolishness has occurred by the motive and intention of the individual, they may believe themselves to be saved; as many pulpit proclamations claim acceptance of Jesus as Savior (only) is acceptable to God for salvation; whereas, with only an un-Biblical confession of faith, the individual never receives the “seal of God” necessary for the relational reality to exist.²⁶⁸⁴ Seeking a relationship with Jesus without being drawn, and aloof knowledge (in ignorance), individuals place themselves in a state of delusion (with enticement from the demonic realm); for unknowingly they are unable to realize that God knows all things, even to the essence of motive and intent, and is never mocked or fooled; thus the individual will not be protected by God from further delusive endeavors, which allows the individual to remain captive to the deceptions and schemes of Satan!²⁶⁸⁵ In most cases, individuals will continue to be lost within religious emotional endeavor, always apart from a spiritual reality; this being the reason that their overall demeanor never changes, even after many years or a lifetime, because they delude themselves to believe the deception which was instigated and influenced by personal unrighteous prideful motives and intentions, with the additional possibility of false pulpit proclamations; which leads to a life of religious fantasy void of reality; thereby a life easily influenced from the demonic realm!²⁶⁸⁶ Because the only religion (Levitical Law) designated by God ceased with the coming of the Messiah, and without the spiritual relational reality there is no salvation; it is easily understandable that carnal (unrighteous mimic) religion is the primary means by which Satan: deceives, devours, and murders multitudes spiritually!²⁶⁸⁷ The truth remains, that the Christ (Jesus) is the New Testament manifest reality of the Old Testament Messiah of promise; for Messiah translated means “Christ”!²⁶⁸⁸ The reality of Satan’s scheme to spiritually murder human beings is easily evidenced and witnessed; for when multitudes practice attempts to worship God by physical realm (demonic) religious rituals, customs, philosophies, doctrines, ideologies, idealisms, and traditions of rote; the

²⁶⁸³ Galatians 5:16-26, specific v. 17.

²⁶⁸⁴ 2 Corinthians 1:20-22.

²⁶⁸⁵ Revelation 12:9.

²⁶⁸⁶ James 1:22-25.

²⁶⁸⁷ 1 Peter 5:8; John 8:42-44.

²⁶⁸⁸ John 1:41.

ignorance which leads them evidences spiritual depravity void of knowledge pertaining to God; for the spiritual reality foundational to the divinely activated measure of initial faith given to each by God can save for all eternity when divinely placed upon God; or the not divinely activated measure of faith can lead to spiritual death for all eternity, when placed upon Satan by worshipping in ignorance within the darkness of Satan's schemes (primarily religious deception)!²⁶⁸⁹ Many, although saved, who have fallen captive to returned practice of such religiosity after coming to knowledge of the truth, will no longer receive growth from God, nor will they be acceptable to God for righteous service; for the Lord God of truth and light cannot and will not utilize anyone who practices the darkness of religious deception!²⁶⁹⁰ Christians, who believe they are impervious to entrapment by Satan, maintain spiritual ignorance of a very powerful foe!²⁶⁹¹ There is no excuse for spiritual ignorance; for disciplined devotional diligence (reverent submission unto God) within factual righteous spiritual endeavor, brings forth great potential for the receiving of knowledge from God which displaces ignorance; the motivating factor regarding this reality is loving God more than anything, or anyone else! The spiritual reality of God and Christ which is realized in those "drawn" by God is a divine work of God's gracious righteous intention (kind intention of His will); to bypass this reality by carnal endeavor leads only to a delusive spiritual corporeal life, which holds no actual hope for salvation!

Although there are many false pulpit proclamations and many false statements by supposed ministers, Pastors, teachers, etc., not called of God; the ultimate culpability and accountability regarding the misled individual, will be upon the individual; for each of us are responsible to investigate, evidence, and walk according to Biblical truth; failure to do so being a matter of personal choice! The evidence of the Gospel emphasizes the seeking of truth; which is the personal preparation necessary in order to be "drawn" by God and the reason Jesus stated that He is the Way, and the "truth," and the life; for within selfless seeking of pure "truth," it is Jesus who is sought! For this reason, there can be no previous or current assumptive expectations foundational to seeking

²⁶⁸⁹ Isaiah 29:13-16; cf. Ezekiel 8:1-18; Galatians 4:4-11.

²⁶⁹⁰ Galatians 4:1-11; cf. Luke 9:62; 1 John 3:1-18; Hebrews 6:4-6.

²⁶⁹¹ 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, specific v. 12.

the Lord in the flesh (religiously); for absolute selfless submission unto the reality of pure truth must remain the foundation of “faith” endeavor, or submission unto the Lord of truth and light will not occur!

How many individuals claim and follow a religion of which they have little or no understanding? How many individuals actually investigate the origins and base doctrines of the religion they follow and proclaim? The world is full of ignorant believers who have little or no actual understanding as to who or what they believe; although there is no excuse for worship according to intentional ignorance! A great discrepancy which has existed throughout human existence remains the fact that most individuals have neither investigated the foundations of their beliefs, nor returned to the core of their beliefs, so as to begin again through investigation and historical accountability pertaining to what they believe; while within this renewal of endeavor seeking actual truth through selfless disciplined devotional diligence! It is perplexing to listen to people fight for the religion they profess, within foolish prideful arrogance; especially when they could have studied the Scriptures (if Christian based) and come to understanding of the falsehoods of the religion they have been following (which has gone astray of truth). For those of us who have studied the world’s religions, so as to reach all with the truth regarding God and salvation (actual Biblical Christianity), it is disturbing to listen to prideful stupidity, when the more individuals fight for their religion, the more their ignorance is evidenced by proclamation! Some of us have studied the world’s religions, for the purpose of having informed conversations with individuals from other religions; this we have done to reach out in love so as to proclaim truth. When I have been asked why I have studied their religion, when most “Christians” only seem interested in proclaiming what they believe while showing no concern otherwise, the answer is always the same—“being led by God in love, I hope the best for you!” The informed conversations and finally statements have many times come to harmonious fruition; as prior prayer and supplication for enlightenment in truth allows God to take the lead during all such conversational meetings, with the exception of when “pride” is allowed to obscure the light of truth by either party. This in addition to speaking to others at their level of understanding is the essence of becoming all things to all people; hopefully to reach them with higher understanding of the one true God, and the salvation which is found in Him alone! It must be remembered,

the Christ (Jesus) is the manifest reality of the Messiah of promise; no religion aside of the Levitical Law (Old Testament religion of God) has ever actually had an inevitable manifested reality of God! Prayer for God's masterful righteous leadership is imperative prior to all ministry endeavors, with special supplication for the individuals held captive by the darkness of false religions; for we must remember that powerful forces of evil are at work attempting to stop righteous fruition! It must always be remembered that Satan seeks to murder multitudes of human beings "spiritually"! Prayer is imperative prior to all ministry endeavors; for if the individual is not being divinely prepared by God for the purpose of receiving the "truth," they will not be receptive by God's preparation to humbly and submissively receive the light of truth; for the veil of obscurity must be removed by God for the purpose of clarity!²⁶⁹² The reality of salvation is truly a righteous and divine work of God, start to finish; therefore, anyone who seeks to minister without being led by God is easily led astray within prideful "self-importance" to become an instrument of carnality and Satan's guile!²⁶⁹³ Just as we cannot serve God and mammon (carnal prosperity), so neither can we serve God and "self"!

Personal Note: Please pray unto the Lord for truth prior to reading the following; for in truth many realizations will occur, yet solely by the personal illumination of truth which comes from the Lord alone. When we make supplication unto the Lord regarding understanding and knowledge, we must do so only after abandonment of all preconceptions and notions of former chosen beliefs; for the reality of God is completely separate from all: darkness, religiosity, carnality, ideologies, idealisms, deception, delusion, and deluding!²⁶⁹⁴ When we fail to empty ourselves of former beliefs and religious notions, we fail to openly receive the truth; for the truth of the reality of God is revealed to individuals by the Lord, which is hindered *if* attempts are made to make associations between former uncertain beliefs and notions, for at no time can the light of truth be compared or associated with the delusiveness of assumption and conjecture. It is for this reason that all who claim to be

²⁶⁹² 2 Corinthians 3:5-18.

²⁶⁹³ Matthew 6:20-24.

²⁶⁹⁴ cf. James 1:19-25.

Christians must diligently pray and study the Bible; for this endeavor may (*if* done correctly) awaken individuals from the slumber, ignorance, and falsehoods which lead astray! In addition, all study and prayer endeavors must be undisruptive, for distractions during alone time with the Lord during the endeavors destroys the implantation of the Gospel truth by the Lord; which leads only to carnal religious intellectualization, which is but foolishness regarding the spiritual reality!²⁶⁹⁵

The beauty of being drawn by the Father unto the spiritual relational reality (intimate spiritual relationship with Jesus), in accordance to God's divine work, stipulates by God's preparation, direct emphasis of the imperative to fully empty (abandon) oneself of all thoughts and desires; for all that is of the flesh must be placed aloof, in order to receive the spiritual blessings of the Lord! When Jesus emptied Himself so as to be tempted in all ways as we are, which He did according to God's good, acceptable, and perfect will, He emptied Himself of deity, so as to yet be without sin so that He would fulfill all righteousness for the sake of salvation; for He had to be perfect in both abstinence from sin and obedience.²⁶⁹⁶ Within the Lord's selfless actions for our sakes, He demonstrated a truth which is rarely witnessed, which He did so as to show us the reality of all that is necessary for the blessings of God to be rendered and received without hindrance. The lesson we are to learn by Jesus' example is that we must be willing to deny "self" (all personal motivations and desires) to the point (adamancy) of abandoning all pre-conceptions and religious thoughts; for the void which comes forth is the place within which God places truth and reality, from which comes the spiritual growth which is from God alone! *If* we refuse to deny "self" with adamancy (abandonment), we also refuse to cease seeking answers in and of "self"; which calluses our spirit and allows demonic influence to lead us in seeking unrighteousness foundational to self-importance, which stays us from being receptive to the righteousness of God! If the Lord Jesus was willing to empty Himself of all deity for our sakes; who are we to fail in emptying ourselves of carnal volition and motives so as to adore, revere, and submit unto the Lord! We must remember that the Lord is the God of all things (entire universe)! We must understand, to actually accept the reality of God in the person of Christ Jesus, is to

²⁶⁹⁵ Mark 7:20-23; 1 Corinthians 1:18-29; 3:18-20; cf. James 1:21-25.

²⁶⁹⁶ Philippians 2:5-11.

identify ourselves with the reality of God, with complete abandonment regarding identification with “self” within the relationship; for to truly identify ourselves with the reality of God is to denounce (inveigh) “self” so that He may fully manifest the reality of Him into our spirit, without the hindrances of our personal volition of self-importance; that He may be truly all in all!²⁶⁹⁷

When we refuse to deny “self” fully (total abandonment of carnal volition), hindrances remain because of the forms of carnality and religiosity which have been allowed to callous our spirits; causing a barrier which cannot be passed. *If* and when we realize our stupendous worth, beauty, and purpose to be solely by the un-merited favor (GRACE) of God, we are then prepared for the personal emptiness necessary for God to allow us to be instruments of His righteousness; which allows us the ability to be fully submissive unto the Lord so as to receive His spiritual blessings! When we are emptied of “self” by disciplined choice, we are then allowed (by faithful submission) to be filled with the reality of God; which is the essence blessing of God’s indwelling!²⁶⁹⁸ Wisdom, understanding, and knowledge from the Lord are true blessings; all of which being invited by loving God first and foremost—with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength!²⁶⁹⁹ When we refuse to denounce all forms of preconception, assumptions, conjecture, concept, and carnal goals when seeking truth; we deny the imperative of the reality of God, as the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge which is from God is absolutely pure and undefiled; therefore, without rejection of all that is impure, unrighteous, and of fleshly (carnal) desire and intent found within “self,” the Lord is not allowed to work within us, as we have not rejected the inappropriate so as to receive the blessing of God’s tutelage and strength! When we seek blessings from God, while attempting to hold to former religious instruction and precept, we seek God’s righteous blessings through the seeking of a righteousness of “self” which rejects the manifestation of God’s righteousness; for the flesh cannot accept or submit to the righteousness of God, as it (carnal self) is not capable of doing so!²⁷⁰⁰ No one can receive the righteousness of God, unless in love for God we fully deny “self”; for without denial of “self”

²⁶⁹⁷ Ephesians 1:3-23.

²⁶⁹⁸ Romans 8:9-14.

²⁶⁹⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40; cf. Psalm 11:10; Proverbs 1:7; 4:7-9; 9:10.

²⁷⁰⁰ Romans 10:1-4; cf. Romans 8:6-8.

the attributes of our sinful nature remain at the forefront of our existence, causing prideful opposition to God!²⁷⁰¹ It should be remembered, adolescent stubborn and rebellious pride is that which encases and clandestinely protects the insecurities of our flesh!

The narrow path of God's righteousness is the path which leads to salvation. Upon the narrow path of true salvation of which only a remnant (few) travels, we must be extremely careful to deny "self" habitually, lest we turn from the narrow and straight path of God's righteousness upon which we are taught, nurtured and led by the Lord; it is because of this truth, that we must work out our salvation with fear and trembling, for the reality remains that in true devotional love for God we must be extremely careful to remain susceptible to receive the blessings of God; which ceases to occur anytime we attempt to mix the darkness of personal carnal endeavor according to personal volition, with the light of truth and submissive obedience which is imperative *if* we are to be taught the reality of God's good, acceptable and perfect will!²⁷⁰² All of this is contingent upon placing and maintaining God first and foremost as our highest priority of existence; which does not happen when "self" is not denied, for within "self" we will always seek a sufficiency and adequacy within ourselves, although all sufficiency, adequacy, strength, and righteousness are blessings from God upon those who realize the immensity of the reality of God, and have denied all else as insufficient within the spiritual relational reality! A true devotional and disciplined relationship with God is all about God; our blessings come from realization and obedient submission unto this reality (of God)!

The blessings of God all work together to fill us with the wisdom, understanding, strength, and knowledge to fulfill spiritual purpose each day; for even tribulations, suffering and persecutions which are allowed by the Lord, fulfill spiritual purposes within our training by the Lord!²⁷⁰³ *If* this day I have denied the imperative of God's masterful leadership, then tomorrow I may be missing a key piece of blessing from God which is for the sake of someone else's salvation. Within this statement, it should be realized that God seeks to prepare us for situations which

²⁷⁰¹ James 4:3-10.

²⁷⁰² Romans 8:26-30; 12:1, 2; Ephesians 5:11-17; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:4-8; 4:7-18; 5:10-13; Philippians 1:6-11; 2:1-13.

²⁷⁰³ Romans 8:29-39; 2 Timothy 3:10-17; 2 Corinthians 12:5-10; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12.

come later, of which we have no current understanding or knowledge. If we miss days of training by the Lord, we also may miss opportunities which would have been presented to us by God for the sake of others; therefore, the reverent fear by which we maintain focus upon the Lord, when lacking, places us in a condition by which we are no longer capable of the sufficiency from God which leads to success and victory in ministry of truth! Within the Lord's training us both now and for all eternity, the many specifics of the training work together for maintained spiritual preparedness at all times; therefore, any specifics which were rejected by personal volition can leave gaps in the righteous spiritual preparedness which God has called us to maintain in accordance to devotional love for Him first and foremost. In love for God first and foremost, we seek constant righteous specifics which will be utilized during servitude now and later; whereas in waning love for God we miss out on many imperative necessary specifics which would have allowed others freedom in Christ (truth). The distinctions mentioned here are truthfully realistic; for within the spiritual relational reality our successes, deliverances, and victories are solely by the grace of God; whereas aloof the reality of God, through religiosity and carnality, successes, deliverances, and victories are sought through carnal endeavor, with outcome ending at the grave! Without denial of "self," being taken beyond the flesh into the spiritual reality by faith and trust solely in the Lord does not occur; for the Lord alone can take us into the spiritual reality, and bless us with the spiritual growth by which we learn, obey, and succeed! That which has been revealed here is absolutely true and correct, which is why we must maintain God as being of extreme importance, and others as being of greater importance to us than ourselves! To truly and devotionally love God, is to remain susceptible to the righteousness of God at all times, while also remaining humbly focused upon the Lord so as to not lose spiritual sight of the Lord's imperative leadership! It is virtually impossible to truly be identified with the Lord, while yet maintaining identification with "self"; for identification with the Lord is spiritual, pure, righteous and just, whereas identification with "self" remains unrighteous and carnal!²⁷⁰⁴ Although we all stumble and fall on occasion; within devotion for God, the imperative remains that we arise quickly and effectively by renewed focus and mindset upon the Lord, so as to

²⁷⁰⁴ Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:17-23.

continue moving forward to God's upward call, which is mandatory to our relationship with Christ Jesus!²⁷⁰⁵

Because the spiritual relational reality is the basis of our existence upon the foundation which is Christ Jesus, even so during our time of corporeality, the Lord must be followed one step at a time; during each moment in time, with fruition coming at a time of God's choosing, *if* and when our obedience does not waver due to personal ambitions and expectations! Although multitudes seek God's blessings; how many of the plethora actually fulfill the righteous duty to humbly and obediently submit, so as to receive the blessings!²⁷⁰⁶ Although multitudes seek God's blessings; how many of the plethora seek the blessings with wrong motives and intentions!²⁷⁰⁷ We must remember that a relationship with God is all about fulfillment of God's righteousness! I did not study world religions by choice, but rather by the influenced masterful inspiration of God! Many years ago during religious intellectual study of the Bible and its history, correlations and associations were discovered pertaining to the Christian religion (not Christianity) and other pagan religions. With absolute humility of heart and spirit, within torment and bitter tears of sorrow, I prayed to the Lord requesting the truth regarding the reality which is found solely in Him. It was at that time that the Lord adopted me and chose me to serve Him according to His anointing, to investigate and receive the truth which was sought; the actual truth sought being the reality of the immense depth of being led by God in the light; this reality being revealed by the Lord, although my request was only pertaining to the truth which negates all forms of deception, due to the torment in my spirit because of the many religious deceits which had been discovered.²⁷⁰⁸ The imperative of adoption unto humble submissiveness to God as legitimate children, is realized with revelation of truth; with continuance (spiritual growth) coming forth solely within not only continued seeking of the truth, but also an immovable acceptance and reception of the truth, so as to walk in truth henceforth without compromise, variation or excuse. It was that day that I was adopted by the Lord and anointed to become an instrument of truth; whereas prior, my relationship with God was only of a superficial (carnal) religious

²⁷⁰⁵ Philippians 3:12-14.

²⁷⁰⁶ Luke 6:46-49.

²⁷⁰⁷ James 4:3-6.

²⁷⁰⁸ 1 John 2:27.

endeavor, which without the revelation was not realized! It is a terrible reality that the Lord will not be found through religious endeavor; for “religion” is the foremost factor by which multitudes have sought after God! From experience, I can state that the Lord is discovered through selfless humility and submission, love and devotion, and accordingly through sincere appreciation for purity of truth! It is for this reason that “self” is so detrimental to all endeavors regarding God, for “self” seeks its own rewards through carnal motive, intent, and expectation; which evades and denies the blessing of the reality of God, as apart from Him we can do nothing which is righteous and/or good!²⁷⁰⁹

It is an unfortunate fact that multitudes believe themselves to be legitimate children of God; although the reality of their very demeanor and character indicates a matter of verisimilitude. The day of God’s anointing was the greatest day of my life; for the reality was not just the wonderment of salvation, but also the reality of God’s indwelling! The experience was solely spiritual; not emotional! The Lord led me to begin investigating the religions of the world (superficial; carnal mimic of spirituality) in answer to the prayer which earnestly and sincerely sought—the depths of truth regarding religious deceptions! I was unaware the reason the Lord was leading me in this endeavor; and as I do not ask God “why,” I followed His leadership without questioning the reason of the endeavor. It was not until later when the Lord began to open the door of ministry to individuals of other religions, that I realized the reason the Lord had rendered inspiration regarding the endeavor; which strengthened my faith within understanding that obedience to the Lord each day is for the purpose of the fruition of God which comes at times of God’s choosing, as the pieces to the overall puzzle come into view by the reality of God’s work, inspiration, and influence!

The reality is this, *if* we will follow the Lord one moment and step at a time, without question or doubt, the Lord’s will is fulfilled precisely; whereas, *if* we fail in our obedience at specific points, the Lord will not be able to use us at later times within specifics which were avoided; for we have denied the imperative of “God at work” because “self” has caused hindrance which has ramifications! The reality is therefore this, the Lord must be followed each moment of each day completely aloof any and all aspects of “self” *if* duties and responsibilities within the

²⁷⁰⁹ Romans 3:9-20; 10:1-4; emphasized—Psalms 14:1-3; 53:1-6.

spiritual relational reality are to be fulfilled without hindrance! Inasmuch as the spiritual relational reality is truly the precise purpose of our existence, and within the precision of God we are blessed according to the kind intention of His will, “self” must never be allowed to cause hindrance to the beauty and wonderment of God within disciplined obedience to the reality of the relationship! Praise God for His tender mercies, everlasting lovingkindness, inspirations, influence, and grace!

It must be understood; the Lord seeks to have an in-depth relationship with everyone; which is why “self” must be denied, so we may be dealt with by God as His “selfless” legitimate adopted children! Just as first comes an earthy existence, and then the heavenly; so also is the reality that the earthy cannot become the heavenly without the divine righteous work of God!²⁷¹⁰ We cannot go beyond that which is of the flesh and world without the divine spiritual work of God; therefore within seeking of the truth we must devotionally submit to the righteous work of God within our spirit, *if* we are to ever begin and continue the journey which is pertaining to His kingdom! Disciplined submissive focus upon the Lord (author and perfecter of faith) is imperative to this righteous endeavor!²⁷¹¹ Those held captive by the superficiality of religiosity will never begin or continue the journey according to the kind intention of God’s will, unless in seeking of truth and reality we denounce all previous practices and carnal endeavors so as to humbly acquiesce unto the Lord, for the spiritual reality to begin and continue; therefore, all volition of “self” must cease entirely, lest the journey be hindered by the flesh and enticements of Satan who is allowed to entice and influence by all that is of the world! The flesh fits quite well into the ways of the world, of which Satan is quite aware; yet the legitimate children of God are led spiritually, and therefore remain aloof the ways of the world for the sake of the spiritual relational reality!²⁷¹² The simple fact remains that answers pertaining to everything are found in the Lord, just as purpose and fulfillment of purpose is led by the Lord; therefore, please submit unto the Lord for revelation of the truth, with unwavering willingness (devotional surrender) and submission to accept and walk within the truth henceforth! Any continued denial or rejection

²⁷¹⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:45-50.

²⁷¹¹ Hebrews 12:1-11.

²⁷¹² 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 10:3-6; Colossians 2:20-23; James 4:7-10; Hebrews 11:6-10, 13-16.

of truth is destructive within a relationship with God; as continuance of practiced religious delusive traditions of rote are extremely detrimental! It absolutely requires the graceful and abounding work of God to go beyond all that is of a carnal corporeal life unto the righteousness of the spiritual relational reality; which is the wonderment of actual Christianity, within which very few journey! It is absolutely possible to have an abundant corporeal life when being led by the Lord, as His masterful righteous leadership allows the discernment and spiritual appraisal necessary to witness and realize one's full spiritual potential in the Lord; while living in the flesh, although not for the flesh! The point of disciplined decision remains a willingness to relinquish one's right to oneself, so as to gain the possibilities which are realized and fulfilled within a righteous spiritual relationship with God! The spiritual relational reality with Jesus is not just an aspect of life; rather it is the imperative basis and foundation of existence, according to the kind intention of God's good, acceptable and perfect will!²⁷¹³

The superficiality which remains prevalent within religious endeavor absolutely destroys the beauty of God's ability to work; which is the message I must emphasize repeatedly; for the wonderment of God cannot be realized until human beings humbly submit unto the reality of God, which will never happen as long as the wretchedness of "self" is allowed to obscure the reality of God who holds full authority! The beauty and wonderment of the spiritual relational reality is available to all who will selflessly acquiesce unto the Lord during the seeking of "truth"; which is truly a matter of the utmost humility and devotion! Praise God for His grace upon each of us; the question remains are we going to love Him first and foremost, and obediently receive His grace accordingly in order to be taken to the spiritual reality, or will we remain submissive to "self" which always denies the imperative of God's grace by taking it for granted! There is absolutely nothing more wonderful than to have the Lord lead us in truth for the sake of salvation for all; for the truth of the entire universe, as concerns us while in our corporeal form, is that God's good, acceptable and perfect will be fulfilled, and that we as His legitimate children do our part by fulfillment of duties and responsibilities according to the kind intention of His will! Please

²⁷¹³ Mark 3:32-35; John 1:11-13; Romans 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; Ephesians 5:6-17;
1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

consider allowing God to be all in all in your existence; for there is no other blessing or reality which will last for all eternity!²⁷¹⁴ The journey of purposeful spiritual existence starts with humble seeking of truth; therefore, with sincerity and unwavering motivation to love the Lord, please pray with supplication for revelation of truth, so the journey may begin and continue!²⁷¹⁵ Please remember, few are those who journey upon the narrow path of God's righteousness which leads to the reality of salvation; for the wiles, schemes, and enticements of Satan are designed to keep human beings from the reality of the spiritual relationship, which saves us and within which the Lord leads! I praise God that He is found according to His drawing us within the light of truth, as I also praise Him that individuals who truly love Him are empowered to come out of the deceptions of religion; with supplication unto to the Lord that the world and its ways (elemental principles) would never again take those made free by the Lord captive once again to religious guile! Returning to that which once was (religiosity) causes nothing by harm to the beauty of the spiritual relational reality; this being the reason why our faith, hope, trust and devotion must remain in and upon the Lord; for all else is distractive and detrimental! The indwelling of God (Holy Spirit) edifies us to abide in the Lord with a devotional and obedient reality, which will never be realized or achieved through any carnal endeavor; for truly the spiritual relational reality is begun and accomplished by the Lord unto eternal fruition!

The reality of actual Christianity (spiritual relational reality) is that God empties an individual of all that is of the flesh (self; personal desires, motivations, expectations, and selfish volition), momentarily during preparation (being drawn) and the actual action of the Biblically righteous confession of faith!²⁷¹⁶ From the point of adoption by the Lord into His family of legitimate children, the Lord enables the potential of our spiritual existence to take righteous form; this enabling the individual the blessing of following the Lord further unto fulfillment of spiritual purpose, which occurs by the spiritual growth which is from God alone! With each passing day, when "self" is denied (abandoned) so as to follow God's masterful leadership upon the narrow path of His righteousness,

²⁷¹⁴ 2 Timothy 4:7, 8; James 1:7-12.

²⁷¹⁵ John 14:6; cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

²⁷¹⁶ Romans 10:8-10, specific v. 9; John 6:44, 45; 14:6, 7.

all that is of the flesh is forced to diminish in accordance to the spiritual growth which comes forth from the Lord; as the individual submits unto God, which forces diminishment of all the wanton desires and lusts of the flesh which are in accordance to carnal volition.²⁷¹⁷ By the strength of God's might which forces the changing of thought leading to righteous word and deed through acts of righteous submissive obedience to God, the diminishment of carnal volition continues as the flesh is taken captive to obedience; which is contingent upon abounding devotion and discipline, for the imperatives of the spiritual relational reality are fulfilled in selfless love for the Lord! The reality is therefore that the Lord leads us forth in spirit, which blesses us with deliverance, successes, and victory over all that is of the flesh, as the Lord allows us the strength to stop yielding to our "self" and grow by yielding to His good, acceptable and perfect will; which disrupts the domination over us which the flesh has caused! The key to continue successes and deliverance remains strict discipline to focus upon and yield unto the Lord God, and to no other; for the flesh shall not be master over us, unless we foolishly return to carnal domination by relaxed focus and obedient yielding! The primary key to righteous success and victory remains that the earth is not our home, but rather God's kingdom, which cannot be inherited by the flesh (perishable), for spirituality is the reality of which God seeks to train us; yet without denial of "self" and therefore denial of the flesh according to its lust, desires, expectations and motivations, the training of the Lord will not be received, as we refuse to deny the unrighteous so as to gain the righteous (imperishable)!²⁷¹⁸ Do not be deceived, the written word of God is imperative; for it is the means and basis by which we will all give account for our corporeal existence!²⁷¹⁹

The Essence of the Reality of God Explained (As Is Humanly Possible)

Personal Note: I apologize for speaking of myself in the writings of this book; for I am who I am solely by the grace of God.²⁷²⁰ The reason I have spoken of myself within the book, is to emphasize the

²⁷¹⁷ James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17; cf. Romans 13:8-14.

²⁷¹⁸ reiterated—1 Corinthians 15:49, 50; Matthew 6:19-34; 7:13-29; 16:24-26.

²⁷¹⁹ John 12:42-50, specific v. 48; 15:1-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12, specific vs. 6-8; Hebrews 5:8-14.

²⁷²⁰ 1 Corinthians 15:10; Philippians 1:21-24.

wonderment of the presence of God, and to refer to personal experience within discovery and coming to dwell within the spiritual relational reality which is all about God; rightfully so, as God is truly the originator (Creator) and fulfiller (Lord) of all creation, faith, and reality!²⁷²¹ Although I actually abhor speaking about myself, as apart from the Lord I am incapable of goodness or righteousness; the necessity of experience proclaimed remains important, so as to explain the reality of God in and of existence to be of the highest priority of our corporeality endeavors. We were truly created by God, for the purpose of a relationship and servitude with and for God; for this is the purpose of our existence!

Having not been raised to realize and experience the reality of a relationship with God, and thus never having included the reality as a basis of motive, intent, and existence, I remained without wisdom, understanding or knowledge; pertaining to God. Throughout my corporeal existence I had understanding of the imperative to know God, yet because of living for “self” never endeavored to come to the reality; although through circumstances throughout my life, the emphasis to know God was presented numerous times. Through the experience of loving a woman who was a Christian, and witnessing the relationship she had with God, while yet myself being void of the reality; I was motivated more so to seek God through the reading of the Gospel, for it is in the Gospel that God chose to reveal Himself to the human race, in a manner which emphasized the reality of Him in a way so that within our flesh, we could seek a more in-depth understanding to love and trust the Lord; which is something although realized in the reality of the relationship, can never be actually realized as long as the flesh (“self”) instigates distraction.

Seeking God through the intellectual pursuits of religiosity was an experience which brought me closer to understanding of the importance of God, yet somehow was lacking the actual reality of the presence of God. It was not until the day that through sorrow, God divinely allowed me to be fully emptied of all corporeal concerns except for the seeking of pure truth, that I began to realize the immensity of the reality of God; which was then confirmed when the Lord God indwelt me and through actual fellowship with Him blessed me with understanding of

²⁷²¹ Romans 1:16-23; 8:1-17; 12:1-3.

the spiritual relational reality, through His inspiration that I was to serve Him contingent upon the pure truth which He began to reveal! Although I had never even considered serving the Lord God, as prior I had believed only in living for “self” while having expectations of the importance of God, which was solely foundational to the foolishness of fleshly (carnal) endeavor (religious intellectual endeavor); the reality of the relationship was not even conceived of until the actual spiritual experience of the presence of God! That day was the greatest day of my life; for the Lord Himself had brought me beyond religious endeavor, pursuits, assumption, conjecture, and expectation; unto the beginning of the actual eternal reality.

PERSONAL NOTE OF PERSPECTIVE

I must begin this note by stating that it is very difficult to put into words, the beauty and goodness which come forth within personal revelation from the Lord! The best that I can hope to accomplish is to put forth my best effort, in hopes that others may experience the wonderment of God from within the spiritual relational reality! This difficulty with certainty was experienced by the Apostle John, when attempting to describe the things which must occur, found in the book of Revelation; for the reality of church history and the tribulation period were to be realized after John’s existence in corporeal form! The astounding immensity of revelation from the Lord, as well as actual fellowship with the Lord God of all creation is ineffable; thus we can only do our best when attempting to convey the reality! The grace of God, as well as His everlasting lovingkindness and tender mercies are truly sufficient within our corporeal existence; and until this is realized with devotional certainty from within the spiritual relational reality, the only potential before us remains: concept, conjecture, assumption, and mimic; of the spiritual reality within which the reality of God is realized as by reception of Him through an actuated measure of faith! Although human wisdom, understanding, and knowledge may lead endeavors; within knowledge that these things are but foolishness to God, we gain knowledge of the immensity of God, and beauty of purpose which is realized when the Lord is our focus; not the “specific”!²⁷²² The world and the things of the world should never become the object of our focus; for

²⁷²² Ecclesiastes 10:1-20; Isaiah 44:1-28; 1 Corinthians 1:18-25; 3:19-23.

righteous focus is reserved upon the Lord! Praise God that He is divinely patient, merciful, kind, and gracious!

What most individuals never realize is the immense and divine intentions of the Lord, in His creative design according to the kind intention of His good, acceptable and perfect will. When the Lord stated the reality of goodness within His creation of the earth, and later His making it habitable within many intricacies which would allow for many beautiful forms of life, and the specifics which would sustain the reality; the righteous intentions of the Lord were very much involved, which led to a great potential for human beings to live within the reality of both God's good, acceptable, and perfect will, and the astoundingly blessings within the kind intention of His will!²⁷²³ The reality of the goodness of the Lord is not only realized in His creation of the material aspects of His creation, but more so within the fact that the kind intention of His will pertaining to the creation of the heavens, earth and life, and the intricacies of habitability were prior to the actual creation! This reality points directly to the fact that God is in fact the essence of love; while also being the righteous and holy foundational basis of: light, truth, purity, goodness, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge! Although within the reality of the immensity of God, and the kind intention of His good, acceptable and perfect will, these truths are not only realized but also beholding the full purposeful potential of everyone created in His image (human beings; spiritual), the fact remains that we in failing to allow God to righteously activate our measure of faith by acceptance of the reality of the Christ (Lord Jesus; glory of Christ), we in our selfish pride have rejected the beauty and goodness of God's intentions by our refusal to deny "self" so as to allow God to lead us to live within the reality of the potential! The immensity of life (life indeed now and forever) is solely realized within the spiritual relational reality, which is divinely brought forth by the goodness of God's intentions; yet this reality is never brought to fruition, while we seek our own misguided (selfish) volition to take precedence over God's good, acceptable, and perfect will! All of this because of the stubborn and rebellious (adolescent) pride which leads us from within our sinful nature, when we fail to selflessly and devotionally acquiesce unto the reality of God for changes in righteousness; for God can only take us

²⁷²³ Genesis 1:1-2:15, goodness specific mention—1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31.

beyond the reality of our flesh, when we will obediently follow the beauty and goodness of the “reality of God,” which has always been the potential which God had intended even prior to the foundation (creation) of the heavens and earth!

Without actual fellowship with the Lord God, these truths can never be realized nor come to fruition; for only in the Lord can our actual purpose of existence exist and righteously proceed unto eternal fulfillment! Please consider—without denial of “self” the reality of fellowship with God never occurs within the life of individuals; for we must humbly and obediently follow the masterful leadership and standards of God unto fulfillment of righteous purpose, or the reality will never actually occur!²⁷²⁴ The “flesh” is opposed to the Spirit; which is a reality which must be reckoned with.²⁷²⁵ Is our corporeal existence and carnal volition really of such importance, so as to miss the immensity of God which can begin now, and be fully realized throughout eternity by the grace of God? Without revelation of these things from within the wonderment of actual fellowship with the Lord God of all creation, there can be no realization of the reality; but only the expectation of righteous judgment which will come upon the sons (and daughters) of disobedience! The ultimate disobedience is refusal to submit unto God, so that He may both will and work according to the kind intention of His will, which leads to our eternal salvation; for this is the only “unforgivable sin”!²⁷²⁶ The reality of God’s goodness is this, humbly submit to the reality of God through disciplined devotion and trust unto the One who is faithful (God), or live for “self” and thereby lose the beauty and goodness forever; for only those drawn and taught by God will be saved!²⁷²⁷ The ways of the flesh and world are diametrically opposed to the goodness of the reality of God; Satan knowing this multitudes to choose that which maintains opposition! God, or opposition to Him, is really the two primary choices of our existence!

The primary problem which is before us while in our corporeal bodies is the fact of our physical realm existence in mortal (physical) form; which comes first!²⁷²⁸ Because there is a diametric opposition

²⁷²⁴ Romans 8:1-17, specific vs. 14-17.

²⁷²⁵ Galatians 5:17.

²⁷²⁶ Matthew 12:31, 32.

²⁷²⁷ John 6:44-65; cf. 14:6, 7.

²⁷²⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:47-50.

between the physical and spiritual aspects of our existence, and because our beginnings are within the former, the difficulty to go beyond the former unto the latter involves divine actuation of our measure of faith by our divine Creator; or the transition can never actually occur, which is the reason why only those drawn and taught by God can actually come to the spiritual relational reality with the Christ (Lord Jesus; Christ)!²⁷²⁹ The reality of the spiritual relationship with the Christ (Lord Jesus) never occurs through avenues of physical realm religiosity; which is the reason that “religion” is a primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world; with exception of the few (remnant)! Although there has been throughout history every conceivable attempt to come to understanding and knowledge of the reality of God; without the actual divine work of God; all attempts fall far short of the reality, which leads to continued endeavors to attempt the spiritual reality through the opposing force which is the earthy! The truth of coming to the spiritual relational reality with God being only by the divine work of God, and the many attempts to avoid and bypass the imperative of God’s work, is the reason that only a remnant of the whole will actually be saved within the spiritual relational reality!

Because the earthy (physical form) comes first, and because of the quandary of the transition from the physical to the spiritual, the majority of human beings have been led astray during initial attempts to realize the truth of God; for the truth only comes to fruition by the divine work (drawing and teaching) of God, which is proven only within actual fellowship with God (taste of the heavenly gift)!²⁷³⁰ Within the perplexity of this situation, when aloof the relational proof, multitudes according to our physical nature (earthy; corporeal) seeks answers from: self, others, physics, mathematics, mammon, science, etc. Within endeavors of this nature (physical realm; earthy), focus is placed upon aspects of the created order; leading to a complete lack of focus and adoration upon and for the Creator (spiritual order), from whom comes all things: created, appropriate, righteous, good, and just. The reality of this is realized when multitudes upon the earth seek answers from physics, science and mathematics which are but aspects of God’s creation, rather than seeking answers regarding the truth from the Creator

²⁷²⁹ Galatians 5:17; resulting—2 Timothy 2:24-26; for information—John 1:41.

²⁷³⁰ Hebrews 6:4-9.

of all things. This is not to say that specifics of God's created order are not to be investigated, which allows understanding; but rather this is to say that our existence is not to be foundational to the creation but rather foundational to the spiritual relational reality with God; for God is the One who allows discoveries.²⁷³¹ When answers are sought through the "creation," rather than from the Creator; the reality remains that it is the creation which is adored, not the Creator!²⁷³² Sir Isaac Newton discovered modern advanced mathematics; yet from whom was Isaac Newton's intelligence and discoveries allowed? The point of all this is simply that through God's created order many investigative discoveries have been made possible; yet righteous focus should always remain upon the Creator, not the creation! It is because of misdirected focus, compounded with avoidance of the imperative of denial of "self," that multitudes upon the earth have progressed to the point that the "reality of God" is no longer sought, but rather increase and acknowledgement of human endeavor! When will human beings realize that this behavior is instigated and influenced by Satan and demons; for the purpose of spiritually murdering a plethora of multitudes!

Thank God that by the strength of His grace in accordance to the kind intention of His will, we may be righteously led forth by God beyond all that distracts and causes opposition, detriment, and spiritual destruction; for the reality is that we can choose selfless and humble obedience unto God and the standards set forth by God, or we can continue in our wretchedness of personal deluded volition! The decision rests with each of us! I chose God!

It is not until we are willing to go beyond the temporal unto training by the Lord to acceptance of the eternal, that we actually allow God to train us and take us (literally) to the spiritual reality; which is never even realized while living for the flesh ("self")! By the experiencing of the "reality of God," through actual intimate fellowship with Him, I realized that I could not maintain focus and intentions upon that which is of the temporal (corporeal life; things of the flesh and world), *if* I was to allow the Lord to lead my journey which placed full focus upon Him; for He leads us to become the instruments of His righteousness in Christ.²⁷³³

²⁷³¹ 1 Corinthians 3:1-15.

²⁷³² Romans 1:22-32.

²⁷³³ Romans 3:21-31; 8:29, 30; 10:1-4; 12:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Hebrews 12:1-3.

