

Understanding the Bible — Biblical Survey

A survey of the Bible from Genesis to Revelation
(Revised 2017/2018)

Part II
The New Testament

**From the UNDERSTANDING THE BIBLE
STUDY SERIES**

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Unless otherwise noted, all the Scriptural passages used throughout this study are from the NKJV.

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Lesson Eight — The First Coming of the Christ

Day One — The Prophecies of The Messiah

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In the final week of Understanding the Bible – Biblical Survey Part I week we barely scratched the surface of the Words of the Prophets with respect to establishment of Israel's theocracy, its fall, the scattering of the people, the future re-gathering of the nation, and the reestablishment of the kingdom. During the reign of Solomon's son, Rehoboam, the kingdom was divided, as the people continued in disobedience. Eventually, both kingdoms were destroyed — the Northern Kingdom (aka Israel) was scattered amongst the Gentile nations, the Southern Kingdom (aka Judah) was overthrown, captured and exiled to the Gentile nation of Babylon, and the City of Jerusalem was destroyed. Seventy years after the Southern Kingdom was exiled, a remnant was allowed to go back to their land, and rebuild. With a number of Jews back in the land, God sent the last prophet, Malachi, to speak to His people.

Some 400 years later, God sent His angel, Gabriel, to speak to a priest who had been chosen by lot to minister in the temple that day. The words the angel said to Zacharias, the priest, were the exact words that God has spoken to His people 400 years prior through Malachi.

In the Old Testament portion of this Survey, we have been able to glimpse, at least in part, what God had begun to reveal — His plans and purposes for the ages. In the Old Testament, *a portion of the complete picture was held in mystery*. Now with the unfolding of God's *written* Word (through the pen of the New Testament writers), we are able to grasp the picture with much more detail. As we begin to peruse the pages of the New Testament, we will begin to see more of the details of God's eternal plan, which was laid down in the Old Testament.

Isaiah was a pre-exilic prophet predominantly sent to the Southern Kingdom during the time the Northern Kingdom was taken captive and scattered. In spite of the warnings that Isaiah spoke, along with several of the other pre-exilic prophets, the Southern Kingdom, with some exceptions during the reign of certain righteous kings, continued to spiral down and away from the Lord. Isaiah prophesied to kings and to a generation of Israel who would not allow themselves to be impacted by God's Word. The Southern Kingdom was taken into Babylonian captivity about 140 years after the destruction of the Northern Kingdom.

Shortly after the onset of Judah's captivity, the city of Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonian king, Nebuchadnezzar. Then, after the Medes and Persians overtook Babylon, which coincided with the end of the 70-year period of Judah's captivity (as prophesied by Jeremiah [Jer. 25:10-13]), Judah was allowed to go back to their land and rebuild Jerusalem, the temple, and wall. There were three post-exilic prophets — Haggai, Zachariah, and Malachi (see chart at the end of our last lesson) — each telling the plans the Lord

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had yet for Israel. After the Word of the Lord came to Malachi, the final prophet, there was a long period of silence from Heaven — 400 years.

The prophecy of Amos came to bear on the Jews. Amos, after being told by a priest to leave the Northern Kingdom and go prophesy in the Southern Kingdom (Amos 7:12), uttered these words:

Amos 8:11

“Behold, the days are coming,” says the Lord GOD, “That I will send a famine on the land, Not a famine of bread, Nor a thirst for water, But of hearing the words of the LORD...”

So there was silence...

...for 400 years!

And then...

A woman who was called barren,
bore a son; and they called him John.

Suddenly a bright light shone in the darkness...
...a star shining in the east.

A virgin had conceived and had borne a Son, and they
called Him Immanuel, “God with us.”

Then a voice was heard...

...a voice crying in the wilderness
...calling the people to

**“Repent, for the Kingdom of the
Heavens was at hand.”**

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Day One — The Prophecies of the Messiah

Begin your week in prayer. Pray for continued understanding, asking the Holy Spirit to be your Teacher. And be sure to praise God for Who He is! Then we can begin our lesson.

For 400 years, God did not raise up a man to speak His word. For 400 years there was silence!

Centuries prior, the prophet Nathan had prophesied to King David an awesome promise —

II Samuel 7

12 “When your days are fulfilled and you rest with your fathers, I will set up your seed after you, who will come from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. 13 He shall build a house for My name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever. 14 I will be his Father, and he shall be My son...”

Write out the last statement printed above —

Then the prophet Isaiah added more details concerning this promise —

Isaiah 7

14 Therefore the Lord Himself will give you a sign: Behold, the virgin shall conceive and bear a Son, and shall call His name Immanuel.

And —

Isaiah 9

6 For unto us a Child is born, Unto us a Son is given; And the government will be upon His shoulder. And His name will be called Wonderful, Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. 7 Of the increase of His government and peace There will be no end, Upon the throne of David and over His kingdom, To order it and establish it with judgment and justice From that time forward, even forever...”

What do these prophecies mean?

Yes, the Jews knew that “Immanuel” meant “God with us” (Mt. 1:23). God’s presence *had been* with His people before in Shekinah Glory from the time He hovered over Sinai to the time His presence filled the temple in the days of the kings. Here Isaiah told them to expect GOD to come *in human flesh* — born of a virgin.

How could it be? *A virgin* to give birth to *God* as the *Son of God*? Let’s read about how the story unfolds.

Luke 1

5 There was in the days of Herod, the king of Judea, a certain priest named Zacharias, of the division of Abijah. His wife was of the daughters of Aaron, and her name was Elizabeth. 6

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And they were both righteous before God, walking in all the commandments and ordinances of the Lord blameless. 7 But they had no child, because Elizabeth was barren, and they were both well advanced in years....

....11 Then an angel of the Lord appeared to him, standing on the right side of the altar of incense. 12 And when Zacharias saw him, he was troubled, and fear fell upon him. 13 But the angel said to him, “Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your prayer is heard; and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you shall call his name John. 14 And you will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth. 15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord, and shall drink neither wine nor strong drink. He will also be filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother’s womb. 16 And he will turn many of the children of Israel to the Lord their God. 17 He will also go before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, ‘to turn the hearts of the fathers to the children,’ and the disobedient to the wisdom of the just, to make ready a people prepared for the Lord.”

List all the things that the angel told Zacharias about his forthcoming son. (Isaiah had prophesied concerning Zacharias’ son John, in Isaiah 40:3.)

A short time later, an angel had another message to give. He appeared to a young virgin named Mary.

Luke 1

26 Now in the sixth month [of Elizabeth’s pregnancy] the angel Gabriel was sent by God to a city of Galilee named Nazareth, 27 to a virgin betrothed to a man whose name was Joseph, of the house of David. The virgin’s name was Mary. 28 And having come in, the angel said to her, “Rejoice, highly favored one, the Lord is with you; blessed are you among women!” 29 But when she saw him, she was troubled at his saying, and considered what manner of greeting this was. 30 Then the angel said to her, “Do not be afraid, Mary, for you have found favor with God. 31 And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bring forth a Son, and shall call His name JESUS. 32 He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Highest; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David. 33 And He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and of His kingdom there will be no end.”

34 Then Mary said to the angel, “How can this be, since I do not know a man?” 35 And the angel answered and said to her, “The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God. 36 Now indeed, Elizabeth your relative has also conceived a son in her old age; and this is now the sixth month for her who was called barren. 37 For with God nothing will be impossible.”

Write out how this pregnancy will occur.

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There are five prophecies in v. 32 and 33. List them below and on the next page:

- 1)
- 2)
- 3)
- 4)
- 5)

Is there any reason to believe that any of these prophecies should be taken in a spiritual (i.e. non-literal) sense?

Mary's response —

38 Then Mary said, "Behold the maidservant of the Lord! Let it be to me according to your word." And the angel departed from her.

Mary went straightway to Elizabeth's house.

Luke 1

39 Now Mary arose in those days and went into the hill country with haste, to a city of Judah, 40 and entered the house of Zacharias and greeted Elizabeth. 41 And it happened, when Elizabeth heard the greeting of Mary, that the babe leaped in her womb; and Elizabeth was filled with the Holy Spirit. 42 Then she spoke out with a loud voice and said, "Blessed are you among women, and blessed is the fruit of your womb! 43 But why is this granted to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me? 44 For indeed, as soon as the voice of your greeting sounded in my ears, the babe leaped in my womb for joy. 45 Blessed is she who believed, for there will be a fulfillment of those things which were told her from the Lord."

What did Elizabeth say about Mary's baby?

What did Elizabeth say about Mary (v. 43)?

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Mary's response to Elizabeth —

Luke 1

46 And Mary said: “My soul magnifies the Lord, 47 And my spirit has rejoiced in God my Savior. 48 For He has regarded the lowly state of His maidservant; For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed. 49 For He who is mighty has done great things for me, And holy is His name. 50 And His mercy is on those who fear Him From generation to generation. 51 He has shown strength with His arm; He has scattered the proud in the imagination of their hearts. 52 He has put down the mighty from their thrones, And exalted the lowly. 53 He has filled the hungry with good things, And the rich He has sent away empty. 54 He has helped His servant Israel, In remembrance of His mercy,

Make a list of the things Mary says about God.

We'll pick it up tomorrow.

Day Two— His Birth

We will continue today where we left off yesterday. Be sure to begin your study in prayer.

Mary stayed with Elizabeth and Zacharias for about three months, until it came time for Elizabeth's baby to be born. As their son was born, read what Zacharias says:

Luke 1

67 Now his father Zacharias was filled with the Holy Spirit, and prophesied, saying: 68 “Blessed is the Lord God of Israel, For He has visited and redeemed His people, 69 And has raised up a horn of salvation for us In the house of His servant David, 70 As He spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets, Who have been since the world began, 71 That we should be saved from our enemies And from the hand of all who hate us, 72 To perform the mercy promised to our fathers And to remember His holy covenant, 73 The oath which He swore to our father Abraham: 74 To grant us that we, Being delivered from the hand of our enemies, Might serve Him without fear, 75 In holiness and righteousness before Him all the days of our life.

What did Zacharias say that God has done? Especially notice v. 73.

Zacharias continues his prayer, now speaking to his newly born son:

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76 “And you, child, will be called the prophet of the Highest; For you will go before the face of the Lord to prepare His ways, 77 To give knowledge of salvation to His people By the remission of their sins, 78 Through the tender mercy of our God, With which the Dayspring from on high has visited us; 79 To give light to those who sit in darkness and the shadow of death, To guide our feet into the way of peace.”

What does Zacharias say concerning his son’s relationship to Mary’s baby (v. 76)?

What will Zacharias’ son do?

Now back to what is happening in Mary’s life. After staying about three months, she left Elizabeth’s house and returned home. Most likely by this time, it would be becoming evident that she was indeed pregnant. The Lord knows all and as Mary trusted God for His timing, God sent an angel to Mary’s betrothed, Joseph, to tell him of His plan.

Matthew 1

19 Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. 20 But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, “Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. 21 And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name JESUS, for He will save His people from their sins.”

Notice the identity of Joseph’s lineage (v. 20). From what line did Joseph come?

What did the angel tell Joseph about the baby?

In making these lists of all that the angel and the different people had said about Jesus, we are learning quite a lot about Him. But we have a few more lists to make. Remember, “line upon line, precept upon precept; here a little, there a little” (Isa. 28: 9, 10). It’s how we learn!

In order to be counted in a Roman census (for taxation purposes), Mary and Joseph made a trip to Bethlehem, during which time the Baby was born. These events were brought about in order to fulfill a prophecy concerning the birth place of Jesus — that it would take place in the town from which King David came — Bethlehem.

Not far from the city of Bethlehem was a place where shepherds were keeping watch over a flock of sheep. After “Immanuel” was born, an angel appeared to these shepherds.

Luke 2

8 Now there were in the same country shepherds living out in the fields, keeping watch over their flock by night. 9 And behold, an angel of the Lord stood before them, and the glory

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of the Lord shone around them, and they were greatly afraid. 10 Then the angel said to them, “Do not be afraid, for behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy which will be to all people. 11 For there is born to you this day in the city of David a Savior, who is Christ [5547] the Lord [2962]. 12 And this will be the sign to you: You will find a Babe wrapped in swaddling cloths, lying in a manger.”

First look up these words in the appendix:

Christ <5547>

Lord <2962>

Now make a list of all that the angel told the shepherds about the baby.

Continuing —

13 And suddenly there was with the angel a multitude of the heavenly host praising God and saying: 14 “Glory to God in the highest, And on earth peace, goodwill toward men!”

Then, on the eighth day, Jesus’ parents brought Him to the temple for His circumcision. Note what an elderly man, having been filled by the Holy Spirit, said of Jesus.

Luke 2

25 And behold, there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was just and devout, waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him. 26 And it had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ. 27 So he came by the Spirit into the temple. And when the parents brought in the Child Jesus, to do for Him according to the custom of the law, 28 he took Him up in his arms and blessed God and said: 29 “Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, According to Your word; 30 For my eyes have seen Your salvation 31 Which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, 32 A light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, And the glory of Your people Israel.” 33 And Joseph and His mother marveled at those things which were spoken of Him. 34 Then Simeon blessed them, and said to Mary His mother, “Behold, this Child is destined for the fall and rising of many in Israel, and for a sign which will be spoken against 35 (yes, a sword will pierce through your own soul also), that the thoughts of many hearts may be revealed.”

List what Simeon said about Jesus:

We’ll note the words of one more person.

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Luke 2

36 Now there was one, Anna, a prophetess, the daughter of Phanuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was of a great age, and had lived with a husband seven years from her virginity; 37 and this woman was a widow of about eighty-four years, who did not depart from the temple, but served God with fastings and prayers night and day. 38 And coming in that instant she gave thanks to the Lord, and spoke of Him to all those who looked for redemption in Jerusalem.

From this passage, describe this woman named Anna.

What did she say about the Child?

Before we close for today, look over the lists that you have made and write a brief but concise statement of *who* Jesus Christ is and *why* He came.

Day Three— The Identity of Jesus

Now that we have established the details of Jesus' birth, let's look at some New Testament passages which deal with the purpose of His first coming. Some of these verses will be familiar to you, and some may not be quite so familiar. But putting them together may give us a better grasp of the whole picture. As you read these verses, make a note in the space provided as to *why* Jesus came, *what* He did, for *whom* He did it, etc.

Let's look first at a few passages out of the first chapter of the Gospel of John. There are some interesting facts to gather and ones that may be easily overlooked. We'll just gather the facts for now. Later we'll look at the implications of these statements.

John 1

1 In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. 2 He was in the beginning with God. ...

...14 And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we beheld His glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father, full of grace and truth.

Describe what these verses say of Jesus.

John 1

15 John [the Baptist] bore witness of Him and cried out, saying, "This was He of whom I said, 'He who comes after me is preferred before me, for He was before me.'"

What did John, the Baptist, say of Jesus?

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John 1

19 Now this is the testimony of John [the Baptist], when the Jews sent priests and Levites from Jerusalem to ask him, “Who are you?” 20 He confessed, and did not deny, but confessed, “I am not the Christ.” 21 And they asked him, “What then? Are you Elijah?” He said, “I am not.” “Are you the Prophet?” And he answered, “No.” 22 Then they said to him, “Who are you, that we may give an answer to those who sent us? What do you say about yourself?” 23 He said: “I am ‘The voice of one crying in the wilderness: “Make straight the way of the LORD,”’ as the prophet Isaiah said.”

These are interesting questions posed to John, with interesting responses.

“I am not *the Christ*.” The word Christ means *Messiah, Anointed One*. (Catch what they are asking!)

“Are you the Prophet?” (This would refer back to what Moses said about God sending a Prophet just like him [Duet. 18:15-18]).

What do these questions reveal about their thoughts concerning One Who is to come?

John 1

29 The next day John [the Baptist] saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!...”

... 34 “And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God.” 35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, “Behold the Lamb of God!”

The phrase John uses twice here is an interesting one. In both places he calls Jesus “the Lamb of God.” John is speaking of Jesus fulfilling both the Old Testament pictures of the sacrifice of the Passover Lamb, the means of redemption, and also His fulfilling the picture of both the sacrificial animal and the scape goat on the Day of Atonement. The Feast of Passover was the an annual feast to remember how God redeemed Israel out of bondage; and the Day of Atonement was an annual feast which allowed for the cleansing of the sins of God’s redeemed people. The differences between the two feast days are important to understand, even as we consider John’s words here.

The Passover and the Day of Atonement were two feast days separated by seven months, each having two completely separate contexts and meanings. Passover was the day to remember how God redeemed the people out of bondage, and became the reminder of the God-given means of redemption for someone not yet redeemed — faith in the death and shed blood of the lamb. Then seven months beyond that feast, the Day of Atonement was an annual feast day set aside for the cleansing of the sins of *redeemed people* committed that previous year. Two animals were involved on the Day of Atonement, both vicariously dealt with the confessed sins of the people for the year — one was sacrificed (for without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness), and the other was led out of the camp alive taking away the sins of the people. Both animals were required in order to fully do away with the sins of the people. It was in this respect that John called Jesus *the Lamb of God, Who takes away the sin of the people*. Jesus was to be the sacrificed animal, a blood

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sacrifice, for the cleansing of their sins; *and* He was to be their scape goat, for the doing away with the sins — once for all.

With this in mind, go back and read the John 1:29, 34-36 printed above and see if you understand the meaning a bit differently now.

Continuing in John chapter one, note the description of Jesus:

John 1

40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, “We have found the Messiah” (which is translated, the Christ).

45 Philip found Nathanael and said to him, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote--Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.”

Write out what both said about Him. What was emphasized in their statements?

Then, once Nathanael met Jesus, he said:

John 1

49 Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”

Do you notice that the two titles which Nathanael used are related? What is the relationship?

Please write a short review of what you learned in today’s study.

Day Four — The Offer of the Kingdom

It must be seen that the New Testament is *enfolded* in the Old Testament and the Old Testament is *unfolded* in the New. Since the NT is a continuation of the OT, it is an unfinished picture if a student of God’s Word studies only *half* of Scripture and not the *whole*. This is the goal of this study course, to grasp an understanding of the whole.

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Yesterday we glimpsed the first chapter in the Gospel of John, in order to get an idea of the thoughts of the people during the presentation of Christ to them. You may want to re-read your summary to have these thoughts fresh in your mind as we begin today. Also remember to pray for your study time.

Today we are going to glimpse some of the statements of and about Christ as to the *purpose* of His coming. It may shed a little different light than what you have previously thought concerning His first coming. (That's why it is imperative to pray for understanding.)

First, let's see what the message was from the forerunner of Christ — John the Baptist. Below are his first recorded words in the Gospel of Matthew. When you come to his quote, underline what John says.

Matthew 3

1 In those days John the Baptist came preaching in the wilderness of Judea, 2 and saying, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand!”

At this point in your understanding, what do you think is the meaning of John's words?

Immediately following Jesus' baptism by John, God speaks from heaven concerning Jesus. Underline what He said.

Matthew 3

16 When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. 17 And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, “This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”

In order to understand the import of the Father's statement, and in order to understand what the Jews knew this statement to mean, it *must* be related back to the prophecy given in II Samuel 7:12-14a, which we looked at on Day One.

Relate God's statement in Matthew 3:17 to God's statement in II Samuel 7:14. What is obvious?

The statement spoken from heaven is clearly the fulfillment of what was previously stated by God in II Samuel. It reveals that Jesus is the One Who is David's descendant, the One Who will sit on David's throne, and the One Who will have an everlasting kingdom. Remember Jesus came to the Jews as their King! And as such, he came to offer them *the Kingdom of the Heavens*. We must get the important meaning of the title “the Son of God.” We must hear it for what it is rather than letting it slip by without understanding its true meaning. (Next week we will work on the meaning of the phrase “the Kingdom of the Heavens.”)

After Jesus' baptism and sometime either during or after His 40 days in the wilderness, John was taken into custody. When Jesus heard this news, He began preaching the same message that John had preached. Underline His words in both passages below.

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Matthew 4

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”...

...23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom....

Luke 4

41 And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, “You are the Christ, the Son of God!” And He, rebuking them, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ. 42 Now when it was day, He departed and went into a deserted place. And the crowd sought Him and came to Him, and tried to keep Him from leaving them; 43 but He said to them, “I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because for this purpose I have been sent.” 44 And He was preaching in the synagogues of Galilee.

According to these two passages, what was the message Jesus was taking to the Jews? Compare it to the message John had been giving.

From the passage in Luke chapter four, what did the demons say of Jesus?

Jesus states the specific reason why He was sent. Why?

To whom did He give the message?

For the following three years, Jesus did public ministry. He walked the streets of Jerusalem and the surrounding regions, continuing to take this message to the Jews, but not to the Gentiles. It was a message *concerning the Kingdom of the Heavens*, which had to do with the unconditional covenant made with Abraham in Canaan, and related to the conditional covenant made with Abraham’s descendants through Moses at Mt. Sinai. The irrevocable promises made to Abraham and to His descendants concern the land, and his descendants having an inheritance in the land — the Abrahamic covenant (Gen. 17:7-8). But an *individual’s participation* in the promises of this covenant is fully conditional upon their willingness to obey — the Mosaic covenant (Ex. 19:5-6).

The message of the New Testament, though, had to do with the second realm of the kingdom promised to Abraham’s descendants. It had to do with *the heavenly portion* of the kingdom, which can be easily seen as one peruses the pages of the New Testament. The Firstborn Sons of God are in a place to receive a double-portion of the inheritance! And both realms of the kingdom make up the double-portion.

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(It is an interesting study to look at a red-lettered edition of the Bible and see what was uppermost on Jesus' mind in His last week on earth prior to His death, even His entire public ministry, for that matter.)

