

# The New Creation Rule

## Introduction

**By George Davis and Michael Clark**

Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; the old things passed away; behold, all things have become new. (2 Corinthians 5:17 EMTV)

For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as walk according to this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (Galatians 6:12-16 NKJV)

And he who sat upon the throne said, "Behold, I make all things new." Also he said, "Write this, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:5 RSVA)

If you are in Christ, your involvement with God goes far beyond "becoming a Christian" or "joining a church." You are called to be a new creation. Regardless of color, gender or race, you have been begotten of the Father into one new humanity that is other worldly in nature-old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. If you are in Christ you have been divinely baptized into one body by one Spirit. That body is not governed by man's laws of organization, but by the life and nature of the One who created it. Your hope of righteousness does not rest in personal piety but in the divine nature that has been placed within you. You owe everything you are and everything you ever will be to your Creator. You are His ongoing workmanship. He who began the work in you will finish it to the praise of His glory.

Referring to this New Covenant, the New Testament speaks of a new genesis, a new birth, a new Adam, a new humanity, a new Israel, a new circumcision, a New Jerusalem and more. Such is the heavenly environment you are called and empowered to live in.

God's old covenant with natural Israel was sealed by circumcision in the flesh, which was a sign of a more efficacious circumcision to come. In the old history, natural Jerusalem entered into bondage with all her children. In the new history the Jerusalem that is above is free. She is the mother of us all (Galatians 4:26). The old covenant ended with the destruction of the Jerusalem temple (Hebrews 8:13), but the new history ends with the New Jerusalem, coming down from above.

The old humanity in Adam, the earthly man, passed away at the cross. The history of the heavenly Man began when Christ, the Last Adam, rose from the dead. Everything is now heavenly. The new creation, the New Jerusalem, the Zion of God, and our very existence are in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Our citizenship is in heaven, ". . . we have a building of God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens" (2 Corinthians 5:1). According to the book of Hebrews, we have already come to the heavenly Jerusalem and to the heavenly assembly, the church of the firstborn (Hebrews 12: 22-24). In this new covenant, circumcision is made without hands (Colossians 2:11) and is of the heart in the Spirit (Romans 2:29), not the flesh.

It is our earnest prayer that as you read the following pages, the Holy Spirit will make the death of the old humanity in Adam a fact in your life, and that you will be empowered in Christ as never before. We pray that the realities of the new creation will become your guiding rule of life.

- [Chapter 1: The New Creation Rule](#)
- [Chapter 2: A New Circumcision](#)
- [Chapter 3: The New Birth](#)
- [Chapter 4: The New Genesis](#)
- [Chapter 5: The New Adam](#)
- [Chapter 6: The Seventh Day](#)
- [Chapter 7: The New Creation and Peace](#)
- [Chapter 8: The New Creation, Male and Female](#)
- [Chapter 9: A New Name](#)
- [Chapter 10: The New Israel](#)
- [Chapter 11: The New Covenant](#)
- [Chapter 12: A New and Living Way](#)
- [Chapter 13: A New Priesthood](#)
- [Chapter 14: A New Commandment](#)
- [Chapter 15: The New Jerusalem and the New Zion](#)

## Chapter One: The New Creation Rule

As many as desire to make a good showing in the flesh, these would compel you to be circumcised, only that they may not suffer persecution for the cross of Christ. For not even those who are circumcised keep the law, but they desire to have you circumcised that they may boast in your flesh. But God forbid that I should boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, by whom the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation. And as many as *walk according to this rule*, peace and mercy be upon them, and upon the Israel of God. (Galatians 6:12-16 NKJV, emphasis added)

Paul begins this passage by addressing the pride of Judaism which is represented by the phrases, "good showing in the flesh" and "boast in your flesh." The key to understanding this passage is found in Paul's specific use of the word flesh. He referred to his fellow Jews as "those who are my flesh" (Romans 11:14), "my countrymen according to the flesh" (Romans 9:3) and "Israel after the flesh" (1 Corinthians 10:18). As for boasting in the flesh he wrote, "Seeing that many boast according to the flesh, I also will boast . . . Are they Hebrews? So am I. Are they Israelites? So am I. Are they the seed of Abraham? So am I" (2 Corinthians 11:18-22).

Here we have a clear example of boasting in the flesh. The Jews boasted in their natural heredity and in those things that made them unique, separate and superior to from the rest of mankind. They wanted to make a good showing in the flesh. They bragged about being Hebrews, Israelites and the seed of Abraham. All this boasting was according to the flesh.

Paul wrote elsewhere, "I also might have confidence in the flesh. If anyone else thinks he may have confidence in the flesh, I more so: circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews; concerning the law, a Pharisee; concerning zeal, persecuting the church; concerning the righteousness which is in the law, blameless" (Philippians 3:4-6 NKJV). Again, all of these things apply to natural lineage and heredity. Paul went on to show that such things must be counted loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus. "I have suffered the

loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ" (Philippians 3:7-8). Paul's pride in his national purity, perfect pedigree and his exalted status among his countrymen had to be counted as rubbish if he would gain Christ.

Paul did have a habit of boasting. He boasted in the cross of Christ. He gloried in the cross. What does the cross do that is so glorious? It kills. It crucifies. It terminates and saves by making room in us for the Son of God. The cross doesn't improve upon the old Adamic humanity. The cross doesn't make Jews into better Jews or Gentiles into better Gentiles; both are in Adam and that fleshly heredity has been crucified. The objective of the cross is an entirely new creation.

Jesus died on the cross to make one new humanity of the two, Jews and Gentiles, and tore down the wall that separated them (Ephesians 2:13-19). For this reason, circumcision and uncircumcision are dead issues. The preaching of the cross negates the preaching of circumcision. In Christ circumcision (being a Jew) counts for nothing and the same goes for uncircumcision (being a Gentile). In Christ, there are no Jews or Greeks to squabble over such things. In Him there is one new humanity that is free from the ethnic divisions that developed as a result of Adam's sin. This is the offense of the cross (Galatians 5:11) to those who insist on clinging to such things.

This is what stumbled the Jews. The cross would separate them from their Judaism and pride in law keeping. When I, Michael, was a boy I was a Cub Scout. My family moved about every two years, and just after I moved up in Cub Scouting, we moved to a new area where there were no Cub Scouts, just a Boy Scout troop. I soon found that my Cub Scout uniform and all its patches meant nothing among these boys. They were of a higher order. My uniqueness as an advanced Cub Scout meant nothing.

So also is Christ among us. His cross was to bring an end to the uniqueness of the Jews and silence their boasting. The resulting antagonism between the favored and therefore prideful Jew and the estranged and offended Gentile was destroyed by the cross, thus making peace. Jesus made peace between the two by abolishing the very thing that gave the Jew special status (the law of commandments contained in ordinances) in order that He could make in Himself one new humanity. ". . . that he (Jesus) might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby" (see Ephesians 2:15-16). This is a foundational aspect of the new creation rule.

This was a difficult concept for the early Jewish believers to understand. They had a hard time accepting God's verdict on their flesh because they believed that they were saved by virtue of their natural birth. When he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, John the Baptist immediately addressed their pride by calling them a generation of vipers and saying, "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, and do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' For I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matthew 3:7-9).

Paul's question, "Well then, are we [Jews] superior and better off than they (the Gentiles)?" was rhetorical. Everything they had been taught by their culture and religion answered with a resounding, Yes! Paul's answer to this question was especially framed to confront this pride. "No, not at all . . . *both Jews and Greeks (Gentiles), are under sin* [held down by and subject to its power and control]. . . None is righteous . . . no not one. No one understands . . . no one seeks out God. All have turned aside; together they have gone wrong and have become unprofitable and worthless; no one does right, not even one!" (Romans 3:9-12 Amplified Bible - emphasis added). Jew and Gentile had long been united in sin, though divided by pride. They were both in Adam and together they had gone wrong. In that regard the Jew was no better off than the Gentile.

Horatius Bonar explains:

"The Jew, educated under the most perfect of laws, and in the most favorable circumstances, was the best type of humanity, - of civilized, polished, educated humanity; the best specimen of the first Adam's sons; yet God's testimony concerning him is that he is "under sin," that he has gone astray, and that he has "come short of the glory of God." (God's Way Of Peace)

The Jews refused to accept God's judgment on their flesh and their traditions, resulting in the emergence of "Judaizers," who worked hard to safeguard their Jewish heritage by adapting Christianity to it. Because they believed that becoming a Jew made you righteous and good, they couldn't believe that God would save the world without first making everyone into Jews. They bewitched new believers by compelling them to be circumcised and keep the law. Like their predecessors the Pharisees, they saw themselves as guides to the blind and a light to those who are in darkness (see

Romans 2:17-19). The idea that God in Christ had made Jew and Gentile into one new race was preposterous to them.

Least we unfairly criticize the Judaizers we should consider the fact that the Jewish apostles also struggled with this. In fact, it is clear from the record that it took quite some time before those in Jerusalem could see and wholeheartedly embrace the new creation with no distinction between Jew and Greek. Years went by before they gained any significant level of freedom from this sectarian pride.

To prepare Peter to do what was unthinkable for a Jew (enter the house of a Gentile), God gave him a vision of a sheet coming down from heaven containing ceremonially unclean animals. Then a voice commanded him, "Rise, Peter; kill, and eat." Peter flatly refused, saying, "Not so, Lord!" Have you ever noticed what an oxymoron it is to tell Jesus NO and then call Him "Lord"? Yet, we modern Christians do it all the time by not yeidling to the authority of His Spirit. After Peter refused to obey, he boasted that he had never eaten anything common or unclean. The voice answered, "What God has made clean, do not call common." This was repeated three times. God was showing Peter that he was still viewing the Gentiles according to the dictates of Jewish society and tradition. Peter walked with Jesus for three years and his ethnic sectarianism still kept him from seeing the complete redemption and salvation of all mankind. Peter could not move redemptively toward the Gentiles while he viewed them as common and unclean. It took a vision and a voice from heaven to persuade this Jew to enter the house of a Gentile.

We know that God continued to deal with Peter in this matter (see Galatians chapter 2) and that later he was a powerful advocate for the Gentiles at what is now called "the Jerusalem council." He stood in the midst of his fellow Jews and asked, "Now therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?" Then he concluded with a statement of belief that revealed how far the Lord had brought him. "But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they" (Acts 15:10-11 NKJV). Here is the root of it. Peter clearly stated that Jew and Gentile must be saved in the same manner, by faith in Jesus Christ and the work of the cross.

Peter had learned that circumcision and uncircumcision were nothing. All things had become new and the old was passed away. Paul wrote, "And the scripture, foreseeing

that God would justify the Gentiles through faith, preached before the gospel unto Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all nations be blessed'" (Galatians 3:8 KJ2000). The old estranged creation in Adam consisting of Jew and Gentile has passed away and a new creation has come. A crucifixion and a resurrection took place, a passing from one world to another. Nothing of the old creation can be carried over into the new. The cross is the death of it.

The only thing that matters is a new creation. This is the New Creation Rule. The peace and mercy of God rest upon those who walk according to it.

### **"Walk according to this rule"**

According to Thayer, the definition of rule in our text is:

*kanon*

1) a rod or straight piece of rounded wood to which any thing is fastened to keep it straight

So Paul exhorts us to walk (*stoicheo*), "keep step with," this rule. In this instance *stoicheo* speaks of the adjusting and aligning stick that keeps believers properly related to God and each other. We must live in the reality of the new creation and relate to God and others according to it.

Thayer's dictionary goes on to say of this word *kanon*, "a definitely bounded or fixed space within the limits of which one's power of influence is confined." In the new creation we are inside the new boundaries that enclose the heavenly Jerusalem. We are consumed with the One that Father has set forth as our model of what His sons should be. He has become our All in all. He is the *kanon* we are tied to so that we will grow along side Him.

If you are in Christ, you were crucified to the world. You are dead to sin (Romans 6). You are dead to the law and you are dead to your old self (Romans 7). You are dead to everything of the old creation. Old things have passed away. You are dead to religion, which operates by the rudimentary principles of the world. But Paul did not only say "old things have passed away," but he continued by saying, "behold all things are become new." You were buried with Christ (in baptism) and raised in power. You are alive unto God. You have ascended and are seated with Christ in heavenly places,

viewing things from a heavenly perspective. All things have become new! According to Paul, those who walk by the new creation rule are the Israel of God. They are the true circumcision, who worship God in the Spirit, rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh (see Philippians 3:3).

When Nicodemus sought out Jesus by night, He brought that old Pharisee up short in his tracks by telling him that everything he represented was of no spiritual value. Jesus said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." Elsewhere Paul put it this way, "I tell you this, brethren: flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:50 RSVA). God is Spirit and they who worship Him and want to be in His kingdom must walk in the Spirit and the truth of the cross of Christ as it conforms us into heavenly beings.

## **Chapter Two: A New Circumcision**

Consider the immense importance that the Jews placed on circumcision. This was the sign given to Abraham, the father of the Jews, that they were true believers of the one true God. It was in every sense of the term the price of admission to their exclusive club as "God's chosen people." It was the sign of their national unity. Anybody without that sign was an outsider, an infidel. A man couldn't enter the temple, partake of the feasts or be involved in the national life of Israel in any way unless he was circumcised.

Paul's disregard for physical circumcision constituted a crisis for the Jews and consequently brought persecution on him. Abandoning this mark of uniqueness amounted to societal suicide, because it had become their identity and badge of righteousness.

What did Paul see that permitted him to write the treasonous words, "circumcision means nothing"? By revelation he saw that the circumcision that initiated a man into the old Israel was only a figure of the circumcision "of their hearts" that God was really after (See Deuteronomy 10-6, 30:6 and Jeremiah 4:4). The new creation is inward and spiritual and so is the new circumcision. Paul wrote, "For he is not a real Jew who is one outwardly, nor is true circumcision something external and physical. He is a Jew

who is one inwardly, and real circumcision is a matter of the heart, spiritual and not literal. His praise is not from men but from God" (Romans 2:28-29 RSV).

Paul also wrote the following:

In whom also you are circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ: Buried with him in baptism, in which also you are risen with him through the faith of the working of God, who has raised him from the dead. And you, being dead in your sins and the uncircumcision of your flesh, has he made alive together with him, having forgiven you all trespasses; Blotting out the handwriting of ordinances that was against us, which was contrary to us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross; (Colossians 2:11-14 KJ2000)

The true circumcision is not outward in the flesh nor is it performed by human hands. It is inward and made without hands. It is the circumcision of Christ, which occurs when you are buried with Christ in baptism-putting off the body of the sins of the flesh-and raised with him. This is the new creation circumcision.

We see a wonderful fore-type of this in Joshua 5:7-12. To the believer, the cross is everything that Gilgal was to Israel. Gilgal was the place where the new generation raised up by God first camped after they passed through the waters of the Jordan River into the land flowing with milk and honey. It was there at Gilgal that Joshua circumcised them. Joshua (Jesus' name in Hebrew) is a type of Christ and this event is a perfect figure of the circumcision exercised by Christ. When Joshua had finished circumcising all the Hebrew men, and they had healed, the LORD said to Joshua, "This day I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you." Gilgal means rolling. Then the children of Israel did something that hadn't been done Egypt. They kept the Passover. They ate the lamb (a type of Christ) and then the produce of the land. Gilgal was Israel's base of operations during the conquest of the Promised Land, and in the years that followed, they returned there often to remember. They went back to regain their vision and purpose.

The same is true of the Christian. We must return to our Gilgal often. It must be our base of operation. We must never forget its significance. We must remember the rolling away! We must remember the circumcision of Christ, the cross that deals with our flesh. If you are a Christian, you also are a new generation raised up by God. You are

the true circumcision. You are a work of God alone as He conforms you into the image of His Son, cutting away all that is of the old Adamic nature, the flesh.

"For we [Christians] are the true circumcision, who worship God in spirit and by the Spirit of God and exult and glory and pride ourselves in Jesus Christ, and put no confidence or dependence [on what we are] in the flesh and on outward privileges and physical advantages and external appearances" (Philippians 3:3 AMP).

Unlike the old Israel, the new Israel has no confidence in the flesh. Everything is a matter of the heart. There is no regard for the flesh in this. He receives praise from God alone. He doesn't boast in the flesh, neither does he regard anyone according to the flesh. God is no respecter of persons, but He does have regard for where His Son dwells by the Spirit and ". . . from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh."

We must prayerfully try to know other believers after the Spirit, to know them as new creatures and see them as God sees them. How often in church circles have we been guilty of judging one another after the flesh? We see Christ as risen, sitting at the right hand of the Father, but we look on those purchased with His blood as temporal and unchanged, or even worse, as unchangeable!

The love of Christ gives us new eyes as well. In Him we are empowered to look beyond the crude, rude and unattractive outward man that is perishing and see the inward man that is being renewed day by day (2 Corinthians 4:16). The love of Christ constrains us to view and relate to every believer through the lens of Christ's death and resurrection. His love gives us the clarity of vision to differentiate between the old Adam and the new Adam. Through that love Christ bore in His own body the penalty for Adam's sin. More than that, He bore in His own body the sinner and by that provided a way out of sin and death into the new creation reality.

Paul explains:

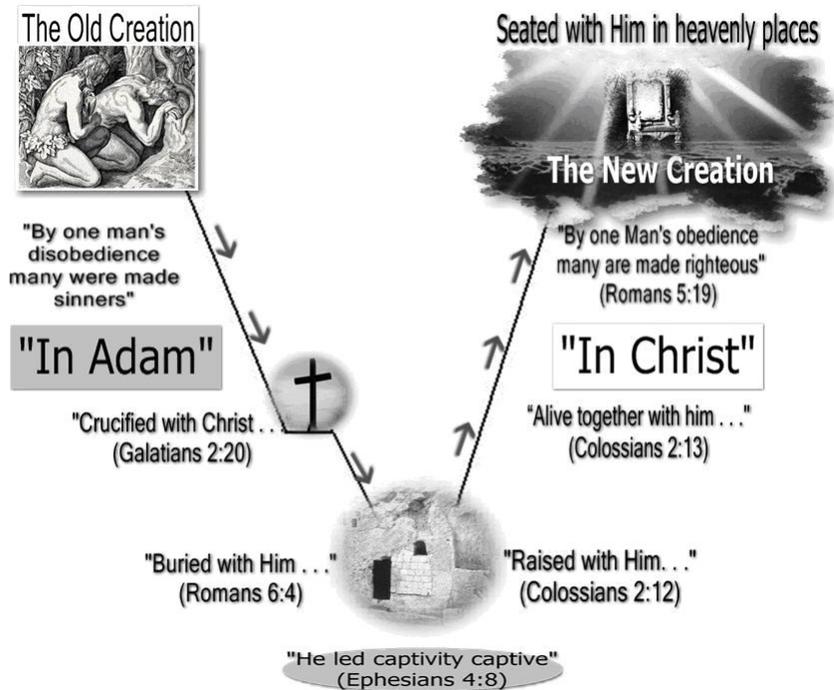
For the love of Christ compels us, because we judge thus: that if One died for all, then all died; and He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves, but for Him who died for them and rose again. Therefore, from now on, we regard no one according to the flesh. Even though we have known Christ according to the flesh, yet now we know Him thus no longer. Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new. Now all

things are of [out from] God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and has given us the ministry of reconciliation, (2 Corinthians 5:14-18 NKJV)

We have inherited a misleading view of redemption that makes Christ an assistant rather than a Savior. Christ is often depicted as someone we add to our lives to help fix us and make us better so we are more acceptable to God and our fellow Christians. Nothing could be further from the truth. Jesus is not something we can add to our juju bag of magical tricks and potions. Jesus did not come to be under the control of Adam, but to displace him totally! As we grow in the knowledge of Him we begin to see that God "delivered us from the power of darkness" in order to translate us . . . remove us . . . carry us away . . . into an entirely new realm and reality. (Colossians 1:13). This new position of all believers in Christ is nothing short of a new heaven and a new earth. Peter used the figure of God's redemption of Noah and his family through the flood to describe it (1 Peter 3:21). It is as if you got on a ship and traveled to a distant land where everything is new, including you. This added dimension is the extraordinary characteristic of our redemption, which consists of more than being delivered from the dominion of sin, the world and the devil. It delivers us from that sinister person that has incessantly dogged our steps and repeatedly ruined our lives. It delivers us from us.

Every believer is in Christ. In that regard every believer was with Christ when Christ was crucified, was with Christ when Christ was buried, and was with Christ when Christ was resurrected, and is now seated with Christ in heavenly places. The love of Christ constrains us to know one another in this way. We are raised up together and made to sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. This is what makes us the workmanship of God, created in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6-10). This is what makes us new creatures in Christ.

The following chart may help us get a better perspective of so great a salvation.



In Christ we have been given a new heavenly position. His death is our death. His resurrection is our resurrection. His ascension is our ascension. His victory is our victory. In Christ we are crucified to the world, dead to sin and released and empowered to live lives that are alive unto God.

The love of Christ constrains us to see all believers as new creatures and relate to them accordingly. Without Christ we are dead men walking. Yet, the life of God once it is born within us brings new life and it is all that is needed. It is an amazing thing. It can even be seen in the faces of those He dwells in. Have you ever met a person for the first time and it was like you knew them before? You probe each other's past and find that your paths never crossed; that the only thing you have in common is that Christ lives within you both. In the final analysis this is the only thing needed to have close fellowship from that point on.

When George and I (Michael) first met there was an instant bond between us. I found myself free to tell him everything about myself, yet I was perfectly safe. We refused to know one another after the flesh, but rather looked beyond the obvious to see Christ abiding within one another. That bond has lasted unto this very day, over ten years later. This is the nature of walking in the eternalness of God. In Proverbs we read, "Two cords wound together are stronger than two cords separately and a three fold

cord is not easily broken." Two believers walking with Christ are that threefold cord. Has our bond in Christ been tested? Oh, yes, but greater is He that is in us than he that is the prince of this world. The key is that we keep yielding ourselves up to Christ in everything that happens.

It is in this spiritual connection with God that we are connected to other believers. We are all members of the body of Christ and as such each member must hold fast to the Head who is Christ (Colossians 2:18-19). It is in this joining to the Head that we can edify one another as members of His body. Paul wrote:

But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body being fitly joined together and knit together by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:15-16 KJ2000)

Just as God created man to relate to Him spiritually, He has given those whose spirits are alive unto Him the ability to know one another spiritually. We are joined to one another in Him. He that is joined to the Lord is one Spirit. And so we can say without reservation, all those who are joined to the Lord are one Spirit. We are joined to Him and therefore attune to one another. So profound is this connection that Paul could write from Ephesus to the Corinthian believers and say, "For though absent in body I am present in spirit . . . When you are assembled, and my spirit is present, with the power of our Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:3-4 RSV).

Through new birth, there is a spiritual joining and knowing among all that are in Christ. "We have the mind of Christ."

### **Chapter Three: The New Birth**

Nicodemus, a Pharisee and ruler of the Jews, came to Jesus by night. Jesus began by teaching Nicodemus the basic requirement for participation in the kingdom of God. "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." Jesus' second statement was like His first, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God."

The Jews were very familiar with the term, "born of water." Proselyte baptism was considered a rebirth into Judaism. Jesus turned the tables on Nicodemus by telling him that he needed to be reborn into an entirely new humanity or he would never possess the spiritual acuity to see the kingdom of God, much less understand what Jesus was saying to him.

This is a very important distinction and one that Albert Barnes makes quite well.

"It may seem remarkable that Nicodemus understood the Saviour literally, when the expression "to be born again" was in common use among the Jews to denote a change from "Gentilism" to "Judaism" by becoming a proselyte by baptism. The word with them meant a change from the state of a pagan to that of a Jew. But they never used it as applicable to a Jew, because they supposed that by his birth every Jew was entitled to all the privileges of the people of God. When, therefore, our Saviour used it of a Jew, when he affirmed its necessity of every man, Nicodemus supposed that there was an absurdity in the doctrine."

The first birth placed everyone, including the Jews, in the first Adam from whom all men receive their carnal nature. The second birth places us into the last Adam, the quickening Spirit, who has made us partakers of the divine nature. Everyone inherits the nature of the first Adam by virtue of natural birth. Those who are born again of incorruptible seed take on the nature of the heavenly Man. "You have been regenerated (born again), not from a mortal origin (seed, sperm), but from one that is immortal by the ever living and lasting Word of God" (1 Peter 1:23 AMP).

Here we see the reasoning behind Jesus' next words to Nicodemus. "That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." In his present condition as a natural born Jew in Adam, Nicodemus could not see or enter the kingdom of God. Flesh begets flesh and Spirit begets spirit. The natural man, Nicodemus, could not see the things of the because he had no spiritual eyes or spiritual ears to see and hear in that realm.

We see this clearly if we remove the chapter break between chapters two and three of John. Without the chapter break it reads, "Now when He was in Jerusalem at the Passover, during the feast, many believed in His name when they saw the signs which He did. But Jesus did not commit Himself to them, because *He knew all men*, and had no need that anyone should *testify of man*, for *He knew what was in man*. . ." Chapter

three continues, "There was a *man* of the Pharisees named Nicodemus. . . *This man* came to Jesus by night . . ." ( John 2:23-25, 3:1-2 emphasis added).