When mention in the Gospel emphasizes the righteousness of human individuals, the reality through the ability to spiritual appraise and discern becomes the truth that our righteousness is actually the righteousness of God, which only occurs when our existence is led and lived by God and for God; when we surrender by the gracious tutelage of God to realize the wretchedness of a life lived for “self”!²⁷³⁴ God is willing and quite capable of taking us beyond the flesh (carnal and secular volition and desires); which is exactly what occurs within God’s drawing and sanctifying us! Without a willingness to deny “self” so as to actually follow the Lord, the reality of God will never actually be realized; which is the reason the divine work (preparation during the drawing process) of God empties individuals of all carnality during a righteous confession of faith (Jesus as Lord); this being the reason for a taste of the “heavenly gift” (actual fellowship with God) during the drawing process!²⁷³⁵ The reality of being “drawn and taught” by God unto the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) is a completely edifying spiritual experience; not an emotional experience which is of the flesh! It is because of blatant unrighteous and selfish seeking of God as one’s Savior (only), with full intention to live for the flesh (“self”), that the deceptive practice of seeking Jesus as Savior alone, has replaced acceptance of Jesus as Lord; although the latter confession is the outcome of God’s divine work involved in drawing individuals into the spiritual relational reality which will save them! Adoring and worshipping the creation rather than the Creator, has serious spiritual ramifications, which ultimately leads to adoring and worshipping the Great Deceiver (Satan) through the delusive elementary things of the world; this leading to blatant wretched carnality with but a concept of God! Acceptance of Jesus as Savior alone is neither Biblical nor righteous; rather it is an action of unrighteousness, which occurs when individuals selfishly deny the “reality of God,” by denial of the imperative that the masterful work and leadership of God is necessary for salvation!²⁷³⁶

As I continued to receive spiritual growth from the Lord, and learned within the spiritual relational reality that existence is all about God, I continued to realize to a greater extent the detriment which is brought

²⁷³⁴ Romans 8:5-14.

²⁷³⁵ Matthew 16:24-27, specific vs. 24, 25; John 6:44, 45; 14:6, 7; Romans 10:8-10, specific v. 9.

²⁷³⁶ Romans 8:12-14.

forth and pronounced anytime “self” is allowed to lead; as well as realizing that the wretchedness of “self” would never cease, because of the unrighteousness of the flesh, and the evil instigations and influences from the demonic realm upon the flesh, which attempt unwavering leadership of human existence! Having experienced the reality of God through actual fellowship with Him, and having realized through experience the detriment caused by “self” as by the loss of fellowship with the Lord because of it; realization led to greater devotional humility and submission unto God, so as to fend off the loss of fellowship which was so devotionally and reverently sought, because of the absolute beauty and wonderment which is lived by the gracious spiritual experience of the presence of God. The Biblical truth remains, that without submission unto the authority of God, resistance of Satan’s schemes and intentions will not occur!²⁷³⁷ The beauty and wonderment of the presence of God became my highest priority of existence; for to live the reality is so very astounding that nothing is worth the loss of fulfilling purpose in the Lord! This did not happen overnight, but rather over the course of years, as each and every time I returned to something of the flesh or of this world, intimate spiritual fellowship with God was lost through forfeiture of the reality of God; according to disobedience which caused opposition to the spiritual (eternal) reality, because of thoughts and actions which foolishly grasped precedence because of temporal emphasis. After experiencing extreme loneliness due to the loss of fellowship with the Lord my God and King on many occasions; which is the essence of sheer stupidity on my part; the imperative of keeping God first and foremost in reverent devotion for Him became the highest priority, which motivated me to stop being stupid, complacent and disobedient, so that the fellowship which is imperative would no longer be jeopardized by continued foolish behavior; for the reality of God realized within actual fellowship with Him is far beyond any thought, expectation, or conception possible; for it is ineffable.²⁷³⁸

The beauty and wonderment of the reality of God which can be experienced by anyone, who will submit to the masterful leadership and authority of God, is the greatest blessing which can be experienced in our corporeal (mortal) existence! The reality of God is not experienced

²⁷³⁷ James 4:3-10.

²⁷³⁸ James 4:3-10.

within any endeavor which is apart from or aloof obedience to God; for the reality exists that all that is of the flesh and of the world (carnality) causes instant hindrance to the wonderment of the presence of God, because of opposition! Although the Lord will never leave or forsake His legitimate children; when He is grieved by our disobedience and opposition, the beauty and wonderment of fellowship with Him is withdrawn, as the Lord cannot and will not bless disobedience and/or opposition which occurs because of self-centered and self-important actions! I wish it possible to explain the beauty and wonderment of the presence of God realized through actual fellowship with Him, yet as it is too wonderful to explain (ineffable), I can only say that there is nothing whatsoever worth the loss of fellowship with the Lord, as to be separated from the presence of God because of carnal disobedience and/or opposition is too harsh to explain; for the absence of God's presence (fellowship) can only be understood by experience of the fellowship, and therefore the loss of it!

According to the kind intention of God's will and the rendering of His grace for fulfillment of it, the reality of God can be experienced; yet only through devotional disciplined love for God first and foremost, as any other motivation and/or intent falls far short of the reality necessary for the Lord to reveal Himself personally to individuals! Through my love for the Lord, as He first loved me; in accordance to His revelatory grace; the realization of the reality and presence of God has taken me far beyond all that I was, unto the reality of who I can be in Christ!²⁷³⁹ The beauty of this reality is available to all; yet never until an abandonment of "self" occurs, which will never happen until intentional denial of "self" is practiced in accordance to the motivations pertinent to the presence of God become an experience foundational to selfless love and disciplined devotion! When the Lord said that in order to actually follow Him, initial consideration to deny one's "self" should occur; this confirms the reality that the Lord is the source of eternal salvation for those who obey Him; which confirms the righteous confession of "Jesus as Lord"; for this confirms that there must be a submission unto the authority of Christ, primary to acceptance of His selfless sacrifice upon the Cross.²⁷⁴⁰ The reason that multitudes have

²⁷³⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

²⁷⁴⁰ Matthew 7:24, 25; Hebrews 5:8-10; Romans 10:8-10, specific v. 9.

failed throughout church history is because multitudes have never had notion or desire to submit unto the authority of Christ; this because multitudes would rather live carnally according to the flesh (“self”), rather than submitting unto the ultimate authority! Most individuals desire the blessings of God, yet only the few actually receive the blessings as by devotional: submission, loyalty, and devotion! It is only righteous therefore; that those who refuse to submit unto the authority of God should be kept from the intimate blessings; for *if* we cannot sincerely love the Lord, proven by the actions (fruits) associated, why should the Lord bless us when we maintain self-importance foundational to pride, arrogance, and idolatry of “self”!

The Lord’s masterful righteous intention and purpose for us is that we receive training for the eternal reality, which begins during our corporeal existence; *if* and when we realize and submit to His authority, which “self” will never allow when we continue to hold primary desires for those things which are temporal!²⁷⁴¹ “Self” holds us to everything which is within Satan’s jurisdictional control (earthy); therefore, if we seek to endeavor toward freedom in Christ, we must first deny personal volition (“self”), or the spiritual battles we face will be lost through narcissistic ignorance! In sincere love and reverence for God, we must submit unto God for the spiritual relational reality to exist and prosper unto increased spiritual growth! Refusal to acknowledge this is the reason that multitudes have never received changed lives in accordance to the spiritual growth which is from God alone! The reality of God’s spiritual blessings will never occur, until we through devotional and disciplined obedience surrender unto the reality of God and His good, acceptable, and perfect will; for the only way to go beyond that which is temporal unto the spiritual reality is by the work of God, when we receive the goodness of His grace, by reception of the reality of His presence! Preconceptions destroy the potential of submission unto the reality of God; for to preconceive what is sought, is to submit to all that can deceive away from the reality of God, as our reality becomes seeking God within the flesh which can never please God!²⁷⁴² Seeking a relationship with Christ as Savior without being drawn by God to accept “Jesus as Lord” always leads to a reality of opposition; for seeking by the

²⁷⁴¹ Matthew 6:25-34; 2 Corinthians 4:7-18.

²⁷⁴² Romans 8:3-8.

enticements of one's "self" is contradictory to seeking a relationship with Christ through the righteous work of God! Because of the blatant narcissism of multitudes during these last days, in drawing unto themselves teachers according to carnal whims, desires, and intentions, pulpit proclamations of acceptance of Jesus as Savior alone has replaced and therefore denied the reality of the imperative of God's work in salvation; for seeking to live for the flesh while claiming a relationship with God, the church has kept Christ from His own church, thereby denying the necessary light of truth in most endeavors to accept and worship God!²⁷⁴³

The Lord gave us the standards by which we must seek, love, and worship Him; all of which is fulfilled by God's work and presence in our existence! Any attempts to bypass the standards and fruits of God, are attempts to come to the reality of God through fantasy and religious foolishness! In love, we will either seek the reality and purity of truth which is contingent to the reality of God, proven by the spiritual work of God in accordance to His grace; or we will seek God through temporal means, within which He will never be found! Praise God that His love and blessings are upon us *if* and when we seek Him during unconditional submission to the truth of the Gospel, and praise Him that He literally indwells us and fills us with the reality of His presence, which includes understanding and knowledge which is revealed by His tender mercies, lovingkindness and grace; yet shame on us *if* and when we deny the reality of God for any reason!

The Gospel truth is actually the reality which exists behind the written words, which is revealed solely by the Lord's blessings of spiritual discernment and the ability to spiritually appraise; which never occur through religious (carnal) endeavors. Within the reality of God's presence in the lives of His legitimate children, the Lord reveals the Gospel truth, by implanting the reality into our spirit; which brings forth devotional submission to the reality of the truth, which is devotional submission unto the reality of God; which is possible only by the work of God!²⁷⁴⁴ The wonderment of all that is of the Lord is found in the reality that it is all by the working of the Lord; as He takes us beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality of His indwelling. As long as "self" is allowed to lead our corporeal existence, the beauty and wonderment of

²⁷⁴³ Revelation 3:14-22, specifics vs. 15-20.

²⁷⁴⁴ James 1:19-25, specific vs. 21, 25.

God will never be realized; for within temporal carnality, nothing of the eternal (actual walking by faith) can be discovered or fulfilled. Just as I made supplication unto God for the purity of truth, which was the beginning of my existence according to the kind intention of God's will, so also can the greatest day of other's lives begin within devotional righteous intention which places the seeking of the reality of God as highest priority! Never had I even thought of the reality of beauty and wonderment which is realized and fulfilled by the righteous leadership of God; yet by His abounding grace He brought me to the essence of the reality which is Him, which continues to this day, and will continue for all eternity! The same wonderment is available to all who will allow the Lord to take them beyond themselves unto the reality for which He created us; we have only to devotionally acquiesce and follow once aloof temporal importance, for to truly love God selflessly is to surrender oneself unto the reality of God, holding nothing back for any reason!²⁷⁴⁵ It must be understood, it is not sufficient to believe we know God, as the imperative remains that God must know us as His legitimate children, for the reality of salvation to exist; which is proven solely by God's personal revealing of Himself (spiritually)!

A question I hope that everyone would ask themselves is this—*if* I have never actually experienced the reality of the presence of God during my corporeal existence; what proof exists that an eternity with Him is a possible reality? Please remember, the personal presence of God is a spiritual reality which is proven only by the wonderment of receiving His heavenly gift; which is actual intimate fellowship with the Lord God of all creation! This reality is not of the flesh, nor is it of the world, nor is it of: emotion, fantasy, assumption, conjecture, or delusion; for the reality is the presence of God of which nothing has ever compared. The reality of the presence of God is solely by the work of God, which is proven solely by a changed existence by the grace of God; which takes us to the realization of the Gospel truth by the masterful divine leadership of the Creator of the universe!

I apologize if I have failed to explain the wonderment of God's presence in my life! I have attempted to explain that which is ineffable, in the only way possible; which is by experience. I truly hope that you will surrender unto loving the Lord first and foremost, so that you also may

²⁷⁴⁵ John 15:1-16:1.

experience the wonderment of the presence of God, which is realized by His indwelling of your spirit! All aspects of the temporal must diminish until it ceases to callous our spirit; for within the tenderness and devotional sincerity which remains, the Lord can fill us with the reality of His goodness and righteousness! Although this is explained in the Gospel, the reality is proven solely by the presence of God, when He is allowed unhindered access to our existence; by our un-fettered disciplined obedience and humble acquiescence! As I have told my students who have attempted to render praise unto me in thanksgiving for my instruction, and by stating that they thank God for me; I am who I am solely by the grace of God, and therefore all praise and thanksgiving must be rendered unto God in appreciation of who He is; for God is truly all in all and must be praised, worshipped, and adored according to the reality of Him!²⁷⁴⁶ Accepting praise from individuals for serving the Lord can be very dangerous; for the prideful and/or arrogant aspects of our sinful nature (“self”), can very easily influence the servant of the Lord to accept adequacy and sufficiency within “self,” although in reality our sufficiency and adequacy is solely from the Lord!²⁷⁴⁷ Fighting the good fight of the faith is not easy by any means, as hindrance and distraction is always present; yet in love for God first and foremost, we fight to maintain disciplined obedience and submission unto the Lord, so that the wonderment of His presence is not denied or rejected though submission to “self”; for to truly love the Lord is to surrender all unto Him, as nothing less is acceptable or sufficient within disciplined devotion!

The putrid nature of our wretched “self” is realized solely by God’s work to take us beyond “self” unto the spiritual beauty of purpose in the Lord! Is there really anything so important upon this earth, or of our flesh, that we would volitionally choose to lose out on the wonderment of the spiritual reality of God? The guile foundational to prideful “self” and demonic scheming stays us upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destitution and/or destruction! The wonderment of the reality of God can take us beyond the putrid unto the righteousness of eternal beauty, even so during a corporeal existence by personal special revelation and spiritual blessing; *if* and when we will allow the Lord to fulfill His righteous purpose within our existence, by our denial and re-

²⁷⁴⁶ Romans 12:1-3.

²⁷⁴⁷ 2 Corinthians 3:1-18; 12:9, 10.

jection of that which holds us captive to carnality (self; demonic influence within self)! Is our “self” really so important that we are willing to deny and reject the wonderment of purpose in the Lord, by narcissism? *If* we truly desire to love the Lord, with the selfless love which is of God’s fruits, we have only to abandon personal volition (“self”) unto the righteous will of God; and maintain the abandonment!

It is the denial of the reality of God which has led multitudes to ex-ample and emphasize themselves through self-importance. In the Gospel (Genesis 1:1, 2), we witness that in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth, and that the earth was formless and void of all life forms. The statement rendered here is the entirety of a complete chapter unto itself; as there is no actual way for us to know when God created the heavens and the earth (in the beginning; Hebrew: *reshith* = chief:—beginning), for no one knows the time of the “beginning”! To assume that the heavens and earth were not created until God decided to make the earth habitable for the creation of living beings upon the earth, is foundational to: arrogance, preconception, assumption, and conjecture. The emphasis found in verse two, renders the reality that God has always been present within His creation, according to the intentions of His: good, acceptable, and perfect will; which in this case is accordant to His creation of life upon the earth. The statements rendered in Genesis verses one and two in no way emphasizes the time of antiquity when these things occurred; yet by the arrogance of religious beliefs and teachings, proclamations have gone forth that the reality was of course (somehow) because of us (human beings), which is nothing less than anthropocentrism.

Within the emphatics of religious zealots and the proclamations there from, anything aloof beliefs that God’s creation was centered upon one form of His creation (human beings), is foundational to the boastful and stubborn pride of life. Yes, God created and made habitable the earth with the kind intention of creating human beings; yet this was performed because of who God is, not because of who we are; for in love for God and motivated by His grace we can become capable of being instruments of His goodness and righteousness, as we were truly made by Him and for Him!²⁷⁴⁸ Within ourselves, we may believe the right thing, yet it will always be for the wrong reason; if the reason is

²⁷⁴⁸ Matthew 25:31-46; Ephesians 1:3-6.

not foundational to revelations regarding the existence of God, and a personal devotional trust and hope in our Creator!²⁷⁴⁹

Within the foolishness of religious and scientific zealotry, and foolish human adolescent stubborn pride, expectations have gone forth that everyone should believe the teachings of other specific types of human beings; as each specific type believe themselves to be right and everyone else wrong. Within the creation epic of religiosity, everyone of the world is to believe that the earth is only a few thousand years old; this of course to emphasize that the planet was created specifically for the creation of the human race, at a time just prior to God's creation of life upon the earth. This seems absurd to many, as carbon dating emphasizes that the earth is millions of years old; yet as aforementioned no one has witness as to the time of antiquity when the earth was initially created and void of all life. In retaliation against the absurdity of religious teaching, the "big bang" theory was comprised within scientific circles to rebut the religious epic; by stating that all the material matter (celestial formations) in the entire universe exploded from a specific point of extremely dense hot matter, which formed all of the galaxies, planets, moons, nebulas. etc., as the hot matter cooled during expansion. To add injury to insult, Charles Darwin then theorized "evolution" (origin of species by means of natural selection) to be the basis of all life on planet earth; with other theories (accumulated modification; mutation, genetic variation, etc.) coming forth from other intellectuals which seem to contradict Darwin's theory. All of these disputes and theories came forth as individuals fail to utilize the measure of faith given them by God, or submit unto God for righteous activation of the measure of faith, so as to trust in God; which is necessary for the veil to be lifted in Christ; the veil causing obscurity to the witness of truth while yet remaining. It is one thing to investigate specific characteristics within different life forms; it is something else entirely to claim changes and characteristics of abounding and precise creation by intelligent design to occur by happenstance! The key factor of disputes and competitions which cause divisions and animosity remains the same; for one person's "self" feels superior to other individual's "self," leading to prideful endeavors to prove oneself to hold the answers which are actually found solely within the wisdom, understanding, and knowledge that come forth by blessing,

²⁷⁴⁹ Ephesians 1:3-12.

within reverence for the one true God and Creator! Multitudes of individuals, both intellectuals and nonintellectuals, form premises from which to believe, and seek to prove the premise by forms of investigation and/or assumption; many times refusing to reject the premise or premises when sound conclusions can neither be proven nor explained scientifically. This occurs also within individuals concerning God and creation, as individuals not drawn by God formulate a premise foundational to their earthy emotional beliefs and feelings; and continue forth aloof truth and reality to believe according to the emotional stature of personal premise, or the teachings of others who find emotional uplifting foundational to carnal chosen beliefs based upon corporeal emotions; although without an actual spiritual context! Multitudes believe what they choose to believe, and will debate even unto obnoxiousness and belligerence, rather than listen to reason or truthful investigations. How truly pathetic it is that multitudes choose to believe other human beings of renowned worldly stature or intellect; while denying the beauty and splendor of intelligent design within the creations of God! When these things occur, it is almost always because of an emotional response brought forth by physical realm stimuli; all of which were witnessed by sensory perceptions of the flesh; many times claimed to arise from faith, although actual faith is the substance (assurance) of things hoped for and the evidence (conviction) of things not seen.²⁷⁵⁰ The problematic situation of believing falsely according to the flesh, remains that the longer false beliefs have been maintained, the harder it becomes to turn away from the darkness of inappropriate beliefs, so as to come to the light of actual knowledge; especially when adolescent stubborn pride stays individuals from the reality of seven words, “I do not know,” “I was wrong!”

It is quite shameful that the beauty of the Gospel and wonderment of God’s creation are ignored or rejected, while at the same time individuals emphasize self-importance and self-influence in expecting others to believe epics and fables foundational to fantasy, assumption, and conjecture! The blessing of the measure of faith which God has given to all created in His image (spiritually), was to allow faith and trust to be placed upon our Creator; the measure of faith was never intended for the purpose of placing faith and trust in other human beings, where the

²⁷⁵⁰ Hebrews 11:1-40, specific vs. 1, 2.

existence and reality of God are concerned and imperative! Although the reality of God is plainly witnessed by all that He has created, the deceptions of religiosity never ceases to confuse matters pertaining to God, when individuals are expected to believe absurdities which far surpass any form of evidenced investigation of truth; whenever the confounding effects of self-importance are allowed emphasis.

“Self” is in fact the root cause of all animosity, divisions, and false beliefs; which abound when refusing selfless submission to truth within humility! Just as the Pharisees kept adding oral law to the written Law of God in attempts to prove their superiority (condescendingly) over the nation of Israel, so also happens when prideful individuals attempt to prove their worth by intimidated superiority over others! When we learn that our true worth is founded solely within the spiritual relational reality with God that saves us from the guilt of our sinful natures, we then can (potentially) come into the light of truth which allows the Lord to take us beyond the petty bickering of prideful volition, as He takes us beyond the flesh and things of the world by training us to live spiritually; toward the reality of life indeed which is life eternal. Those who live for the flesh in accordance to carnal volition never realize the wonderment of a life lived for God; for a life lived for the flesh is a life in opposition to God, which includes a life lived according to physical realm religion; whereas a life lived spiritually for the Lord is life indeed, now (purposeful) and forever (righteously)!²⁷⁵¹ Both the church and science intellectuals have expended great amounts of effort to prove absurdities; whereas if everyone would righteously utilize the measure of faith given to them, by primary submission unto God for righteous activation of the measure of faith, we could all journey beyond the foolish pride and arrogance foundational to the flesh, thereby caring for one another with selfless affections and considerations. The Lord rendered the necessary factors (Scriptures; divine inspiration and illumination) so that we may realize the error of our ways, and submit to love God as is appropriate foundational to sincere appreciation for all that He has done for us; which includes the vast and precise wonderment of His created realm! The choice to live for “self” or for God rests with each of us, yet it is never a righteous choice to lead others astray from truth for any reason; as it is also blatant foolishness to follow blindly within

²⁷⁵¹ Romans 8

ignorance, when “faith” foundational investigation can occur with disciplined diligent effort!

The fact remains that God did indeed create the heavens and the earth; when exactly no one knows, nor do the time specifics matter as all was within God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will and the kind intention of His will regarding life on planet Earth! The fact remains that God created the heavens and the earth, and created life upon the planet at and during times of His choosing; for the immensity of God cannot be fathomed, understood, or reasoned any more than the original times and durations of God’s creativity! Within the foolishness of zealotry, human beings attempt to prove their correctness by absurdity; specific types against all other specific types, as arrogance comes forth when spiritual faith has not actually been utilized, during physical realm premise investigations pertaining to the vastness and absolute precision of creation! Within the book of Romans the reality of “creative design” is made evident; which negates any excuse by anyone who would attempt to deny the reality of God, as by pride and foolishness!²⁷⁵² How is it that even the uneducated American Indians (and others) realized the beauty and precision of creative design, and acknowledged the Creator (Great Spirit); whereas intellectual scientists remains incapable? The answer is simple, for the American Indians (and all others who believe) righteously utilized the “measure of faith” given them by God; whereas a plethora of intellectuals are incapable due to personal self-importance and unrighteousness; as the former realized the immensity of God by witness of His vast, beautiful, and precise creation, as they looked beyond “self” by utilizing the measure of faith, whereas the intellectuals were blinded by “self” because of their prideful rejection and rebellion against the obvious! Within the creation epics of religiosity and intellectualizations, the opposing viewpoints are rejected as absurd; although all of the epics are void of actual wisdom, understanding, and knowledge; therefore all being absurd! When “self” is not denied for the righteous purpose of believing in and following the Lord by faith, then the reality of God is denied for the sake of prideful insistent speculation and confident assertions; which amount to nothing more than ignorance proclaimed, of which all endeavors cause divisions and animosity as the “self” of individuals battle against the “self” of others who hold to only

²⁷⁵² Romans 1:18-23.

their own premises, theories, and false beliefs! The only way to come to knowledge of truth regarding “creation” is to look beyond “self” unto the immensity of the reality of God; by awakening from spiritual slumber and opening one’s eyes, which is accomplished solely by faith, after abandonment of the prideful notion of carnal-importance!²⁷⁵³ The reality of God is rejected and denied because of the simple reason that is human arrogance; for multitudes place their focus upon all that is of the physical realm, with nary a notion of the divine which far surpasses all that is temporal!

The foolishness of carnal scientific investigation is further proven by the scientific attempts to proof factors which are actually neither discernible nor reasoned! With the world of humankind seeking answers within “self” and through conceived notions, the blinding effects of prideful endeavor have clouded even the obvious; which remains that answers regarding the creative design of the Lord can only be understood or perceived by the reality of God’s creativity, which while in human form goes far beyond the realm of corporeality to the realm of “faith”! An example of this is the SETI (Search for Extra Terrestrial Intelligence) program of investigation, as multitudes choose to believe in aliens rather than in the Lord! The government has spent multiple millions of dollars seeking evidence in the heavens which would indicate other forms of intelligent life; while at the same time failing to realize the error of the investigations. With the two powerful foes which mislead away from the spiritual relational reality being the attributes of “self” (pride, arrogance, self-centeredness, stubbornness, self-importance. etc.) and demonic influence, there is absolutely no way that the Lord would allow other forms of universal life to distract and deter! With millions (possible billions) of planets in the universe, the possibility of intelligent life is certainly a possibility; yet as God seeks that none should perish eternally, the Lord would never allow further distraction and deterrent to come forth which would allow further detriment and damage to our faith to accept God’s salvation. An additional point which emphasizes the foolishness of carnal (natural) humanity which denies the reality of God and Gospel truth; is the fact of the reality of the Messiah’s having come, which was an event which has been realized throughout the world! The date designations of “B.C.” (before Christ)

²⁷⁵³ Isaiah 55:6-11.

and “A.D.” (Anno Domini—the year of our Lord), were changed several years ago within literature, to the designations of “BCE” (before Christ’s era) and “ACE” (after Christ’s era); as if this change would actually deny (if possible) the reality of the Messiah’s having come, with an emphasis upon a possible denial of God, as if this change would ever justify a denial of the world changing event which was by the grace of God our Creator, according to the kind intention of His will!

LIFE WITHIN THE REALITY OF GOD

That which is of the flesh is foreign (alien) to the reality of spirituality, which leaves only assumption, conjecture, concept, and fantasy regarding the transition from the former to the latter; when aloof the work of God, for flesh and the Spirit are opposed one to the other!²⁷⁵⁴ When God takes an individual across the threshold from the physical realm to the spiritual realm (carnality to spirituality) by His divine work of preparation and drawing, He allows the reality of spirituality to take form by His indwelling; this bringing forth the reality of a spiritual existence, and therefore the ability to actually walk by faith in accordance to the divine righteous work of God.²⁷⁵⁵ Without the divine work of God, individuals are incapable of going beyond concept and fantasy, unto a spiritual reality; this leading to fleshly emotionality which only mimics and fantasizes spirituality, leading to delusion in accordance to the deceptive scheme of Satan, who seeks that human beings never come to the spiritual reality of submissive devotional obedience and reverence necessary in order to be saved!²⁷⁵⁶ When individuals are kept from the spiritual reality which allows them only false belief (religious fantasy; falsehood), they delude themselves to believe the deception; as they will never come unto the potential of the spiritual reality, unless they with disciplined diligence seek the purity of uncompromising truth!²⁷⁵⁷

With the world now being in the final end times prior to the Tribulation Period, with exuberant love of “self” growing to extremes (narcissism), fleshly (carnal) religious endeavors to seek God have replaced the actual spiritual imperative and reality; this leading to disunity, as there is no longer one Lord, faith, and baptism; for fleshly

²⁷⁵⁴ Galatians 5:17-25.

²⁷⁵⁵ Romans 8:11; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

²⁷⁵⁶ Ephesians 4:1-14; cf. Hebrews 5:8-6:3.

²⁷⁵⁷ James 1:22-24.

emotionalism has led multitudes in different directions upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction, as physical realm ritualistic and doctrinal religion in many forms appeases the individualized motives of seeking God in the flesh (multiple denominations and false beliefs)! When God indwells individuals a changed life is led forth by the Lord, as He convinces and convicts within His legitimate child's spirit regarding the imperatives of being led in righteousness and harsh correction (chastisement) for disobedience; whereas those who have remained deceived continue forth in the flesh with nary a notion of Biblical priorities regarding righteousness! A primary reality of those indwelled by God (legitimate children) is acceptance and adherence of and to unwavering truth (probity; candor, veracity); whereas those who remain deceived continue within the darkness of deception, with inability to witness the reality of their spiritual depravity! Where God is at work by His indwelling there is change in righteousness which is inimitable; where God is not at work there is no actual change in righteousness, but rather only the effects of personal change according to religious credulity!²⁷⁵⁸

When God draws an individual to accept both the atoning work and authority of Christ (Jesus as Lord; Romans 10:8-10), He divinely takes the individual beyond all that is of the physical realm; for the righteous confession of faith is solely spiritual, and must therefore be divinely led by God for the individual to go beyond the confines and dominion of the flesh and world within the moment (time period) of God's work to prepare, accept, adopt, and justify the individual.²⁷⁵⁹ As the divine work of God always involves truth and reality, a legitimate child of God is blessed with experiencing an actual spiritual reality, which is completely aloof all influence and coercion from both "self" (flesh) and demonic instigation; which allows future reference regarding the spiritual reality of God, thereby emphasizing the imperative of accepting God's masterful and righteous leadership by faithful disciplined and devotional submission!²⁷⁶⁰ Once the divine work of God in the adoption process has been completed, which brings the individual to the reality of being an adopted legitimate child of God (by literal spiritual experience; not

²⁷⁵⁸ Romans 10:1-3; Colossians 2:20-23.

²⁷⁵⁹ Romans 3:9-31.

²⁷⁶⁰ Matthew 16:23-27.

religious emotional response), the Lord's divine work of progressive sanctification then begins; increase being contingent upon the individual's willingness to submissively follow the Lord further during the duration of one's life; for the Lord cannot bless times of disobedience or selfish complacency. Throughout this primary divine work of God, the measure of faith is in fact righteously actuated by the Lord; for without personal experience of a spiritual reality, an individual will falsely believe a delusive walking by faith and continue forth illegitimately (religiously)! When the measure of faith has never actually been righteously activated by the Lord, as a false confession of faith was rendered, then the measure of faith will be utilized un-righteously; which leads to having faith foundational to the delusive nature of the world and flesh, leading to placing trust and hope virtually everywhere except in the Lord (in reality)! The reality of false beliefs and un-righteous faith is evidenced by a progressive seeking of God through physical realm means (religion; secular factors), and the reality that the individual is never actually separated unto God nor made holy (sanctification)! False beliefs and delusive faith never leads to a changed life by the righteous work of God; but rather only a religious cheap mimic, as individuals attempt to justify themselves through false (self-important; religious) righteousness!²⁷⁶¹ The imperative of diligent discipline in following the Lord, is realized within the matter of righteously actuated faith; for the flesh ("self") will never stop attempts to be master over us; thus the imperative of disciplined righteous faith so that the flesh will not again gain control of us, lest the masterful righteous leadership of the Lord be rejected leading to a return to spiritual stagnancy! There is truly no spiritual reality or growth aloof the righteous work of God's masterful guidance and work; thus Jesus must be allowed to remain Master (Lord) over us, unhindered through constant strict discipline!²⁷⁶²

With a legitimate child's willingness to follow the Lord within the spiritual relational reality by devotional (habitual) denial of "self," God continues to work in the individual further progressive sanctification; this literally bringing forth the righteousness of God which conforms the individual to the image of Christ, which Jesus exemplified during His selfless walk upon the earth, and ministry of righteousness!²⁷⁶³ The

²⁷⁶¹ Luke 16:15; Romans 10:1-3.

²⁷⁶² Hebrews 12:4-11.

reality of God's progressive divine work in an individual is witnessed (evidenced) by the individual's going beyond the lust, intentions, motivations, deceptions, and wanton desires of the flesh and of the world, which brings forth an earnest disciplined devotion within the individual for continued submission unto the Lord, so as to receive further blessings of His actual presence; which further separates them from those who are yet perishing.²⁷⁶⁴ Those who live within the reality of God do not make excuses (deluded deceptions) for compromising with the world and its ways; for we live within the reality of abstaining from sin so as to remain (unhindered) within the relational reality! Those who live within the reality of God abstain from living for "self" habitually; for all moments foundational to "self" are moments external of the beauty and wonderment of the reality of God! It is this action (righteous motivation; God's righteous work) within the individual, which leads them to increased devotional reverence for the Lord; with the outcome becoming a righteous desire for God's divine presence, which is the devotional motivation which ushers in actual intimate fellowship with the Lord; for the individual seeks to remain separate from the darkness from which the Lord delivered them!²⁷⁶⁵ As the individual allows God to further work within them (unhindered), the blessing of increased intimate fellowship with the Lord allows the Lord to implant the Gospel truth (reality behind the written Biblical words) into the individual's spirit; which with the addition of personal specifics from the Lord of which the individual has righteous necessity, takes the individual to God's upward call which is foundational to the Lord Jesus (being conformed).²⁷⁶⁶ Without the divine work of God, a life foundational to the Lord never actually occurs; rather only delusional fantasy and religiosity!

Those who live within the reality of God are both diligent and disciplined to abide in God's word (Bible; gospel truth), for five reasons: devotional submission and obedience; to learn (literally) increasing truth from the Lord as His learned pupils (disciples); to receive freedom (made free) from deception, sin, and carnal fantasy; to maintain freedom in Christ; and to receive the power of God to maintain abiding in the

²⁷⁶³ Philippians 1:6; Romans 8:1-39.

²⁷⁶⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:33, 34, 47-50; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; 6:14-7:1; Colossians 1:9-14; 3:6-17; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

²⁷⁶⁵ Philippians 2:12, 13; cf. Hebrews 12:1-11; 1 John 1:5-7.

²⁷⁶⁶ Philippians 3:7-14; cf. Romans 13:1-14; cf. James 1:19-25.

Lord, for apart from Him we can do nothing that is righteously acceptable!²⁷⁶⁷ Those who live within the reality of God maintain strict discipline, so that God may deal with us (on a continual basis) as His legitimate children; for also within strict discipline, devotional humility and submission are maintained so that our actuated measure of faith will keep us free from false worship, arrogance, and complacency (smugness).²⁷⁶⁸ To live within the reality of God is to seek to achieve and maintain higher levels of training, which blesses us with increased knowledge of the reality of God; this bringing us always closer to the reality of eternity, with God as our Lord, King, and Master (all in all)! As God is the creator of all things, life within the reality of Him guides us to accept and appreciate the fact that He is greater than all things, and thus we never seek to surpass the immense goodness and righteousness of God through prideful arrogance! Imagine the reality, that the universe is vastly immense and precise; yet God being greater than all that He has created, seeks to know and lead us, which is astounding, considering our insignificance when aloof of the reality of Him! It should always be remembered, that the measure of faith is for the purpose that we may actually know our Creator (and be known by Him), and to keep us from thinking more highly of ourselves than we ought (arrogance); for both our purpose and actual worthiness are realized solely by His righteous masterful molding in accordance to His grace and tender mercies.²⁷⁶⁹ Within the spiritual relational reality with God, His grace is truly understood to be sufficient; for without this understanding His grace is taken for granted, as we feel we hold entitlement of His considerations and blessings, as *if* we warrant the wonderment of God by our own actions and intentions.²⁷⁷⁰ There is no greater blessing than to be devotionally reverent, obedient, and submissive unto to Lord our Creator; for nothing is greater than God, by whom we journey and live within the blessings of God's righteousness and holiness, of which the world (and those of the world) will never realize! No one who is willing to compromise through involvement with darkness, deception and selfish pride will ever reach higher levels of training within the reality of God! This is explained further in chapter nine (Ultimatum).

²⁷⁶⁷ John 8:31-36; 15:1-17, specific vs. 4, 5, 7, 8, 10, 11.

²⁷⁶⁸ Romans 12:1-3; Hebrews 12:7, 8.

²⁷⁶⁹ Isaiah 29:13-16; 64:8; Jeremiah 18:1-10; Romans 9:19-24.

²⁷⁷⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:6-10.

A life within the reality of God continues for eternity; for during an individual's corporeal lifetime, the changes brought forth by God continue progressively over time within disciplined devotional obedience, with summation of the reality happening suddenly when God divinely brings forth the ultimate change of the perishable (corporeal) to the imperishable (spiritual eternity).²⁷⁷¹ Although the Lord's work within an individual's corporeal existence takes a lifetime, the work continues progressively unless the individual follows enticements to return unto a carnal existence; at which time the progression becomes hindered because of selfish arrogance and disobedience. Although the Lord is not pleased with disobedience, the fact remains that as He will never leave us nor forsake us, thus He will always wait patiently for the individual to selflessly and devotionally return to submissive obedience; which generally occurs because the individual having remembered the beauty of the Lord's presence, and realizing the harsh loss of God's presence (by chastisement; loss of fellowship), seeks return to the wonderment of God, whom eagerly awaits them for return to righteous continued spiritual blessings! Without experiencing the reality of the presence of God as by God's prior divine work, the potential to return to the wonderment of God would generally never occur! The blessing of God's work in the life of individuals is unsurpassed by anything; the witness of this first realized by God's divine work of drawing and adoption! Anyone who did not come to the spiritual relational reality with God by His divine work, will never realize the reality of God; therefore, all the religious instigations, prodding, and insistence conceivable, amounts to nothing aside of further deluding effects! It is for this reason that all emotional (not spiritual led by God) and religious endeavors of human effort will fail due to unrighteousness; for within all endeavors of this type, the guile and deceptive schemes of Satan are easily allowed to deceive and mislead; which unfortunately may last for the entire lifetime of the individual! If an individual has always had doubts as to God's divine work in their existence, the potential reality exists that God has never actually began a good work in them; therefore, the individual should selflessly seek the truth through supplication unto the Lord, for as God seeks that none should perish, He very much desires humble submission unto

²⁷⁷¹ 1 Corinthians 15:40-50; cf. 13:12; 1 John 3:1-3.

the reality of receiving His divine work! The simple truth remains, “if in doubt, humbly go to God!”

Life within the reality of God is a very personal intimate matter, between an individual and God, therefore the individual must seek tutelage personally from the Lord (within actual fellowship with Him); for no human being can actually teach the spiritual reality, as we can only instruct pertaining to the reality, which I am now attempting to do!²⁷⁷² In accordance to this reality, God and God alone is capable of making the reality come to fruition; which negates any notion by other human beings that they were somehow responsible for the reality of another’s salvation, or actual spiritual growth which is solely from the Lord! We as legitimate children of God speak the Gospel truth in love, and instruct others how to accurately handle the word of truth (Gospel); yet the actual righteous work of implantation of the gospel truth is performed solely by our Lord! We as legitimate children of God never vary from the truth; this being one of the reasons why we are hated by many, as the light of truth exposes the darkness of deceit and deception, thus those held in bondage to darkness hate the light of truth and therefore hate the messenger of truth.²⁷⁷³ We do not concern ourselves with being hated as instruments of God’s righteousness; for we know that the truth we speak is that which allows potential spiritual freedom to come to righteous fruition, *if* and when an individual submits to the authority of God in reality! It is an unfortunate fact that multitudes of individuals seek spiritual answers from other individuals; when this continues indefinitely, the truth emphasizes that the individuals have never actually received anything from God! As the Lord’s legitimate children, it is our duty to emphasize that the individual must put forth devotional effort to seek answers and righteous fruition from God; for *if* we repeatedly give in (kowitz) to the desires of the individual in their turning to us rather than to God, then we have turned against God by the truth of our endeavors, as we have allowed selfishness, pride, arrogance, cowardice, or ignorance of the reality to take the lead in the endeavor, which negates God’s masterful leadership and work! True servants of the Lord would rather be hated (without cause), than to compromise; for compromise leads to selfish disruptive endeavors! As long as individuals

²⁷⁷² Matthew 23:8-10.

²⁷⁷³ Matthew 10:22; John 15:18-27; 17:14.

continually seek answers from other human beings, they will fail to go to God, from whom comes the reality of spiritual training and growth! When we maintain devotional adherence to following the Lord, those receiving God's divine embrace will listen to us; whereas those who are not being divinely embraced by God will not listen!²⁷⁷⁴ Anyone who continues forth confrontationally by attempting to convince or convict individuals of the truth, are self-centered individuals who seek attention within matters of pretentiousness and pedantry, and by doing so are foolishly and selfishly attempting to do the work of God! The righteous reality of actual Christianity (not the Christian religion) is "God at work"; we as legitimate children simply speak the truth in love, and render instruction pertaining to the Scriptures and the hope that is in us (relational salvation)! It is for this reason that all selfless devotional servants of the Lord must be diligent and disciplined to study the Gospel; for speaking without knowledge (ignorantly) is always detrimental, and therefore against Christ!²⁷⁷⁵ Those who speak only kind words and present only Scriptures which appease the flesh, are not legitimate children or servants of the Lord; for our duties and responsibilities must remain pleasing to the Lord, without exception!²⁷⁷⁶

Being within a righteous relationship with God (spiritual relational reality) is astoundingly wonderful; for we are blessed with being led, taught, and changed (spiritual growth) by God!²⁷⁷⁷ The relational reality can never be duplicated or imitated; although the religions of the world emphasize contrary! When within the spiritual relational reality, the imperatives of existence are all about God; this being emphasized (proven) as individuals strive with great assiduity to remain spiritually pure by avoidance of anything that is of darkness and deception, for to compromise from the imperatives of light and truth causes immediate detriment to the spiritual reality because of the seriousness of the offense!²⁷⁷⁸ It is because of the seriousness of the offense (intentional blatant disobedience), that legitimate children of God must remain aloof any and all religious practices; for with the exceptions of celebrating

²⁷⁷⁴ 1 John 4:1-6.

²⁷⁷⁵ Matthew 12:30; cf. 1 Timothy 1:5-11.

²⁷⁷⁶ 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Galatians 1:3-10; Ephesians 5:1-17; Colossians 3:20-24; 1 Thessalonians 2:3-6.