It becomes very obvious that the focus of His message concerned offering the Kingdom of the Heavens to Abraham's descendants, the only ones on earth who were in a position to be made such an offer¹. They were the people of God, the only people who had access to the Living God, and the only people who were descendants of the one to whom the promises were given. God was their King. Jesus was God in the flesh, and had come to offer the Kingdom of the Heavens to them. They only needed to repent from their sinfulness and receive their King and the kingdom.

Tomorrow we'll see how they responded to this offer. And we will continue to study these things as we work through the next several weeks of study.

That's it for today! Have a nice one!

Day Five — The Offer Rejected and Withdrawn

Thus far this week we have glimpsed the message which was brought by both John the Baptist and the message of Jesus Christ. Both brought an identical message to God's people — the only people on earth who could have been offered this specific message. The message had to do with *repentance* and *the Kingdom of the Heavens*. Next week, we will delve into the message more fully, striving to understand exactly what it was that was offered to the Jews. But in order to finish up our lesson this week, we will look into something which we already know — the Jews rejected the message and crucified the Messenger, the King.

Today we will look at a few events which took place during the last week of Christ's public ministry, exactly prior to His death. We'll begin on the first day of that week.

Jesus rode into Jerusalem on a donkey. Look to see what the crowds were saying on this day —

John 12

12 The next day a great multitude that had come to the feast, when they heard that Jesus was coming to Jerusalem, 13 took branches of palm trees and went out to meet Him, and cried out: "Hosanna! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' The King of Israel!"

Matthew 21

8 And a very great multitude spread their clothes on the road; others cut down branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then the multitudes who went before and those who followed cried out, saying: "Hosanna to the Son of David! 'Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!' Hosanna in the highest!" 10 And when He had come into Jerusalem, all the city was moved, saying, "Who is this?" 11 So the multitudes said, "This is Jesus, the prophet from Nazareth of Galilee."

Mark 11

8 And many spread their clothes on the road, and others cut down leafy branches from the trees and spread them on the road. 9 Then those who went before and those who followed

¹ For more information on this subject see the article in the Appendix entitled ISRAEL A SPECIAL CREATION SEPARATE FROM THE NATIONS.

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cried out, saying: “Hosanna! ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’ 10 Blessed is the kingdom of our father David That comes in the name of the Lord! Hosanna in the highest!”

Luke 19

37 Then, as He was now drawing near the descent of the Mount of Olives, the whole multitude of the disciples began to rejoice and praise God with a loud voice for all the mighty works they had seen, 38 saying:” ‘Blessed is the King who comes in the name of the LORD!’ Peace in heaven and glory in the highest!”

From all four gospel accounts, what seems foremost in the minds of the Jews this first day of Christ’s last week?

As Jesus entered into the city that day, numerous things began to take place in rapid succession. It seems that the hatred on the part of the leadership toward Jesus grew daily. Just a few weeks prior, when Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead, the leaders had already decided to look for an opportunity to kill Him. (So adamant had they become in desiring to kill Jesus, that they sought even to put Lazarus to death as well.) With the events of this first day of the week of Passover, they looked for a way to kill Him all the more!

Early in this particular week of Passover, Jesus spent the days walking through the streets teaching the crowds and answering the Pharisees accusations, talking much about the Kingdom of the Heavens. But in the evenings, He would retreat with His disciples to have some very intimate moments with them, as He continued to teach them and encourage them, again talking much about the Kingdom of the Heavens. Of course, in His omniscience, He knew His time was growing shorter by the day.

At some point in the final weeks of Christ’s public ministry the leaders, speaking on behalf of the nation of Israel, crossed over the line. There was a defining moment in Matthew chapter twelve when the leaders attributed Jesus’ power to perform miracles to Satan. As a result, here in chapter twenty-one, Jesus mentions the fact that He was going to withdraw the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens, which He had been making to them for the previous three years. Let’s read about it.

Matthew 21 (speaking to the Pharisees)

33 “Hear another parable: There was a certain landowner who planted a vineyard and set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. And he leased it to vinedressers and went into a far country. 34 Now when vintage-time drew near, he sent his servants to the vinedressers, that they might receive its fruit. 35 And the vinedressers took his servants, beat one, killed one, and stoned another. 36 Again he sent other servants, more than the first, and they did likewise to them. 37 Then last of all he sent his son to them, saying, ‘They will respect my son.’ 38 But when the vinedressers saw the son, they said among themselves, ‘This is the heir. Come, let us kill him and seize his inheritance.’ 39 So they took him and cast him out of the vineyard and killed him. 40 Therefore, when the owner of the vineyard comes, what will he do to those vinedressers?”

41 They said to Him, “He will destroy those wicked men miserably, and lease his vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to him the fruits in their seasons.”

42 Jesus said to them, “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’? 43 Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it. 44 And whoever falls on this stone will be broken; but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder.”

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45 Now when the chief priests and Pharisees heard His parables, they perceived that He was speaking of them. 46 But when they sought to lay hands on Him, they feared the multitudes, because they took Him for a prophet.

Who does the landowner represent?

What did the landowner do with the vineyard?

What did the vinedressers do?

When did the landowner send his son?

What did the vinedressers do with the son and why?

Jesus asked the next question directly to the Chief Priests and Pharisees. “When the landowner comes, what will he do with the vinedressers?” How did they answer?

What will the landowner do with the vineyard?

Does the landowner have the right to do this? Why?

What does v. 43 imply that the vineyard represents?

According to v. 45, whom do the vinedressers picture?

Why will the vineyard be taken from the vinedressers and given to another people? What are these other people to do?

This is exactly what happened. Due to the continual unrepentant state of the leadership of the Jews, and their sway over the people, Jesus withdrew the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens from the Jews and, as we will

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see next week, was going to offer it to a new man, a new creation. We will study this more in upcoming weeks. But just a few more details need to be filled in before we end for the week. Notice something here. John wrote —

John 12

42 Nevertheless even among the rulers many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue; 43 for they loved the praise of men more than the praise of God.

What do these verses say?

As a result of a lack of repentance on the part of the majority of the leadership and their holding sway over the people, they connived to kill their King. And the very crowd who had begun the week singing praises to the “Son of David” as He rode into the city on a donkey, had another cry —

Mark 15

12 Pilate answered and said to them again, “What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?” 13 So they cried out again, “Crucify Him!” 14 Then Pilate said to them, “Why, what evil has He done?” But they cried out all the more, “Crucify Him!” 15 So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified.

And so they did! They crucified their King!

So what happened? Has there yet been a change of powers in “the Kingdom of the Heavens”? The One offering the kingdom to the Jews was crucified by them! So did Satan win? What does this all mean? And what does it have to do with Gentiles, who are not a part of the descendants of Abraham? Where do they fit into all of this? Is this plan of God thwarted completely?

Not at all! It is all a part of God’s overall plan. This is ALL Plan A, and not Plan B. There is not Plan B with God! The fulfillment of these things had to take place, and were the working out of Old Testament prophecies concerning the eternal plans and purposes of God. We’ll see more of the unfolding of God’s plan as we continue in the weeks to come.

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Lesson Nine — The Kingdom of the Heavens

Day One — God’s People, a Kingdom of Priests

Day Two — Two Realms of One Kingdom

Day Three — Beginning with the Earthly,
Moving Toward the Heavenly

Day Four — The Gospels

Day Five — The Sower and the Seed

We are at a turning point! Thus far, we have glimpsed various large portions of the Biblical puzzle, fitting many of the detailed small pieces together into various, separate sections. The sections are as follows:

- The purpose of man’s creation — man was created to rule.
- The present system of rulership — fallen angelic forces ruling from the heavens over the earth, headed by Satan.
- The call of and promises to Abraham and his descendants — that they would 1) be innumerable (as the sand and the stars), 2) possess a land, and 3) receive an inheritance in that land.

We have also seen Abraham’s descendants through Isaac and Jacob, grow in numbers, become enslaved in a land not their own, and be redeemed from slavery for the purpose of being taken into another land. We have seen this first generation fall away, losing their inheritance due to their disobedience.

We have also seen the establishment of the theocratic kingdom within the land, the interruption of that kingdom, and the displacement of Israel from the land (due to continual disobedience). Then we have glimpsed some of the prophecies concerning Israel’s future reestablishment.

Last week we viewed the first coming of Christ, and the message He pronounced — *the Kingdom of the Heavens*. We witnessed the rejection of the offer of the kingdom and the crucifixion of the One making the offer — the very King Himself. The question that we will consider this week is this — What does the phrase *the Kingdom of the Heavens* mean? Exactly what did Christ’s offer entail for Abraham’s descendants?

Understanding the answers to these questions is essential in order to fit together these large and various sections of Scripture. As we get more into the New Testament, the overall picture of Scripture will really begin to take shape and dimension, as these sections fall into place. Please continue to pray for yourself and the others in your group as you work through this week’s lesson. Let’s begin.

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Day One — God’s People, a Kingdom of Priests

Let’s remember for a moment how God’s Word is structured. God purposely begins at one point and purposely ends at another point. (Remember your timeline?) The foundation of the entire Scripture is laid down in Genesis 1:1-2:3. It is this:

- In the beginning, there was a perfect creation (Gen. 1:1);
- there was a ruin of that creation (Gen. 1:2a); and
- there was a restoration of the ruined creation, in which God took six days to complete (Gen. 1:2b-31). Then
- God rested on the seventh day and He sanctified it (Gen. 2:1-3).

That’s it. Plain and simple!

And it is upon this foundation that God builds the structure of the remainder of Scripture. In the beginning, He explains the created purpose of man — to rule; and in the end He brings that purpose to fruition — Christ, the *Son of Man*, ruling from an established throne with redeemed mankind ruling with Him for an entire period of time (one thousand years [Rev. 20:2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7]). This thousand-year period is called the Messianic Era or the Millennial Reign of Christ. It is also referred to as the Sabbath Rest (Heb. 4:9-11; cf. Gen. 2:1-3). And everything between the beginning point and the end point is a part of the puzzle that fits together with precision, accuracy, and purpose. (We will continue to build on this foundation in upcoming weeks.)

In order to comprehend *the big picture of Scripture*, we must see and understand how God deals with Abraham’s descendants *in both* the Old Testament and the New Testament, understanding exactly who Abraham’s descendants are, along with the implications thereof.

First, the specific promises made to Abraham have to do with *redeemed people*, not the world-at-large (although the world-at-large will ultimately be blessed through these promises being fulfilled in the Coming Age [Gen. 12:3]). The promises are given only to those who are saved! So it is necessary to understand how salvation is accomplished in the Old Testament, and what are the implications thereof. As we have seen, *the means* and *the end* of salvation in the Old Testament is the same as *the means* and *the end* of salvation in the New Testament. The *means* of salvation involves faith in the provision God gives, which has always been *death and shed blood*. (Initially, God shed the blood of an animal [Gen. 3:21], which remained *the means* of salvation throughout the entire Old Testament. As we have previously seen, more details were added to the revelation of the means of salvation [Gen. 4; Gen. 22; Ex. 12], all of which ultimately pointed to the shedding of blood and death of Jesus Christ.) Anyone putting faith in the provision God made — the blood of an animal in the Old Testament (pointing to or foreshadowing, Christ’s redemptive work), or the blood of Jesus Christ in the New Testament — was saved!

And *the end* of salvation remains unchanged also. *The end* is eternal life, which has been, is now, and always will be a *free gift*. This free gift is received apart from any work of an individual himself. It is only God Who can accomplish this work. The only thing necessary on the part of an individual in order to be saved is to *believe* in the provision made — the death of the lamb (OT) /Lamb (NT).

But more is implicated in this salvation than solely the free gift of eternal life. Once this salvation/redemption has taken place, a door of opportunity opens up. When Abraham’s descendants were redeemed on the night of Passover, they were placed in a position to participate in a *theocracy* (a system of government wherein God would be King and His people would be the administrators of that kingdom). Redeemed Israel was placed in a position where they might become a *kingdom of priests*, a holy nation (Ex. 19:4-6). Two things were necessary on the part of an individual in order to partake in this kingdom: 1) he was to have been redeemed through faith (realizing salvation, passing “from death to life”), and 2) he was then to exercise

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faithful obedience toward God's commands. The first is a singular event (salvation/redemption) which takes place at a particular *point in time*. This *event* is referred to in Scripture as *salvation* or *redemption*. Both terms are interchangeable in this regard. The second is a process which is to take place over a *period of time*. This *process* leads to what is also referred to in Scripture as *salvation/redemption* or *the inheritance*. These terms are interchangeable in this regard.

The term *salvation* in Scripture can either be referring to *the initial event*, or it can be referring to *the succeeding process*. (More on that in Lesson Twelve.) The former takes place the moment a person puts faith in the provision God gives, and the latter subsequently takes place along the way of life as a person exercises faithful obedience. Context would determine which facet of salvation is in view in any given passage.

Again, there is something essential to understand at this point. To experience *initial* salvation only involves one thing on man's part — *faith!* But to take part in the theocracy as a priest in God's kingdom involves something beyond simple faith, it requires *faithful obedience*. And participating in the kingdom has to do with *receiving the inheritance* as a firstborn son. (As we shall see in upcoming weeks, this distinction clears up much misunderstanding concerning the issues having to do with salvation!)

Another way to state the previous paragraph is to say that only family members (those who are redeemed through faith into the family of God) have the right to become priests in God's kingdom and receive the inheritance as a firstborn son of God. The free gift, received through faith, puts an individual into the family. Ongoing faithful obedience allows that redeemed individual to receive the inheritance as a firstborn son. And the inheritance has to do with the theocracy, the kingdom of God. We have seen some of this play out in the Old Testament. This week we will begin to see how this plays out in the New Testament.

As we close for the day, would you summarize in your own words the contents of the last six paragraphs, adding any questions you have about this at the end of your summary. (The purpose of this exercise is to solidify your understanding of these things.)

Day Two— Two Realms of One Kingdom

As we begin today, please read the summary you wrote at the end of yesterday's lesson. (Hang on to the questions you may have; most likely they will be answered for you in upcoming lessons.) Be sure to pray as you begin.

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Let's think through a few things. You know that "in the beginning God created the heavens and the earth." Write down which two realms are mentioned in this very first verse in the whole Bible?

You also know that Satan and his fallen angels rule over the earth. But from where do they rule? Are they ruling the earth *from the earth* or *from the heavens* above the earth? (Look at the end of Eph. 6:12 and the end of Dan. 4:26, if you need help in answering this question. Or go back and skim Lesson Four.)

So, what two realms are obviously involved in Satan's domain?

Even now Satan and his angels are ruling from the heavenly realm over the earthly realm. (Of course there are heavens beyond that over which Satan and his angels have no control. The heavens from which they exercise control are the heavens that have to do with the earth, not the heavens extending throughout the universe.)

We have also seen that in Satan's fall, as the Scriptures state, his sanctuaries (plural) became profaned, or desecrated, which would refer to both the earth and the heavens that surround the earth (Ezek. 28:18).

Both realms are mentioned in the very first verse of the Bible — *God created* the heavens and the earth. And subsequent to this first verse in all of Scripture, we get information of His creating things *to fill* both of these realms. In the passages printed below, Paul states some of the details (not that this is the first place this information can be seen in Scripture, but Paul words it so succinctly here).

Colossians 1

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him... . . .

Paul tells us that God created things *in* these two realms. With respect to *creation*, which realm is mentioned first? (This answer is seen in this passage, as well as in Gen. 1:1.)

Then what does Paul say God created within the two realms?

Did you notice that there are both *visible* and *invisible* thrones, dominions, principalities, powers? Write out the obvious — which set goes with which realm?

Continuing —

...20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

According to v. 20 (as it follows v. 16), what needed to be reconciled through the blood of Christ?

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Putting all of this together, what do you think is the reason for *things* in *both* realms needing reconciliation?

According to Colossians 1:16, 20, specifically what things on earth needed reconciliation?

According to Colossians 1:16, 20, specifically what things in the heavens needed reconciliation?

Both sets of created things — *visible* and *invisible* thrones, dominions, principalities and powers — needed to be reconciled to God, showing that in time past, both realms of authority had been in perfect accord with God, then became out of accord, resulting in a need for a reconciliation. And according to the passage, both realms *are reconciled* through the blood of Christ.

We will glimpse another passage written by Paul which has to do with the same idea.

Ephesians 1

8 ... in all wisdom and prudence, 9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth--in Him

How is this passage similar to the one we studied in Colossians?

What added facts can you draw from the Ephesians passage?

According to this passage, in the fullness of time, what will be summed up in Christ?

Recount in your own words what you just learned from these two passages in today's lesson.

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Day Three — Beginning with the Earthly, Moving Toward the Heavenly

The Old Testament deals primarily with the earthly realm, along with an earthly inheritance for Abraham's physical descendants (through Isaac and Jacob) — the land. Now we are going to see that the New Testament deals primarily with the heavenly realm, along with a heavenly inheritance for Abraham's spiritual descendants (through the blood of Christ) — the heavenly land. The offer of the heavenly realm of the kingdom is that which the Jews, as a nation, forfeited when they rejected the One making the offer. We will look more closely into these things in upcoming weeks, but today we want to see if Old Testament saints knew anything about this heavenly realm and the inheritance therein.

Abraham was called by God and was told of a land that God would give to him and to his descendants after him. Throughout the progressive revelation God gave to Abraham, he learned that he would have many descendants, that these descendants would have a land of their own, and that they would have an inheritance in that land — possessing the gates of their enemies (i.e., exercising power over them). Throughout eleven chapters in Genesis (chs. 12-22), God begins to unveil and make known the details of His promises to Abraham. And we have learned much about the promises given to Israel, through studying these eleven chapters. But there is more to learn about the promises of the inheritance for Abraham's descendants throughout the New Testament. Again, for the most part the Old Testament deals with the land, the *earthly portion* of the kingdom; and the New Testament deals with the heavens, *the heavenly portion* of the kingdom.

But there are a couple of questions which must be asked — Since there is *an inheritance* connected with the earthly kingdom, would there also be *an inheritance* connected with the Heavenly Kingdom? Did Abraham and his descendants know anything of *the heavenly realm* and the inheritance therein? One of the places in Scriptures where the answers to these questions are evident is in the Book of Hebrews. Read through these passages in Hebrews a few times, and make study notes in the margins. Then answer the questions which follow.

Hebrews 11

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God. 11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude--innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore. 13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

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What did Abraham do when he was called (vv. 8, 9)?

For what was Abraham looking (v. 10, 16)?

What two Old Testament descriptive phrases did the author of the Book of Hebrews quote to describe the numbers of Abraham's descendants (v. 12)?

What did those who "died in faith" confess (v. 13)?

For what were these Old Testament saints seeking (v. 14)?

For what type of country were these Old Testament saints looking (v. 16)?

Compare v. 16 with v. 10. From these two verses, describe the city they were looking for.

Continuing in Hebrews chapter eleven, the author cites the works done through faith by these Old Testament saints. After citing several specific examples (vv. 4-31), the author goes on to give some general examples of faithfulness. Before you answer the questions which follow the passage, be sure to spend some time studying through this passage, making notes of what you learn in the margins. (We are going to be studying the specific examples of faithful saints in Lesson Fifteen. But today we are only looking to see if Old Testament saints could have understood some things concerning the heavenly inheritance.)

Hebrews 11

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in

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deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth. 39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us.

At the end of v. 35, what does the author state is the reason for the actions of these faithful saints?

Write out the statement made of these saints at the beginning of v. 38.

Write vv. 39 and 40 in your own words.

The question we are considering is this — Did Abraham and his descendants know anything of the heavenly portion of the kingdom? After studying through these sections of Hebrews chapter eleven, what do you think — Could Old Testament saints have known and understood about the heavenly portion of the kingdom? From the text, what makes you think so?

And here is another question — With these things from Hebrews chapter eleven in mind (along with the information from last week's study as to the first coming of Christ, His offer and the nation's rejection), *should* the Jews of Christ's day have understood His message, the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens? Why, or why not?

We'll end here for the day. Please keep entrusting yourself to God the Holy Spirit as He guides you into understanding. Keep asking Him to open up your mind to understand more and more from His Word, as we compare Scripture with Scripture.

We'll look at more of this tomorrow.

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Day Four — The Gospels

With the message which John the Baptist brought, and the fact that Christ's message was exactly the same as John's — *Repent, for the Kingdom of the Heavens is at hand* — we must look at the gospels in this light (Mt. 3:1,2; 4:17, 23). The gospels literally lay out in detail the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to God's people. Last week we studied some of these details. Today and tomorrow we want to glimpse more details of the offer made to Abraham's descendants – the Jews – in the Gospel of Matthew.

Matthew is the only gospel writer who uses the phrase *the kingdom of heaven* (Gk. "*the Kingdom of the Heavens*"). The other gospel writers use the phrase *the kingdom of God*. Throughout the gospels there is no difference in the meaning of the two phrases; it is just a different way of saying the same thing. (In a few passages in the Bible, the phrase *the kingdom of God* can cover a larger scope, actually the entire universe. The subject matter and context of a given passage in which the phrase is used will determine its meaning. And this must be understood for proper understanding.) Simply stated, "the Kingdom of the Heavens" (or "the kingdom of God" in most of the places it is used) refers to the *rulership from the heavens over the earth* (cf. Dan. 4:26b).

To get started today, we'll review a couple of passages we looked at last week.

Matthew 4

17 From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, "Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."

...23 And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease among the people.

It is easy to see from these two verses what Jesus' message was. Luke records a similar phrase in his gospel, clearly explaining the purpose for which Christ had been sent, quoting Christ Himself.

Luke 4

43 but He said to them, "I must preach the kingdom of God to the other cities also, because

What was Christ's own stated purpose for coming to the earth?

