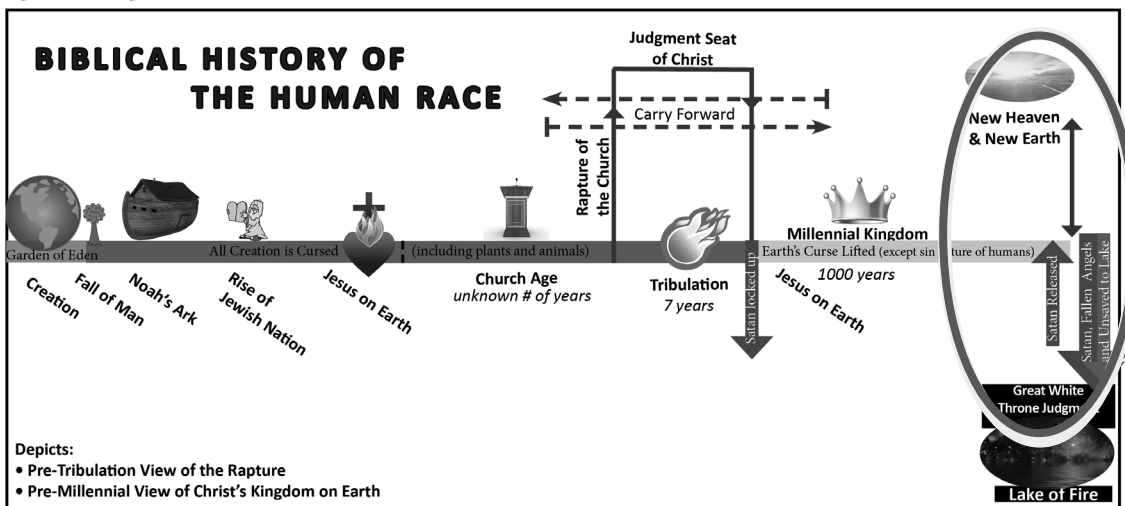


Preparing for the Rapture and Beyond

THE END ... AND A NEW BEGINNING

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See page 183 toolbox for full-page image.

THE NEW HEAVENS AND NEW EARTH

Millennium believers, who should all still be alive in human bodies at this point, will by-pass death and receive new eternal bodies (just like believers who were raptured alive prior to the Tribulation). **The new race is now complete**, we will live together forever in peace, happiness and harmony.

IN MY OPINION, at "the end" the new race (all in new bodies) and probably the holy angels will be safely tucked away in the Holy City (see graphics on pages 191 & 193 in toolbox) and then the Lord will destroy the old heavens and earth in an instant. And, in that same instant He will create everything new - and everything will be perfect as He is perfect. Voila! A new eternal beginning for the human race.

The new heaven and new earth will appear, and the Holy City (New Jerusalem) will descend from the heavens to rest permanently on the new earth. The Holy Trinity will dwell with the new humanity forever. There will be no more sin, no more tears, no more sorrow, no more pain, and no more death. Our memories of the old world and era will be erased.

¹⁷"See, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind." Isaiah 65:17

¹Then I saw "a new heaven and a new earth," for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. ²I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. ³And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. ⁴'He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death' or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away."

⁵He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." Revelation 21:1-5

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Very little is known about the Eternal Kingdom, but much more than what is presented here may be found in the Scriptures. Since that era is not the focus of this study, I'll leave that research up to you. Perhaps, Lord willing, I'll do a bit and He will allow me to write another study guide. We will see.

WHAT TO DO NOW?

The formula has been on every other page of this study guide (look at the bottom of this page).

- **LISTEN** - Read the Holy Scriptures aloud and listen to what they say, listen to the Holy Spirit in prayer. *"To him who has ears to hear, listen to what the Spirit has to say..."* Note that the word "listen" means listening with the intent of obedience.

- **OBEY** - **Do what the Scriptures say** (this is universal obedience; some are instructive, some are shown by example). And follow the specific instructions the Holy Spirit gives you in prayer; in quiet prayer with Him and in constant contact with Him (endlessly and without ceasing). He will whisper to you all the time **as you practice obedience**.

- **REJOICE** - To rejoice and give thanks is the will of God for you:

¹⁸ _____ in all circumstances;
for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus.
1 Thessalonians 5:18

⁴ Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again:
Rejoice! Philippians 4:4

Rejoice because you have been saved eternally to live with the God of the Universe in peace and joy. Rejoice because we serve a generous God who intends to lavishly reward those who love Him (which, by HIS definition, is to obey His commands).