²⁷⁷⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:1-9.

²⁷⁷⁸ John 3:19-21; 8:37-47; 2 Corinthians 13:8; Ephesians 5:1-17; 1 John 1:5-10.

the Lord's Supper and the Feast of Booths (during the millennial reign of Christ), all religious traditions (of rote) are of sin within darkness and deception!²⁷⁷⁹ Ignorance can never be excused; for it is the responsibility of all believers to evidence the truth, and live within the realm (spiritual; well lit) of uncompromising truth! Legitimate disciplined and obedient children of God remain aloof of all religious darkness and deception; for involvement is sin foundational to Satan's schemes to lead astray and cause spiritual detriment and/or spiritual death by religiosity! When within the spiritual relational reality, the wonderment of God's presence is so astounding that nothing of this world any longer holds merit; for nothing is more important than pleasing the Lord by remaining instruments of His righteousness through devotional submission! God is good and wonderful all the time; our motivations and fruits must emphasize this fact, for although ineffable, the presence of the reality of God is of pure wonderment! Loving God first and foremost is the primary imperative which allows our disciplined motivations to remain foundational to the righteousness of God (foundation is Christ); it is for this reason that loving God with all our heart, soul, mind, and strength was and continues to be the great commandment of God; which He rendered for our benefit, so that we may righteously live within His blessings, which are based within disciplined devotional obedience and reverence!²⁷⁸⁰ Those who truly love the Lord teach these principles (and admonitions) to their children, for having experienced the reality of God, they maintain hope that their children may experience the reality of God as well! Negligence regarding this matter is inexcusable; for what loving parent would want to deny their child the reality of God; loving disciplined diligence is found within the reality of leading by example!

The reality of a relationship with God is motivated by the righteousness of God, *if* and when individuals maintain appropriate devotion and reverence for the Lord God of all creation! As was aforementioned, when the Lord draws an individual to the spiritual relational reality (actual Christianity), He does so divinely so all that is of the flesh is placed aloof the work of God; which is the divine work that prepares, adopts, and justifies the individual in accordance to God's holy and righteous

²⁷⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 11:17-33; Zechariah 14:16-19; cf. 1 John 3:1-10.

²⁷⁸⁰ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; Matthew 22:36-40; cf. Hebrews 12:1-11.

indwelling.²⁷⁸¹ It should be remembered that the Lord is absolutely holy and righteous; it is pertinent to this reality that justification and definitive sanctification occurred during God's divine "drawing" process, and why progressive sanctification must be allowed to continue by righteous obedient submission, lest we return to defiling the "temple of the Lord" which is our body, by fleshly and secular disobedience!²⁷⁸² Continuation of God's work (spiritual growth; sanctification) may continue, or not, depending upon the individual's willingness to submit unto further goodness and righteousness from the Lord.²⁷⁸³ The reality of God and the reality of the spiritual relationship are exactly compatible, for the divine work and righteous leadership of God, in addition to actual fellowship with Him which accompanies salvation, proves the relationship and therefore also salvation!²⁷⁸⁴ When the divine work of God (power of our faith) cannot be witnessed in an individual, even so after many years, then one of two things evidences the truth regarding the individual's relationship with God.²⁷⁸⁵

1. God has not actually begun a good work in the individual; therefore, no continuation of God's divine work can continue, for it was never started! Many within this reality, may go to church all of their lives, and never actually come to knowledge of the truth; either pertaining to the spiritual relational reality which is foundational to the reality of God, or of the spiritual reality of their own existence. It is because of the prevalence of this reality that all are told to test, judge, and examine themselves righteously, for without prove of God's presence, not even the individual knows for certain if they are a legitimate child of God! To cloud the reality of being separate from God, Satan influences individuals to be cowardice; in this they hide in the darkness, while claiming to be in the light, and therefore deceive themselves and others; with the exception of God who is never deceived, mocked or fooled!²⁷⁸⁶ Religion is a primary weapon utilized by Satan to obscure the reality of both these specifics (1 and

²⁷⁸¹ Romans 8:3-14; Philippians 1:6.

²⁷⁸² 1 Corinthians 3:1-23, specific vs. 10-17.

²⁷⁸³ Philippians 2:12, 13; James 4:3-10.

²⁷⁸⁴ Hebrews 5:11-6:9.

²⁷⁸⁵ 2 Timothy 3:1-7, specific v. 5.

²⁷⁸⁶ John 3:16-21; 1 Corinthians 4:1-5; 1 John 1:5-10; cf. Revelation 21:8.

- 2), for religious individuals may believe themselves to be legitimate children of God, although the divine work of God cannot be witnessed; for within the darkness of Satan's wiles and schemes, individuals cannot see clearly the reality of their own spiritual existence, which is compounded greatly when individuals refuse to investigate the truth pertaining to "self"!
2. The individual, although saved by God's grace (or not), reverted back to living for the flesh, and therefore returned to the coercion, enticements, influence, and sin foundational to the human sinful nature!²⁷⁸⁷ When this has occurred, which is actually quite prevalent upon the earth, only God Himself knows if the individual is saved, or not; when no evidence of God's presence in the individual's life can be witnessed by others with the passing of time. It should be understood, there is a huge difference between emotional puffing up foundational to religiosity, and spiritual growth which is a blessing solely from God; for when in darkness, individuals are incapable of distinguishing the difference, as the distinction is spiritually appraised, which only happens when in the light of truth within the reality of God!²⁷⁸⁸

The immensity of the reality of God within a relationship with humans who devotionally discipline themselves to obey and follow the Lord by humble submission, can be realized within the fact that the Gospel standards and commandments set forth by the Lord, are brought unto righteous fruition by the Lord; for God Himself is the power of our faith for success and victory! The action of obedience by those who obey and follow the Lord, and submit so that God may both will and work for His own good pleasure, is the action of obedience unto the greatest commandment to love the Lord with: all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our strength, and all of our might; to submissively surrender unto the divine righteous work of God! Those who refuse devotional obedience, and those who never go beyond double-mindedness, will never know or realize the personal immensity of the reality of God; for they will choose to believe only according to selfish

²⁷⁸⁷ Romans 7:15-25.

²⁷⁸⁸ 1 John 2:3-11.

ambition, and therefore will always remain spiritually stagnant during their corporeal existence! The wonderment of a life lived within the reality of God, is the same wonderment of actually Christianity (being Christ-like); for the wonderment is in fact the divine work of God within the creatures created in His image! The matter is simple, we can either live for “self” and suffer shipwreck regarding our faith, or we can live for and unto the Lord and be blessed for all eternity!²⁷⁸⁹ Although there are those who will be saved, although never receiving reward for service rendered unto God; there has been a remnant throughout history who rendered servitude unto God never seeking reward, for we consider God Himself to be the greatest blessing (reward) possible, as we are honored to serve (and suffer) within His righteousness and goodness in the light of truth!

A LIFE ALOOF THE REALITY OF GOD

A life aloof the reality of God, with the exception of John the Baptist, begins at birth.²⁷⁹⁰ A life aloof the reality of God may very well continue throughout an individual’s lifetime, *if* never instructed (or shown) the truth regarding the spiritual reality by a legitimate child of God; for the reality can never actually be taught or shown by someone who has never come to the spiritual relational reality themselves! Within this statement, it must be realized that Satan will do anything possible to lead individuals astray of the reality, by sending forth servants of darkness to deter, confuse, or callous the individual by religious zealotry which is aloof spiritual knowledge. If the effect of Satan’s schemes causes enough spiritual damage so that the individual adamantly turns away from God, then they will no longer be receptive to the Gospel truth and will therefore reject righteous instruction. *If* and when this occurs, only the divine work and drawing of God will be able to bring the individual to acceptance of truth and the spiritual relational reality; which of course is the imperative in all cases! The point to be made here is that a plethora of individuals cause harm by religious selfishness, foolishness, stupidity, and greed, which scatters others away from a spiritual reality with God; whereas a willingness to submit to the truth is tainted and obscured! Praise God that He looks to the core of individuals, and for the work that only He

²⁷⁸⁹ Romans 8:28-39; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13; 1 Timothy 1:18, 19; James 1:25.

²⁷⁹⁰ Luke 1:13-16, specific v. 15.

can accomplish! Shame on those who cause harm through the ignorance and zealotry of selfish ambitious religiosity!²⁷⁹¹

It does great harm to children when parents teach religiosity to their offspring; and further lead the children astray by actions (fruits) contrary to Biblical standards of righteousness; for children will generally seek to mimic the behavior of their parents, as they seek to learn by observation! Although legitimate children of God realize the imperative to deny “self” so as to follow the Lord’s masterful leadership upon the narrow path of His righteousness; illegitimate individuals (those aloof the reality of God) live for “self” and teach the same to their offspring! To emphasize emphatics upon “self” by celebration of—birthdays, is an absurdity which teaches one’s child the importance of “self”; which outright denies the detriment regarding a relationship with God, which this practice brings forth; this generally beginning at age one. When “self” is allowed superiority on occasions, the very same foe (“self”) will seek the same forms of superior self-importance again and again; this leading the individual to place themselves in opposition to God, with nary a thought of the consequences! As “self” is the primary foe which has coerced multiple millions of individuals to never actually follow the Lord, to instruct one’s child emphasis upon “self” is not an act of love, but rather an act of disassociation away from a sound and righteous relationship with God; for when “self” is allowed to be emphasized in a child, the outcome will always be the foolishness of stubborn adolescent pride! To rear a child in the ways of the Lord is foreign to those aloof the reality of God; for they believe they can maintain righteousness in the Lord (*if* religious), while yet living for the flesh, although this is a strong form (double-mindedness) of Satan’s delusive work!²⁷⁹² The greatest problem with falling prey to a coercive emphasis of “self,” is that the coercive enticements will grow to abounding proportions; for “self” seeks to lead individuals throughout their lifetime, upon the broad path which leads to spiritual depravity and/or destruction!

To live aloof the reality of God is to live without the power (God at work) for success and victory pertaining to a spiritual reality! The outcome of being aloof the reality of God generally involves much deception in an individual’s life; for they will choose self-importance

²⁷⁹¹ Matthew 18:7.

²⁷⁹² Romans 8:1-17, specifics vs. 5-8, 12-14; cf. Matthew 18:5-11; James 1:7, 8; 4:7-10.

as precedent for existence, and make excuses (render lies) for having done so! Within the blinding effects (obscurity) of self-importance, individuals through carnality seek all that is of the world; while never seeking the goodness and righteousness of God, except through religious delusion! Within an endeavor of this type, individuals create a façade for themselves with the intentions of gaining advantage over others through deluded carnal effects; for their personal gains take precedence over the welfare and benefit of others, which in most cases leads to deceptions (both inward and outward) in attempts to hide the truth regarding their actual motivations and priorities which are always (somehow) self-centered! Although legitimate children of God deny “self” so as to actually follow the Lord to spiritual growth and strength; illegitimate children (those aloof the reality of God) live for “self,” as they easily fall prey to the guile of Satan that physical realm expansion is of the greatest importance! Those who are guilty of self-importance are easily known by God’s children who can spiritually appraise, for their professions and their behavior contradict each other; for they never realize that they will be truthfully known by their actions (fruits), not by their delusive words!

Those who are aloof the reality of God participate in many unfruitful actions which are of the world, including religion (worthless elemental things—Galatians 4:9); which is quite contrary (opposed) to being within the spiritual relational reality; for “religion” is quite carnally superficial regarding actual spirituality, whereas the spiritual relational reality is quite in-depth in all ways concerning our existence!²⁷⁹³ Within the religions of the world, including the Christian religion (not actual Christianity), emphasis is placed upon things which involve the flesh; for the flesh always holds desires to be involved, and possibly lead all endeavors of life, including worship (false) of God within the deceptive superficiality of religion; although that which is of the flesh cannot please God!²⁷⁹⁴ As religion is aloof the reality of God, so also are the precepts, traditions, doctrines, and philosophies of religion; for never is the reality of God taught, as He must be worshipped solely in spirit and in truth!²⁷⁹⁵ As long as individuals are held captive to religion, which

²⁷⁹³ Matthew 13:7, 22; Mark 4:3-7, 14-19; cf. 2 Peter 1:2-11.

²⁷⁹⁴ Romans 8:6-8.

²⁷⁹⁵ John 4:20-24.

remains aloof the reality of God and worshipping Him in spirit and in truth, the possibility of their coming to the spiritual relational reality is made void, through adherence to deceptive (false) ministries and religious practices!

Throughout the known history of the world, different civilizations held their gods to be precedent and superior over the gods of other civilizations; this as creedal, kingdom, and country pride is easily influenced by Satan as a means of keeping them all aloof the reality of God, through opposition! The reality of useless creeds, as pertaining to the Christian religion (not truthful Christianity), is realized by the Nicene Creed which places emphasis upon believing in God as through philosophical doctrine!²⁷⁹⁶ This always happens when those aloof any spiritual reality by God's divine work, attempt to explain bases of belief as through carnal intellectual prowess! In many cases of antiquity, the philosophical religious doctrines involved practices pertaining to fertility and worship of the sun (Sol Invictus); these forms of worship were believed to bring forth longer warmer days and the fruits of the harvest! The Christian religion (not actual Christianity) is no different, through acts of worship which are foundational to fertility (Easter) and sun worship (Christmas); while having nothing whatsoever to do with the God of the Bible; these traditional practices being abominations unto the Lord, also entice the ultimate abomination of complacency, as multitudes look forward to the falsehoods for the purpose of religious self-satisfaction! To those who are aloof of the reality of God, it has always been believed that their specific god (or goddess) was superior to the gods and goddesses of other cultures or beliefs; which of course indicates the boastful pride of life and bigotry; which when adhered to holds those of false beliefs captive to the wiles and guile of Satan!²⁷⁹⁷ Within the Christian religion (not actual Christianity) the dates pertaining to these false worldly forms of worship were incorporated from other pagan beliefs to ease the transition of pagans to the Christian religion; and this in complete defiance of the truth which is actual Christianity, for the precedent involved numbers of new converts, which showed a complete denial of the absolute holiness and righteousness of God, and sanctity of truth! As the truth can never be

²⁷⁹⁶ Colossians 2:8-10.

²⁷⁹⁷ 1 John 2:15-17; cf. 2 Timothy 2:24-26.

changed, lest it be coerced to become part of a deception, the actions to gain converts were solely of selfish religious pride, arrogance, and greed; which are intentionally fulfilled abominations to God! The greatest abomination being the smugness (complacency) within the actions, with nary a thought of devotion or reverence for God; for religious individuals do not actually concern themselves with being pleasing to God, but rather maintain concern to continue the falsehoods of which they have become accustomed in their flesh!²⁷⁹⁸ The greatest abomination of complacency (too light a thing—Ezekiel 8:17) proves the complete lack of respect and devotion for God within false worship, even so in church settings; for complacency (smugness) is foundational to self-satisfaction, which holds no consideration for God beyond attempts to attach Him to falsehood! The Lord God is absolutely holy, righteous, and the essence of truth; therefore, He must be treated with absolute reverence, of which false worship has no concern whatsoever! For information sake, Tammuz (8:14) is pertaining to fertility, and eastward prostration is of sun worship; these actions being performed in a place of worship supposedly for God! Please note in verse seventeen, that those participating in false worship are putting a twig to their own noses; which indicates that they are preparing themselves for bondage unto Satan's schemes, as he holds the tether which connects to the twig so as to lead them into religious bondage away from the reality of God! These specifics have been of mention, so that further understanding may come forth as to why only a remnant of the masses of individuals who claim to be believers in God will actually be saved; as the masses have placed themselves into potential bondage by deceptive religious practices; whereas the remnant remains aloof all deception, as we remain founded upon the Lord (Rock of our salvation) in the light of truth!²⁷⁹⁹ As aforementioned, ignorance will not be an excuse when each of us renders accountability unto the Lord for our deeds while in our corporeal bodies; for the Gospel is the standard by which we will all give account, thus it should be the moral and spiritual basis by which we live our lives!²⁸⁰⁰ *If* individuals do not investigate the truth pertaining to the beliefs, traditions, doctrines, philosophies,

²⁷⁹⁸ Ezekiel 8:1-18.

²⁷⁹⁹ 1 John 1:5-10.

²⁸⁰⁰ John 12:46-50; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:6-12; 1 Peter 5:7-19.

and precepts which they follow regarding matters pertaining to the Lord God of all creation, and by un-righteous actions attempt to attach God to falsehoods which is the work of the devil; is it really any wonder why their complacency (smugness; self-satisfaction) in doing so is considered the epitome of abomination unto the Lord! All those who are guilty of such rude, crude, and un-righteous actions unto the Lord, do in fact put the twig for religious bondage tethering to their own noses; therefore, they intentionally place themselves aloof the reality of God, and therefore aloof the Lord's blessings, which include: strength, masterful leadership, convincing, convictions, deliverance, spiritual successes and victory! Ignorance is not an excuse, but rather an attempt to evade responsibility by attempts to evade truth, reality, or both! Those who are guilty of complacency within the "ignorance is bliss" mentality of the world are truthfully held captive by Satan to do his will; which stipulates that individuals both deceive self and others, and remain deceived to continue falsehoods!

Those who are aloof the reality of God, place as existence precedent the ways and things of the world, and the wellbeing of the flesh! Placing as precedent the ways and things of the world and the welfare of the flesh, directly indicates placing highest priority upon all that ends in death at the grave; with no evidence of consideration pertaining to responsibilities regarding what comes after! This is part of the reason why those aloof the reality of God constantly place focus backwards, in the form of traditional celebrations of rote, and mournful remembrance of past deaths and depravity; for there is no certainty as to the future!²⁸⁰¹ This reality is demonstrated by the belief of multitudes that God will save everyone; regardless of all circumstances! Although those within the reality of God focus upon Jesus, who is the author and perfecter of our faith, and thereby also unto the joy of eternity in the brilliantly lit righteous kingdom of God, which allows us true hope and strength; those who are aloof the reality of God focus upon themselves with only a notion of conceptual false hope pertaining to the reality which comes after death and a grave.²⁸⁰² Within the false hopes foundational to religious beliefs abounding with lacking devotion and irreverence for God, as the foundational basis and focus of false beliefs

²⁸⁰¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:13.

²⁸⁰² Revelation 21:23-22:5.

and hope remain upon all that is of the physical realm (world, rituals, traditions, philosophies, precepts, dates, numbers, congregational financial status, etc.), those aloof the reality of God place emphasis of existence upon: self-importance, self-gratification, self-satisfaction, and overall wellbeing of “self”; with nary a thought or notion of the necessary spiritual imperative in order to be saved!

Those who are aloof the reality of God remain extremely earthy; for they indulge frequently in: religious practices, worldly and empty chatter (chitchat; confabulation), gossip, being busybodies, seeking purpose in the uncertainty of riches, seeking of comfort, endeavoring toward prestige and superiority, etc.²⁸⁰³ Being complacent when aloof the reality of God is extremely dangerous; for within smugness of the flesh comes absolute spiritual depravity, for they will always seek answers and successes for and through “self,” which allows arrogance to abound to extremes! It is one thing to respect one’s body as by the purposeful creation of it by the Lord, it is something else entirely to believe one’s own body to be the primary reason for existence! Those who remain seeking purpose within “self” (habitually) are guilty of the same form of prideful sin which caused Satan’s fall from heaven; for they by their intentions and actions seek ultimate superiority of existence, with no consideration or concern regarding the consequences to others or a righteous relationship with God!

The primary fleshly basis regarding the failures of being aloof the reality of God, remain foundational to complacency and conceit; both remaining foundational to foolish adolescent pride and the arrogance which always follows in close proximity! It is due to the carnal (foolish adolescent and superficially boastful) pride of which God is opposed, that the ultimate abomination unto God occurs; which is complacency (too light a thing—Ezekiel 8:17) within one’s own demeanor, which lashes out into every other aspect of one’s existence, including their (supposed) relationship with God; for they take everything for granted, including the grace of God, while never growing beyond superficiality regarding their own duties and responsibilities which show actual sincere concern for others! The mentality of multitudes is one of denial regarding their own frailties and faults; they quickly criticize others for every little bit of fault or frailty, while adamantly denying their

²⁸⁰³ Romans 1:20-32; 1 Timothy 6:17-19; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

own weaknesses, faults and frailties. This is easily witnessed by blatant denial of one's own culpability in wrongdoing, while simultaneously seeking to place the blame of culpability upon everyone else. It is an unfortunate fact that millions of individuals will not inherit God's kingdom because of cowardice pertaining to examining, testing, and judging oneself righteously; for in failing to do so, they refuse to look at the reality of their own existence, while seeking responsibility to always be elsewhere!

Although all individuals have frailties, and guilt regarding inappropriate behavior, myself included; the fact remains that in the Lord we can have our unrighteousness replaced by His righteousness, *if* and when we will humbly submit to follow Him, trusting Him in all things; rather than always seeking to lead while wandering in darkness!²⁸⁰⁴ The numbers of those who do not truly trust the Lord is plethora, whereas the number of those who do actually trust the Lord is few; for the former have never grown (matured) enough to cease trusting in "self," whereas the latter have realized the spiritual detriment and degradation which follows trusting "self," and have therefore ceased, so as to fully trust the Lord and thereby find rest and security in Him.²⁸⁰⁵ The cowardice of multitudes comes as they hate the light of truth regarding their own existence, lest their deeds be laid open to scrutiny; which has actually already occurred, for the Lord God knows everything about each of us; thus the cowardice is foundational to failure in examining oneself rightly in the light of truth, which is reality! It is terrible how multitudes are only concerned about what those closest to them may think; whereas very few face the fact of God's knowledge of all things, including who we are in and of ourselves, and who we could become if only we would allow the wonderful and righteous divine work of God to take us forth unto His upward call in Christ Jesus!²⁸⁰⁶ All who insistently run from the truth of their own behavior (demeanor; character) run directly into the wiles of the Great Deceiver (Satan); then when trouble arises, they seek to place blame elsewhere as an action of denial pertaining to their own involvement and responsibilities! Those who are external of the reality of God should seek and

²⁸⁰⁴ Romans 1:17-19; 3:21-26; 10:1-3; cf. John 3:16-21; 8:12; 12:35, 36, 46;
2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

²⁸⁰⁵ Romans 9:23-29; Hebrews 4:1-10.

²⁸⁰⁶ Philippians 3:7-14.

openly accept the truth about themselves; for it is then, and only then, that the individuals will accept the imperatives of devotion, humility, and obedience unto the Lord necessary in order to be saved, and led to a spiritually prosperous existence!

Personal Note: Very few of the many students I have had, ever endeavored to actually deny “self” so as to follow the Lord! Among the few who did deny “self” to follow the Lord, only a remnant maintained the denial so as to follow the Lord consistently! The exact same foe foundational to the flesh caused the downfall of the majority, as once again becoming prideful; they once again began to trust in “self,” counting the successes derived from God’s work, as being personal accomplishments. God warned us of His disapproval regarding the “proud” for a very good and righteous reason; yet as with most instruction from the Lord, the abomination of complacency within self-importance has deterred the many away from the beauty, goodness, and righteousness of God’s masterful leadership and embrace! Although it is truly a blessing to abandon one’s “self” (personal volitional leadership) before God’s throne of grace, only a remnant (few) devotionally perform the task with certainty foundational to humble devotion and reverence unto God! Those who refuse the imperatives of humility, devotion and reverence for God always do so for the very same reason, which is prideful failure to love the Lord accordant to the reality of His: immensity, holiness, righteousness, and absolute purity! The reality of God is far beyond our comprehension; therefore, the imperative remains acceptance of the reality of God and the necessity of His divine work accordant to devotional faith, without attempts to explain, determine, or intellectualize the reality! God is astoundingly awesome all the time; are we mature enough to accept this fact, or are we too full of ourselves so as to deny devotional acceptance of the beauty and goodness of the Lord, while rendering sincere thanksgiving unto the One who is worthy to be praised! As the Lord rendered instructions unto us which are for our betterment now and forever, are we mature enough to learn and adhere to the instructions; or are we too full of ourselves, that we believe we have no necessity of instruction from our Creator? Personally I can attest to the necessity to both learn and adhere to the instructions from the Lord, for by His grace, learning and adherence leads to the blessing of overall spiritual growth which is achieved solely in the Lord!

THE REALITY OF GOD SUMMATION

All that is of the physical realm, including our physical bodies, the world and all that is of the world, are inherent of one another. All that is of the earth is within Satan's jurisdictional control, with the authority of God due to the initial sin of humankind (Adam) in the Garden of Eden. As a note of importance, Eve was deceived by the serpent (Satan) to commit sin, whereas Adam was not deceived, but rather intentionally sinned to appease his wife.²⁸⁰⁷ Most all that is of the physical realm upon the earth (including religions) can therefore be utilized by Satan to stay those created in God's image (spiritually; human beings) from the spiritual reality which is necessary in order to be saved and led by God. As "self" is inherent to the physical realm, it also is susceptible to the jurisdictional control of Satan (and demons), and can therefore be influenced, enticed, and coerced away from any spiritual reality. Because the only victory over the flesh (including death) and world is contingent upon a spiritual reality, which begins and ends with the reality of God's divine work and intentions, any endeavor toward eternal victory must be foundational to the reality of God which is realized solely in what God has done for human beings; which is the reality of the Lord Jesus; for the Messiah of Old Testament promise was manifest in the New Testament reality of the Christ (Immanuel; glory of Christ)!

Because "self" is the primary foe which must be contended with throughout a person's lifetime, the answer pertaining to the conquering of the wretchedness of "self" remains battling the foe from within the spiritual reality; which of course involves the Holy Spirit, as the Holy Spirit and the flesh are in opposition to one another!²⁸⁰⁸ The foe which is "self" is accordant to the masterful design of God, for He also rendered the blessing of a measure of faith; this as through the kind intention of God's will, He has allowed the potential victory from the very beginning of our corporeal existence, *if* only we are willing to deny the wretchedness so as to lay hold of God's righteous divine work! The matter is complicated throughout an individual's lifetime, each and every time submission is rendered unto "self" rather than unto the Lord! It is for this factual reason that all potential victory is rejected

²⁸⁰⁷ Genesis 3:13-24, specific vs. 13, 17; cf. 1 Corinthians 15:22; 2 Corinthians 11:3;

1 Timothy 2:14.

²⁸⁰⁸ Galatians 5:17.

without a willingness to deny “self”; for without a willingness to deny personal corporeal volition (“self”), there remains no willingness to go beyond the physical realm unto the spiritual reality, by which we gain: adoption, justification, definitive and progressive sanctification, nurturing, strength, guidance, correction, answers, and spiritual successes; unto victory!

Within the reality of God’s drawing individuals to acceptance of truth, which is acceptance of the sacrificial atonement of Christ by submission unto the reality and authority of God, is found the initial first step to victory; for God in His drawing of individuals divinely allows the blessing of going beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality! Without acceptance of what God has, and may continue to do through the victorious process, there remains only potential which ends at death! The wonderment is that God divinely prepares and carries forth a spiritual reality; whereas only spiritual detriment and possible defeat awaits those who refuse to accept and adhere to the truth of the reality of God! Although many will be saved by the divine work of God, the fact remains that by the enticement, influence, and coercion of both Satan (plus demons) and “self,” many will return to a life of carnality; as “self” (self-importance) will not allow them to submit unto God for continued spiritual growth and success, for they volitionally refuse to submit unto the authority of God for further spiritual progress, as they have allowed themselves in accordance to adolescent stubborn and competitive pride to be taken captive to the wiles and schemes of Satan by something within his jurisdictional control.²⁸⁰⁹ The true key to avoid returning to carnal obscurity and disobedience, remains the light of truth which is foundational to the reality of God; for the only strength for success and inevitable victory remains the strength of God’s righteous might, which is only rendered and received through selfless devotional submission unto the masterful design and intentions of the Potter (God)!²⁸¹⁰ By the grace of the Lord, the potential exists for spiritual victory over all that is of the physical realm, including the wretchedness of “self”; acceptance of which remains a matter of personal choice.

²⁸⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:1-20.

²⁸¹⁰ Isaiah 29:13-16; 45:9-12; Jeremiah 18:1-10; cf. John 8:12; 12: 35, 36, 46-48; Romans 9:19-29; 1 John 1:5-10; Romans 13:11-14; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; Colossians 1:9-14; 1 Peter 2:7-10.

When individuals stray aloof the wonderment of God's divine work because of self-importance, the only potential remaining characteristics are inherent to the flesh which cannot please God; therefore, endeavors which attempt to serve God will be without the Lord's masterful leadership and righteousness, and thus incapable of success to gather others unto the reality of the Christ, rather instead causing a scattering effect away from the spiritual reality necessary for reception of the truth.²⁸¹¹ As aforementioned regarding the epics foundational to carnal zealotry, in most cases the scientific and religious investigations cause a scattering effect; when within the endeavors the focus does not emphasize the reality of God. There are a few scientists who emphasize the reality of intelligent design within their investigations and research, many times coming to realize the reality of God within their endeavors; which can cause a gathering effect unto Christ, as the individuals are led by God's work pertaining to reality! When carbon dating to ascertain approximate dates of antiquity regarding fossils, were factors such as the immense weight of billions of gallons of water (Noah's deluge) taken into account, or were the investigations strictly accordant to human reason; which can remain entirely aloof historical specifics! When the religious zealots rendered insistence that all must believe that God created the entire universe several thousand years ago, just prior to the Lord's creation of human beings, they obviously did not take into account that the light from the stars of other galaxies can be seen from the earth; which took thousands (if not millions) of years at the speed of light (299,792,458 meters per second; approximately 186,000 miles per second) to reach the earth so as to be witnessed. Anthropocentrism has been a problem foundational to the pride and arrogance of humankind throughout history! The purpose of scientific and religious endeavor can either be in context of reality or entirely aloof reality; depending upon the motives of the individuals; therefore, great care must be taken when choosing what to believe as to the outcome of the investigation, for false beliefs and choices can easily lead astray of reality.

An emphasis of the reality of God and how He has allowed in-depth appropriate investigations even so within creation and history can be witnessed when the reality of God is not intentionally denied; for within the fact that God loves us, He has rendered prove of His presence both

²⁸¹¹ Luke 11:23-26.

in creation and rendered Biblical history. Two books which emphasize this fact are *The Privileged Planet*; Guillermo Gonzalez and Jay W. Richards; Regnery Publishing, Inc., 2004 / *The Bible as History*; Werner Keller; Bantam Book Published by arrangement with William Morrow and Company, Inc.; 1981. These two books, which are terrific, are rendered as examples. When the reality of God is realized, accepted, and not denied, endeavors (including investigative) will generally hold an element of success within certainty, which is why we must “in all our ways acknowledge Him”; lest our endeavors remain of earthy self-importance, which never holds a certainty of success when aloof the Lord’s masterful guidance!²⁸¹²

In the second century A.D., servants of the devil entered into the beauty of actual Christianity, to coerce and defile the wonderment of spiritual truth, regarding the reality of God.²⁸¹³ By the third century A.D., the teachings of the revised Babylonian Mysteries Religion priesthood (Papal Roman Catholicism), was being tolerated, which directly demonstrates how condoning of falsehood leads to tolerance of the delusive work of Satan.²⁸¹⁴ By the fourth century A.D., the falsehoods (delusive religion) foundational to the scheme of Satan was not only tolerated, but also openly and blatantly accepted; which demonstrates how easily the devil takes human beings captive to do his will (deceive and be deceived), when within human complacency the darkness of deceit is openly tolerated, condoned, and accepted by those who (for any reason) choose to wander in darkness; this as self-importance, self-satisfaction, and a lack of self-criticism and discipline leads to carnal failure to love the Lord (in reality) and thereby investigate the truth, so as to walk in the light of truth, which is necessary in order to accept the reality of God! Through the coercive effects of religious deception, the spiritual relational reality was outright denied (except by the remnant), and replaced with ritualistic and doctrinal religion which emulated the Levitical priesthood (physical realm religion); for within this, the reality of God was refused by multitudes (which continues to this day), as ritualistic and doctrinal religion which appeases the flesh within delusion, led them astray of the truth, and thereby aloof the spiritual reality nec-

²⁸¹² Proverbs 3:5, 6.

²⁸¹³ Revelation 2:12-17.

²⁸¹⁴ Revelation 2:18-29; cf. 2 Corinthians 11:2-4, 13-15.

essary in order to be saved! Within the power of Satan's deceptive scheming, even the darkness of a vicarious substitute for God in the form of a human being (Pope) has been fully tolerated and accepted; which outright denies and rejects the reality of God! This entire travesty began even before the end of the first century A.D., because of fear in the flesh when individuals fail to love and trust God within the spiritual reality; which is foundational to failure in sincerely and devotionally loving the Lord within the reality of God; as God's selfless, sacrificial and unconditional love when rendered and received casts out fear foundational to the flesh!²⁸¹⁵ Two notes of importance:

1. Regarding the continuation of the religious deception; it was the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion (Roman Catholicism) that instituted the darkness of the Christian religion's (not actual Christianity) deceptive traditions of rote which continue to this day, in efforts to ease conversion of pagans from other religions to the Christian religion. This terribly obscured the light of truth, by instigated, influenced, and practiced religiosity of darkness!
2. Loving God within the spiritual relational reality is a matter of absolute sincerity and devotion which accepts the reality of God! Acceptance of the reality of God is foundational to both spirit and truth; for all that is of the spiritual relational reality is completely separate from the vanity which is of the flesh, which includes deluding and delusive words and practices which remain devoid of the devotional spiritual reality!²⁸¹⁶ God knows each of us to the very core of motive and intent, and therefore knows us better than we know ourselves, when we are aloof His masterful embrace and righteous leadership! The vanity of words and practices only deludes the individual and possibly others; never is God mocked or fooled!²⁸¹⁷ Within the religious depravity of denying the reality of God, the superficiality of the flesh has led multitudes to delude themselves into believing falsehoods according to the schemes of the devil, which includes believing their own delusive professions of faith; yet

²⁸¹⁵ Revelation 2:8-11; cf. 1 John 4:1-19, specifics vs. 18, 19.

²⁸¹⁶ John 4:20-24; 14:15-17; 15:26, 27; 16:13-15; Romans 12:1-3; cf. 1 John 4:1-6.

²⁸¹⁷ Galatians 6:7, 8; cf. Ecclesiastes 5:2, 3.

within the spiritual relational reality, when God is loved first and foremost, the vanity and delusive ways of the flesh are removed by God's grace, so that the reality of salvation is realized and brought to righteous fruition! The religions of the world will save no one; this includes the deceptive Christian religion (not actual Christianity)! For more information regarding "religion" please reference chapter eight.

The point to be made is that we must acknowledge and love the Lord, without attempts to deny the obvious, if we are to succeed unto spiritual victory; the only victory being by faith in what God has and may continue to do for us, for all else is distraction and delusive! As is revealed in the Scriptures, someday when we by God's grace have knowledge of all things, we will come to understand many facets of creation of which we now can only speculate.²⁸¹⁸ What is the purpose in seeking those things which cannot now be realized except through righteous devotional investigation, when the reality of all things will come to those who have waited patiently upon the Lord; trusting Him fully! Within the reality and wonderment of God's creation, the beauty, immensity, and precision of God's design is plainly witnessed; therefore, there is no such thing as "atheists"; rather only the reality of the obscurity which comes forth when the natures of self and carnality are allowed to mislead unto disbelief and wretchedness, upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction!²⁸¹⁹

God factually exists and seeks to bless His creation; are we appreciative of all that God has done for us, or are we too abounding with "self" to ever realize the immensity of God in reality! Our appreciation can motivate us to seek God further by disciplined devotional submission, or our lack of appreciation can hold us in bondage to continued blatant carnality and denial of truth; the former leads us to blessings in faith-based reality, whereas the latter cannot! The choice rests with each of us individually, for nothing can lead to the reality of God except for God Himself; thus it is prudent that each human devotionally and humbly submit unto God, so that the reality of God may abound unto

²⁸¹⁸ 1 Corinthians 13:9-12; 1 John 3:1-3.

²⁸¹⁹ Romans 1:18-32; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; 3:1-9; 2 Corinthians 3:10-18; cf. Colossians 2:18-23; Matthew 7:13-27.

an eternal reality, that does not involve judgment foundational to the foolishness and complacent stupidity of the flesh, and the deceptive scheming of Satan!

Imperative Note: It must be understood that “religion” is a basis by which faith and focus is misguided as by misdirection; which is the scheme of Satan within utilizing “religion” as a primary basis to deceive the whole world (minus a remnant)!²⁸²⁰ Anytime the teachings of religion vary from the strict standards rendered in the Gospel, misdirection has been rendered, which when followed as by adherence leads to a misguided journey when attempting to find Jesus within the seeking of truth (He is the Way, and the **truth**, and the life)!²⁸²¹ Individuals are led by the Lord upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness which is the “Way,” taken divinely unto “life” indeed which is “life” eternal; yet it is the responsibility of the individual to seek the “**truth**” (reality of the Christ; glory of Christ) within the Gospel of God’s inspiration and through spiritual mindedness; which is the investigative endeavor by which God witnesses a spark for devotion unto Him!²⁸²² This reality can never occur while individuals focus upon the flesh and those things which are of the world (carnal mindedness); for that which is of the flesh and world, and that which is of the Spirit are in opposition one to the other!²⁸²³

Please understand, although I abhor religion, especially Catholicism which is the primary religion which has turned billions away from God and the spiritual relational reality, which is actual Christianity; I yet love the individuals who have allowed themselves to be misguided through the following of religious specifics which misdirect away from righteous devotional intimacy with God, which remains the primary imperative of the spiritual relational reality; for righteous motivation within devotional intimacy with God is discouraged and many times lost entirely! Within the book, much accurate information has been rendered pertaining to the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion

²⁸²⁰ Revelation 12:9.

²⁸²¹ John 14:4-14, specific v. 6.

²⁸²² John 8:31-36; 1 Timothy 6:3-19; 2 Timothy 2:14-19, specific v. 15; 3:13-17, specific vs. 16, 17.

²⁸²³ Galatians 5:16-26; Hebrews 12:1-11, specific vs. 1-3; James 4:4-10; 1 John 2:12-17, specific vs. 15-17.

(Roman Catholicism); for this specific revised religion is the specific which instigated and influenced the blatant harlotry and misdirection which brought forth the deceptive—Christian Religion. With understanding that “religion” is the primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world, with the exception of a remnant who maintains righteous motivation and devotional intimacy with Jesus within immovable adherence to the “**truth**,” it can then be understood why misdirection is a primary tool utilized by those who are aloof the reality of God; for Satan’s deceptive intention is that individuals remain misguided until it is too late for God to begin and continue the good work of which He alone (the Lord) is capable.²⁸²⁴ The primary avenue to God’s divine work by which individuals are saved and led righteously is the avenue in seeking truth in pure form; thus the seeking of truth without variation; which will never be accomplished through religions, as seeking truth in pure form is seeking the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) in the light of truth; without compromise, variation, excuse or exception!²⁸²⁵

For salvation to occur the Lord must reveal Himself to individuals; which is the reality which will never be taught within “religion”! The reality of God is manifested within individuals by His indwelling, which can never be mimicked or emulated; for God’s manifest presence alone displaces the influence and coercion which the sinful nature (“self”) entices, and therefore brings forth motivational conviction to adhere to truth at all times, which rejects any form of falsehood (deception; deluding) so as to continually follow the Lord’s masterful leadership devotionally!²⁸²⁶ God’s indwelling begins the good work of which God alone is capable, with continuation of the good work and displacement of the ways of the sinful nature, occurring during times of devotional reverent fear and submission unto the Lord; which is hindered and many times stopped entirely, once individuals return to carnal mindedness, which entices both withdrawal of devotion and continuation of humble acquiescence! This truth cannot be denied, lest continuation within seeking God in the flesh, lead to a deluded fantasy relationship; which will always remain devoid of the truth (reality of God)! Without willingness to deny “self” there can be no humble acquiescence unto

²⁸²⁴ Philippians 1:6, 2:12, 13.

²⁸²⁵ John 14:15-18; 15:24-27; 16:12-15; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8; 1 John 4:1-6.

²⁸²⁶ Romans 7:15-25; 8:1-17, specific v. 14; John 15:1-17.