Jesus came to offer the Kingdom of the Heavens to the only people on earth who, at that time, could receive this offer — the Jews. But just as receiving the earthly kingdom at Kadesh Barnea was individually conditional upon faithful obedience, so is receiving the Heavenly Kingdom individually conditional upon faithful obedience. And the spiritual condition of Israel at the time of Christ's first coming was so deplorable, that a message of repentance needed to preface the message of the offer of the kingdom. Hence, the message John brought and the message Jesus brought — Repent!

Jesus' first sermon — commonly known as *the Sermon on the Mount* — was spoken in the hearing of a great multitude, but directed specifically to His disciples. It is important to study Jesus' message in this light. This sermon was spoken to individuals who were the first followers of Christ. The intent of Jesus' words to them was *not* how to receive the free gift of eternal life, but rather *how to live in such a way so as to inherit the Kingdom of the Heavens*. The assumption that the disciples had already been saved through faith in the provision God had made in the Old Testament is obvious.

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Let's take a little time and sort through this beginning portion of this message. When you come to the words or phrases having to do with the Kingdom of the Heavens, inheritance, or reward, underline it. Remember, He is speaking to His disciples.

Matthew 5

- 1 And seeing the multitudes, He went up on a mountain, and when He was seated His disciples came to Him. 2 Then He opened His mouth and taught them, saying:**
- 3 “Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- 4 Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.**
- 5 Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.**
- 6 Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.**
- 7 Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.**
- 8 Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.**
- 9 Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.**
- 10 Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- 11 Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you
falsely for My sake.**
- 12 Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven,
for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.**

Fill in the details from the passage in the chart below. I've done the first one for you.

Blessed are —

1) the poor in spirit

For theirs/they shall —

1) is the Kingdom of the Heavens

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Based upon this first section of His sermon (this entire sermon runs from Mt. 5-7), what do you think Jesus wants His disciples' focus to be?

From succeeding portions of this sermon, it is easy to see that treasures can be stored in either of two realms — earthly or heavenly. What is the difference between the two? At this point in your understanding, how do you think you would store up treasures on earth?

In the heavens?

Jesus desires His disciples to take their focus off of the present world and place their focus on His Heavenly Kingdom. After speaking to them about the differences between the reward here and now given by men, and the reward in the future kingdom given by the Father (6:1-21), read what He says to them about storing up treasures.

Matthew 6

19 “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal; 20 but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where neither moth nor rust destroys and where thieves do not break in and steal. 21 For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also.

What does Jesus say our focus should be with regards to storing up treasures for ourselves?

Jesus reiterates His desired focus as He tells His disciples about seeking the things of this world versus seeking the things of heaven by finishing this section of His message with the following words. Underline what He tells them to seek first.

Matthew 6

31 “Therefore do not worry, saying, ‘What shall we eat?’ or ‘What shall we drink?’ or ‘What shall we wear?’ 32 For after all these things the Gentiles seek. For your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. 33 But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you...”

What did He say was necessary to seek?

And what would happen as a result?

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A study of the entire sermon (Mt. 5-7) reveals the type of lifestyle Jesus says is necessary for one *to receive his inheritance in the Kingdom of the Heavens*. The focus of this sermon is *not* on how one receives the free gift of eternal life. Understanding this distinction clears up major misunderstanding in these passages (as well as many others). As we end today's study, you may want to read the sermon in its entirety, but if your time does not allow it, at least read the end of the sermon as it is printed below. Think through these things. Keep it in mind the context of the whole message that Jesus was giving to His disciples.

Matthew 7

13 “Enter by the narrow gate; for wide is the gate and broad is the way that leads to destruction, and there are many who go in by it. 14 Because narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few who find it.

15 “Beware of false prophets, who come to you in sheep’s clothing, but inwardly they are ravenous wolves. 16 You will know them by their fruits. Do men gather grapes from thornbushes or figs from thistles? 17 Even so, every good tree bears good fruit, but a bad tree bears bad fruit. 18 A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit. 19 Every tree that does not bear good fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire. 20 Therefore by their fruits you will know them.

21 “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven. 22 Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, cast out demons in Your name, and done many wonders in Your name?’ 23 And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’ 24 Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock. 26 But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.” 28 And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, 29 for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

Answer these couple questions as you consider this passage.

In the way of review, to whom is He speaking (Mt. 5:1)?

What seems to be the subject of this entire sermon?

A couple of things need to be remembered while studying through these verses at the end of the sermon, wherein Jesus sums up what He has taught them. In doing so, He talks about *entrance into* or *exclusion from* the Kingdom of the Heavens. It is not a free gift/eternal life issue. (His comments are directed to people who are saved [5:1, 2]). And He is talking about fruit-bearing in the spiritual realm. Only people who are alive spiritually can bear fruit in the this realm, either good or bad. Those who are dead spiritually would never be expected to bear spiritual fruit, as it would be impossible for someone to bear fruit if they are spiritually dead. Think on these things as you end your study today.

See you tomorrow.

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Day Five— The Sower and the Seed

As we come to the conclusion of this week’s lesson we will endeavor to understand a little more clearly the message of the Kingdom of the Heavens as it is laid out in the first parable given in Matthew chapter thirteen.

If you were to read through the first twelve chapters of the Gospel of Matthew, you would see Jesus being baptized by John, His public ministry beginning, His calling twelve men to Himself, His offering the Kingdom of the Heavens to the descendants of Abraham — the nation of Israel, and His performing many miraculous signs during the course of the offer. He did not take His message to the Gentiles as He could not do so. Because the promises were made to Abraham and his descendants, the offer *could only be made to Israel*. Even when He sent out His disciples with the message of the kingdom, He instructed them to only go to the house of Israel (Mt. 10:5-7; cf. Mt. 15:24; Ro. 15:8).

But already, the Pharisees and the leadership of the Jews were trying to disparage Jesus and His ministry, saying that He performed miraculous signs by the power of Satan (Mt. 9:32-34). As Matthew’s gospel unfolds, it becomes evident that the leadership of the Jewish people were not only disparaging Jesus, but also His message. In truth, they *hated* Him, and *despised* the message He brought. So much did they hate Him, that they sought for a way to destroy Him (Mt. 12:14).

As His public ministry was gaining momentum and as Jesus continued to teach and perform miraculous signs, more and more Jews were following Jesus believing that He was, in fact, the son David, the Son of God. Many others were beginning to wonder. He had made it very clear Who He was through His words and miraculous signs! In fact, at one point, Jesus cast a demon out of a man, causing the people to wonder *aloud* if it were true — Is this the Son of David (Mt. 12:23)? If the nation accepted the fact that Jesus was the Expected One (the son of David, the Son of God), it would mean that He would have ushered in the final kingdom. Though some of the people asked the question — Could this be the Son of David? — the way the question is worded in the Greek reveals that the people, in fact, *doubted* that He was! The way they worded their question revealed a “middle-of-the-road” attitude, so to speak, leaning very strongly to the possible answer being a negative one.

When the Pharisees heard that the people were wondering this, they publicly made a statement that Jesus cast out demons by the power of Satan (Mt. 12:24). In a sense, this was a line crossed over! They had committed a sin which would not be forgiven in *this age* (the present age) nor *in the age to come* (the Messianic Age). They had blasphemed the Holy Spirit. Through the use of miraculous signs (signs done through the power of the Holy Spirit), God had been validating the Words and the Works of Jesus, in order that the people might recognize that He was Who He said He was — the Christ! But instead of recognizing and agreeing with the power and work of the Spirit, the Pharisees credited His power to Beelzebub (Satan). This action blasphemed the Holy Spirit, which was a sin that could not be forgiven in this age (the present age), nor in the age to come (the Kingdom Age).

This sin on the part of the leadership caused Jesus to change His course of actions. He went out of the house and sat by the seaside (Mt. 13:1). And there by the seaside, Jesus began teaching through the use of parables. Below is the first one He gave. Let’s see what we can learn from this first parable.

Matthew 13

1 On the same day Jesus went out of the house and sat by the sea. **2** And great multitudes were gathered together to Him, so that He got into a boat and sat; and the whole multitude stood on the shore. **3** Then He spoke many things to them in parables, saying: “Behold, a sower went out to sow. **4** “And as he sowed, some seed fell by the wayside; and the birds came and devoured them. **5** Some fell on stony places, where they did not have much earth; and they immediately sprang up because they had no depth of earth. **6** But when the sun was up they were scorched, and because they had no root they withered away. **7** And some fell among

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thorns, and the thorns sprang up and choked them. 8 But others fell on good ground and yielded a crop: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty. 9 He who has ears to hear, let him hear!”

Before we go any further with this parable, list the information about each seed in the first two columns. We’ll fill in the third column as we come to it.

Conditions of of the soil:	What happened to the seed:	Interpretation:

Continuing —

10 And the disciples came and said to Him, “Why do You speak to them in parables?” 11 He answered and said to them, “Because it has been given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it has not been given. 12 For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 13 Therefore I speak to them in parables, because seeing they do not see, and hearing they do not hear, nor do they understand. 14 And in them the prophecy of Isaiah is fulfilled, which says:

‘Hearing you will hear and shall not understand, And seeing you will see and not perceive; 15 For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn <1994>, So that I should heal <2390> them.’

16 “But blessed are your eyes for they see, and your ears for they hear; 17 for assuredly, I say to you that many prophets and righteous men desired to see what you see, and did not see it, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear it.

What question did the disciples ask in v. 10?

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What was the very next statement (v. 11, 12) Jesus made to the disciples before directly answering their question (v. 13)?

In the space below, make careful notes as to the reason that Jesus had begun speaking to them in parables (vv.14, 15).

Be sure to look up the definitions for the words *return* and *heal*.

turn <1994>

heal <2390> (Also look up the root word <4762>)

Write out what Jesus would do for these people if they would open their eyes and ears to see and hear.

After explaining these things, Jesus Himself gives the commentary as to the meaning of this parable, leaving absolutely no doubt as to its meaning.

18 “Therefore hear the parable of the sower: 19 When anyone hears the word of the kingdom, and does not understand it, then the wicked one comes and snatches away what was sown in his heart. This is he who received seed by the wayside. 20 But he who received the seed on stony places, this is he who hears the word and immediately receives it with joy; 21 yet he has no root in himself, but endures only for a while. For when tribulation or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he stumbles. 22 Now he who received seed among the thorns is he who hears the word, and the cares of this world and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and he becomes unfruitful. 23 But he who received seed on the good ground is he who hears the word and understands it, who indeed bears fruit and produces: some a hundredfold, some sixty, some thirty.”

According to Jesus’ Own Words, what is the topic of this parable (v. 19a)?

There is a key to understand the Parable of Sower correctly, without which understanding would be difficult at best. The key is this: When the Word of the Kingdom is sown into a person’s heart, God expects that

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individual to bear fruit with respect to the Kingdom. Now that person has a choice to make – he will either be fruitful with respect to the Kingdom, or he will not be fruitful, and the degree of fruitfulness is up to that individual himself. With this in mind, refer back to the list you made on the four different soils and complete the chart, specifically noting what happened to each, *why* it happened, and the outcome of each.

Contextually, what is the ultimate goal of the seed when it is sown?

Can you see why this parable is not dealing with the free gift of eternal life? It is dealing solely with people who are capable of bearing spiritual fruit! And bearing fruit has to do with things *beyond* the free gift of eternal life. Bearing fruit has to do with a Christian's work here and now with a view to an inheritance in the future. We will see this more clearly as we continue to study.

In your own words, write out briefly what the meaning of this parable is.

The four soils in this parable represent the willingness a person has to produce fruit whenever “anyone hears the Word of the Kingdom” (v. 19a) In the way of a personal question — Having now come into a deeper understanding of what is required when “anyone hears the Word of the Kingdom,” what needs to be your goal?

Is there anything in your life that needs to change in order to produce fruit?

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Lesson Ten — A New Nation, a New Creation, a New Man

Day One — A Spiritual House

Day Two — Living Stones

Day Three — A New Man, a New Creation

Day Four — The Body of Christ

Day Five — God's People

In the past two weeks we have studied issues and events surrounding the first appearance of Jesus Christ and the purposes thereof. We have seen that not only did Jesus come to die on the cross to make reconciliation; He initially came to offer the Kingdom of the Heavens to Abraham's descendants — Israel. But Israel, as a nation, refused the offer of the kingdom and Jesus withdrew the offer, saying that He would raise up a new nation who would produce the fruits of the kingdom (Mt. 21:43). This new nation would be a new creation; it would make up a new man — the Body of Christ — with Christ as the Head, and the individual members forming the Body. And this is the topic we want to study this week — the new creation.

But first, here is a thought to consider. Sometimes we are tempted to think that “the Church” is a building on a corner in town, into which we go once or twice a week and participate in the activities therein. That is not the Church! That is only a building on a corner in town, into which we go once or twice a week and participate in the activities therein. This building often houses the Church, but it is not the Church.

Rather in a literal sense, the Church is a living organism, not a physical building of bricks and mortar. It is referred to in Scripture in several different ways, each description giving a different aspect of this living organism. The Church is a new nation, a new creation, a new man. It *is* a building, but not a physical one; it is a spiritual building. It *is* a house, but not a physical house; it is the house of Christ, the household of God. Along with understanding this, it is important to realize that the Church has been created for a specific purpose, and called to perform certain functions. Therefore, as we discuss things about the Church throughout this week of study, please think of the Church in the terms Scripture uses, rather than in terms of a brick and mortar building on a corner in town.

Day One — A Spiritual House

At one point in time prior to the last week of Christ's public ministry, Jesus spoke of the Church. It was at a time when it had become apparent that the Jewish nation as a whole would not believe that Jesus was Who He said He was. In this setting, Jesus mentions the Church for the first time. Let's read about it.

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Matthew 16

13 When Jesus came into the region of Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples, saying, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” 14 So they said, “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets.” 15 He said to them, “But who do you say that I am?” 16 Simon Peter answered and said, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” 17 Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 “And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 “And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.”

What two questions did Jesus ask?

What was Peter’s answer to the second question?

Write down how Jesus responds to Peter’s answer (v. 17ff). (Be sure to note that He deals with both realms of the kingdom in v. 19.)

The Greek word for *church* is the word *ekklesia*, which means “called out.” This new entity — the Church — would be made up of individuals who, through placing faith in Jesus Christ, have been *called out* for a purpose. And the purpose for this *calling out* is seen in several passages in the New Testament (some of which we will cover in this week’s homework). This passage in Matthew chapter sixteen (printed above) begins to reveal what the purpose of the Church is. With this in mind, go back to the passage and see if you can ascertain what one of the future purposes for the Church will be. Write out what you find.

In Matthew 16:17-18, Peter made a statement, the essence of which had been revealed to him by the Father in heaven. The statement was: “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” The phrase *the Christ* means *the Messiah, the Anointed One*. This phrase involves all three offices which Jesus would, at some point in time, hold — that of

- Prophet, His first coming, His **past** work;
- Priest, His **present** work as High Priest in the heavens;
- King, His **future** work, as King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek.

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He appeared the first time as *Prophet*, proclaiming the Coming Kingdom; He is presently appearing in the heavens, at the right hand of the Father, fulfilling the office of *High Priest* on behalf of God's people, offering a cleansing for sin with a view to entering the kingdom; and He will appear on earth a second time, when He comes as *King*, ushering in His kingdom. All three offices — prophet, priest and king — required an anointing by God (*cf.* Isa. 61:1, 2; Lev. 8:30; I Sam. 10:1), and all three offices have to do with an ultimate goal in view, that of the Coming Kingdom. Hence, He is the Messiah, the Christ, the Anointed One. Thus, it is easy to see that Peter understood these things, as He connected the title “the Christ” with His being the “Son of God,” an obvious reference to the prophecy God gave to David in II Samuel chapter seven.

(Remember our study in II Samuel chapter seven? God told David, through the prophet Nathan, that David would have a Descendant Who would sit on an eternal throne and would establish an eternal kingdom, and this Descendant would be the Son of God (vv. 13, 14). The essence of the statement that Jesus is “the Son of God,” encapsulates the idea of His Kingdom, as revealed through the contents of the prophecy made to David. *Sonship has to do with rulership*. Therefore, whenever the title *Son of God* is used in Scripture, it carries the idea of His Coming Kingdom. The two cannot be separated. And we would do well to remember that.)

Upon Peter's identification of Who Jesus is, Jesus said that it is upon *this rock* — the statement that had been revealed to Peter by the Father in heaven — that Jesus would *build* His Church. The first mention of *ekklesia*, was that it would be *built upon a Rock* (inferring a ‘building’ being built). The Rock is Jesus Christ, the Anointed One, the Son of God, the Coming King. The inference is that this spiritual building being built upon the Rock, represents the fact that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God, the One coming to establish His kingdom; and that the *ekklesia*, the spiritual building itself, would have the keys to the kingdom, inferring that this spiritual building would eventually have control over the heavens and the earth — both realms (v. 19b). Thus, one can see that the Church, being built upon the Rock, has to do with a people being called out to receive Christ's kingdom, establishing His household. Therefore, one of the purposes for the establishment of the Church is that God would call out a people to Himself, and build a spiritual household, a people who would administer His kingdom from the heavens over the earth, with Christ in their midst as King.

Now let's look at another place wherein the purpose for this Church can be seen. We studied this passage in Lesson Eight, Day Five, but we want to look at it again as it helps to fit this picture together.

The context of this passage is the Parable of the Vineyard. Jesus gave this parable to the chief priests and elders, at the end of which, He asks what the vineyard owner should do to the tenants who refused time and again to give the expected produce to the owner. They responded that the owner will bring “those wicked me to a miserable end,” and “lease out the vineyard to other vine-dressers, who will render to him the fruits in their seasons” (v. 41). Now read Jesus words in response to their response:

Matthew 21

42 Jesus said to them, “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’? 43 Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.

In the way of review and according to this passage, essentially what did the Jews reject?

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And as a result of this rejection, what is Jesus going to do (v. 43)?

Do you see how the new nation is now the recipient of the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens?

But how can Jesus offer the Kingdom of the Heavens to anyone other than Abraham's seed? After all, the promises concerning these things were given to Abraham and to *his* descendants. So how can anyone other than Abraham's descendants receive this offer? The answer is, "Jesus can only make this offer *to Abraham's descendants!*" Just watch, though! See how this "IS MARVELOUS IN OUR EYES"!

Through the Apostle Paul in his epistle to the Galatians, it is clearly established *how* the offer can be made to a people who are not Abraham's *physical* descendants. Chapter three deals with the subject matter extensively. So let's take a look at a few of the verses.

Galatians 3

...6 just as Abraham "believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness." 7 Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham. 8 And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel to Abraham beforehand, saying, "In you all the nations shall be blessed." 9 So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham.

...14 that the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith.

Who does Paul say are the sons of Abraham?

What does Paul say the Scriptures foresee?

What do we learn from v. 14?

Now read how Paul sums up the subject in the last few verses of this chapter.

Galatians 3 (continuing)

26 For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. 27 For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. 28 There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. 29 And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise.

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Based upon the truth set forth in this passage, how can God offer the Kingdom of the Heavens to someone other than to the Jews?

What does v. 29 tell us?

From what we have studied thus far, what would Paul mean when he talks about the blessings of Abraham? In other words, what would individuals making up the Church now be able to acquire through faith? (At this point, it may be somewhat difficult to answer this question, but give it a try.)

We'll pick it up tomorrow.

Day Two — Living Stones

We are learning some things about the inception of the Church and the purposes thereof. We will continue to build upon these ideas as we work through the study. Please be in prayer that you may grasp the significance of the Church and your participation in it.

As we have seen in Matthew chapter twenty-one, the Jews, who were the original tenants of the vineyard, did not produce the fruits of the vineyard. There was no repentance on the part of the Jews, and consequently, no fruit-bearing (*cf.* Mt. 3:7, 8). The fruitless tenants of the vineyard rejected the Messenger and His message. (Notice that *producing fruit* has to do with the kingdom. This is an important connection to make.)

It was the Jews who rejected “the chief cornerstone,” i.e., Jesus Christ (Mt. 21:42). The use of the term *cornerstone* implies a substructure upon which the superstructure will be built. Notice what Paul writes in Ephesians chapter two.

Ephesians 2

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

What does Paul say of the Church?

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Then think back to what Jesus told Peter in Matthew chapter sixteen, “Upon this rock I will build My Church...” Having these things in mind, study through the following passage. (Notice that the author of this passage is *Peter* —the one who answered Jesus’ question in Matthew 16.)

I Peter 2

...4 Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, 5 you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. 6 Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, “Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame.” 7 Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, “The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone,” 8 and “A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense.” They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. 9 But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; 10 who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy.

Based upon the passages that we have considered in last week’s lesson and thus far in this week’s lesson, what do you think it means that *He was rejected by men*? (In other words, who were the men who rejected Him?)

List everything you see about ‘living stones’ in this passage.

From what Peter wrote, what kind of building is presently being built?

In v. 6, what does it say about those who believe?

According to v. 8, what happens to those who reject The Cornerstone?

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What do vv. 9-10 reveal about the Church?

John the Baptist told the Jewish leaders that from stones God was able to raise up descendants of Abraham, who would become the recipients of the promises.

Matthew 3

7 But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, “Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? 8 “Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance, 9 “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.

Make a note as to the connection between what John told the Pharisees and Sadducees in Matthew 3:7-9, with what Peter says about the Church in I Peter 2:4-10, with what Jesus said about the Rock in Matthew 16:18-19. What connections can you make?

Matthew 3:7-9

I Peter 2:4-10

Matthew 16:18-19



Go back and reread 1 Peter 2:5, 9-10. About whom is Peter speaking (v. 10 gives a good hint)?