Jesus met Nicodemus not as a Jew but as a man. Jesus knew exactly what was in him. Jesus knew that Nicodemus was wrong by nature. He knew that Nicodemus must learn what another self-righteous *Pharisee of the Pharisees* (Paul) later learned on the road to Damascus. Paul described his life as *a man* in these terms, "...*we all* once lived in the passions of our flesh, carrying out the desires of the body and the mind, and *were by nature children of wrath*, like the rest of mankind" (Ephesians 2:1-3 ESV emphasis added). Nicodemus could not see that he was *by nature* no different than the rest of mankind.

Nicodemus believed Jesus because he saw the signs that He did. He expressed the level of his belief in his opening words to Jesus. "Rabbi, we know that you are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that you do unless God is with him." It was one thing to believe that Jesus was sent from God and quite another to have the spiritual ability to understand the signs. And so Jesus said in effect, "Just stop right there, Nicodemus! You cannot enter the kingdom of God unless you become an entirely different man, born from above (actually, the Greek here says that we must be procreated by the Father). Unless you are born again it is senseless to go any further. Flesh and blood cannot comprehend the deep things of God."

Nicodemus' response proves how void of spiritual understanding he was. "How can these things be!" He simply didn't have the spiritual faculties to see or enter into a conversation of any depth with the Son of God. Jesus seemed to acknowledge Nicodemus' bewilderment, but added something even more difficult for the natural man to grasp. He described the nature of those who are begotten of the Spirit. "The wind blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:1-8 NKJV). God who is Spirit has begotten them and they, by nature, are like Him. "But the spiritual one discerns all things, but he is discerned by no one" (1 Corinthians 2:15 LITV).

"That which is born of the flesh is flesh and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." God can only be known after the Spirit. Those who are born of the Spirit are spirit and can only be known spiritually. They cannot be discerned by the natural man because

they are not born of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, but of God. We have a sister in Christ who lives in Texas. When you are talking with her, you never know what she will say next. She thinks and speaks in the Spirit and is totally unpredictable. She drives religious church folks crazy, just like Jesus did, yet those to whom He is speaking through her understand what she shares with them and they are blessed. They who are born of the Spirit are like the wind.

## **Resisting the Temptation to Christianize the Flesh**

Watchman Nee once quipped that you can take a pig out of his wallow and give him a bath and put perfume on him and tie a bow on his head. You can even train him to eat at the table with the family. But one thing is sure, as soon as you leave the door ajar the slightest amount he will bolt out of the house and back into his pig sty and return to his wallow. Why? Because he is still a pig by nature.

We must get it straight once and for all that carnal man can never be anything but flesh. Flesh will always be flesh. We may try to rehabilitate it, wash it up, dress it up all pretty, groom it and present it to God, but it is still what we started out with. It is flesh. Though it might look better, smell better, talk better and even walk better, it is flesh because it was born that way. God rejects it for that reason. He has given up on the flesh and so must we. God has no interest in Christianizing the flesh, and as His children, neither should we.

Charlotte and I (George) have four children. Two of them are born again believers and two of them are not. The temptation to Christianize our two unsaved children who are, quite frankly, only being true to their natures, is very tempting indeed. Through it all God has taught us that the gospel is no longer good news when we use the letter of scripture as a moral rulebook. Jesus didn't come to save the self-righteous, but the lost. The good news is for sinners. The scriptures become condemnation when they stop being the testimony of Jesus and become a codified law-book in the hands of judges.

If unregenerate sinners somehow manage to obey the letter of scripture, at best they would be well-behaved sinners. If they memorized the whole Bible and tried to obey it to the letter, they would more likely become Pharisees than Christians. Nicodemus had the letter of the law and probably had it his whole life. He almost certainly kept the law as well as anyone. What he didn't have was the spiritual wherewithal to see and enter

the kingdom of God. For that, you must be born again of the Spirit! You must be created anew! Book learning, no matter how much we have, or how many doctorates in divinity we may possess, will never leap the gap from the mind of the flesh into the mind of the Spirit. You must be a partaker of the divine nature. Attempting to become a Christian and live the Christian life without the Life and nature of God is destined to frustration, failure and condemnation. Attempting to comprehend the things of the Spirit through the faculties of the flesh is impossible.

You cannot put new wine in an old wineskin. You cannot put a patch of new cloth on an old garment, or when it is washed it will shrink and tear the old garment and make it worse than it was before. This is why statistically Evangelical and Pentecostal churches can report millions of "conversions" or "decisions" made for Christ every year, yet all the while their church populations are shrinking. If you make an altar call appeal to the emotions and logic of men, you can get them to "go forward," but the kingdom of heaven is not apprehended by emotion or logic. It comes when you acknowledge to God that you are a lost sinner and you embrace the cross of Christ as your only hope. Out of this comes resurrection life.

We are not engaged in the ministry of Christ when we bring a list of rules and expectations and put them upon the shoulders of men as a condition for God's acceptance. Jesus didn't come saying to the multitudes, "if you will just straighten up God will be happy with you and accept you." He did not bring the expectation and condemnation of the law. Where law and death reigned, He brought life and healing. "For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved" (John 3:17). Jesus didn't even accuse a harlot who had been caught in the very act of adultery. The law said she should be stoned, but He said, "Neither do I condemn you. Go and sin no more." He didn't deny the existence of sin, but neither did He enforce the law with its demands and penalties. No, He brought Life and forgiveness. Had Jesus brought the law He would have been obligated to pick up stones with the rest of the religious crowd and stone her to death. But no! "The law was given by Moses but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17).

The ministry of the letter is not the ministry of Life. It is the ministry of death (2 Corinthians 3:7). How cruel is it to put heavy scriptural burdens on the shoulders of anyone who has no spiritual capacity to obey them? Jesus didn't even condemn the religious folks who were willing to stone that woman. Instead He said, "Let him who is

without sin cast the first stone." It is unrealistic to expect spiritual behavior from those who are begotten only of flesh. Should we not do as Jesus did and say, "You must be born again"?

Why do we find it so difficult to accept Jesus' verdict on the flesh and stop trying to Christianize it? If we truly understood that "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing" (see John 6:63), we would stop trying to make the old man into a good man. God rejects the best that mankind had to offer. An unregenerate law-keeper is really no better off than an unregenerate prostitute. He might be as pretty as a whitewashed tomb on the outside, but inside occupied by a putrefying dead body. The descendants of Adam, however beautiful, intelligent and socially graced they might be, are begotten of flesh and are still flesh. All are of corruptible seed. Without partiality, all must be re-begotten of the Spirit. In this we see the alpha rule of the new creation. Rebirth begins with the abandonment of all hope in the flesh. Only then can you be begotten of incorruptible Seed.

## **In Adam or In Christ**

By one man (the first Adam) sin came into the world. "Through Adam all die. . . ." Through the first Adam, the old creation is hostile to its Creator and in a spiritual sense it is a desolate wasteland. Through One Man (the last Adam) there is a new creation that is made new in the Spirit of God. There is a new race possessing a DNA conformed to the image of Him who created them (See Romans 5). First there was the natural--man was made a living soul; then the spiritual--man was made in the image of a life giving spirit.

If you study the New Testament, you cannot help but notice the repeated reference to these two representative men (the first and the Last Adam) and the people resident in these two. There is no middle ground. Every living human being is either in the old dead Adam or in the living Christ. The sinful nature of Adam works within everyone who is in Adam and leads to death. The righteous nature of the Last Adam, Christ, works within everyone who is in Him, leading to life. Everybody dies in Adam; everybody comes alive in Christ (1 Corinthians 15:22 MSG) Paul put it this way in another place: "For, if by the wrongdoing of one [Adam], death was ruling through the one, much more will those to whom has come the wealth of grace and the giving of righteousness, be ruling in life through the one, even Jesus Christ" (Romans 5:17 BBE).

As the representative of a new lineage, Christ had to be tested and proven victorious in every area where the first Adam had failed. He learned obedience through the things that He suffered, and through His proven faithfulness, believers are delivered from sin, failure, suffering, sickness and death into abundant life in the Spirit. Everything was set right by the obedience of the heavenly Man, Jesus Christ. This is not a merely legal or purely conceptual redemption, to be batted around and comprehended only by theologians. No, this salvation requires everyone to repent as sinners needing righteousness and as beggars needing grace. God's gift of grace not only covers our sins, but also empowers us to live above the reach of sin and its consequences (Romans 8: 1-2). Abundance of grace and the gift of righteousness aren't merely given to save us in "the sweet by-and-by." They are given so we can reign in life by One, Jesus Christ (Romans 5:17-19).

### **"All Things Are Of God"**

Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are become new. And all things are of God, who has reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ, and has given to us the ministry of reconciliation; (2 Corinthians 5:17-18 KJ2000)

Now we want to speak to the highest rule of the new creation. T. Austin Sparks called it "The all-inclusive rule of the new creation."

The all-inclusive rule of the new creation is that "all things are of (out from) God." Concerning this fact the Apostle Paul uses the word "but" - "But all things are of God" - as though he would anticipate, intercept, or arrest an impulse to rush away and attempt life or service upon an old creation basis, or with old creation resource. (T. Austin Sparks, *A New Creation*)

Origin determines everything. All things cannot be new until all things are out from God. This is the genesis rule of the new creation. Nothing is out from us. "Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:9-10 KJV). As Jesus put it, "Apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5).

We cannot please God out from ourselves any more than we can be our own makers. All things must originate in and proceed from God. He created the universe from

nothing, but He can use none of that to remake fallen man. Speaking of Christ, Paul wrote, "And He is before all things, and by Him all things consist. And He is the head of the body, the church. He is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He might have the preeminence" (Colossians 1:17-18 KJ21). The new creation must consist of Christ alone.

We are creatures, created in Christ Jesus. We are God's own workmanship. The cross guarantees that nothing of the old creation can enter into the new creation. That old "I" must be crucified before the words "nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me" (Galatians 2:20) become real.

The old covenant and the law served to reveal the failings of Adam's flesh, but they have no place in the new creation. In the old covenant the power to perform (or should we say the lack of it) came from us, shown by the commands, "thou shalt and thou shalt not." In the New Covenant, nothing is of us! Even the works we do were established from before the foundation of the world in Christ Jesus (See Ephesians 2:10). All things are from Him. Mercy and peace pursue those who walk by this rule. Attempting to serve God with Adam's resources will only bring frustration and defeat. You didn't become a Christian by struggling to change yourself, but by believing in Christ and receiving the Spirit of Christ, and even that was not by your choice, but the Father's. Neither do we live the Christian life by agonizing and straining. "As you have received Christ Jesus, so walk in Him." We were born from above by Him and we are to walk by His Spirit alone.

We have been saved by the grace of Jesus and we walk by His grace. Paul makes this point by the use of an impossible scenario.

But the righteousness based on faith says, "Do not say in your heart, 'Who will ascend into heaven?'" (that is, to bring Christ down) or "'Who will descend into the abyss?'" (that is, to bring Christ up from the dead). (Romans 10:6-7 ESV)

This is the point. These are things that only God can do. It was God who sent his Son into the world and it was He who raised Him from the dead. And it is God who has raised us up together with Christ. All things are from God. That is Faith! That is righteousness! This is the new and living way, not the oldness of the letter that demanded a performance from us. No. In the new creation all things that pertain to life and godliness are supplied in Christ.

We don't partake of Christ through effort. "We are made partakers of Christ" (Hebrews 3:14) by the Father. We don't overcome sin through personal discipline; His life lifts us above the struggle to overcome sin (Romans 7:15-18). "Thanks be to God through Jesus Christ our Lord! . . . There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and of death" (Romans 7:25, 8:1-2 NRS).

The cross guarantees that nothing that doesn't originate in the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus makes the transition into the new creation. To glory in the cross is to glory in this fact. God desires a new creation that is completely from Him. He wants a new unspoiled man that is renewed in knowledge after the image of Him that created him (Colossians 3:10). This is the all-encompassing rule of the new creation.

## Chapter Four: The New Genesis

The New Testament is the record of a new genesis or beginning. Matthew begins his gospel with words very reminiscent of the book of Genesis. "The book of the generation (Greek - *biblos genesis*) of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1 WEB).

We find the same phrase in the Greek translation of the Old Testament (the Septuagint). Genesis 5:1 reads, "This is the book of the generations (*biblos genesis*) of Adam. In the day when God created man, He made him in the likeness of God."

The first genesis begins with the created earth in a state of confusion and emptiness (tohu va bohu) and darkness was over the face of the deep. Every sequence of creation that followed was God's answer to that chaos and purposelessness. In the beginning of the old genesis the Spirit of God brooded (*ra^chaph*) over the face of the deep, literally, as a fowl hatching her eggs. In the new genesis the angel declared to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Most High will overshadow you" (Luke 1:35). Again, we see the parallel of the old and new genesis, the Spirit brooded over a virgin as it did thousands of years earlier over the face of the deep. God's order displaces the chaos and emptiness beginning with the brooding of the Holy Spirit.

The seven days of the old creation are types and figures that have their heavenly fulfillment in Jesus Christ. He is the firstborn from the dead (Revelations 1:5) and the beginning of God's creation (Revelations 3:14). "He is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of all creation. For by him all things were created, in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible . . . all things were created through him and for him...in him all things hold together. . . He is the beginning..." (Colossians 1:15-18). He is the embodiment of the new creation . . . through whom are all things and through whom we exist" (1 Corinthians 8:6 ESV). "And he is before all things, and in him all things hold together" (Colossians 1:17 ESV).

On the first day of the old genesis God said, "Let there be light," and there was light. Next He separated the light from the darkness (Genesis 1:3). It is important to note the use of the words divide and divided in the first genesis record. Separation was needed before God could make the earth fruitful and prepare the way for the masterpiece of His creation. He divided the light from the darkness, and the waters from the waters and the land from the waters and the day from the night. It all begins with light, and light brings separation.

The new genesis of Jesus Christ follows along these very lines. Paul wrote, "For God, who said, "Let light shine out of darkness," has shone in our hearts to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Jesus Christ (2 Corinthians 4:6 ESV).

The Gospel of John starts with the declaration, "In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was in the beginning with God. All things were made through him, and without him was not any thing made that was made. In him was life, and the life was the light of men. The light shines in the darkness, and the darkness has not overcome it" (John 1:1-5 ESV). Here we see that the beginning of both the old and the new genesis was the Word. With the manifestation of the Word comes the entrance of Light and the dividing of Light from darkness.

The Word that was with God before He spoke a single thing into existence is the same Word that speaks today. God has never remained silent but is ever present throughout all His creation, calling us to Himself and setting things in order. He is still moving. The command, "let there be light" is still going forth and the Light is still illuminating the darkness in the hearts of men. John put everything in the present tense. "The light

shines (this very moment) in the darkness, and the darkness has not [and will not] overcome it."

This separation of light from darkness also divides men into two groups--those who love the Light and those who prefer darkness and hate Him. John's new genesis record continues, "And this is the judgment: the light has come into the world, and people loved the darkness rather than the light because their deeds were evil. For everyone who does wicked things hates the light and does not come to the light, lest his deeds should be exposed. But whoever does what is true comes to the light, so that it may be clearly seen that his deeds have been carried out in God" (John 3:19-21 ESV).

We see this same new genesis theme in the opening verses of the book of Hebrews.

"God, who at many times and in various manners spoke in time past unto the fathers by the prophets, Has in these last days spoken unto us by his Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds; Who being the brightness of his glory, and the express image of his person, and upholding all things by the word of his power, when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high. (Hebrews 1:1-3 KJ2000)

God has spoken unto us by his Son. In a particular sense, Jesus is His final creative Word. Jesus is the Word and Light. He is the One by whom all things were created and He is still upholding all things by the word of His power. Jesus is unlike any other light. His is an uncreated light, brighter than the sun. His light can penetrate even into the deepest and darkest heart of a man. He is the brightness of God's glory. It was this Light that shone into that first day of creation and caused the darkness and chaos to retreat. The image of God was tarnished and obscured through the failure of the first man, but Jesus is the exact image of God's person that shines without blemish today. All the old genesis words and figures apply to Christ. All that was prefigured by the old creation was fulfilled in Him. God has spoken! Light has come! The division of light and darkness is ongoing. The darkness cannot overcome it.

Early in the sixth day of the old genesis, the Word spoke the beasts of the earth, the livestock and everything that creeps on the ground into existence. It was all good but this was not all, since the crowning creation of His sixth day was yet to be.

Then God said, "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness." So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

For such exceptional creatures there was an exceptional process of creation. They were not created out of nothing, but came from the earth. The way God created them foretold the purpose they were created for. This process is key to understanding the new creation. It is a prophetic figure of Him who was to come and His bride.

Enter Adam-the figure of Him who was to come.

## Chapter Five: The New Adam

Everything that happened on the sixth day of the old creation was a type and shadow of the sixth day of the new creation. According to Romans 5:15, Adam was the figure (sampler or type) of Him that was to come. All God's purposes for creating Adam were to be realized in Christ. The ultimate objective in God's mind was the manifestation of the Last Adam on earth and a "new man" (Ephesians 2:15), His body. (Matthew 1:1 WEB).

Just as Adam was the firstborn of the old creation and was created in the likeness and image of God, the Last Adam "is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn over all creation" (Colossians 1:15 NKJV). On the sixth day of the old creation "Adam the son of God" (Luke 3:38) was formed from the earth and given life by the breath of God. A physical body that descended from the tribe of Judah was formed for Christ, but that was not all that God had in mind. He planned a spiritual body for His Son on the earth that Paul calls "the Body of Christ," the *ekklesia* of God, made of earthen vessels filled with the Spirit of God.

On the day of Pentecost God again breathed the Breath of Life into a lifeless body of Christ's followers and it began to move, walk, talk and live by the Life of its Creator. This is the eternal significance of the last Adam; a life-giving Spirit and of the body of Christ; the fullness of Him who fills all things. "The first man Adam became a living being. The last Adam became a life-giving spirit" (1 Corinthians 15:45). The first Adam bore offspring in his image (Genesis 5:3). And Paul introduced Christ as "the Last

Adam," the progenitor of an entirely new Spirit-birthed lineage bearing God's likeness and image.

Paul compared the old creation of the first Adam with the new creation in the last Adam. First the natural, then the spiritual. "The first man is of the earth, made of dust: the second man is the Lord from heaven. . . As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly." All who are born of the last Adam, who partake of this new creation, have been given a great promise. "Just as we bear the image of the man of dust, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly Man" (1 Corinthians 15:49).

The Adam that God created toward the close of the sixth day was male and female, "in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them." God created Adam to typify Christ. He created Eve to typify the Church. Neither is complete without the other.

In the old creation God created a helpmeet for Adam. The way God created Eve was also a prediction of things to come. God's old creation was good, but something important was missing. ". . . but for the man there was not found a helper fit for him" (Genesis 2:18-20). God saw Adam's incompleteness and loneliness and said, "It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." Unlike Adam's body, his wife was not formed directly from the earth.

"And the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon Adam, and he slept; and he took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh instead thereof. And the rib, which the Lord God had taken from man, made he a woman, and brought her unto the man. And Adam said, 'This is now bone of my bones, and flesh of my flesh: she shall be called Woman, because she was taken out of Man.'" (Genesis 2:21-23)

Eve was not made of dust, but of Adam. She was made of the bone of Adam. Adam was the source of her existence. Without the rib from Adam, there would have been no Eve. So it is with the Bride of Christ. She comes totally out from Him. Whatever is not taken out of Him cannot be His bride. Whatever is not bone of His bone and flesh of His flesh is not a suitable helpmeet for Him. To all the most well-meaning, self-made Christians He will say in that last day, "Depart from me, you workers of iniquity. I never knew you."

Speaking of Jesus, John wrote, "This is he that came by water and blood, even Jesus Christ; not by water only, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit that bears witness, because the Spirit is truth" (1 John 5:6 KJ2000). When the Roman soldier pierced Jesus' side on the cross, water and blood flowed out. The new Eve, the bride of Christ, was born of the water and the blood of Christ that burst forth from His side.

Before leaving the disciples Jesus said, "I will not leave you comfortless: I will come to you. Yet a little while, and the world sees me no more; but you see me: because I live, you shall live also. At that day you shall know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you" (John 14:18-20 KJ2000). We are bone of His spiritual bones. Our spirits are born of His Spirit and He abides in us and with us.

### **First the Body, then the Bride**

Here we see the prophetic order hidden in the old creation types and shadows. First; Adam's body was created. Secondly; that body was given life. Thirdly, a bride was taken out from that body. This is the end-time development of the Church. Out from the Body of the last Adam is taken a bride. The body is the fullness of Christ. The bride is complimentary.

Eve was presented to Adam as a bride at the close of the sixth day, the sixth generation of the creation of the heavens and the earth (See Genesis 2:4). Christ's Bride will be presented to Him at the close of the sixth day of the redemption week. God's announcement "Behold, I make all things new" in Revelation 21:5 is followed by the angelic invitation, "Come, I will show you the bride, the Lamb's wife" (Revelation 21:9 NKJV). The Majority Text reads, "I will show you the woman, the Lamb's bride."

The Lamb's bride is the fullness of everything the woman prefigured. Many leaders in the church today equate organized religion with the bride of Christ. It is not. The church system as we know it is only the means to an end. Israel brought the Messiah, and the church brings the Bride of Christ. "Behold, the bride has made herself ready."

In Matthew 13 Jesus had no delusions that Pentecost would create the perfect bride who would go to meet her Husband at His final coming. He prophesied that His great harvest field would be defiled by an enemy sowing tares among the wheat. He also spoke of a catch consisting of good fish to be kept and trash fish to be discarded. He warned that some of the seed of the gospel would take root in stony hearts that will be

offended with Him when tribulation comes. Other seeds will be choked out by the cares of this world. Only a quarter of the seed falls on good ground and grows to become part of God's final harvest. In this same chapter, Jesus spoke of the birds of the air stealing the good seed of the gospel before it could take root; later he described these birds building their nests in a mustard plant, which signifies the church itself!

No, the bride of Christ is the glorious church that is without spot or wrinkle spoken of in Ephesians 5. God is calling forth to Himself a chosen people out of all of Christendom fit to be a bride for His Son. These holy ones are not divided by the religious barriers we see around us today. They are pulled by the love of Christ to one another because Christ in each of them draws them to Himself. This is what Paul wrote about.

Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ: That we from now on be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, by which they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, who is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body being fitly joined together and knit together by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body unto the edifying of itself in love. (Ephesians 4:13-16 KJ2000)

We are in the betrothal period now. (See 2 Corinthians 11:2-3) The bride is in preparation. She is betrothed to one Husband but that marriage is not yet consummated. She is being made ready, awaiting the marriage supper of the Lamb. John wrote:

Then I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude like the roar of many waters and like the sound of mighty peals of thunder, crying out, "Hallelujah! For the Lord our God the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exult and give him the glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready; it was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure"-- for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. And the angel said to me, "Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb." And he said to me, "These are the true words of God." (Revelation 19:6-9 ESV)

And again:

I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband . . . Then came one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues and spoke to me, saying, "Come, I will show you the Bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great, high mountain, and showed me the holy city Jerusalem coming down out of heaven from God, (Revelation 21:2, 9-10 ESV)

The Church is the Eve of the Last Adam and the primary target of Satan. The primary focus of Satan's attack isn't Adam. The Last Adam certainly can't be coerced by temptation. No, the thrust of Satan's attack is against the Church. Satan wants to attack Christ by seducing His bride.

Paul saw the falling away of the church and warned, "For I am jealous over you with a jealousy of God; for I myself betrothed you unto one husband, to present, a chaste virgin, unto the Christ,- But I fear lest, by any means, as, the serpent, completely deceived Eve, in his craftiness, your minds should be corrupted from the singleness and the chasteness which are due unto the Christ" (2 Corinthians 11:2-3 Rotherham).

Let us have faithful, loving hearts that are worthy of our Bridegroom and be careful not to be drawn away from Him by this world and its influences that can even be found in the church today.

## **Marriage, the Mystery of Christ and His Bride**

One of the most amazing portions of scripture regarding Christ and His Bride is found in Ephesians 5:21-33. In it we see that natural marriage is also a figure of things to come. In verse 21 Paul exhorts the Church to assume her proper position as Christ's betrothed by submitting to one another out of reverence for Him. This is not submission to an autocrat by the rank and file, like serfs submitting to Emperor or king, but is a mutual submission. It does not mean submitting to pope, cardinal or clergyman. This submission is a result of our reverence for Christ.

"Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit in everything to their husbands."

Today such language could get you in a lot of trouble. The very idea that a women should submit to her husband in our society is considered chauvinistic and demeaning to womankind. This is what Satan wants people to believe. By promoting this lie, he hides the mystery that husbands and wives are especially fashioned to model. Each member of Christ's body, the Church, is to submit to his or her own husband, Jesus, as his or her Head.