God; without humble acquiescence unto God there can be no sincere devotion; for the volition of the sinful nature will never cease influence and coercion attempts, which maintains bondage within the confusion and obscurity in fleshly attempts to find and love the Lord (who is Spirit); which is the primary basis of “religion” within the schemes of the devil (physical realm carnality)!²⁸²⁷

Within the revised priesthood of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion (servants of darkness) every avenue away from the light of truth is repeatedly influenced!²⁸²⁸ The means, by which this is accomplished, is by misguiding all within the religion to stay focus away from God, thereby staying them from any intimacy with the righteous author and perfecter of faith (Jesus).²⁸²⁹ Only God can forgive sins, as all sin is directed unto God; for He alone is absolutely holy and righteous; yet the revised priesthood through the deception of having God’s authority on earth, insists that confession of sin stop and rest upon them, so that multitudes never actually go beyond to the One (Lord) who can actually forgive the sins!²⁸³⁰ When sin remains, even within the harboring of sin within one’s thoughts, intentions or motives; all prayer potential becomes void, for God chooses not to hear what is said; this with the exception of actual humble and contrite confession of wrongdoing, from a heart of absolute mourning for one’s own dreadful behavior; which is accomplished only in the light of truth and the seeking of one’s Creator!²⁸³¹

In addition, the “masse” (mass) is a daily continual offering of the savior pertinent to Catholicism (not Jesus) for the sins of the world, although the actual Lord and Savior of the Bible (Jesus) died once for all; thus the revised priesthood has misdirected away from the God of the Bible, so as to demand focus upon themselves (priesthood). As “religion” is a pathetic physical realm (fleshly) superficial mimic of an intimate devotional spiritual relationship, individuals who remain misguided continually skim atop the reality of God and actual sincere devotion; therefore never achieving the immense depth of the relationship which is necessary in order to be divinely saved from the wages of sin, and led forth unto the eternal reality! Most individuals within

²⁸²⁷ 1 Peter 5:1-11.

²⁸²⁸ 2 Corinthians 11:1-3, 13-15.

²⁸²⁹ Hebrews 12:1-3.

²⁸³⁰ Mark 2:5-7; Luke 5:20-24; cf. Genesis 39:7-9.

²⁸³¹ Psalm 66:18, 19; Isaiah 29:13-16; 59:1, 2; 1 John 1:5-10.

this form of deceptive religion never actually understand the delusive essence of the religion; for they have remained fearful of excommunication and possible ejection away from salvation, as the revised priesthood claims authority to revoke salvation! This delusive religion is one of intimidation leading to fear; which never includes reverent fear of the Lord!²⁸³²

The fact that “religion” (one) designated by God (Levitical Law) had righteous purpose in pointing to the coming Messiah (fulfillment in Christ), all other religions have always remained void of truth; and with the coming of the Messiah (Christ), even the chosen religion of God (Levitical Law) became null and void, as the imperative became one of “faith”; completely aloof any and all physical realm worship attempts or stratagems! Therefore, all physical realm religion since the earthly fulfilled ministry of the Christ is futile and worthless; for all “religious” endeavors yet skim atop the reality of God and of the Christ (glory of Christ), and thus maintain misdirection away from the depth of the spiritual reality!²⁸³³ Within the revised priesthood (Babylonian Mysteries; Roman Catholicism), a mimic of the Levitical Priesthood is endeavored; with incense, priestly attire, holy water which replaced anointing oil, and intercession for the followers; yet the fact remains that all this is a futile mimic of what was, which holds no pertinence to what is and what is yet to come!²⁸³⁴ Within all this jargon, there is complete denial as by avoidance (misdirection) that Jesus (God) and the Holy Spirit (God) is the only intercessor between human beings and God; as the Lord (God) actually intercedes for us in matters which are far too in-depth for us to understand and fulfill; as this is but one of the many blessings from God in accordance to the kind intention of His will which He performs for us within the extremely righteous and intimate relationship (spiritual relational reality) by which we are: prepared, drawn, taught, led forth, and saved!²⁸³⁵ Additionally, as if instigation and influence to focus upon the earthly priesthood was not enough misdirection leading to individuals being misguided; the revised priesthood also instigates and influences prayer to: angels, dead human beings (Mary, saints, etc.);

²⁸³² Matthew 10:22-28.

²⁸³³ Matthew 27:50-54, specific vs. 50, 51.

²⁸³⁴ Philippians 3:1-14.

²⁸³⁵ Romans 8:14, 26-34; 1 Timothy 2:5, 6; John 6:44-65; 14:6, 7.

pretty much prayer to everyone and everything other than the Lord God of the Bible! Pope Pius XII proclaimed the assumption of the Virgin Mary occurred, and this in A.D. 1950; can it be supposed that if there was any truth to Mary's assumption, it would have been known much sooner in church history! The foolishness continues as the revised priesthood declares—Mary always virgin; yet the Gospel indicates the brothers of the Lord, which proves Biblical wisdom that husband and wife must never deprive each other of sexual relations within marriage, except for a decided upon time period so that both may draw closer to the Lord; lest they fall into temptation!²⁸³⁶ Had Mary remained always virgin, she would have been causing deprivation toward her husband; and as Mary was a righteous servant of the Lord, and therefore capable of great devotion, the possibility of this occurring is completely nonexistent; for Joseph had shown Mary great loving respect, thus Mary would have done the same for Joseph!

In addition, the revised priesthood understands nothing of a spiritual nature; which explains their attempts at explanation of the reality of the Christ, through such foolishness as Transubstantiation, and how the wafer and wine actually become the body and blood of Jesus during communion. In John chapter six, Biblical explanation is rendered regarding the reality of the Christ (as is possible to the flesh), of which the revised priesthood proclaimed doctrine which attempts a physical realm explanation of a spiritual reality; which falls far short of any reality pertaining to the glory of Christ, which also remains a sham of a mimic in any regard; for the flesh cannot understand complete acceptance of the reality of the Christ, as it is not capable of doing so!²⁸³⁷ The Biblical rendering in chapter six makes emphasis upon the divine work of God necessary in order to come to the reality of the Christ, which is information which is a teaching of God pertaining to the spiritual reality of the Christ; this spiritual reality being rendered unto individuals by God during His drawing process! The point to be made is this, without the divine work of God, which includes righteous activation of an individual's measure of faith during the preparatory and drawing process, individuals will never achieve capability to come to the spiritual relational reality within which we are sealed, led, and saved hence! All that

²⁸³⁶ Mark 3:32-35; 1 Corinthians 7:1-6.

²⁸³⁷ John 6:44-67.

can occur without the divine work of God is physical realm mimics and/or emulation which remain aloof of reality, which entrap and hold captive all who never humbly acquiesce unto God for His good work to start and continue; therefore, individuals are never taken to the spiritual reality, as they remain captive to carnal false beliefs and worship attempting by emulation to mimic what they are incapable of understanding; as they remain fleshly and focused upon all that is of Satan's influence in the physical realm! This is the reason that multitudes throughout history although claiming to know and love God, have never come to actual devotion or a spiritual reality, as the "flesh" and the "Spirit" are diametrically opposed one to the other! Actual "devotion" for God is foundational to God's fruits manifest unto fruition; which can only be falsely emulated or mimicked in the flesh, along with every other spiritual reality!

In addition, the revised priesthood states that the grace which is realized and fulfilled by Jesus is also (more so) available through Mary; although she has been long past dead! The revised priesthood also states that Jesus (prior to birth) had to ask and receive permission from Mary for her to give birth to Him; thus as can be witnessed, Jesus according to their teaching is subordinate to Mary, which gave rise to Mary being the queen of heaven, which was to replace the Babylonian Mysteries queen of heaven (Ishtar). Mary (a physically dead person) is proclaimed as the primary focus of worship within this terribly deceptive form or religion; which has nothing whatsoever to do with the God of the Bible; within this foolishness, it is yet Ishtar (Babylonian queen of heaven) who is actually worshipped, just under a different name (Mary)!

Within the aforementioned delusive instigated and influenced misdirecting by the revised priesthood, and the fact that multiple millions of individuals have never gone beyond the deceptions so as to actually know of the reality of God, by God's indwelling; it becomes evident how easily human beings are led astray of the reality of God and of the Christ, though religious teachings which are never tested according to Biblical truth and standards! It is complete absurdity to adhere to and trust a religion for one's salvation, without ever investigating the origins and principles of the religion being trusted; for "eternity" is a very long time to regret laziness within complacent carnal religiosity! There is salvation only through the divine work of the God of the entire universe, which is not according to the proclamations of religion; for variations

from the truth leads only to delusive beliefs and worship, which unfortunately is the form of bondage which has held and yet holds billions of individuals captive away from the Truth (glory of Christ) by which they could have been saved!

For that which follows, please understand that any form of religion claiming—“Christianity” which denies the imperative of instruction regarding the divine work of God necessary for salvation, is but another religion which continues within the darkness of delusive denial, thereby obscuring the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ)! To further emphasize the point of misdirection leading to being misguided, multiple Christian religion ministries; which are too numerous to list; have varied terribly away from the reality of God, within seeking to appease a plethora of individuals! This occurs as once leaving one’s first love (Jesus) as by loss of devotion, many avenues of teachings come forth which deny the imperative work of God necessary for actual righteous fruition unto eternal salvation! Although the revised priesthood blatantly violates Scripture standards, as the reality of God is completely irrelevant within the religion, as they claim the authority of God to be their own; numerous other sects of religion deny the reality of God, as they proclaim simple spoken words to be sufficient for salvation. Having spoken to numerous individuals who claim to know Jesus as their Savior, a simple question is asked of them—“what does it mean that Jesus is Lord?” When the individuals evade the question by always referring back to Jesus as their “Savior,” the reality of their answers and evasion of the question directly indicates that they have no knowledge so as to render the answer. As knowledge of the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ) is necessary for salvation, as the knowledge comes from God during the drawing process; the reality indicates that the individuals are aloof the reality of God and of the Christ, which directly evidences that they confessed only an aspect (Savior) of Christ; while remaining ignorant of the reality (truth: Lord, God, Savior, King)!²⁸³⁸ This is the general result of the misdirection leading to individuals being misguided, which is the emphatic emphasis of “religion” which remains aloof of the truth (Christ)!

The primary basis which allows “religion” to misdirect, is the seeking of God from a foundation of the flesh! Because multiple ministry leaders have left their first love (devotion for Jesus); if they actually

²⁸³⁸ 2 Corinthians 4:1-6.

loved the Lord at all (ever); and in doing so have also departed the narrow path of God's righteousness; the possibility of being led by God (as He leads the endeavor, and they follow) is made null and void, through carnal focus and endeavor. Without sincere devotion for Jesus, which involves surrender of volition ("self") and endeavor with one's whole heart, mind and spirit (soul), God is not allowed to lead instruction and salvation endeavors; which leaves the only leadership available to be that of the flesh, which is foundational to carnal and secular understanding (at best). Although the reality of "Jesus as Lord" means that Jesus has the full authority of God, as He is God; I cannot begin to count the number of individuals who state that Jesus was a man sent by God. When attempts were made to explain the reality of the Christ (glory of Christ), numerous individuals stated that they did not believe that Jesus has deity; which directly evidences that the individuals are completely aloof the reality of God (Jesus as Lord), while claiming to know and love Jesus!²⁸³⁹ The misdirection rendered leading to multitudes being misguided, is according to the schemes and guile of Satan; who does not want human beings to come to knowledge of the truth, and thereby be saved (eternal salvation)! The religious leaders who misdirect are therefore held captive by Satan to do his will, while the misguided remain in the darkness of ignorance; all of which being foundational to the flesh; for *if* the individuals were being drawn by God unto the reality of the Christ, they would have understanding to seek the truth elsewhere; for within God's divine work, no misdirection can occur leading to an individual being misguided, as the entire endeavor is under the divine righteousness of God, which forces rejection of anything devious, deceptive, or coercive, as those drawn by God will in fact come to the reality of the Christ!

As can be witnessed within the account of the church at Laodicea (current-day church), which indicates individuals seeking only that which is of the world and beneficial to the flesh, leading to a faith which is solely "lukewarm"; multitudes seek not the reality of God which is pure, as they are not capable of doing so! When Jesus stated that the individuals of the church (Laodicea) should seek gold refined by fire, which indicates purity, so that they may become rich; the Lord is referring to richness spiritually, leading to the potential of a corporeal

²⁸³⁹ Romans 10:8-10, specific v. 9.

existence of purity and devotion which is dedicated unto the Lord! When Jesus stated that the “lukewarm” behavior caused nausea within Him (spit; *emew*; to vomit), He was not referring to the individuals themselves, but rather the general behavior of the multitudes (individually) in seeking only that which is of benefit to a corporeal existence; therefore the behavior which denies the imperative of spiritual focus upon the author and perfecter of faith (Jesus), and the completely misguided avenues which stays the multitudes away from the imperative to seek truth and spiritual reality, which are realized within God’s divine drawing process! This reality is proven as God seeks none should perish, but rather come to knowledge of the truth, or repentance; whichever is of necessity; lest individuals remain deceived within carnality and aloof the reality of God which could have saved them! If the divine work of God cannot be witnessed in an individual even after extended periods of time within which the individuals claim to know and love Jesus; then something is terribly wrong, for without proof of the Holy Spirit’s indwelling, what proof is there of the divine work of God which assures salvation! We must always remember, the Lord loves the individuals yet hates the sin by which we remain deceived, misguided, or deluded; which evidences why the worst abomination unto the Lord is complacency within delusive religious practices; for within believing only those things of one’s own choosing, while rejecting all other, “self” in opposition to God rejects overall truth, and by this the guilty individuals place the twig of potential bondage to their own noses!²⁸⁴⁰ Without sincerity to come to knowledge of the truth pertaining to God, and be known by the one true God of truth and light, there can be no “devotion” for God; for without denial of “self” (personal volition) within seeking of the truth, there can be no “devotion” for God; as “devotion” is impossible without surrender of one’s volition for the sake of the “devotion”; thus the possibility remains but an endless circle of spiritual defeat foundational to the flesh! It must be understood, actual “devotion” is love given with both whole heart and volition; thus the necessity for “denial of self” (surrendered volition), or love is never wholly (entirely; totally) rendered! Without surrender of personal volition (“denial of self”), there can be no seeking of or submission to the good, acceptable and perfect will of God!

²⁸⁴⁰ Ezekiel 8:1-18.

The kind intention of God's will is that individuals acquiesce unto His good, acceptable and perfect will, to receive spiritual training so as to walk by faith within God's righteous masterful leadership; which takes us forward unto the eternal reality of salvation, while training us within God's righteousness for service in accordance while in our corporeal bodies. To seek God in the flesh, or seek God while living for carnal endeavor possibilities, is to seek God completely aloof any spiritual reality; for it must be remembered that God will choose not to hear the prayers of those who harbor sinful intentions!²⁸⁴¹ To seek God aloof any spiritual reality, which is manifest by God unto spiritually successful fruition, is to seek God aloof both God's good, acceptable and perfect will, and the kind intention of God's will; which is to seek God within departure from the narrow path of God's righteousness; which is to seek God upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction! Complacent focus upon the flesh and secular world, allows this delusive behavior to continue, without the slightest notion pertaining to the reality of God and of the Christ; for a mindset upon the flesh leads only to spiritual destruction and death, when freedom could have been accomplished by a mindset upon the author and perfecter of faith (Jesus).²⁸⁴² Truly we are known by our "fruits" (actions); not by our delusive or deluded words, which have no basis in truth or reality!

A final note within the imperative to understand the superficial and delusive natures of "religion" which remains devoid the reality of God; is the statement that the reality of God is immensely real and abounding with wonderment! As has been emphasized, sincere "devotion" for God has great benefit to those who seek to walk by faith within the spiritual relational reality; which is certainly far different from the superficial mimic and attempted emulation of spiritual matters within "religion," which remains completely devoid actual spirituality! Because actual Christianity is the reality of "God at work," both willing and working for His own good pleasure within devotional individuals; please understand the imperative of humble submission unto the reality of God; which never actually begins or continues without the imperative to deny "self" (personal volition and carnal motives), for the purpose of humility and selfless submission! The Lord God must be sought solely

²⁸⁴¹ Isaiah 59:1, 2, specific v. 2; Psalm 66:16-20, specific v. 18; cf. Isaiah 64:4-8.

²⁸⁴² Romans 8:1-17; Hebrews 12:1-3.

for who He is (Lord, God, Savior); never from a foundation of selfish intention or motivation! The reality of actual sincere devotion unto the Lord, within an individual is actually a “work of God”; for only God can render the “goodness” and “righteousness” by which sincere selfless devotion occurs unto spiritually righteous fruition! As can be witnessed by statements regarding King David; King David had a devotion for God which was brought forth by the Lord, as God witnessed in the king an earnest desire to know and walk in the truth regarding the reality of God; which led to King David’s devotion for God which was emphasized, for his love was beyond the love of most others, by God’s merciful work of righteousness and goodness.²⁸⁴³ Yet King David sinned by committing adultery and murder, which involved both Bathsheba and Uriah the Hittite (Bathsheba’s husband); yet the fact remains that God forgave David, although a judgment was rendered, upon his devotional sorrow for and confession of the wrongdoing (sin).²⁸⁴⁴ As an informational note, it should be understood that Uriah the Hittite was one of King David’s thirty-seven most devout and mighty warriors; which makes evident that when we lose devotional focus upon the Lord (for any “self” based reason), the potential of causing harm to others and to our relationship with God, becomes an inappropriate (un-righteous) possibility; and this also includes all who may pay consequences of our failure to speak the truth in love according to God’s righteousness!²⁸⁴⁵ The final point to be made is this, God does indeed search the hearts (intentions) and minds (motivations) of all human beings; rendering blessing unto those who earnestly seek Him in the light of truth; while denying (negating) the selfish supplications of those who remain religiously aloof the reality of God, as by carnal beliefs, volition, and secular desires! “Religion” is useless; whereas the reality of God is everything, for our existence must truly be devotionally all about Him, or we will fail terribly spiritually throughout our corporeal existence!²⁸⁴⁶ God seeks to bless abundantly those who seek Him within the purity of truth; yet the ulterior (carnal) motives found within multitudes are undesirable for any good and righteous fruition! It is hoped that now you (the reader) may understand the imperative to love

²⁸⁴³ 1 Samuel 13:13, 14; 16:1-13.

²⁸⁴⁴ 2 Samuel 11:1-12:31.

²⁸⁴⁵ 2 Samuel 23:8-39, specific v. 39.

²⁸⁴⁶ John 14:1-16:15.

the Lord with all your heart, soul, mind, and strength; for within this selfless reality the good and righteous “work of God” may be fulfilled henceforth unto eternal fruition! Purposeful life while in our corporeal bodies is life which is lived for and unto the Lord, asking nothing in return; for within this reality the goodness and righteousness of the Lord may abound unto blessings which are ineffable (beyond words or explanation; indescribable)! A key help of this endeavor is to consider the already fulfilled blessings from God; Earth, habitability, being known prior to foundation of the world, being created unto purpose in righteousness (God’s relational righteousness)!

The Imperative of Loving God First and Foremost

The world is full of individuals who claim to love God; yet true disciplined devotional love for the Lord is a powerful spiritual motivator which allows selfless humble submission fiduciary of God’s perfect righteousness, to bring forth fruition in truth! The very first step toward spiritual depravity, is failing to love God first and foremost (sincerely without variation); which Biblically is referred to as—‘leaving one’s first love’; for leaving one’s first love is to exit one’s endeavor in fulfilling one’s purpose unto the Lord, which is always contingent to walking in the light of truth!²⁸⁴⁷ As God is spirit, righteous love for Him is spiritual as well; for it is the spiritual love which is of God’s fruits, that is rendered and manifested by God within a “drawn” believer’s spirit, that is righteously (devotionally and reverently) returned unto the Lord.²⁸⁴⁸ When an individual has left their first love (God first and foremost) because “self” has not been denied, they will no longer do the right thing for the right reason (serve foundational to God’s righteousness); for the love which goes forth unto the Lord will be the love which is foundational to the flesh, and nothing of the flesh (self) is pleasing to God!²⁸⁴⁹ As can be understood by a more in-depth presentation in chapter five, regarding leaving one’s first love because “self” has not been denied, the reality of being led spiritually by the Lord ceases, which leads to being led carnally in the flesh; which from this point allows the darkness of

²⁸⁴⁷ Revelation 2:4.

²⁸⁴⁸ Galatians 5:22, 23; cf. 1 John 4:7-10.

²⁸⁴⁹ Romans 8:6-8.

deluding influence to stay the individual from witnessing clearly the spiritual detriment which is occurring to their relationship with God. Without the spiritual leadership of God to lead the individual to walk by actuated and emphasized faith, the endeavors hence will be foundational to carnality; which causes a blinding effect (obscurity) to any further spiritual reality, as God is no longer allowed to lead the individual by faith to spiritual growth and discernment (manifested mind of Christ)! The final effect becomes that the individual becomes incapable of realizing the spiritual depravity which has been caused by the flesh, which leads to loving and serving God only with the superficial love of the world which seeks its own; thereby endeavors foundational to “self”!²⁸⁵⁰ The reality becomes fleshly and worldly endeavors (carnality; religiosity), accompanied by self-delusion that all is as it should be; although the Lord is no longer allowed to work by the rendering of spiritual blessings, which train us to walk by faith now and forever! The reality is therefore, that the devotional spiritual relationship has become superficial fleshly religiosity foundational to “self,” which denies the imperative that God must be worshipped in spirit and in truth; for the flesh is incapable of any spiritual understanding!²⁸⁵¹ When this occurs, how can the individual possibly hope to explain the spiritual reality of the Christ to others; for endeavoring within the flesh, righteous devotional supplication unto God for His masterful embrace, prior to ministry endeavor, will certainly never happen!

When individuals claim to love God, yet have never: studied the Bible, tested received instruction from others according to appropriate Biblical reality, or studied specifics of the religion they profess; selfless devotional love for God is not witnessed, but rather selfish: laziness, complacency, pride, arrogance, and/or intentional ignorance! *If* we claim to love God, should not our love be evidenced by: devotion, diligence, discipline, endurance, and righteous motivational effort?²⁸⁵² True sacrificial (selfless) love and servanthood for God is proven by God’s fruits manifest and witnessed (true reality of righteous fruition); for God is allowed to both will and work for His own good pleasure!²⁸⁵³

²⁸⁵⁰ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7.

²⁸⁵¹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16.

²⁸⁵² Luke 6:46-49; 2 Timothy 2:11-15; Hebrews 12:7-11; 1 Corinthians 10:13; Galatians 2:20; Philippians 1:21.

²⁸⁵³ Romans 12:1-3.

True disciplined and devotional legitimate children of God are blessed with doing the right thing for the right reasons; for the reality is—God at work in us!²⁸⁵⁴ Just as Jesus our Lord was hated for speaking the truth regarding the Way to the spiritual relational reality, so also are we; yet with knowledge of God’s unwavering love for us, we yet persevere in love for the sake of the lost that remain deceived, as our love for them is the unwavering manifestation and fulfillment of God’s love; for we love because He first loved us, which remains pronounced only when maintaining love for God first and foremost (first love)!²⁸⁵⁵

The Lord knowing the power and deceitfulness (when influenced or enticed) of our sinful nature, commanded that we love Him with all of our: heart, soul, mind, and strength.²⁸⁵⁶ This is the first and foremost commandment, for our benefit; for without devotional love for God first and foremost, the ugliness of “self” will assuredly coerce us to be stubborn and disobedient regarding the righteous reality of God! If we truly love God, we must follow and obey Him; which will never occur without denial of “self” (carnal volition), which always leads to forms of idolatry as we place greater emphasis upon matters apart from God!²⁸⁵⁷ The coercing power of “self” is proven by demonstration when we do not follow and obey God, although claiming to love Him; which proves that we are known by our fruits, not our words or deluding fantasies!²⁸⁵⁸

Within the unrighteousness of adolescent pride and the constant distractive prodding which it brings forth, which deludes the host individual, the necessity of “self-importance” far surpasses any reverence and love for God; by this individuals are completely blinded to the reality of their overall demeanor and character, and the fact that God knows all things even to the core of motive and intent! When prideful individuals who are actually irreverent regarding God speak of loving Him to others, they within the blinding effects (obscurity) of self-importance (prideful narcissism), actually delude themselves to believe their own false humility to be true; which when witnessed and realized by others causes extreme detriment regarding the drawing of others to love the Lord within the depths of reality! The truth remains that foolish adolescent pride (and

²⁸⁵⁴ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

²⁸⁵⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7; 1 John 4:19.

²⁸⁵⁶ Deuteronomy 6:4-9; reiterated Matthew 22:36-40.

²⁸⁵⁷ Matthew 16:24-27; John 15:1-17; Colossians 3:5; Hebrews 5:7-10.

²⁸⁵⁸ Matthew 7:16-27.

the associated arrogance) forces a delusive superficiality which edifies no one (spiritually); while potentially harming many, through deluded denial of personal reality! Anyone who truly and devotionally loves the Lord realizes an imperative to test, judge, and examine oneself rightly; for the spiritual relational reality (adoption; justification; sanctification, salvation) pertaining to everyone is of utmost importance, lest our state of eternity remain one of torment and regret!

The reality exists, that when God draws an individual to come to the spiritual relationship with Jesus, He does so by first placing the individual into a reality of selflessness; for the confession unto salvation is a matter of submissive surrender unto the authority of God, thus the confession accepting “Jesus as Lord” of one’s existence!²⁸⁵⁹ Within the cheap mimic of religiosity (Jesus solely as Savior), both God’s divine work allowing selflessness and the reality of Jesus (totality: Lord, Savior, King) are denied and/or rejected; for God cannot work within evasive mimic, emulation, or attempts to appease, but rather only in the light of truth which allows entrance into the spiritual reality of a saving relationship! Within the saving reality, it is absolutely possible to understand that seeking God with sincerity of devotional love holds great righteous submissive potential; whereas seeking God through or by religion (carnality) holds only potential for deceit and deluding influence! The saving endeavor is solely spiritual; therefore nothing (motive, intent, and action) of the flesh or of the world is allowed involvement; for the spiritual blessings of God which He renders are foundational to His love for us and our devotional love in return, which begins with God’s divine actions which place selfless individuals upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness, upon which few spiritually tread, which leads to salvation.²⁸⁶⁰ Simply stated, all of God’s blessings are foundational to the fact that God is the essence of pure and undefiled love; therefore, through the divine work of God in the salvation process, all that is of the flesh and of the world is ejected and kept aloof when God is at work; therefore, aloof the spiritual reality which is started and completed by God in love, there is no salvation! Nothing of the flesh or of the world (religion; elemental principles of the world) can change, mimic, emulate, or begin the spiritual reality which is from

²⁸⁵⁹ Romans 10:8-13, specific v. 9.

²⁸⁶⁰ Matthew 7:13, 14.

God alone; therefore, nothing of the flesh or of the world can place us into a position whereby the divine work of God will occur to bring forth a spiritual reality! God is either sought spiritually in loving seeking of the truth, which allows submissiveness unto God's divine work, or He is denied and rejected in ignorance through carnality; the former is righteous, pure, and beautiful, whereas the latter is not! Leaving one's first love (God first and foremost) which is spiritual, and this after coming to the spiritual relational reality, leads only to fleshly endeavors which holds to but a notion of continued spirituality; for failure to love and focus upon the Lord spiritually, leaves only an impression of God which leads to obdurate behavior! When obdurate behavior continues, it tends to obfuscate all continued endeavors, as prideful stubbornness and the obscurity there from tends to increase with the passing of time, when not taken captive to obedience by righteous focus, intent, submission, and humility!²⁸⁶¹

Truly devotional and sacrificial love for God first and foremost, when brought to the spiritual relational reality by God, has many spiritual blessings! These blessings include: potential complete surrender of "self" (carnal volition and desire), servitude, spiritual growth, the ability to spiritually appraise and discern, intimate and precise spiritual fellowship with the Lord, spiritual chastisement (when necessary), nurturing, exaltation, abundant sanctification, increased humility and submission, and fulfillment of righteous spiritual purpose; for we were created by Him and for Him!²⁸⁶² With the aforementioned being blessings from God which are received only through humble and submissive reverence and appreciation, and disciplined devotional focus and obedience, it is quite easy to discern why God is opposed to the prideful who choose to live for "self" (the flesh); for they deny and reject the spiritual imperative! Deceptive pulpit proclamations foundational to carnality, have added greatly to the spiritual detriment which comes forth from all elemental teachings; as multitudes serve mammon and "self," not God!²⁸⁶³

Holding to the spiritual imperative, we know that all: answers, strength, deliverance, victory, wisdom, understanding, and knowledge come from the Lord God of all creation; this realized through devo-

²⁸⁶¹ James 4:3-10; cf. Romans 6:16-18; 12:3; 2 Corinthians 10:5; 1 Peter 113-16.

²⁸⁶² Colossians 1:16, 17.

²⁸⁶³ Galatians 4:1-11; Matthew 6:19-24; cf. Colossians 2:6-10, 20-23; Hebrews 5:12-6:3.

tional reverence and the grace of God! Within this knowledge, we realize that we must take our thoughts obediently captive to Christ, lest the ways of the world and “self” mislead us along with the multitudes; for all that is of the world and of “self” is easily overpowered, influenced, and led astray by the ruler of the world who is Satan; for he (Satan) has many servants (demons; individuals held captive to do his will), who travel to and fro in unrighteousness to mislead even the elect (*if possible*).²⁸⁶⁴ All of us can fall prey to unrighteousness if we do not maintain righteous devotional focus upon the Lord; it is our spiritual devotional love which motivates us to guard our focus and thereby the direction which we travel (straight or winding), and to beware when we stand lest we fall!²⁸⁶⁵ Standing firm upon the only true foundation which is Christ, or only thinking we stand, are entirely two separate things; for the former demands devotional courage and disciplined diligent effort, whereas the latter only has need of selfish fantasy and delusion!²⁸⁶⁶ Those who do not devotionally love the Lord speak of loving Him (words only); whereas those who are truly devotional do not seek to influence by words alone, but rather put forth great effort, focus, and devotion so as to love Him with increased selfless sacrificial and devotional vitality continuously; for we know that the reality of our devotion is witnessed by His fruits in us (His righteous actions)!²⁸⁶⁷ Returning the love which God has bestowed upon us back unto Him (first love) is the basis of spiritual success; for God’s spiritual love is: selfless, sacrificial, devotional, faithful, and unconditional!²⁸⁶⁸ The downfall of multitudes is because they seek to love God with only the self-centered love which is of the flesh and world; the love which always selfishly asks “what is in it for me!” There is no such thing as a righteous intimate relationship which abounds with “self”; which is why so many individuals cannot maintain sound relationships with God or others, as they believe the relationship must be beneficial within their own volition. *If* the love which is proclaimed by multitudes that cannot maintain relationships is the same love by which they claim to love God; is there really any doubt why multitudes have a weak lukewarm relationship with God,

²⁸⁶⁴ John 17:15-17; 2 Thessalonians 3:1-5.

²⁸⁶⁵ Hebrews 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13; cf. Proverbs 4:23-27; Matthew 7:13, 14.

²⁸⁶⁶ 1 Corinthians 3:1-20; cf. Psalm 27: 11-14; 31:23, 24; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9.

²⁸⁶⁷ Matthew 7:15-27; James 1:22-25.

²⁸⁶⁸ 1 Corinthians 13:4-13.

while deluding themselves to believe otherwise?²⁸⁶⁹ The biggest problem with failure to deny “self” is the superficiality and spiritual blindness “self” brings forth; for without denial of “self” all in-depth spiritual potential ceases through obscurity!

A true example of those who do not actually love the Lord, although they claim to do so, is the fact that they do not investigate the truth so as to walk according to the reality of truth! The failure of multitudes to walk according to reality of truth is evidenced by their refusal to investigate the truth, refusal to believe the truth, rejection and rebellion against the truth, and seeking salvation through religiosity; for these failures directly indicate a contradiction regarding the truth, which is the instigated and influential work of Satan (Great Deceiver; father of lies)!²⁸⁷⁰ The truth regarding the spiritual relational reality is that our relationship with God is the primary basis of our existence; which far surpasses simple belief devoid of God’s fruits manifested and fulfilled! Within the seeking of truth in a relationship with God, there are two specifics which are being sought:

1. The intimate reality of the one true God and Savior, from within the spiritual relational reality; for the Lord is in fact—**the Way** (Acts 9:1, 2; 19:9, 23; 22:4, 5; 24:14, 15, 22) (God) of righteousness whom must be followed and obeyed—Romans 8:14; the only path (Way; ladder) to God’s spiritual realm—John 1:51, cf. Genesis 28:12); **the truth** (the essence of righteous factual reality, which makes us free from the domain of darkness and deceit—John 1:3-5; cf. 8:31-36; Colossians 1:9-14); **the life** (purposeful existence, now and forever—John 1:9-13; cf. 15:1-3, 10-17; 16:13-15); for apart from Him we can do nothing which is righteous!²⁸⁷¹ It must be understood that “salvation” is the result of the kind intention of God’s righteous will!
2. The purity of light and truth! Within this seeking, individuals strive with disciplined devotion to walk in a manner pleasing to the Lord; walking according to Biblical standards by close relational

²⁸⁶⁹ Ephesians 5:22-30; cf. Revelation 3:15-18.

²⁸⁷⁰ John 8:44; 1 John 4:1-6.

²⁸⁷¹ John 14:6, 7; 15:4-11.

association with the Lord, who masterfully leads solely in the light as He is in the light; for this is the narrow path of God's righteous salvation!²⁸⁷²

- The narrow gate which opens to the narrow Way (path) of God's righteousness (right doing) is small, and few are those who find it; for the path which leads to life indeed is specifically within the righteous standards set forth by the Lord God, which are found in the Gospel! It should be realized that the original Hebrew and Greek Biblical texts are inerrant; therefore, the most precise literal translation should be sought and utilized, lest err of lesser precise translations deter away from the reality of God's inspired Word! The most accurate and precise literal translation in the English language from the original Hebrew and Greek texts is the New American Standard Bible (NASB).

The many Biblical standards of righteousness are precise; for the Lord who inspired the standards is the one true God of absolute precision and righteousness!²⁸⁷³ To enter through the small narrow gate, is to confess "**Jesus as Lord**"; for this is the only Biblical avenue (action) of righteous humility and acquiescence (submission, even though reluctantly)!²⁸⁷⁴ Reluctance and/or avoidance in proclaiming unto God the Biblical righteous confession of faith comes from demonic instigation; for Satan seeks to stop the spiritual relational reality between individuals and God before it even starts, through instigation and influence to attempt entry through the narrow small gate without the specifics of God's instruction and righteousness! Although many translations state the specific to be—"Jesus is Lord"; this although being true (Jesus is Lord) is not a statement which specifies the imperative of submission unto the masterful leadership and authority of God! To confess "Jesus as Lord" is a statement which confesses understanding as to the absolute imperative of being led in one's existence (now and forever) by the Lord God (Jesus as Lord of one's existence)!²⁸⁷⁵ THE SPIRITUAL RELATIONAL REALITY IS A RELATIONSHIP FOUNDED UPON TRUTH WHICH DEMANDS SINCERE OBEDIENCE UNTO

²⁸⁷² 1 John 1:5-10; cf. 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; Ephesians 5:1-17.

²⁸⁷³ 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; cf. 2 Timothy 2:15; 2 Peter 1:16-21.

²⁸⁷⁴ Romans 10:8-10, specific v. 9.

²⁸⁷⁵ Romans 8:5-14, specific v. 14.

THE AUTHORITY OF GOD; PROVEN BY THE EMPHASIZED MENTION OF CHRIST'S LORDSHIP THROUGHOUT THE NEW TESTAMENT; FOR THE EMPHASIS IS TO BELIEVE IN THE LORD JESUS (CHRIST) IN ORDER TO BE SAVED!²⁸⁷⁶ Please remember, the Old Testament "Messiah" of promise is the manifest reality of the New Testament "Christ"! Just because someone comes out of darkness into the light, does not mean that they have been "born again" of the Holy Spirit; the transition from darkness to light simply allows an ability to witness the path before oneself, in order to make future decisions according to the truth of reality, for the transition from darkness to light is the action of conversion, not regeneration! The born again experience is not a matter of an individual's own decision, but rather the work of God; yet as most believe what they choose to believe, rather than believing the truth pertaining to the reality of God, these facts are obscured through the flesh, when in failing to receive righteous instruction and thereby realize the facts, multitudes have stopped at conversion from obscurity in darkness to being able to see in the light of truth, hence trusting in themselves to choose their own path unto salvation! Being truly "born again" of the Holy Spirit is to realize that we are to surrender our existence through sacrifice of it (loyalty) unto the Lord, for realizing we were regenerated because of God's righteous purpose, we no longer live for "self" but for Him who has blessed us by His divine righteous work!²⁸⁷⁷ Fantasy makes us believe we can be saved by personal choice; reality emphasizes that salvation within the spiritual relational reality is solely by God's divine work in accordance to His grace; for the fact that God considers us at all emphasizes His loving-kindness and grace, whereas our conceit dictates that we are deserving of God's involvement in fulfillment of our own carnal volition!

- To avoid the specific of God's righteousness for admittance through the small narrow gate, individuals have gathered for themselves ministers and teachers who will instruct according to fleshly (carnal) whims and desires!²⁸⁷⁸ This demonstrates the delusional "ignorance is bliss" mentality of multitudes; for

²⁸⁷⁶ Exampled—Acts 16:31.

²⁸⁷⁷ Hosea 6:6; cf. Romans 12:1, 2; Titus 3:3-8.

²⁸⁷⁸ 2 Timothy 4:1-5, specific v. 3; cf. 3:1-7.

refusing to accept the specific standards set forth by God, multitudes desire to be saved within a fantasy of personal choice (volition), while remaining deluded in believing their choices of alteration and deception to be acceptable to God! The fact remains, to deny the standards set forth by God is to reject the reality of God!

Within the Scriptures, there are many statements which emphasize the many deceptions of false leadership which lead multitudes astray; even so *if* possible the elect. Within Scripture is found emphasis of following sound Biblical doctrine, and the imperative of strict discipline so as to remain upon the righteous foundation which is Christ!²⁸⁷⁹ Within Scripture is found emphasis that we each should test, examine, and judge ourselves to see if we are actually in the faith; the reality of being in the faith is proven by God's work of sanctification, which is to separate us from the ways of the world and make us holy; for He is holy!²⁸⁸⁰ God's work of sanctification also takes us beyond the enticements and influences of the flesh; for the flesh is of the world, as also is narcissism (carnal exuberant love of self)! Although the Scriptures place emphasis upon the imperative of our spiritual existence, and this according to the kind intention of God's will that we receive training from Him for a spiritual eternal reality; multitudes seeking imperative within a corporeal existence, live for the flesh while holding to a concept of a god who will change or alter from perfection so as to appease; this being nothing less than seeking God in the flesh, while claiming to walk by faith! Within the foolishness of human carnal conceit and assumption, which is aloof actual sincere love and devotion for God, Satan easily leads multitudes astray of reality, simply by influencing the multitudes to deny truth so as to live a fleshly existence in accordance to emotional stature; this being the reason that physical realm religion is emphasized and accepted so easily, for without denial of "self" and God's work of sanctification, the flesh always seeks precedent involvement! Is our corporeal existence really of such importance that we would deny the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God, and the kind intention of His will, for the sake of a

²⁸⁷⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:10-14; 1 Timothy 4:6-8; Hebrews 12:7-11.

²⁸⁸⁰ 1 Peter 1:13-21, emphasis vs. 13-16; cf. 1 Thessalonians 4:1-8; 1 Corinthians 11:17-34; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

conceptual relationship, when such a relationship is aloof spiritual reality? Eternity is a long time to regret having denied the truth for the sake of feeling good in one's flesh; and this in addition to willful intentional ignorance regarding the spiritual imperative! Worship in ignorance is worship within delusive endeavor; thus worship of the Great Deceiver (Satan)!

- Many deceptions and delusions occur upon the broad path which leads to spiritual depravity and destruction; this easily occurring due to weakness of our flesh, when we do not stand firm upon the Rock (Jesus) who is the foundation of truth and spiritual reality!²⁸⁸¹

Those who sincerely love the Lord, realize the imperatives of Scripture emphasis according to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God! Legitimate devotional children of God understand that God set the standards for our benefit; therefore, avoidance, denial, or rejection of the standards causes spiritual detriment or outright destruction of the eternal potential!²⁸⁸² True devotional believers (legitimate children; disciples—i.e. learned pupils) submit therefore to the righteousness of God; this leading to special revelation from God which always places emphasis upon truth pertinent to the reality of God!

What then does it mean that God is the Savior of all persons, especially of believers?²⁸⁸³ Simply stated, the statement means that true believers are spiritually and devotionally loyal and therefore obedient to the standards set by the Lord God of all creation; for we do not vary so as to feel good in our flesh! Those who will not be saved have never achieved the spiritual reality unto salvation (adoption; regeneration), by the divine work of God accordant to His grace! Although it is sometimes difficult to follow and obey God, it is never burdensome; for devotional love for our Creator motivates humble submission unto deliverance in all situations! Although the Lord seeks that none should perish but that all would come to knowledge of the truth, true believers are those (remnant) who do not disregard or disobey standards set for by God's

²⁸⁸¹ Matthew 7:13-27.

²⁸⁸² Deuteronomy 4:2; Revelation 22:18, 19.