Now we have a comparison to make. Looking back in the Old Testament, the children of Israel were called out of Egypt for a specific purpose. They were told of their purpose once they arrived at Mt. Sinai. (We studied it weeks ago, but it bears on what we are presently studying.)

Exodus 19

“... 5 ‘Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. 6 And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.’ These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel.”

The Church (the *ekklesia* [the called out]) has been called out for an identical purpose. Write out the similarities between Exodus 19:5-6 and the passage in 1 Peter 2:5, 9.

Exodus 19:5-6

I Peter 2:5,9

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God has raised up children to Abraham. He is still in the process of building His Church upon the Rock of Jesus Christ. He is raising up sons of Abraham, a people who *were not* a nation, but because they have put faith in Jesus Christ as their Savior, they have become a *new* nation and are spiritual descendants of Abraham. Therefore Gentiles, along with the Jews, can partake in the promises of Abraham. It is an awesome picture, isn't it? Any thoughts?

We'll pick it up tomorrow.

Day Three — A New Man, a New Creation

Let's look at more passages that reveal what actually takes place when one puts faith in Jesus Christ.

II Corinthians 5

17 Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new.

Galatians 6

15 For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but a new creation.

What do these passages say?

At the beginning of yesterday's homework, we looked at a passage found at the end of Ephesians chapter two. For the remainder of our study time today, we are going to look at the complete chapter. This chapter encapsulates some of what we have learned throughout the study thus far:

- our condition prior to faith in Christ,
- the fact that Satan is the present ruler of the world, and
- reveals what God has done for us — *how* we are saved, *why* we are saved, and *the benefits* of being saved.

Wow! All in one chapter.

We'll begin with the last two verses in chapter one, then we'll go right into chapter two. If time allows, it would be a good idea if you could read through the chapter two or three times, making your own study notes in the margins. Then answer the questions which follow.

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Ephesians 1:22-2:22

...22 And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, 23 which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all.

1 And you He made alive, who were dead in trespasses and sins, 2 in which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience, 3 among whom also we all once conducted ourselves in the lusts of our flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, just as the others.

4 But God, who is rich in mercy, because of His great love with which He loved us, 5 even when we were dead in trespasses, made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved), 6 and raised us up together, and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus, 7 that in the ages to come He might show the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus. 8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast. 10 For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.

11 Therefore remember that you, once Gentiles in the flesh--who are called Uncircumcision by what is called the Circumcision made in the flesh by hands-- 12 that at that time you were without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world. 13 But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ.

14 For He Himself is our peace, who has made both one, and has broken down the middle wall of separation, 15 having abolished in His flesh the enmity, that is, the law of commandments contained in ordinances, so as to create in Himself one new man from the two, thus making peace, 16 and that He might reconcile them both to God in one body through the cross, thereby putting to death the enmity. 17 And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those who were near. 18 For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father.

19 Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, 20 having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, 21 in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, 22 in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.

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According to vv. 1 and 5, what was our condition prior to coming to Christ?

Verses 12 and 19 further describe this condition. What was it?

According to various verses throughout this chapter, what did Christ accomplish for us? Make a list of the things you find.

Relating v. 11 with v. 14, who are the two groups brought together as one?

Look at vv. 14-18 and relate what Jesus has done for these two groups. Be sure to see that He has made the *two into one new man*. Then underline that phrase in v. 15.

How did Jesus make the two groups into one new man?

Paul quotes a prophecy from Isaiah 57:19, revealing that this prophecy has been fulfilled. What was the essence of the prophecy as quoted in v. 17?

Because of the cross, Gentiles (who believe) are no longer strangers and aliens, but what are they now (v. 19)?

Finally, what do vv. 20-22 picture for us?

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In the way of a summary, God has made a new creation! He has brought two groups of people together, making the two into *one new man*! Now rather than there only being Jews and Gentiles in the world, now there are Jews, Gentiles, *and Christians* (cf., I Cor. 10:32). Any Jew or Gentile who puts faith in Jesus Christ becomes a new creation — a Christian — and becomes part of the Body of Christ. That individual is no longer a Jew, or no longer a Gentile (whichever the case may be), but is a new creation. The old things have passed away (II Cor. 5:17), he has become new. (These passages have nothing to do with the doing away of our old sinful nature [the man of flesh], as so many people teach. These passages have to do with our becoming *a new creation in Christ*, part of His Body. This is the topic of the study tomorrow.)

And as a new creation, now being neither Jew nor Gentile, an individual can receive the inheritance promised to Abraham (*i.e.*, things surrounding the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens), through faith in Jesus Christ. Abraham's physical descendants, as a nation, rejected the offer. Therefore, Jesus said that He would withdraw the offer from the descendants who refuse to produce the fruits, and will give it to a new nation who would produce the fruits (Mt. 21:43). Then Jesus calls out a people for the purpose of offering the Heavenly Kingdom to them. This entity is a new nation, a new creation, a new man, who is set apart for purposes having to do with the Heavenly Kingdom — the kingdom of Jesus Christ, the Son of God.

We'll pick it up tomorrow.

Day Four — The Body of Christ

Thus far, we have seen that the Church is a living organism, a living temple of God, a spiritual building, a new creation, a new nation, a new man. This new man is also described in Scripture as “the Body of Christ.” We will focus today on the Church being identified as the Body of Christ.

There are several passages in the New Testament that deal with the Body of Christ, each teaching things pertaining to different aspects of the Body. We will only glimpse a few of the passages in order to understand some of the facts about the Body. We will need this as a building block for further study.

Let's glimpse some passages.

Romans 12

4 For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, 5 so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another.

1 Corinthians 12

12 For as the body is one and has many members, but all the members of that one body, being many, are one body, so also is Christ. 13 For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body--whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free--and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. 14 For in fact the body is not one member but many.

...27 Now you are the body of Christ, and members individually.

From these few passages, what is the picture you get about the Church?

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Here is an admonition from the Apostle Paul to the Church at Ephesus. (Notice the admonition has to do with a calling [v.1].) Spend a bit of time on this passage. There is a lot here. Remember, we have been called out for a purpose — to be built into a spiritual house, administering the kingdom with Christ when He comes into His kingdom.

Ephesians 4

1 I, therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called, 2 with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love, 3 endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace. 4 There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; 5 one Lord, one faith, one baptism; 6 one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all.

... 11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

Explain the purpose of the Body and how it is to work together.

Colossians 2

19 and not holding fast to the Head, from whom all the body, nourished and knit together by joints and ligaments, grows with the increase that is from God.

Describe the picture this passage gives us.

Now, let's take this picture just a bit further. With the individual members of the Church making up the Body of Christ and with Christ as the Head, we have something else to learn about this Body, the new man. Read the passages below and make note of what you read.

I Corinthians 15

45 And so it is written, "The first man Adam became a living being." The last Adam

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became a life-giving spirit. 46 However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural, and afterward the spiritual. 47 The first man was of the earth, made of dust; the second Man is the Lord from heaven.

Obviously, who is “the first man”?

Who is “the second man, the last Adam”?

How does this passage describe both?

Now look at what Paul says about these two individuals.

Romans 5

Nevertheless death reigned from Adam to Moses, even over those who had not sinned according to the likeness of the transgression of Adam, who is a type of Him who was to come.

In the last part of this verse, what does it say Adam was?

This English word *type* is from the Greek word *tupos*. It has the sense of something bearing the exact representation of something else. As it is used here, Paul reveals that Adam is *an exact representation* of Christ. Adam is the type; Jesus is the antitype. Information gained through studying Adam becomes instructive for us in studying Jesus Christ; and the reverse is also true. The whole picture is instructive beyond degree for us!

This chart reveals how a type and antitype work in Scripture:

Just as Adam...	Even so Christ...
<i>Just as</i> Adam was created as a son of God...	<i>even so</i> Christ is the <i>only begotten</i> Son of God.
Just as Adam was created to rule over a restored creation...	<i>even so</i> Christ was begotten to rule over the restored creation.
<i>Just as</i> Adam’s helpmate (his wife) was taken from his body...	<i>even so</i> Christ’s Helpmate (His Bride) will be taken from His Body.
<i>Just as</i> Adam through partaking of the sin of his wife, died...	<i>even so</i> Christ took upon Himself the sin of the world and He died.
<i>Just as</i> Adam’s death on behalf of his wife made possible life through the promise of a Redeemer...	<i>even so</i> Christ’s death made possible redemption and life for all who would believe.

(Notice how the phrases “Just as...” and “even so...” work throughout the scenario. This is an easy way to

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see how types and antitypes work.)

Any thoughts or questions?

Day Five— God’s People

This week we have seen how God made a way for the Gentiles to be grafted in as the seed of Abraham through the blood of Christ. At the present time, because of Israel’s rejection and crucifixion of their Messiah, the Nation has been set aside. Because Israel as a nation rejected the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens, God is presenting calling a people unto Himself from amongst the Gentiles forming the New Man in Christ – the Body of Christ, the Church. Once this dispensation comes to a close – which will occur at the “catching up” (the rapture) of the Church – and the JSOC in the heavens is concluded, God will begin dealing with Israel once again.

Through faith in Jesus Christ, an individual becomes part of this new and distinct nation. It is not an earthly nation that is being formed, it is a heavenly one. And as such, the individuals making up this nation are presently *sojourners* passing through, *ambassadors* for Christ. Their citizenship is in heaven. And these citizens will receive the promises *that have to do with the heavens*. (We’ll see the development of this in upcoming weeks of study.) Certain promises now pertain to the Church that do not pertain any longer to Israel. And the reverse could be said as well – certain promises still pertain to Israel, that do not pertain to the Church.

There is coming a time when this new nation will be called heavenward so that the promises pertaining to the heavenly portion of the Abrahamic covenant can be fulfilled for Abraham’s spiritual descendants. Many things will take place in the heavens at that time. (The heavenly events following the rapture will be our subject of study in upcoming weeks.) Both realms are dealt with in the reconciliation through the blood of Christ. Read the passage below, noting how Paul puts all of this together. (We’ve studied this passage before, but it bears repeating here.)

Colossians 1

16 For by Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him. 17 And He is before all things, and in Him all things consist. 18 And He is the head of the body, the church, who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead, that in all things He may have the preeminence. 19 For it pleased the Father that in Him all the fullness should dwell, 20 and by Him to reconcile all things to Himself, by Him, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His cross.

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Study through this passage and make notes as to what you can learn from it. Notice that Paul brings together several of the things that we have been dealing with in these past weeks of study.

Now relate the concluding promises that God made to Abraham as he had just offered his son Isaac on the altar. God stops Abraham from slaying his son by first saying to him —

Genesis 22

11 ... “Abraham, Abraham!” So he said, “Here I am.” 12 And He said, “Do not lay your hand on the lad, or do anything to him; for now I know that you fear God, since you have not withheld your son, your only son, from Me.” 13 Then Abraham lifted his eyes and looked, and there behind him was a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. So Abraham went and took the ram, and offered it up for a burnt offering instead of his son. 14 And Abraham called the name of the place, The-LORD-Will-Provide; as it is said to this day, “In the Mount of The LORD it shall be provided.”

This *first statement* (vv. 11-14) has to do with the *first coming of Christ*. It has to do with the means of redemption from bondage, that of death and shed blood. It has to do with a substitutionary death, pointing to the death of Christ. Verse 14 summarizes it beautifully!

Now the Lord calls to Abraham a *second* time. In the passage, underline the words *a second time*. Verse 15, the *second* time God called to Abraham, has to do with a future redemption, that of the redemption of the inheritance. (Yes, that’s right — a *future* redemption!)

Continuing in Genesis 22

15 Then the Angel of the LORD called to Abraham a second time out of heaven, 16 and said: “By Myself I have sworn, says the LORD, because you have done this thing, and have not withheld your son, your only son - 17 “blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply your descendants as the stars of the heaven and as the sand which is on the seashore; and your descendants shall possess the gate of their enemies. 18 “In your seed all the nations of the earth shall be blessed, because you have obeyed My voice.”

Verse 17 refers to two realms wherein Abraham’s seed will exist. What two realms are they?

What does the passage say that Abraham’s seed in *both realms* will do (v. 17b and 18)?

Once the Body of Christ, the new man, has been taken up, God will turn His attention back to Israel so that He can fulfill the promises pertaining to the earthly portion of the Abrahamic covenant for Israel. Those promises to the nation of Israel are irrevocable. In order though, for these promises to be realized by Israel, Israel will have to be brought into a place of repentance (which will happen as a result of the coming tribulation [“Jacob’s Trouble”]).

Words inadequately express how awesome it is to see the way God has put this altogether. He gives Abraham an *unconditional covenant*, telling him that his seed will be as numerous *as the sand on the seashore* (Isa. 10:22; 48:19; Hos. 1:10; Ro. 9:27 [the land of Israel lays at the shore of the Mediterranean Sea]), and stars

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in the sky (Dan. 12:3 [our citizenship is in the heavens]). The numbers of the grains of sand and stars represent numbers in two distinct realms — earth and heaven — which has reference to the two realms of the kingdom. At the time of the covenant and because of Abraham's faithfulness, God irrevocably deeded over a land (Canaan) within the earthly realm to Abraham's physical seed (through Isaac and Jacob). This land would be the place from which a theocracy on the earth would emanate.

God continues the working out of His complete plan of redemption. (Remember that His plan involves redeeming fallen man, as well as redeeming the earthly and heavenly places of authority [Col. 1:16, 20].) He took Abraham's descendants into a land that was not theirs (into Egypt), allowing them to increase in numbers. During this time, they put into the bondage of slavery, wherein they had need to be redeemed. God accomplished this redemption by the means of slain animals, the blood of which was to be appropriated on the door posts and lintel of their houses. This redemption put Abraham's descendants in a position wherein they could become a nation of kings and priests, a kingdom of priests. All of this was enacted with the idea of Israel claiming their own land, the land which God had previously deeded to Abraham and his descendants 400 years prior with the nation of Israel inhabiting that land as the head of all the nations and not the tail.

But, as is God's way, after He redeemed the Children of Israel, He tested them; they had to prove themselves worthy to inherit the land and be placed in rulership. The point of proof was their obedience. (Obedience is always the point of proving oneself worthy.) The Children of Israel unanimously agreed to the conditions of the covenant, and God — through Moses and the angels — instituted a *conditional kingdom covenant* with Israel (the Mosaic covenant [Ex. 19:8; 24:3; 24:7; cf. Gal. 3:19]).

From that first generation, the individuals who were wholly devoted and obedient to God — Joshua and Caleb — received their inheritance in the land; the individuals who were not wholly devoted — the remainder of the first generation — lost their inheritance. Not one redeemed person, however, was sent back into slavery, even though going back to Egypt was their stated desire. They remained God's redeemed people; He never left them and never forsook them. Going back into to slavery in Egypt was a moot point. God didn't address their expressed desire.

(Their going back into slavery — in the sense of becoming unredeemed [after they had once been redeemed] — would be equivalent to saying that a person today could become unsaved [after one had once been saved]. It was a moot point in Scripture *then*; it is a moot point in Scripture *now*. Just as it couldn't happen in the OT, it cannot happen in the NT. The issue of losing one's eternal salvation (i.e., the free gift) is simply not addressed in Scripture. A person redeemed by the action of God cannot become unredeemed by any action on the part of the individual.)

For two thousand years, from Abraham to Christ, though both realms of the kingdom (earthly and heavenly) could be seen through all that God had revealed, attention was focused on the earthly, not the heavenly. However, even though attention was focused on the earthly realm of the kingdom, certain Old Testament saints aspired to a higher calling. They looked beyond the earthly to the heavenly (e.g., Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived as aliens, dwelling in tents [Heb. 11:9], as well as others, many who are mentioned in Hebrews chapter eleven).

Finally, at the appointed time, the King appears in order to climactically offer *the Kingdom of the Heavens* to Abraham's descendants. As a nation, they rejected the offer (though a number of individuals believed). And while the earthly land had already been irrevocably deeded over to Abraham's physical descendants, the heavenly land would now be given to another people — a new creation, a new nation, a new man — the Body of Christ.

This new creation is also Abraham's seed, through the blood of Christ, Who is Abraham's Seed. Now, for the first time in the entire history of mankind, there are three distinct groups of people — Jews, Gentiles, and Christians see (I Cor. 10:32). Jews and Christians are both of the seed of Abraham. But, since the rejection

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of Christ by Israel (Abraham's physical seed) at His first coming, Jesus is presently offering the realm of the Heavenly Kingdom to Christians (Abraham's spiritual seed) — to anyone who would believe on the Lord Jesus Christ. In believing on the Lord Jesus Christ, individuals are made partakers of Abraham's promises through the blood of Jesus, Who is Abraham's Seed. Now, for the past two thousand years, this offer is being made to the Church, the new nation, and will also climax in Christ's second coming when He comes to judge His people and set up His Kingdom.

Do you see the picture? Isn't it exciting? God is faithful to His Word! Praise His Holy Name. Jesus is the Chief Corner Stone, and we are the living stones, being built into a spiritual house. And we are made partakers of His house, *if we continue in faithful obedience* (Heb. 3:6). After the leaders of Israel had rejected Christ, and the kingdom had been taken away from them (as depicted through the Parable of the Vineyard), Jesus pronounced woes upon the leaders of Israel (Mt. 23). In the end, He describes what the leaders have done, but also states the ultimate hope in v. 39.

Matthew 23

37 “O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the one who kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to her! How often I wanted to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing! 38 “See! Your house is left to you desolate; 39 “for I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, ‘Blessed is He who comes in the name of the LORD!’“

Due to their stubborn and unrepentant heart, Israel lost a great blessing. Presently, their “house is left desolate.” But there is coming a time when God will turn back to Israel, and begin dealing with His wife, Israel, again. And following their national repentance, when the Jewish people see Him again, they will say, “Blessed is He Who comes in the Name of the Lord.”

In the interim, God is calling out a people within the Church to inherit that which Israel rejected — the Heavenly Kingdom. The next weeks of study will be taken up with what the implications are for us as the Body of Christ. I hope that these last couple of weeks have laid a good foundation upon which we can build, so that we can see the purpose for the Church. Please continue to pray for spiritual insight and discernment for yourself and others who are in your class. We have some very exciting things to learn yet.

Do you have any thoughts or comments?

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Understanding the Bible – Biblical Survey

Lesson Eleven — The Book of Acts: Part 1

Day One — Eternity vs. the Ages

Day Two — Dispensations

Day Three — The Day of Pentecost

Day Four — The Days Following Pentecost

Day Five — Miraculous Signs Among the People

We will be spending the next two weeks of study on the Book of Acts. Understanding the transitory nature of this book will help us be able to more clearly understand some very important distinctions within the epistles. And *that* is important to our understanding of how God has laid out His Word! We will see that not only does the Book of Acts outline the history of the early Church, but it is also marks a very important transition within God’s economy. The Book of Acts transitions from the Gospels to the Epistles, and in so doing God is seen transitioning from dealing with the Nation of Israel to dealing with the New Nation, the New Man in Christ, the Church.

In order to see God making this transition, we will have to get a few things straight as to how God deals with Eternity, the Ages, and Dispensations. Most Christians only think in terms of Eternity and Time, not giving much thought beyond those two distinctions. But there are a few other things to consider! In particular we need to see that Eternity is distinct from the Ages, and then within the Ages, God has fit several dispensations. At this point, these distinctions may not seem all that important to understand, but at the end of these two lessons, it should become clear just how important this understanding is, especially when we see that it is all laid out by Divine Inspiration. So, study well.

Day One — Eternity vs. the Ages

Some say that a picture says a thousand words. So let’s lay out a “picture.”

Again, most Christians think of “time and eternity” in God’s economy like this:



This would seem a very simplistic way of looking at God’s dealings within time and eternity. But the problem is that seeing time and eternity this way is fundamentally wrong! Yet sadly, it is the way most Christians look at it. In seeing things this way an individual cannot grasp a correct understanding of some *very, VERY* important things that God has laid out for His people to understand.

There is so *much more* to the picture! And the “much more” is so exciting to see! So let’s get started.

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The Book of Acts: Part 1

Lesson Eleven

One thing that is helpful in an overall perspective of the way God laid things out is to see that we really shouldn't think in terms of "time and eternity" without a perspective on the AGES. That is, we really should think more in terms of "eternity and ages." (We will see that "time" as we know it, fits into two ages, but beyond that, we really wouldn't know how to calculate time. But let's put that thought aside just for a minute.) To grasp the distinctions of eternity and ages, we will need to get a bit technical, so please bear with this as we work our way through this piece of the puzzle.

Technically speaking, the only thing or only One Who is eternal is God! One very succinct statement of His eternality is found in **Deuteronomy 33:27a** **The eternal God is your refuge, And underneath are the everlasting arms...** He is the One with no beginning *and* no ending. No one else, and nothing else is technically *eternal* in that nothing else has "no beginning". Everything else, besides God, has a beginning.

You may want to cry out – But what about 'eternal' life??? Well, *eternal life* for each of us has a beginning, doesn't it? And even though it has no ending point, it does have a beginning. So, from this perspective, God is the only One Who is 'technically' eternal – with no beginning, and no ending. (The language of Scripture bears this out, as well.)

So where might we place the beginning of everything? Is there a beginning of everything? The answer is a resounding YES!

Scripturally speaking, the earliest beginning point of anything would be *the beginning of the ages*. This verse is one place that mentions it.

I Corinthians 2

7 But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory...

There are many passages which reveal that determinations were made by the Godhead in eternity past (before the ages began), but that verse seems to suffice for our purpose today. (If you would like to see more verses, see them on the last page of this lesson.)