You husbands, how will your relationship to your wife reverence Christ?

". . . love your wives, as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.." (Ephesians 5:25-29 ESV)

The natural figure of marriage that began when God initiated the union of the first man and woman in Eden is a type of the new-creation union of Christ and the Church. With this in mind, Paul went on to echo Adam's words:

"For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:30-32 KJV).

The revelation of this mystery is the cause and purpose for marriage. It was the cause behind the creation of Adam and Eve in the first place.

When a man leaves his father and mother, is joined unto his wife and loves her like Christ loves the Church, laying his life down for her, he is participating in the mystery. When the woman responds and yields to the love of her husband, she has the privilege of demonstrating the mystery of Christ and His Church. This is what Paul meant by submitting to one another out of reverence to Christ. Infidelity is unthinkable to those who truly reverence Christ and understand this mystery.

## Chapter Six: The Seventh Day

"But I say unto you that in this place is one greater than the temple. But if you had known what this means, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice, you would not have condemned the guiltless. For the Son of man is Lord even of the sabbath day."  
(Matthew 12:6-8 KJ2000)

Have you ever wondered why the Pharisees were constantly accusing Jesus of breaking the Jewish law of the Sabbath? How could He have such a disregard for the Jewish laws and traditions governing the keeping of the Sabbath, and still be without sin? The answer is simple. He was able to heal on the Sabbath and obey His Father and do His works seven days a week because He is the Lord of the Sabbath. If He could say of man, "Man was not made for the Sabbath, but rather the Sabbath was made for man," how much more was this true of the One who came down from heaven, who made all things in six "days" and rested on the seventh?

Jesus was born by the Spirit in a natural body, yet He never left His heavenly position before the Father. He only did those works He saw His Father doing and only spoke the words He heard His Father saying. He did His Father's works not by obeying the dead letter of the law and the voluminous traditions of the elders, but by walking in the Spirit of God Who instructed Him moment by moment. Mankind was locked into the sixth day of creation by sin, but Jesus walked in the seventh day of God's eternal rest. The letter of the law did not bind Him.

The Lord of the Sabbath gave the law. The same Lord of the Sabbath fulfilled the law and completed it. He filled-up the law's just requirements in the body of a human being, thus accomplishing what no man before or since could ever do. Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to do away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to complete and fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17 AMP).

As we abide in Christ and not in the fleshly ways of Adam, we fulfill the Law in Him, not by our fleshly efforts to be perfect, but by abiding in His perfection within us. Paul wrote, "For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do: sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the just requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:3-4 RSV). Just as it took

a spotless Lamb to take away the sins of the world, so it took this same spotless Lamb to end the offense of law keeping and set all men free.

Paul wrote, "The law of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:2).. He who is free in Christ is free in deed. Our deeds have been set free as we walk as His earthly Body, doing not our works, but His, fulfilling the just requirements of the law in us, not by our might or power, but by His Spirit.

Paul wrote another place, "For by grace are you saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast. For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Ephesians 2:8-10 KJ2000). God long ago ordained certain works for Christ and His body to walk in according to His eternal plan. As we walk in those works that He has for each of us individually; we walk as His sons according to all righteousness. How? By listening to and obeying His indwelling Spirit. These are not our works, generated by our "good" thoughts, but His. He gives us the pleasure, power and privilege to walk as obedient sons.

As long as we walk in the rest of the Father spoken of in Hebrews 4, we will manifest the will of the Father among men, regardless of what the law says we must do. Peter and John understood this when they were forbidden by the Sanhedrin to speak in the name of Jesus. "Whether it is better to obey man or God, you be the judge." The Spirit always trumps the flesh, even the rules of fleshly religious leaders. His rest is found in the seventh day of God where He abides. Though the letter of the law might be broken, if we obey the Spirit of God the spirit of the law is never broken.

A good example of the Spirit leading a righteous man to do things contrary to the law is found in the life of the prophet Elijah. After calling for a drought over the land of Israel, God told him to hide himself. It was not long before hard times set in over the land. Livestock were dying and men were desperately searching for food and water. At first God fed the prophet from the mouths of ravens. These are considered "unclean" birds because they feast on dead things. Yet, Elijah ate what they brought to him as he camped in the wilderness. Later the brook he camped by dried up and God told him to go live with a Gentile widow in Zidon, where he ate her food. Jewish law forbade Israelites to eat Gentile food or even enter their houses (See Acts 10:28 where Peter also broke this law at the Spirit's bidding.) Obeying God's voice will often cause us to

go cross grain with the sensibilities of the religious, but He desires obedience rather than sacrifice, and to hearken to Him is better than offering up the fat of rams (1 Samuel 15:22).

We obey His voice from a position of resting in Him. We, like John, recline with our ear against Jesus' chest. Watchman Nee wrote about this in his book *Sit, Walk, Stand*.

Adam, we are told, was created on the sixth day. Clearly, then, he had no part in those first six days of work, for he came into being only at their end. God's seventh day was, in fact, Adam's first. Whereas God worked six days and then enjoyed his Sabbath rest, Adam began his life with the Sabbath; for God works before he rests, while man must first enter into God's rest, and then alone can he work. Moreover it was because God's work of creation was truly complete that Adam's life could begin with rest. And here is the Gospel: that God has gone one stage further and has completed also the work of redemption, and that we need do nothing whatever to merit it, but can enter by faith directly into the values of his finished work.

Adam's first day was God's seventh day. As the final act of God's creation, Adam and Eve were created in the image of God. You might say Adam was "born" into the rest of God. It took the temptation of the serpent to pull Adam and Eve back into the sixth day of unrest and doing. God never called man to add to what He had created. Only the creative works of His Son are pleasing to God, never our own. Jesus put it this way, "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, except it abide in the vine; no more can you, except you abide in me. I am the vine, you are the branches: He that abides in me, and I in him, the same brings forth much fruit: for without me you can do nothing" (John 15:4-5 KJ2000).

God's Son made everything in all creation and only in Him could God say, "It is good." Adam and Eve could not add to what was perfect, yet this was the very temptation that Satan set before them when he said "You shall not surely die: For God does know that in the day you eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and you shall be as gods, knowing good and evil" (Genesis 3:4-5 KJ2000). Satan was saying that their state of being was not good, but that with his help they could tweak themselves a bit and make it complete. There was no consciousness of good or evil in the perfect rest where God had placed them. They were blind to such a thing. There was only a simple, rest-filled abiding in their Creator.

Eve was tempted to be as God by eating the forbidden fruit of the knowledge of good and evil. She was tempted to become "wise" apart from His wisdom and choose for herself what was good and what was evil. Yet, both Adam and Eve were already living and walking in God's seventh day of rest, doing only the works that their Father had foreordained from the foundation of the world that they should walk in (See Hebrews 4:3). They were only "as God" as they walked in His rest with Him, doing only those works that He alone gave them to do.

Keeping the law as opposed to walking by the abiding Spirit of God can only bring us to a point of interpreting for ourselves what is "good" and what is "evil." The Jewish book called the Talmud is filled with the traditions of the Jewish elders. The Talmud added traditions to the original law to the point that the laws of God were of no effect (See Mark 7:10-13). The natural old man of Adam within us is still trying to be his own god, relishing in his knowledge of good and evil and lording it over everyone around him (Romans 2:15). The result is always the same. We look at ourselves and see our own nakedness and begin to cover ourselves with the self-righteous fig leaves of man-made religion. When we do this, we bind ourselves into the sixth day of unrest and carnal doing. We attempt to be our own god and add to what God has already finished in righteousness.

## **Chapter Seven: The New Creation and Peace**

When asked what they want more than anything else, the standard response for most beauty pageant contestants is, "World peace!" It would be wonderful, but human nature actively undermines our noble ideals. Even those who protest for peace have resorted to rioting in the streets. It is a contradiction to beat someone while singing, "Give peace a chance!" Even our leaders in high places give lip-service to "world peace" and receive the prestigious Nobel Peace Prize while they are fighting wars all over the world. Thomas Jefferson wrote, "It is error alone which needs the support of government. Truth can stand by itself."

When sin entered God's creation through Adam, every son of Adam became a divided personality. There is a war raging in our very natures. Paul described it like this: "So I find it to be a law (rule of action of my being) that when I want to do what is right and good, evil is ever present with me and I am subject to its insistent demands" (Romans

7:21 AMP). This is the condition of mankind "in Adam." Wars and fighting are only the outward reflections of this inner conflict ( James 4:1).

This division first surfaced between Adam and Eve in the form of a domestic rift. Before this they were "one flesh" and there was no shame in their relationship (Gen. 2:24-25), but now blamed each other. "It's that women you gave me. It's her fault and yours for giving her to me," says Adam. And Eve says, "It was the serpent in the tree that gave the forbidden fruit to me... the devil made me do it!"

This schism continued on through their descendants, picking up momentum on its downward plunge. Their first children Cain and Abel were so divided that it ended in murder. Sin beget sin until God looked at mankind and observed, "...that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (Genesis 6:5 KJ2000). Finally, God judged the world by destroying it with a flood, saving only eight. Even from these came more evil.

In the course of God's redemptive plan, this utterly fractured humanity was reduced to two seemingly irreconcilable units, Jew and Gentile, each hating the other, each having nothing to do with the other, calling one another dogs, devils, and infidels. What is the answer to this dreadful problem? How can there ever be world peace?

There is a peace that the world gives and there is a peace that Christ gives. Jesus spoke of His peace to His disciples. "Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid" (John 14:27 ESV).

The world tries to give peace through war. This is reflected in the World War One slogan, "The war to end all wars." The peace at the end of "The Great War" lasted only as long as it took to rebuild the war machines and go at it again! The human race is in constant conflict. From pole to pole there is discord, hatred, strife and war.

Jesus spoke of this in Luke 21:10. "Nation (ethnos) shall rise against nation (ethnos), and kingdom against kingdom. . ." The Greek word ethnos is the word from which we get the English word ethnic. Jesus said that wars would increase in severity and number as we near the end, and that ethnic violence and the ambition to rule (kingdom against kingdom) are the primary causes of war and conquest.

True peace cannot be won by war any more than virginity can be promoted by promiscuity. The peace that Jesus gives goes to the root of ethnic dividedness and puts to death the inner and outer warring of man. This hostility is killed by an act of love so great that it defines love-"greater love has no man than this, that He lay down his life for his friends." Christ's gift of peace is Himself. The hostility is destroyed in Himself. He created in Himself one new humanity from the two, thus making peace. He is the Prince of Peace.

## The Solution

The cross is God's answer for the inner and outer conflicts of men. The cross is the answer for the bloodshed that is occurring around the world today.

For he is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of partition between us; Having abolished in his flesh the enmity, even the law of commandments contained in ordinances; to make in himself of two *one new man*, so making peace; And that he might reconcile both unto God in one body by the cross, having slain the enmity thereby: And came and preached peace to you who were afar off, and to them that were near. (Ephesians 2:14-17 KJ2000 - emphasis added)

On the cross, Jesus purchased "peace [on earth] among those with whom he is pleased!" (Luke 2:14 ESV). Jesus lived, died and rose again to restore all things. As the last Adam He restores a new unified humanity to the Father. In God's sight there is only one race.

The Greek word *anthropon*, translated *man* here, is used in scripture for both the individual and of mankind in general (the whole race). It is clear from the context that the general meaning is in use here and that the phrase, "one new man" could be translated, "one new humanity." The translators of the International Standard Version agree: ". . .that he might create in himself one new humanity from the two, thus making peace" (Ephesians 2:15 ISV).

The objective of Christ's death on the cross is one new race, a new creation that is unspoiled by hostility and conflict. Christ killed the power of hostility by submitting to the cross. By the cross both Jews and Gentiles who trust in Him are made one again. We who are in Christ now dwell in heavenly places in Him. This is where "world peace" is to be found.

This peace goes far beyond the peaceful cohabitation of many races, living in a modicum of harmony or armed neutrality. Wuest explains, "The Greek verb *eirōnē* means 'to join'; the noun *eirōnē* refers to the things joined together. To make peace, therefore, means 'to join together that which is separated.'" This peace is the divine joining of the redeemed of all races into one new humanity. He killed the hostility. "He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near" (Ephesians 2:17 NKJV.) For this reason Paul emphatically stated that in Christ there cannot be distinctions along ethnic lines. Christ is our Adam and there is one new race in Him. He is all, and in all!

Because the two have been made one, Jew and Gentile cannot exist in this new creation. As Paul exhorted the Colossian believers:

"Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices and have put on the new nature, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator. Here there cannot be Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scyth'ian, slave, free man, but Christ is all, and in all" (Colossians 3:9-11 RSV).

Those who walk according to this new creation rule are the only hope for peace. Without the salt and light they bring, violence will completely fill the earth as it did in the days of Noah. (Genesis 6:13).

## **An Exhortation**

How can we preach peace when we who claim to be in Christ are so divided? How can we preach about the two becoming one while we separately rally under so many banners? Have we not lost our savor? Are we not being trodden under foot by men? The enmity of the old creation is very much alive in all that we do in His name. Gathering together, ecumenically, under our separate denominational flags can never restore that witness. This kind of unity is no different than that of the Pharisees and the Sadducees, where love is tolerance and kindness is a disingenuous, halfhearted, superficial smile.

After World War II, a Japanese pastor observed the many diverse and conflicting doctrines that the western missionaries were spreading in his native country. This situation was not well accepted by the Japanese because they saw that truth does not

contradict itself. The lack of unity among these missionaries was the real witness. Kokichi Kurosaki wrote about this problem in his book *One Body In Christ*.

Just as faith in Christ is a new spiritual life in Him, so the Body is a spiritual organism. This makes the construction of the human body and its members very similar to the essential nature of the Ekklesia of Christ. Indeed, the Body of Christ, though not physical, is no less real and practical than our human bodies. Thus, the Ekklesia has real existence, and is one Body, and for no reason should be divided. As a human body cannot live when it is divided into parts, so the Body of Christ cannot live when it is sectionalized. A divided Church is no Church at all in the New Testament sense.

We must yield to God, allow Him to free us from our religious partisanship, and enable us to walk according to His new creation rule. Then we will have a voice for peace in the earth again, a voice that speaks louder than mere words.

## **Chapter Eight: Male and Female: One in Christ**

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus" (Galatians 3:28 KJ2000).

Just as there is no inequality between Jew and Greek and between bond and free, in Christ there is no male and female inequality. Both are one in Christ. There was no gender inequality until Adam and Eve sinned and their eyes were opened by that sin. Before that they were one. There was no hierarchy in their relationship. That came later as a consequence of their sin. Only after they sinned did God say to Eve, ". . . yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Genesis 3:16).

In the new creation this division is also healed. As we have already seen in Ephesians 5, husbands who reverence Christ do not demand submission from their wives but instead they submit to Christ by laying down their lives for their wives.

Galatians 3:28 is a sweeping statement of equality; Jew and Greek, slave and free man, male and female are all one in Christ. In Christ the Jew is no longer superior to the Greek. Paul wrote, "For there is no difference between the Jew and the Greek: for the same Lord over all is rich unto all that call upon him" (Romans 10:12). In Christ the slave is no longer inferior to the free man. Paul asked Philemon to receive back his

runaway slave, Onesimus, not "as a servant, but above a servant, a brother beloved, especially to me, but how much more unto you, both in the flesh, and in the Lord?" (Philemon 1:16). Paul adds male and female to the list of co-equal heirs in Christ. This recovery is a substantial part of the restitution of all things.

We are told in Genesis 2:20-22 that God formed Eve from Adam's rib to be a helpmeet, suitable, adapted and complementary to him. This seems to make Eve subservient to Adam in every way—a kind of tag along servant to do lesser and less desirable jobs. But as we cross-reference the word help (ezer), we find that it is not a term of subordination. It is never used of slaves helping their masters, but the help of an equal or superior. In his book *One in Christ*, Phillip B. Payne explains.

"The noun used here, however, throughout the OT does not suggest "helper" as in "servant," but "help, savior, rescuer, protector," as in "God is our help." In no other occurrence in the OT does this noun refer to an inferior, but always to a superior or an equal. Fifteen times it describes God as the rescuer of his people, their strength or power; the remaining four times of a military protector. . . this expression highlights the role of the woman as the rescuer of the man, "a strength corresponding to him," and hence no less than an equal." (Phillip B. Payne - *Man And Woman, One In Christ*, pg. 44, 45)

"Help meet" describes the spiritual partnership between the husband and wife. And as to their equality, the text is replete with evidence. The first man and women were equally created in the image of God. Together they were called man and Adam. "Male and female created he them; and blessed them, and called their name Adam, in the day when they were created" (Genesis 5:2). Together they mirrored the image, likeness and purpose of their Creator. They were together commissioned by God to "fill the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moves upon the earth (Genesis 1:27-28). This command was not given to the man only but to both man and woman. Together they were "Adam." Together they were blessed and commissioned by God. Together they shared authority over every living thing. The woman was different, and what man wouldn't thank his maker for that? These differences were complimentary—each supporting the other—each strengthening the other. There was diversity and there was equality. Something interfered with this blessed primal condition. Sin entered through disobedience and equality was the first casualty.

Eve and Adam ate the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil God had forbidden them to eat. From that moment on everything began to fall short of the glory of God. His words to Eve reveal the consequences of that fall. "I will greatly multiply your pain in childbearing; in pain you shall bring forth children, yet your desire shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you." And to Adam he said, "Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten of the tree of which I commanded you, 'You shall not eat of it,' cursed is the ground because of you; in toil you shall eat of it all the days of your life; thorns and thistles it shall bring forth to you; and you shall eat the plants of the field. In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread till you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken; you are dust, and to dust you shall return" (Genesis 3:16-19 RSV).

What was once created good was now less than perfect because of sin. Everything had changed. The equality that man and women shared vanished along with their innocence. Man became dominate. Eve is told that she would be mastered by her husband from that point on. This was a vast departure from God's original intention of co-dominion.

"...though at their creation both were formed with equal rights, and the woman had probably as much right to rule as the man; but subjection to the will of her husband is one part of her curse. . ." (Adam Clarke on Genesis 3:16).

The redemption that is in Christ Jesus reverses this curse. His redemption is great enough to correct all that was undone in Eden. He has restored the equality of male and female, or has He delivered us from sin only to leave its consequences in place? Has He freed men and left women in abject subjection? As always, Jesus is our example.

## **Jesus, the Kingdom of God and Women**

Jesus came preaching the kingdom of God and He depicted women as co-heirs in that Kingdom. This was a concept that was considered unorthodox by His fellow Jews, who believed that it was better to burn the Torah than to teach it to a woman (Sotah 3:4). Jesus ignored Jewish traditions of inequality. His respectful treatment of women violated every social taboo. Women, who had been repressed and marginalized all their lives, flocked to Him. Unlike other Jewish masters and rabbis, Jesus was as accessible to women and children as He was to men. He talked with women. He touched them with

His healing hands, and they even dared to cross socially accepted lines and touched Him. A woman with an issue of blood, who according to the law was not to be touched and whose touch was considered defiling, overcame her fears, touched Him and was healed. Had she touched a Pharisee, she would have been rebuked immediately for being in public during the time of her uncleanness (Leviticus 15:25) and for defiling him. But what does Jesus do? He calmed her fears by calling her "daughter" and proceeded to commend her for her faith. Even the ceremonial law was secondary to the wellbeing of this woman.

Jesus violated another social taboo by coming in contact with women of ill repute. One woman, whose sins were many, dared to come into Simon the Pharisee's home where Jesus had been invited to eat. She brought with her an alabaster flask of ointment. Kneeling behind Jesus, at his feet, she began to wash his feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair, while kissing his feet and anointing them with the ointment.

The thoughts of the host judged both the woman and Jesus. "If this man were a prophet he would have known who and what sort of woman this is who is touching him for she is a sinner.." This showed how women were devalued among the Pharisees. Turning toward the woman Jesus said to Simon, "Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave me no water for my feet, but she has wet my feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but from the time I came in she has not ceased to kiss my feet. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. Therefore I tell you, her sins, which are many, are forgiven-for she loved much. But he who is forgiven little, loves little." And He said to her, "Your sins are forgiven." Then those who were at table with him began to say among themselves, "Who is this, who even forgives sins?" And he said to the woman, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Luke 7:36-50).

Jesus' initial question was very telling, "Do you see this woman?" Did Simon really see her? Did he comprehend the mystery that was before him? "Do you see this woman?" in that time, women simply weren't seen. They were devalued, ignored, marginalized and for the most part viewed as possessions. They were veiled and to some degree dehumanized. But here, in the company of those who didn't even offer Jesus the customary greeting or wash His road-weary feet, knelt an example of love and devotion for Christ. In a climate of rude disregard for the Son of man, here was a woman washing his feet with her tears.

Jesus' every word and action were indictments against the prevailing misogynistic bias. We see this in the record of Mary of Bethany who performed a very similar act. She took a pound of ointment of spikenard, very costly, and anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped his feet with her hair: and the house was filled with the odor of the ointment. Mary was anointing Jesus for his burial. Could it be that she understood Jesus' atoning death when it is clear from the scripture that even the closest of His disciples didn't comprehend it yet? Could it be that she understood the things of God better than Peter, who rebuked Jesus for even mentioning the cross? Could she have learned this at the feet of Jesus?

Mary sat at Lord's feet and listened to his teachings. This also was socially *verboten*. If a man gave "his daughter a knowledge of the law it is as though he taught her lechery" (Sotah 3:4). Martha, who was acting out the socially acceptable role of the women (in the kitchen), became upset with Mary's irresponsibility and sought Jesus' help to put her in her place. "Lord," said Martha, "do you not care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her then to help me." Jesus' answer was undoubtedly a surprise to Martha, "Martha, Martha, you are anxious and troubled about many things, but one thing is necessary. Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:38-42).

Because of our western culture, we don't comprehend the full gravity of what it meant for Mary to sit at Jesus' feet. Adam Clarke comments, "This was the posture of the Jewish scholars, while listening to the instructions of the rabbis. It is in this sense that St. Paul says he was brought up at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3)."

In teaching Mary, Jesus was again disregarding the prevailing misogynistic mentality toward women. In his answer to Martha, who was dutifully carrying out her social responsibilities, Jesus affirmed Mary's choice by answering, "Mary has chosen the good portion, which will not be taken away from her." Jesus wholeheartedly approved of Mary's choice, and would have no part in taking it away from her.

Jesus healed both men and women on the Sabbath, giving us insight into Jesus' valuation of women as co-heirs in the Abrahamic Covenant. One of these women He healed had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years and was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. "When Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, 'Woman, you are freed from your infirmity.' And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was

made straight, and she praised God." The rulers of the synagogue were indignant and accused Jesus of breaking the Sabbath and reminded Jesus that "There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the Sabbath day." This false show of piety didn't set well with Jesus, who answered, "You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the Sabbath day?" (See Luke 13:11-16).

Asses and oxen were better treated than afflicted men and women were in that day. Animal owners could nourish and water their asses and oxen on the Sabbath and even help them out of a ditch but this poor, infirmed daughter of Abraham must continue to struggle in sickness. Jesus showed this woman respect by referring to her as a daughter of Abraham (a title that is used no where else in scripture).

In another instance, Jesus mercifully freed a woman caught in the act of adultery (John 8:2-11). The law demanded that both the man and the woman be put to death (Leviticus 20:10), but her accusers didn't bring the man who was also caught in the act. This shows the clear sexual bias of the Jews that Jesus refused to participate in.

In route from Judea to Galilee, Jesus took the most direct route through Samaria. Due to an age-old feud between the Jews and the Samaritans, many devout Jews journeyed twice the distance, up the eastern side of the Jordan River, to avoid Samaria altogether, but our Lord "must needs go through Samaria." Jesus came to Sychar, a place rich in history, for it was the sight of Jacob's well. Weary from his journey Jesus sat down on the well where a woman from the village came to draw water.

Jesus said unto her, "Give me a drink." By this Jesus broke two social taboos at once. He spoke to a woman in public and He asked for a drink of water from a Samaritan. In Rabbinic Judaism it was forbidden for men to talk with women in the street. "He who speaks much with a woman draws down misfortune on himself, neglects the words of the Law, and finally earns Gehenna" (Mishnah Aboth 1:5). She knew this very well. So she asked Jesus, "How is it that you, being a Jew, ask drink of me, who am a woman of Samaria, for the Jews have no dealings with the Samaritans?"

Jesus ignored the ethnic and gender biases underlying her question and spoke directly to her heart. He went on to share profound truths with this woman. He spoke to her of

"the gift of God" and offered her "living water . . . springing up into everlasting life." He could see right through her. He knew she had problems, that she had been married five times, and that she was now living with a man who was not her husband, and yet, in the light of His gaze she was drawn and not driven away. He shared amazing truths about the new covenant with her that no Jew had ever heard. He spoke of a time when worship would no longer take place in holy mountains and holy sites like temples, but in Spirit and in truth. He shared with her the purpose behind this more perfect worship, "God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth." And when she said to Him, "I know that Messiah is coming (he who is called Christ); when he comes, he will show us all things." Jesus did something that he had previously forbidden his disciples to do (Matthew 16:20). He told her in no uncertain terms that He is the Messiah, "I who speak to you am he." He could openly reveal himself to this woman of Samaria where he could not do so in Jerusalem (John 4:3-34).