²⁸⁸³ 1 Timothy 4:10.

righteousness, whereas multitudes do; the former will be saved, whereas the latter will not!²⁸⁸⁴ The answer to the enigma is simple; when we humbly and devotionally submit unto God for sanctification and spiritual training in righteousness, we are also empowered spiritually by the Holy Spirit; which is the power by which we obtain and maintain victory over the weaknesses of our flesh!²⁸⁸⁵ The beauty of this reality never occurs when “self” is not denied; for without denial of “self” there is no submission to follow the Lord within devotion and obedience within the reality of Gospel truth! It is absolutely true that those guilty of blatant natural fleshly carnality, have absolutely no idea as to the reality of the intricate and intimate spiritual relational reality, which could save them from the wages of sin which is death; for within spiritually destitute complacency, multitudes would rather listen to rhetoric and false pulpit proclamations, than to seek reality in the light of truth!²⁸⁸⁶ Jesus is the Savior of all persons, especially of believers; because those divinely “drawn and taught” by God are the “believers” who will be saved, whereas those who remained deceived to trust religion to save them, and those who outright reject God, will not be saved! The sacrificial atonement of the Lord Jesus Christ was rendered once for all human beings; yet multitudes have and will yet reject the reality of what God has done for them!

- Upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness, there are no turns either right or left; for to cease moving straight forward to God’s upward call in Christ Jesus with maintained disciplined focus upon the Lord, is to sway or vary from the righteousness of God; which brings forth immediate spiritual stagnancy by stumbling!²⁸⁸⁷ The primary problem with carnal stumbling due to refusal to deny “self,” is that with each day that passes in failing to arise again from the stumbled posture, we will remain down without realizing the necessity to arise, as we become complacent within present circumstance! We cannot spiritually move forward to God’s upward call in Christ Jesus when we remain down and out because of a chosen carnal existence; for although the flesh receives what it desires, the will of God is left

²⁸⁸⁴ 1 Timothy 4:1-11; cf. Hebrews 5:8-10; John 12:46-50.

²⁸⁸⁵ Colossians 2:20-23.

²⁸⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; cf. Hebrews 5:11-6:3.

²⁸⁸⁷ Philippians 3:8-21.

forlorn! It is one thing to love our existence within fulfillment of purpose to follow our Creator and Lord now and for all eternity; it is something else entirely to love our “self” for the purpose of living carnally, with but a concept of a spiritual existence! The former will be delivered from bondage to the world and flesh in accordance to the righteous leadership of the Holy Spirit, the latter will not; for those who are led by the Lord are His legitimate children, whereas those who are led by the flesh or standards of the world are not!²⁸⁸⁸ Being found to be an illegitimate child of God, and therefore aloof the family of God for all eternity, will truly be a terrible regrettable reality which lasts forever! Why will the cowardly not inherit the kingdom of God?²⁸⁸⁹ The answer is simple; because in cowardice multitudes will refuse to test, examine, and judge themselves rightly to see if they are legitimate children of God (in the faith), and this because they are afraid to admit the truth regarding personal wretchedness which remains, when aloof the spiritual relational reality which is led by the Lord!²⁸⁹⁰ God knows everything about us, even to the core of motive and intent; with freedom and victory being given by God’s grace to those who will submit to follow Him in reality, what purpose is cowardice in refusing to admit the realistic truth regarding our corporeal existence, when in love for the Lord we can approach His throne of grace with humble boldness to receive truth, mercy, grace, and His masterful righteous leadership; unto deliverance! It is an unfortunate fact that most individuals place the least effort within their corporeal existence, into having a sound righteous relationship with God; for when the ways of the world and flesh lead endeavors, then the emphasis of existence remains upon those things which hold our attention and focus. As there is nothing more important than an appropriate righteous relationship with our Creator, there is really no excuse for laziness in seeking proper understanding and knowledge pertaining to the relationship; yet the fact remains that multitudes choose inten-

²⁸⁸⁸ Romans 8:3-17; cf. Hebrews 12:7-11.

²⁸⁸⁹ Revelation 21:8.

²⁸⁹⁰ Romans 8:14-17.

tional laziness and procrastination pertaining to the reality of the relationship, so that they may claim ignorance of understanding and knowledge when the time comes to render accountability for their deeds while in the flesh! What type of love does this intentional behavior example, within a relationship with the One (Lord) who has loved us with unwavering considerations and abounding grace! When the Creator of the entire universe renders grace so that we may come to the spiritual relational reality of absolute sincerity and disciplined devotion, only the blatantly selfish and blatantly prideful would dare take the blessing for granted! The entire key to our existence is to love the Lord with all of our heart, all of our soul, all of our mind, and all of our strength (first and foremost); yet the fact remains that we must go beyond “self” (personal priorities and motivations) for this actually to occur!²⁸⁹¹ It is a terrible reality that multiple millions of individuals will never know the beauty and righteousness of the spiritual relational reality, and this primarily because of stubborn pride; for within the obscurity of selfish stubborn and rebellious pride, every avenue except the righteous narrow path are attempted, and this by obscured and obdurate misdirection pertaining to the instruction, commandments, and guidance of God!

Personal Note: With anointed knowledge that my existence must be wholly devoted to God, I made supplication for revelation from the Lord that He show to me the reality of my existence in the flesh as He sees me; when intentionally aloof His: tender mercies, everlasting lovingkindness, and sufficient grace. Although the revelation literally made me physically sick and disgusted, the reality which I no longer sought to hide from brought forth increased devotion and humble submission unto Him; for in the Lord we are beautiful, whereas in and of ourselves we are wretched! Why did I make supplication to the Lord to show me the wretched reality of a life lived for the flesh? The answer is simple; within disciplined devotional love for the Lord, I wanted to know the truth, so that there would never again be denial or evasion of it, or attempts to seek what the flesh desires! Within devotional diligent study

²⁸⁹¹ Deuteronomy 6:4-7; Matthew 16:21-27; 22:36-40; cf. Luke 14:25-35.

of the Gospel so as to handle it accurately, and knowledge that it is by the Gospel reality that we will be held accountable by the Lord; I felt it necessary to have a personal jihad to eliminate the enticements of the flesh foundational to personal volition, which causes hindrance to my relationship with the Lord whom I must serve!²⁸⁹² Although it takes courage to accept the truth of one's existence in and of "self," the beauty in surrendering all unto the Lord by abiding in the Word and stepping into the light of reality, truly brings forth freedom in Christ as He makes us free (God at work)!²⁸⁹³ Never hence that time have I ever sought or even considered what I feel is deserved within my corporeal existence; for truly a life lived for the flesh is deserving of an eternity in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone (hell)!²⁸⁹⁴ The beauty of revelation from the Lord regarding our sinful nature; when we have the courage to accept it is truly motivational; for the imperative to deny "self" habitually becomes blatantly obvious and forthright, even unto rejection (full abandonment) of it! When we truly love the Lord, entering and staying in the light of truth and reality becomes imperative; for without this reality, there is no actual fellowship with our Creator!²⁸⁹⁵ When the Lord blesses someone with abundance of His heavenly gift (actual intimate fellowship with Him), He does so only when we remain in the light of truth and reality; for He is light, and cannot bless anything that is within or of darkness; yet within the obscurity of prideful selfishness, multitudes delude themselves to believe that God will alter from righteous perfection to bless their deluded attempts at self-importance, self-gratification, self-insistence, and self-sufficiency!²⁸⁹⁶ The revelations and teachings from the Lord which come forth within intimate fellowship with Him, are distinctively for the purpose of understanding and knowledge pertinent to spiritual growth in the Lord; never does the Lord render the blessing of intimate fellowship with Him, for the purpose of growth within "self"; therefore, those who abound with "self" who believe they have an abundant relationship with the Lord, not only delude themselves, but also risk being released unto the depravity of their own false beliefs and notions (depravity of mind)!²⁸⁹⁷

²⁸⁹² John 12:48; 1 Corinthians 9:15-27; Philippians 1:21-24.

²⁸⁹³ John 8:31-36.

²⁸⁹⁴ Romans 8:5-14, specific—vs. 12, 13.

²⁸⁹⁵ 1 John 1:5-10.

²⁸⁹⁶ 2 Corinthians 3:4-18.

The more we devotionally place the Lord as precedent first and foremost, the more He will guide us to love both Him and others with selfless sincerity! The closer we are to the Lord, the further He takes us from the ways of the flesh and world and the pathetic standards and ways of both; this by His righteous work of sanctification! In loving Him first and foremost, He not only literally reveals and teaches us His ways, but also leads us in righteousness so that His fruits displace the deeds of our flesh!²⁸⁹⁸ Without a willingness to deny “self,” the wonderful righteous work of the Lord will not occur; for without “denial of self” there is no further submission to follow the Lord upon the narrow path of His righteousness; as a willingness to “deny self” is the only acceptable first step to begin the spiritual journey! Within “denial of self,” He leads us to have appropriate relationships and associations, while also leading us away from the ways of the world, so as to guard us from being ensnared (taken captive); for how can we lead others out of captivity to delusion accordant to Satan’s schemes, if we ourselves have fallen prey to bondage!²⁸⁹⁹ Imagine the beauty of selfless relationships! Imagine the beauty of being able to discern all things that are of righteous importance! The wonderful fulfillment of these things is absolutely possible; we have only to sincerely and devotionally love the Lord first and foremost, while humbly submitting in a disciplined fashion so as to receive the blessings! God is awesome all the time; the only reason multitudes fail to realize this is because multitudes fail to love Him within any form of sincerity or devotion, because of the wretchedness of “self”! Within this foolishness, the Lord remains but one aspect of a multiple aspect existence, and generally remains very low upon the multitudes list of priorities!

Characteristics of the Flesh; When “Self” Is Not Denied

- 1. Deluding influence due to denial and/or outright rejection of the reality of God:** The truth of this dangerous predicament is realized by the words of the Lord; for He stated—‘I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot, I would that you were cold or hot. ‘So because you are lukewarm, and neither hot nor cold, I will

²⁸⁹⁷ examples—Romans 1:28-32; 1 Timothy 6:3-5; 2 Timothy 3:1-9.

²⁸⁹⁸ Psalm 25:4, 5; 86:11-17; 143:8-10; Romans 8:26, 27; 12:1, 2; Galatians 5:19-23.

²⁸⁹⁹ 1 Corinthians 2:6-16; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

spit you out of My mouth (NASB translation—Revelation 3:15, 16). The reality of the aforementioned statement by the Lord directly indicates that the behavior of “lukewarm” believers are sickening to Him; for the word “spit” or “spew” (depending on translation) in the Greek is *emew*, which means to vomit! Christianity (spiritual relational reality) is all about God (hot; light of truth); not about “self” (cold; deluded darkness), nor about living for “self” while claiming a relationship with God (lukewarm; delusive gray zone between darkness and light)! When individuals live within the gray zone (lukewarm; fantasy of living within light and darkness simultaneously), they allow entrapment of their spirit to carnal enticement and influence foundational to the blinding effects of foolish adolescent stubborn pride; this making null and void the necessity of a fostered meek and gentle spirit which is necessary to maintain humble submission unto the masterful righteous leadership of God, for spiritual success and victory! The primary culprit of this predicament remains double-mindedness; for we maintain belief that redemption (salvation) is all about us (self-importance; self-emphasis), rather than all about God accordant to His grace and righteousness!²⁹⁰⁰

The narrow path of God’s righteousness is the narrow path which leads to salvation; therefore a path of obedience upon which God leads and we follow!²⁹⁰¹ Within deluding influence which is foundational to our flesh, we believe that God saves us because we are deserving of the redemption (salvation) which is found solely in Him; whereas the reality remains that entrance through the narrow gate upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness is solely by the grace (unmerited favor) of God, as it was determined by God that adoption, justification, sanctification, and salvation of human beings is right doing (righteousness) accordant to the kind intention of His will!²⁹⁰² Within acceptance of this reality in accordance to God’s divine drawing and preparation, the legitimate children of God devotionally follow to receive the addition of God’s blessings for improved spiritual humility, submission, fellowship and servanthood;

²⁹⁰⁰ 2 Timothy 2:1-3:5.

²⁹⁰¹ Philippians 1:6; 2:12-16; cf. Hebrews 5:8-10, specific v. 9; Romans 8:14.

²⁹⁰² Romans 3:21-31, specific vs. 21-26; 1 John 4:7-10.

which accompany the reality of redemption (salvation)!²⁹⁰³ Proof of acquiring and maintaining of the spiritual relational reality with God is emphasized solely by the means of sincerity regarding the salvation of others; not by the seeking of personal holiness, goodness, righteousness or salvation; for the reality of God's presence motivates an individual's intentions to be upon the betterment of all others to take precedence over any betterment of "self"! The blessings of God in the life of His servants are realized (evidenced) through righteous: focus, devotion and priorities (God's)! To place this in context of God's good, acceptable, and perfect will, is to realize that as God seeks that none should perish but that all should come to knowledge of the truth, we also, with the mind of Christ, would seek and live for the very same purpose; which is the purpose of our existence accordant to the kind intention of God's will, and the reason why God works divinely within our humble and submissive corporeal existence according to His righteousness!

The reality of the aforementioned is summed up by the Lord's encounter with the rich young ruler.²⁹⁰⁴ The point of being "hot" within seeking and maintaining a relationship with the Lord, is realized by the willingness to abandon all that has been desired, worked for, maintained, and/or hoped within the flesh; with the intention of unhindered spiritual devotion and submission unto the righteousness of God, so that others may be saved; for this is the reality of surrendering unto the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God. Without willingness to abandon all that is of the flesh ("self"), the spiritual blessings of God are denied and/or rejected because of the wanton desires of the flesh; this placing individuals into a state of lukewarm-ness by choice! Within a stature of a chosen carnal corporeal existence, led by the volition of "self," all aspects of a spiritual existence which places God first and foremost is rejected; this with the rejected additions of God's strength, leadership, righteousness, purposes, and working of sanctification and holiness! The point of the matter is that there must be a willingness and motivation to abandon all that is of oneself, *if* the reality of God is to be accepted unto fulfillment of purpose!

²⁹⁰³ Romans 1:1-7.

²⁹⁰⁴ Luke 18:18-30.

Without a willingness to deny “self” there can never be a willingness to abandon all that is according to the flesh; for without willingness there can never be a reality which is pleasing to God, as we yet believe ourselves to be of importance aloof the Lord, and thereby of equal importance with the Lord! We must be willing to admit that God must be all in all in our existence (Lord), or in reality He will never be; for without actual denial of “self” so as to follow the Lord upon the narrow path of His righteousness which leads to salvation (redemption), there is no salvation, as a cold state of reality exists while deluding ourselves within a lukewarm stature! We either accept the righteous reality of God unto eternal salvation by willful denial of “self,” or we forfeit the reality of righteous purpose unto eternal torment and despair! The downfall of the multitudes who will remain eternally separated from God remains the same; denial and/or outright rejection of the reality of God, through the desires, concerns, lusts, pride, complacencies, assumptions and conjecture; which obscures and rebels against the well-lit reality which is possible when through denial of “self” God is allowed to both will and work for His own good pleasure upon the narrow path of His righteousness!²⁹⁰⁵ It is truly an eternal blessing to deny “self” even unto complete rejection of “self”; for we were truly and factually created by God for fulfillment of His righteous intentions and purposes! Without a willingness to go beyond one’s own carnal volition, the Lord is disallowed the ability to begin and continue the “good” work of which He alone is capable; for how can we be taken beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality by the Lord, *if* we absolutely refuse to relinquish any or all aspects of our fleshly existence!

Within the beauty and righteousness of God’s divine work to draw individuals to come to the spiritual relational reality, we are blessed with complete avoidance regarding: assumption, conjecture, preconceived notions, and fleshly desires; for the divine work of God in drawing individuals unto the spiritual reality, is the beginning step to a lifelong process which leads to spiritual growth and purpose! Within the corporeal lifelong process which is within God’s divine work of sanctification leading to a spiritual walking by faith even so

²⁹⁰⁵ Philippians 1:1-11; 2:1-16.

within our corporeal bodies, all that is of “self” is eventually renounced and rejected in preparation of our eternal existence with God in His kingdom. The only hindrances to the spiritual growth which is from God alone, are contingent upon the workings of our sinful nature when “self” is not denied; for God cannot lead those who are led carnally, for the imperative of the reality of God (spiritually) is denied and rejected within the seeking of carnal corporeal comfort, ease, and purpose. This is the reason why many legitimate children of God receive little actual spiritual growth during their corporeal lifetime, whereas a remnant receive abounding spiritual growth during comparable amounts of time; for where God is allowed to work there is change in righteousness, and when God is allowed to work abundantly there is abundant change! With practiced denial of “self” comes increased ability to deny “self,” for within devotional practice which places God first and foremost there is increased disciplined devotion which adores and submits to God all the more; this allowing God to work abundantly as the hindrances of the flesh diminish as the righteousness of God abounds!²⁹⁰⁶ If we selfishly refuse to decrease; the Lord cannot increase within His child’s selflessness! The reality of God, or rejection of the reality of God, is revealed truthfully through the fruits (actions) of individuals; for our spiritual purpose is fulfilled or rejected through the reality of our existence (core demeanor; character), when God is allowed to both will and work for His own good pleasure, or not!

The carnality of believing human beings (for the most part) is witnessed by rebellious involvement with the world, through disobedience to the Biblical standard that we must come out from the midst of the world and be separate.²⁹⁰⁷ Within the superficiality of the world and flesh, words (rhetoric; worldly and empty chatter; chitchat) has replaced necessary truth; for multitudes fall prey to the schemes of Satan, who wills that human beings be kept from the spiritual reality which will save them. As superficial behavior brings forth increased superficiality which denies the in-depth spiritual relational reality, multitudes through skirting atop actual devotion

²⁹⁰⁶ exemplified—John 3:25-36.

²⁹⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; cf. James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

have drawn unto themselves those who will teach according to the physical realm superficial mimic of the spiritual reality; this when accompanied by Satan's schemes solidifies the damage which is caused to spiritual wellbeing, which brings forth increased rejection of the reality of God, for the sake of comfort which is found within fantasy and delusive disobedience. Acceptance of and submission to the reality of God is realized through disciplined devotional submission and obedience, as God both wills and works for His own good pleasure; whereas, denial and/or rejection of the reality of God is witnessed where the imperative of sanctification is rejected for the sake of living for the flesh and world, which is evidenced by the absence of God's masterful righteous work because of: rebellion, rejection, opposition, and self-importance.²⁹⁰⁸

Within the blinding effects (obscurity) of carnality and prideful self-importance, multitudes trust in everything which is separate from the reality of God!²⁹⁰⁹ Multitudes believe and trust in extraterrestrials, personal endeavor, technology, mammon, religion, and "self"; while believing they are children of God, although the reality of their fruits directly evinces that they do not trust in God, as carnality and the spiritual relational reality are diametrically opposed one to the other!²⁹¹⁰ Because the fact remains that those who are led by the Lord are His legitimate (saved) children, whereas all others are not; the fact also remains that within the narcissism of prideful self-importance, multitudes within rebellion against the reality of God have denied the truth regarding the foe of righteousness (Satan) who seeks to spiritually murder multiple millions of individuals through deception and all that is of the flesh and world. Denial of the reality of God, and therefore also the imperative of being led by the Lord, has led multitudes to be spiritually destitute through the obscurity of ignorance and complacency; which emphasizes that all who live for the flesh and world are indeed held captive by Satan to deception, and the inevitable consequences of eternal torment which they refuse to acknowledge!²⁹¹¹ The primary truth which is most obscure to the

²⁹⁰⁸ John 15:1-16:1.

²⁹⁰⁹ 1 John 2:15-17.

²⁹¹⁰ Galatians 5:16-26, specific vs. 16, 17; cf. Proverbs 3:5-7; 1 John 2:15-17; James 4:3-6.

²⁹¹¹ Romans 8:1-17; 1 Peter 5:8-11; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Revelation 12:9.

multitudes in these last days of blatant carnality and prideful self-importance is this; to deny the reality of God is to deny reality; all who deny or reject reality (truth) will be deceived! The broad path of self-importance and denial of truth (reality) upon which multitudes have always tread is the broad path upon which Satan leads unto eternal spiritual destruction; the narrow path upon which the Lord leads is the narrow path upon which only a remnant (few) treads, which is the narrow path of spiritual: purpose, salvation, and eternal spiritual victory!²⁹¹²

Everyone has necessity to test, examine, and judge themselves rightly (righteously); for all who refuse these Biblical mandates remain intentionally ignorant, although ignorance leads to judgment!²⁹¹³ The test which evinces a true legitimate child of God is habitual integrity (veracity; candor); for legitimate children of God can do nothing against the truth, but only for the truth!²⁹¹⁴ The necessary examination and judgment to ascertain being a legitimate child of God is—"self-denied"; for there is no place for "self" in church, or within a relationship with God!²⁹¹⁵ The reason multitudes refuse to test, examine, and judge themselves righteously is because of cowardice regarding acceptance and acknowledgment of truth and reality regarding one's existence; which happens to everyone who refuses to follow the Lord upon the narrow path which leads to salvation!²⁹¹⁶ Being led by the Lord is everything to His legitimate children; for the Lord righteously leads in the light of truth and reality! The cowardice of the "self" absorbed multitudes, leads them upon the broad path of destruction; this derived from the fact that they choose to believe according to selfish volition, rather than according to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God! The fact remains that God's perfect love when manifested in the spirit of His legitimate children cast out all fear and cowardice; whereas all who are without God's perfect manifest love remain fearful of truth, light, and forms of reality, which is the reason they choose to believe falsely according to carnal volition, no matter how far from the light of

²⁹¹² Matthew 7:13-27; Hebrews 5:8-10.

²⁹¹³ John 12:46-50.

²⁹¹⁴ 2 Corinthians 13:4-8.

²⁹¹⁵ Matthew 16:24-27; 1 Corinthians 11:18-34.

²⁹¹⁶ Revelation 21:8.

truth and reality their chosen beliefs take them! Denial of “self” and being led by the Lord in the light of truth and reality are truly imperatives of our existence; for without these imperatives there is no proof of salvation!²⁹¹⁷

Because religious rhetoric has replaced the necessary truth of the reality of God, and because “self”-importance has taken precedence over humble submissive devotion unto God, the church since A.D. 1954 has closed the door to keep the Lord out of His own church.²⁹¹⁸ Within the wickedness of staying the Lord (truth) from entering into the church, the reality of God and of the Christ (glory of Christ) has been denied and/or rejected for the sake of carnal comfort within manmade religiosity; this due to the reality that personal self-importance and self-gratification have replaced the imperative authority of the Lord, whereas also religious rhetoric has replaced truth. Although the fact remains that individuals must be drawn by God to know Jesus, and the confession unto salvation involves humble acquiescence to the authority of God in order to be saved; within the foolishness of narcissism to the point of believing ourselves to be of equal importance with God, the reality of God has been denied and/or rejected to the point that a simple acceptance of Jesus as Savior has become sufficient within deception; although within this absolute delusive behavior, the Lord is no longer worshipped in spirit and in truth, adored, revered, served, or actually appreciated! Just as Satan was cast from the heavens initially because of his pride which would settle for nothing less than being like (equal to) the Most High God, so also has multitudes of human beings through self-importance been held captive to the very same foolish adolescent stubborn and rebellious pride, which is opposed to the goodness and righteousness of God! All human beings who claim to know and love God, who yet refuse willingness to deny “self” so as to actually follow the Lord, are deceived by the depravity of their own deluded thinking processes; which is the final aspect of complete separation from God, as although God is patient to extremes, the foolishness of multitudes through self-importance have reached extremes which can longer

²⁹¹⁷ 2 Timothy 3:1-5; cf. 2 Thessalonians 1:3-12.

²⁹¹⁸ Laodicea—Revelation 3:14-22, specific v. 20.

be tolerated or excused! All that remains for the human race (minus a remnant; few) in accordance to the righteousness of God is judgment; which will be severe beyond understanding. **Amen, come Lord Jesus** (Revelation 22:20)!

- 2. Insecurities:** All human insecurities are derived from failing to have an appropriate righteous relationship with one's Creator; for fleshly insecurities remain because of spiritual immaturities, by failure to submit to and trust in the Lord! The security which is found within the spiritual relational reality is the only form of actual security, by the grace, strength, and faithfulness of God; which will displace the insecurities which remain foundational to carnality! Within the righteous spiritual relational reality, we are led to realize that in and of ourselves we are weak and insignificant; whereas abiding in the Lord we receive His strength and masterful leadership, so as to both realize and fulfill the spiritual significance of our existence (walking by faith), which is abounding with grace accordant to the kind intention of God's will.²⁹¹⁹ Because the kind intention of God's will is that we receive spiritual blessings unto both spiritual growth in the faith and fulfillment of spiritual purpose according to His anointing, the imperative of our existence is therefore spiritual, not carnal; therefore, a life lived carnally is a life devoid of God's spiritual blessings, and this by the choices of the individual, as God cannot spiritually bless intentional chosen carnality (worldly and fleshly character)!²⁹²⁰ When led by the Lord, our corporeal existence is by stern discipline placed under the authority of God by choice, eventually unto adamancy; for by God's righteous tutelage we realize that our bodies must be presented unto God as a living and holy sacrifice, for this is foundational to righteous spiritual service of worship.²⁹²¹ Therefore, our mortal bodies are presented for service under the righteous masterful leadership of God; this service being for God not our mortal existence, thus we live for God not for "self"!²⁹²² This is the righteous relational reality within which we receive: growth, exaltation, nurturing, masterful leadership, wisdom,

²⁹¹⁹ Romans 8:14; 2 Corinthians 12:9, 10; John 15:1-8.

²⁹²⁰ Ephesians 1:3-12; cf. James 4:4-6; Romans 8:12, 13.

²⁹²¹ Romans 12:1-3.

²⁹²² Matthew 6:19-34; Colossians 3:1-25.

understanding, knowledge, and chastisement (when necessary); through literal fellowship with the Lord, which stays us upon the narrow path of God's righteousness; upon which few have the courage to journey, for the journey is difficult and in need of much perseverance and righteous focus!²⁹²³

When the aforementioned is not a matter of knowledge which is from the Lord; as simple understanding will not suffice, except to allow potential for the seeking of knowledge through humble acquiescence and devotion; carnality within delusional concept and assumption of spirituality is the best that can occur. Within but assumption, concept, pretense, and conjecture regarding a spiritual reality, the flesh leads all endeavors pertaining to God; therefore, carnal religiosity leading to emotional puffing up within the endeavors of fantasy, allow the weaknesses of the flesh to lead in opposition to the potential spiritual strength which is from the Lord; thus the inherent insecurities of the flesh continue to reign supreme in an individual's existence, as obscurity exists because the veil remains un-lifted!²⁹²⁴ The primary reason that multitudes have never actually come to the spiritual relational reality is because of attempts to love the Lord with only the insincere selfish love which is of the flesh; for devotion and humble submission unto the Lord's authority cannot occur when an individual's love expects something in return (i.e. what's in it for me)!

The spiritual relational reality with God that saves us is all about God; our blessings are rendered and received within this reality! When "self" is not denied in all things pertaining to God and walking by faith, the reality remains that in selfishness we seek to be blessed by the Lord in our flesh aloof spirituality, although all that is of the flesh cannot please God!²⁹²⁵ When we fail to love the Lord first and foremost, by returning unto the Lord the love by which He loves us (selfless, sacrificial, unconditional); as the spiritual relational reality is all about God; we within carnal selfish love consider ourselves as equal or greater than the Lord God, for the pride and arrogance of our wretched nature ("self") denies the imperative of righteous humble devotion and submissiveness unto God!²⁹²⁶

²⁹²³ Matthew 7:13, 14; Luke 8:11-15; Romans 2:5-11; 5:3-5; 8:24, 25; 15:4-6.

²⁹²⁴ Matthew 26:38-41; 2 Corinthians 3:12-18.

²⁹²⁵ Isaiah 64:6, 7.

²⁹²⁶ Isaiah 29:16; 45:9-12; cf. Romans 9:19-24.

Believing ourselves to have authority over our own existence is truly an action derived from human insecurities; this occurring because we refuse to deny our own volition (personal carnal choices), so as to humbly and submissively allow the Lord to remove us from the domain of darkness which is under the authority of the ruler of this world (Satan), for deliverance into the realm of righteous light which is within the spiritual relational reality (in Christ)!²⁹²⁷ Because of denial regarding the imperatives of truth, light, and God's righteousness manifest; therefore denial of the imperative of God's work rendered and received; multitudes will perish within the fantasy foundational to human insecurities, for without denial of "self" (personal volition and motive) we remain captive to our flesh, which is easily led astray by the enticements of demonic instigation and influence. The darkness of this reality is eternal; for we must come out into the light of truth and reality in order to be saved!²⁹²⁸ When the reality of God's imperative "good" work is not taught prior to confessions unto salvation, then the glory of Christ is neither taught; this leading to confessions made foundational to ignorance devoid of actual understanding or knowledge!

The reality pertaining to "denial of self" is simple, without willingness to deny "self" (personal volition, carnal motives and desires) there is no chosen intention to submit unto the Lord's authority for change; without a willingness to change, the Lord cannot and will not render the righteousness and strength for spiritual success over the means and ways of the flesh; without superiority of spirit led by the Holy Spirit over the flesh and its means and ways, individuals remain captive within themselves to chosen blatant carnality and all the insecurities thereof! Because the flesh is generally delusive and evasive within insecurities, the work of the devil is easily formulated and forthcoming; as those abounding with intentional selfish carnality will always look external of "self" to others, regarding matters of personal responsibilities, with a mentality foundational to bigotry, prejudice, evasion, and judgment; for stubborn adolescent pride utilizes these tactics to deny personal: frailties, weaknesses, responsibilities, culpabilities, and guilt. When individuals abound with

²⁹²⁷ John 1:5; 3:19-21; 8:12; 12:35, 36, 44-50; cf. 2 Corinthians 3:4-18.

²⁹²⁸ Acts 26:16-18; Romans 13:12-14; 2 Corinthians 4:3-6; Colossians 1:9-14.

human insecurities and spiritual immaturities, they refuse to test, judge, and examine themselves righteously; for they seek to deny the reality of their own sinful nature, which is contingent upon denial of the imperative of allowing God to both will and work for His own good pleasure (righteousness manifest). The reality of this action which is in accordance to personal cowardice can be witnessed by the individual's evasion of accountability regarding personal unrighteous behavior, as they evade or deceive in efforts to avoid a reality of personal accountability which is accordant to the faith that they profess! Although this is quite prevalent in an undisciplined world which denies truth and personal responsibilities, the fact remains that God knows all things and is graciously willing to take individuals (make them free) beyond the foolishness of the flesh, *if* and when individuals volitionally choose to submit unto God, which forces resistance to the devil; thereby forcing him to flee because of the power of God's might which is rendered unto those who are devotionally obedient! God has the power, might, wisdom and righteousness to bring forth spiritual success within individuals; yet this never occurs without denial of "self" so as to submit to God's masterful leadership and strength! A true devotional relationship with God leads to a life lived for God; whereas a self-centered relationship with God, leads to a life of delusion and evasion pertaining to a righteous reality, as we believe our self-importance to be of utmost demand!

When individuals attempt to come to Christ without being drawn by the Father, they do so in attempts to be saved from the wages of sin while living for the flesh; therefore, individuals who attempt this (multitudes; multiple millions), attempt to be saved without the divine work of God! Why would anyone attempt such a foolish and vain approach to God? The answer is simple; because of the blatant selfishness which is foundational to human insecurities, which are foundational to the flesh! Because human insecurities are foundational to the "me," "myself," and "I" of narcissism which is in opposition to the "we," "us," and "our" of Biblical unity, attempts to approach a relationship with God is attempted within the darkness of delusion and therefore not foundational to the grace of God; for although the grace (unmerited favor) of God is an immense free gift, it is neither rendered or received through prideful selfish demand or one's deluding attempts! When Jesus said... "If anyone wishes to

come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me” (NASB; Matthew 16:24); this is not a request, for the path upon which the Lord leads is the path to salvation! This fact is evidenced and realized by the fact that those who will humbly acquiesce (by denying personal volition) to the divine work of God will be saved, whereas those who seek to be saved by selfish ambition (full of “self”) will not!²⁹²⁹ This reality makes evident why multitudes will be left behind at the time God’s legitimate children are caught up (Rapture); although believing themselves to be saved, while attempting to blame God for the reality!²⁹³⁰ To delusively avoid this reality, multitudes have gathered unto themselves teachers who instruct according to the human fleshly desires and whims; not realizing the darkness, within which they journey henceforth by their own choosing, is unto captivity to Satan’s intentions and deceptions to murder them spiritually!²⁹³¹ Although human works are irrelevant pertaining to salvation, the work of God is imperative; for it is the Lord who makes individuals free from the domain of darkness upon the well-lit path of His masterful righteous leadership, yet it is our responsibility (and blessing) to follow Him!

The primary defense mechanism which is evidenced in spiritual and fleshly insecure and immature individuals is pride; for as pride causes opposition to God, it easily leads individuals to deny the immaturity of their faith and insecurities which abound within the flesh. Because God is opposed to foolish adolescent pride, which abounds with stubbornness, rebellion, self-importance, and obscurity, there can be no deliverance by the Lord; for in failing to deny “self” which is the foundation of foolish pride, the individual is fully culpable and accountable for the inevitable outcome. Although God knows all things, even to the core of motive and intent within all human beings; countless multitudes evade the truth regarding themselves, feeling within the darkness of personal delusive character that the truth is what they choose it to be, although aloof reality. Within the insecurities of flesh and false hope, when attempting to obscure the light of truth regarding oneself, multitudes impugn the

²⁹²⁹ Matthew 16:25-27.

²⁹³⁰ Matthew 7:21-23; Revelation 16:9-11, 21.

²⁹³¹ John 8:39-45; 2 Timothy 2:3, 4; 2 Peter 2:1-3.

reality of physical and/or spiritual stature; prideful in holding to a fantasy by evasion, thereby denying the light of truth and therefore the imperative necessity of God. Can we actually receive deliverance by God within a chosen deluded existence, when the reality of God is evaded or renounced through prideful denial?

Although it is absolutely possible to do the right thing for the right reason by God's manifest righteousness, it is also absolutely possible to do the right thing for the wrong reason, when led by the flesh within the obscurity of pride and insecurities! Multitudes of human beings in failing to judge or test themselves rightly according to Gospel righteous standards, endeavor continually without notion or concern as to the spiritual consequence; within this statement it must be understood that a righteous relationship with God (relational reality) is spiritual, not carnal.²⁹³² When failing to love God accordant to devotion, we as humans fulfill our own volition generally without consideration of Gospel standard or the kind intention of God's will; therefore, we go forward within carnal focus to fulfill the intentions of our flesh ("self"); whether for the right reason or wrong reason, makes no difference, as long as our own volition is fulfilled according to personal motive and intent! Within this prevalent behavior, an extreme superficiality exists which blinds us to the fact that as legitimate children we must be led by God for fulfillment of His manifest righteousness; for without this reality we are endeavoring solely in and of the flesh, which abounds with insecurities due to the lack of concern for the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God!²⁹³³ Please remember—without intentional denial of "self," derived from devotional love for the Lord, there is no willingness (personal volition) to follow and obey the will of God; although being led by God is the imperative for both security and salvation!²⁹³⁴ Some examples of the aforementioned right / wrong are:

- a. **Physical Strength** Although it is righteous (right reason) to work with appropriate diligence to keep our mortal bodies (temple of God) cleansed and strengthened for righteous

²⁹³² John 4:20-24; 2 Timothy 3:16, 17; example specifics—1 Corinthians 11:18-34; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

²⁹³³ Romans 12:1, 2; 2 Corinthians 7:10; Ephesians 6:5, 6; 1 Thessalonians 4:3-7; Hebrews 10:36-39; 1 Peter 4:19.

²⁹³⁴ Matthew 16:24-26; Romans 8:14-17; cf. Hebrews 3:7-4:10; 5:8-10.

sacrificial service unto the Lord; this same endeavor can be accomplished un-righteously in and for the flesh according to prideful motive and intent (wrong reason). The former endeavor is fulfilled humbly and sacrificially, whereas the latter is fulfilled in attempts to prove corporeal purpose through physical strength and/or bulk; the latter generally being to conceal fleshly insecurities and spiritual immaturity which lead to spiritual depravity, and this according to Satan's delusive intentions to murder the individuals spiritually! The spiritual destitution is proven when the individuals believe and emphasize their overall (physical, emotional, spiritual) strength to be proven by sheer corporeal bulk and/or stamina, although denying the reality of their own overall demeanor to be witnessed with the passing of time! This demonstrates the aforementioned superficiality which obscures the light of truth and reality, especially when combined with adolescent stubborn pride; for this is proven as the endeavors point and lead continually back unto one's own flesh ("self")! When the cleansing and strengthening has been accomplished righteously (right reason), all endeavors prior and subsequent point unto the Lord by repeated righteous focus, intent, motivation, and proclamations; all of which point and lead away from oneself, to emphasize the Lord in: thought, word, and deed! As God witnesses reality at all times, even to the core of motive and intent, the difference between fulfillment of God's righteousness (right doing; right reason) and human un-righteousness (right doing; wrong reason) is huge and undeniable!

Personal Note: Attempting to prove one's significance through physical strength (right doing; wrong reason), occurs because of carnal insecurities; believing oneself to hold the strength and stamina for ultimate success (prideful arrogance unto deliverance). The reality is actually in accordance to the fleshly notion of "Macho"; which is—"the foolishly prideful behavior of insecure individuals attempting to prove maturity as by absurdity!" **My personal definition.**

- b. Giving / Alms—Right doing for the right or wrong reason
Biblically explained.

GIVING

Although it is righteous (right thing; right reason) to financially support church leadership; *if* they have been called of God; and those who have dire need (poor, widowed, orphaned, neglected); it is the purity of motive and intent in giving, which makes the endeavor righteous!²⁹³⁵ The same monies may be given un-righteously (right thing; wrong reason), *if* personal notice or personal financial gains are within the motive and intent.²⁹³⁶ As can be noted by the 2 Corinthians 9:6, 7 verses, the standard by which giving is righteous, is when giving as purposed in one's heart; never grudgingly or under compulsion, as God loves a cheerful giver.

When in a congregational setting, *if* the word "tithe" is rendered from the pulpit; although the "tithe" ceased when the dispensation of the Law ended with the spoken ministry of the Christ; the word is mentioned in attempts to render compulsion in giving.²⁹³⁷ When this occurs, the individual making mention of the "tithe" is actually sinning against the congregation; for they are violating the Gospel standard for the sake of monetary gains! For information sake, the "tithe" was the 10% rendered by eleven tribes of Israel to support the Levites, whose inheritance by the Lord was their devotional servanthood for the Lord.²⁹³⁸ The Levites then rendered 10% (tithe of the tithe) unto the Levitical Priesthood; all of which was for the support and servitude of the Levites pertaining to the tent of meeting and Lord's Temple (Solomon's Temple), which came to a final end in A.D. 70 with destruction of the Temple, which was burned by the Romans.²⁹³⁹ The Temple of God (Solomon's Temple) had to be destroyed, so as to put full closure to all attempts to worship God as through prior designated physical realm religion which was in accordance to the Levitical Law; for with the coming of the Messiah unto manifest reality (Christ), true worship of God has been in spirit and in truth (within the spiritual relational reality), which negates the former physical realm religion which pointed to the blessing of the prophesied Messiah of promise! As the New Testament "temple of God" is actually the corporeal bodies of God's

²⁹³⁵ 1 Corinthians 13:3-7; 2 Corinthians 9:6-15; James 1:27.

²⁹³⁶ 1 Timothy 6:1-19.

²⁹³⁷ cf. Galatians 3:19-26.

²⁹³⁸ Numbers 18:20-24.

²⁹³⁹ Numbers 18:25-32.

legitimate children, to even mention the “tithe” is absurd at best; by those who serve mammon; not God!²⁹⁴⁰ Those who are not called of God to pulpit service, and those who serve mammon not God, continually attempt to attach the Levitical Law of Old Testament antiquity with the “faith” based spiritual relational reality of New Testament fulfillment; because of the distinct 10% tithe of old for the purpose of financial gains; although the standards of worship pertaining to antiquity and the standards of worship pertaining to the “faith” based spiritual reality fulfillment are entirely two separate and distinct standards!

To avoid being caught in one’s transgression by emphasis upon compulsory giving, by those who understand Biblical standards; many Pastors and ministers have placed emphasis upon the sin of “coveting” to maintain servanthood unto mammon.²⁹⁴¹ The way which this is accomplished is to bypass giving grudgingly by the promises rendered unto others by God (Job; Abraham); which is to say that individuals will receive back fifty to one hundred times more than what they have given, in accordance to blessings which were rendered unto Job and Abraham. The absurdity of this is evidenced by the fact that Job was the most righteous human being on planet earth, and Abraham was the father of many nations!²⁹⁴² As can be witnessed by the aforementioned, to give righteously is to give joyously from one’s heart; all else is derived from the foolishness of human idolatry!²⁹⁴³

ALMS

To render unto those in need is both appropriate and righteous; *if* and only *if* it is accomplished selflessly; which is appropriate in the Lord!²⁹⁴⁴ To render alms selfishly, is to render necessity unto others for personal carnal reasons; such as tax write-offs, personal notice or exultation, and/or to feel good about oneself.

The simple fact remains, when we devotionally love the Lord we will do the right thing for the right reason; whereas to be void of righteous love for the Lord, all right doing will be for the wrong reason! As has been of mention repeatedly throughout the book, the command-

²⁹⁴⁰ Matthew 6:19-24, emphasis v. 24; 1 Corinthians 3:16, 17.