Another thing we may want to consider is that the Universe was created at the point that the ages began. This point is clearly made in the first verse of the Bible:

Genesis 1

1 In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.

Again, we need to be technical here. You can take your pen and literally cross out the definite article 'the' between the words "In" and "beginning", as the word is *not* in the original language. It literally should read: "**In beginning God created the heavens and the earth.**"

But why would this be important? It is because *this* beginning – the beginning of the Ages is different from the beginning of each subsequent age, as they also have an ending; but the beginning of the Ages will never have an ending. In this respect, there is only one true beginning of everything, other than God. This point is instructive for us. If the article 'the' was present in the original language, it could indicate that there are other beginnings similar to this beginning. But such is not the case. Hence, God simply stated, "In beginning, God created the heavens and the earth."

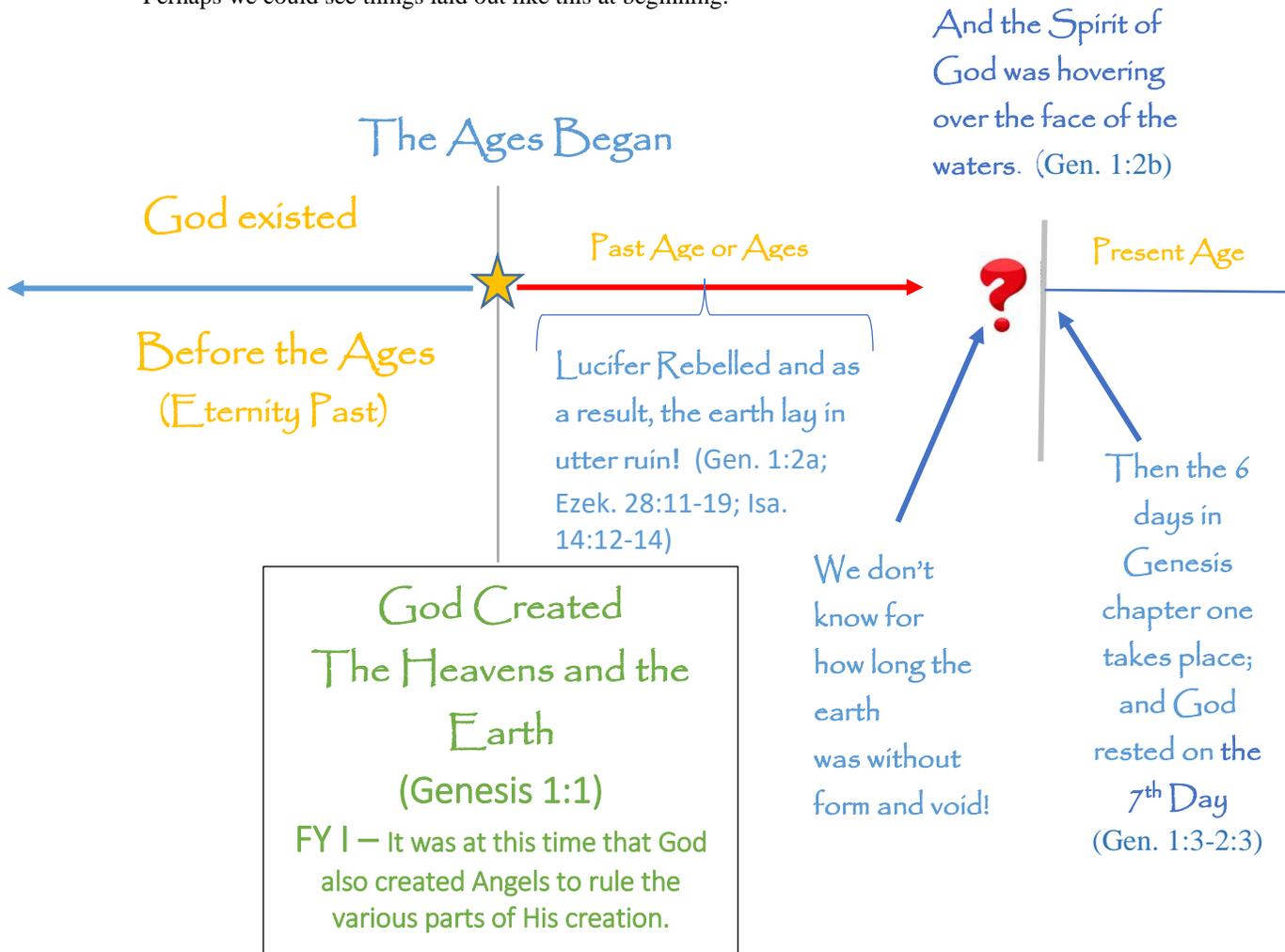
So, the question is: What began at "beginning"? Yes! That is the point! EVERYTHING began then! The whole creation and organization of the Universe, and the hosts of angels throughout the Universe. It all began then. And one of the most important things for us to see in understanding this, is that the AGES began then

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The Book of Acts: Part 1 Lesson Eleven

too. And from that point on, there will be ongoing, perhaps innumerable Ages, each with a beginning and an ending.

Perhaps we could see things laid out like this at beginning:



Please spend a bit of time studying over this timeline. (Hopefully this “picture” is worth a thousand words.) Once you have a good handle on this, then continue in your day’s study.

So, what you have just seen is the distinction between eternity past (with no beginning) and the beginning of the ages (with no end of ages, though each age will have a beginning and an end). Eternity past and the beginning of the ages is separated by the creation. From that point on, there will only be ongoing, unending AGES. What we have all previously understood as “eternity future” is, in one sense, a misnomer! Literally, the word “eternal” or “eternity” is only a concept that can be applied to God Himself.

For more clarity, here is another verse that shows there was a beginning of the ages:

Ephesians 3

9 and to make all see what is the fellowship of the mystery, which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ;

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The Book of Acts: Part 1 Lesson Eleven

For further study on Ages, check out this link: <http://lampbroadcast.org/plets/ppdf3/Ages.pdf>

Day Two — Dispensations

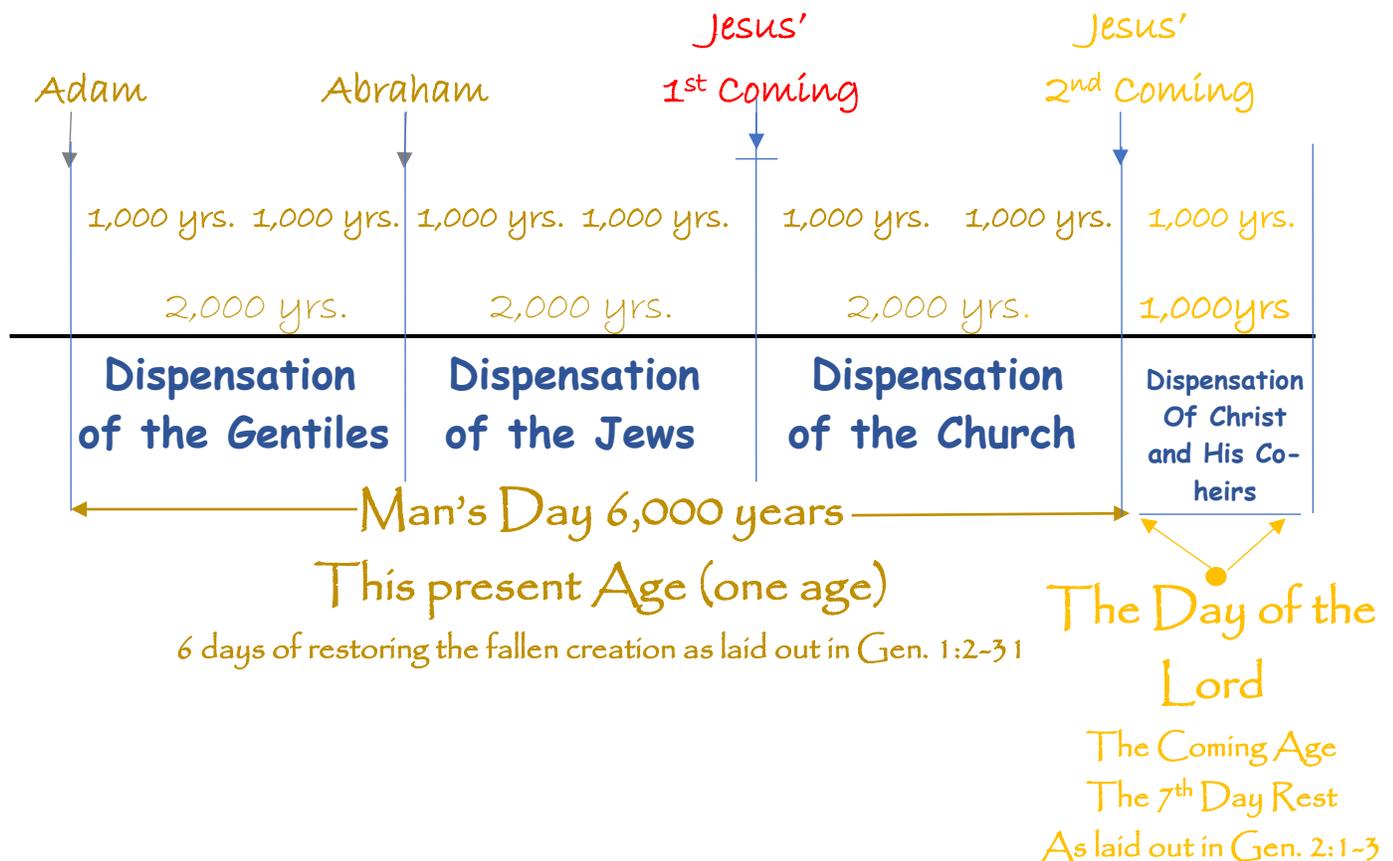
Now that we have some grasp on the distinctions between “Eternity” and the “Ages,” let’s tackle another concept that will be important to understand before we get into the transition that is in the Book of Acts. This is the *dispensational framework of Scripture*. Dispensations do not have to do with a period of time, per se. Rather, dispensations fit into time periods, as we shall soon see.

The word *dispensation* is translated of the Greek word *oikonomia*, which is made up of two words – *house* and *management*. Therefore, the word has to do with the *management of a house*, which is to say from a Scriptural standpoint, God has placed managers (or stewards) in charge of His household.

There are a couple of things that need to be stated here about dispensations:

- First, as we will see, the concept of dispensation has its basis in Scripture (and not just in the history of man’s ideology, as some would teach), and
- Second, a dispensation in and of itself does not denote any specific length of time, although a dispensation or several dispensations can fit into an age.

Perhaps we can grasp it better by studying through another timeline.



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The Book of Acts: Part 1

Lesson Eleven

The Bible reveals overall that there are three groups of people within the history of mankind: Gentile, Jew and Christian. We can see it clearly stated in

I Corinthians 10

32 Give no offense, either to the Jews or to the Greeks [Gentiles] or to the church of God [Christians]...

From an overall Scriptural standpoint, God deals separately with each individual group during Man's Day (see previous timeline) providing a 2,000-year cycle for each dispensation, which then culminates in God dealing with all three groups together during the Lord's Day, the Coming Age.

There is something that should be noted during the Jewish dispensation. While it is a 2,000-year cycle as the others are, there is an interruption in the chronology (so to speak). Daniel deals with this in the prophecy he received in

Daniel 9

25 "Know therefore and understand, That from the going forth of the command To restore and build Jerusalem Until Messiah the Prince, There shall be seven weeks and sixty-two weeks; The street shall be built again, and the wall, Even in troublesome times. 26 And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; And the people of the prince who is to come Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary. The end of it shall be with a flood, And till the end of the war desolations are determined. 27 Then he shall confirm a covenant with many for one week; But in the middle of the week He shall bring an end to sacrifice and offering. And on the wing of abominations shall be one who makes desolate, Even until the consummation, which is determined, Is poured out on the desolate."

You may recognize this as Daniel's 70-week prophecy. God sent the angel Gabriel to give Daniel the timeframe of the final 490 years of the dispensation of the Jews. A 'week' here simply means a "7", and contextually, this reveals that the word "week" is referring to a 7-year period of time². So, 70-sevens (490 years) had been declared for Daniel and his people, the Jews. But, as seen in this passage, even that period has been divided into "seven weeks and sixty-two weeks" (v. 25) and "one week" (v. 27). It is easy to see from vv. 25, 26 that *from the going forth of the command to restore and rebuild Jerusalem until Messiah the Prince... and the Messiah being cut off* [Lit., dies], there will be a total of 69 weeks (or 7+62=69 sevens = 483 years). And then the reference to 1 week (or 7 years) in v. 27.

The command mentioned in v. 25a was given by Artaxerxes around 444 or 445 BC (see Nehemiah chs. 1, 2). And from the time of this command being issued until the crucifixion of Christ there were *exactly* 483 years, when counting from 444 BC to 33 AD using a 360 day calendar, which is what God uses in Scripture. (See the article mentioned in the footnote.) It is at this point (the point of Christ's crucifixion when "Messiah was cut off") that God stopped the clock, so to speak, on the Jewish dispensation and ushered in a new dispensation, the dispensation of the Church. This pushed the last 7 years of Daniel's prophecy forward another 2,000 years. So, the last 7-year period, which will conclude the Jewish dispensation, has yet to play out. This is the 7-year Tribulation, the Time of Jacob's Trouble (Jer. 30:7), which will precede the ushering in of the Messianic Kingdom of the Christ, bringing to a full close the Jewish dispensation.

One way that is helpful to see this is to look at v.26 again, with the break in time noted:

26 And after the sixty-two weeks Messiah shall be cut off, but not for Himself; [insert the 2,000-year dispensation of the church which began on Pentecost (53 days after the crucifixion); then once the church is resurrected/raptured, God will turn His attention back to Israel to conclude His dealings with them,

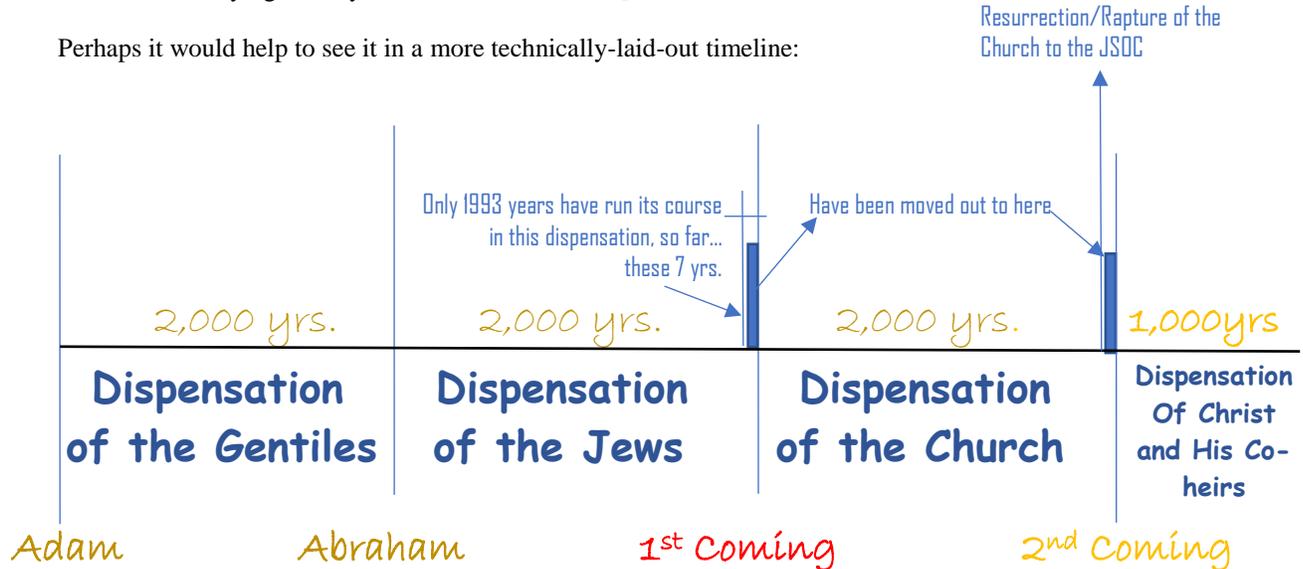
² For more detailed information on Daniel's 70-week prophecy, go to:
<http://lampbroadcast.org/plots/ppdf11/Daniel%E2%80%99s%20Seventy%20Weeks.pdf>

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bringing them to full repentance through the events of the 70th week – the 7-year Tribulation, which will bring their dispensation to a close.] **And the people of the prince who is to come** [referring to the antichrist] **Shall destroy the city and the sanctuary.** [Of course, the actions of the antichrist destroying the city are all future from now.]

Perhaps it would help to see it in a more technically-laid-out timeline:



The space in time between Daniel’s 7 + 62 weeks, and the 1 week is depicted in this timeline. But overall, we can see that each dispensation has a 2,000-year cycle. And so, we can see that there are three dispensations in the present age – Man’s Day, and that we are very near the end of the last of the three.

But let’s consider the Coming Age for a moment. AH! This Age is at the center of ALL things. The writer of Hebrews refers to the fact that God has framed the ages. And of course, we would know that the ages have been framed within the overall *eternal* plan of God:

Hebrews 11

3 By faith we understand that the worlds [Lit., ages] were framed by the word of God

In referring to this verse in Part 5 of his Hebrews Series, Pastor John Herbert writes:

“The word ‘framed’ has to do with setting in place in an orderly arrangement, and as we see this was done by ‘the word of God’ – the audible utterance of Deity. In other words, “God said”, just as we see in Gen.1:3 Then God said.... God said and instantly the ages of eternity past, the present age, the age to come and the endless ages of eternity future were set in place, were structured, in order and perfection in accordance with the Divine plan and purpose for these ages.”

Then here are a few passages we need to consider when contemplating the Day of the Lord, which is the Coming Age, with its own Dispensation:

Ephesians 1

9 having made known to us the mystery of His will, according to His good pleasure which He purposed in Himself, 10 that in the dispensation of the fullness of the times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven and which are on earth-- in Him.

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How does v. 10 refer to this dispensation?

And what is it that God is going to do in that dispensation?

This is God's eternal purpose as we see a couple of chapters later:

Ephesians 3

11 according to the eternal purpose which He accomplished in Christ Jesus our Lord,

We'll remember that God alone is eternal! He is the only One Who has no beginning and no ending. Then technically speaking, we can see that because He is eternal (in the most literal sense of the word), His *purpose* would also have to be seen as eternal (in the literal sense of the word). So, putting these two passages from Ephesians together, we can see God's "good pleasure", which He "purposed in Himself" is that in the "dispensation of the fullness of time" (the Coming Age), He would "bring all things together in Christ, which is "according to his *eternal* purpose which He accomplished in Christ." That's amazing to think about! And perhaps the most amazing thing from our perspective may be the idea that you and I can have a part in this truly eternal plan. In fact, it is amazing to think that we were part of His eternal plan, a plan which literally has no beginning and no ending. Amazing!

Then before we close for today, there is one more thing we need to realize. Let's see that His Word says about this Coming Age. We will read it from the Young's Literal Translation:

Ephesian 3

21 to Him is the glory in the assembly in Christ Jesus, to all the generations of the age of the ages. Amen. (YLT)

Daniel 7

18 and receive the kingdom do the saints of the Most High, and they strengthen the kingdom unto the age, even unto the age of the ages. (YLT)

In your own words, what implication do the underlined phrases have in both the Old and New Testaments?

The Coming Age is considered by God to be "*the* age of the ages". But is *this* all *that* important? Well...if God considers the Coming Age to be THE *age of all the ages*, then what importance should that be to us? What should our view on it be?

You may want to go back to the previous timeline of the Dispensations and circle the last one, and mark it as "The Ages of the Ages", giving it its proper due.

Day Three — The Day of Pentecost

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With what we have seen now on dispensations, it will be easy to see that there was a change in “household manager” at some point after the rejection of Christ by the Nation of Israel. And the point in time when this change was made is easy to see. Jesus had already stated that He was going to withdraw the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens away from the Jews, and would extend the offer to a new nation (Mt. 12:32; 21:41). This “new nation” is the Church, a nation not to be counted among the Gentiles (just as the Jew are not to be counted), but this nation would be a nation wherein citizenship is in heaven. (To grasp the uniqueness of this our heavenly citizenship is a paradigm shift in one’s thinking, to be sure. Perhaps more on that later.)

But back to Pentecost. As we will see, there was a reoffer made to Israel, through the new nation, the Church. In other words, the Jews were being offered the Kingdom of the heavens once again, only now it was the Church (the New Creation) making the offer. Now God was going to use His disciples (sent as Apostles) to give the message of repentance and the kingdom of God to His people, the Jews, for one more period of time. The “keys of the Kingdom of the Heavens” were given to Peter when he made the statement that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of Living God, to which Jesus responded that upon that rock He would build His Church (Mt. 16:13-19). It would be through this new entity — the Church — that a reoffer of the kingdom would be made to the Jews. This reoffer began on the day of Pentecost, and continued to be made to the Jews for about 30 years. The idea of this reoffer can be seen in the parable which Jesus gave to a group of Jewish people who came to Him on one occasion. Read the parable in Luke chapter thirteen.

Luke 13

6 He also spoke this parable: “A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. 7 Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, ‘Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?’ 8 But he answered and said to him, ‘Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. 9 ‘And if it bears fruit, well. But if not, after that you can cut it down.’”

Here a certain man owned a vineyard (a piece of real estate) which had a fig tree planted in it. Of course, the owner of the vineyard expected fruit from the fig tree, but when it produced no fruit after a certain period of time, the owner told the vineyard-keeper to cut it down. For how many years had the fig tree not produce fruit before the command was given to cut it down?

What did the vineyard-keeper ask of the owner?

What was the vineyard-keeper planning on doing to the fig tree for an additional year?