Before it was all over this woman went into her city and brought everyone out to see this man who told her everything she had ever done. She was seen, she was valued and flattered by having such truth bestowed on her.

The redemption that is in Christ Jesus restores the equality of men and women. The only limitations now are based solely and uniquely upon their roles as man and woman—each one complimenting, filling up and strengthening the other. If man and wife are ever to know the oneness that Adam and Eve knew in their innocence they must come to see that only together are they whole. They must come to appreciate each others' strengths and cover each others' weaknesses. In this they become one.

In Christ all who believe have returned to an Eden-like existence, which, in a very specific sense, takes us back before sin and its consequences. There were no ethnic distinctions in Eden. In Christ, the inequality of humanity is so completely eradicated that all social, economical, and gender inequalities are removed. Woman was not inferior in the beginning, neither is woman inferior in the new creation. In Christ there is a new (fresh) beginning. In Christ the equality of man and woman is restored.

Some might protest here, "But doesn't the scripture teach that women are to submit to their husbands?" Yes, it does. But it also teaches that men are to submit to their wives. Let us return for a moment to Ephesians 5. "Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ." This is not a top-down, hierarchal subjection. This is mutual subjection out

of regard for Christ. Paul first applies this concept of mutual subjection to husbands and wives. This reciprocal subjection "one to another" respects God's unique design in the creation of man and woman. Inferiority or superiority have nothing to do with it. This subjection reverently focuses on the specific roles of husband and wife as related to the mystery of Christ and the Church. Any subjection that does not hold this end in view is not biblical subjection but tyranny. Biblical subjection and equality are not at odds. For the wife who subjects herself to her husband out of reverence for Christ is equal to or one with her husband. Her free and loving submission is required for this mystery to be seen. The husband submits both to his Lord and to his wife by laying down his life for her. He does this out of reverence for Christ and love for his wife. Together they reverence Christ by fulfilling their unique roles.

All this disappears the moment subjection is demanded or taught as a duty. It all becomes a perverted mess when husbands stop laying down their lives for their wives out of reverence and love and start demanding submission. It all goes wrong when wives stop lovingly yielding to their husbands and start demanding that their husbands lay down their lives for them. Such submission is not unto the Lord, but rather demanding and self-serving. Christ is not revered in this and the mystery of Christ and the Church is not modeled but rather perverted.

Subjection can only be given unto the Lord. Paul writes, "Wives, be subject to your husbands, as to the Lord" (Ephesians 5:22). Remember this is not hierarchal subjection but mutual subjection, "one to another." If it were otherwise Paul would have written this to husbands, "Husbands, subjugate your wives as Christ subjugates the Church." No. The husband's focus is to be elsewhere. His role in this great mystery is to lay down his life for his wife and in doing so to nourish her and cherish her as Christ does the church.

The mutual submission of husband and wife is to be tempered by the knowledge that both are members of Christ's body. "Even so husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever hates his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body" (Ephesians 5:28-30 RSV).

As a husband married to the same woman for over forty years, I (George) must confess that this truth has been a long time coming. Charlotte has been my lifelong companion,

friend and wife and because of my outgoing nature, she was known as "George's wife" for a long time. All the while she was cooking, doing the dishes, doing the laundry and other household chores, between birthing, nurturing and raising our four children. To me she is a model mother and wife, and if the greatest in the kingdom are the servants of all, she is the greatest I have ever known. But it has only been in the last 10 years or so that I have come to know Charlotte in a much deeper way. I have come to know her as a member of the Body of Christ. I have come to realize that I am married to my sister. Charlotte is first my sister in Christ, then she is my wife (and in that order). She is first a member of Christ's body to whom I owe deference and honor then she is my wife.

Dorothy and I (Michael) have a similar history as George and Charlotte. For years I believed in a misogynistic gospel; women were to keep the home, raise the kids and make life easier for their husbands. No other input was acceptable or expected. After seeing the fruit of this kind of thinking bring forth a full crop of weeds for many years, a marriage counselor pointed out to me that Dorothy had something of value to contribute to our relationship besides slavery. Imagine that! He told me that God created certain qualities and strengths in her that were actually lacking in me and vice versa. He showed me how our marriage would only be complete as we learned to rely on one another's strengths in our areas of weakness. This is what God meant for her to be my "help meet." Mutual submission was necessary if we were to be a healthy whole together in Christ. "The two shall become one flesh." Since then His words, "It is not good for man to be alone" have taken on a much deeper meaning.

This knowledge was common among early believers. Paul wrote of it, "Have we no right at all to be leading about a sister as a wife, even as the rest of the apostles and the brothers of the Lord and Cephas?" (1 Corinthians 9:5 CLV). In a letter to his wife, Tertullian, an early church leader, wrote about Christian marriage in terms of endearment and equality that are uncommon today.

"What kind of yoke is that of two believers, (partakers) of one hope, one desire, one discipline, one and the same service? Both (are) brethren, both fellow servants, no difference of spirit or of flesh; nay, (they are) truly "two in one flesh." Where the flesh is one, one is the spirit too. Together they pray, together prostrate themselves, together perform their fasts; mutually teaching, mutually exhorting, mutually sustaining. Equally (are they) both (found) in the Church of God; equally at the banquet of God;

equally in straits, in persecutions, in refreshments. Neither hides (ought) from the other; neither shuns the other; neither is troublesome to the other." (Excerpt from *Ad Uxorem*)

This gives us a sense of the mutual subjection of husbands and wives in the early Church. Both are brothers (siblings and of the same Father) and fellow-servants. They are two in one flesh. They do all things together. They pray together. They fast together. Mutually they teach, mutually they exhort, and mutually they sustain. "Equally (are they) both (found) in the Church of God . . ."

Again, the only proper submission is unto the Lord; a mutual subjection out of reverence for Christ. Those who live by the new creation rule must dispense with every thought, word and action that keeps those old ethnic, gender, and class distinctions alive. If God sees no Jew or Greek, no slave or free man, no male or female, then we shouldn't see them either. Who are we to keep the old ethnic and gender dividedness alive, when God has made one those who believe?

There are many other passages that could be considered here but that would involve a far too lengthy and time consuming study. We would however like to recommend the work of an author who has already done the research. We recommend the definitive book (from which we previously quoted) *Man and Woman, One In Christ* by Phillip B. Payne, Zondervan Publishing, 2009.

## Chapter Nine: A New Name

He that overcomes will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which comes down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name. (Revelation 3:12 KJ2000)

Paul wrote, "(just as it is written, 'I have appointed you a father of many nations') before God, whom he believed, the One who gives life to the dead and calls those things which are not as though they were" (Romans 4:17 EMTV). God calls those things that are not as though they are. We see in this passage the principle that governs growth and maturity in the kingdom of God. At the center of it all is the giving and receiving of a new name.

God's way of leading Abraham and Sarah to the fulfillment of the promise began with the changing of their names from Abram ("father") to Abraham ("father of a multitude") and Sarai ("She that strives") to Sarah ("Princess" or one who inherits all things). The promise that God gave to Abraham and Sarah was not fulfilled by striving, but by divine inheritance. Every time He spoke their new names in their barren state, He was calling those things that were not as though they were. This is the faith of God at work. Abraham and Sarah's condition was grim from a purely human perspective. There wasn't a single shred of physical evidence to support the possibility of the fulfillment of God's promise to them, much less that it could ever come to pass that their seed would become as plenteous as the stars of heaven or the grains of sand by the sea. Abraham's body was as good as dead and Sarah's womb was barren.

God sees through to the end of a thing. He is called the Alpha and the Omega for a reason. He knows what He intends to do, how to get it done and He finishes what He starts. True faith takes into account the working of His mighty power on our deadness and barrenness to bring about His will. He sees our Isaac as a living reality long before we do.

In God's dealings with Abraham, the father of the faith, we see a principle of faith at work that looks at the substance of things that are not seen, especially as it applies to the new name he gives. Just as God saw Abraham in Abram, Sarah in Sarai, Israel in Jacob, Paul in Saul and Peter in Simon, He sees a new name in every one of His children. In the Hebrew culture, name, character and position are synonymous. The changing of a name corresponded to a change of character and position. With God, however, the new name is given well in advance of the realization of what the name promises.

To us this is contradictory because we are taught to view evidence from a purely empirical point of view--something we can handle with our hands and see with our natural eyes. In our culture the saying goes, "Seeing is believing." From our perspective there is no evidence to support God's view of us. There are simply too many blemishes and weaknesses in our lives. We often feel as hopeless in our individual situations as Abraham and Sarah were childless. Our present deadness and barrenness stand before our eyes like two atheists demanding proof of God's existence. The great gulf between God's promise and where we are in relationship to it is the real test of faith.

I, Michael, went through many years of testing and trials. I was in a spiritual wilderness. I was looked upon by my fellow Christians at best as an anomaly among them, or worse yet, rejected as not one of them. I felt like Job, surrounded by his "friends" who were constantly trying to psychoanalyze him while he was in pain and just needed to be loved.

It was at the end of this time that I was at a church conference in a class called "The Heart of David." At the end of a class time the teacher picked up his guitar and led us in a song. The lyrics went like this:

I will change your name.  
You shall no longer be called  
Wounded, Outcast, Lonely, or Afraid.

As I sang it along with them I was thinking, "Yup! That is my name, Lonely Reject." But the song did not end there. The next stanza went:

I will change your name.  
Your new name shall be  
Confidence, Joyfulness, Overcoming One  
Faithfulness, Friend of God...

These things were not true! I was not confident, joyful, nor did I feel like an "overcoming one." At that point I said, "God, who am I that you would call me your friend?" Then I heard the song continue.

One Who Seeks My Face.

That was when I broke. I slumped down to the floor as my knees buckled under me from the impact of what Father was saying to me. I was His faithful friend because in all my trials and loneliness for Him, I had sought His Face and never turned from believing in Him. He is calling those things that were not as though they were until they fully become who I am in Him; confident, joyful, faithful, overcoming friend of God. What a great salvation we have!

**Hope**

We are not just saved by faith but also by hope. Hope is locked in tandem with waiting for what is clearly promised but not yet realized. This is the nature of a promise. A promise is a guarantee that something will certainly happen or be done without our help! The promise is there but the realization is not. This is where hope comes in. Without hope (expectantly looking to a future fulfillment) there can be no patient waiting. Consider Paul's words:

For we know that the whole creation groans and travails in pain together until now. And not only they, but ourselves also, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, waiting for the adoption, that is, the redemption of our body. For we are saved by hope: but hope that is seen is not hope: for what a man sees, why does he yet hope for? But if we hope for that we see not, then do we with patience wait for it. (Romans 8:22-25 KJ2000)

We are saved by hope! By their natures faith and hope walk hand in hand. And true hope patiently waits for God to fulfill His promise. This is where fallen human nature crosses grain with the promise. Waiting is not our specialty. I knew a brother that used to say, "Lord, give me patience right now!" As typical Americans we want it now and we want it "biggie sized."

Most of us get a glimpse of what God has for us and we set out to help Him make it happen. We have known Christians that have been given personal prophecies and the rest of their lives were ruined as they tried to make them come to pass. God created the universe and all that is in it without us, but we can't depend on Him to be the Omega in our lives. Like the foolish Galatians, we set out to complete in the flesh what God started by His Spirit. Though we can foster an Ishmael, we cannot create God's Isaac! God has shut our womb to such an exercise. If we are to see the promise fulfilled we must wait on God to fulfill it. So we either wait in hope or act in haste. Either God is birthing or we are striving, and what is not of faith is sin. We must learn to wait on the timely appearance of what God is calling into existence. This is the bedrock Christ builds His church on. He calls those things that are not as if they were and as we stand in faith, He allows us to see the evidence of those things that are not seen with mortal eyes.

Now let's consider how this relates to the new name. We will consider two other instances of this--one in the Old Testament and one in the New Testament. Let's begin with Jacob.

## **Jacob and the New Name**

All Christians are on a spiritual journey that began the moment they believed. Our Lord Jesus is the way and the Holy Spirit is our guide and vehicle. Faith demands that we follow. The Spirit wind is fluid and always moving. Religion is more like stagnant, unmoving air than wind. Embarking on our faith journey often puts us on a path that is contrary to the wishes of men. Our destination is God Himself and His ways are not our ways, nor are our thoughts His thoughts. This is why with His Spirit abiding in us we must have a new heart.

Jacob's travels led him to an increasing comprehension of God, and yet a greater hostility grew between him and his brother, Esau. Those who have begun to follow the Good Shepherd have a similar journey. God, in His foreknowledge, has predestined us to be conformed to the image of His Son. He has called, justified and glorified us, and these are all spoken as if they are already done, in the past tense (Romans 8:29-30). Again God calls those things that are not as though they are.

Jacob's journey was a pilgrimage of discovery and transformation in which "the God of Abraham and Isaac" became his God. After deceiving his father Isaac and taking Esau's birthright, Jacob found himself fleeing from his angry brother. He had a dream that very night as he lay on the ground sleeping. He saw a ladder extending from heaven to the earth with the angels of God descending and ascending on it. God stood above the ladder confirming the covenant that He had made with Abraham and Isaac, "I am the lord God of Abraham your father and the God of Isaac." Note that He did not say here, I am the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Did Jacob know God in the same way his fathers knew Him? God's words here seem to be introductory. "Hello Jacob. I am your grandpa's God and your father's God. Am I yours?" Jacob must go through many trials before God could say, "I am the God of Jacob."

Jacob named the place of this highly significant meeting Beth-El meaning, "House of God." From here Jacob must journey on, following on to know the Lord. It will take years of breaking. In short, God was about to lay the ax to the root of Jacob's natural bent toward conniving and taking what he wanted with his arm of the flesh. Even in his

birth, his natural strength was evident; he came into this world grasping his twin brother's heel as if to pull him back into the womb so he could be the first born.

As he grew he became a man who continued to take matters into his own hands. When he fled from Esau, Jacob went to live with and work for his uncle Laban. Little did his uncle know that he was about to meet his match in Jacob. The two stood toe to toe, one deception after another, deceiving and being deceived. In spite of being tricked into being Laban's slave for 21 years, Jacob remained unbroken. Finally, Jacob left with two of Laban's daughters as his wives and the best of his herds, still very much in control. Then the Lord said to Jacob, "Return to the land of your fathers and to your family, and I will be with you" (Genesis 31:3). Jacob was sent to Laban's house initially by his natural father Isaac to save him from the wrath of his elder brother, but now he is sent back home by his heavenly Father, God Himself, knowing full well that Esau was still waiting for him.

Little by little Jacob was learning to trust in God more and less in his own strength and opinions. By faith he was now willing to face the fear that he once ran from. He obeyed God and set out for home. He must have remembered his brother Esau's threats, but God promised him, "I will be with you." God always rewards our obedience to His commands when we step out by faith. It is through this obedience that our faith in God has a chance to grow (James 1:2-4 and Romans 5:1-5).

Because of his trust in God, Jacob, perhaps for the first time, made himself truly vulnerable. Even then he still could not resist his natural tendency to manipulate his circumstances. He sent messengers with oxen, asses, flocks and servants on ahead to Edom to meet his brother, in hopes that he might temper his brother's anger and buy grace in his sight. However, a messenger returned to report that Esau was coming with an obvious war party of 400 men. This struck fear in Jacob's heart, so he divided the remaining people and flocks into two bands, thinking that if one band were smitten the other might get away. Had Jacob forgotten God's words, "I will be with you"?

At this point Jacob was undoubtedly grasping again, looking to his natural strength and craft to save him. "I will appease him (Esau) with the present that goes before me, and afterward I will see his face; perhaps he will accept me." But Esau and his men kept coming. After having exhausted all the possible avenues of escape, Jacob fell to his knees, and prayed.

"O God of my father Abraham and God of my father Isaac, the Lord who said to me, 'Return to your country and to your family, and I will deal well with you': I am not worthy of the least of all the mercies and of all the truth which You have shown Your servant; for I crossed over this Jordan with my staff, and now I have become two companies. Deliver me, I pray, from the hand of my brother, from the hand of Esau; for I fear him, lest he come and attack me and the mother with the children." (Genesis 32:9-11)

God led Jacob to his own Red Sea experience, and he had difficulty standing still. His scheming mind was teeming with evasive thoughts; how can I soften my brother's anger, where to hide and what to do? Finally, Jacob is reduced to prayer. Sad to say, it was his last resort just as it is with many of us. Isn't this often this case? How often have we heard the comment in an hour of need, "All we can do now is pray"? We give the situation to God only when we are faced with circumstances beyond our control. Here in this story we are witnessing the breaking of Jacob and what was perhaps the first truly insurmountable circumstance in His life.

Jacob now sent gifts on ahead to prepare his way as a peace offering while he stayed behind alone. Then suddenly an angel appeared to him, and true to his nature, Jacob grasped him and would not let go. He wrestled all night until daybreak, saying to the angel, "I will not let you go until you bless me!" Jacob clung to God with the same tenacity he had previously schemed and cajoled his whole life. He finally understood that the only answer to his need was God's blessing, His great grace. How did God bless Him? He crippled him by putting his hip out of joint. From that day on he walked with a limp. Have you ever thought of your weakness as God's blessing for you? Speaking of his own God-given weakness, Paul said, "Therefore I take pleasure in weaknesses, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong" (2 Corinthians 12:10 KJ2000).

It was after this that the angel informed Jacob in his weakness that his name was changed to Israel, one who prevails with God. Only in our weakness will we prevail with God as His servants. Jacob named the place of this encounter Peniel, which means "the face of God." God is revealing Himself to Jacob and Jacob is changing. To see Him is to be changed into His likeness. John wrote, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall

appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3 KJ2000).

The story of Jacob continues:

Jacob looked up and saw Esau coming with his four hundred men. He divided the children between Leah and Rachel and the two maidservants. He put the maidservants out in front, Leah and her children next, and Rachel and Joseph last. He led the way and, as he approached his brother, bowed seven times, honoring his brother. (Genesis 33:1-3 MSG)

Notice that Jacob leads the way before the maid servants, his wives and their children. He now faces his brother with them behind him. This shows a total change in character; the conniving coward has become a man of faith in God, not seeking his own wellbeing first, but the wellbeing of those for whom he is responsible.

Years later God said to Jacob. "Arise, go up to Bethel and dwell there; and make an altar there to God, who appeared to you when you fled from the face of Esau your brother" (Genesis 35:1). So Jacob and his sons sanctified themselves, changed their clothes, and went forth. In that time, moving such a massive company of people was considered an act of war. "And they journeyed and the terror of God was upon the cities that were round about them, and they did not pursue after the sons of Jacob" (Genesis 35:5). This is a testimony of Jacob's growing trust in God to protect him and his family. It was God who put fear in the hearts of all who might think of attacking him. This time he didn't break the family up into bands. His faith had grown since that day at Peniel when he was facing the army of Esau. Now he stepped out boldly, knowing that the God who promised to be with him was not far away.

Jacob arrived at the place he had previously named Beth-El (house of God) and there he built an altar renaming this place El-Beth-El (The God of the house of God). In Jacob's journey, he finally came to see beyond the religious trappings of a mere religious house, to the God of the house. What a revelation! Christianity is not a system of buildings God dwells in along with the organizations that control them, but it is Christ in us! For many of us as children, Christianity consisted of "going to church," singing from the hymnal, and listening to a man in an ornate robe or black suit talk about this God who is in heaven, so very far away. What a glorious day it is when God pulls back the religious veil and we see beyond the house to God Himself.

Based on this revelation and Jacob's faith, God changed His name saying, "Your name will no longer be called 'Jacob,' but, 'Israel,' for you have fought with God and with men, and have prevailed" (Genesis 32:28 WEB). The Hebrew name Israel has a twofold meaning. 1) One who will rule like, or prevail like God and, 2) One who will rule or prevail with God, or along side of God. Jacob had become like his heavenly Father. He would no longer be known by the name Jacob, the grasper. From then on he was called Israel-one who is like God and will rule with Him.

Like Jacob, we are also called on a journey of transformation. We also must be broken of our grasping, manipulating and self-serving ambition and come to a place of vulnerability and utter dependence on God. We must come to our own Peniel where we see the face of God with our natural strength broken. We must behold His glory with unveiled faces and be transformed into His image from glory to glory (Corinthians 3:18). We also must be led back to Beth-El where we finally break through the earthly veil of religion (the house) and focus on the God of the house.

Paul wrote, "Since you are manifestly declared to be the epistle of Christ ministered by us, written not with ink, but with the Spirit of the living God; not in tables of stone, but in fleshly tables of the heart. And such trust have we through Christ toward God: Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think anything as of ourselves; but our sufficiency is of God; Who also has made us able ministers of the new covenant; not of the letter, but of the spirit: for the letter kills, but the spirit gives life" (2 Corinthians 3:3-6 KJ2000). We know God as our sufficiency. We see beyond Beth-El, beyond the cultic, superstitious and shadowy realm of religion, beyond antiquated and abolished temples, altars, staged services, priest craft, rites, rituals and all that is of the Old Covenant. We now walk in a new and lasting Covenant with His law of love inscribed on our new hearts by the power of His Spirit within (2 Corinthians 3:9-11, Hebrews 7:21-25, 8:13, and 12:25-29). Finally we have come to that place where the temporal is forever distinguished from the eternal, where the "one thing" is valued over the many. Only then can we prevail with God. Only then can we reign with Him. Only then can we apprehend that for which He has apprehended us.

For whom He foreknew, He also predestined to be conformed to the image of His Son, that He might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover whom He predestined, these He also called; whom He called, these He also justified; and whom He justified, these He also glorified. (Romans 8:29-30)

## Simon and the New Name

Now let's consider this principle of the new name in the life of Christ's disciple Simon (Peter). It all began one day when John the Baptist was standing with two of his disciples looking at Jesus as He walked by. John said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" Two of his disciples who heard this left John and followed Jesus. One of them was Andrew the brother of Simon. Andrew went and found Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah." Andrew led Simon to Jesus.

Next we read the first recorded words that Jesus spoke to Simon. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas," an Aramaic surname whose Greek synonym is Petros, or Peter, meaning "a rock" or "stone" (John 1: 35-42). With a few exceptions, Jesus called Simon by this surname (not his new name) for most of His three and a half year ministry.

One of these exceptions occurred at Caesarea Philippi where Jesus called His disciples to Himself and asked, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" They replied, "Some say John the Baptist, some say Elijah, and others say Jeremiah or one of the other prophets." Then he asked them, "Who do you say I am?" Simon Peter answered, "You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God." It must be noted here that the blessed revelation was not that Jesus was the Messiah, but that He is the Son of God. Andrew had already introduced Simon to Jesus as the Messiah. The revelation that the Father gave to Peter was that Jesus is the Son. Herein lies the meaning and significance of His use of the two words for rock: petros-a stone-for Peter and petra-a massive foundational rock.

To Simon's answer Jesus replied, "Blessed are you, Simon son of John, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. I also tell you that you are Peter (petros), and on this rock (petra) I will build my assembly, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it" (Matthew 16:17-18).

Simon was the name given to Peter by his natural parent, Simon son of John (Simon Bar-jona). This revelation was about two fathers, one earthly and One heavenly, and their sons, one earthly and One heavenly, one fleshly and One spiritual. Nothing Peter received from his flesh and blood father could perceive this heavenly revelation. Natural abilities had no part in it whatsoever. "It is the Spirit that gives life; the flesh profits nothing" (John 6:63), and where the life of the Spirit is, there is revelation. On

the backdrop of Simon's natural relationship to his earthly father, Jesus showed Simon the true meaning of his new God given name, Peter.

So what does this have to do with the foundational rock (Petra) upon which Christ builds His *ekklesia*, "that also He should gather together in one the children of God who were scattered abroad" (See John 11:52)? Here is the significance of why God gives us a name that matches how He sees us in our final (omega) form. It makes no sense unless we consider it in the context of family, the children of God. The blessed revelation is of His Son, "you are...the Son of God"-- Christ the Petra or massive foundational Rock. This Son is as foundational to the family of God as Isaac was to Abraham's family. When Jesus used the word *ekklesia* in our passage, He was not only using it in the sense of a large called-out gathering, but expanded its meaning to include the lineage and growth of the family of God. We are talking about our Father, His Son (Matthew 16:17-18) and many more sons (Romans 8:14-18, 29-30 and Hebrews 2:10).

The Son is the Rock or Foundation Stone, but as important as this is, that is not all that is being implied here. Just as Isaac represented the hope of a new lineage to Abraham, the Son makes the way for the heavenly lineage of Abba Father. Flesh and blood has no part in this family nor can it conceive the ultimate intention of our Father. Simon the son of John could not imagine it, but the converted Peter could (Luke 22:31-32).