²⁹⁴¹ Exodus 20:17; Matthew 6:24; 2 Corinthians 9:7.

²⁹⁴² Job 1:8; Romans 4:13-18.

²⁹⁴³ Colossians 3:5.

²⁹⁴⁴ Matthew 6:3, 4.

ment to love the Lord with all of our heart, soul, mind, and strength (fully and completely; first and foremost) was rendered by God righteously (right doing; right reason); for our Creator knows all things about us, and seeks to deliver us from the immaturities, insecurities, and disobedience of blatant carnality, by the strength and beauty of His sufficient grace! Without true devotional love for the Lord, there is no humble submission or desire to follow the Lord; therefore, as those who are led by the Lord are truly His legitimate children and all others are not, *if* the essence of our existence is not willing to follow His masterful and grace abounding leadership; how can He lead us to freedom, victory, and right doing for the right reason!

**SORCERY (GREEK: PHARMAKEIA;
ENGLISH: PHARMACY, PHARMACEUTICS)**

We all know that drugs with righteous intent are for the benefit of our mortal bodies (right reason). We also know that utilization of drugs for wrong reasons can lead to physical and mental depravity, sickness, and even death. What most individuals do not realize is that Satan has and will continue to instigate and influence the use of drugs wrongly, as part of his scheme to deceive the whole world (minus the remnant; God's legitimate children); for the purpose of spiritual death!²⁹⁴⁵ Within Satan's scheme, he also holds the intention to stop legitimate children of God from righteous servitude and maintained freedom in Christ!

When drugs are misused for personal selfish reasons or by overindulgence, they hinder an individual's ability to think clearly; this creating a welcome mat for Satan's intentions to become a reality, as by obscurity regarding the light of truth! Without the ability to think and reason clearly, individuals cannot humbly and righteously submit unto God during a confession unto salvation; this leading to a foundation for life-long instigated bondage to deception, from which multitudes will never escape!²⁹⁴⁶ Within this bondage, multitudes will be led (by Satan) to believe the deceptions of human religiosity to be sufficient for salvation; for through the obscurity caused by drugs, they will never realize, or will forget the imperative of being led by God; which never happens when our thinking processes have become clouded by unrighteous use of

²⁹⁴⁵ ref. Revelation 9:20, 21; 18:22-24.

²⁹⁴⁶ 2 Thessalonians 2:7-12.

“sorcery” (drugs)! As the veil of obscurity is lifted in Christ; the work of Satan is made evident when “sorcery” (drugs) is utilized to obscure (cloud) the light of truth; for to be led by God, we must remain in the light of truth, as God never leaves the light of truth and reality!²⁹⁴⁷ When a legitimate child of God falls prey to the wiles of Satan by un-righteous use of drugs, they also may fall prey to addiction; therefore, as a drug addict the legitimate child of God can no longer be obedient to God, thus they can no longer be led for righteous fulfillment of spiritual purpose and service! Once again, true disciplined devotional love for God could have been a powerful motivating factor, which strengthened the individual away from the addiction before it ever happened; yet by refusal to deny “self” and thereby refusal to follow and obey the Lord, bondage becomes the end result! This fact emphasizes the reality regarding the imperative to love the Lord wholly for fulfillment of purpose and service, spiritual success and victory; for all forms of bondage and captivity away from the necessary spirituality (walking by faith) foundationally come from failure to stand firm upon the foundation of our existence which is Christ Jesus the Lord!

Without denial of “self” there can be no devotional focus upon the Lord; without devotional focus upon the Lord there can be no disciplined obedience unto humble submission; without humble submission there is absolutely no potential to follow the Lord and receive His instruction, masterful leadership, nurturing, chastisements (when necessary), deliverance from bondage, and victory! All that is of this world can be utilized by Satan to deceive, take captive, distract, discourage, and bring forth spiritual death; therefore, those who live for the flesh and the world will potentially perish, eternally!²⁹⁴⁸ The one characteristic of our wretched nature (volitional self) which Satan has no need to entice or influence, is foolish adolescent pride; for because of the insolent, stubborn and rebellious nature of pride, individuals who refuse to deny “self” volitionally cause opposition with God, thereby making void all potential for God’s blessings, and this they do by choice!

Without raising a child in the admonitions of the Lord, pride and foolishness assuredly abounds, this leading to generations of

²⁹⁴⁷ 1 John 1:5-10.

²⁹⁴⁸ Romans 8:6-14, specific vs. 13, 14.

un-disciplined individuals who are susceptible to every scheme and desire of Satan.²⁹⁴⁹ As sorcery will be a primary weapon within Satan's arsenal of schemes in these end times, overindulgences of drugs (sorcery) will lead to addictions, which by obscurity will cloud the minds of multitudes; staying them from the spiritual relational reality which would have saved and led them unto spiritual success and victory!²⁹⁵⁰ It is certain that where "sorcery" is concerned, a great and real danger will occur *if* the uses of drugs are utilized for the wrong reasons! Although the world is abounding with harshness, wretchedness, meanness, and forms of idolatry which many would seek to avoid by denial; utilizing sorcery (drugs) as a means of accomplishing denial only adds to the problem, as to walk with the Lord we must remain in light of truth and reality, lest the necessary spiritual blessings of God be forfeit as well!

INSECURITIES SUMMATION

Human insecurities lead to many downfalls in life; the most substantial downfall being spiritual degradation and destruction, which occurs when falling prey to Satan's scheme to deceive the whole world (minus the remnant) and spiritually murder its inhabitants! A righteous relationship with the Lord (spiritual relational reality), allows God to displace the un-righteous deeds of our flesh by the implantation (instilling by degree) of the fruit of the Holy Spirit; which occurs only during times of devotional humble submissiveness. An additional blessing of the Holy Spirit's indwelling also includes the power of God's might that we may fight the good fight of the faith!²⁹⁵¹

All of the commandments of God are for our betterment, and obedience to God's righteous leadership and nurturing! Because all of God's commandments, and more specifically His commandment to love Him first and foremost were rendered for our existence as obedient and devotional legitimate children; the Lord rendered instruction never utilizing the word—"please," for *if* we truly love Him, and are loved by Him, we will submit to obey Him!²⁹⁵² As is being revealed repeatedly

²⁹⁴⁹ Proverbs 8:13; 11:2; 13:24; 16:18, 19; 21:24; 22:15; 23:13, 14; 29:15, 23.

²⁹⁵⁰ 1 Timothy 4:7-11; cf. 1 John 5:1-5.

²⁹⁵¹ Galatians 5:19-23.

²⁹⁵² John 3:3-7, 36; Acts 5:32; Romans 2:5-8; 2 Thessalonians 1:6-8; Hebrews 5:8-10; cf. Hebrews 12:5-8.

in this chapter, the Lord loves us and hopes the best for us by His masterful leadership, and training in righteousness!²⁹⁵³ When we volitionally choose not to deny “self,” our actions emphasize equality with our Creator; this leading to prideful arrogance and disobedience by our choice to delude ourselves by denial of the righteous imperatives set forth by God!²⁹⁵⁴ The un-righteous wretchedness of our sinful nature (carnal volitional “self”), and the schemes of Satan can hold us captive to sin and deceptive depravity; whereas the Lord God of all creation can release us from the depravity of sin and deception and make us free; to which we will submit is a matter of personal choice!²⁹⁵⁵ Without humble submission unto the Lord, there cannot be deliverance from the abounding insecurities within the flesh, which easily blinds us regarding the righteousness, goodness, and beauty of God; please submit therefore unto the Lord!²⁹⁵⁶ The best way for humble devotional submission and obedience to occur is complete and utter abandonment of personal carnal volition (“self”); please approach God’s throne of grace boldly for this reason, and receive His merciful, kind, and gracious deliverance!²⁹⁵⁷ Absolute humility and submissiveness are the imperatives of this endeavor!

SUMMATION – CORRELATION OF FACTS

God is spirit; nothing foundational to our flesh or the world can please God!²⁹⁵⁸ That which is of the flesh, and that which is of the Spirit, are in opposition one to the other; therefore, the reality remains that we must be willing to surrender all that is foundational to the flesh, in order to be led by God into the spiritual reality!²⁹⁵⁹ This truth is the reason that the righteous confession of faith unto salvation is foundational to truth regarding a willingness to accept and acknowledge “Jesus as Lord” of one’s existence; which far surpasses the deception of simply accepting Jesus as Savior, for within this deception there is no imperative for selfless submission!²⁹⁶⁰ Without the reality and willingness of selfless

²⁹⁵³ 2 Timothy 2:1-3:17.

²⁹⁵⁴ Isaiah 29:15,40:25-31; 16; Matthew 7:16-20.

²⁹⁵⁵ John 8:31-36; Romans 6:1-23; 1 Peter 5:8-11.

²⁹⁵⁶ James 4:7-10.

²⁹⁵⁷ Hebrews 4:11-16; cf. 12:1-3.

²⁹⁵⁸ Isaiah 64:6; John 4:20-24; James 4:4-6; 1 John 2:15-17.

²⁹⁵⁹ Galatians 5:17, 18.

²⁹⁶⁰ Romans 10:8-13; 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11.

devotional submission even unto surrender, God cannot lead us to the spiritual relational reality; within which we are sealed, saved, led, trained, and secured for all eternity!²⁹⁶¹ Without a willingness to go beyond “self” and that which is of the world, the spiritual relational reality will dwindle or never occur; neither will our being led by God to spiritual growth and maturity occur (*if* already adopted, sealed, and saved) during times when “self” is not denied, as without denial of “self” willingness to follow the Lord ceases!²⁹⁶² Beyond what seems to be a current form of deluding influence and effect, in believing a short visit to a church congregational setting constitutes walking by faith in following the Lord; the reality yet remains that following the Lord is a daily endeavor of Christian corporeal existence, as we follow the Lord for training and preparation for eternity in His kingdom! Actual spirituality (being led by God accordant to walking by faith) is a foundational basis of one’s existence; which far surpasses a concept of God while living for the flesh! God cannot lead us, *if* we are not willing to follow, for God’s masterful righteous leadership is accordant to the kind intention of His good, acceptable, and perfect will; never according to our carnal selfish volition! Because God leads upon the narrow path of salvation, which is the path of fulfillment of the spiritual relational reality, an imperative exists that we change our thinking processes for alignment with this fact; for without being transformed by the renewing of our minds (thought processes according to devotional obedience to God), we will not continue to deny “self” so as to maintain devotional humility to focus upon and follow the Lord!²⁹⁶³ Being devotionally diligent to deny “self” daily (moment by moment) in order to follow the Lord is imperative; maintaining love for God first and foremost is the motivation which allows fulfillment of this imperative, knowing that God alone can manifest fruit in us (His) which brings forth righteousness and goodness!²⁹⁶⁴ The reality of staying one’s journeys to remain upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness is summed up by the statement—“pray without ceasing”; for again this indicates a focus and trust in the Lord with continual thanksgiving, for spiritual success while in our corporeal

²⁹⁶¹ Romans 8:14-17; 2 Corinthians 1:21, 22; Ephesians 1:9-14; 4:30; 2 Timothy 2:19.

²⁹⁶² Matthew 16:24-27.

²⁹⁶³ John 3:3-8; Romans 2:4-8; 12:1-3.

²⁹⁶⁴ Matthew 22:36-40; Philippians 1:6; 2:12-16; Romans 10:1-4; Mark 10:18; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21.

bodies, which is foundational to devotional love for the Lord; which will never happen as long as we continue to constantly trust in ourselves!²⁹⁶⁵ Our purpose in accordance to the kind intention of God's will is spiritual, not carnal; without fulfilling the imperative to deny "self," the leadership of God cannot occur, as we are not willing to follow! Although the Lord seeks to spiritually bless us for training pertaining to His kingdom, are we maintaining our forward straight motion upon the narrow path of His righteousness so as to receive the blessings; or are we turning to and fro upon the broad path of spiritual destruction, so as to live for the flesh while expecting God to bless our disobedience? Without the leadership of God there can be no spiritual edification or growth, thus spiritual stumbling and depravity occur! Without God's strength and nurturing leadership unto security in Christ, the insecurities of the flesh will always return and abound; for there is no surety or security within anything that is certain to perish!²⁹⁶⁶ If we truly trust God, we will take the Gospel seriously, which is another reason accuracy of translation is very important; for *if* we are not living according to the Gospel standards of reality, our doubts yet abound pertaining to the Gospel truth!²⁹⁶⁷ Ignorance pertaining to the Gospel is no excuse!

The only surety and security we have in our mortal (corporeal) bodies is because of the faithfulness of God; which is foundational to the reality of God! Without God's powerful righteous work within His legitimate children (actual Christians; those who are "Christ-like"), which is due to the reality of God's indwelling, religious uncertainty and carnal insecurities remain, along with avoidance of any confidence foundational to faith and truth; for nothing of the world or of our flesh holds promise or surety, as the Lord does not bless carnal religiosity or selfish expectations; therefore, to live for the flesh and for the world holds only the reality of righteous judgment.²⁹⁶⁸ Without a devotional willingness to spiritually follow the Lord, there is no possibility of humble submission of the flesh to one's spirit, which in turn is led by God; this proven as "self" (carnal selfish volition) must be denied, for the possibility of being led and following to occur in reality!²⁹⁶⁹

²⁹⁶⁵ 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24; cf. Proverbs 4:23-27; Matthew 7:13-27.

²⁹⁶⁶ Colossians 2:18-23; cf. 2 Peter 2:4-22; 1 Corinthians 15:47-50.

²⁹⁶⁷ Romans 1:16, 17; 2 Timothy 1:8-12; 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17; Hebrews 2:10-18.

²⁹⁶⁸ Hebrews 10:26-31, 35-39.

1. There are two distinct natures of our existence in accordance to the beauty and goodness of God's unique and precise creativity.
 - Pertaining to each nature—flesh / spirit, God our Creator has allowed enticements and influences to affect each of the distinct two natures; with volition within each being to decide which nature will be dominant and which will be passive; the primary volitional choice holding the potential for leadership, with the other holding only the ability to follow, unless there is a change of thinking processes and focus. This was according to God's just creation, in accordance to His good, acceptable, and perfect will; for this reason a decisive choice for God can never be associated with indecision which is formed by double-mindedness; as within failure in this regard the flesh will never be spiritually forced into submitting to the will of God.
 - Within God's knowledge of all things, as He is the Creator of all things including living beings (with volition and two natures—corporeal and spirit) and living creatures (without volition and only one nature—corporeal); the Creator justly implanted (by creation) in the former (beings; humans and angels) the ability to decide and volitionally choose, with ultimate accountability unto the Creator for the volitional choices and ultimate decisions made.

2. One is the nature of the flesh or physical structure, and the other is the nature of the spirit.
 - Within the nature of the flesh is found great potential toward selfishness, depravity, lawlessness / sin, wretchedness, impurity, lewdness, and faithlessness; for in and of itself (physical structure existence), is found the same potential which is of the world (multitudes of structured beings); all of which are under the potential influence of Satan, who by the righteous authority of God in accordance to His good, acceptable and perfect will, was granted authority over all that is of the physical realm upon the earth (carnality). Within this is should be understood that there are two powerful forces with the ability to act against the nature of the spirit; these two forces being—the sinful nature,

²⁹⁶⁹ Romans 8:12-14; Matthew 16:24.

and demonic influence, both of which being of wretchedness and impurity which is of darkness.

- Within the nature of the spirit is found great potential toward selflessness, righteousness, holiness, purity, goodness, and faithfulness; all of which are solely under the authority, power, and influence of God within the spiritual relational reality. Whereas the flesh can be enticed and influenced by all that is of a physical existence, including the demonic forces which by the authority of God were granted authority over the same, which includes the nature of sin found within the flesh; the nature of the spirit within a being's existence can only be righteously influenced and empowered by the Lord God who created both natures. The reality is therefore that the spiritual relational reality is led, empowered, nurtured, and fulfilled by the will and work of God by His indwelling; whereas all that is of a physical realm religious mimic is easily influenced by demons, with fulfillment in the flesh.²⁹⁷⁰ The world abounds within unrighteous compromise, because denial of the imperative of spiritual strength, leads to weakness within the flesh! Being led by the Lord is a matter foundational to submissive reverence and devotion by choice; being led carnally occurs anytime a decision for God has never been made with devotional certainty! Those who are led by God are His legitimate children; whereas those who are religious in the flesh while claiming to love and know God spiritually are deceived into living a deception! Satan is the father of deception (lies); therefore, all who remain involved in the religious mimic of the spiritual relational reality are in fact held captive by their father (Satan) to remain in bondage to the flesh and world, while deluding themselves in attempts to evade the reality!²⁹⁷¹ The reality of the attempted mimic is demonstrated as religiously deceived individuals constantly attempt to emulate the righteousness of God, attempt to explain spiritual matters via human intellect and reason, and seek spiritual answers through physical realm religiosity; all of which is done solely in the flesh,

²⁹⁷⁰ Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

²⁹⁷¹ John 8:44; 1 John 3:1-18; James 1:22-25; cf. 1 John 1:5-10.

with but a concept of spirituality! With this knowledge, it is quite easy to understand why “religion” is the primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world, minus the remnant that are actually indwelled by God, trained by God, led by God, and there also sealed by God for the day of redemption!

3. Although Satan was allowed authority over the physical earth and the physical nature of our existence which is the flesh (structure); Satan has never been allowed authority over the spiritual nature of our existence; for the spiritual nature was created for the purpose of an existence with the Creator (who is Spirit), which is the reason that a measure of faith was given to each. Apart from the Creator, in accordance to the primary decisions and/or volitional choices of the being, the measure of faith is not utilized righteously, but rather in a manner to place belief in something which is under the authority of Satan, which involves the flesh. The righteous outcome to believe according to the reason God rendered a measure of faith unto each, finds fulfillment unto spiritual success and victory only by the grace of God through legitimate adoption into God’s family (by God’s indwelling); this being the reason why our corporal motivations must be in conjunction with loving the Lord first and foremost, *if* our focus, actions, and intentions are to remain righteous; for the righteousness is God’s, with manifested fulfillment through humble devotional acquiescence and obedience, as God both wills and works for His own good pleasure within those who are willing to obey Him!²⁹⁷²

- The specific point between humanity’s flesh and spirit is volition; which in our corporeal bodies is of the mind, where decisions are made pro or con regarding that which is of the flesh and that which is of the spirit. Satan has been granted authority to entice the thinking processes of the mind in accordance to all physical aspects of which he has been granted authority; yet has not been granted authority over volition where final decisions are founded. For this reason, Satan has authority to place thoughts for the purpose of enticing wretchedness according to the physical aspects of existence; yet cannot read thoughts, as this could potentially sway volition.

²⁹⁷² Matthew 22:36-40; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; Hebrews 5:8-10.

- Satan has not been allowed to sway or influence volition directly, as volition holds the authority over the final decision regarding a being's eternal existence; for it is an individual's volition to seek truth within the spiritual relational reality by submission unto God, or continue to live for the flesh while remaining deceived regarding spiritual matters; this being the reason why "double-mindedness" is extremely detrimental to any spiritual reality!²⁹⁷³ As God has knowledge of all that is of His creation; this knowledge also includes absolute precision regarding: volition, motives, and desires. *If* Satan was given authority by God to read a being's thoughts, and thereby the ability to sway volition and final decisions and choices, the possibilities and potential of a being's eternal state would be dire and bleak; as Satan by volitional choice and final decision holds to only evil and unrighteousness. This statement is pertaining solely to those who desire a relationship with God, through realizing the goodness and righteousness of God through observation; for once an individual is drawn by God to accept Jesus as Lord, nothing can interfere with God's righteous and grace abounding work!
- Because God our Creator is absolutely holy, pure, righteous, faithful and just, and thereby has the ability for beautiful goodness, He and He alone has the ability to read thoughts; within this God and God alone can sway volition in accordance to pure light, truth and reality, as God desires that His living beings (humans) be allowed an eternity of: holiness, righteousness, purity, and goodness; all of which are within the spiritual relational reality, in accordance to the kind intention of God's will in creation. It should be understood, because God willed the reality of existence accordant to His nature, He has ultimate authority throughout the entirety of all creation; therefore, foreknowledge of all that is resolute regarding all volitional beings.²⁹⁷⁴ The fact of this matter is proven by the reality that all who are drawn by God and accept His authority by devotional submission and obedience, actually come to the spiritual relational

²⁹⁷³ James 1:2-8, specific vs. 7, 8; 4:3-10.

²⁹⁷⁴ John 2:24, 25.

reality; whereas those who are “double-minded” and abounding with “self” will not, as they remain selfishly opposed to God through their own “self” indulgent importance!²⁹⁷⁵

4. Just as by God’s creation, human beings have two distinct natures, so also do angels; for they can be seen or unseen, according to the choice of the being, or in accordance to the righteous will and intention of God.²⁹⁷⁶
 - According to God’s just creation, He created in angels the same potential and possibilities according to volitional choices and final decisions, as He created within human beings. Angels can volitionally choose and finally decide to follow and obey God unto a righteous resolution; or they can volitionally choose and finally decide to rebel against God unto disobedience and a terribly unrighteous resolution; heavenly angels each chose the former, whereas fallen angels (demons) chose the latter.
 - In a like manner, human beings can volitionally choose and finally decide to follow and obey God unto a resolution of holiness and purity according to the kind intention of God’s will that none should perish; or each may volitionally choose and finally decide to rebel against God in disobedience to the kind intention of His will, unto a resolution of eternal torment. All must realize that the eternal reality will be because of personal volitional choices, and final decisions; for God can never be blamed for the eternal outcome, when the reality was because of final decisions which were in accordance to a volitionally resolute chosen character.

5. Just as there are two distinct natures to our existence (flesh / spirit), so also there are two distinct possibilities within our two natures (obedience to flesh or spirit); for the flesh holds great potential toward all that is opposing to God; whereas the spirit holds great potential by God, when led and empowered by God’s indwelling (Holy Spirit).²⁹⁷⁷

²⁹⁷⁵ John 1:10-13; 6:39-45; Romans 10:8-13; cf. Hebrews 5:8-10.

²⁹⁷⁶ examples - Genesis 6:4; cf. Job 1:6; Jude 1:6; Matthew 1:20; 2:13; Luke 1:11-14; cf. Hebrews 13:2.

²⁹⁷⁷ Matthew 26:41; John 15:5; Romans 8:5-8; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4; Galatians 5:16-25; Ephesians 2:3-10.

- The true strength of human beings, by creation, is found within the spiritual possibility which is realized only within a personal relationship (spiritual relational reality) with our Creator; this being initially according to confessed acceptance and obedience of and unto the authority of the Lord Jesus (“Jesus as Lord”).²⁹⁷⁸ The fact that God is the Creator of all things is undeniable, and this by the reality of precise design in creation.²⁹⁷⁹ Therefore, when we realize the immensity of the Lord God, we can either deny the reality which leads to wretchedness and rebellion within chosen ignorance and complacency, or we can acknowledge the one true astounding God and thereby accept reality!²⁹⁸⁰ To deny the reality of God is to deny truth; therefore, anyone choosing to deny the righteous and pure reality of God in the light of truth, has also by choice placed a distinct welcome for any or all forms of deception! Within acceptance of the reality of God, we can choose to continue living for the flesh, which allows worsening of our wretchedness; or we can accept the fact of our wretched carnal existence, and henceforth choose to realize the imperative of a personal relationship with God, for the purpose of change in righteousness.²⁹⁸¹ Anyone who chooses complacency within living for the flesh, has intentionally rejected the purity and righteousness of God; for as God is witnessed within the beauty and precision of creation, so also has a basis of good and evil been placed within each and every human being; therefore, rejection of God is also violation of the law of good and evil placed within each, which leads to intentional rebellion against the reality of God!²⁹⁸² There is absolutely no excuse by anyone for such an act of rebellious rejection of reality; therefore, the righteousness of God will abound in judgment! The reality remains, we can either submit unto God for spiritual fulfillment of our purpose in creation, which will force Satan to flee from

²⁹⁷⁸ Romans 10:8-10.

²⁹⁷⁹ Romans 1:18-20.

²⁹⁸⁰ Romans 1:21-23.

²⁹⁸¹ Romans 1:24-32; exemplified - 1 Corinthians 11:26-32; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8; 1 Thessalonians 5:16-24.

²⁹⁸² Romans 2:14-16.

us; or we can deny God by living for the flesh, which welcomes Satan to: deceive, entice, influence, coerce, and lead us astray within carnality! A remnant devotionally chooses the former; whereas multitudes rebelliously (within “self”-importance) choose the latter!

3. Quick arrogance: When prideful behavior is maintained as a defense mechanism to deny spiritual and fleshly immaturity and insecurity, blatant arrogance is generally an immediate result! This can be witnessed (evidenced) when individuals make confident assertions regarding matters of which they have little or no understanding; yet claiming vast knowledge, although their own words demonstrate a contrary reality. Regarding religious matters, many individuals adamantly speak regarding what they believe, which is usually regarding a specific of religion or denomination, and in many cases fight against Biblical truth; for within prideful denial of actual understanding and knowledge, although professing otherwise, they speak and many times argue completely from a foundation of ignorance, being too prideful and arrogant to admit little understanding as to what they profess; this made evident by confident assertions being made without actual knowledge.²⁹⁸³ The primary problem is that when referring to the Bible, multitudes are long on words and short on effort; seeking to compensate by continuance of many words and additional little or no effort, all the while denying the reality that only actual knowledge displaces ignorance! It is the responsibility of all believers to study the Gospel with disciplined devotional diligence as unto the Lord; not attempt to con or evade, foundational to ignorance and laziness!²⁹⁸⁴

The reality of multitudes attempting to know and worship God through vain and futile carnal religious doctrines, is witnessed as multitudes hold to manmade doctrines such as the Nicene Creed, which although considered a distinctive Christian doctrine, yet holds specifics such as the—“Trinity,” which is never mentioned in the Bible; for with the immensity and potential of God, arrogant mention of such things remains irrelevant, as within the spiritual

²⁹⁸³ example—1 Timothy 1:3-7.

²⁹⁸⁴ 2 Timothy 2:15; 3:16, 17.

relational reality, God reveals necessary truth to His legitimate children!²⁹⁸⁵ Within the bold and blatant religiosity of comprised and compiled human doctrines which claim Christian origins; the reality remains that adding to and taking away from the Scriptures to suit religious doctrines which attempt to explain God is not “Christ-like” (Christian) at all; for the Lord Jesus never did any such thing, as additions, subtractions, and variances to God rendered truth, opens a door for the instigations and influence of demons unto delusive behavior!²⁹⁸⁶

When new converts step out quickly within pride and arrogance, with little understanding and discipline, they shamefully obscure the reality of God; for they attempt to prove themselves fully capable of accurately handling the word of truth, of which they have only infant understanding; this action being one of blatant prideful self-importance, which is never led by the Holy Spirit! This actually occurs quite often, as individuals abounding with “self” hold little or no consideration for God and those to whom they speak, as they seek personal notice and reverence! Pride, arrogance, emotionalism, and “self” have no place in ministry; for ministry is all about God, and secondly those to whom proclamation is made, as by the selfless love of God (not emotional) we hold sincere concern that others may be blessed within the spiritual relational reality!

The blinding effects of adolescent stubborn pride, of which God is opposed, can easily be witnessed in a multitude of new believers. Having the simplest form of understanding regarding but a few Scriptures, which they have come across during the few weeks or months since coming to a basis of faith, multitudes proclaim abounding understanding of all Scripture, proven by the fact of their arrogance in refusal to converse about matters; for they already know it all! Unfortunately, when individuals who are guilty of prideful arrogance go forth and example their ignorance in a fashion (confident assertions) so as to prove vast understanding which does not actually exist, they cause dissention and confusion; this pushes the listeners further from the truth, according to the darkness of carnality, causing a scattering effect which is against Christ.²⁹⁸⁷

²⁹⁸⁵ reality exemplified—Jeremiah 33:3.

²⁹⁸⁶ Deuteronomy 4:2; cf. Revelations 22:18, 19; exemplified—Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Timothy 4:1-3.

Those individuals, who are guilty of this form of arrogant foolishness, are so blatantly spiritually insecure, that all they are concerned with is that they be an object of focus; unfortunately, many individuals of this type call themselves to church leadership, and lead many astray of the truth habitually; for being without God's anointing, and abounding with "self," they have no respect for anyone, yet demand respect because of the position they bestowed upon themselves!²⁹⁸⁸ Pridelful arrogance from pulpits breeds pridelful arrogance throughout the congregation, as a congregation led astray of truth by un-righteous manipulation of Scripture can never profit spiritually in reality; these congregations are easily witnessed by the way in which they will hold to but a few primary Scriptures as the entire foundation of their congregational belief system, proving their religion to be aloof the one true foundation which is Christ!²⁹⁸⁹ Is it any wonder why God is opposed to the proud and arrogant?²⁹⁹⁰

A reality exists, and although obscure to many due to the darkening effects of pride, arrogance and human idolatry, the truth remains that no one who refuses to deny "self" has any business calling themselves to be servants of God (delusively; within façade)!²⁹⁹¹ The Gospel truth remains that those who are led by God are His legitimate children and servants; therefore, as without denial of "self" there cannot be a selfless willingness to follow where the Lord leads, and as the Lord never leads those who are selfishly disobedient and delusive regarding the necessity of God's manifest fruit and righteousness, and as all spiritual growth and nurturing is from God alone; planting righteous Gospel seed, and the watering of the seed with and by righteous devotional diligence, can never occur unto righteous fruition, *if* and when any of these facts are made void by pridelful denial of them! It must be remembered—it is solely by the divine work of God that anyone comes to the spiritual relational reality; therefore, it is only by God's divine work and leadership within His legitimate children that pure Gospel seed and righteous watering will occur unto fruition according to the: good,

²⁹⁸⁷ Matthew 12:30.

²⁹⁸⁸ 1 Timothy 6:3-11.

²⁹⁸⁹ 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11.

²⁹⁹⁰ Romans 12:3-8; 1 Peter 5:5-7.

²⁹⁹¹ Matthew 7:21-23; 16:24-27; Colossians 3:5.

acceptable, and perfect will of God! Blinding adolescent pride and arrogance aloof God's divine work and righteous masterful leadership, causes: distraction, confusion and spiritual detriment; for no one benefits when the blind lead the blind within the darkness of selfish carnal stupidity!²⁹⁹²

4. **Carnal Focus:** Within spiritual detriment, and carnal attempts to worship God through physical realm religiosity, multitudes maintain desire for the things of the world, and a mindset foundational to the flesh, leading to focus upon the same.²⁹⁹³ Without soundness within the spiritual relational reality, because "self" has not been denied so as to follow the Lord, all that can be accomplished through thought processes are: assumption and conjecture concerning spiritual matters, a carnal mindset leading to carnal focus, attempts to achieve security in the flesh through physical realm means, delusive behavior (by demonic enticement and influence), prideful stubbornness and rebellion, self-centeredness, and spiritual destitution; for without the Lord's righteous masterful leadership, and the necessary submission to receive it, the only potential in the life of individuals is the potential of increased carnality within personal delusive beliefs!

As had been revealed prior, without true devotional love for God, the motivations of life are solely foundational to physical realm focus and intent (carnality); this being the reason that exuberant love of "self" (narcissism) leads the lives of multitudes, and why multitudes seek accomplishment and success through all that is of the world. This is the reason why religion is so profound upon the earth; for with failure to actually become spiritual by the divine work of God, and the necessary acquiescence and humility to receive spiritual blessings from the Lord, multitudes attempt to worship and follow God through the: doctrines, philosophies, precepts, ideologies, idealisms, rituals, and traditions of carnal human religion; all of which are under the instigations, influence, and coercion of the evil one (Satan)! Without a spiritual reality, all that exists to guide one's

²⁹⁹² Matthew 23:16-19, 25-28; 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; example emphasized—Romans 2:17-29.

²⁹⁹³ Romans 8:5-8.

endeavors is the flesh; all of the assumptions, conjecture, and concepts regarding spirituality change nothing; for those who are led by the Lord spiritually are His legitimate children, all others are illegitimate children who delude themselves, or are delusively led astray!²⁹⁹⁴ *If* the actions of God cannot be witnessed by His both willing and working for His own good pleasure, which never contradicts Biblical standards, then all contrived fantasy cannot make the spiritual relationship a reality! *If* God never achieves high standing upon the list of an individual's priorities of focus and existence; as God is spirit and thus never upon lists foundational to carnality; then He is not actually known; therefore, the individual is not known by God legitimately, for by choice the individuals have denied the power (God at work) of the true saving relationship (actual Christianity; spiritual relational reality)!²⁹⁹⁵ This type of choice (volitional blatant carnality), comes with dire spiritual consequences regarding behavior and the possibility of deliverance from the inappropriate as by actual knowledge!²⁹⁹⁶ Although multitudes claim to know and love God, the truth remains that *if* the Lord is not the object of our focus, then in reality He is not truly known or loved; for the reality of God's presence (indwelling) brings forth spiritual focus and growth, leading to a changed life which abounds with devotion and obedience unto the King of kings and Lord of lords! The spiritual relational reality is all about God; for He alone is deserving of our utmost devotional reverence and gratitude; the blessing of true Christians is that the Lord God knows us personally as His legitimate adopted children, and has lovingly invited us to live in His kingdom; thus we diligently endeavor to journey toward our actual home, upon the specific narrow path He has righteously constructed; for only He knows how and which way we must travel without detours in order to arrive safely!²⁹⁹⁷ Chosen carnality creates detours over mountainous terrain, where dangers lead to falling and the fears associated; although the chosen structured spiritual path is: straight, direct, and safe, which is the reason that we can neither turn left, right or backwards!

²⁹⁹⁴ James 1:22-25; Matthew 7:15-23.

²⁹⁹⁵ example emphasized—Galatians 4:3-11.

²⁹⁹⁶ 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

²⁹⁹⁷ Proverbs 4:23-27; Hebrews 11:8-10, 13-16.

5. Lack of spiritual discipline: True devotional children of God strive for spiritual discipline, so that God may deal with us as His legitimate children; for without the strength of spiritual discipline there is no controlling of the flesh; for freedom from the deeds of the flesh, which is true freedom indeed during our corporeal existence, is achieved solely in and by the Lord!²⁹⁹⁸ Those who are without spiritual discipline is plethora; for they believe a short stint at their local congregational setting once per week, sufficiently constitute a sound relationship with God. All who fall prey to this form of delusive thinking and belief live their lives for the flesh throughout the week, with only prayers of rote throughout the week to pacify religious craving. The world is full of individuals who fail to realize that only those led by the Lord are His legitimate children; this reality proven by the fact that legitimate children of God being devotionally disciplined, cannot practice sin because of the indwelling Holy Spirit!²⁹⁹⁹ Habitual violation of human laws which do not contradict Biblical standards is practiced sin (lawlessness); this includes traffic laws, which are rendered for the safety of all! Spiritually un-disciplined individuals (multitudes) fail to realize the dangers of their sinful behavior, although the reality of their behavior demonstrates (proves) they are void of the convictions of the Holy Spirit; for in most cases they are devoid of the Holy Spirit, which proves their relationship with God to be a delusive façade!³⁰⁰⁰ Where God is at work there is growth within God's righteousness; for the sanctification of believers is the will of God!³⁰⁰¹ Spiritual discipline by the grace of God always leads to physical discipline; multitudes are completely ignorant of this reality, because of the blinding effects of self-importance and the characteristics thereof (pride, arrogance, and narcissism)! Those who are without spiritual discipline are easily witnessed by the legitimate children of God, for they frequently conjure deceptions to mask the reality of their frequent deceptions and seeking of unjust gains, while compromising with the world in most aspects of their lives.

²⁹⁹⁸ Hebrews 12:4-11; Romans 8:12-14; John 8:31-36; 2 Timothy 1:7.

²⁹⁹⁹ Romans 8:14; 1 John 3:1-18.

³⁰⁰⁰ Matthew 13:37-43; 23:27, 28; 24:12, 13; Romans 6:19-23; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

³⁰⁰¹ 1 Thessalonians 4:3-8.

6. Spiritual weakness: “Self” is the foundation of personal carnal (fleshly) volition. Without denial of “self” there is no denial of the desires and motivations of the flesh and of the world; therefore, as carnality is in opposition to the spiritual reality and growth which pertains solely to God, the insecurities of the flesh far surpass the spiritual security which is from God, and thus spiritual weakness remains through the carnal decisions and actions of the individuals.³⁰⁰² The primary reason that so many believers are spiritually weak is because they refuse to study the Gospel; for increased faith comes from the Scriptures, as also the power of the Word through diligent disciplined devotional study and prayer!³⁰⁰³ Simple visits to one’s local congregation will never achieve the spiritual strength which comes from devotional studies of Scripture, prayer, and personal fellowship with the Lord! Preconceived notions and intentions destroys all potential for spiritual strength, and increases regarding actual Scriptural knowledge; for “self” leads all endeavors of this kind, not the Lord! Daily submission, devotion, reverence and focus for and upon God is the primary key to spiritual strength; for only the Lord can bring the spiritual reality to righteous fruition within all endeavors!

Multitudes are spiritually weak because of laziness and rejection of the truth! Multitudes are spiritually weak because of carnal attempts to worship God; foolishly following the status quo of the other spiritually weak who follow and argue for human doctrines and un-righteous traditions, which are influenced from the demonic realm! Multitudes are spiritually weak because they have chosen to place their faith upon other humans, upon “self,” or the things of uncertainty which are of the world; examples: money, technology, employment, theatrical fantasy, religion, creeds, doctrines, philosophies, traditions of rote, logic and reason, etc.! Multitudes are spiritually weak because they refuse to deny “self” so as to follow the Lord; from whom comes all spiritual strength and growth! Multitudes are spiritually weak because carnally choosing for themselves teachers who instruct according to human whims and desires; they never actually came to knowledge of

³⁰⁰² example—Matthew 26:40, 41.

³⁰⁰³ Romans 10:17; Hebrews 4:11-16.

Biblical truth which abounds with the light of truth, within which God makes us free! Multitudes are spiritually weak because they choose to place trust and focus upon all that leads to ease and comfort during their corporeal existence! Multitudes are spiritually weak because carnal religiosity, and its enticements upon the flesh, takes precedence over the reality of God which is solely within the confines of “faith” (in spirit and in truth)! Multitudes are spiritually weak because they hate anything or anyone who interferes with their fabricated fantasy or façade! Multitudes are spiritually weak because of carnal and volitional choices aloof light and truth; for although the spiritual relational reality starts, carries forth, and is finished by the divine work of God, multitudes have chosen contrary to the reality of God!

Praise God for the remnant (few) who have been spiritually strengthened for a life of change (carnality to spirituality); for having been sanctified (set apart) from the world and its ways, we consider God Himself to be our greatest blessing, as all else falls far short!

- 7. Emotionalism (Emotionality):** Physical realm religiosity is all about the flesh; while holding to but a concept of spirituality; which is why there must be emotional revival on a continual basis; this being the reason multitudes visit a local congregational setting weekly, while yet remaining carnal (fleshly / worldly) the remainder of the time! Because the spiritual reality of a relationship with God has not been emphasized or taught since A.D. 1954, and emotional (carnal) uplifting (puffing up) contrary to any spiritual reality has become precedent; the Lord has been kept out of His own church since that time, as those of the world have no concern for the certain necessity of truthful endeavor at all times!³⁰⁰⁴ Within this reality, teachings within the church (in general) have predominantly been regarding all that is carnally within a corporeal existence! Without the presence of the Lord in congregational settings (organized religious church), the teachings have become weak of discipline, and spiritually destitute; this being the reason why the purity of Scripture has been replaced with a verse now and again, with abundance of rhetoric throughout!

³⁰⁰⁴ Revelation 3:14-22.

Within the foolishness of church services void of convictions by the Holy Spirit (kept out), emotionalism has abounded to the point that multitudes consider emotional responses to constitute a spiritual reality; although not! Within the emotional uplifting (puffing up) of rhetorical religious hogwash (worldly jargon); multitudes although remaining spiritually destitute, have believed themselves to be obedient to God by their weekly visit, while remaining completely ignorant of the fact that they have not been led away from fleshly indulgences (sanctified); for aloof the righteous discipline of the Lord (kept out), nothing of God's sanctifying work has occurred, leaving only the obscurity of religious deceptions within fleshly emotionalism!³⁰⁰⁵ This is always the outcome of repeated religiosity, which is aloof any and all spiritual reality; for where the Lord is present, there is righteous potential for spiritual growth and edification, whereas all that is devoid of God's presence (kept out) remains spiritually destitute and delusive! This is easily proven by witnessing the "holier than thou" attitude of multitudes while at church, and the reality of their general character when away from the congregational setting! As God does not change or alter, neither do His legitimate children who are led by the Holy Spirit; for we are who we are by God's immense sufficient grace, and have moved away from the deceptive foolishness of fleshly religious rhetoric and puffing up, so as to remain within the actual loving and righteous embrace of our Lord (spiritual reality)!