And if the fig tree then produced no fruit, what would be the result for the fig tree?

With this parable, Jesus was prophesying that which was about to take place in Israel. The fig tree represents Israel (Joel 1:6, 7; Hosea 9:10). With the ministry of John the Baptist and the public ministry of Jesus Christ, the call for repentance with an expectation of fruit-bearing had gone forth throughout Israel for a period of *three years*. These three years ended with the crucifixion of Christ. Now the offer of the kingdom was to be withdrawn from the Nation of Israel, for lack of fruitfulness. But, as we shall see in these opening chapters in Acts, God’s plan for Israel was that a reoffer would be made to the Jews through the ministry of the Church. Then, as seen in the parable of the fruitless fig tree, if the Jews did not respond to the offer once again,

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depicted through the symbolism in this parable, the Jews would be set aside, as represented by the fig tree finally being cut down for its continual lack of fruit-bearing.

We will see the symbolism of the work of the vineyard-keeper in this parable play out throughout the majority of the Book of Acts. So, let's get started in this book by reading what happened during the 40 days which followed Christ's resurrection, and then what happened ten days following His ascension.

As you know, Jesus rose from the dead on the third day and spent forty days ministering to His disciples before He ascended to heaven. Luke, the author of the Book of Acts, briefly mentions Jesus' post-resurrection ministry preceding his account of the inception of the Church and the things that took place in the early years of the Church. Luke gives a summary of Christ's post-resurrection ministry in the following verse.

Acts 1

3 To whom He also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the kingdom of God.

According to this verse, during the 40 days in which He presented Himself alive to the disciples, what did Jesus speak about?

Exactly prior to His being taken up, Jesus told His disciples to wait for that which had been promised. (Just before His death, Jesus had promised to send the Spirit of Truth, Who would guide them into all Truth [John 16:13-15].) The Holy Spirit came upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, ten days after Christ's ascension. The disciples began to speak boldly, and a miraculous thing happened. As they spoke, individuals present "out of every nation under heaven" heard them speaking in their own tongues! This caused quite a stir within the city, and Peter stood with the other eleven and gave his first message to the Jews in the re-offer of the kingdom. After quoting the Old Testament prophet Joel (wherein Joel prophesied the outpouring of the Holy Spirit in connection with the coming Day of the Lord [Joel 2:28-32a]), Peter brings to the forefront a few words of King David concerning Jesus Christ. Study this portion of the message. (Remember Jesus had been crucified 53 days prior.)

Acts 2

22 "Men of Israel, hear these words: Jesus of Nazareth, a Man attested by God to you by miracles, wonders, and signs which God did through Him in your midst, as you yourselves also know-- 23 Him, being delivered by the determined purpose and foreknowledge of God, you have taken by lawless hands, have crucified, and put to death; 24 whom God raised up, having loosed the pains of death, because it was not possible that He should be held by it. 25 For David says concerning Him: 'I foresaw the LORD always before my face, For He is at my right hand, that I may not be shaken.

26 Therefore my heart rejoiced, and my tongue was glad; Moreover my flesh also will rest in hope. 27 For You will not leave my soul in Hades, Nor will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption. 28 You have made known to me the ways of life; You will make me full of joy in Your presence.' 29 Men and brethren, let me speak freely to you of the patriarch David, that he is both dead and buried, and his tomb is with us to this day. 30 Therefore, being a prophet, and knowing that God had sworn with an oath to him that of the fruit of his body, according to the flesh, He would raise up the Christ to sit on his throne, 31 he, foreseeing this, spoke concerning the resurrection of the Christ, that His soul was not left in Hades, nor did His flesh see corruption. 32 This Jesus God has raised up, of which we are all witnesses. 33 Therefore 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. 34 For David did

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not ascend into the heavens, but he says himself: ‘The LORD said to my Lord, “Sit at My right hand, 35 Till I make Your enemies Your footstool.”‘ 36 Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.”

What does Peter say the Israelites did in v. 23?

What is the essence of the quote from David, which Peter quoted (vv. 25-28)?

From what we have learned in prior lessons, what is v. 30 about?

What do vv. 34 and 35 say Jesus’ position is now?

The obvious outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples on the day of Pentecost, and Peter making reference to this outpouring through quoting the prophet Joel at the outset of his message (vv. 16-21), is inextricably linked to the coming of the kingdom. The words which Peter continued to address the Jews concerned what David had prophesied, and his bold accusation of their having crucified the Messiah (vv. 23b, and 36b), brought about a very intense reaction on the part of some Jews. Read their response.

Acts 2

37 Now when they heard this, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, “Men and brethren, what shall we do?” 38 Then Peter said to them, “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 39 For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call.” 40 And with many other words he testified and exhorted them, saying, “Be saved from this perverse generation.”

Before we close for today, take a minute to think through their question in v. 37 and Peter’s response, keeping it all in the context of the setting. Jesus had offered the Kingdom of the Heavens to this group of people, who previously, instead of accepting the King and His offer, had crucified Him. (This offer can only be given to people who are already eternally saved. Remember how people prior to Christ’s death were saved – faith in the death and shed blood of the provision God gave – the Passover lambs.) Through the power of the Holy Spirit, Peter gave a message that pierced their hearts. Some of them responded in repentance (repentance being the message John had brought to them three years prior, and the message Jesus had been bringing to them after John – Repent for the Kingdom of the heavens is at hand). The baptism Peter spoke of in v. 38 was the baptism for the forgiveness of their sins *subsequent* to their initial salvation, with specific reference in Peter’s message to the sin of their having crucified the Messiah. Through repentance and baptism, they would “be saved” (lit. *delivered* [Joel 2:32a; cf. Acts 2:21]) from their own generation of leadership who had perverted the truth about these things. Three thousand souls were saved (delivered) that day! Three thousand Jews had come to believe that Jesus Christ was their Messiah.

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There you have it – the beginning of the reoffer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to the Jews, something that remained on offer to them until about 62 AD, which we shall see later.

Do you have any thoughts at this point?

Day Four — The Days Following Pentecost

In the days that followed Pentecost, Peter gave more messages along the same lines as the one given on the Day of Pentecost. As we read these messages, we can ascertain more clearly the obvious focus and direction of the Spirit's leadership as He continued to speak through Peter.

As we read the next recorded message Peter gave, listen to the tenor of his words. See what he was emphasizing to the people and what their different responses were. In Acts chapter three, Peter and John healed a lame man. This miraculous sign (which was a sign for the Jews [I Cor. 1:22], that if they would repent, they too, could be healed) caused some commotion. Peter seized the opportunity to give credit where credit was due, bringing forth the accusation of their crucifying their Messiah and the message of repentance with a view toward healing. Here is what he said to the people:

Acts 3

12 ... So when Peter saw it, he responded to the people: "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? 13 The God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, the God of our fathers, glorified His Servant Jesus, whom you delivered up and denied in the presence of Pilate, when he was determined to let Him go. 14 But you denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked for a murderer to be granted to you, 15 and killed the Prince of life, whom God raised from the dead, of which we are witnesses. 16 And His name, through faith in His name, has made this man strong, whom you see and know. Yes, the faith which comes through Him has given him this perfect soundness in the presence of you all. 17 Yet now, brethren, I know that you did it in ignorance, as did also your rulers. 18 But those things which God foretold by the mouth of all His prophets, that the Christ would suffer, He has thus fulfilled. 19 Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out, so that times of refreshing may come from the presence of the Lord, 20 and that He may send Jesus Christ, who was preached to you before, 21 whom heaven must receive until the times of restoration of all things, which God has spoken by the mouth of all His holy prophets since the world began. 22 For Moses truly said to the fathers, 'The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear in all things, whatever He says to you. 23 And it shall be that every soul who will not hear that Prophet shall be utterly destroyed from among the people.' 24 Yes, and all the prophets, from Samuel and those who follow, as many as have spoken, have also foretold these days. 25 You are sons of the prophets, and of the covenant which God made with our fathers, saying to Abraham, 'And in your seed all the families of the earth shall be blessed.' 26 To you first, God, having raised up His Servant Jesus, sent Him to bless you, in turning away every one of you from your iniquities."

List all that Peter told the people they had done (vv. 13-15).

What does he tell them to do in v. 19a?

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And why does he tell them to do this (v. 19b-21)?

How does Peter then show that Jesus was the One prophesied in the Old Testament?

The result of this message brought 5,000 people to repentance (4:4). It also brought about Peter and John being thrown into jail for the night. The next day the leaders brought the two men into their midst and asked by what power or by what name had they done this miraculous sign. Peter seized the opportunity again. Here is what he said to *the leaders of Israel*.

Acts 4

8 ... “Rulers of the people and elders of Israel: 9 If we this day are judged for a good deed done to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, 10 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. 11 This is the ‘stone which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone.’ 12 Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved.”

So, what was the accusation brought by Peter against the rulers and elders (v. 10)?

Reread v. 11. Do the words sound familiar to you? Jesus quoted these words the week prior to His death to the leaders after He had given them the parable of the vineyard, at which time He withdrew the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens from the Nation (Mt. 21:42-43).

Again, let’s note that Peter was speaking to the rulers of Israel! This generation of Jews was unique in all of history in that they had been saved under the Law (their faith in the provision God had given through the Passover lambs), but now, with Christ’s death on the cross, the Law of sacrifices for the removal of their ongoing sins was no long efficacious! These Jews *had to be given an opportunity to repent of their ongoing sins on a new basis* because, like all saved individuals, there must be a provision for the cleansing of the sin of redeemed people. And once Christ had gone to the cross, the old system of priestly sacrifices was null and void. And hence Peter’s words in v. 12. Can you see that?

The leaders feared to do any harm to Peter and John at this point because all the people esteemed them. But they warned Peter and John not to speak in this Name (the Name of Jesus) anymore, to which they replied, “*Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard.*” (Acts 4:19b, 20)

The disciples continued to speak out boldly in the Name of Jesus Christ (Acts 4:31). And the few fishermen whom Jesus had called three years prior were beginning to turn the world upside down (Acts 17:6). Many signs and wonders were taking place among the people; multitudes of men and women were constantly being added to their numbers (Acts 5:12, 14). Even a good number of the priests were beginning to believe (Acts 6:7). This brought about great jealousy on the part of the leadership of the Jews, and the apostles were seized and placed in a public jail (5:17, 18). But an angel appeared to them that night, and spoke to them saying,

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“Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life (Acts 5:20)” They were miraculously released from prison and they obeyed the words of the angel.

The following day when the leadership sent for the apostles to be brought from the prison in order to be questioned by them, they were told that the prison was locked up tight, but that the prisoners were all gone from the prison, and in fact, they were standing in the temple teaching the people (just as they had been told to do by the angel)! The apostles were brought to the Council, and the Council said to them: **“Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this name? And look, you have filled Jerusalem with your doctrine, and intend to bring this Man’s blood on us!” (Acts 5:28)**

Now catch what the Council had just said! What did they say that the apostles intended to do? (cf. Mt. 27:25)

It is as if they didn’t want to admit the fact that they were indeed the ones responsible for crucifying Jesus Christ! They were obviously nowhere close to repenting from that sin.

Read Peter’s response to them –

Acts 5

29 ...”We ought to obey God rather than men. 30 The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. 31 Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel and forgiveness of sins. 32 And we are His witnesses to these things, and so also is the Holy Spirit whom God has given to those who obey Him.”

What had the leadership demanded them not to do (Acts 4:19b, 20)?

But what did the angel tell them to do?

Once again, for what actions had the leadership admonished them?

What Peter say to the Council in Acts 5: 29-32.

Here is the response of the Council –

33 When they heard this, they were furious and plotted to kill them.

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But Gamaliel, a respected leader of the Jews, strongly urged them to take a wait-and-see posture, cautioning them to proceed slowly just in case their message was indeed from God:

38 “And now I say to you, keep away from these men and let them alone; for if this plan or this work is of men, it will come to nothing; 39 but if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it--lest you even be found to fight against God.”

40 And they agreed with him, and when they had called for the apostles and beaten them, they commanded that they should not speak in the name of Jesus, and let them go. 41 So they departed from the presence of the council, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name. 42 And daily in the temple, and in every house, they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ.

There is an interesting pattern of behavior developing here between the obvious message that God desires to be brought to His people and the reaction of the leadership to this message. What is the pattern you see?

Interesting, isn't it?

Day Five — Miraculous Signs Among the People

In the past two days of study we have begun to look at the transitory nature of the Book of Acts. Acts is the book which sits between the gospels and the epistles, and opens with a brief description of Jesus' 40-day post-resurrection ministry, and His ascension into glory (Acts 1). Ten days later, on the Day of Pentecost, the Church was instituted (Acts 2). Of course, at this point the very early Church consisted solely of Jews who had believed in Jesus as their Messiah.

Although Jesus had withdrawn His offer of the Heavenly Kingdom from the Jews in the week leading up to His death (Mt. 21:33-44), we have seen that Jesus had previously given a parable which revealed that there was going to be a re-offer made to the Jews after His death (Luke 13:6-9), only in the reoffer, God would use the newly instituted Church to present the Heavenly Kingdom to Israel. Again, this period of the re-offer to Israel is covered throughout the Book of Acts – from 33AD through about 62AD.

During the early years of the dispensation, Peter and the Apostles' ministry was abounding with *miraculous signs* among the people, and then also Stephen's. Let's read about it:

Acts 2

43 Then fear came upon every soul, and many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.

Acts 5

12 And through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon's Porch.

Acts 6

8 And Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders among the people.

In thinking about these individuals called and empowered by God to perform these signs among the people, let's note a few things about the early Church. During the very early years of the dispensation, the Church

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was solely located in and around Jerusalem. According to these verses, describe what was happening at this time.

With the Church located in Jerusalem during these early years, who were the people among whom the signs were being done?

So, let's realize a few things about *miraculous signs* by going back to where they are first mentioned in Scripture. (We'll remember what we learned about the First Mention Principle in Part I of our Survey: When anything is mentioned for the first time in God's Word, its foundation is laid, upon which we are to build our understanding of that topic. This foundation then will remain unchanged and unalterable throughout Scripture.) The first mention of miraculous signs being performed by individuals was during Moses' day, followed by Joshua (some 2,500 years into mankind's history), and then forefront again during the days of the Prophet Elijah followed by Elisha. At both times, both *Israel and the Kingdom were in view*, laying the foundation for proper understanding of signs, wonders, and miracles. *Israel and the Kingdom* must be in view *together* in order for signs, wonders, and miracles to be present.

During Moses' day, God had redeemed the Children of Israel out of bondage in Egypt for the purpose of taking them into the Promised Land with the view to setting up the Theocratic Kingdom. Moses and Aaron, and then later Joshua, had been empowered by God to do various *miraculous signs*, which would not only be their credentials to Israel showing that they had been sent by God with a message about the kingdom, but also the signs themselves would point to the message being given. (Prior to this time, of course, miracles had been done, but only by God. God empowering individuals to do miraculous signs was first seen here, and not before.) But now, signs would be the credentials for the messengers sent by God to Israel:

Exodus 4

1 Then Moses answered and said, "But suppose they will not believe me or listen to my voice; suppose they say, 'The LORD has not appeared to you.'" 2 So the LORD said to him, "What is that in your hand?" He said, "A rod." 3 And He said, "Cast it on the ground." So he cast it on the ground, and it became a serpent; and Moses fled from it. 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Reach out your hand and take it by the tail" (and he reached out his hand and caught it, and it became a rod in his hand), 5 "that they may believe that the LORD God of their fathers, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob, has appeared to you." 6 Furthermore the LORD said to him, "Now put your hand in your bosom." And he put his hand in his bosom, and when he took it out, behold, his hand was leprous, like snow. 7 And He said, "Put your hand in your bosom again." So he put his hand in his bosom again, and drew it out of his bosom, and behold, it was restored like his other flesh. 8 "Then it will be, if they do not believe you, nor heed the message of the first sign, that they may believe the message of the latter sign. 9 And it shall be, if they do not believe even these two signs, or listen to your voice, that you shall take water from the river and pour it on the dry land. And the water which you take from the river will become blood on the dry land."

Do you see how God explained to Moses that the signs would validate to the people that He had in fact sent Moses? God was sending Moses and Aaron with a message to the Jews, and empowered the two to perform miracles as a sign so that the people would believe. Then here is the result recorded at the end of the same chapter:

Exodus 4

29 Then Moses and Aaron went and gathered together all the elders of the children of Israel. 30 And Aaron spoke all the words which the LORD had spoken to Moses. Then he

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did the signs in the sight of the people. 31 So the people believed; and when they heard that the LORD had visited the children of Israel and that He had looked on their affliction, then they bowed their heads and worshiped.

The other time in the Old Testament where God empowered individuals to perform miraculous signs was during Elijah and Elisha's ministry. It was a time long after the Theocracy had been set up, but due to the Nation's ongoing disobedience, God sent Elijah, and then later Elisha, to call the Nation to repentance. Signs and wonders accompanied these two prophets' ministry in order to show the Jews that they had, in fact, been sent by God with a message of repentance. *The Kingdom* and *Israel* were both in view again, which had to be the case, as that had been the prerequisites laid in the foundation in the first mention of signs and wonders in Scripture. At this time, if Israel did not repent, the Kingdom would cease to exist (only to be established later in fulfillment of God's promises), and Israel would be scattered among the nations. This is exactly what happened. Israel didn't repent, the Assyrian and Babylonian captivities ensued, the kingdom within Israel ceased, and the Times of the Gentiles was ushered in.

There is no other record in the Old Testament of any individual being empowered to perform miraculous signs. Again, God Himself performed miracles, but as far as individuals being empowered to perform signs, these are the only ones. And it was when *Israel* and *the Kingdom* were in view, as must be the case due to the foundation laid out at the first.

Now, fast-forward to the days of Christ's ministry. Signs were an integral part of His ministry. Jews were back in the Land, and the Kingdom of the Heavens was in view. And the Jews understood that signs, wonders, and miracles would accompany the Messiah. See John 2:18; Mt. 16:1.)

John 21

25 And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.

Jesus' healing of so many sick within the Nation was to reveal that Israel as a Nation was sick! (Read Isa. 1:4-6.) The miraculous signs of healing were to point to the fact that the One Who is able to save them from their sin-sickness and deliver them into the Kingdom was the One performing the miracles. But alas! Most within the Nation would not believe.

So, it would only make sense that in the re-offer of the Kingdom, the messengers coming with the same message as Jesus and His Disciples would be empowered to deliver the message accompanied by signs, wonders, and miracles. After all, both the Jews and the Kingdom were in view. And so, we can see that Peter, the Apostles and Stephen were all empowered by God to perform miraculous signs, and later others during the reoffer of the Kingdom to the Jews, including Paul. For it is:

I Corinthians 1

22 For Jews request [require] a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

Next week, we'll continue to see how all this plays out throughout the remainder of the re-offer of *the Kingdom* to the *Jews*. But for now, we will close our study for this week. You are doing a great job! Keep it up.

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Lesson Twelve — The Book of Acts: Part 2

Day One — Stephen’s Message

Day Two — More on Stephen’s Message

Day Three — The Conclusion of Stephen’s Message

Day Four — Paul’s Ministry

Day Five — The Epistles

Last week we began to consider the Book of Acts, and the transition this book makes between the gospels and the epistles. There are several reasons that the understanding of the things we are studying on Acts is so important. One thing that must be understood is that a new dispensation began on the Day of Pentecost – the Dispensation of the Church. And along with this, a new group of ‘household stewards’ comes into view. But remember, initially the Church was made up solely of Jews and was centered in and around Jerusalem. Eventually the Jews who wanted nothing to do with the Church began persecuting the Jews who made up the Church, which brought about some changes. So let’s begin our study this week looking at what was happening.

Days One — Stephen’s Message

After Pentecost, the basic message of the day to the Jews in Jerusalem was – Repent from crucifying the Messiah so that the times of refreshing could come from the presence of the Lord (3:19, 20). Though numerous individuals within the Nation did repent, the Nation as a whole (led by the Pharisees and Sadducees) was called upon to repent from that sin, in order for Jesus to return and set up His kingdom. (Notice that Jews and the Kingdom are both in view here.) God used Peter, as the major spokesman, during this time throughout Jerusalem to give this message. Though many Jews, including many priests (Acts 6:7), were responding to the message of repentance, we come to a place now where we will see God bringing this message in Jerusalem to a climax.

Remembering what we learned in last week’s study about what was going on in Jerusalem in the days following Pentecost, we can know that things were heating up. Signs, wonders and miracles were being performed by the Apostles, and many Jews were joining the ranks of the Church. This did not sit well with leadership within the Nation, and some severe persecution began.

This was about the time Stephen somewhat comes to the forefront (Acts chps. 6, 7). There is much we can learn in Scripture from the message Stephen gave just prior to his martyrdom. So we’ll spend some time looking at it.

In order to correctly understand the power with which Stephen’s message went forth, and to correctly understand the effect it had on those who heard his message, we would have to know that Stephen was filled with the Holy Spirit to give a very *purposeful* message to the leadership. We are going to spend a bit of time on his message because in seeing it correctly we will learn even more as to how God gives His Word! Otherwise, Stephen’s message might appear to be simply a history lesson of the Jews.

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But it is much, much more than just a lesson to the Jews about their history. The Jews knew what Stephen meant by what he was saying. His words had the potential of either bringing about such a *strong positive response* that it could bring about national repentance bringing about the times of refreshing about which Peter spoke, or his words had the potential of bringing about *such a strong negative response* that they would kill him for it. We know the outcome, but let's look at the details of it. The first part of his message reminds them of what God had done for Abraham. (As you read through this, try to hear Stephen's words with Jewish ears, so to speak.)