To see Jesus as the Son is to see God as Father! This is the revelation the true Church is built on-"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God!" To see Jesus as He really is, is to know Him as the Son. The life is in the Son for He who has the Son has life. Knowing this, we understand that He is "the first begotten of the Father," and that many more begotten ones-many sons of the Father-are being birthed, nurtured and brought to maturity by the Him as His called out assembly.

If we do not see this foundational revelation "You are the Son...," we will never know our position in the Father and the Son. We will never see what John saw and recorded in his first epistle. "Behold, what manner of love the Father has bestowed upon us, that we should be called the sons of God" (1 John 3:1).

Life-changing power comes from the Son as we abide in Him and He is revealed in us and the Father bestows that power and right upon all who receive Him. "As many as

received Him to them gave He power to become the Sons of God!" It is critical that we receive from the Father the same revelation that he gave Peter.

Who we think Jesus is, is critically important. It is foundational to all that the Father would do in and through His children! It is the bedrock on which the called-out assembly of Christ is multiplied, grown and built. John wrote, "Beloved, now are we the children of God, and it does not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is. And every man that has this hope in him purifies himself, even as he is pure" (1 John 3:2-3 KJ2000). Flesh and blood cannot reveal this to us. A mere Sunday-school teaching or even extensive seminary training will not suffice. Only the Father can reveal the Son and He desires to not only reveal Him to us, but in us. There is no knowledge of Him without "...the spirit of wisdom and of revelation in the knowledge of him" (Ephesians 1:17 RSV).

And so we have in this blessed revelation and in the name Peter the promise of many sons and a conversion much like that of Jacob. This is how Christ's Church is built. God's dealings with Peter reflect the scope and nature of that building. First we see The Rock (Jesus) *petra* - a massive rock, a large stone, the Foundation Himself. Next we have the rock (Peter) *petros* - a small, lively stone and the building material. The recounting of the earthly flesh and blood name Simon with the immediate mention of God's prophetic name Peter draws our attention to the process more than the man-the principle more than the person. "You are blessed, Simon son of John . . . I say to you that you are Peter." The name Simon represents the choosing of a man by God to be initiated into a process of change according to God's plan, but the name Peter represents the end of that process. Peter was not the foundation of the *ekklesia* as some falsely teach, for no other foundation can be laid other than Jesus Christ (See 1 Corinthians 3:11 and Isaiah 28:16).

The name Peter is representative of the kind of building materials (living stones) Christ has chosen and still chooses to use in His building, and also of the principle for quarrying such stones. Christ builds His church by the principle of revelation and faith. The prophetic nature of the new name (in this case Peter) comes with that personal revelation of Himself that He gives us. The new name carries with it the promise of conversion. We will see this very clearly as we consider the Divine transformation of Simon into that stone, *petros*, founded on the True Foundation Stone, *Petra*.

In choosing the stone for his famous statue of David, Michelangelo settled upon a flawed stone that the previous sculptors had rejected. When asked why he had chosen an inferior stone his reply was "I have chosen this one, because it has David in it!" The artist could see the finished work in the stone before he ever started. The useless rock had to be removed before David could be revealed. There are five statues that Michelangelo started but never finished, though you can see the human forms in them as they were emerging. Prophetically, these statues are called "The Captives." As a master sculptor, Jesus came to set the captives free. How fitting that the stone the builders rejected is the One Who lets the oppressed go free.

Like Simon, those God has called are not chosen because they are great, noble or wise. He does not choose those who the world admires and values because of their outward beauty or apparent worth. No! There is nothing there of the old Adam to commend us to the Father, no matter how "perfect" it may seem to others. As He did with Simon, He sees beyond our rough exteriors, beyond the faults, beyond the earthly habits and propensities, even beyond our inconsistencies. He sees the finished product, the perfection of His Son. He sees an extraordinary image in the unlikeliest of pebbles. He sees the image of His Son in weak and foolish stones. Paul wrote, "For you see your calling, brethren, how that not many wise men after the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called: But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God has chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty" (1 Corinthians 1:26-27 KJ2000). God sees the Foundation Stone, the model for our transformation, and so this divine sculptor sets His hands to form Christ in us.

As Christ is formed in us we exchange our flesh and blood weaknesses for the stability of the Rock. He must increase. We must decrease. This is the nature of the conversion that the new name promises; an exchanged life. Just as Michelangelo chose a flawed stone to ensure that the beauty of the work would reflect his true talent, God chooses the weak and flawed stones so that the glory of the finished product might reflect Him. (1 Corinthians 4:7).

We see in Simon Peter the process that purges all believers from dependence on their natural strengths and founds them on the strength and resources of the Rock, Jesus the Son of God. In many ways we all identify with Simon. Many of us have one particular Simon-like trait. How often have we prayed the well-intentioned prayer, "I will

serve you, Lord! I will lay down my life for you." And how quickly have our bold declarations morphed into a bemoaning of our inconsistencies and failures? This is where we are most like Simon; on the one hand, boasting in our strengths and on the next, mourning over our failures.

The Lord had been preparing His disciples for His death on Calvary. He said to them, "Where I go, you cannot follow me now; but you shall follow me afterwards." As usual the impulsive Simon spoke up, "Lord, why can't I follow you now? I will lay down my life for your sake" (John 13:37). Sound familiar? This statement was about to become the focal point of the greatest test of Simon's strength and resolve. Jesus answered him saying, "Will you lay down your life for my sake? Verily, verily, I say unto you, the cock shall not crow, till you have denied me three times" (John 13:38). Matthew records Peter's response, "No!" Peter insisted, "Not even if I have to die with you! I will never deny you!" And all the other disciples vowed the same (Matthew 26:35 NLT).

Before we judge Peter too harshly, note that all the other disciples made the same promise, but Simon, being first in so many things, would go through this conversion process ahead of the others. It is one thing to confess Christ, but still another thing to be truly converted to the point where you lay down your life in both living and dying for Him. We know Peter's story. It happened just as the Lord had foretold. Peter, when pressed by those who were crucifying Jesus, openly denied the Savior--not once, but three times.

Luke records the warning that Jesus gave Simon, just before he made his bold and heroic declaration ". . . I will lay down my life for your sake." To this the Lord replied, "Simon, Simon, behold, Satan has desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat: But I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not: and *when you are converted, strengthen your brethren*" (Luke 22:31-32 - emphasis added).

What was it that Simon needed to be "converted" from? Notice his use of the phrase, "I will..." Man has to come to terms with the fact that in himself he is powerless to do the work of God. James spoke of the folly in our human assertions when he wrote:

Come now, you that say, Today or tomorrow we will go into such a city, and continue there a year, and buy and sell, and get gain: Whereas you know not what shall be tomorrow. For what is your life? It is even a vapor, that appears for a little time, and then vanishes away. For you ought to say, If the Lord wills, we shall live, and do this,

or that. But now you rejoice in your boastings: all such rejoicing is evil. (James 4:13-16 KJ2000)

The other thing about this phrase, "I will," that repels God is that it originated with Satan himself! Isaiah records the roots of the serpent's original rebellion against God when he wrote:

How are you fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how are you cut down to the ground, who did weaken the nations! For you have said in your heart, *I will* ascend into heaven, *I will* exalt my throne above the stars of God: *I will* sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the farthest sides of the north: *I will* ascend above the heights of the clouds; *I will* be like the most High. Yet you shall be brought down to sheol, to the sides of the pit. (Isaiah 14:12-15 KJ2000 - emphasis added)

God is the prime mover in His creation, not man, and this is the lesson that Simon unwittingly placed himself into to be sifted by Satan like wheat. When a saint fully comes to see that in himself is only found weakness and failure, a place for Satan to work, and sees that in Christ alone can there be any success or righteousness, that saint can be said to have truly been converted. Until then he is still in process of becoming a true believer and is at the mercy of his enemy as long as he operates in that same pride which brought Satan's downfall. Only the I AM has the right to say, "I will."

Jesus warned Simon regarding the nature of the crisis before him. He explained it in the context of winnowing grain as it has been carried on in the East for thousands of years. It was a sifting designed to bring conversion and purity by the removing of the chaff and the tares. Winnowing separates the worthless chaff (the fleshly nature of the old Adam) from the precious wheat. Sifting on the other hand separates the wheat from the poisonous tares that are smaller, fall through the sieve and are then cast into the fire.

John the Baptist described the ministry of Christ in this very context. "Whose fan is in his hand, and he will thoroughly purge his [threshing] floor, and gather his wheat into the barn; but he will burn up the chaff with unquenchable fire" (Matthew 3:12 KJ2000). God doesn't reject the wheat because of the chaff that clings to it. He threshes and winnows it. This is exactly what had to happen to Simon before he could fully become Peter, the rock, whom Christ would use to strengthen his brethren.

We should pay close attention to the use of the name Simon here, as it was repeated twice for emphasis, "Simon, Simon." Simon must be sifted before Peter could emerge in God's strength. Standing between Simon and the reality of all that the name Peter implied was a divinely ordained sifting. Peter's poisonous pride had to be removed. The chaff of his fleshly ways had to be blown away by God. God used Satan to do the sifting through trials and tests, breaking Simon's natural strength and shaking his self confidence. In this winnowing process he learned the utter futility of attempting to follow Jesus and do the Father's will in the strength of his own soul.

Although it makes many extravagant declarations of its intention to follow Jesus at any cost, the flesh draws back as the cross draws near. Instead of siding with Christ it seeks to comfort itself at the fires of those who crucify Him. When put to the test it will always elect to deny Him in order to save itself and Satan knows this. "Skin for skin, yea, all that a man has will he give for his life" (Job 2:4). This is the purpose of this crisis. Peter must learn to put no trust in Simon! He must learn to distrust his fleshly resolve and tenacity. Simon must be converted from one life-source to another -- from his natural strength to the life and recourses of Jesus. This is what Jesus meant when he said, "And when you are converted, strengthen your brethren."

Simon's denial of Christ is an admonition to us today. How much of our "Christianity" remains unconverted and weak because we evade the cross, preferring rather to draw from the strength of the flesh? Even while enduring the trials we seek to hide in self-pity. How much of our Christianity still needs to be sifted? Without this we may think we are able to minister to the saints of God (as many do), but we will go on lacking the depth of spiritual maturity required to truly strengthen the brethren. Can we honestly say that "... we are the circumcision, who worship God in the spirit, and rejoice in Christ Jesus, and have no confidence in the flesh" (Philippians 3:3)?

Undoubtedly, Simon's faults have been put on display so that when the enemy sifts us, only our faith in ourselves will suffer. Through each test our faith in Christ grows. One look at Simon and we know there is hope. We know that our Savior is praying and interceding for us as He did for Peter (Romans 8:34). "I have prayed for you..." Dear believer, no matter what you are going through right now, remember, He has prayed for you! No matter how painful your trial, remember, He is touched with the feelings of your infirmities, "that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, He himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses" (See Matthew 8:17 KJ2000 and

Hebrews 7:25). As you endure the painful winnowing process, you will find more than enough strength to see it through, because He has yoked Himself with you. Paul wrote, "For while we live we are always being given up to death for Jesus' sake, so that the life of Jesus may be manifested in our mortal flesh. So death is at work in us, but life in you" (2 Corinthians 4:11-12 RSV). Death and suffering in us is meant to bring forth life not just in us, but in others also. "When you are converted, strengthen your brethren."

After denying Jesus Peter must have been in his own "slough of despondency." Could he have been thinking to himself, "I am no better than Judas. I also have denied the Lord; he did it for silver and I did it to save my life." But let's not forget the nature of this sifting. Peter was valuable wheat to be gathered into the Father's granary. He was not discarded like chaff or tares, but in this moment of utter despondency he was closer to pure wheat than he had ever been before. He soon found this out; Simon had a unique encounter with Jesus that was more than a mere restoration (as though value had been lost rather than gained in the sifting process).

It was a rather uncomfortable commissioning, based upon the new name, Peter. Jesus tested Simon, giving him every opportunity to repeat those words, "I will lay down my life for you Jesus. I will serve you." After Jesus rose again from the dead, He tested Peter to see whether he would answer this time from his own strength and pride? Jesus appeared to him on the shore of the Sea of Galilee.

Jesus: "Simon son of Jonah, do you love (*agapao*) me more than these?"

Simon: "Yes, Lord, you know I love (*phileo*) you."

Jesus: "Then feed my lambs."

Jesus: "Simon son of Jonah, do you love (*agapao*) me?"

Simon: "Yes, Lord, you know I love (*phileo*) you."

Jesus: "Then take care of my sheep."

Jesus: "Simon son of Jonah, do you love (*phileo*) me?"

Simon: "Lord, you know everything. You know I love (*phileo*) you."

Jesus: "Then feed my sheep."

Notice how Jesus does not refer to Simon as Peter, but instead uses his flesh and blood name Simon, son of Jonah. The problem was with Simon, not with Peter, and Jesus was going to the source of it. Added to this is the fact that there are two different

Greek words that Jesus used in the above conversation and both are translated love in English Bibles. The first word is *agapao* and the second one is *phileo*. *Agapao* is love in its highest expression--a sacrificial love, where the one loving gives his all for the one loved. "Greater love (*agape*) has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). *Phileo* is a word that is much cooler in relational intensity which indicates a fondness or a friendship kind of affection, but not necessarily a sacrificial love. Let's amplify this conversation with this in mind.

Jesus: "Simon son of Jonah, do you love me with a sacrificial love, so intense that you would lay down your life for me? Do you love me more than the rest of these, your brothers?"

Simon: "Yes, Lord, you know I have a friendship fondness for you."

Jesus: "Then feed my lambs."

Jesus: "Simon son of Jonah, do you love me with a sacrificial love, so intense that you would lay down your life for me?"

Simon: "Yes, Lord, you know I have a friendship fondness for you."

Jesus: "Then take care of my sheep."

Jesus: "Simon son of Jonah, do you even have a friendship fondness for me?"

Simon: "Lord, you know everything. You know I have a friendship fondness for you!"

Jesus: "Then feed my sheep."

Because of his previous failure, Simon dared not use the word *agapao*. Instead he used the lesser word *phileo* because he had failed to sacrificially lay down his life for Jesus as he had once boasted. Each time Jesus asked this it must have been like a finger being poked into an old infected wound. No doubt Simon was Christ's friend. He was fond of Jesus that was certain, but did he love Jesus with a divine *agape* love that produces a sacrificial posture of life? Peter had not yet received the Holy Spirit and he did not know the fruit of the Spirit in his life. How could he *agape* love our Lord? The point of this test was not to rub salt in a wound, but to show him his lack so that he would no longer put any of his trust in the flesh of Adam within.

Jesus went on to assure Simon that there would come a time when he would indeed glorify God in both his death and his life. He showed him the difference between Simon the waffler and Peter the rock. "The truth is, when you were young, you were able to do as you liked and go wherever you wanted to. But when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and others will direct you and take you where you don't want to go." Jesus

said this to let him know what kind of death he would die to glorify God. Then Jesus told him, "Follow me" (John 21: 15-19 NLT).

Only after this conversion and Jesus' death on the cross could Peter hear Jesus say, "Follow me," and know exactly what He meant. It was not a call to follow Jesus in his own energies and resolve, in the strength of a young man who does what he likes and goes where he wants. It was a call to be given over to the love and grace of Christ so completely that the cross was no longer an emblem of suffering and shame, but a glorious door to life. The converted Peter would do the will of his Savior and go where Simon refused to go.

Peter did eventually lay down his life for his friend, Jesus. Tradition has it that when he was old, he was indeed bound and taken where he had formerly been unable to go. After years of embracing the cross in his heart, it came to pass that Peter hung upside down on a literal cross, all for the love of his friend and Lord, Jesus. Peter asked that he should not be crucified upright, for he reasoned that he was not worthy to die in the same manner as his Lord and Friend Jesus. What devotion! What greater love is there than this, than a man would lay down his life for his friend? Was Peter a stone? Undoubtedly! Was He the Foundation Rock? No, but he looked an awful lot like Him.

### **Know No Man after the Flesh**

Jesus builds His church with such stones. The more we are adhered to the Head as members of His body, the more we become like Him and see Him as He is. The more that we become like Him, the less that "church" is about us. Church is no longer something we do, but rather something we are... the *ekklesia*, the called out of God as His own precious sons.

So we see the significance of the new name as it relates to the new creation. Knowing all this, there is one more consideration. How do we live in a way that complements this glorious truth in our own life and the lives of others? In other words, how can we relate to others in a way that affirms the new name that Father has given them? We are called to be "converted" and empowered by the Spirit to know one another after the Spirit as new creatures.

Paul wrote, "Therefore from now on know we no man after the flesh . . . if any man be in Christ, he is a new creation: old things are passed away; behold, all things are

become new." How desperately we need to know one another in a new creation way after the Spirit and not after the flesh. We need to ask the Father how He sees our brothers and sisters in Christ instead of looking upon their "Simon" in process. God has given us each a new name. Do we see one another as Jesus does, through His incredibly prophetic eyes? Do we have the new creation eyes to see beyond the biases and prejudices of our flesh and see another person in the light of eternity? There is no greater blessing that we can give one another than to acknowledge in *agape* love that each of us is God's work in progress. This is the perfect love-filled and faith-filled environment for growth in the *ekklesia* of God.

We need to love one another with a love that sees the wheat underneath all the chaff, which sees the David in all that rough hewn rock and desires to see him set free! Such love is empowering. Love empowers its object. There is no greater influence than to be believed in. Love believes the best of every person, not blindly but with clarity of vision that differentiates between present shortcomings and the divine call on an individual's life. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things" (1 Corinthians 13:7 RSVA).

God doesn't give us a general charge to change people so that we can be more comfortable with them. Rather He desires to give us grace and vision for that person in order to relate to them in faith. Jesus saw Peter in Simon and prophetically declared the promise "you shall be called Peter," but He did not seem to go out of His way to make it happen. He saw the divine plan and watched it unfold, knowing that the Father would certainly bring it to pass in spite of all the natural obstacles and outward workings of the flesh. Allowing the Father to bring things to pass on His timetable is not necessarily our specialty, but it is the specialty of His great eternal love for us. "Faithful is he that calls you, who also will do it" (1 Thessalonians 5:24 KJ2000).

May we dare to think it possible to say of each other what the prophet Isaiah prophesied so long ago, "The nations shall see your righteousness, and all the kings your glory, and you shall be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give. You shall be a crown of beauty in the hand of the LORD, and a royal diadem in the hand of your God" (Isaiah 62:1-3 ESV).

"He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white

stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it" (Revelation 2:17).

## Chapter Ten: The New Israel

By saying that there is a new Israel we are not promoting replacement theology (the idea that the Church has fully replaced Israel as God's covenant people). God is not done with Israel after the flesh. He made promises to Abraham regarding them that He fully intends to keep and many of His dealings with them are not yet accomplished (Romans 11:25-28). Nevertheless there is a sense in which Israel as a physical nation has been replaced. Until the time of Christ's completed ministry, the kingdom of God resided with Israel. God is spirit and He is seeking a spiritual kingdom, not a fleshly one. Thus the kingdom has been taken away from them and given to a "nation" (*ethnos*) that bears spiritual fruit.

During His ministry to Israel, Jesus warned of their impending judgment. Because Christ and the kingdom are one, rejecting Him is rejecting God's kingdom. Jesus' words leave no room for doubt. "Have you never read in the Scriptures: 'The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the LORD's doing, and it is marvelous in our eyes'? Therefore (because of this) I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:42-46, see also Matthew 8:11-12).

The kingdom and priesthood were taken away from the nation of Israel and given to another nation. Again, the word nation here is *ethnos* and is defined by Thayer as "a multitude of individuals of the same nature or genus . . . a tribe, nation, people group." Some believe this nation to be the Gentiles, but this is not exactly the case. This nation is not Jew or Gentile. It is a chosen generation (*genos* - the aggregate of many individuals of the same nature, kind, sort), "a royal priesthood and a holy nation (race)." The kingdom was taken away from natural Israel and given to this nation, a collective made up of those from all mankind who believe in Christ as the Son of God.

Peter, undoubtedly recounting Christ's words, wrote, "To whom coming, as unto a living stone, rejected indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, You also, as living stones, are built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual

sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ. Therefore also it is contained in the scripture, Behold, I lay in Zion a chief cornerstone, elect, precious: and he that believes on him shall not be confounded. Unto you therefore who believe he is precious: but unto them who are disobedient, the stone which the builders rejected, the same is made the head of the corner, and a stone of stumbling, and a rock of offense, even to them who stumble at the word, being disobedient: to which also they were appointed."

God placed a stumbling stone in the middle of natural Israel and they as a nation failed the test. But who is this new "nation" to whom the kingdom is given? Peter continues, "But *you* . . ." Yes, "you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people for his own; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. . ." (1Peter 2:4-10 KJ2000 - emphasis added).

The true significance of these words rests in the fact that they are not new words. God spoke them to natural Israel not long after they crossed the Red Sea and entered the wilderness in route to the Promised Land. He said to Israel through Moses, "...you shall be to me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. These are the words that you shall speak to the people of Israel" (Exodus 19:6 ESV). Now Peter applies these very words to a new nation and priesthood.

## **Jesus Is the New Israel**

Jesus is the New Israel. His preparation and testing followed along the very lines of Israel's preparation and testing. Being warned by an angel of Herod's plan to kill the Christ-child, Joseph took the young child and his mother by night, and departed into Egypt. The Scripture is very clear regarding the Divine purpose behind this journey. "...that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying, 'Out of Egypt I called my son.'"

Here again we see a sign or pledge of future things. The scripture in reference here is Hosea 11:1. "When Israel was a child, then I loved him, and called my son out of Egypt." This prophecy refers to natural Israel. How could it be used of Jesus? The fullness or real value and meaning of all spiritual things are in Christ. The law and the prophets were shadows of things to come. Israel was merely a type or prophetic picture that pointed to Christ. The old Israel was the vine brought up out of Egypt and planted in the Promised Land by the Lord Himself (Psalm 80:8 and Jeremiah 2:21). Zechariah

prophesied, "And speak unto him, saying, Thus speaks the LORD of hosts, saying, Behold the man whose name is The BRANCH; and he shall grow up in his place, and he shall build the temple of the LORD" (Zechariah 6:12 KJ2000).

Jesus said, "I am the true (real) Vine and my father is the husbandman." Again we see that all things are summed up in Christ. The old Israel was the branch (Psalms 80:15). Jesus is the true Branch (Jeremiah 33:15). In Him the history of mankind and the history of Israel begin anew. The old covenant had a temple made with human hands, but in the New Covenant we find a temple made of living stones by Jesus for His Father to abide in. Thus the real meaning of John 15: "I am the vine, you are the branches. He who abides in me, and I in him, he it is that bears much fruit, for apart from me you can do nothing" (John 15:5 RSV). Jesus is not only the Foundation of this house for God, but also the Chief Cornerstone. What a wondrous thing!

The old Israel was set apart as God's firstborn son. In Matthew 1 Jesus is presented as the Firstborn. The old Israel was brought up out of the land of Egypt. The New Israel, while yet a young child, was taken down into Egypt, that the scripture might be fulfilled, "Out of Egypt have I called my son." The old Israel was taken through the waters and was baptized first in the Red Sea later in the Jordan River. In Matthew 3, the New Israel, Jesus Christ, is taken through waters of baptism in the Jordan that all righteousness might be fulfilled. Every Jew understood that baptism pointed back to the flood and the beginning of a new world (1 Peter 3:20-21), and also to the crossing of the Red Sea during the exodus.

After old Israel was led into the wilderness to be tested and an unbelieving generation died off, they came out of the wilderness led by Joshua (a type of Christ) in the power of God's Spirit, into the land of promise (the full provision of God). After the New Israel, Jesus, was baptized, "Immediately the Spirit drove Him into the wilderness" (Mark 1:12). Matthew tells us why, "...to be tempted" (Matthew 4:1). Both baptism and overcoming temptation are required to fulfill all righteousness. Even the Son of God had to learn obedience by the things that He suffered. Are we to have lives of ease because, "Jesus did it all"? No, He is the Pattern Son, the divine pattern the Father uses to perfect many sons unto His glory. He first had to endure the depravation and temping of the wilderness for forty days (a type of Israel's wilderness journey of forty years) to come up out of the wilderness in the power of God (Luke 4:14). How many

who want spiritual power today are willing to go through the trials and testing that Jesus endured? There is a price to be paid to be greatly used in the kingdom of God.

After Jesus' wilderness period He went to the synagogue in His hometown, opened the book of the prophet Isaiah and read these words, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim release to the captives and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty those who are oppressed, to proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord" (Luke 4:18-19 RSV). Where the old Israel failed to set its captives free and proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, the year of Jubilee, Jesus (the New Israel) fulfilled all righteousness by breaking every yoke and all forms of oppression. "He who is free in Christ is free indeed." By way of the Spirit of God, Jesus came to set the captives free and proclaim that in this New Covenant, we have left condemnation behind and entered the "acceptable year of the Lord."