The primary factor which has been avoided by religious individuals is the seeking of truth, and the righteous imperative to walk within the reality of truth! Within the preconceived notions foundational to weak and undisciplined carnal religious endeavors, multitudes have failed to devotionally submit unto the Lord; this leading to Satan's welcomed presence to deceive and mislead, for there is no deliverance or spiritual success within ignorance! It is solely by humble obedient submissiveness unto God, that the devil (Satan) is forced to flee! Instead of devotionally and obediently submitting unto God, which would force Satan to flee, the church by closing the door to deny God access, has allowed the delusive influence of Satan to abound unto spiritual destitution; this setting

³⁰⁰⁵ Colossians 2:20-23.

the stage for spiritually destitute carnal emotionalism to abound unto supremacy, while yet only holding to but a concept of a spiritual reality!³⁰⁰⁶ Is it any wonder why the remnant who truly and devotionally love the Lord, have left church congregational settings; choosing instead to diligently study the Scriptures within small group settings, or alone when other devotional Christians cannot be found? The entire problem has always been failure to love the Lord first and foremost, and failure to be separate from others who are guilty of the same unrighteousness! The primary emotional excuse has most times remained—“Oh, but it makes us feel good”! This is completely absurd, as religious emotional responses and beliefs have replaced the necessary spirituality foundational to truth (Christ), which actually pleases the Lord!³⁰⁰⁷

True devotional love for the Lord is foundational to the Lord, for it is the selfless, sacrificial and unconditional love by which God loves us; which by implantation by the Lord into the spirit of His legitimate children, is returned unto the Lord out of disciplined devotional dedication (loyalty), admiration, and reverence! This acceptable and righteous love for God, which is God’s love manifest, is not the emotional love which is of our flesh; for His love is spiritually manifested only within the spiritual relational reality, within those who have been drawn by God, and answered God’s call for devotional and submissive obedience! The love of God manifest is a wonderful and tremendous blessing which is bestowed upon those who spiritually live for God; not for “self” and the world! It is by this love that we love others and reach out to proclaim the truth of the spiritual relational reality; for it is God’s love manifest that motivates us to go unto those for whom we have no respect or likening due to their blatantly carnal and selfish demeanor; for we in love are concerned for their salvation, and therefore that they would come to an actual spiritual relationship with God, which is completely aloof the deceptions of carnal religiosity and church traditions; for in love we never instruct the lost to associate with groups which have rejected God’s presence and righteous standards!³⁰⁰⁸

³⁰⁰⁶ James 4:7-10; Revelation 3:20-22, note—the “door” is the door to the current-day church.

³⁰⁰⁷ exemplated throughout church history—John 4:20-24; cf. 14:6, 7.

It is because of the carnal (fleshly / worldly) love (emotionalism) which is abounding in groups who are devoid of God's masterful presence and leadership, that God's true servants of truth remain aloof from close associations with religious individuals; for although multitudes emotionally enjoy speaking of God when in religiously deceptive settings, they yet reject and rebel against all truth which would interfere with the reality of spiritual ignorance! This occurs because Satan's will is that individuals both deceive and remain deceived; whereas God's will is that His true devotional servants shine the light of truth into the darkness of deception, while remaining outside the darkness of close associations and relationships which could cause us to stumble.³⁰⁰⁹ Those who are held captive by Satan to maintain emotional religiosity are opposed to spiritual truth, as the fleshly endeavor is opposed to the Spirit of truth and light; whereas the devotional servants of the Lord realizing the dangers of emotionality and emotionalism, continually go forth with the reality of spiritual truth, and this we do against all adversity in love (God's love manifest)!³⁰¹⁰ The huge problem exists, that emotionally religious individuals believe themselves to be spiritual; for holding only to a concept of spirituality, they deny and reject any instruction regarding actual spirituality which would have potentially allowed them freedom within the spiritual relational reality *if* and when they submit unto God! Physical realm (ritualistic and doctrinal) religion will save no one; for we are saved solely within the spiritual relationship with God which He has deemed righteous and appropriate!

Within the darkness of church settings which are devoid of the Holy Spirit's presence (kept out), all that is carnally emphasized (rituals, traditions, proclamations placing precedence upon corporeal existence as imperative), attempts to emotionalize that which is actually spiritually appraised and discerned.³⁰¹¹ Within the darkness of flagrant emotional religiosity, multitudes believing emotional responses to be of a spiritual nature, remain captive to the guile of demonic influence; by this all hopes of escape remain hidden (obscured), as freedom is foundational to the spiritual reality

³⁰⁰⁸ 2 Timothy 2:24-26; Jude 1:20-23.

³⁰⁰⁹ 1 Corinthians 10:12; 15:30-34; 2 Timothy 3:1-7; James 5:19, 20.

³⁰¹⁰ Ephesians 4:14-16; cf. 2 Corinthians 2:9-11; 2 Timothy 4:1-5.

³⁰¹¹ 1 Corinthians 2:4-14.

of God's work, which is never found within darkness or deception! It is for this reason, that emotionally religious individuals will fight and rebel against the truth; for there is no spiritual reality within the emotionalism of organized human religion, when it is believed that emotionalism constitutes a spiritual reality; although not!

The fact remains that the initial and abounding problem within the multitudes that remain prideful and emotionally religious is failure to deny "self," so as to actually follow the Lord away from the flesh unto a spiritual reality! Without denial of "self" there remains no volitional willingness to submit unto the Lord; for "self" is all about the flesh, which is opposed to any spiritual reality; which is why all who live for the flesh "self" cannot please God and must die!³⁰¹² The reality which is neither seen or known by multitudes of prideful emotionally religious individuals, remains that in order to enter into the spiritual relational reality according to the kind intention of God's will, by His righteous drawing of individuals to the relational reality with Christ, never involves the flesh! Within ignorance regarding the matter, multitudes desire a Savior, while outright rejecting the imperative of humble acquiescence unto the authority of God; this being the reason that by the influence of multitudes, pulpit proclamations have become—simply accept Jesus as Savior for salvation, although Biblically actual knowledge must precede a confession of "Jesus as Lord" for salvation.³⁰¹³ Without knowledge of the Biblical imperative, multiple millions have never learned the imperative of the spiritual reality; for within their flesh they have sought God to serve them within the foolishness of prideful human carnal volition ("self")! Any religion or religious setting which deems God changeable by alterations of Biblical standards should be avoided at all cost; for as God cannot change from being absolutely perfect, pure, holy and righteous, neither can the truth be altered, lest the light of reality be obscured unto utter darkness within those who remain within religious fantasy!³⁰¹⁴

The spiritual relational reality begins and is carried forth by the divine work of God; therefore, there must be a knowledgeable

³⁰¹² Romans 8:5-17, specific vs. 12, 13.

³⁰¹³ 2 Corinthians 4:3-6.

³⁰¹⁴ Matthew 6:19-24; cf. Luke 11:29-36; John 1:1-5; 3:17-21; 12:35-50.

acceptance of the authority of God *if* a spiritual reality is to occur, for only God can bring forth the beginning and continuance of the spiritual relational reality which lasts for all eternity! Within the highs and lows of emotionalism, the spiritual reality remains a mystery, for seeking God in and through the flesh maintains a deception which is easily influenced by Satan and all who remain captive to the darkness of religious and carnal deceptions (by close association).³⁰¹⁵ *If* the Bible (accurate translations) had strictly remained the source of all learning endeavors pertaining to God, then the falsehoods of emotionalism and religiosity would never have abounded to the point of the entire world (minus the remnant of God's actual legitimate children) being deceived and spiritually murdered by Satan! The fact remains, only God can bring forth the spiritual relational reality within which we are adopted, justified, sanctified, led, and saved; therefore, without the divine work of God, which is never found within religion, there can be no spiritual reality, but rather only the deceptions which are so easily enticed and influenced as multitudes intentionally and un-devotionally remain full of "self," and draw unto themselves teachers who instruct according to fleshly emotional indulgence and desire!

The fact of emotionalism being abounding in the church today is proven by the many denominations which have come forth; although all believers were to remain of one spirit, mind and intent in the Lord!³⁰¹⁶ Individuals go from one form of religiosity to another, and then another, until they find a congregational setting (denomination) which makes them feel emotionally secure; for the reality of the spiritual imperative no longer exists, but rather the imperative has become feeling good in accordance to teaching which uplifts (puffs up) fleshly emotions! This is the reason there are so many kinds of religion; for Satan knows the weaknesses of the flesh and how to entice individuals through the weakness and insecurities of carnality, as he (Satan) also knows that without denial of "self" and actual knowledge of the divine work of God, the spiritual reality can be avoided unto eternal spiritual destruction (murder)! Eternity will be an extremely long time to regret seeking God in the flesh,

³⁰¹⁵ 2 Timothy 3:5; 1 Corinthians 10:1-13, specific vs. 11, 12; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1.

³⁰¹⁶ Ephesians 4:1-32.

by the seeking of emotional uplifting (puffing up); all of this because multitudes aloof believing God have trusted the deceptions of human beings who were led by the Great Deceiver (Satan)!

Personal Notation Regarding Facts: To emphasize the blinding effects (obscurity) of abounding emotionalism within religion, due to a worldwide failure by multiple millions (plethora) to deny “self,” and the ease by which Satan holds the same number of individuals at bay and in bondage, can be witnessed in the celebration of the Christian religion holidays. Actual Christianity (spiritual relational reality) is solely foundational to “spirit” and “truth”; whereas the Christian religion is copious with deceptions, the exact same as all religions upon planet Earth, for all carnal religion is aloof of the spiritual reality.³⁰¹⁷ The only “religion” designated by God was the Levitical Law which pointed directly to the preciseness of God, which by God was fulfilled fully by the coming, earthly spoken ministry, atoning death, and resurrection of the Christ (Jesus; Immanuel).³⁰¹⁸ With the fulfillment of God’s blessing to atone for the sins of all humankind, all necessity for “religion” ceased; for from that time hence the imperative became one of “faith,” for the spiritual relational reality had begun.³⁰¹⁹ With the immense blessing by God upon humanity now completed, the only practice which was to be followed was—the Lord’s Supper celebration; for this was designated by God to emphasize and proclaim Jesus’ death, until His triumphant return.³⁰²⁰ Through Satan’s (Great Deceiver) abundant deceptive work, the mother of harlots (Roman Catholicism; Babylon the Great; mother of the Christian religion) began to incorporate rituals and traditions from paganism, to ease conversion of humans from other pagan religions into the pagan religion which is the “Christian religion” (not actual Christianity); which is solely foundational to the work of Satan, as his greatest deceptive scheme is to spiritually murder as many human beings as possible!³⁰²¹

Two of the greatest deceptions within the Christian religion (not actual Christianity) which have held millions of individuals away from the spiritual relational reality, and the imperative of fellowship with God

³⁰¹⁷ 1 Corinthians 3:10, 11; John 1:1-5; John 11:25, 26; 14:6, 7.

³⁰¹⁸ Book of Leviticus; Isaiah 7:14, 15; Matthew 1:23; John 19:30.

³⁰¹⁹ Galatians 3:12-29; 1 Timothy 4:10, 11.

³⁰²⁰ 1 Corinthians 11:24-26.

³⁰²¹ John 8:44; 2 Corinthians 11:3, 12-15; Revelation 17:1-18.

in the light of truth and reality to receive freedom from the bondage of religious deception, are—Christmas and Easter; both of which have absolutely nothing to do with the God and Savior of the Bible! “Christmas” (Christ’s Masse) was Catholicism’s way of converting individuals from celebration of the winter solstice, which were celebrations believed to appease the gods who brought back longer days and shorter nights, thus leading to the well-lit warmth of Spring (Sol Invictus; sun worship). The winter solstice celebration at the time of the Roman Empire was a time to honor the Roman god of agriculture—Saturn; this celebration was called the festival of Saturnalia. Catholicism by incorporating the dates of the winter solstice and the festival of Saturnalia, did so by proclamation that the celebration event was in remembrance of the birth of Christ (Son worship); who most definitely was not born during the winter months, as at the time of Jesus’ actual birth Caesar Augustus had decreed a census which would never happen during cold winter months!³⁰²² “Easter” was Catholicism’s way of converting individuals from celebration unto the fertility goddesses of the Ashtaroth, who were believed (when appeased) to bring forth all harvest potential. The name “Easter” is derived from the name(s)—“Ishtar” who was the chief goddess of the Babylonian Mysteries Religion / Babylonian queen of heaven, and the Mesopotamian goddess of fertility and war; the second name—“Eostre” who was the Anglo-Saxon goddess of the dawn, from which came the sunrise aspect of the Easter celebration.³⁰²³ More information about the pagan rituals and traditions of the Christian religion is contained in chapter eight. Additional note, the “spirit” of these seasonal celebrations, is the spirit of deception (Satan), who by God’s authority is currently the ruler of the world!³⁰²⁴ Do we really want to “get into the spirit of the season”; I would certainly hope not; for devotional legitimate children of God must remain dedicated to the seeking of truth and remaining therein, without: variation, compromise, or excuse!³⁰²⁵

To further emphasize the point of how “religion” being foundational to the work of Satan is alterable (changeable) within deception upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction, can be evidenced

³⁰²² Luke 2:1-5.

³⁰²³ ref. Jeremiah 7:18; 44:16-29.

³⁰²⁴ John 14:30, 31.

³⁰²⁵ 2 Corinthians 13:5-8, specific—v. 8.

by the study of history. A few reiterative facts can assist regarding deceptive religious changes within the Christian religion (foundational to Catholicism; not Christ).

1. The priesthood of the Babylonians Mysteries Religion invaded into the beauty of Christianity through the church at Pergamum in the second century A.D., this occurred as Satan sent forth his servants to introduce falsehoods, which would inevitably lead a plethora of individuals astray of the truth (Jesus; God), and thereby astray of the spiritual relational reality.³⁰²⁶ It must be remembered, Satan's scheme is to murder human beings spiritually! The delusive ways of the Babylonian Mysteries religion was then tolerated in the third century A.D., and became the primary influence by Satan which changed (altered) the beauty of Christianity (light and truth) into the Christian religion (darkness and deception) by the fourth century A.D.; for it was fully accepted!³⁰²⁷ Reiterative, the goddesses of the Ashtaroth and the Baals are associated with the Babylonian religion through—Ishtar. The primary deity of the Babylonian Mysteries religion was—Ishtar, the: Great Mother, goddess of fertility / harvest / war (variations within different Mesopotamian / Canaanite peoples or nations), “queen of heaven.” The great delusive comparison to Christianity came as “Ishtar” being the great mother goddess was portrayed as a mother with a child at her breast. This was then associated by comparison to Mary and Jesus as mother and Son; as the delusive foundational basis for attachment to Christianity, which was the threshold and origin of the deceptive (pagan) Christian religion. To prove that the Babylonian Mysteries religion has been the primary pagan religion utilized by Satan to lead human beings who seek the one true God astray, it should also be realized that Ishtar was closely associated during history of antiquity with a consort named—Tammuz.³⁰²⁸ Additionally, the nations which would lead astray the chosen of God with forms of the Babylonian religion fertility gods and goddesses, by close vicinity association, were to be utterly destroyed, the: Amorites, Hittites,

³⁰²⁶ Revelation 2:12-17.

³⁰²⁷ Revelation 2:20-26; cf. Jezebel—1 Kings 16:31-33; 18:3-19:18.

³⁰²⁸ Ezekiel 8:1-18.

Perizzites, Canaanites, Hivites, Girgashites, and Jebusites; for had the masterful leadership (commands) of the Lord been exactly followed, the Babylonian religion would have ceased causing religious (old; Levitical Law) and spiritual (new; Christianity, i.e. spiritual relational reality) harm to the chosen of God!³⁰²⁹ Within “self” and the disobedience thereof, a plethora of individuals have been forced to suffer the consequences for generations; this examples the dread and detriment which is inflicted upon others, when individuals before them have rejected the specific (exact) directions and instructions (commands) of the Lord; which directly proves that the righteousness of God must be followed at all times, or stumbling and detriment will always occur! “Self-centeredness” (blatant obedience to the flesh) has absolutely no place within a righteous relationship with God; thus to be devotionally dedicated and obedient to the Lord, “self” must be abandoned (habitually denied and rejected)!³⁰³⁰

2. The Roman Catholic doctrines of Immaculate Conception and the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary are furtherance of the deceptive nature of the Christian religion! By the doctrine of Immaculate Conception, Mary was not born into the original sin of humankind (Adam), and this doctrine to emphasize purity in Mary apart from all other human beings; yet the fact remains that all human beings with a human father are guilty of the original sin by which human accountability for sin is derived! This doctrine was necessary to facilitate the deception of Mary being the “queen of heaven” within the Christian religion! Please recall the Babylonian Mysteries religion—Ishtar was “queen of heaven.” In A.D. 1950 Pope Pius XII decreed the Assumption of the Blessed Virgin Mary; which is but a continuance of the religious deceptions which have been attempting defilement of Christianity through the pagan Christian religion, since the fourth century A.D. Another of the falsehoods which violate Biblical truth within Catholicism is—“Mary always virgin”; which Biblically would mean that Mary sinned against her husband Joseph habitually throughout their marriage!³⁰³¹

³⁰²⁹ Deuteronomy 7:1-16; cf. 20:16-18; cf. obedience—4:1-40.

³⁰³⁰ Romans 8:1-17.

Would the Lord have blessed Mary with giving birth to the Messiah (reality manifested—Christ), *if* she was a practicing habitual sinner; absolutely not!³⁰³²

3. An additional form of blatant darkness foundational to Roman Catholicism is the praying to Mary and assorted saints, who supposedly can be prayed to for intervention. *If* praying for the dead violates Gospel standards of righteousness, praying to dead individuals is absolutely unrighteous and sinful.³⁰³³ With the Christian religion (not Christianity) remaining foundational to carnal emotionalism and religious rituals and traditions (of rote), there remains no wonder why the religion changes to suit religiosity and human frailties; for alterations within darkness all yet remain of darkness, whereas the truth can never change or be altered lest the outcome become yet another deception! All variable (alterable) religion involves worship of the Great Deceiver (Satan); for deception is his greatest weapon within religiosity, by which multitudes have and will continue to be spiritually murdered!

The point to be made by these specifics of reality regarding the deceptive “Christian religion” which was founded by the “mother of harlotry” (Babylonian Mysteries [antiquity] / Roman Catholic Church [church history]), is the fact of how badly multiply millions of individuals have been led astray of truth regarding an actual relationship with God, by Satan throughout history; and the factor within individuals which has been the root cause of the obscurity regarding the light of truth! The key factor to be realized is that religions of falsehoods have always utilized the two sources of human nature which is so easily influenced by Satan; the sources being fear, and the emotionalism of the flesh, because of refusal to deny carnal volition (“self”); so as to humbly and devotionally acquiesce to the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God!

Within failure to deny—“self” (personal carnal volition), a plethora of individuals throughout history, have been led astray (by Satan and carnal obscurity) because of allowing endeavors of the flesh to lead

³⁰³¹ Matthew 12:46-50; 1 Corinthians 7:3-5.

³⁰³² 1 John 3:4-12; cf. Luke 1:43-56, specific—vs. 46-48.

³⁰³³ 1 John 5:14-17.

involvement within all aspects of worship; although the flesh is opposed to the spiritual reality necessary in order to know, be known by, and please God!³⁰³⁴ This fact proves that multitudes were never taught the spiritual imperative necessary to worship God accordant to “faith,” in spirit and in truth; thus multitudes have submitted unto the deceptions of Satan through physical realm (fleshly; carnal) religious worship, which never having achieved the spiritual reality by the divine work of God, continued forth completely in the darkness of delusive beliefs and religious practices! This delusive reality is further proven as multitudes look forward to worship in darkness each year according to traditional practices, while remaining completely ignorant that deceptive worship and religious practices hold spiritual consequences within a relationship with God! The reality of this is that multitudes have never been taken beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality by God’s gracious divine work; thus all the endeavors were of the flesh and never went beyond emotional responses to religious stimuli! This then is also proven by the multitudes who claim to have had great “spiritual uplifting” by visitation to Jerusalem; although Jerusalem holds no “spiritual” significance whatsoever in worship of God, thus once again emotional responses are believed to be of spiritual significance, although the flesh and the Spirit are in opposition!³⁰³⁵ Satan absolutely knows that aloof the spiritual relational reality there will be no salvation, and in accordance to this fact, that the rituals and traditions of religiosity entice the flesh to lead emotional involvement so as to mimic spirituality within the carnal darkness of deception and fantasy; therefore, ritualistic and doctrinal (emotional; intellectual) religion to be a tremendous tool for deception which assuredly allows enticements and influences to mislead away from the light of truth and reality!

To further emphasize the point, let us now look at another reality which involves—Islam. Mohammed was initially seeking the one true God, which was the cause of his exile from Mecca. Upon gaining followers, Mohammed unfortunately was turned from his spiritual pursuits to realize and know the one true God, by allowing attentiveness and praise from his followers to rest upon himself; when he should have always directed all attention by everyone to the fact of God according to

³⁰³⁴ Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 4:4-11; 5:17.

³⁰³⁵ John 4:19-24, specific vs. 22-24; Galatians 4:3-11, specific vs. 8-11; 5:16-26, specific v. 16-18.

his initial pursuits. Upon leaving the spiritual pursuit to realize and know the one true God, the flesh and the emotionalism of the flesh took hold of the endeavors henceforth, which led to the origins of another deceptive religion which could not be led by God because of the darkness of fleshly indulgences, and furthered pursuits within the flesh! The praise and adoration of Mohammed's followers influenced Mohammed to leadership within worldly endeavors, which completely ended His pursuits regarding the imperative spiritual relationship with God, which were Mohammed's initial endeavors! Had Mohammed stayed upon the original course in pursuit of truth, he could have been drawn by God to know the Messiah (Christ); which is the same one true God of Christianity, as there is but one true God; yet because of the flesh and the misleading of Satan through emotionalism foundational to "self" was led astray; just as a plethora of believers within the Christian religion and Islam have been led astray into the darkness of deception because of the same reason! For information sake, Mohammed had stated that he believed Jesus to be a true prophet; as a true prophet can never make wrong statements or predictions (eschatology), and Jesus claimed to be the Messiah, so is revealed the truth which Mohammed could have realized!³⁰³⁶ Imagine what the outcome could have been, had Mohammed returned to the core of his beliefs and endeavors; thereby staying from further distractions. A plethora of individuals within both Islam and Christianity (both of which endeavor to know the one true God) have made this same mistake throughout history, as they continued upon the paths of distractions rather than returning to the core of initial spiritual beliefs and investigation of truth!

Just as the deceptions of the Christian religion have brought forth alterations and delusive traditions; as within delusive religion multiple directions upon the broad path which leads to spiritual destruction can be endeavored; so also occurred within Islam, when Mohammed's endeavors were no longer foundational to walking within undistracted truth, during the endeavor of spiritually seeking God! Please understand—no person can criticize Mohammed for making the same mistake which has been made by millions of individuals throughout history; for multitudes have been misled away from the spiritual reality, because of return to endeavors in the flesh which are foundational to

³⁰³⁶ John 4:25, 26; cf. Hebrews 1:1-4; Revelation 1:1-3.

“self”! Just as Mohammed failed to cross the threshold into the spiritual realm reality by the divine work of God within His drawing and teaching unto the knowledgeable reality, because of distraction when approaching the threshold; for the exact same reason a plethora of individuals have failed throughout history; when a distraction, discouragement, or immediate need of emphasized self-importance arose, turned the individuals to the right or left at a crucial time when at the threshold of realization, when God would have divinely brought them to the spiritual imperative!³⁰³⁷ This occurs frequently, as Satan and his demons must stop the seeking process prior to God’s divine work; for once God’s drawing and teaching process begins, all potential to stop the spiritual relational reality ceases! Continuing further unto spiritual growth, edification, and exultation by the Lord is an entirely different matter; yet as the divine work of God saves an individual, hindrances can only stop the individual from serving God in the light of truth, which is why the harvest has always been plentiful, and the servants of truth few; for without continual disciplined and devotional focus and submission within humility unto the Lord, deterrents happen quickly, effectively, and many times hold lasting effects!³⁰³⁸ Strict disciplined devotion and submission unto God (in reality) is the only way to remain focused upon God, through all distractions and deterrents; this being the reason for the “great foremost commandment” of the Law, and why within the spiritual relational reality foundational to strict disciplined faith we actually establish the Law!³⁰³⁹

The word—“infidel” directly indicates someone who does not have faith so as to know God, or someone who outright rejects God. During the Crusades to regain control of Jerusalem, members of the Christian religion (actual Christians remained aloof) were killing members of Islam, and members of Islam were killing the supposed Christians; while both called the other “infidels,” although both religious factions were claiming their endeavors to be founded upon their beliefs in God (religious foolishness); this making no sense whatsoever, directly demonstrates the extent by which Satan can lead multitudes who endeavor in religious darkness astray, when truth is no longer a factor of

³⁰³⁷ John 6:44, 45.

³⁰³⁸ Matthew 9:37, 38.

³⁰³⁹ Deuteronomy 6:4-7, specific v. 5; Matthew 22:36-40, specific vs. 37, 38; Romans 3:21-31, specific v. 31.

one's pursuits, because the flesh is leading the endeavors!³⁰⁴⁰ In addition, a "jihad" (holy war) was never actually a battle with anyone else, but rather a battle within oneself to eliminate all distraction or discouragement which would cause hindrance to one's personal spiritual relationship with the one true God! The worst part of all the killing, and of religious endeavors throughout history, is the fact that the battles were always fought to achieve a goal or prize (stuff) which is of the world, and/or because of blatant adolescent pride which influences individuals (and groups of individuals; cultures) to seek conquest superiority!³⁰⁴¹ Is the city of Jerusalem actually of righteous importance during this dispensation of grace; absolutely not!³⁰⁴²

A personal "jihad" should be endeavored (frequently) by everyone who seeks to remain devotionally obedient to the Lord God; for strict discipline to test, examine, and judge oneself rightly is imperative, lest pride, arrogance, and/or self-deluding foundational to self-importance distract away from the devotional humble submission necessary to remain following the Lord's righteous and masterful leadership!³⁰⁴³ Within an appropriate "jihad" all factors of one's existence must be righteously examined; for but one unrighteous (inappropriate) aspect of the flesh or of the world can cause severe detriment to an individual's spiritual relationship with God! The unrighteous aspect can be: friends, family behavioral traits, associations, employment, and hobbies of fantasy, sensuality, lusts, financial gains, etc.; for *if* it causes distraction away from righteous focus upon the Lord (author and perfecter of our faith), it must be eliminated; for the "jihad" begs the question—"which is more important, the Lord or the thing / endeavor"! True devotional obedience unto the Lord must maintain very strict discipline, so that God may deal with us as His legitimate children of righteousness; for without the strict discipline to test, examine, and judge (all things) rightly, failure to continue following the Lord's masterful and righteous leadership remains a very distinct possibility!³⁰⁴⁴

Another realistic truth regarding the darkness of religious fleshly and emotional endeavors can be found in attempts to deify human

³⁰⁴⁰ John 16:1-3.

³⁰⁴¹ Matthew 6:25-34; 1 John 2:15-17.

³⁰⁴² John 4:20-24.

³⁰⁴³ 1 Corinthians 11:27-31; 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

³⁰⁴⁴ Hebrews 12:1-11, discipline specific vs. 7, 8.

beings. Just as Roman Catholicism has attempted to deify Mary (by assumption), so as to justify how she is the “queen of heaven,” so also did Islam by the religious teaching that Mohammad was raised into the heavens at the location of which currently sits—the dome of the rock (sight of the Jewish Temple). Reality check—Mary was blessed of God as His devotional servant who gave birth to Jesus / Christ, yet Mary as a human being died; in a like manner, Mohammed died on June 8, 632 (not circa) after a sudden and fatal illness. All deceptions occur aloof light and truth, because in failing to deny “self” so as to devotionally submit to God, the flesh overpowers the measure of faith given to each by God; and thereby being led by Satan leads individuals away from the light of truth foundational to God, which could have made them free from the absolute havoc of religiosity, which abounds within the prideful fleshly emotionalism of human endeavors, when “self” is not denied so as to actually follow the Lord!³⁰⁴⁵ If all who truly want to know, and be known by God, would deny “self” so as to humbly and obediently be submissive to God’s divine work, we could all be one (unified) in Christ; of one accord and faith, saved within the spiritual relational reality!³⁰⁴⁶ Imagine how the reality of Christ (glory of Christ) could have abounded upon the earth, had all those deceived within Islam and the Christian religion (not actual Christianity) only gotten over themselves, and their religious pursuits in attempts to prove “my god is greater than your god,” so as to walk in the light of truth; remaining aloof of all deceptions! As always when prideful, fleshly and emotional individuals attempt to prove their specific to be greater than everyone else’s specific; I will go with the Biblical imperative of—“Rather, let God be found true, though every man a liar”³⁰⁴⁷ Is denial of “self” an imperative; unknown by multitudes, because of the prideful (stubborn, competitive, and rebellious) emphasis upon self-importance?

The point of this “personal notation regarding facts” of the obscurity of emotionalism within religion, is to demonstrate how Satan entices the flesh as part of his scheme to spiritually murder multiple millions of individuals; by holding them in bondage to deception, which holds them aloof the spiritual relational reality! The huge difference between

³⁰⁴⁵ Matthew 16:24-26; John 8:31-36.

³⁰⁴⁶ Ephesians 4:4-6.

³⁰⁴⁷ Romans 3:3, 4.

Christianity (spiritual relational reality) and the pagan Christian religion is the fact of actual Christianity being foundational to pure righteous truth regarding the reality of God, and the Christian religion being foundational to the same worldly delusive nature as all “religions”! The simple fact is plain to witness, righteous truth of the spiritual relational reality can never change, as the saving relationship with God is foundational to the faithfulness of the Lord God of truth and light, who also can never change; for He is the Lord God of all creation!³⁰⁴⁸ As the Lord is absolutely pure, righteous, holy, and faithful; nothing pertaining to the Lord can involve any form of deceit, which proves the reality of Christianity to be of the Lord, and the reality of the Christian religion to be of the devil! No legitimate child of God who truly and loyally loves the Lord can be involved in delusive behavior; which most definitely includes the practice of deceptions!³⁰⁴⁹ Righteous worship of God, being spiritual and not carnal, demands that all aspects of fleshly / worldly (carnal) celebration is un-righteous, deceptive, and wrong (sin); therefore, in love for the Lord any and all celebrations, traditions, and rituals of carnal religiosity must not occur, lest the divine work of God unto salvation be denied and/or rejected!

Within the emotionalism of religion, righteous worship of God does not matter; for all that matters is that individuals “feel good” about what they are doing, even *if* what they are doing is foundational to spiritual fantasy! When individuals claim to love the Lord, while yet practicing religious deceptions, the fact remains that they are all living a lie; which in fact proves that they do not actually love the Lord, but rather are held captive to their own “love of self” (carnality; fleshly narcissism)! The fact also remains, that we cannot actually love the Lord by humble acquiescence and righteous devotion, when we are willing to live a lie; for we are known by our fruits (actions), not by our own delusions or deluding words!³⁰⁵⁰ Because the flesh and the emotionalism thereof is the primary cause of a plethora of human beings being religiously led astray within the schemes and guile of Satan to deceive and spiritually murder as many human beings as possible, it has been necessary because of the immense dangers involved when

³⁰⁴⁸ John 1:1-10; Hebrews 13:8.

³⁰⁴⁹ 2 Corinthians 13:5-8; 1 John 3:1-18.

³⁰⁵⁰ Psalm 11:1-7; 26:1-7; Proverbs 17:3, 4; Jeremiah 17:10; 1 Corinthians 3:11-20; cf. 1 John 4:1-6.

being led by the flesh, that this section of the chapter has been in-depth with the realism of facts!

Question—what is a primary reason the Lord has been kept out of His church since A.D. 1954? Answer—because the spiritual relational reality has not been taught and followed; this is derived from failure to devotionally love the truth (Jesus), because the carnal emotionalism of religion derived from the flesh and self-love (narcissism) now reigns supreme!³⁰⁵¹ Again it must be asked, is denial of “self” so as to actually submit to and follow the Lord an imperative for spiritual success in reality?

³⁰⁵¹ 2 Timothy 3:1-7.

“IF”

TO TRULY LOVE THE LORD, is to realize that many of the instituted traditions and rituals followed within the Christian religion are in fact futile for one’s faith and spiritual growth! The Lord blessed us as His legitimate children with the circumstances and training (teachings) which renders the truth that we cannot please Him by our carnal physical attempts; for submissive disciplined devotional faith is the primary basis necessary. Throughout the Bible, our dearest heavenly Father (Abba—Romans 8:15) has attempted to show us that it is our devotion and loyalty given freely and sincerely to Him that matters in all aspects of our existence, whether—spiritually, physically or mentally. The Law from the Old Testament demonstrated how it is virtually humanly impossible to fully conform to God’s righteous standards and thereby please Him by one’s own merits, thus we were given the opportunity to realize factually that we are incapable of pleasing God by human efforts. This in itself should have been enough for us to realize our true necessity in life is a personal relationship with Him, within which He righteously leads, and we follow through humble and loyal faith and trust! To finalize this fact, God with abounding grace for all, reduced the 614 laws (some say 613; now irrelevant) to but two—love God and all others.³⁰⁵² Loving God first and foremost, and all others second, leaves our “self” for last; this being a true characteristic of Christianity; for we do not love our “self” narcissistically, but rather for who we are in the Lord, selfless, disciplined, loyal, and devotional servants of Christ; disciples (learned pupils) of truth.³⁰⁵³

During our corporeal lives, our circumstances and other individuals teach us that we must trust in ourselves; the circumstances by harshness, and others by their letting us down repeatedly. These things along with being taught that “*if* you want something done right—do it yourself,” we tend to lose trust in not only others but also in God. Being a “doubting Thomas” ourselves on far too many occasions, how long

³⁰⁵² Matthew 22:36-40; John 13:34, 35.

³⁰⁵³ Philippians 2:1-4.

will we fail to trust in Him who is faithful and true?! God has given us every opportunity to get past the drudgery of mistrust, yet onward we go—aggravated by our continual failure to realize that He has divinely made us free from carnality (fleshly; earthy) so as to place full trust in Him spiritually.³⁰⁵⁴ As humans who place our greatest trust in that which is temporal (seen, witnessed and/or experienced in the physical realm), we tend to mistrust God by our experiences with others; for they are seen and He is not. The “seeing is believing” mentality of the world tends to draw us away from our faith (walking thereby), as we also tend to go with the status quo; many times with unbelievers and lukewarm believers, which is actually quite inappropriate *if* we are to maintain a fruitful disciplined and devotional faith!³⁰⁵⁵ All that is of the flesh and world terribly hinders our spiritual existence by the grace and divine work of God; thus spiritual focus upon the Lord is the imperative to remain free from the distractive hindrances; as we look to the beauty and goodness of God’s good work in creation, thereby staying focus from the ugliness accordant to Satan’s scheming, instigations and influences.

- *If* we truly love the Lord our God, selflessly as He loves us, we will proclaim Gospel truth (and spiritual reality) to as many others as we possibly can.³⁰⁵⁶ The good news of salvation by grace through faith must be accompanied by knowledge of the Lord (glory of Christ), knowledge of the reality of the relationship (authority of Christ), and knowledge of truth (imperative divine work of God)!³⁰⁵⁷
- *If* we truly have sincere love for all others, we will not want any to perish aloof the spiritual saving relationship; neither will we speak solely to appease.³⁰⁵⁸

³⁰⁵⁴ John 8:31-36; 20:25-29; cf. 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 10:6-13; 2 Timothy 2:11-13; 1 Peter 4:15-19.

³⁰⁵⁵ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 2 Timothy 3:1-5.

³⁰⁵⁶ 1 Corinthians 9:16-19; Matthew 25:15-30.

³⁰⁵⁷ John 6:44-65; Romans 2:17-29; 10:1-4; 11:33-36; 15:14-17; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 2 Corinthians 2:14-17; 4:1-6; 6:1-10; 10:5, 6, 17, 18; Ephesians 1:3-23; 3:11-13; 4:11-16; Philippians 1:9-11; Colossians 1:9-14; 2:1-3; 2 Timothy 2:24-26; 3:1-7; 2 Peter 1:2-11; cf. Hebrews 5:8-10.

³⁰⁵⁸ Colossians 3:22-4:1; 1 Timothy 2:1-8; James 5:19, 20; Jude 1:20-23.

- *If* we truly consider others as more important than ourselves, we will allow ourselves to be jeopardized (hated, persecuted) for the sake of reaching all with the Gospel truth!³⁰⁵⁹
- *If* we truly understand that as believers we go from life to “life indeed” and this according to God’s faithfulness, then we will not fear the intimidation of humankind or of death.³⁰⁶⁰
- *If* we do not fear intimidation, persecution or death, then we will not fear those who can kill only our mortal bodies.³⁰⁶¹
- *If* we do not fear the persecution or death upon our mortal bodies; now boldly separate unto the Lord; we are in a position of truly trusting God in all circumstances!³⁰⁶²
- *If* we truly trust God in all circumstances, then we are fully prepared to serve even unto persecution and/or death; speaking the Gospel truth, so that others may come to knowledge of the truth, and the potential of salvation.³⁰⁶³
- *If* we have knowledge of the reality of God, within the spiritual relational reality by the Lord’s indwelling, which saves and leads us; then we can understand “Christianity” to hold the imperatives of: sincere selfless love, devotional discipline, disciplined diligence, and devotional disciplined humble acquiescence; unto God’s good, acceptable, and perfect will, in accordance to the kind intention of His will³⁰⁶⁴

Every Christian falls short of our calling on occasion, yet the victory is in continually and devotionally rising up once again, by return to righteous focus and reverence unto the Lord! An understanding of great importance is to realize we are complete in Christ, having received all that is necessary for a successful Christian (Christ-like) life; endeavoring in the righteousness of God.³⁰⁶⁵ We have but to appropriate the

³⁰⁵⁹ Philippians 2:1-4; Matthew 10:17-28; 16:24-26; cf. John 15:18-21.

³⁰⁶⁰ 2 Corinthians 2:15-17; Romans 8:33-39; Hebrews 13:5, 6.

³⁰⁶¹ Matthew 10:26-28.

³⁰⁶² Psalms 7:8-11; 18:2-6; 28:1-9.

³⁰⁶³ Romans 8:35-39, specific v. 36.

³⁰⁶⁴ 1 Corinthians 13:4-7, 11; Hebrews 12:4-11; 2 Timothy 2:11-15, 19-23; James 4:7-10; cf. Romans 12:1-3; Ephesians 1:3-12.

³⁰⁶⁵ Romans 1:16, 17; 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:5; 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Colossians 2:8-10; Ephesians 2:1-10.

necessary grace given us by God in any circumstance, that we may have victory leading to true freedom in Christ! God’s timing is always perfect! God’s love is always present! He will neither be early nor late when we need His measure of grace and tender mercies, therefore when the need arises—turn to Him; for He will always be there with power for success within righteous obedience. Understanding who we are in Christ, is true understanding indeed, for in this understanding comes the knowledge of the sufficiency of God’s grace! GRACE being the unmerited favor of God, which is the second greatest blessing we could ever hope for; the first being the Lord Himself!

Understanding God’s grace to be absolute wonderment in action; as it is the unmerited favor of the Creator upon His creatures; it would behoove us to be content; yet with continued focus upon the flesh because of refusal to deny “self” (selfish ambitious volition), contentment will never occur, as the ways of the world and carnal involvement being under the influence of the ruler of the world (Satan) will never cease; until the coming of the Lord’s re-creation of the heavens and earth in holiness and righteousness! Although many within the Body of Christ may seek the blessings of God reserved for the Nation of Israel to be their own due to the sin of covetousness, this is due to the failure of multitudes to appropriately appreciate the immensity and sufficiency of grace! When we seek for more on a continual basis, as we have failed to realize grace to be immensely sufficient; this demonstrates the covetous nature of the world and the human sinful nature; which cannot cease without the Lord’s righteous work of sanctification! Realizing the wonderment of God’s grace, demonstrates the content nature of Christ! Truly we are known by our fruits and focus! Please submit unto God you’re all in all; receiving within humility the abundant blessing of His grace; for without selfless humility God’s blessings are not received, although He seeks to give them!

Amongst the many zillion things I have yet to know or understand, is the reason why human beings tend to always want what we do not currently have. We can receive gift after gift, while wondering why we did not receive the others we had hoped for! Could this be due to placing our hope inappropriately in that which is of the world?³⁰⁶⁶ Could it be that we carnally seek fulfillment of purpose through the standards and

³⁰⁶⁶ Romans 5:1-5; 8:24, 25; 1 Corinthians 13:13; cf. Galatians 5:5; Ephesians 1:18-21; 2:11-16.

elemental things of the world?³⁰⁶⁷ We can enjoy the blessing of health granted us, while yet complaining about some small ailment or defect. We can praise God for His lovingkindness and tender mercies, yet continually fail to pass mercy, grace and love unto others. Submission being an act of love; why do we yet fail to submit to our Lord and others, instead continuing on our own designated path yet demanding that He and others submit to us. I must admit that I am tormented at the love of “self” which has become so prevalent in the world; although the Lord revealed the reality would occur; the extent of the narcissism is disgustingly terribly and mean. Although a personal exuberant love may seem appropriate to the individual themselves, how does such a love edify others?