GROWING IN CHRIST: THE "LOVE IS" CHALLENGE

I sincerely hope you have taken much of this to heart and are already making plans to grow your

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“bema pile.” If you’d like to track your success (as best we can) toward becoming more like Jesus you may consider taking the **“Love-Is Challenge”** on page 215 in the toolbox. More about this in the next few pages.

I personally have been surprised by some of the changes I see happening **to and in me** (sometimes it seems almost in spite of me, praise the Lord!).

Remember, we are in **“good company” on the journey** -

¹⁵I do not understand what I do. For what I want to do I do not do, but what I hate I do. Romans 7:15

^{18b}For I have the desire to do what is good, but I cannot carry it out. ¹⁹For I do not do the good I want to do, but the evil I do not want to do—this I keep on doing. Romans 7:18b-19

²⁴What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body that is subject to death?

²⁵Thanks be to God, who delivers me through Jesus Christ our Lord! Romans 7:24-26

Fondly,
Your Brother in Christ Jesus
the Apostle Paul

As I said at the beginning, I became a believer in Jesus Christ as my Lord and Savior in the spring of 1989. I didn’t talk about it to anyone. It was a very beautiful but private moment in my life.

Years later my best friend had a crisis in her life (I believe she was ready to become a believer) and asked me to come talk with her. She made a statement that has always “stuck” with me. She said, “I know when you became a Christian. I remember it.” She went on to say, “You were always a nice, kind, generous person. But I knew something was different about you. I just knew it.” (The rest of this story may be found on page 181 of the toolbox.)

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Our salvation should change us in ways that are both invisible and visible. We are told in Ephesians 5 to be *“imitators of God, as beloved children; and walk in love...”*

If you read the *Bema Builders - Believers Only Blogs: Working Out Our Salvation with Fear and Trembling* and *Christians Are a Bunch of Hypocrites!* you will notice a recurring theme: some Christians accept Jesus' gracious gift of salvation, then “sit down” – making no effort to grow in their faith and likeness to Him. At the very least this is sad, perhaps tragic. The tragedy is for them, the church and for the unsaved world.

The New Testament is full of warnings and admonitions about the expected behavior of the Believer. Romans 12:2 tells us: *“Do not conform to the pattern of this world,”* which effectively means, “stop being like you were before you were saved!” Before we are saved, we are “of this world” and are “conformed” to it. That is supposed to stop – it happens **progressively and intentionally**. If it happened automatically there would be no need to talk about it in the New Testament.

If we took the time to go through the entire New Testament to list every “example” of how a believer should be different from a non-believer, it would take pages. It could all be wrapped up in this one: *“Therefore you shall be perfect, as your heavenly Father is perfect.” Matthew 5:48*

The good news is that we aren't expected to accomplish this in our own strength or power, for God knows this is impossible. I love the way E.M. Bounds puts it in his book, *The Necessity of Prayer*, **“Does God give commandments that men cannot obey?”** Is He so arbitrary, so severe, so unloving, that He issues commandments that cannot be obeyed?

The answer is that, in all of Scripture, not a single instance is recorded of God having commanded any man to do a thing that was beyond his power. Is God

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so unjust and so inconsiderate to require of man something that he is unable to do? Certainly not. To infer it is to slander the character of God.”¹

So, if it cannot be done within our power, but God is not unjust in commanding it, what must be the answer? The Holy Spirit, of course. But we bear responsibility too.

A long time ago I worked with a friend, Bruce Cook, in preparing some of his teaching entitled *Strategic Faith Planning*. After watching it over and over I came to a conclusion that the synopsis of that teaching might go like this: *In all things there are two parts, my part and God’s part. They are not the same, nor are they equal. Here’s the catch – I can’t do His part, and He won’t do mine.*

In general, **His part is the Power. My part is to ask (pray), to believe, to watch, to participate, to wait and to rejoice.** In order to rejoice you have to know that you have a victory in an area of your life – maybe not complete but at least a step or two forward.