Paul saw the spiritual body of Christ developing along these very lines and finally coming to the fullness of the stature of Christ. None of this is of us. Only as we stand in Christ's victory can we prevail with God (the meaning of the name Israel). Our Israel has prevailed and we stand in His merit, power and victory. We earn nothing. We inherit everything. We are heirs according to the promise and have unmerited access to the riches of God's grace! We are re-created in Christ Jesus. By this alone are we the Israel of God.

## **Chapter Eleven: The New Covenant**

"The primary mission of Jesus was to tear down religion as the foundation for people's connection with God and to replace it with HIMSELF--the Divine coming to us in our own context and our own form. This is what Jesus called, "the kingdom of God." It is God and His people, living together in the way he originally intended."  
(Bruxy Cavey, *The End of Religion*)

The spiritual does not come first, but the physical and then the spiritual. (1 Corinthians 15:46 ISV)

It is in this context, "first. . . the natural . . . then the spiritual," that we now want to consider the New Covenant. The old covenant was a shadow of good things to come. Even the law possessed only a shadow. The old Covenant dealt with natural and physical manifestations of a spiritual reality in the heavens. It had a physical tabernacle, priesthood, vestments and a special tribe of chosen people who lived in a specific nation on this earth. It dealt entirely with the natural things of this earth, complete with sights, smells, tastes, sounds and all things needed to titillate the senses of the worshipers. It appealed to the carnal aspects of the natural man.

The New and Lasting Covenant of the New Testament has spiritual counterparts to everything that is in the old. The New Covenant requires faith, which is the evidence of things not seen. To take part in this covenant God requires us to grow up. He has replaced all the physical aspects of the Old Covenant with the spiritual counterparts that they represented. Instead of a tabernacle made of stones and wood, He has made one of living stones, surrounding Himself with men and women who love Him with all their hearts, minds and souls, making them His holy habitation. Instead of a special priest cast to work in that temple, He has made all who believe in Christ a kingdom of priests. Instead of putting on special garments as the Levitical priesthood did, these priests put on Christ Himself.

The first covenant was a natural covenant with natural Israel that He used to point the way to the One to come. The New Covenant is the spiritual realization of all that the Old Covenant merely foreshadowed, a spiritual covenant with a spiritual Israel (Romans 2:29). The Old Covenant was written on tablets of stone for a people with stony hearts. The New Covenant is written on hearts of flesh by the very Spirit of God.

God started to tip His hand, so to speak, through Old Testament prophets. They were allowed to foresee a change that was coming, one that would replace the covenant that Israel broke. Jeremiah spoke of this radical new covenant that was to come.

Behold, the days come, says the LORD, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; my covenant which they broke, although I was a husband unto them, says the LORD: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the LORD, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their

hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people. And they shall teach no more every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the LORD: for they shall all know me, from the least of them unto the greatest of them, says the LORD: for I will forgive their iniquity, and I will remember their sin no more. (Jeremiah 31:31-34 KJ2000)

Ezekiel also saw this quantum shift that was coming.

A new heart also will I give you, and a new spirit will I put within you: and I will take away the stony heart out of your flesh, and I will give you a heart of flesh. And I will put my spirit within you, and cause you to walk in my statutes, and you shall keep my judgments, and do them. (Ezekiel 36:26-27 KJ2000)

And in Isaiah we read:

They shall not hurt or destroy in all my holy mountain; for the earth shall be full of the knowledge of the LORD as the waters cover the sea. In that day the root of Jesse shall stand as an ensign to the peoples; him shall the nations seek, and his dwellings shall be glorious. (Isaiah 11:9-10 RSVA)

All your sons shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the prosperity of your sons. In righteousness you shall be established; you shall be far from oppression, for you shall not fear; and from terror, for it shall not come near you. (Isaiah 54:13-14 RSVA)

Habakkuk also prophesied of this New Covenant.

For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea. (Habakkuk 2:14 RSVA)

These passages from the Old Testament prophets were fulfilled in Christ. The New Covenant is nothing like the covenant that God made with Israel when He brought them out of Egypt. The Old Covenant was written on tablets of stone, to be read, memorized and obeyed-cold stony tablets for cold stony hearts. No understanding was required to obey the letter. All they needed to remember was, "Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not." In this they were really no different than a mule that has no understanding and must be controlled with bit and bridle under the penalty of pain. The Lord has always wanted a people after His own heart that He could share His passion and vision with-a people

that He could guide with His eye (Psalms 32:8-9), who know not only His works but His also His ways (Psalms 103:7).

The bit and bridle of legalism was never His ultimate aim. He wants to give us new hearts that are after His heart -- the goal of the New Covenant. This New Covenant requires a radical inner working of God's Spirit. It is within-written in the heart-taught by God Himself. The first words of Ezekiel's prophecy are critical, "And I will give them one heart, and I will put a new spirit within them." The one heart and the new spirit are inseparable. One heart means unity. One spirit is the ground of that unity among the saints. The new covenant implants the very nature of God in man-written upon hearts of flesh. This inward writing of God's Spirit in the hearing hearts of His people is the new order of things. They live in one heart, the heart of their Father and one accord, the mind of Christ. The love of God constrains us as the Spirit of God guides us.

There is no room for the pride of man here. God's New Covenant promise is this, "I will make . . . I will put. . . I will write it. . . I will forgive... I will not remember... I will put a new Spirit within you." This covenant is totally up to God and His righteousness operating in us. Paul wrote, "Therefore, my beloved... work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for God is at work in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure" (Philippians 2:12-13 RSVA). The only "I will" that is valid in the economy of God's kingdom is His. It is God who wills and works good in us according to His designs, not ours.

Men can't even teach righteousness without Him. God is our Teacher by His Spirit within our hearts. The writer of the book of Hebrews picked up on this theme. "And they shall not teach every one his fellow or every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord,' for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest. For I will be merciful toward their iniquities, and I will remember their sins no more." The old covenant is obsolete. "*And what is becoming obsolete and growing old is ready to vanish away*" (Hebrews 8:11-13 RSVA emphasis added).

The Old Law-Covenant was given to prove to sinful man that he is bankrupt and totally unable to please God. Though the Children of Israel pledged to obey, they found no power within them to do so (Acts 15:10-11). Paul observed in himself, "the very commandment which promised life proved to be death to me. For sin, finding opportunity in the commandment, deceived me and by it killed me... For I do not do the

good I want, but the evil I do not want is what I do... Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?" (Romans 7:10, 11, 19 and 24 RSVA)

In the midst of this frustration, God sent His Son to be the Mediator of a better covenant-a wonderful New Covenant that is totally empowered by His Spirit. The wretchedness of man under the law was answered, "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life has set you free in Christ Jesus from the law of sin and death. For God has done what the law, weakened by the flesh, could not do. By sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh and for sin, he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not according to the flesh but according to the Spirit" (Romans 8:1-4 ESV).

In the New Covenant God has provided everything that pertains to life and godliness. He writes a new commandment in our new hearts, that we should love one another even as Jesus loves us (John 13:34 and 1 John 4:21). He has put His Spirit within us to lead us and teach us all things pertaining to His kingdom, so much so that we behold Him as our Teacher, the only Teacher we need (1 John 2:20 and 26-28) to keep us from being deceived.

Man is not the teacher in this new dispensation, but His abiding anointing is. Man is a container or he is nothing at all. It is the Spirit within him that leads into all truth. God writes His passion upon the supple hearts of yielded vessels.

In this New Covenant we have not come to a mountain that may be touched that burned with fire and where the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words were so terrifying that even Moses said, "I am exceedingly afraid and trembling." No, we "have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all, to the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel" (See Hebrews 12:18-24 NKJV).

We no longer congregate at the mount of trembling (an earthly geographical place) but in heavenly places in Christ Jesus (John 4:21-24 and Ephesians 2:5-6). Our physical senses are of no use here, for we touch, taste, smell, hear and see those things that cannot be discerned by natural faculties. Faith looks at things that are not seen

(Hebrews 11:1). We hear His non-audible voice from behind with spiritual ears, "This is the way, walk in it. Turn neither to the left or the right." We are no longer dependent on dark sayings and hidden speeches of the prophets, but we speak with him as a man face to face like Moses (Numbers 12:6-8). With spiritual eyes we behold our Teacher who is no longer hidden from us (Isaiah 30:20-21).

The battle for faith is waged on this ground. Only the victors have eyes to see beyond the natural to the spiritual. To those who walk by faith, the heavenly Jerusalem is more real than the earthly Jerusalem with all its commercialism, religious clap trap and gaudy shrines. To them the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven are more real than any local church with its mixture of carnal agendas. Jesus, the Mediator of the new covenant, is more real than the most charismatic clergyman on earth.

We choose our reality. We will look with natural eyes on material things and demand empirical proof before we believe, or we will look with spiritual eyes beyond this natural realm to that city whose builder and maker is God. A man with 20/20 spiritual sight described it this way, "while we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Corinthians 4:18 NKJV). Will we focus on temporary or eternal things? We focus on the one that is more real (and more important) to us and that guides the life we live. Faith is not proven or verified by empirical evidence. It is the substance of things not seen with natural sight. It is time we who believe in Christ realize that we are not natural beings having a spiritual experience, but rather spirit beings having an experience in the natural world!

"We habitually think of the visible world as real and doubt the reality of any other. We do not deny the existence of the spiritual world but we doubt that it is real in the accepted meaning of the word. The world of sense intrudes upon our attention day and night for the whole of our lifetime. It is clamorous, insistent and self-demonstrating. It does not appeal to our faith; it is here, assaulting our five senses, demanding to be accepted as real and final. But sin has so clouded the lenses of our hearts that we cannot see that other reality, the City of God, shining around us. The world of senses triumphs. The visible becomes the enemy of the invisible; the temporal, of the eternal. That is the curse inherited by every member of Adam's tragic race" (A. W. Tozer, *The Pursuit Of God*).

So when the woman saw that the tree was good for food, and that it was a delight to the eyes, and that the tree was to be desired to make one wise, she took of its fruit and ate; and she also gave some to her husband, and he ate. (Genesis 3:6 RSVA)

When those eternal things that are seen by faith become more substantive, more real, than the earth under our feet, then we are walking by faith. This is how it should be for those who walk by faith and not by sight, yet much of what is called "Christianity" around us today sells itself to our physical senses and denies a true exercise of our faith. Religious man loves those things that can be seen, touched, heard, smelled, and tasted in his services; the smells, the bells and all that sells.

When John saw the New Zion in his Revelation vision he reported, "And I saw no temple in it: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it" (Revelation 21:22 KJ2000). With this being true, why are so many Christians all excited about the prospect of a new temple being built in old Jerusalem? Shouldn't we be citizens of the city where the Lamb is our Light and like Abraham, look for that city that has foundations whose builder and maker is God?

The New Covenant began in the Spirit and it is lived and completed in the Spirit. Jesus is not only the Alpha, but He is the Omega. Paul wrote, "*Now may the God of peace himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful; he will surely do it.*" (1 Thessalonians 5:23-24 ESV- emphasis added)

## **The Seal of the Spirit**

The fruit of the Spirit poured out on the Feast of First Fruits, Pentecost, was and is a guarantee of our redemption to come (Romans 8:23). The Spirit is the New Covenant seal and earnest pledge from God, "who also has sealed us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee" (2 Corinthians 1:22 NKJV). A man's seal--an imprint made by his signet ring in the hot wax poured on the flap of the envelope--was considered his signature. His seal guaranteed a document was genuine and had not been tampered with. We are sealed in Christ by the Holy Spirit. This seal and guarantee are given "that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:14 NKJV).

The Spirit was the promise and the Spirit is the guarantee. Jesus spoke of this to His disciples. "If a son asks for bread from any father among you, will he give him a stone? Or if he asks for a fish, will he give him a serpent instead of a fish? Or if he asks for an egg, will he offer him a scorpion? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask Him!" (Luke 11:10-13 NKJV). Everything that the heavenly Father wants to give to His children comes in the form of one gift-the good gift-the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is the bread, fish and egg-the full-meal-deal. He is the seal and guarantee and the One who delivers us to the desired destination. Paul even went so far as to say, "But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. *Any one who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him.*" (Romans 8:9 RSV - emphasis added).

Just before Jesus was carried up into heaven, He said to His disciples, "Behold, I send the Promise of My Father upon you; but tarry in the city of Jerusalem until you are endued with power from on high" (Luke 24:49 NKJV). Luke continued, "And, [Jesus] being assembled together with them, commanded them that they should not depart from Jerusalem, but wait for the promise of the Father, which, said he, you have heard of me... you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now"(Acts 1:4-5 KJ2000). After the Spirit was poured out Peter went on to speak of this promise. "Therefore [Jesus] being exalted to the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, He poured out this which you now see and hear" (Acts 2:33 NKJV). The New Covenant is based on the promise of the Father and the seal of the Spirit Who is to manifest in each of us as *He* wills.

With the Spirit comes life, light and righteousness. The kingdom of God comes in each life when the Father's gift is received by faith in His Son. His kingdom is righteousness, peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. (Romans 14:17). There is no kingdom, no righteousness, no peace and no joy without the Holy Spirit. This is what makes the New Covenant so much better. It is through His Spirit that Christ is made all in all. In the Old Covenant, man worked for righteousness. In the New Covenant righteousness is found by dwelling in the Holy Spirit. In the Old Covenant, peace with God depended on perfect compliance to the law, but in the New Covenant our peace is found as we abide in the Spirit of the Prince of Peace.

Paul wrote, "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. There is no law against such things" (Galatians 5:22-23 ISV). All of these things are the fruit of the Spirit and are present in a Spirit filled life. We do not need love or patience or any of the other gifts as if they were commodities in and of themselves. We need the Good Gift. We don't need joy, we need the Gift. We don't need peace; we need the Gift of the Father. Peace is a byproduct of a life in which the Spirit reigns. We can't be faithful without the Gift that was promised to the descendants of faithful Abraham. God is love. When we are filled with the fullness of God, we are filled with His love. This is the kingdom that is in the Holy Spirit.

Paul wrote about the freedom of the New Covenant in the Spirit. "But now we have been delivered from the law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6 NKJV) "There is therefore now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has set me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1-2 RSVA)." For you have not received the spirit of bondage again to fear; but you have received the Spirit of adoption, by which we cry, Abba, Father" (Romans 8:15 KJ2000). "Now the Lord is that Spirit: and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is liberty" (2 Corinthians 3:17 KJ2000). As you can see, we who have the Spirit are free from the law, free from condemnation, free from dictates of our flesh and free to boldly come into the very presence of God and call Him "Daddy."

Paul continues, "[God] also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. But if the ministry of death, written and engraved on stones, was glorious... how will the ministry of the Spirit not be more glorious? For if the ministry of condemnation had glory, the ministry of righteousness exceeds much more in glory" (2 Corinthians 3:6-9 NKJV). If we as His ministers are ministering condemnation, we are of the wrong covenant.

The Old and New Covenants are as different as death and life. As servants of a New Covenant, we are not servants of the letter but of the Spirit. Under the old letter-covenant, we must read, memorize and strive to obey. Our sufficiency to do so is from us. In the New Covenant, the source of all our strength and power is the Spirit of God. Satan entices believers to abandon God's sufficiency, the ministry of the Spirit, and return to the ministry of the letter, the ministry of death. This is the foolishness of

legalism. Whether we strive by the flesh to do good or strive by the flesh to do evil, it is still a work of the flesh and we are still eating from the wrong tree. Like Jesus told the disciples, "The flesh profits nothing." Why would a sane person choose death over life? Yet, those who have been bewitched by the deceiver do just that (Galatians 3:1-3).

## **The Foolishness of Legalism**

Paul prophesied that the church would fall away (Gr. apostocia) from the Spirit-dependent state (2 Thessalonians 2:3) and would manifest "a form of godliness" without power (2 Timothy 3:5). Some believe the gospel of John, written toward the end of the first century, was a response to this apostasy. The freedom of Christ was slowly being eroded away in the early church. They were slowly being dragged back into bondage by "the caprice and cunning of men" (Ephesians 4:14 Darby New Testament). Soon, things were not as God meant them to be. The heavenly order was forsaken and the heavenly nature was forfeited as men set out to perfect in the flesh what Christ started in the Spirit. It soon became a systematized deception, filled with man-made sacraments, boundaries, structures and rules. True life in the Spirit was slowly lost and the glory was departing. As men rose up, the Spirit's leadership and presence were quenched and the world was plunged into the Dark Ages.

The greatest danger to the Christian faith is not hedonism, but religion. The foolishness of legalism is far and away the greatest insult to the blood bought grace of God. Paul asks, "Are you so foolish? Having begun in the Spirit, are you now being made perfect by the flesh?" (Galatians 3:3 NKJV). The Galatian believers were drifting away from the ministry of life and turning back to the ministry of death. They were returning to the works of the law and, as a result, were being cut off from the supply of the Spirit.

To help them see their error, Paul asked them the following question, "Therefore He who supplies the Spirit to you and works miracles among you, does He do it by the works of the law, or by the hearing of faith?" (Galatians 3:5 NKJV). In this verse we see both the New Covenant Minister and ministry. Jesus is the one who supplies the Spirit. He does the work of ministry. Jesus is the New Covenant Minister as our High Priest, the one Mediator between God and man. We simply believe and trust in Him who supplies and works. When we return to the law (or any of the works of the flesh) we come back under the curse and the supply of the Spirit is cut off and the miracles cease (Galatians 3:10-11).

What does it mean for Christ to be the Minister? How is this realized in His body? Does it involve the showmanship we see on elevated platforms and pulpits today? Jesus doesn't want "faith-healers," He wants vessels He can minister to the sick through. He wants men and women who speak and act in such a way that even their lives are a testimony of His power. Peter wrote, "As every man has received a gift, even so minister the same one to another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If any man speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God; if any man ministers, let him do it as of the ability which God gives: that God in all things may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom be praise and dominion forever and ever. Amen" (1 Peter 4:10-11 KJ2000).

"Every man has received a gift" and each one is to "minister one to another," doing so with "the ability that God gives" that God might be glorified, not men. When prominent charismatic figures draw all attention to themselves, the lowly believer feels that what the Spirit has given him is not worthy to be manifest in the body of Christ. Thus he goes off like the man in the parable and buries his talent in the dirt. Brothers, it should not be this way. We should each be making room for the weaker brethren to move among us by the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:23-25) instead of drawing attention to ourselves.

After the lame beggar was healed by the gate of the temple Peter said, "Men of Israel, why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, *as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?*" (Acts 3:12-16). On the next day the rulers, elders, and scribes demanded, "By what power or by what name have you done this?" Peter, filled with the Holy Spirit, said to them, "Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that *by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth*, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, *by Him this man stands here before you whole*" (Acts 4:5-10 NKJV - emphasis added).

How much of what calls itself "ministry" today is actually Christ ministering? How much of what calls itself ministry today is done by the Spirit? Do we see the lowly Carpenter or King Herod in all his fine robes? Do we see Jesus or men so lacking in humility that they dare to call themselves "faith healers" and imply that healing comes by their own power or godliness? Like the lyrics of a country song go, "Would He wear a pinky ring,

would he drive a fancy car... Would Jesus wear a Rolex on his television show?" Christ will not compete with such pomposity. Where is the humility that recognizes that the Minister is Christ and insists that only He receives the glory?

## **Don't Turn Back**

The believers the letter of Hebrews was written to were facing a very serious spiritual crisis. In chapter two we read this warning, "Therefore we must pay much closer attention to what we have heard, lest we drift away from it" (Hebrews 2:1 ESV). This is the theme of the book. Our Hebrew brothers and sisters were in danger of drifting away or falling away from the gospel, the Good News of Jesus Christ, and all that He is. The test before them was whether or not they were going to go on into the full possession of all that Christ had given them or turn back to the old religious order.

This letter was written around 60AD. By 70AD Israel and Jerusalem were completely sacked and the people were either killed, scattered or had been taken as slaves by the Romans. Their temple and synagogues were completely shattered. All the external trappings of their religion they depended on were no more. This letter was clearly written to prepare them for this coming disaster. The author, under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit wrote, "In that he says, A new covenant, he has made the first old. Now *that which decays and grows old is ready to vanish away*" (Hebrews 8:13 KJ2000 - emphasis added). He repeatedly exhorted them in this letter to go on, leaving the shadows of the old religious order and to fully taste the heavenly gift and share in the Holy Spirit (6:1). These believing Jews had answered the heavenly call and started upon the heavenly way but now they were tempted to turn back to the old Jewish temple system. They started to return to the camp of the old religious order and God slammed the door by calling them to go to Him outside the camp. "We have an altar, of which they have no right to eat who serve the tabernacle" (Chapter 13:10).

T. Austin Sparks aptly described this crisis in his message, "Let Us Go On."

"That, I think mainly, if not entirely, is a matter of contrasts. Contrasts... a new era had come in. A new economy or order had been introduced with Christ and now, the changeover was the change, the tremendous change, from the earthly to the heavenly. With the Son of God from heaven, there had come in the heavenly order and from that time onward, the old earthly order of the things of God, as we have in the old economy of the Old Testament, ceased. . . .

Everything now is heavenly; it's passed from earth. But what a testing position is a heavenly position! It's a crisis! It creates a crisis, it's the very essence of a crisis: "Pull that down to earth, have something here, something on this earth, have something here, abandon that heavenly position, (that heavenliness by which those who so speak, mean that which is so abstract and unreal), let's get down to earth, to reality!" That was the nature of this crisis: the contrast between the heavenly and the earthly, and they were at the point of leaving the heavenly for the earthly. Great warnings are connected with that and all the exhortations, "let us go on, let us go on"... The contrast between the tangible and the spiritual. The soul wants something that it can take hold of, can manipulate, can grasp! That is the soul, to have something tangible... and all this talk about the spiritual and spirituality, how "unreal" it is... That's the crisis, isn't it? They in the old dispensation had it all visibly, they had an earthly tabernacle and priesthood and all that belonged to them, but now, the reality is in heaven, it's not seen! That was but a shadow, the reality is unseen, but it's far more real! But it's unseen, and that's the test of the soul. I'm sure you'll know the meaning of this."

The Hebrew believers longed for the earthly, touchable expression of religion. Are we any different today? The crisis point lies between the temporal and the eternal-the earthly and the heavenly-between faith and disobedience. It is in this context that we understand chapter six of Hebrews.

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, and of instruction about washings, the laying on of hands, the resurrection of the dead, and eternal judgment. And this we will do if God permits. For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then fall away, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding him up to contempt. (Hebrews 6:1-6 ESV)

We must come to understand apostasy (falling away) in these terms. The book of Hebrews was not written to hedonists or people sliding back into the overt sins of the world, but to an extremely religious people. It is not warning against returning to smoking, chewing and going with girls who do. It is not a warning against drinking or using drugs. It is a warning against returning to the old law-based religious order!

To go back to the old sacrifices and the old priesthood and the old temple system of the old covenant is to crucify Christ afresh and put Him to an open shame. To do this is to count the blood of Christ a profane thing. To taste the heavenly gift and know the power of the age to come, God's Holy Spirit, and turn back to the weak and beggarly elements of the old religious order is a far worse sin than adultery. The adulterer, after all, is not trying to substitute lesser sacrifices for the once-for-all sacrifice of the spotless Lamb of God. The adulterer is not thumbing his nose at the blood of Christ by substituting the works and sacrifices of the law for righteousness. It is spiritual adultery that God is concerned with where men turn from Christ and seek to replace a living relationship with dead religion.

We crucify Christ afresh when we stop trusting in His finished work and the efficacious power of His blood and turn back to the works and merit-based righteousness of the old religious order. There is no more sacrifice for sins other than the once-for-all sacrifice of Christ. It is human nature to want to pay sin's debt by extraordinary obedience or to apologize to God for bad behavior by offering Him a greater measure of good deeds—two pounds of good for a pound of sin. This is why the temptation to return to law-keeping is so strong. The flesh yearns to manifest, to justify itself and boast in its doings. To return to law-keeping for righteousness is a denial of the righteousness of God in Christ.

Paul longed to "be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith. . ." (Philippians 3:9 NKJV). Paul also wrote about Israel, who preferred their own righteousness to the righteousness of God. "For they being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:3-4 NKJV). Those who return to a law-based righteousness prefer their own righteousness to the righteousness of God in Christ, and as a result, have fallen from grace. "You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by law; you have fallen from grace" (Galatians 5:4 NKJV).

More than this, anyone who tries to keep the law has not just fallen from grace but has come back under the curse. "For as many as are of the works of the law are under the curse; for it is written, 'Cursed is everyone who does not continue in all things which are written in the book of the law, to do them'" (Galatians 3:10 NKJV). You can not pick

and choose which old covenant laws you want to incorporate into New Testament living. You are either under grace or you are accountable to keep the whole book of the law perfectly. There is no middle ground. To come back under the law is to reject Christ's grace and redemption completely. Why choose death when you can have life?