Acts 7

2 And he said, “Brethren and fathers, listen: The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham when he was in Mesopotamia, before he dwelt in Haran, 3 and said to him, ‘Get out of your country and from your relatives, and come to a land that I will show you.’ 4 Then he came out of the land of the Chaldeans and dwelt in Haran. And from there, when his father was dead, He moved him to this land in which you now dwell. 5 And God gave him no inheritance in it, not even enough to set his foot on. But even when Abraham had no child, He promised to give it to him for a possession, and to his descendants after him. 6 But God spoke in this way: that his descendants would dwell in a foreign land, and that they would bring them into bondage and oppress them four hundred years. 7 ‘And the nation to whom they will be in bondage I will judge,’ said God, ‘and after that they shall come out and serve Me in this place.’ 8 Then He gave him the covenant of circumcision; and so Abraham begot Isaac and circumcised him on the eighth day; and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs.

Of what did Stephen remind the leadership? Do you remember the details of what you have previously learned concerning the promises given to Abraham? (The Jews of Stephen's day would have understood exactly what Stephen was saying to them through this reminder.) Write out what you understand Stephen to be saying.

Now Stephen jumps ahead to a time in the history of the Jews where brothers came against a brother due to jealousy of their father's favor upon this one son. Stephen reminds these leaders about the actions of Joseph's brothers and what God brought about as a result. Continuing in Acts 7 —

8b ... “and Isaac begot Jacob, and Jacob begot the twelve patriarchs. 9 And the patriarchs, becoming envious, sold Joseph into Egypt. But God was with him 10 and delivered him out of all his troubles, and gave him favor and wisdom in the presence of Pharaoh, king of Egypt; and he made him governor over Egypt and all his house. 11 Now a famine and great trouble came over all the land of Egypt and Canaan, and our fathers found no sustenance. 12 But when Jacob heard that there was grain in Egypt, he sent out our fathers first. 13 And the second time Joseph was made known to his brothers, and Joseph's family became known to the Pharaoh. 14 Then Joseph sent and called his father Jacob and all his relatives to him, seventy-five people. 15 So Jacob went down to Egypt; and he died, he and our fathers. 16 And they were carried back to Shechem and laid in the tomb that Abraham bought for a sum of money from the sons of Hamor, the father of Shechem...”

Do you remember what the sons of Jacob did to Joseph, their brother (see Gen. 37) ? What was it?

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Why did they do it (v. 9)?

What did God do with Joseph? (Remember, Egypt is a picture of the world.)

After Joseph had been mistreated by his brothers, what happened in the land, both in Egypt and Canaan?

With Joseph apart from his brothers, a great famine hit the land, and great affliction with it. God granted Joseph the ability to translate a dream that the Pharaoh had, giving the Pharaoh knowledge of the upcoming famine, resulting in Egypt storing enough grain to cover the years of the famine. But Jacob and his family had no knowledge of the upcoming famine, and therefore suffered the affliction of it. Finally, Jacob sent his sons to Egypt to see if they could buy grain. The *first time* the brothers were before Joseph, does it appear they recognized him?

What happened on their *second visit*?

Stephen, as directed by the Holy Spirit, points out to the Council that Joseph appeared before them and revealed his identity to his brothers *the second time* (v. 13), and the Jews listening to Stephen would have known that upon the brothers' realization of this, the family of Jacob was well cared for.

What could this portion of their history have revealed to these Jews listening to Stephen about themselves?

We'll pick it up tomorrow.

Days Two — More on Stephen's Message

Stephen continues with the details of the nation's history, as the Holy Spirit directed him to speak for a specific purpose. He mentions again the promises given to Abraham (v. 17), reminding them that God's plan was unfolding. Continuing —

Acts 7

17 “But when the time of the promise drew near which God had sworn to Abraham, the people grew and multiplied in Egypt 18 till another king arose who did not know Joseph. 19 This man dealt treacherously with our people, and oppressed our forefathers, making them expose their babies, so that they might not live. 20 At this time Moses was born, and was well pleasing to God; and he was brought up in his father's house for three months. 21 But when he was set out, Pharaoh's daughter took him away and brought him up as her own son. 22 And Moses was learned in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and was mighty in words and deeds. 23 Now when he was forty years old, it came into his heart to visit his brethren, the

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children of Israel. 24 And seeing one of them suffer wrong, he defended and avenged him who was oppressed, and struck down the Egyptian. 25 For he supposed that his brethren would have understood that God would deliver them by his hand, but they did not understand. 26 And the next day he appeared to two of them as they were fighting, and tried to reconcile them, saying, ‘Men, you are brethren; why do you wrong one another?’ 27 But he who did his neighbor wrong pushed him away, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? 28 Do you want to kill me as you did the Egyptian yesterday?’ 29 Then, at this saying, Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons...

Stephen points out a time in their history wherein the Jews were under the authority of a harsh ruler – an Egyptian Pharaoh. Stephen brings Moses into the picture, but watch Stephen’s comments carefully. He knew that these Jews who were before him thought of themselves as disciples of Moses (John 9:28). And remember, too, what Jesus had told the Jews earlier – “For if you believed Moses, you would believe Me; for he wrote of Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?” (John 5:46, 47).

Stephen points out that Moses supposed that his brethren understood that God was granting them deliverance through him. But what was the case (v. 25b)?

The day after this event took place, Moses came upon two Hebrew brothers who were fighting, and he interrupted them. What was their response to Moses (vv. 27, 28)?

Yes, Stephen points out how their fathers treated Moses, even mockingly asking, “Who made you to be ruler and judge over us?”

(This is interesting! Stephen points out something that happened to Moses, which was very similar to that which had happened to Joseph. Joseph had had a dream and told the dream to his brothers saying, **“Please hear this dream which I have dreamed: There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Then behold, my sheaf arose and also stood upright; and indeed your sheaves stood all around and bowed down to my sheaf.”** And his brothers said to him, **“Shall you indeed reign over us? Or shall you indeed have dominion over us?”** So they hated him even more for his dreams and for his words. [Gen. 37:6-8].)

What is the pattern Stephen is pointing out to the Jews about their history?

Stephen continues –

29b “ ... Moses fled and became a dweller in the land of Midian, where he had two sons. 30 And when forty years had passed, an Angel of the Lord appeared to him in a flame of fire in a bush, in the wilderness of Mount Sinai. 31 When Moses saw it, he marveled at the sight; and as he drew near to observe, the voice of the Lord came to him, 32 saying, ‘I am the God of your fathers--the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob.’ And Moses trembled and dared not look. 33 ‘Then the LORD said to him, “Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground. 34 I have surely seen the oppression of my

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people who are in Egypt; I have heard their groaning and have come down to deliver them. And now come, I will send you to Egypt.”⁴

What did God see and hear in Egypt?

What was God going to do for His people?

As Stephen points out, after these two Hebrew men mocked and rejected Moses, he fled the country. After Moses had departed, the Israelites began being more oppressed than ever and they groaned under the weight of the slavery. God heard their groans and finally sent *the very one who had been rejected* to deliver them. Are you seeing that that which Stephen is telling them is more than just a history lesson?

Now watch how many times Stephen points out “this Moses,” or “this man,” or “this is the one” —

35 “This Moses whom they rejected, saying, ‘Who made you a ruler and a judge?’ is the one God sent to be a ruler and a deliverer by the hand of the Angel who appeared to him in the bush. 36 He brought them out, after he had shown wonders and signs in the land of Egypt, and in the Red Sea, and in the wilderness forty years. 37 This is that Moses who said to the children of Israel, ‘The LORD your God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from your brethren. Him you shall hear.’ 38 This is he who was in the congregation in the wilderness with the Angel who spoke to him on Mount Sinai, and with our fathers, the one who received the living oracles to give to us,

List the things Stephen reminds the Jews about Moses:

Then Stephen tells them something they already knew –

39 “whom our fathers would not obey, but rejected. And in their hearts they turned back to Egypt, 40 saying to Aaron, ‘Make us gods to go before us; as for this Moses who brought us out of the land of Egypt, we do not know what has become of him.’ 41 And they made a calf in those days, offered sacrifices to the idol, and rejoiced in the works of their own hands. 42 Then God turned and gave them up to worship the host of heaven, as it is written in the book of the Prophets: ‘Did you offer Me slaughtered animals and sacrifices during forty years in the wilderness, O house of Israel? 43 You also took up the tabernacle of Moloch, And the star of your god Remphan, Images which you made to worship; And I will carry you away beyond Babylon.’...

What does Stephen remind the Jews that their fathers had done?

As a result, what did God do?

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After reminding the Jews of what God did with the generation of Jews who disowned Moses, he reminds them of the following generation, those who were taken into the land by Joshua –

44 “Our fathers had the tabernacle of witness in the wilderness, as He appointed, instructing Moses to make it according to the pattern that he had seen, 45 “which our fathers, having received it in turn, also brought with Joshua into the land possessed by the Gentiles, whom God drove out before the face of our fathers until the days of David,

What did God do for the second generation through Joshua?

Then Stephen mentions King David, drawing attention to *regal* issues surrounding Israel. Again this is with a purpose!

Continuing —

46 “who found favor before God and asked to find a dwelling for the God of Jacob. 47 “But Solomon built Him a house. 48 However, the Most High does not dwell in temples made with hands, as the prophet says: 49 ‘Heaven is My throne, And earth is My footstool. What house will you build for Me? says the LORD, Or what is the place of My rest? 50 Has My hand not made all these things?’...

Any knowledgeable Jew would have been immediately mindful of God’s dealings with David, especially the promises made to David in II Samuel chapter seven concerning one of his descendants Who would sit on his (David’s) throne, and Whose Kingdom would be an Everlasting Kingdom.

Look at the first half of v. 49. What two realms does Stephen mention here, quoting from the prophet Isaiah?

Now look at the last half of v. 49. What is the question God asks?

(The word for *rest* (v. 49) is the same word for *rest* in Isa. 66:1. Do you remember in Genesis 2:1-3, that God rested on the seventh day and set aside the seventh day [the day of rest] as holy? Later, God gave the Sabbath day as a sign for the Jews, something to which they were to look forward. Even now there is a Sabbath rest yet future for the people of God [Heb. 4:9]. It is a day set aside, a day of rest, a Sabbath rest. We’ll study more on that in upcoming weeks.)

Remembering that Jesus offered the heavenly realm of the kingdom to the Jews, what is the implication in what Stephen says in vv. 48 and 49?

Days Three — The Conclusion of Stephen’s Message

This is the climax of the historical portion of Stephen’s message, ending with the mention of the dual realms of the kingdom. This would certainly have reminded the Jews of the message which they had rejected and

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in the process of rejecting and crucifying the Messenger. All the parts leading up to this part of Stephen's message, along with the reminder of the dual realm of God's throne would have served to remind the Jews of the message Jesus had brought to them – "Repent, for *the Kingdom of the Heavens* is at hand."

Look closely for a moment at all the elements of Stephen's "history lesson" for the Jews.

- First Stephen mentions the call of Abraham and the promises God gave to him – promises that include a land (v. 3), an inheritance in that land (v. 5), and descendants (vv. 5b, 6).
- Then he reminds them of Joseph, the favored son, who had been rejected by his brothers, sold into slavery and later elevated to the second highest position in all of Egypt, pointing out to them that trouble came upon them after they sold Joseph – trouble in the form of a severe famine in the land.
- Then he mentions the fact that years later, in the first visit, the brothers didn't recognize Joseph, but upon their *second visit* with him, his identity is revealed to them, and they are blessed through him.
- Then Stephen gives a fairly lengthy account of Moses and how their fathers had repudiated Moses, the one who "was lovely in the sight of God" and chosen by Him to lead the Children of Israel out of bondage. This same Moses is the one their fathers – those of the first generation – had disowned and disobeyed, and as a result, their fathers had been laid low in the wilderness – they died before receiving their inheritance.
- Then he mentions *regality*, bringing King David into the forefront. It is at this point that Stephen packs the final punch...
- All of these historical reminders have a purpose in view — bringing the nation to repentance for crucifying the Messiah, *the very One to Whom all these pictures point!*

Stephen says –

51 "You stiffnecked and uncircumcised in heart and ears! You always resist the Holy Spirit; as your fathers did, so do you. 52 Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One, of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers, 53 who have received the law by the direction of angels and have not kept it."

Stephen draws a comparison between what their fathers had done, and what they had done. Put into your own words what the comparison is.

This message, given by Stephen, was under the specific guidance and direction of the Holy Spirit (v. 55). It was a powerful message, designed to bring about recognition and repentance on the part of those listening to it. The nation of Israel, as directed by their leadership, needed to repent from their rebellious, sinful ways (particularly that of rejecting and crucifying the Messiah) so that the Messiah could usher in His kingdom, and bring about the blessings connected with the promises given to Abraham. In particular, they needed to repent from rejecting and crucifying the Messiah. And *if the leadership would lead Israel in national repentance for their sin*, then Jesus, the Holy and Righteous One, would come a *second time* (they had rejected Him the first time), bringing in the period of restoration and times of refreshing from the presence of the Lord, restoring the kingdom to Israel (Acts 3:19-21; cf. 1:6).

What would be the leadership's response to this powerful message?

54 When they heard these things they were cut to the heart, and they gnashed at him with their teeth.

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Apparently, so ready was the Father to send Jesus back (upon their repentance) that Stephen was allowed to witness something taking place in the heavens. He was allowed to witness Jesus standing, as if ready to return.

55 But he, being full of the Holy Spirit, gazed into heaven and saw the glory of God, and Jesus standing at the right hand of God, 56 and said, “Look! I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the right hand of God!”

What position is Jesus in at this moment?

Prior to Stephen seeing Jesus standing, it had already been mentioned by Peter on the day of Pentecost that Jesus *had taken His seat* at the right hand of the Father, which would be His position until the Father sends Him back, at which time His enemies would be made a footstool for His feet (Mk. 16:19; Acts 2:34, 35). And now Stephen looks into heaven, sees the glory of God, and *Jesus standing!* What an awesome sight! What an awesome thought! Standing, ready to be sent back a second time, if the leadership responded in repentance to this Spirit-directed message. What would be their response?

57 Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord; 58 and they cast him out of the city and stoned him. And the witnesses laid down their clothes at the feet of a young man named Saul. 59 And they stoned Stephen as he was calling on God and saying, “Lord Jesus, receive my spirit.” 60 Then he knelt down and cried out with a loud voice, “Lord, do not charge them with this sin.” And when he had said this, he fell asleep.

The heavens closed up and, evidently, Jesus took His seat once again at the right hand of the Father, and is presently waiting (Ps. 110:1)! It is important to see that this is a major turning point in the New Testament. Of course this event did not catch God by surprise. A way had to be made for the Gentiles to be grafted in. We will see the beginning of this in Day Five, and then throughout the remainder of this workbook.

(*There is a chart on the last page of this lesson that compares what Stephen lays out in his message.)

Days Four — Paul’s Ministry

With the martyrdom of Stephen, it had become clear that the nation of Israel, as a whole — led by the Pharisees, Chief Priests and Sadducees — was not going to repent. Through the messages given to them by both Peter and Stephen, they had had several opportunities to do so; but the rejection at the conclusion of Stephen’s message seems to be somewhat of a climactic rejection, bringing about a change in direction in the Book of Acts. God had prepared a way for the Gentiles to be grafted into the family of Abraham, and this was going to come to the forefront now.

The preponderance of the remainder of this Bible study will be made of that which follows the event that took place in Acts chapter seven.

There is a person who now comes to the forefront. Did you notice toward the end of the Acts chapter seven a man named Saul was mentioned (v. 58)? Saul (his Hebrew name), better known as Paul (his Greek name), was zealous for his Hebrew tradition. He had been “circumcised the eighth day, was of the nation of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of Hebrews; as to the Law, a Pharisee; as to zeal, a persecutor of the church; as to the righteousness which is in the Law, found blameless” (Phil. 3:5, 6). But something happened to him one day subsequent to Stephen’s death that changed the direction of his whole life and he was never the same again.

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After Stephen's martyrdom, many Jews who had become followers of Christ fled from Jerusalem into the neighboring cities and countryside. Saul was going into these different cities in order to bring these Christians back to Jerusalem to be punished. It was on one of these trips that the Lord appeared to him, striking him blind. A dialogue ensued between Saul and the Lord Jesus Christ which forever changed him.

Saul was 'converted' on that day (Acts 9:3-6), that is to say that Saul changed his mind about Jesus Christ. His blindness remained for three days; but as soon as his sight was restored, he immediately and boldly began proclaiming in the synagogues that Jesus was the Son of God (9:20). (Remember what that title 'Son of God' means!) It was some time later once Saul began his ministry, he became known more as Paul, than Saul (Acts 13:9).

Initially, Paul spent as many as three years in the Arabian desert, being divinely taught the revelation of Jesus Christ, by Jesus Himself, and was shown that he was to take the message of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles (Gal. 1:11-18).

In short, God raised up Paul to take the Gospel into the whole world. In the years that followed, Paul made three different journeys into different parts of the known world, establishing the Church in the various areas. Upon arriving in a particular city, he would first go to the synagogue and speak to the Jews about Jesus Christ. When that fellowship of Jews rejected the message (which they did time after time), he then went into the streets and by-ways of that area, giving the message to the Gentiles.

He brought a two-fold message to the Gentiles.

- Firstly, he brought the *gospel of the grace of God* to the unsaved people, giving them the good news concerning the death and shed blood of Jesus, and the fact that, through faith in Jesus, they could be saved from their sins (e.g. Acts 16:30, 31).
- Secondly, he brought the *gospel of the glories of Christ* to saved people, giving them the good news concerning the purpose for their salvation, instructing them that they have been saved for a purpose, telling them what that purpose is.
- Finally, in the end, he gave the *complete* message, strongly establishing the Church in the Word of God. This is exemplified in what Paul told the elders of Ephesus at Miletus after his third journey, having spent three years ministering to the people in Asia –

Acts 20

18 And when they had come to him, he said to them: "You know, from the first day that I came to Asia, in what manner I always lived among you, 19 serving the Lord with all humility, with many tears and trials which happened to me by the plotting of the Jews; 20 how I kept back nothing that was helpful, but proclaimed it to you, and taught you publicly and from house to house, 21 testifying to Jews, and also to Greeks, repentance toward God and faith toward our Lord Jesus Christ. ...

24 "But none of these things move me; nor do I count my life dear to myself, so that I may finish my race with joy, and the ministry which I received from the Lord Jesus, to testify to the gospel of the grace of God. 25 And indeed, now I know that you all, among whom I have gone preaching the kingdom of God, will see my face no more. 26 Therefore I testify to you this day that I am innocent of the blood of all men. 27 For I have not shunned to declare to you the whole counsel of God....

According to what Paul says in vv. 24 and 25, what would make up *the whole council of God*?

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As Paul continued to travel from city to city, he continued to go first to the synagogues before going to the Gentiles. But time after time the Jews rejected him and plotted against him. He suffered many things at the hands of his foes, Jews and Gentiles alike.

Several different times, Paul verbalized a judgment against the Jews. The first was in Antioch, a city in the region of Pisidian (not Syria). Paul gave a message to the Jews, which, interestingly enough, was actually very similar to the message which he had heard Stephen give just prior to Stephen's stoning. (You can read what Paul said to the Jews of this city in Acts 13:16-41.) His message ended with this warning —

Acts 13

38 “Therefore let it be known to you, brethren, that through this Man is preached to you the forgiveness of sins; 39 “and by Him everyone who believes is justified from all things from which you could not be justified by the law of Moses. 40 “Beware therefore, lest what has been spoken in the prophets come upon you: 41 “Behold, you despisers, Marvel and perish! For I work a work in your days, A work which you will by no means believe, Though one were to declare it to you.”“

The following week, a great number of Jews came to hear Paul speak to them in the synagogue. The Jewish leaders of the city became jealous and began contradicting the things Paul said (v. 45). But Paul was not deterred and spoke these condemning words —

Acts 13

46 Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, “It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. 47 For so the Lord has commanded us: ‘I have set you as a light to the Gentiles, that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth.’“

48 Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed.

Another time Paul brought a verbal judgment against the Jews, explaining that he would take this message to the Gentiles, was when he was in Corinth, where he ended up spending a year and a half. Upon his arrival in Corinth, the Scripture says that Paul spent every Sabbath in the synagogue trying to persuade both Jews and Greeks concerning Jesus Christ.

Acts 18

... 6 But when they opposed him and blasphemed, he shook his garments and said to them, “Your blood be upon your own heads; I am clean. From now on I will go to the Gentiles.”

Paul had fulfilled his responsibility before the Lord in warning his brethren!

Shortly after this incident in Corinth, at the beginning of his stay there, the Lord spoke to Paul in a night vision saying, **“Do not be afraid, but speak, and do not keep silent; 10 for I am with you, and no one will attack you to hurt you; for I have many people in this city.”**

Paul had many more travels and many more converts. Along the way, he brought the light of the Gospel to the Gentiles across the known world. The Book of Acts closes with the Jews imprisoning Paul in Jerusalem and his asking to go to Rome, having appealed to Caesar. While in Rome, Paul called together the leading men of the Jews. When he had them together, he basically explained the essence of his ministry (see Acts 28:16ff), ultimately expounding the kingdom to them (v. 23). Read carefully this last passage from the Book of Acts, looking to see his emphasis on the Coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ.

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Acts 28

24 And some were persuaded by the things which were spoken, and some disbelieved. **25** So when they did not agree among themselves, they departed after Paul had said one word: “The Holy Spirit spoke rightly through Isaiah the prophet to our fathers, **26** saying, ‘Go to this people and say: “Hearing you will hear, and shall not understand; And seeing you will see, and not perceive; **27** For the hearts of this people have grown dull. Their ears are hard of hearing, And their eyes they have closed, Lest they should see with their eyes and hear with their ears, Lest they should understand with their hearts and turn, So that I should heal them.”’ **28** Therefore let it be known to you that the salvation of God has been sent to the Gentiles, and they will hear it!” **29** And when he had said these words, the Jews departed and had a great dispute among themselves.