Love is the one thing that all living creatures seek with vigor! In this vigor, we most times seek love in all the wrong places; for the love of God is before us at all times; His love being unsurpassed, selfless and sacrificial! We go end around God’s love for us, by our attempts to fill our hearts with affections for worldly things. We tend to feel—*if* only I had this or that, I would be complete. We tend to believe—*if* only others would take my point of view, all would be okay. It is this type of inane thinking and selfish love which has caused divisions; where selfless unity was to abound by the grace of God!

- *If* all believers were to grasp hold of God’s grace and allow themselves to be led upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness, we would not have a plethora of denominations and religions; but rather one unified body of believers upon the same path. This as the “necessary righteous relationship with God” would be precedent, rather than the “rote of religious beliefs”!³⁰⁶⁸
- *If* all believers were to bask in the abundant love of God, we would not attempt to fill our existence with worldly forms of love. In this, God’s love would abundantly fill our hearts (demeanor and character) to the point of overflowing, with the overflow going forth to others; who can then experience the love of God in their own lives (*if* God permits).³⁰⁶⁹

³⁰⁶⁷ James 4:1-10, specific vs. 3, 4; 1 John 2:15-17; Galatians 4:3, 9-11; Colossians 2:8, 20-23.

³⁰⁶⁸ Isaiah 29:13-16.

³⁰⁶⁹ Romans 5:1-5; 2 Corinthians 13:14; 2 Thessalonians 3:5; 1 John 2:3-6; 4:7-10; 5:1-5.

- *If* we would realize that what we deserve—is an eternity of torment in hell derived from our wretched sinful nature, we would never again seek “what we deserve”; thereby contentment would be ingrained within our very existence.³⁰⁷⁰
- *If* and when we realize that by God’s grace we will never receive what we deserve, we will then stop falling prey to the same foolish desires as those who have no hope.
- *If* we realize that we are complete in Christ by His sacrificial work upon the cross, and by His personal righteous tutelage and leadership, we will then stop seeking additions to that which is totally completed in the Lord (It is finished—John 19:30).³⁰⁷¹
- *If* we would spend our time diligently studying the Gospel, and practice listening in prayer so as to learn from our spiritual Teacher, we would understand that the answers we seek will come to us—*if* and when we wait patiently upon our Lord. Too much time is spent out on tangents, in attempts to intellectualize and reason the Gospel. When we patiently and prayerfully wait upon God, He brings to us the fulfillment we seek regarding the Gospel truth and purpose of existence! Are we so impatient that we cannot wait for answers and instruction from the Lord; instead of making conjecture and assumptions pertaining to God, in our impatience and intellectual prowess?³⁰⁷²
- *If* we understand the love of God for each of us, then we will also love all others. Understanding the love of God (as is humanly possible), allows us to abhor the evil of sin, while loving the sinner. When this is accomplished, criticism is swallowed up by love, and replaced by edifying truth. In this—our demands upon others are replaced by sincere hope that God’s grace may lead and teach others freedom in Christ. Our victory is found solely in our relationship with the Lord; for apart from Him we can do nothing of an appropriate righteous nature!³⁰⁷³ Our sinful nature, or the righteous nature of Christ; the choice as to which we will submit, rests with each of us.

³⁰⁷⁰ 2 Corinthians 12:7-10; Philippians 4:10-13; 1 Timothy 6:6-19.

³⁰⁷¹ Luke 4:43; John 12:27-32; 19:28-30.

³⁰⁷² Romans 8:24-24-30; Philippians 3:15-21.

³⁰⁷³ John 14:1-16:15.

- *If* only we would practice denial of “self” unto full and complete selfless surrender of our existence unto our Creator and Lord, His abundant blessings would be both given and received unto true hope; for this “true hope” which is foundational to the faithfulness of God, can never, ever, disappoint!³⁰⁷⁴
- *If* we would truly, devotionally, and loyally love the Lord, we would deny “self” so as to actually follow His masterful righteous leadership!³⁰⁷⁵ When we actually follow the Lord, submission unto His good, acceptable and perfect will becomes easier; while never being burdensome!³⁰⁷⁶ When we are within the good, acceptable and perfect will of God, in accordance to the kind intention of His will, which is a spiritual reality not simply a carnal existence, then we can fight the good fight of the faith which is within the spiritual realm!³⁰⁷⁷ When the good fight is practiced unto efficiency by the grace of God, then the devil is forced to flee from us; which allows our existence to be free from the schemes, enticements and influence of the devil; with the exceptions of Satan’s work of wretchedness within those who are ignorant of the reality of God, as they may be utilized against us to stray us from the narrow path of God’s righteousness!³⁰⁷⁸ God, and God alone, is faithful; therefore, in Him (and Him alone) we can place our hope and trust with certainty, within the spiritual relational reality which saves us for all eternity, and within which we are led forth unto eternal purpose!³⁰⁷⁹ God seeks to train us now for the spiritual reality henceforth!
- *If* we truly want to know, love, worship, and adore the Lord God, then we must also seek truth, and walk therein, without: compromise, variation, or excuse!³⁰⁸⁰ The Lord is the God of absolute truth, light, love, holiness and righteousness; therefore, we as legitimate children of the Lord must devotionally (in a

³⁰⁷⁴ Romans 5:1-5.

³⁰⁷⁵ Hosea 6:4-11; Matthew 7:13-27; 16:22-27.

³⁰⁷⁶ 1 John 5:1-12.

³⁰⁷⁷ Romans 12:1-3; 2 Corinthians 10:3, 4; Ephesians 1:3-14; 1 Timothy 1:18, 19; 6:12-19; 2 Timothy 4:7, 8.

³⁰⁷⁸ John 8:31-36; cf. Proverbs 16:4 ,5; Matthew 24:9-13; 2 Corinthians 6:1-10.

³⁰⁷⁹ Romans 5:1-5; 1 Corinthians 1:4-9; 10:13; cf. Proverbs 3:5, 6; 4:20-27.

³⁰⁸⁰ John 4:20-24; cf. 2 Corinthians 13:5-8.

disciplined fashion) submit unto the reality of God, and thereby live according to the standards He has set forth; for within devotional humble submission, which cannot begin without denial of “self,” the Lord God implants the reality of Jesus into us (mind of Christ), and thereby fulfills righteousness in us according to the kind intention of His will!³⁰⁸¹

- *If* we truly love the Lord, let us walk the talk of the faith we confess; for within this reality is found the many spiritual blessings by which the Lord seeks to bless us, which are for spiritual servitude, worship, and adoration unto the Lord now and forever!³⁰⁸²

REGARDING MARRIAGE AND FAMILY: PLEASE REFERENCE

EPHESIANS 5:22-6:4

What does it mean that husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her (v. 5:25)? This does not indicate the perfection between Christ and the church, which is believed in certain denominations and religious teachings; rather this indicates the selfless and sacrificial love of Christ for the church, of which a husband should have for his wife, as the husband is to submit unto the authority of the Lord as the spiritual head of the household (vs. 23, 24, 28-31)! The husband is to guide his wife in the admonitions of the Lord, by diligent study of the Gospel, so as to handle it accurately; for without accuracy in accountability, how will the wife understand the standards by which she is to submit unto her husband (vs. 22-33). Just as the husband is accountable unto the Lord to lead his wife according to his (husband) being led by the Lord, so also the husband must do the same for the children of the household; should the Lord bless the husband and wife with children (vs. 6:1-4)! The point to be made is that the husband should place the Lord first and foremost, and thereby be diligent in study and prayer; for as the spiritual head of the household, the husband above all others in the household is responsible unto the Lord for the spiritual wellbeing of both his wife and children! Within this the husbands priorities are—the Lord first and foremost, the wife

³⁰⁸¹ John 14:6; 15:1-27; 1 John 1:5-10; 4:7-10; Hebrews 12:1-11; Matthew 16:23-26; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Philippians 1:6; 2:12, 13.

³⁰⁸² Romans 12:1-3; cf. Matthew 25:34-46; 1 Corinthians 3:1-23; Ephesians 1:3-23; 1 Peter 1:17-21.

second only to the Lord, and the children third; whereas the husband's love for his wife and family is a precedent during his corporeal existence upon the earth.

- *If* the husband truly loves the Lord unto “selfless” devotion, which is righteous, then the husband (and father) will guide and nurture his family to love the Lord also; the husband does this selflessly and courageously, as the spiritual head of the household who is accountable unto the Lord. The imperative of “courage” is necessary, as wives and children must be led (by example) against the ways of the world, and away from the instigations and influence of peers (at school, friends, neighbors, etc.) who do not follow the admonitions, discipline, and instruction of the Lord (v. 6:4)!³⁰⁸³
- *If* the husband is righteously serious about his family, he will be diligent to study the Gospel and maintain prayerful devotion unto the Lord; for the husband is the “sacrificial” member of the household, who must deny both “self” and anything of the world which would hinder his responsibilities unto the Lord, regarding the spiritual edification and Scriptural instruction and nurturing which allows his family “training in righteousness” (the Lord’s righteousness)!³⁰⁸⁴
- *If* the husband has the courage to maintain focus and devotion unto the Lord against all adversity, he will then have the courage to guide the members of his household to be courageous within their devotion unto the Lord as well! This is imperative; for the ways of the world must never be allowed to enter a household which is dedicated unto the Lord; which includes all aspects of the “internet” which would allow potential harm to come to members of the household!³⁰⁸⁵ Biblical sanctification (set apart from the world and made holy), which is a gift from God, righteously guides away from the unrighteousness of the world; yet this blessing from God is made void, when individuals intentionally choose to be disobedient,

³⁰⁸³ James 1:5-12; 16-25; 2:18-26; 4:1-10; 1 John 2:3-3:3.

³⁰⁸⁴ 2 Timothy 2:3, 4, 14, 15, 20-26; 3:1-7, 10-17.

³⁰⁸⁵ 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; 1 John 4:1-6; Matthew 18:5-14.

which directly evinces the imperative of appropriate righteous child rearing while in the home of their parents! It takes great courage to be parents who maintain dedication and culpability unto the Lord; which evinces the imperative of devotion unto the Lord first and foremost, for wives and children are blessings from the Lord and must be treated accordingly!³⁰⁸⁶ Tough love involves great courage, and may lead to being despised for a time; yet within devotion for the Lord, parents will do what must be done regarding their children; for there is no love in cowardice and quitting so as appeasing emotions!

It does not matter what the families devoid a relationship with the Lord may choose to do, when regarding one’s own family and household! What matters within a household of dedication unto the Lord, is that the discipline, instruction and admonitions of the Lord be strictly enforced! Within this blessing, children of the household may not have many friends; yet the friends they do have will not attempt to lead them astray, as the children of reverence unto the Lord, will not allow the foolishness of the world to entangle (entrap) them; while remaining diligent in love for their friends, that the world not entangle (entrap) them as well! True devotional love for the Lord is foundational to God’s righteousness; thus this is the Love that goes forth unto all of close associations! This is the reason that it takes great courage to be a true child of God in a world of coercion and deceit; which evinces the imperative of the husband and father to stay upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness, and in doing so remain an example to both his wife and children!

- *If* the husband and wife truly love the Lord, they will treat each other with great respect; foundational to reverent fear of the Lord.
- *If* a man truly loves the Lord, he will marry foundational to his devotion for the Lord; which negates marriage with a non-believing wife, believing that the wife will assuredly come to know the Lord; for this is completely inappropriate and unrighteous, as no one comes to the spiritual relational reality

³⁰⁸⁶ 1 Corinthians 7:10, 11, 14.

without the divine work of God, which is never contingent upon the hopes or desires of a potential husband or wife!³⁰⁸⁷

Violation of this Biblical standard has led to numerous husband / wife relationships which were doomed to failure, because of blatant chosen disobedience! Bad company corrupts good morals; while abiding in the Lord and Gospel leads away from the foolishness of the world and its ways!³⁰⁸⁸

- *If* a husband is devotional unto the Lord, he will instruct the imperative of “denial of self” to his children; for although a devotional wife will know of this imperative, children must be taught the imperative, *if* true devotion unto the Lord is to occur unto spiritual successes and righteous behavior; for without “denial of self” there will be no submission unto the Lord, who alone can nurture spiritual growth unto victory! Children of a “Christian” household will learn this imperative primarily by the example of their parents; which is the reason that believing parents must live the reality of submission unto the Lord! In this endeavor, both the husband and wife should show by example, for the behavior of both must evidence the reality of being led by the Lord! Within this, there can be no difference between words spoken, and the “fruits” which evidence the words!
- *If* believing husbands and wives are truly devotional unto the Lord, they will remain strictly disciplined so that the Lord may deal with them as His legitimate sons and daughters!³⁰⁸⁹ Within this strict discipline, and through the righteous respect which is shown between the believing husband and wife, their children will witness the example of “God at work” within the household! As children of a “Christian” household must be considered within the righteousness of God, both parents should be sacrificial as to their chosen practices; for primarily the husbands must remain upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness for the sake of his family, and the wives must remain upon the narrow path of God’s righteousness as loving

³⁰⁸⁷ 2 Corinthians 6:14-16.

³⁰⁸⁸ 1 Corinthians 15:33, 34; cf. John 15:1-16:1.

³⁰⁸⁹ Hebrews 12:1-11.

examples of both devotion unto the Lord and dedication to their husbands, who strive with diligence to serve the Lord in the home!

- *If* the Lord God is not first and foremost loved within “Christian” households, then the “work of God” will be hindered and/or renounced! There is great victory within a “Christian” household, when the Lord is allowed to remain the shield and strength of the household; yet this blessing is assuredly hindered, when aloof the divine work and guidance of the Lord, due to disobedience!

We can either maintain love for God first and foremost and thereby journey within the victory of freedom in Christ, or we can become involved in forms of harlotry and idolatry leading to inevitable spiritual defeat. Please remember—our victory is by faith; therefore victory in both the physical and spiritual realms is obtained and maintained within the spiritual relational reality with the Lord, which is led and nurtured by the Lord!³⁰⁹⁰ To abound within a righteous spiritual relationship with the Lord in the light of truth, as He is in the light; all practices involving the darkness of delusion, deluding, deceptions, and submission unto our sinful nature must cease, lest we return to all that is unrighteous, and of the flesh and world!³⁰⁹¹ Amen come Lord Jesus!³⁰⁹²

³⁰⁹⁰ Romans 8:1-17, specific—vs. 1, 14-17.

³⁰⁹¹ James 1:1-5:20; 1 John 1:1-5:21.

³⁰⁹² Revelation 22:20, 21; cf. Numbers 6:24-26.

ENDING NOTES

I AM HOPEFUL that this book has helped in answering many questions which may have existed prior to its reading. I have attempted:

- To simplify certain complicated matters; hoping a better understanding of the Gospel, and the reality of God will result.
- To emphasize the necessity of God's divine masterful work, upon the narrow path of His righteousness, of which few (a remnant) travel; for the narrow path is the path which has no turns, as the Lord righteously leads in the light of truth, and we follow. This being the path of purposeful spiritual existence now (walking by faith), and righteous reality for all eternity; for it is upon this path alone that salvation is revealed and fulfilled accordant to the kind intention of God's good, acceptable and perfect will, by His indwelling!
- To emphasize that prayerful and devotional faith-based hope never disappoints.
- By comparison of many Scriptural truths (systematic presentation), to assist in understanding the truth of the Gospel; so unrighteous (religious) teachings will no longer be acceptable, but rather seen for what they are; the doctrines derived from instigation and influence from the demonic realm.
- **Important note:** I have not documented within this book, many specifics which have been discussed within classes I have been blessed with instructing. I have done this, so as to allow the Lord to fill in the gaps derived from prayerful supplication during seeking of truth, within diligence of individual believers to ascertain and maintain truth; for it is the decision of each child of God to walk in truth accordant to faith, and worship Him in both spirit and truth.³⁰⁹³
- **Imperative note:** The book renders the truth and information necessary for anyone to realize, achieve, and abound within the

³⁰⁹³ John 4:19-24; 1 Corinthians 13:1-13; 15:10; 2 Corinthians 5:1-9; 12:6-10; Hebrews 12:1-11; 2 Peter 1:1-11.

spiritual relational reality with God which saves us from the wages of sin, and allows us the instruction necessary to receive God's: spiritual blessings, training, teaching, nurturing, and anointing; which is according to the kind intention of the Lord's will for individual believers.³⁰⁹⁴ The plethora of Scripture specifics were listed so as to allow the power of the Word (Gospel) to: teach, lead, exult, and train in righteousness; for my words cannot possibly fulfill this righteous task! All the instruction in the world cannot render fulfillment of an individual's purpose in and for the Lord; personal: seeking of truth, discipline, humility, denial of "self," selfless devotion, dedication, and righteous focus; is foundational to pure motives and diligent effort on the part of the individual! No human spiritual leadership on planet earth can lead us or take us to the spiritual relational reality; for God alone draws, finds, spiritually teaches, and accepts us as His legitimate children! Therefore, trusting in human beings to do the work which God alone is capable is futile, distractive, and outright devious and deceptive; and should never be sought to bring forth spiritual awakening and growth which is from God alone! We must place our trust and hope in God alone regarding eternity; no exceptions! NOW IS THE I TIME TO GET BUSY WITH DISCIPLINED DEVOTIONAL DILIGENCE, FOR TOMORROW MAY NEVER COME; NOW IS THE TIME TO CONFESS "JESUS AS LORD," FROM A FOUNDATION OF HUMBLE SUBMISSION (ACQUIESCENCE) AND KNOWLEDGE, FOR RELIGIOSITY, FALSE CONFESSIONS, AND IGNORANCE WILL LEAD TO THE SALVATION OF NO ONE!

I have attempted to include different truths which I have come to realize, in my endeavors to better know and serve our Lord. I cannot say that all which I have included is accurate to its finest detail, yet I can say that I have done my best in presenting truth as I have come to know it; for knowledge and implantation of the Gospel reality is from the Lord! We all have much to learn in regard to our faith, trust, and hope in Jesus;

³⁰⁹⁴ 1 John 2:27.

I as much as all others! Truly I hope that the information presented has helped the reader in some way, *if* even a small way to know of God's love for you; hopefully assisting you in simply and devotionally loving and obeying Him. Truly we were created by Him and for Him! In this realization, hopefully we will understand how the Bible truly associates with our lives upon this earth, and our existence for all eternity!

I am so very hopeful that simplistic love and devotion for God becomes the endeavor of the reader; so your life will reach abundance in knowing your purpose according to the kind intention of God's will; accordant to His grace and anointing.³⁰⁹⁵ Please understand—"abundant life" is a life of devotional reverence, submission, obedience, and service unto the Lord; "eternal life"—the second greatest blessing ever given, the first greatest blessing being God Himself!

I apologize for any harshness which I have presented within this book. I also apologize for using personal pronouns regarding myself, for my intent is in pointing to Christ. It was never my intent to hurt anyone, but rather to present the truth of—faith and trust in God to be derived from love for Him (apart from religious foolishness). Because our love for Him is a blessing derived from His love for us, I am hopeful that a necessity for disciplined devotional love for Him has become evident. It is also my hope that with many questions now answered, folks may move forward in their life for Christ with less distraction, and better devotion derived from knowledge. Although many aspects of our walk with Christ may seem difficult as by the "should" and "*if*" statements, the victory is found in placing our love and trust in Him; for truly He will complete the work He has begun! Please turn to, trust in and thereby love and worship Him daily.

By the grace of God each of us has the potential to move forward to the upper call of God in Christ Jesus. Although we are in fact weak within ourselves, in Christ Jesus our Lord we are indeed strong. Please place your confidence in Him, and receive the strength of God's might in your life (Ephesians 6:10). His grace is before us, we are complete in Him, the war has already been won; we have only to fight the individual battles. Our endeavor is to love Him, so that in love, we ourselves will not be the hinderer of His conforming us to the image of His beloved Son. Please appropriate the abounding grace He freely gives,

³⁰⁹⁵ John 10:7-18, specific v. 10; Ephesians 3:14-21; 1 John 2:20-27.

and grasp the personal victory He has rendered—just for you. His righteousness will lead each of us to continued sanctification, *if* we will submit to follow Him and allow this to happen. The standards which He has set forth in the Gospel are not accomplished by human efforts or merit (although “religion” would have us believe so); but rather by His grace, in working within us that which is pleasing to Himself. God freely gives us His sufficient grace (un-merited favor); do we love Him enough to receive it?

As final notes, may I suggest consideration of eight things:

1. Please start your day in prayer. Praise and thanksgiving are the most powerful prayers!
2. Please continue each day with prayer; pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:16-24)!
3. Please spend time listening when you pray; for the Lord cannot teach us *if* we refuse to listen and wait patiently for an answer! Always stay from proceeding within personal endeavor involving others, until instruction as to the proper (righteous) path has been received, as it is wise to never leave the narrow path of God’s righteousness!
4. After making supplication unto the Lord, please wait patiently upon Him for the answer. Sometimes He answers “no,” and this for our betterment; therefore please do not fight against that which is best for you. Please also remember that our prayers will be answered at the appropriate time; for God’s timing is always perfect. Be persistent, patient, and persevere!
 - Making supplication and actually waiting for an answer from the Lord, is an area within Christianity (mostly the Christian religion) where very few believers ever seek to go. Most believers ask God to walk with them through their day; yet in this, they are actually asking God to follow them wherever they choose to lead. We must ask the Lord to lead us accordant to the kind intention of His good, acceptable and perfect will for our day and life. We cannot by any Biblical sense expect the Lord to follow (nor lead) us upon the broad path of our own

carnal volition (generally founded upon the wretchedness of “self” which leads to unrighteousness)! “Carnal”—pertaining to the flesh, as opposed to the Spirit.

5. Sanctification (being set apart unto the Lord and made holy) is of necessity!

- When the Lord told us to “come out from their midst and be separate” (2 Corinthians 6:17; cf. 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1), He meant exactly that! God’s instructions are not a request, nor are God’s instructions open for debate by those who claim to know Him. *If* we claim to know the Lord, then we must follow where He leads; as we realize the imperative of devotional submission derived from focusing our desires upon fulfillment of His will for our existence (Romans 8:14). Is better knowing and serving God the desire within the heart of most believers, or is the desire of most focused upon “self?” Is Jesus Lord of our existence, or is He a God of convenience? The former is the foundational basis of “Christianity,” as we submit to serve in accordance to an actual relationship based in knowledge rendered by the Holy Spirit; the latter is the basis of the “Christian religion,” in seeking to worship without actual knowledge, but rather in ignorance devoid of spiritual discernment.³⁰⁹⁶ Worship in ignorance is worship of Satan (the Great Deceiver)!
- I have counseled (by request of their family) many individuals because of the amounts of time they spend on the internet, away from their families. Did most believers ask the Lord’s permission prior to connecting into the world? I would tend to think not; for ease and comfort seem to be the priorities of current life; which is exactly the priorities (ease; comfort) of the flesh! When I was requested to go on the internet so as to send researched Biblical information to pastors and teachers in other states, who had made request for the information for the sake of their congregations; I first made supplication (the first time) unto

³⁰⁹⁶ Colossians 2:1-3:17; Romans 8:1-17; 10:1-13; 2 Peter 1:2-11; John 4:20-24; 1 Corinthians 2:6-3:11.

the Lord. Upon waiting almost four months for His answer, to this very day I have never been on the internet; except with permission from the Lord to present this book to those throughout the world who seek the truth of the spiritual relational reality. Even my Bible College could not understand my refusal to connect with their institution on the internet; which raises much question as to supposed Christian institutions having true understanding as to the purpose of prayer, or understanding pertaining to an actual relationship which is led by the Lord God; which far surpasses the emulated cheap mimic of religion, for the former is of light and truth and the latter of darkness and selfish deception!³⁰⁹⁷

- Does the Lord want us to connect into the world for ease, comfort, and pleasures of “self”? Through the wonderment of prayer, I know the specific answer in my case. Did the majority of believers even consider making supplication to the Lord, prior to proceeding forth entering involvement with the world? Christianity instructs us that God is in control and thus the leader. Are we willing to follow Him, or are we going to ask Him to follow us as we go with the status quo, or journey upon paths of our own choosing. When the Lord inspired the truth that friendship with the world is hostility toward Him (James 4:4-6; cf. 1 John 2:15-17), He meant exactly that! Are we really willing to stop loving the Lord unto the reality of adversity and hostility with Him by our own choosing, and this so as to be “carnal”?
- The internet is preparing millions of individuals to accept the “mark of the beast”! Will the “mark” actually be a computer identification and cyber finance chip, invented by man in accordance to demonic influence, which sets the stage for human government coercion and control?³⁰⁹⁸ In this world of “quick and easy,” most folks will have no problem accepting the mark necessary for corporeal existence to remain: simple, safe, easy, and comfortable.³⁰⁹⁹

³⁰⁹⁷ Philippians 4:4-9; Matthew 6:25-34; Romans 8:26-28; Colossians 1:9-14.

³⁰⁹⁸ Revelation 13:16, 17.

Will life actually remain simple, safe, easy, and comfortable when acceptance of the mark leads to involvement within the wrath of God, and an eternity of dwelling within the lake which burns with fire and brimstone?³¹⁰⁰ As we are currently living amongst the apostate (carnal) church emphasized by the church at Laodicea (Revelation 3:14-22), believing riches and comfort to be an indication of success even within supposed Christianity; are we truly prepared for Christ's return (veil lifted), or will we continue denying the revelation of what must occur so as to "feel" comfortable in the moment (veil remains)?³¹⁰¹ For information sake please consider one truth of the emphasized internet (World Wide Web), for a web is a woven obstacle which ensnares and entangles; which is exactly what the internet (World Wide Web) does when utilized un-righteously!

- Again, "sanctification" is the blessing of being set apart unto the Lord, and made holy; for He is holy. This blessing from the Lord is imperative, *if* we are to have and maintain the strength and guidance of the Lord to abstain from the world and its ways! This blessing is terribly hindered and many times withdrawn completely, *if* and when we choose to be selfishly disobedient; for we cannot drink from both the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons!³¹⁰²

6. A personal relationship with God vs. secular religion.

- Although "religion" portrays supposed means of salvation, and supposed means by which humankind may please or assist God; the truthful reality yet remains that only a personal relationship with God will bring forth the victorious deliverance of salvation, and the only pleasing factor of human existence (reverent submission); so that the Lord may both will and work within us that which pleases Himself!³¹⁰³ "Religion" always feeds the

³⁰⁹⁹ Revelation 13:16, 18.

³¹⁰⁰ Revelation 14:9-13; 16:1-21.

³¹⁰¹ cf. 2 Peter 2:1-9; Luke 17:26-36; Hebrews 10:36-39; 1 John 2:27-3:10; 2 Corinthians 3:4-18.

³¹⁰² 1 Corinthians 10:20-22.

³¹⁰³ John 6:44, 45; 14:6; Hebrews 12:1-11; Romans 8:26-30; Philippians 1:6, 21; 2:12, 13.

desires of emotional human existence (the flesh), thereby placing emphasis back upon “self.” Within “religion,” going with the status quo within compromise is generally acceptable; whereas within the “relationship” (the Way) between individual believers and the Lord (actual Christianity), the emphasis is solely upon Him spiritually, thereby disallowing close associations or involvements with the world. “Religion” condoning close relationships with the world, denies the righteous work of God (sanctification); whereas dwelling within the “relationship” allows full access for His work in our lives (fruit of the Spirit).

- “Religion” being void of spiritual wisdom, understanding, knowledge, and discernment pertaining to God, has necessity of rituals, icons, symbols, philosophies, doctrines, and traditions; whereas within the “relationship,” the aforementioned aspects of necessity within religion are adamantly denied for the sake of maintained uncompromising fellowship with God. The former (religion) is an attempt to seek and know God in the physical realm (walking by sight; spiritual emulated mimic); whereas the latter (actual Christianity) is the reality of actually being known by God as His legitimate children (walking by faith; led by God).³¹⁰⁴
- We know that Christianity (as distinguished from the Christian “religion”) is the way of salvation, for within the entirety of bases of faith throughout the world, only Jesus is truth in reality; which is proven only by close intimate fellowship with Him, which is the most astounding reality (Amen)!³¹⁰⁵
- All who have never actually been taught by the Lord “personally,” which cannot be emulated or mimicked by human beings, are void of the reality of God; for without His personal teaching and embrace, there is no prove of His indwelling! Those ensnared by religion (weak and worthless elemental things), will never know the immensity of the reality of God; for all must first make supplication unto the Lord for the truth of the relationship, and be willing to live within the revealed truth

³¹⁰⁴ Galatians 4:1-11; 2 Corinthians 5:1-21; cf. Hebrews 12:7, 8; Romans 8:14.

³¹⁰⁵ Mark 16:9-14; 1 Corinthians 15:12-19; John 20:11-31; cf. John 15:1-16:4.

by rejection of all that is of darkness!³¹⁰⁶ Attempting to hold to the old (religion) while seeking involvement in the new (spiritual relational reality) can never occur; for an endeavor of this type is foundational to double-mindedness, in seeking to live within the darkness of religiosity, and the light of relational truth simultaneously!³¹⁰⁷ For the sake of actual salvation, individuals must forsake the old completely, or at least be willing to do so, for the Lord to draw them unto the saving relationship (spiritual relational reality); for without volition to submit unto the authority of the Lord, which righteously involves light and truth while rejecting darkness and deception, He cannot divinely work within individuals, when they have refused to come out of practiced darkness!³¹⁰⁸

7. As a reiteration, please understand that the epistles to the individual churches found in the New Testament, were letters affirming appropriate righteous behavior, while holding words of necessary correction for inappropriate unrighteous behavior; while all that was written was for follow up pertaining to the spoken ministry which occurred initially. This with the exception of the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, John), Acts, and Revelation).
 - During the year or more that the Apostles were personally ministering to the individual churches, much information and reiteration was proclaimed pertaining to the spiritual reality of a relationship with God; which included proclamation of individual testimonies including rendered testimonials from experiences of the spiritual reality.
 - This being a matter of fact, which emphasizes the spiritual strength which can come from those who have learned the imperatives necessary to humbly and devotionally submit unto the Lord; should make example to everyone who hears, the importance of learning and practicing going unto the Lord who is the actual Teacher of spiritual matters, from whom comes spiritual growth!

³¹⁰⁶ Romans 8:3-8; Galatians 3:10-26; 4:1-11, emphasis vs. 9-11.

³¹⁰⁷ 2 Corinthians 5:14-19.

³¹⁰⁸ John 1:1-5; 3:16-21; 8:12; 12:35, 36, 44-50; Romans 13:11-14; 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1; cf. Matthew 6:22-24.

- Spirituality is greatly hindered within those who maintain the necessity to cling to other human beings, yet spiritual growth comes to those who look beyond human instruction, unto the Teaching of the One who is masterful and righteous in all things! Initially, a combination of both the instruction, and the reality of actual spiritual teaching from the Lord, work very well together; for individuals are allowed to witness in others the devotional diligence which leads to spiritual successes, while also witnessing the result in others when earnest effort was never put forth! Coming to the spiritual relational reality is truly a learning process, which is worth the greatest of effort!
 - Example can be witnessed during the reading of the epistles, that although a few (remnant) taking the instruction seriously came to the spiritual relational reality in a short period of time, leading to their submission unto the Lord; many others continuing to straddle the fence of indecision (double-mindedness), took much longer periods of time, and this *if* they ever came to the spiritual relational reality at all!
 - Within all this, the lesson to be learned is that the Lord is deserving of our greatest: love, efforts, reverence, and devotion! If and when we have done our best unto the Lord today, we will have no place for regret tomorrow!
8. It is quite realistic that we are truly known by our “fruits”; not by words devoid of actions (fruits).
- Being “indwelled” by the Holy Spirit renders righteous motivation pertaining to all aspects of the “reality of God” and the “reality of the Christ” (glory of Christ); for it is from this motivation foundational to God’s righteousness, by which the legitimate children of God make time for God, while maintaining disciplined diligence to abide both in the Lord and in the Gospel!³¹⁰⁹
 - Although the world has multitudes who claim to know and love the Lord God, the reality of the spiritual relationship with Him is proven by the abundance of extent by which the legitimate

³¹⁰⁹ John 8:31-36; 15:1-17; Philippians 1:21-24.

children of God endeavor, with great diligence to do their best unto the Lord each and every day; whereas those aloof the reality within but assumption, conjecture and concept of the relationship, have many words which they speak, while yet showing little action (God's manifest fruits) which "proves" the spiritual relational reality.

- The legitimate children of God who are led by the Lord, know what must be done by the grace of God, and fulfill the necessary tasks; whereas the illegitimate children of God and lukewarm believers having simple understanding of what must be done, render many words foundational to the understanding, yet never seem to actually fulfill the necessary tasks; unless of course they can gain notoriety by actual action, or are seeking to go with a group of other "talkers" who alone would never seek involvement in fulfillment of necessary tasks.
- The reality of this is that the legitimate children of God are devotionally disciplined and diligent "doers" of the Word; whereas illegitimate children and lukewarm believers remain simple "hearers" who delude themselves! The legitimate children of God go to great extents to fulfill necessary devotion and righteousness; whereas the illegitimate children of God and lukewarm believers go only as far as their flesh will allow! Within this reality it becomes plainly evident; those who live according to the Spirit, and those who live according to the flesh!³¹¹⁰
- The reality of the spiritual relational reality is proven by necessary actions (God's fruits manifest and fulfilled); for where God is leading, there are always righteous actions which emphasize God's masterful righteous leadership!³¹¹¹ When illegitimate children of God and lukewarm believers witness some of the things which must be accomplished, which many times involves "tough love" and precise disciplined actions and accountability, they will criticize and gossip (more words only) pertaining to what occurred; while the legitimate children do what they must with little concern as to what is said and/or

³¹¹⁰ James 1:19-27; 2:14-26; Romans 8:1-17.

³¹¹¹ Romans 8:14.

believed in ignorance; for we remain concerned only with the fact that God knows all things, and masterfully leads for fulfillment of His righteousness!³¹¹²

- The legitimate children of God do not attempt to explain the reality of their spiritual service unto God to those who are illegitimate or lukewarm; for as the Spirit and the flesh are opposed to each other, there is no righteous reason in attempts to explain spiritual matters to the flesh of others.³¹¹³ Those of the Spirit are led by the Holy Spirit, and having actual knowledge pertaining to our purpose, fulfill our purpose most times without “words”; whereas those who live according to the flesh speak a plethora of words, which remain without actions beyond what the “flesh” will allow!
- The reality remains that when the divine work of God has taken us beyond the flesh unto the spiritual reality (glory of Christ; reality of the Christ); the spiritual reality becomes a basis of our existence, as we “abide in the Lord” and He “abides in us,” for we “abide in each other!”³¹¹⁴ Those who live solely for the flesh, as the “good” divine work of God has never begun, may have a concept of the spiritual reality as it is but an aspect of their existence; while yet with but a concept of the spiritual reality, they cannot and will not gain knowledge of the spiritual relational reality of which they have never actually experienced! Those of the Spirit live for the Lord; whereas those aloof the Spirit live for the flesh!³¹¹⁵ All the assumption and conjecture in the minds of humankind cannot change this reality; for actual righteous spirituality is wholly by the divine “good” work of God!³¹¹⁶ All else is of the flesh, and emotional (carnal) religiosity!³¹¹⁷

Because a personal relationship with Jesus saves from the wages of sin which is death, and because religion will save no one; please render unto the Lord your sincere love, reverence, and admiration, within the seek-

³¹¹² Philippians 1:27, 28.

³¹¹³ Romans 12:1-3; 1 Corinthians 2:1-16; Galatians 5:16-26, specific v. 17.

³¹¹⁴ John 15:4-9.

³¹¹⁵ Romans 8:1-17, specific vs. 5-14.

³¹¹⁶ 2 Corinthians 4:1-6; cf. John 3:31-36; 6:44, 45; Hebrews 5:8-10.

³¹¹⁷ Colossians 2:20-23.

ing of truth! He is faithful to bring forth all spiritual growth and blessing; from the time of your devotion's rendering, *if* pure motive and intent is witnessed; for it must be remembered, the Lord will look to the core of an individual's existence (motive and intent), and therefore always knows the truth pertaining to each of us! Please make supplication unto the Lord for one thing—"truth"; for this supplication involving Him will always be answered, *if* it is rendered in love, with reverence (selflessly)!

Throughout the book, I have rendered the truth! The truths which have been presented, especially pertaining to "religions," have angered many folks; and although it was never my intention to anger folks, I will never apologize for presenting the truth; for without coming into the light of truth, only the potential for delusive darkness remains, especially when being held captive within the schemes of Satan involving the darkness of religion! It is terrible how multitudes will argue for the religion they have followed and adhered to, when their supposed "Christian" basis of belief violates numerous or all Scriptural standards pertaining to God; then when the truth of the religion is presented to them and taken captive to the Gospel, they will many times maintain continuation to argue in ignorance against the truth; for foolish adolescent pride hates the light of truth, although only actual knowledge of the truth can displace ignorance! Because most individuals who hold to religion have never investigated the origins of the religion they follow, profess, and adhere to; proclamation of truth is many times very difficult, although we have listened to their professions prior to any in-depth discussions, in hopes they will listen to the truth! My concern is for the salvation of all; and although a plethora of individuals will not actually be saved through the religion the profess, I have done my best (by the grace of God) to reach out with the light of truth, so that all in whom I come in contact may achieve freedom in Christ (literally), which is freedom indeed!³¹¹⁸ I praise God for the opportunity to suffer for the sake of righteous truth; for by God's grace, and through actual intimate fellowship with Him, I endure the harshness for the sake of anyone to whom I come in contact.³¹¹⁹ Praise God for the reality of Him, for the reality although ineffable to those aloof the reality, is

³¹¹⁸ John 8:31-36; 2 Corinthians 4:5, 6; Ephesians 5:3-17; Colossians 1:9-14.

³¹¹⁹ John 14: 16, 17; 15:26, 27; 16:13-15; 1 John 4:1-6.

absolutely beautiful, pure, righteous, and astounding! I hope the best for everyone, yet without individual willingness to deny “self” and come out darkness into the light of truth, there is nothing that can be done for them! Please remember—“religion” is the primary means by which Satan deceives the whole world, minus a remnant of devotional and selfless believers; all Satan has to do to hold anyone in bondage, is to keep individuals from the light of truth regarding their existence and practices! Please resist the Great Deceiver by selflessly submitting unto the Lord; for when we are in the Lord, Satan must flee because of God’s might!³¹²⁰ External of the Lord, we actually have nothing but potential for delusive and carnal trouble; for the majority of endeavor, including religiosity, is but “vanity” and striving after wind!³¹²¹

WONDERFUL SHEPHERD

There once was a wonderful Shepherd, whom truly loved His sheep.³¹²² Many of His flock came to know His voice, learned to trust His instruction and leadership, knowing that the loving Shepherd always sought the best for them.³¹²³ Those of the flock, whom trusted the Shepherd enough to heed His words and nurturing leadership, were kept close and did not seek to stray; for they knew His lovingkindness is everlasting.³¹²⁴ Others of the flock were not fully aware of the Shepherds lovingkindness, and seeking to find such wonderful love elsewhere, were constantly seeking different paths away from the safety of the wonderful Shepherd.³¹²⁵ These fell into difficulties which were not necessary, because they chose to stray from the warmth and protection of the Shepherd’s nurtured leadership! No matter how far astray they went, the Shepherd was always watching and waiting to once again embrace them.³¹²⁶

*If you are astray, please return to His loving embrace; He eagerly awaits you.*³¹²⁷

May the Lord Jesus bless “you” with true abounding: freedom, knowledge, growth, and love!³¹²⁸

³¹²⁰ James 4:3-10; cf. Romans 8:28-34.

³¹²¹ Ecclesiastes 1:1-12:14; Emphasis 1:14-17; 3:14; 12:1-14.

³¹²² John 3:1-21; 10:1-18.

³¹²³ Romans 8:28; Hebrews 13:20, 21.

³¹²⁴ Psalm 136:1-26.

³¹²⁵ Matthew 7:13-27.

³¹²⁶ Luke 15:11-32; cf. Hebrews 13:5, 6.

³¹²⁷ 1 Peter 2:25; Luke 15:20.

MY FRIEND

My Friend, I stand in judgment now, and feel that you are to blame somehow.

On earth I walked with you day by day, and never did you point the way.

You knew the Lord in truth and glory, but never did you tell the story.

My knowledge then was very dim, yet you could have led me safe to Him.

Though we lived together here on earth, you never told me of the second birth.

And now I stand this day condemned, because you failed to mention Him.

You taught me many things, that's true: I called you "friend," and trusted you.

But I learn now that it's too late, and you could have kept me from this fate.

We walked by day, and talked by night, and yet you showed me not the light.

You let me live, and love, and die, you knew I'd never live on high.

Yes, I called you "friend" in life, and trusted you through joy and strife.

And yet, on coming to this dreadful end, I cannot now, call you "My Friend."

Author Unknown

Numbers 6:24-26: The LORD bless you, and keep you;
The LORD make His face shine on you, And be gracious to you;
The LORD lift up His countenance on you, And give you peace.

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