Paul's words to Peter, "For if I build again those things which I destroyed, I make myself a transgressor," show us the danger of returning to the law for righteousness. It is not a simple or harmless mistake. It is a grievous transgression. Paul explained further. "For I through the law died to the law that I might live to God. I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me." Jesus filled up the requirements and need for the law and He no longer is subject to the law, and neither are we who are abiding in Him and His righteousness.

### **Alive to the Law or Alive to Christ**

In Christ we died to the law. We cannot be alive to the law and at the same time be alive to Christ. Or as Paul put it, we can not be married to both husbands. We will be dead to one or the other. To attempt to do otherwise is spiritual adultery.

Occasionally we have overheard conversations between believers in which the term "spiritual adultery" was used. We have heard the term applied to a wide assortment of activities. What is holy to one is spiritual adultery to another. If the term has any legitimate usage, it is in connection with those who have been freed from the law, espoused to Christ, and returned to the bondage of the law once again. It is in this sense that we use the term.

First let's examine the definition of the word adultery: "voluntary sexual relations between a married person and somebody other than his or her spouse" (The Encarta Dictionary). The same definition applies to spiritual adultery. How is legalism adultery? It is spiritual adultery when those who are betrothed to Christ are romantically engaged with another man-the old husband (the law). There is only one way to have a proper relationship with Christ and that is through dying to the old husband (the law). When you are dead to something you no longer have any relationship with it. You are dead to it and it is dead to you. This is clearly set forth in Romans 7.

Or do you not know, brothers--for I am speaking to those who know the law--that the law is binding on a person only as long as he lives? Thus a married woman is bound by law to her husband while he lives, but if her husband dies she is released from the law of marriage. Accordingly, she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive. But if her husband dies, she is free from that law, and if she marries another man she is not an adulteress. Likewise, my brothers, you also have died to the law through the body of Christ, so that you may belong to another, to him who has been raised from the dead, in order that we may bear fruit for God. For while we were living in the flesh, our sinful passions, aroused by the law, were at work in our members to bear fruit for death. But *now we are released from the law, having died to that which held us captive, so that we serve not under the old written code but in the new life of the Spirit.* (Romans 7:1-6 ESV - emphasis added)

If you are a Christian, you have died to the old husband and are married to Another. You have died to the law through Christ's death. You are resurrected in Him and are His, entering intimacy with Christ and bringing forth fruit unto God. We have died to that old demanding husband that held us captive!

What should we call it when we who have died to the old husband and have been betrothed to Christ, sneak around and engage again in intercourse with the old husband? This is the textbook definition of adultery. Or as Paul put it, "she will be called an adulteress if she lives with another man while her husband is alive." Our relationship to the old husband was all about our works and our righteousness (how well we measured up to his demands). Our relationship to our new husband, Christ, is all about bringing forth His fruit (birthed, nurtured and brought forth by Him) and His righteousness (the fruit of His Spirit within us). We can only have one husband. Which will it be?

To return to the old husband is to set grace aside and crucify Christ afresh. And so Paul concludes, "I do not set aside the grace of God; for if righteousness comes through the law, then Christ died in vain" (Galatians 2:21 NKJV). May this help us get a true sense of the level of transgression that is reached when we turn back from the heavenly way to the old religious order.

## **The New Covenant and the Body of Christ**

On that day of Pentecost two thousand years ago, a humble band of disciples gathered in an upper room, obediently waiting for the promise of the Father. Suddenly, a sound like a mighty windstorm came from heaven and filled the whole house where they were sitting. Tongues like flames of fire rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance. Devout men from every nation were there in Jerusalem that day. They had come to observe the old covenant Feast of Pentecost, but what they saw and heard went beyond their expectations. Men who had followed Jesus were speaking to the assembled crowd and each of them could hear them in their own native tongue. "We hear them telling in our own tongues the mighty works of God." They were amazed and perplexed, saying to one another, "What does this mean?" Desperate for a logical answer, some of them even mocked saying, "They are filled with new wine." They had no idea how accurate their words were.

It was then that Peter lifted up his voice and explained what this extraordinary event was all about:

You men of Judea, and all you that dwell at Jerusalem, be this known unto you, and hearken to my words: For these are not drunken, as you suppose, seeing it is but the third hour of the day. But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel; And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, I will pour out of my Spirit upon all flesh: and your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, and your young men shall see visions, and your old men shall dream dreams: And on my servants and on my handmaidens I will pour out in those days of my Spirit; and they shall prophesy: And I will show wonders in heaven above, and signs in the earth beneath; blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke: The sun shall be turned into darkness, and the moon into blood, before that great and notable day of the Lord comes: And it shall come to pass, that whosoever shall call on the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Acts 2:14b-21 KJ2000)

What Joel prophesied was something new. Never had the Spirit been poured out on all flesh. Never had everyone who believes in God been given the gift of prophecy, prophetic dreams and heavenly visions. These things had been reserved for a select few in the old covenant, special spiritual leaders for an appointed time. Here we see a third witness to what was prophesied by Jeremiah and Ezekiel regarding the altogether different nature of the New and Lasting Covenant.

Jesus spoke to His disciples in parables regarding the absolute newness of the New Covenant. The old wineskin of religion had to be discarded for the New to take effect (Hebrews 8:13). He also addressed the repercussions of attempting to carry the old covenant over into the new. Jesus warned His disciples and everyone else who will listen of the futility of attempting to patch up the old covenant.

No one tears a piece from a new garment and puts it on an old garment. If he does, he will tear the new, and the piece from the new will not match the old. And no one puts new wine into old wineskins. If he does, the new wine will burst the skins and it will be spilled, and the skins will be destroyed. But new wine must be put into fresh wineskins. And no one after drinking old wine desires new, for he says, 'The old is good.'" Luke 5:36-39 ESV)

In the early days of the church, Paul and others fought a great spiritual battle to preserve a pure and undiluted gospel. Not only does religious man prefer the old wineskin, but he really prefers the old wine altogether. He tries to put the new wine into his old familiar wineskin! Let us keep Jesus' warning in mind as we consider the utter newness of the New Covenant.

The difference between the Old and the New Covenants centers upon this very issue of the vessel and the wine. God doesn't dump new wine on the ground. Just as a good vintner would, He prepares an appropriate vessel for it. This is what Jesus' earthly ministry was about. The author of the book of Hebrews records Him saying to the Father, "a body you have prepared for me." This was a prophetic statement pertaining both to His natural body and his spiritual body. Just as the Father had prepared a natural body for Him He was preparing a body for Jesus to manifest Himself through here on earth after His death, "the body of Christ," a body of members, enlivened by His Spirit. The body of Christ is the wineskin or vessel of Christ-the fullness of him who fills all things. Just as the man Jesus was the vessel of God so the body of Christ is the vessel of Christ. Individually and collectively, we are His body, the dwelling place of Him who is Himself the New Wine. As this New Wineskin, we are destined to hold what the universe itself cannot contain, "all the fullness of God."

The Spirit that was put upon prophets, kings, and judges, empowering them to do the work of God, is now poured out upon all the members of the body of Christ. Joel foresaw this. "And it shall come to pass afterward, that I will pour out my Spirit on all

flesh; your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, your old men shall dream dreams, and your young men shall see visions. Even on the male and female servants (slaves) in those days I will pour out my Spirit" (Joel 2:28-29 ESV). Any covenant that does not include everyone or ascribes greater access to some than to others is not the New Covenant. Even the young, sons and daughters, can be attuned to God's heart and share His burden prophetically. It is not limited to the seminary educated elite, but is poured out on lowly servants and slaves as well. The anointing that was exclusively given to a specific priest cast has come to rest on the whole priesthood of believers. "You also, as living stones, are built up into a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5 KJ2000). Yes, His glory is being poured out on all flesh. As Paul put it, "For you may all prophesy..." (1 Corinthians 14:31).

The fulfillment of Joel's prophecy consists of more than the Spirit resting on all flesh. It speaks directly of God's desire to fill all things. Jesus spoke of this to His disciples, ". . . You know him [the Spirit of truth], for he dwells with you and will be in you" (John 14:16-17). Again we see the vessel and the Wine. The Spirit is no longer poured out on men like the oil that was poured out on Aaron, but now it is placed *within* those who believe. In this Covenant we are His golden lamps that contain His oil of the Spirit and are perpetually refilled by His golden pipes that bring our oil down from the throne of God (Zechariah 4:1-6). "Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord."

## **Christ is our Teacher**

Jesus said, "But you be not called Rabbi: for one is your Teacher, even Christ; and all you are brothers" (Matthew 23:8 KJ2000). Isaiah explained this New Covenant in terms of the direct access and tutelage of God saying, "All your children shall be taught by the LORD, and great shall be the peace of your children" (Isaiah 54:13 ESV). Jesus said to the Jews, "No man can come to me, except the Father who has sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day. It is written in the prophets, 'And they shall be all taught of God.' Every man therefore that has heard, and has learned of the Father, comes unto me" (John 6:44-45 KJ2000).

John described this in his first epistle. "But you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things . . . the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches

you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him" (1 John 2: 20, 27 NKJV). The All Knowing One can now be known by all without the need for human teachers. Jesus sent His Spirit to His body to lead us into all truth.

But when he, the Spirit of truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come. He shall glorify me: for he shall receive of mine, and shall show it unto you. All things that the Father has are mine: therefore said I, that he shall take of mine, and shall show it unto you. (John 16:13-15 KJ2000)

If we walk in the Spirit, we no longer have to go to a special prophet or seer to find out what God has to say to us and has for us. God has shown all things to Christ, Christ is ours, and the Spirit takes those things that are of Christ and shows them to us. We are no longer servants of God as if we were still under the old covenant, but friends! "From now on I call you not servants; for the servant knows not what his lord does: but I have called you friends; *for all things that I have heard of my Father I have made known unto you*" (John 15:15 KJ2000 emphasis added). Yes, all things are made known unto us by the Spirit of Christ. This is the privilege of friends. In fact, the word mysteries, so often used by Paul in his epistles, means "the secrets of friends."

There is a vast difference between the Old Covenant and the New and that difference is the Spirit Christ abiding in our hearts.

### **Old Covenant**

Aaronic Priesthood (Exodus 28:1-3)

Stone Temple made by men (1 Kings 6:7)

Special priestly garments (Exodus 28:3-8)

Priests offer many sacrifices (Leviticus 9:7)

Spirit rested on a few anointed ones (Numbers 11:29)

Hearts of stone (Ezekiel 11:19)

Dead letters written in stone

### **New Covenant**

Priesthood of all Believers (1 Peter 2:9)

Temple made of living stones (1 Peter 2:5)

Believers put on Christ (Romans 13:14)

Christ offered once for all (Hebrews 7:22-28)

All believers are His anointed; Spirit abides within (1 John 2:27-28; John 14:16-17)

New hearts of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26-27)

Living letters written on the heart

(Exodus 24:12)	(2 Corinthians 3:3)
External law to be obeyed (Leviticus 26:3-6)	A new commandment to love (John 13:34)
A covenant for Israel only (Exodus 19:5-6)	A covenant for all who believe (Matt. 26:28 and John 3:16)
Under the law of death (Romans 7:5)	Led by the Spirit of life (Romans 8:2)
Tabernacle of Herod/Den of Thieves (Mark 11:17)	Heavenly tabernacle with Christ our High Priest (Hebrews 9: 22-24)
Veil of separation between God and man (Leviticus 16)	Access of God for all (Ephesians 2:13-18 and 2 Corinthians 3:14)
Jew and Gentile separation (Genesis 17:7-8)	One new man in Christ (Romans 10:12-13)
Of the first Adam, a living soul (Genesis 2:7)	Of the Last Adam, a life giving Spirit (1 Cor. 15:45)
Human teachers of law and prophets (1 Kings 8:36)	Taught by the Spirit (Luke 12:12; John 14:26; 1 John 2)
A covenant that was done away with (2 Cor. 3:9-11)	An eternal covenant (1 Peter 5:10)
High priests who died (Hebrews 7:23-24)	A Melchizedek priesthood (Hebrews 6:20)
Of the flesh and bondage (Galatians 4:24-25)	Of the Spirit and freedom (Galatians 4:26-31)
"Thou shalt" and "Thou shalt not" (Exodus 20:1-17)	"I will...I will...I will." (Jeremiah 31:31-33 and Ezekiel 36:26-27)
Old wineskins with old wine	New wineskins with new wine
Circumcision of the flesh (Genesis 17:11)	Circumcision of the heart (Romans 2:28-29)
Works of the law (Joshua 1:8)	Faith in Christ's work (Ephesians 2:5-10)
Mere shadow of things to come (Hebrews 10:1)	"But the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17)
Many fathers (Malachi 4:6)	One Father (Matthew 23:9)
Many shepherds (Ezekiel 34)	One Shepherd (Ezekiel 34:23; Psalm 23:1; John 10:16)
Knowing one another after the flesh	Knowing one another after the Spirit

(John 8:15)

(2 Cor. 5:16)

## Chapter Twelve: A New and Living Way

Paul wrote that we are "reconciled to God through the death of his Son . . . we will be saved by his life" (Romans 5:10). Here is the sum of all God's provision and expectation as far as we are concerned. It is this concept of being "saved by His life" we so often stumble over. We are reconciled through the death of the Son. We are saved from the deplorable consequences of trying to do it ourselves by the indwelling life of the Son of God. So much of Christendom strives to be "Christian" without His life. This is futile. Only Christ can be Christ in us. It is no wonder that sin is so prevalent in the church today-the first Adam cannot do what the Last Adam must do as He lives in us.

Through the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus, everything that pertains to life and godliness is now ours as a free gift, but it is a gift that must be exchanged. He offers us His victorious life in exchange for our defeated ones. We cannot hold on to the old deadness of Adam and eternal life at the same time. Paul expressed it this way, "For I through the law am dead to the law, that I might live unto God. I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faithfulness of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Galatians 2:19-20).

Since Martin Luther nailed his 95 thesis on the Wittenberg Church door, we in Protestantism have had 500 years of teaching on the atoning death of Christ. What a wonderful truth it is! We are reconciled through His death. Yet we dare not stop there because reconciliation is a ticket to ride. Reconciliation is an invitation to embark on a grand journey. The cross is not the goal, but a door to a whole new life. When you stand on the train station platform with tickets in hand, you waste your ticket if you stay at the station while the train leaves without you. The ticket is the assurance of a destination to be reached, but you must step forward and board the train for that to become a reality. Jesus is the train! Only as we live in Him will we move forward into the glory God has predestined for us.

Jesus prayed, "And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You have sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. Father, I desire that they also whom You gave Me may be with Me where I am, that they may behold My glory which You have given Me; for You loved Me before the foundation of the world" (John 17:22-24 NKJV). Jesus has given us His glory. It is a gift that is given when we abide with the Father as He abides. Jesus lives in the glory of the Father and has made that same life in the Father available to us with all its glory. Do we dare to believe?

Not only did Christ redeem us from being bad sinners; He also wants to redeem us from the fruitless effort of trying to be good Christians. We did not reconcile ourselves; neither can we save ourselves. Christ's death was required for reconciliation. His ever-present and empowering life is required for salvation. To view salvation as a past event, something that happened to us years ago when we first believed, is a great theological blunder. We are saved moment by moment by His life within us. We are being saved as we are being changed into His likeness by His life. His life in us meets every challenge. "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," wrote Paul.

I, George, recently had a conversation with a young college student that almost moved me to tears. She, being a recovering agnostic, had now come to believe that there is indeed a God and that He created everything but having done so, He left and is now watching from afar to see how it will all turn out. All I could initially think to say was, "That is so sad!" But as I pondered her words I realized that they reflected not only the state of her life and mentality toward God, but from her perspective this was the only explanation for the condition of Christendom today. Thankfully, I was given opportunity to share with her what makes true Christianity so exceptional. Jesus is Emmanuel, God with us! He is an ever-present help in time of trouble, a Friend that sticks closer than a brother! The words of an old hymn come to mind.

He Lives, He lives, Christ Jesus lives today!  
He walks with me and talks with me along life's narrow way  
He Lives, He lives, salvation to impart!  
You ask me How I know He lives?  
He lives within my heart.

The great earnest of our salvation is the Spirit of Christ! This is the key to everything. We have not been left to see how well we will do without Him. Jesus promised, "And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever-- the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:16-18 NKJV).

Christ's Spirit in us is passionate to please the Father. Think of it! God has sent the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, Who in the face of horrendous sorrows cried out, "Abba, Father, all things are possible for you. Remove this cup from me. Yet not what I will, but what you will" (Mark 14:36). The Spirit of God's Son in our hearts still cries, "Abba, Father, your will be done on earth in us as it is in heaven." The Spirit of the Son creates His passion for the Father's will within us. More than earthly comforts, more than physical life itself, the Spirit of the Son seeks Abba's will. This is what is meant by being led by the Spirit. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. "For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:14-15 ESV).

Sons of God are led by the Spirit of the Son. We do not labor to be led by the Spirit and so become sons of God. No, God does not give the Spirit of His Son to strangers. He gives that Spirit to sons. ". . . because you are sons, God has sent the Spirit of his Son into our hearts, crying, 'Abba! Father!'" (Galatians 4:6 ESV). This is what distinguishes Christianity from all religions and true believers from mere religious men.

The most basic instinct in man is self-survival. It is this very self-saving instinct, rooted in the nature of the first Adam, that Satan uses to control men and keep them from partaking of divine Life. He is banking on one thing, "Skin for skin! All that a man has he will give for his life" (Job 2:4). This certainly applies to religion that teaches the fear-based idea that you are saved by obedience and if you maintain that obedience long enough God will bless you for your efforts, and if you fail to obey, God will reject you. The underlying premise here is, "Obey more! Obey harder! Obey and you will live!"

The very first change that occurs when the Spirit of the Son takes up residence within the hearts of believers is that this spirit of fear is vanquished (Romans 8:15, 2 Timothy 1:7). Perfect love casts out all fear (1 John 4:18). The Spirit of the Son doesn't

say "obey and you will live," but "live and you will obey." Divine life produces proper behavior, not the other way around. Through death, Christ destroyed the one who had the power of death, the devil, and delivered all those who through fear of death were subject to lifelong slavery (Hebrews 2:14-15). The fear of death enslaves, but the Spirit of the Son lifts us up above that cowering existence. We cannot reign with Christ as long as the fear of death keeps us hiding in Gethsemane, asking for our cup to be removed. The book of Revelation records the secrets of the reigning life. "And they [those reigning in Christ] overcame him [the devil] by the blood of the Lamb and by the word of their testimony, and they did not love their lives to the death" (Revelation 12:11). The fear of death hinders the overcoming and reigning life that is ours in Christ. We have not received the spirit of fear unto bondage but the Spirit of love and Life in Christ Jesus. That Spirit has set us free. The deeds of the flesh, including the need to survive, are mortified by that Spirit. If Satan can make us fearful he can also make us disobey the leading of the Spirit and forfeit our place of rest as sons of God.

That being said, let's consider again Paul's words in Romans 8:9-15.

"You, however, are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. Anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But if Christ is in you, although the body is dead because of sin, the Spirit is life because of righteousness. If the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit who dwells in you. So then, brothers, we are debtors, not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. For if you live according to the flesh you will die, but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the Spirit of adoption as sons, by whom we cry, "Abba! Father!" (Romans 8:9-15 ESV)

Everything that God hopes to accomplish in your life He intends to do through His Spirit Who dwells in you-the Spirit of adoption-the Spirit of His Son. The deeds of the flesh are put to death by the Spirit. The Spirit is death-dispelling. The Spirit is life! (Romans 8:10). Paul wrote to the Galatians, "This I say then, Walk in the Spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh" (Galatians 5:16 KJ2000). We are saved by his life-by His working within. The riches of the glory of this mystery is this, "Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Colossians 1:27). Not Christ in your clergyman, but Christ in you!

Jesus promised that out of your innermost being will flow rivers of living waters. Is this not being saved by His life within? This speaks of abundant life, not only enough life for you, but a life that is infectious to those around you! In every situation the correct response flows out from His throne through our innermost being to others. Do you struggle to love that difficult brother or sister with little or no success? Christ in you is our hope, not that old Adam. Christ in you is longsuffering and kind. Christ loves! Walking according to this rule frees us from constantly missing the mark. Only the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus can free us from the law of sin and death. The sooner we see that we cannot live the Christian life, the closer we are to walking in His victorious life, where Christ lives out His passion for the Father's interests through us.

When we understand that we died with Him, were buried with Him and were raised with Him, there is still one more revelation to come. Having accomplished all this on our behalf, has Jesus now left us to reign without Him? Not hardly! It is crucial that we understand the "with." We are called to reign *with* Him! This is what it means to be seated with Him in heavenly places. Seated implies the end of all work. "It is finished!"

When we finally realize that we are crucified with Christ, we quit trying to live the Christian life and give Christ permission to live out His resurrected life through us. Only then are we buoyed up by the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus far above the realm of law, sin and death. The Spirit of Life in Christ Jesus ends our struggles, for "now we have been released from the Law, having died to that by which we were bound, so that we serve in newness of the Spirit and not in oldness of the letter" (Romans 7:6 NASB). "But if you be led of the Spirit, you are not under the law" (Galatians 5:18 KJ2000).

Today is the day of salvation. We now are free from the law. Today we have life everlasting. We live by His life. We are saved by His life. Satan doesn't tremble at our faith in God's ability to act sometime in the future. What he really dreads is the rise of that woman, the Church, who will walk in the salvation that brings the presence and power of God into every situation in every moment of every day. He seeks to create a general climate of unbelief that expects nothing of the Lord's presence and power today. And so the new and living way is systematically assaulted by theological unbelief, which sounds like this, "Yes, believers will have everlasting life but this only applies to the afterlife, 'the sweet by and by,' and has little to do with our daily

existence. The days of miracles are over, so for now we just try our best to live a good Christian life and everything will be fine in the end."

This limiting mentality was reflected in Martha's response to Jesus when He first told her, "Your brother shall rise again." She immediately did the acceptable theological thing. She put everything off into the future. "I know that he shall rise again in the resurrection at the last day." Jesus' answer was designed to take Martha's eyes off the sweet by and by and put them squarely on the present. "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believes in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live: And whosoever lives and believes in me shall never die. Do you believe this?" (John 11:23-26 KJ2000). This is the question, isn't it? Do we believe this? I am certain that most Christians believe that the dead shall live again, but do we believe that living believers will never die, that their life is eternal life? Do we believe that eternal life is available for every believer right now in each moment of every day? Do we participate in this Resurrection on a daily basis?

Only moments later Jesus demonstrated the nature, scope and reality of the Christian life. He stood before the tomb of Lazarus and commanded, "Lazarus! Come forth!" At His word, all that science deems certain, fatal and irreversible was overruled, and he who was shut away in the grave in a decaying body beyond all hope of human intervention came forth alive and healthy. Talk about violating the second law of thermodynamics!

Today in a theological environment that only dares to believe that God has acted in the past and may again act sometime in the future, Jesus invites all who have the courage to believe Him to join Him in a life that is every bit as miraculous as the resurrection of Lazarus—a life that transcends the ordinary. This life lifts you above the droning dirge of contemporary dispensational theology that limits all the power of God. He who has life in Himself (John 5:26) bids us to come forth from our religious tombs, shed our theological grave clothes and partake of the Resurrection and the Life today. We are saved by His resurrected life, not theology.

## Chapter Thirteen: A New Priesthood

To you therefore who believe, he is precious, but for those who do not believe, "The very stone which the builders rejected has become the head of the corner," and "A stone that will make men stumble, a rock that will make them fall"; for they stumble because they disobey the word, as they were destined to do. But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light. (1 Peter 2:7-9 RSV)

What we want to focus on here is the superior nature, passion and mission of the royal priesthood. The author of Hebrews contrasted this priesthood to the Levitical priesthood. We want to prove its superiority by showing that this new priesthood is not religious at all, and for that reason goes far beyond any previously held concept of religious priesthood, including the Levitical priesthood. It existed long before Levy, the law, the temple, and Judaism or any other religious expression of Israel. Moreover, it is in effect now, 2000 years after the Levitical order disappeared. It is a priesthood designed to end all religious priesthoods. It is not a better religious priesthood. It is simply not religious at all.

Before looking at New Covenant priesthood, we must first discuss the principle of priesthood as it relates to man's fallen condition. The fall of man is the ground religious priesthood bases its birth, function and longevity on.

Through years of religious conditioning, it is our habit to immediately superimpose the idea of religious priesthood on the priesthood of all believers. This is both erroneous and limiting because God has something entirely different in mind, something that goes far beyond any previously conceived priesthood. Religion is not a higher state of things as some would teach. It has no place in God's ultimate design. It exists not as an answer to sin but because of sin. Sin gave birth to it in the first place.

Many Christians believe that Christ's finished work opens the way back into an Eden-like communion and fellowship with God. Let us then for a moment consider what it was like before man fell.

In the beginning man had no religion. There were no temples; no holy niches, no veils, no religious rites and no priests. Adam and Eve had direct, unveiled access to God.