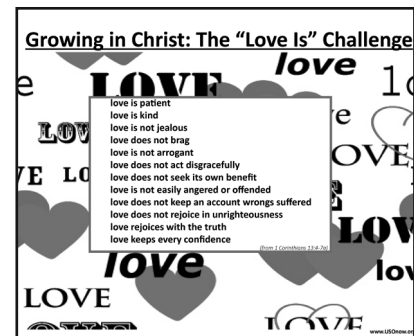
To help track this I put together a little “challenge” you might enjoy. I call it the **Growing in Christ “Love-Is” Challenge**. It is based on that “famous love chapter” (the one often read at weddings). Love is patient, love is kind – funny that very few can go past these first two – LOL. Maybe because we can’t even master those two in our own power. The challenge form and instructions are found in the toolbox.

The intent of the challenge is to allow us an opportunity to honestly assess ourselves against the perfection of Jesus. Then do our part – and see how the Holy Spirit handles His part.

Our part is:

1. Conduct an honest assessment of ourselves (more about this in the instructions the toolbox).
2. Pray regularly, asking that the Holy Spirit transform us day-by-day into the image of our

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Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ.

3. Expect to be challenged in these areas in the days ahead because this is how we grow.

²Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials [temptations], ³knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance [steadfastness]. ⁴And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect [mature] and complete, lacking in nothing. James 1:2-4

4. Consider every grievous thing to be an opportunity to grow in His image (count it all joy). Daily seek the help of the Holy Spirit to pass the tests of faith that mature us. Don't go making trouble for yourself or others, there are enough growth opportunities already present.

5. As you grow, rejoice and give thanks!

If the "Love Is" Challenge isn't your "thing" – how about using the admonitions contained in Ephesians 5:3-5?

³But among you there must not be even a hint of sexual immorality, or of any kind of impurity, or of greed, because these are improper for God's holy people. ⁴Nor should there be obscenity, foolish talk or coarse joking, which are out of place, but rather thanksgiving. ⁵For of this you can be sure: No immoral, impure or greedy person—such a person is an idolater—has any inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and of God. Ephesians 5:3-5

- Sexual immorality, impurity or greed must not even be mentioned among (by) you
- No obscenity, foolish talk or vulgar joking

Interesting that "foolish talk" is tucked in between obscenity and vulgar/coarse joking. Very interesting word choices...

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Either way, as believers, if we are sitting down, resting on our laurels, not growing in Christ:

GET DOWN! - on our knees.... then

GET UP! - and practice (demonstrate) obedience and gratitude...

We will do ourselves and the rest of the Church a great favor if we will get on with our sanctification process. **If nothing else, we OWE it to Jesus.**

CLOSING COMMENTS

You made it – all 200+ pages are now in the rear view mirror! Congratulations!

I hope you are tipping back your chair, roaring with laughter, delight and relief! I hope that you are saying to one another, “That’s it? Is it really that simple?” Yes, my friend, it is. **Because He is good.**

However, **simple and easy are not the same.** While it is that simple, it is NOT easy. We have three great enemies who will constantly do everything in their power to trip us up:

1. Satan and his demons
2. The world
3. Our greatest enemy – our own flesh

But be of good cheer, for ⁴*You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. 1 John 4:4* We have two advocates, One Who is in Heaven (Jesus) and One Who lives within us (the Holy Spirit). They both want great success for us (Father does too). **They are all ready, willing and more than able to supply everything we need to succeed mightily.** Call on them regularly - call on them in confidence - call on them in gratitude.

I am reminded of Oliver Twist in the play. He is hungry and asks, “Please, sir, I want some more (food).” May that be our request for we are all spiritually hungry for the living God. Please Sir, may I have (know) more (of You)?

Unlike the cruel master in the play, our Master is pleased to respond:

⁶*Blessed* are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.*
Matthew 5:6

*Blessed = Makarios means fortunate, well off, happy

There you have it. We don’t need to search for “some great thing” to do for the Lord. He may have a few people do “great things”, but what He truly wants is everyone doing the thing He has planned for them. **Everyone starts small and grows to maturity, if we are willing.**

Who am I? I am no one of any great consequence – I pray I have been nothing more than a humble scribe for the Holy Spirit of God. I pray that you have and will consider what has been expressed here and take it before the Lord for any application He chooses for you. I pray that you will fall more in love with Jesus and let the rest take care of itself. (To listen to this story, scroll down on the home page of www.BemaBuilders.org.)

May the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and the love of God, and the fellowship of the Holy Spirit be with you all. 2 Corinthians 12:14

Blessings my friend - See Ya on the Way Up!
Maranatha!