They were His offspring, living by His Breath. They related to their Creator without any sense of fear or shame (Genesis 2:22). This glorious first-estate of man, in union with his Creator, was forfeited as a consequence of Adam's sin. Immediately following their disobedience, Adam and Eve hid themselves from God in fear and shame. Then the LORD God called to Adam and said to him, "Where are you?" Adam answered, "I heard Your voice in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; and I hid myself." To which God replied, "Who told you that you were naked? Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?" (Genesis 3:9-11). "Where are you, Adam?" This original sin removed man from the presence of God. They were no longer one with their Maker, but separate, even veiling themselves from Him with their self-made garments.

This was the dawn of religion and the seminal beginnings of religious priest-craft. Religion that sprang from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil cannot exist apart from the conditions that first drove Adam and Eve into hiding. Three things are essential to its operation: separation, fear and shame. Religion makes its basic appeal to the fallen nature of man because they both sprang from the same tree. It appeals to that deep sense of separation that is now an intrinsic part of man's makeup and capitalizes on the resulting guilt and shame. Religion traffics in fear by promoting the idea that apart from it there is no bridge of salvation. It presents itself as the bridge, "The church saves you." But this unfortunately is a toll bridge.

And so this separation-based, fear-based and shame-based religion has set up shop between God and men. Its bazaar is strategically placed in that gulf that sin has fixed. It preserves its place by maintaining the separation, guilt and shame that gave it birth. Though it gives lip-service to the idea of reuniting men with God, its greater concern is to protect its economy by maintaining man's need for it. Like the Pharisees, it has a vested interest in continuing this separation between God and men in order to preserve its own marketplace (see Matthew 23:13). Therefore, religion as such is not a higher state of things as is so often believed and taught, but is, as Karl Barth suggests is, ". . . the concern of godless man." Godless man loves religion because of the strategic position, power and prestige it gives. So this enviable, exclusive guardianship of the way to God progressively takes on the tones of a marketplace. When you have acquired exclusive rights to God, why not charge admission? All these temples with their holy niches and veils, religious rights and priests (ministries) cost money to maintain.

Providing a covering at a price is nothing new to religion. Historically religion and its priest-craft used the threat of withheld forgiveness and access to God to control and bind multitudes to itself. The etymology of the word religion speaks of binding and bondage. Webster defined it as follows:

"RELIGION, n. relij'on. [L. religio, from religo, to bind anew; re and ligo, to bind.]"

Then he goes on to address the pagan origins of the word.

"This word seems originally to have signified an oath or vow to the gods, or the obligation of such an oath or vow, which was held very sacred by the Romans."

This overtly idolatrous system is in perfect keeping with fallen man's inner circumstance, yet leaves him in perfect control to decide what is good and what is evil without the leading of the Spirit of God. It generates a priest-craft that consists of the soulishly powerful reigning over the guilt-ridden weak. This binds man to an ancient, inherently flawed approach to God. It binds men to failure and is destined for total collapse. There was no religion in Eden where man walked in the cool of the day with God and there is no religion among those who dwell in heavenly places in Christ Jesus. Religion by its very nature is adverse to a meaningful relationship with God. Those who have had a living relationship with Him have always been a target for persecution by the religious. Even the Son of God was persecuted and killed by those who wanted to preserve their religion.

Judaism had become a religion. The more it became so, the more it tried to preserve its place by maintaining the separation between God and men. It had forgotten its purpose. It no longer freed men but bound them instead. It placed grievous and heavy burdens upon the shoulders of men (Matthew 23:4). It no longer brought men to God but instead shut up the kingdom of heaven against men (Matthew 23:13). It no longer focused upon the needs of people but instead upon the maintenance of its own system (Matthew 23:16). It no longer charitably gave but rather tried to gain riches under the pretense of piety (Matthew 23: 14). Jesus constantly confronted this as He went about ministering to the sick and needy and to those who had been victimized by this religious system.

The true priesthood of God is not a religious priesthood; it is governed by a different passion and a different mind. It passionately desires to reconcile men to God. It has a

new High Priest Who has given His all for that very purpose. There is a new priesthood that carries His passion into the world. This priesthood is not made up of a select family or group within the believing community but is made up of all believers. This one objective of this priesthood is to cooperate with God in bringing men back to their first condition, living by God's breath moment by moment. It exists for one purpose--to restore everything that sin has undone by reuniting the creature with the Creator through the Lord Jesus Christ.

William Law wrote of this blessed primal condition which predates and will mark the end of religious priest-craft.

"It is the SPIRIT OF GOD brought again to His first power of life within us. Nothing else is needed by us and nothing else is intended for us neither by the Law, the prophets or the gospel. Nothing else is or can be effectual in the making of sinful man into a godly creature. Everything else, however glorious and divine in outward appearance; everything that angels, men, churches or reformations can do for us is dead and helpless, but so far as it is the immediate work of the Spirit of God breathing and living in it." (*An Affectionate Address to the Clergy*)

Paul wrote about this great reunification of man with the Father. "But he that is joined unto the Lord is one spirit" (1 Corinthians 6:17 KJV). This is the undoing of all the division and destruction that sin brought upon the earth. It is the key to unity with the Lord and with men. The basis of this unity is the reunion of Spirit and spirit that is in every regard a return to Eden. It is a return to the face-to-face fellowship that God shared with Adam the son of God. (Luke 3:38).

If you are a believer, you are part of this glorious priesthood, predestined to be filled with God Himself. Paul wrote, "that He [Jesus] should be presenting to Himself a glorious *ekklesia*, not having spot or wrinkle or any such things, but that it may be holy and flawless" (Ephesians 5:27 CLV). This word glory is key. Glory as revealed in the scriptures is the visible presence and power of almighty God! The Lord Himself is "the glory of the Lord." A glorious assembly is an assembly filled with the Lord. Mediators have no place when the Lord is present.

When Solomon's temple (the former house) was dedicated, the glory of the LORD filled the house of the LORD so completely that the priests could not stand to minister. . ." (1 Kings 8). Ezekiel shows us the appropriate human response to such glory. ". . . and I

fell upon my face" (Ezekiel 44:4). So shall it be in the end-time *ekklesia*. God's glory brings an end to the need for mediators between God and men. In His glory the priest cannot minister and the prophet cannot stand. We need far less human activity and more glory-more of Him.

Adam and Eve were bound only by the life that animated them. The very breath of God was their unity. The new priesthood contends for this. They declare the realities of an unveiled relationship with God by their life and actions, and whose lives are an inspiration and invitation to others to enter beyond the veil. In this priesthood there is only one Mediator. This priesthood points the way beyond the veil into the presence of the living God. These priests always seek to decrease in the eyes of men that He might increase in their lives. Like their Master, they are the humble, living reproof of those who seek the chief seats in the synagogues.

The true priesthood has one end in view-open and free access into the holy of holies for all. This priesthood earnestly seeks to usher men into God's presence. The tables of the money changers are completely toppled when believers avail themselves of God's invitation to enter the holiest place through the efficacious working of the blood of the Lamb. Religion and all its trappings are meaningless to those who stand in the glorious presence of God!

We close this chapter with the words of a song that holds deep meaning to us.

### **Take Me In**

By Dave Browning

Take me past the outer courts  
Into the Holy Place  
Past the brazen altar  
Lord I want to see Your face  
Pass me by the crowds of people  
And the Priests who sing Your praise  
I hunger and thirst for Your righteousness  
But it's only found in one place

[Chorus:]

Take me into the holy of holies  
Take me in by the blood of the Lamb  
Take me into the holy of holies  
Take the coal, touch my lips, here I am.

## **Chapter Fourteen: A New Commandment**

"A new commandment I give unto you, that you love one another as I have loved you. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another." (John 13:34)

For the priesthood being changed, there is of necessity a change also of the law.  
(Hebrews 7:12)

"This is my commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you." (John 15:12 NKJV)

"Therefore all things whatsoever you would that men should do to you, do you even so to them: for this is the law and the prophets" (Matthew 7:12 KJ2000; see also Matthew 22:37-40).

With a New Covenant comes a new commandment. The old is fulfilled in the new. Love is the fulfillment of the Law.

In His sacrificial love, Jesus filled up the just requirements of the law. In His perfect sinless life and in the offering of His body for sin He blotted out the ordinances that were against us, and took it out of the way, nailing it to his cross (Colossians 2:14). Jesus came to fulfill all righteousness (Matthew 3:15-17) so we could walk in spiritual righteousness, not by our fleshly efforts, but by His Spirit dwelling within us.

Love is the new commandment.

With this New Covenant came a new heart on which the commands of God are written and there also came His Spirit put deep within us producing the desire and ability to please Him. The commandments of the Old Covenant are fulfilled by the perfect life and sacrifice of Christ! It is FINISHED! Jesus said, "Do not think that I have come to do

away with or undo the Law or the Prophets; I have come not to do away with or undo but to complete and fulfill them" (Matthew 5:17 AMP). The word fulfill here in the Greek is very implicit. In Thayer's dictionary we read the following:

G4137

pleroo

Thayer Definition:

1) to make full, to fill up, i.e. to fill to the full

1a) to cause to abound, to furnish or supply liberally

1a1) I abound, I am liberally supplied

2) to render full, i.e. to complete

2a) to fill to the top: so that nothing shall be wanting to full measure, fill to the brim

Jesus did what sinful man could not do. He filled up to the brim all the just requirements of the Old Covenant law. When He came to John the Baptist to be baptized, John did not want to do it. He said, "I have need to be baptized by you, and come you to me?" Jesus answered him, "Permit it to be so now: for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness." Then John baptized Jesus (Matthew 3:14-15 KJ2000). Jesus came to fulfill all righteousness and to impute that righteousness to all who would believe in, trust in and rely totally on Him as their Savior and Life. Paul wrote, "For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. For what the law could not do, in that it was weak through the flesh, God sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, and for sin, condemned sin in the flesh: That the righteousness of the law might be fulfilled in us, who walk not after the flesh, but after the Spirit" (Romans 8:2-4 KJ2000).

Today many insist on bringing the old covenant law into the New Testament church. They pick and choose parts of the old law that they can use to put the body of Jesus back into bondage. The law of the tithe and the priest cast system are favorites. Some denominations even insist that we obey the Levitical laws of Sabbath keeping, and abstain from meats. Paul wrote about this attack on the church back then. "Let no man therefore judge you in food, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: Which are a shadow of things to come; but the body is of Christ" (Colossians 2:16-17 KJ2000).

The body is not of or under the law of the Old Covenant. When Jesus died on the cross He totally filled-up the requirements of the law. We cannot add anything to His perfect sacrifice. We are now free in Christ as we walk after the Spirit and not after the flesh. We seek the substance that is Christ, not the shadow. We are free to love and thereby fulfill the law. Any obedience that does not flow from love is nothing.

Paul explains, "Owe no one anything except to love one another, for he who loves another has fulfilled the law. For the commandments, 'You shall not commit adultery,' 'You shall not murder,' 'You shall not steal,' 'You shall not bear false witness,' 'You shall not covet,' and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself.' Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law" (Romans 13:8-10 NKJV). And Again, "For all the law is fulfilled in one word, even in this: 'You shall love your neighbor as yourself'" (Galatians 5:14 NKJV).

Walking in Jesus' new commandment, the love of God that He has shed abroad in our hearts, is walking in the fullness of the law and the prophets. John wrote, "And whatsoever we ask, we receive of him, because we keep his commandments, and do those things that are pleasing in his sight. And this is his commandment, that we should believe on the name of his Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, as he gave us commandment. And he that keeps his commandments dwells in him, and he in him. And by this we know that he abides in us, by the Spirit whom he has given us" (1 John 3:22-24 KJ2000). The fruit of the law is death, but the fruit of the Spirit is love (Romans 7:5 and 8:2, 1 Corinthians 15:56, and Galatians 5:22).

Remember, the law of love in Christ Jesus fulfills all that was written in the old law and with a new heart and a new Spirit within us, we can walk it out with all men.

Paul wrote about the effects of the Spirit of God living within us. "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, self-control: against such there is no law" (Galatians 5:22-23 KJ2000). Jesus put it this way, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is like unto it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:37-40 KJ2000).

John, the apostle who Jesus loved, had much to say about love.

So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love abides in God, and God abides in him. By this is love perfected with us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as he is so also are we in this world. (1 John 4:16-17 ESV)

Whoever says he abides in him ought to walk in the same way in which he walked. Beloved, I am writing you no new commandment, but an old commandment that you had from the beginning. The old commandment is the word that you have heard. At the same time, it is a new commandment that I am writing to you, which is true in him and in you, because the darkness is passing away and the true light is already shining. Whoever says he is in the light and hates his brother is still in darkness. Whoever loves his brother abides in the light, and in him there is no cause for stumbling. But whoever hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going, because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (1 John 2:6-11 ESV)

Love is the witness that we are Jesus' disciples, not tongues or prophesy and anything else. Jesus said, "By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:35 NKJV). Tongues and prophesy will cease but love abides forever.

Keeping Jesus' commandments, walking by the voice of His Spirit, is always accompanied by His love. Jesus said:

As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you: continue you in my love. If you keep my commandments, you shall abide in my love; even as I have kept my Father's commandments, and abide in his love. These things have I spoken unto you, that my joy might remain in you, and that your joy might be full. This is my commandment, That you love one another, as I have loved you. Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends. (John 15:9-13 KJ2000)

## **Chapter Fifteen: The New Jerusalem and the New Zion**

There is indeed a New Jerusalem that is measurable and has gates and streets where righteousness and peace dwell. It is in every sense a city, but its location distinguishes it from former Jerusalem. Unlike the old Jerusalem, it is heavenly in origin and in locale. Unlike the old Jerusalem, it is free. According to Paul, the former Jerusalem is in slavery along with her children. They are still in a religious

slavery far worse than any occupational force put on them. Yet in contrast to all this, Paul speaks of the New Jerusalem as a free woman who is our mother.

Now the son of the slave woman was conceived according to the flesh, but the son of the free woman was conceived through a promise. This is being said as an allegory, for these women represent two covenants. The one woman, Hagar, is from Mount Sinai, and her children are born into slavery. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to present-day Jerusalem, because she is in slavery along with her children. But the heavenly Jerusalem is the free woman, and she is our mother. (Galatians 4:23-26 ISV)

John wrote of this new city at the culmination of this age when the Israel of God (Romans 2:28-29) fully inhabits it.

Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and the sea was no more. And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Behold, the dwelling place of God is with man. He will dwell with them, and they will be his people, and God himself will be with them as their God. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and death shall be no more, neither shall there be mourning nor crying nor pain anymore, for the former things have passed away." And he who was seated on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." Also he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." (Revelation 21:1-5 ESV)

Just as God makes all things new in us, so we are also being made ready as members of His New Jerusalem. He dwells with us there. The degree of direct intimacy here is beyond anything we have ever known on this earth. In that city, the days of mourning will be over. God Himself will be so close and so intimate that He will personally wipe every tear from every eye. When we reach that city the former things will have fully passed away. The voice of God resounds within its gates, saying, "Behold, I make all things new." All old things are passed away. Even the memory of them will end with the wiping away of our tears.

It is God's will for His kingdom to come on earth as it is in heaven. His kingdom and His presence are inseparable. The kingdom resides where He resides-Jerusalem the

city of the great King and Zion the habitation of God. In that regard the earthly Jerusalem was to be a representation on the earth of the heavenly Jerusalem. At its best, the earthly Jerusalem was the foreshadowing of the heavenly Jerusalem. Jerusalem should be a witness of a Heavenly reality. The long shadows of Jerusalem were to silhouette and forecast the coming of a greater reality.

Shadows are the longest and most distinct in the morning when the light is emerging and the darkness is fleeing. In those early hours the light is indirect and the shadows are disproportionately long and clear. As we move on into the full day the shadows slowly become less distinct and shorter until they gradually vanish from sight. There are no shadows at high noon. So goes the proverb, "But the path of the righteous is like the light of dawn, which shines brighter and brighter until full day" (Proverbs 4:18 ESV). It is in the context of light, darkness and fleeting shadows that we see the path before us all to be one of fewer shadows and more Light, until all the shadows of religion and worldliness are gone and the full day of the realization of all God's purposes in Christ Jesus has come. Even those religious things that may now be held dear are nothing but shadow compared to the reality that is in Christ Jesus. Even the much debated "law"-the centerpiece of faith for many-possessed only a shadow of good things to come and not the very image of the things (Hebrews 10:1). The reality is in Christ. Therefore we find these words in the prologue of John's gospel: "For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ" (John 1:17 KJ2000). There may be arguments regarding the meaning of this passage but a comparison between the Law of Moses and grace and truth is crystal clear. In this comparison we see that law and truth are two different things. The law had only a shadow of the truth. It forecast a reality that was to come in Christ.

The Greek word for *truth* here means reality (*aletheia* -the reality lying at the basis of an appearance; the manifested, veritable essence of a matter. -- W.E. Vine). The only truth in shadow is that it silhouettes something or someone that is very real and substantive. You cannot hug or even touch a shadow. You can pass right through it and all you can sense is marked decrease of light and heat.

There is no substance in a shadow, but there is a definite lack of light. James wrote, "Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights, with whom is no variableness, neither shadow of turning" (James 1:17 KJ2000). Light does not cast a shadow; the thing that blocks the light does. As long as

men cling to the shadow of the Old Covenant, they resist Jesus the Light and they miss out on every good and perfect gift that God has for them. The reality lying at the basis of all Old Testament shadows is Christ. He is the substance. He is the Truth. He is reality! Only those who are in Him and in whom He abides know the essence of Truth.

Let no man therefore judge you in food, or in drink, or in respect of a holy day, or of the new moon, or of the Sabbath days: *Which are a shadow of things to come*; but the body is of Christ. (Colossians 2:16-17 KJ2000 - emphasis added)

The tabernacle, its trappings and its priesthood were only shadows of heavenly things. They weren't reality or truth. They simply foreshadowed truth. They are fleeting shadows and from a heavenly viewpoint they have no substance. And so the author of Hebrews wrote:

For if he were on earth, he would not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: *Who serve unto the example and shadow of heavenly things*, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, says he, that you make all things according to the pattern showed to you in the mount. But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. (Hebrews 8:4-6 KJ2000 - emphasis added)

It is with this understanding that we approach the subject of the New Zion, or more appropriately, the heavenly Zion. The heavenly Zion predates the earthly Zion, but the full realization of the heavenly Zion is increasingly new to us. When Paul wrote, "first the natural. . . then the spiritual," it is something of a foregone conclusion that these spiritual things existed in eternity, in the Father's heart, long before He gave us the natural picture of them. The Lamb was slain from before the foundation of the world. We were chosen in Him before the world began. And as for Jesus, "He indeed was foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:20 NKJV).

It is the spiritual manifestation of Zion that is new to us. The natural Zion was a prophetic fore-type and earthly representation of the spiritual Zion. The primary characteristic of natural Zion was that it was chosen to bear God's name and character. It would thereafter be referred to as ". . . the place of the name of the LORD of hosts, to mount Zion" (Isaiah 18:7).

The significance of Zion is eternal. Zion was not chosen by David or any other man, but was selected by God himself as the place of His dwelling that, in His view, was not a temporary but an everlasting dwelling place. "*For the Lord has chosen Zion, He has desired it for His habitation: This is My resting-place forever [says the Lord]; here will I dwell, for I have desired it. I will surely and abundantly bless her provision; I will satisfy her poor with bread. Her priests also will I clothe with salvation, and her saints shall shout aloud for joy. . .*" (Psalms 132:13-16 AMP - emphasis added).

God calls Zion "My resting place forever," but we know that few of these things currently apply to the natural Zion. That Zion is presently desolate. The eternal resting place and habitation of God is the spiritual Zion that embodies everything that the natural Zion only foreshadowed. It is there that the provision of the Lord is abundant. It is there that the poor and hungry are satisfied with the Bread of Life. It is there we find His rest. It is there in this eternal habitation of God that His spiritual priests are clothed with salvation and the holy worshippers shout aloud for joy. The Lord still dwells in Zion! It is the place of His habitation forever. The only thing that has fallen down is the outward, natural Zion and the natural tabernacle of David. These two terms can be used somewhat interchangeably, because the presence of the tabernacle of David on Mariah's crest is what made Zion the habitation of God.

We do not intend here to cover in depth the journey of the Ark, its stay in Philistia, its nights in the temple of Dagon and its return to the people of Israel and the joy and celebration which eventually accompanied its ascent to Zion, but simply to say that Zion was at the center and zenith of natural Israel's history. The ultimate glory of it was not seen in Solomon's temple, but in David's tent. The Ark of God's presence lived in that small, unsolicited, open-faced tent for 40 years and everything since represents a departure from a more glorious state of things, or more concisely, the falling down of the tabernacle of David. Even the magnificent period of Solomon's kingdom and temple that dazzled the queen of Sheba was rubble and ruin compared to the glory of that simple tent. The tabernacle of David and all that it represented was and still is the crowning glory of Zion.

Amos prophesied of its restoration:

On that day I will raise up the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down, And repair its damages; I will raise up its ruins, And rebuild it as in the days of old; That they may

possess the remnant of Edom, And all the Gentiles who are called by My name," says the LORD who does this thing. (Amos 9:11, 12, NKJV).

The tabernacle of David is a fore-glimpse of Christ and His Church, in which Jews and Gentiles become one new man. James acknowledged this when he quoted the prophecy of Amos, "After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up" (Acts 15:16). Solomon's temple was destroyed and there is no prophecy of it being rebuilt, yet men did their best to restore that mere shadow on more than one occasion. Christ is the only one who has restored the Tabernacle of David according to the pattern and the will of the Father.

James quoted this passage in reference to the Antioch Church-a Gentile Church, which was walking in the grace and reality of Christ without law-keeping and the trappings of Judaism. God had not only brought Israel unto Himself as a holy nation, just as he had promised Abraham, but He has included the Gentiles in this holy new humanity.

### **The Tent of David**

During the peak of natural Zion's history, the tent of David rested atop Mount Zion and the presence and power of the living God resided there. This was something of an illegal act because the Ark was supposed to be in the holy place in the tabernacle of Moses over on Mount Gibeon. During that 40 year period, God permitted a prophetic fore-type that perfectly silhouettes the nature and scope of spiritual Zion. David's tent only had three sides. The fourth side was open and the ark could be seen by all. It was open to Jew and Gentile alike. Jesus is the door to the sheepfold. He is the door to the Father's house. It is no more complicated than this. Jesus is the tent, the tabernacle, the temple, even the veil of the temple and all that was represented as the dwelling place of God. In Him, God tabernacled among us! In Jesus God is with us (Emmanuel). But more, in Jesus, we have also become the dwelling place of God. All the types and shadows of the natural Zion and the tabernacle of David are fulfilled in Him. Jesus is the substance. He is the reality. He and all who dwell in Him are the new Zion. All else is shadow.

And I saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, made ready as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne, saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is among men, and He will dwell among them,

and they shall be His people, and God Himself will be among them, and He will wipe away every tear from their eyes; and there will no longer be any death; there will no longer be any mourning, or crying, or pain; the first things have passed away." And He who sits on the throne said, "Behold, I am making all things new." And He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then He said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost. (Revelation 21:2-6 NASB)

"I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God the Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (Revelation 21:22 NASB)

Satan's most effective means of leading the Church astray is to deceive her into forfeiting her heavenly inheritance by endeavoring to finish what God has begun in the Spirit by the energies of the flesh. He tries to dissuade her from answering the heavenly call. He tempts her to approach life and service on an old creation basis and by old creation resources. He bewitches her to abandon the new creation altogether and forsake Him who ministers the Spirit and works miracles and return to a more "responsible" and lawful religion that sets out rules of conduct and calls on natural energies to perform them (Galatians 3:1-13). He wants to lead her away captive with a seemingly "practical" and "responsible" approach to the Christian life that constitutes the abandonment of the finished work of Christ (for redemption) and the continuous work of the Holy Spirit (for sanctification). He wants to trick her into replacing the governance of the Spirit with natural laws of organization and temporal rulers. He wants to supplant Divine growth (God adding to the Church through sovereign election, travail and new birth) with church growth seminars and church membership drives. He wants to replace the gospel with good moral preaching. He wants to discourage trust in the divine nature as the only hope of empowering right behavior by bolstering fleshly confidence in personal piety. He wants to replace trust in Divine transformation (the workmanship of God) with an exaggerated belief in Christian responsibility. The lie that he whispered in Eve's ear over six thousand years ago still echoes in the ears of those who aspire to be self-made Christians, "You can be like God. You can do it. You can be self-made. You can do it yourself."

The humble creature who is the workmanship of Him who said, "Behold I make all things new," stands in sharp contrast to that. Our being and purpose flow out from God Himself. Such is the new creation. Such is the new creature.

We who are of Christ, the New Jerusalem of God, have been made new in every way: a new heart, a new mind, a new spirit, and we will receive new bodies. We are of the New Covenant and a new priesthood with His new law written in our hearts, the law of love. There is nothing man can add to this.

Peace and mercy be upon all who walk according to this rule!

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