30 Then Paul dwelt two whole years in his own rented house, and received all who came to him, **31** preaching the kingdom of God and teaching the things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ with all confidence, no one forbidding him.

Did you notice that last verse? And he preached *the kingdom of God* and taught things *concerning the Lord Jesus Christ with all openness, unhindered!* Thus ends the Book and Acts! And along with this ending, the fig tree from the parable in Luke 13:6-9 was cut down.

The prayer which he asked the Church at Ephesus to pray for him was being answered —

Ephesians 6

19 and for me, that utterance may be given to me, that I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel, **20** for which I am an ambassador in chains; that in it I may speak boldly, as I ought to speak.

In conclusion, the Book of Acts is the historical account of the transition made between the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to the Jews through the ministry of John the Baptist, Jesus and His disciples (in the gospels) to the reoffer being made to the Jews through the ministry of the newly formed Church, with the offer eventually being completely withdrawn from the nation of Israel and their being completely set aside at the end of the Book of Acts.

With the continual rejection on the part of Israel as a whole, Israel was set aside. The remainder of the New Testament – the epistles – is given over to the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens being made to the Church, the *ekklesia*, with the Book of the Revelation culminating all things.

Days Five — The Epistles

As one begins to study any of the epistles, he/she would have to realize that the main subject of the epistles is no different than the main subject of the entirety of God’s Word. The central theme of the epistles would be no different than the central theme of the OT, which would be no different than the central theme of the gospels and the Book of Acts! It would all be one and the same. The only difference would be the recipients! The epistles are letters written to the Church; letters that contain the offer of the kingdom to His people – the “one new man in Christ” (Eph. 2:15). Not one of the epistles is written to an un-saved people group – not even one! And while there may be passages that might lead an unsaved person to understand what it takes to become saved, every single epistle is written for the edification and growth of the new man in Christ.

We have seen over and over again what God’s purpose has been for man since the beginning. It all has to do with the Coming Kingdom, when a new order of rulers will be placed over the earth and the present rulers will be put down. Now consider what Jesus said about the New Nation when He mentioned it, saying

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Matthew 21

43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it.”

According to this verse, what would Jesus expect from the Church that He did not get from Israel?

With that in mind, what do you think the focus of any and all the epistles would be?

Then there are a couple more things that need to be considered when studying the epistles – one is the timeframe in which a particular epistle was written. Any epistle that was written *during* the period covered in the Book of Acts, or even shortly after the close of Acts, would be written to a Church that would have had many Jewish believers within – Jews who would have to reconsider what their view had been concerning the OT Law, as well as God opening the way of salvation to the Gentiles through Christ. Here is a list of the epistles written before Acts 28 (when the reoffer to the Nation of Israel was still open):

James wrote:	James 45-48 AD	
Paul wrote:	I Thessalonians 52AD	II Corinthians 58AD
	II Thessalonians 53AD	Romans 58AD
	I Corinthians 57AD	Anonymous: Hebrews 63AD??
	Galatians 57AD	

Romans and Galatians have been somewhat notoriously difficult to understand because both of these books have so much about the OT Law within them. Christians might wonder what the Law has to do with the Church. And then there is I Corinthians which has also been somewhat difficult due to things written therein that deal with some of the spiritual gifts – particularly the gifts which include miraculous signs (e.g., the gifts of tongues and healings). Christians might wonder if miraculous signs would still be for today.

Now, as far as the Law is concerned, we can understand why there is so much in Romans and Galatians about the OT Law, as Paul was revealing to the Jews within the Church the fact that the OT Law had been *fulfilled* in Christ Jesus, and the mindset of the Jews needed to reflect this. Paul was also showing the Jews that it has always been God’s plan to allow Gentiles to become part of the household of God (cf., Is.9:2; 42:6; 49:6; 60:1-3; Lk.2:30-32). This was being fulfilled right before their very eyes. And though portions of these epistles were written to believing Jews helping them to understand these things, these epistles are also very beneficial to the Church today as they show us what the OT had to say about the Coming Redeemer/Messiah, and how Jesus fulfilled the entire Law. Even now, it is a very good thing for us to have these epistles to study so that we, too, might grasp the significance as to how and why God gave the Law in the first place, showing us that the Law was a tutor to bring individuals to Christ; the Law was a copy and shadow of the good things to come (cf. Heb. 8:5). We can learn more about the work of Jesus through an understanding of the Law and what it pointed to. Also, concerning the Gentiles, even now we would need to understand how Gentiles are grafted in to the commonwealth of Israel, through faith in the Christ. Apart from studying the OT, we wouldn’t know what it means that we have been grafted into the Promises.

Then too, there is the issue of the miraculous signs being performed during this period of the reoffer. The need for these signs being performed during this time can be seen in what Paul wrote in his first letter to the Church at Corinth. I Corinthians was written to a church (made up of both Jew and Gentile) in turmoil, wherein he said in

1 Corinthians 1

22 For Jews request [Lit., require] a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom...

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Miraculous signs can only be present when two things are present together: The Jews and the Kingdom. So, signs have always had to do with the Nation of Israel in conjunction with the Kingdom, as shown here in what Paul so succinctly states. Paul states that *it is the Jew who requires a sign*. As we have seen, miraculous signs were necessary for Israel to believe. But Greeks (i.e. Gentiles) do not need a sign to validate the offer of the kingdom, as they would simply need to *seek wisdom to understand the Word of God*. Paul continues to explain this:

I Corinthians 14

18 I thank my God I speak with tongues more than you all; 19 yet in the church I would rather speak five words with my understanding, that I may teach others also, than ten thousand words in a tongue. 20 Brethren, do not be children in understanding; however, in malice be babes, but in understanding be mature.

21 In the law it is written [see Isa. 28:11]: “With men of other tongues and other lips I will speak to this people; And yet, for all that, they will not hear Me,” says the Lord. 22 Therefore tongues are for a sign, not to those who believe but to unbelievers;

We also see here that the gift of tongues is for unbelieving Jews – eternally saved Jews who did not yet believe that Christ was their Messiah – Jews who require a miraculous sign to prove the validity of the offer made to them so that they might believe in both Christ as Messiah, and in the offer being presented to them. *This can hardly be stated any more clearly!* And though these things were written during the period covered in the Book of Acts, even now, we would have to understand that certain gifts of the Holy Spirit – specifically gifts that involve miraculous signs – were present during the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel, in order to provoke unbelieving Jews to belief in Christ. But once the reoffer was completely withdrawn from Israel (Acts 28:28), there was no more need for the miraculous signs, and the performing of these things ceased. Therefore, you would not expect to see the mention of miraculous signs in the epistles written after the close of the Book of Acts. (These miraculous signs will come back into the picture during the Tribulation when both Israel and kingdom are back in view.)

Romans, Galatians and I Corinthians are three of the seven epistles written during a time when Israel was still in view with respect to the reoffer of the kingdom, and a very Jewish audience was still in view. And these epistles would reflect that!

Then early in 62AD, Paul arrives in Rome as a prisoner, and shortly thereafter the re-offer of the Kingdom to the Jews is withdrawn (Acts 28:16-31). Here is a list of the epistles written after Acts 28 (after the reoffer of the kingdom was closed to Israel as a Nation):

Paul wrote:	Ephesians 62AD	Paul wrote:	I Timothy 63AD
	Philippians 62AD		Titus 63AD
	Colossians 62AD	Peter wrote:	II Peter 65AD
	Philemon 62AD	Paul wrote:	II Timothy 66AD
Peter wrote:	I Peter 63AD	Jude wrote:	Jude 75AD
Anonymous:	Hebrews 63AD ??	John wrote:	I, II, III John 90AD
			Revelation 97AD

On this side of Acts 28, the remaining epistles were written without the reoffer of the kingdom to Israel in view. And the further one gets away from 62AD, the number of Jews being added to the Church decreased greatly, and the number of Gentiles increased greatly. With this being the case, there was no longer a need to deal with the Law and the miraculous signs. Hence, less and less is said about either. While many more things can be said about the epistles, for our purposes in this study, we will leave it here.

Does this all make more sense to you now? As a result of understanding these things in this lesson, how will you read and study the epistles now?

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JOSEPH	MOSES	CHRIST
Rejected by his Brothers	Rejected by his Brethren	Rejected by His Brethren
Goes to a Far Country: Egypt	Goes to a Far Country: Midian	Goes to a Far Country: Heaven
Exalted to 2 nd only to Pharaoh where he takes a Gentile Bride	Exalted at the Burning Bush which is Holy Ground. Whilst in Midian he takes a Gentile Bride	Exalted to the Right Hand of the Father where He takes a Gentile Bride
In the dealing with his Brothers they experience: <u>Famine</u>	In the dealing with his Brethren they experience: <u>Persecution</u>	In the dealing with His Brethren they experience: <u>Tribulation</u>
<u>As a result they:</u> reach out to Joseph for deliverance	<u>As a result they:</u> cry out to God for deliverance	<u>As a result they:</u> cry out to God for deliverance
It is at their 2 nd meeting that Joseph reveals to his brothers that their deliverer is their brother who was 'dead'.	When Moses returns a 2 nd time to Egypt he will be recognized by his brothers as their deliverer from the hardships of Egypt.	At Christ's 2 nd Coming He will be recognized by His Brethren as 'Him whom they pierced' and deliver them from Gentile world powers.
Israel (Jacob and his 12 sons) move to Egypt where they are given land .	Under Moses' (and Joshua's) leadership they are taken into The Promised Land .	Following Israel's repentance and deliverance Christ will return them to the Land of their Inheritance and through them all the Nations of the earth will be blessed.
Israel is blessed.	Israel is blessed.	Israel is blessed.

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Lesson Thirteen — The Full Scope of Salvation: Part 1

Day One — God’s Purpose for Salvation

Day Two — The Children of Israel, Our Example

Day Three — The Free Gift vs. the Reward

Day Four — The Reward of the Inheritance

Day Five — The Salvation of the Soul

We have come to a place where we will be able to see more sections of the puzzle joined together. The full scope of salvation is one large section of the puzzle, and a proper Scriptural understanding of salvation allows many sections of the puzzle to fit together with ease. The topic of study for this week should be the most basic of all topics in Scripture, yet the teaching of salvation is filled with confusion and misunderstanding throughout the Church today. People are all over the board, so to speak, in their belief and understanding of something so basic as *salvation*. It should not be so.

The present confusion surrounding issues concerning salvation has mainly to do with two different areas — the issue of faith and works, and the issue of eternal security. Questions surrounding these two issues can be stated as follows:

- Is a person saved through faith and faith alone? Or
- Are works involved in a person’s salvation?

And then,

- Once a person is saved, is he/she eternally secure? Or
- Can a person lose his salvation?

We’ll deal with these issues this week. Be sure to begin your week in prayer.

Day One — God’s Purpose for Salvation

The Bible opens with the very Scriptural foundation upon which the remainder of Scripture rests. We can learn much from the first verses of the Bible. In fact, God saw fit to explain something about Himself in *the very first verse* in the Bible. The Name of God in Genesis 1:1 is *Elohim* — “In [the] beginning, Elohim...” *El* is a Hebrew word for God, and *him* is a plural suffix, which in the Hebrew language indicates *two or more*. Subsequent Scriptures reveal that “Elohim” is a Trinity, existing in *three parts* — Father, Son, and Holy Spirit.

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The first thing that can be known about *man* is that God made him *in His Own image and in His Own likeness*. (This is no small bit of information! And it is interesting that God saw fit to mention that first about man!) Therefore, at the onset of Scripture, we see that man, being created in God's image, was created a *three-part* being. Man was created spirit, soul and body.

The first chapter of Genesis also reveals that God created man to rule over the earth (Gen. 1:26, 27), and the second chapter reveals that He tested man for obedience *prior* to his stepping into that position of rulership (Gen. 2:16, 17). The test for obedience was given to the Man in his *unfallen state* and had to do with choosing between one of two trees — the Tree of Life and the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil.

God told Adam that he should not eat from the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, for in the day that he ate from that tree *he would die*. Of course, we know that he ate from the forbidden tree — and he died — with death affecting all three parts of his being:

- 1) He died spiritually, being separated from God, Who is Spirit;
- 2) his soul became corrupted (now knowing evil), and
- 3) his body lost the covering of glory.

Subsequently, every descendant of Adam has been born after Adam's image rather than after God's image (compare Gen. 5:1 with 5:3). Every descendant of Adam is born:

- 1) dead spiritually, separated from God,
- 2) with a corrupted soul having a propensity toward evil, and
- 3) a body devoid of glory.

In this state, mankind is disqualified to fulfill his created position. And in order to be placed back in that position, all three parts of man must be dealt with. Herein is the importance of seeing that man was created a three-part being (not a two-part being as so many teach), the importance of which cannot be over emphasized! Man exists in three parts, and *salvation must deal with all three parts of man* —

- 1) the spiritual birth (John 3:5-7), which happens at the moment of faith;
- 2) the salvation of the soul (I Pet. 1:9; Jas. 1:21), which is the ongoing process after the spiritual birth;
- 3) the redemption of the body (I Cor. 15:21, 22), which is the end result of the salvation of the soul.

If this were recognized and understood, the ongoing confusion surrounding salvation would not exist.

It is only through the work of the Holy Spirit that an individual can even begin to come into an understanding of his spiritually dead state, along with an understanding of what Jesus has done for him. And it is only through faith in the death and shed blood, the finished work of Christ, that an individual can be redeemed from the bondage of sin, bringing him out of his spiritually dead state into a spiritually alive state. When faith is exercised, light and life are brought into a place where only darkness and death had previously existed. Through faith, the *spirit* of an individual is *fully and completely redeemed*. This is a spiritual birth, a birth from above. And nothing can be added to or taken away from this spiritual birth. And this life is eternally secure due to Jesus' death and shed blood, His finished work on the cross.

We can see a perfect example of this redemption-through-the-blood in the Old Testament. As we have previously seen, the best overall picture of *the means* and *the purpose* of our salvation in all of Scripture is the picture of *the redemption of the Children of Israel from the bondage of slavery in Egypt for the purpose of their being led into the Promised Land*. This picture not only presents the *means of redemption out of bondage*, but also gives the *purpose for that redemption*. It is very important to understand and study both facets of this picture — the *means* and the *purpose* — otherwise the picture falls far short of what God

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intended. (If you need a review of this Old Testament example, please take a few minutes to peruse pages of Part I of the Survey Study, pgs. 86-89.)

It is only after the Children of Israel has passed from death to life, through the blood of the Passover lambs, that they are then led by the Spirit towards the Land of their inheritance. Even when they wanted to go back to Egypt, which is a picture of the world and their bondage, God did not even countenance the thought of their return to bondage. It was a moot point.

This is THE foundational picture of the eternally secure state of an individual who, like Israel, has passed from death to life through faith in the death and shed blood of our Passover Lamb.

John 1

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!...”

I Corinthians 5

7 Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us.

And before we close for today, let us consider one more important point concerning the *purpose* for our salvation. Just as Israel was redeemed for a specific purpose, even so, we have been. And it is imperative for us to know what our purpose is if we are to accomplish it. So, let’s think about this – since Man was created for the purpose of rulership over the earth, and death (through sin) prohibited him from fulfilling his created purpose, and since salvation is the ‘antidote’ to death, then can we see that salvation is for the same purpose as creation? Spiritual birth (the free gift of salvation) places Man in the position once again wherein he can prove himself worthy to rule. This will become more and more clear as we move through this week’s study and beyond, but it is important to consider this thought now. *Creation and salvation are for one and the same purpose.*

Day Two — The Children of Israel, Our Example

The picture of the Children of Israel coming out of bondage in Egypt *and* their being taken into the Promised Land *must* be seen *in its complete scope* in order for Christians to understand *all* that God intends concerning the issue of our own salvation. In I Corinthians, the Holy Spirit, through Paul, uses the overall picture of the Children of Israel as an “example” (lit. *a type*) for us. In chapter nine, he reveals that when an individual becomes saved, he is placed in a race – the ultimate outcome of which is dependent *upon our actions during the present time*. As you study the passage below understand that Paul is writing to saved people, people who have already experienced spiritual birth.

I Corinthians 9

24 Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. 25 And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate <75> in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. 26 Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. 27 But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified <96>.

NOTES:

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temperate <75>

disqualified <96>

The end of v. 24 indicates that the only one who wins the prize is the one who runs in such a way as to win! According to v. 25a, what does it take to win the prize?

According to v. 25b, why should a person do such a thing?

In vv. 26 and 27, Paul says he does something. What does he do and why does he do it?

Herein are some things we should seriously consider —

Does Paul *know* what the goal is? How can you tell?

Is Paul aware of the possibility of a negative outcome? What is possible for Paul?

Being in the race itself is not the prize! Some have erroneously taught that *Paul's ministry* is the thing he could lose. Paul's ministry was the vehicle through which he could run his race. He knew the prize was to be awarded to him *at the end* of the race (II Tim. 4:7-8), and that it was the prize which could be lost, not his placement in the race. Think about it.

Can it be inferred from this passage (vv. 26, 27) that it might be difficult for one to gain the prize if the individual didn't know: 1) that he/she is in a race, and 2) what the goal is?

How would the prize be lost?

Let's continue with the text, which immediately follows. (Too bad for a chapter break here, as the following passage is inseparably connected to the previous one.)

I Corinthians 10

1 Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, 2 all were baptized <907> into Moses in the cloud and in the

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sea, 3 all ate the same spiritual <4152> food, 4 and all drank the same spiritual <4152> drink. For they drank of that spiritual <4152> Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ.

NOTES:

The Greek word Paul used for the word *baptized* is an interesting one. Paul had the choice to use either this Greek word *baptizo* <907>, or another Greek word *bapto* <911>. He used *baptizo* for a purpose. Look up both words in the Appendix and briefly write out the comparison.

baptizo <907>

bapto <911>

What was Paul inferring in choosing to use the word *baptizo* in order to describe what had taken place in their baptism?

Paul states that they were baptized into *three* different things. What were the three things they were baptized into?

How many of them were “baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea”?

How many ate *spiritual* food?

How many drank *spiritual* water?

What did they drink the *spiritual* water?

Who was the Rock?

Continuing —

...5 But with most of them God was not well pleased <2106>, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness.

NOTES:

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not well pleased <2106>

Had all of these individuals been redeemed?

With how many was God not well-pleased?

So, what happened to them?

The answers to these questions give clear indication that Paul is speaking to saved individuals concerning their future inheritance, giving warning about their potential loss of that inheritance.

As Paul continues, he states why these things were written down in such detail (i.e., the whole panorama of events from Ex. 12 through Num. 14). This is also the reason why we studied these things in such detail!

Continuing —

6 Now these things became our examples <5179>, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. 7 And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, “The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” 8 Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; 9 nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; 10 nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. 11 Now all these things happened to them as examples <5179>, and they were written for our admonition <3559>, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. 12 Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall <4098>.

NOTES (be sure to look up the definitions):

examples <5179>

admonition <3559>

fall <4098>.

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According to vv. 6, 11, why were these things written down?

According to v. 12, what is the possibility for us?

What relationship can be seen between I Corinthians 9:27 and 10:12?

We have one final question for the day, one that you shouldn't rush through. It is this: Why is it important that we see the full scope of the redemption of the Children of Israel (from the Passover to Kadesh Barnea), as having been written down for our instruction? Write your answer with as much detail as you can. Don't be brief, as this is important to understand.

Day Three — The Free Gift vs. the Reward

One of the major problems as to the confusion in the Church today surrounding the most basic of all Scriptural doctrines — the doctrine of salvation — is the lack of understanding of the distinctions between *the free gift* and *the reward of the inheritance*, and how each is attained. Here are some questions that must be dealt with concerning these distinctions:

- Exactly how does one receive the free gift and what does it entail? And,
- How does one receive the reward, and what does the reward entail?

First, let's look at a few passages that deal with the free gift and see that it is just that — a free gift!

Romans 3

22 even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; 23 for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, 24 being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus...

A Philippian jailer asked a most succinct question to Paul and Silas; it is followed by a most succinct answer.

Acts 16

30 ... "Sirs, what must I do to be saved?" 31 So they said, "Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved, you and your household."

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Ephesians 2

8 For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, 9 not of works, lest anyone should boast.

From the general consensus of these passages, what does it take to be saved?

According to these passages, do the works of an individual come into the picture of the free gift?

It is faith and faith alone! Nothing more and nothing less. Jesus died on the cross to pay the eternal penalty for our sin. There is no other way! And there is nothing that can be added to or subtracted from the work of Jesus Christ. A person need only believe!

So, what does *having been saved* mean for a person? Observe what you can from these verses.

John 5

24 “Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life.

John 3

18 “He who believes in Him is not condemned; but he who does not believe is condemned already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God.

What do you learn from these verses about *the state* of one who has been saved?

We see that salvation is a free gift, based upon faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ – allowing one to pass out of death into life. As we are learning, this salvation has to do with our spirit. It is our spiritual birth, our being born from above, being born again.

But because Adam’s death affected all three parts of man – spirit, soul and body – then, within *the full scope of salvation*, there is more to be dealt with than simply our spiritual birth. Our spiritual birth is the beginning point, not the climax! There is much to learn about that which goes beyond the moment we were saved, and, this can be seen through the examples given to us in the Scriptures concerning the Children of Israel.

The Children of Israel, having been redeemed out of bondage by the blood of the paschal lambs, were redeemed for the purpose of their being taken out of one land (the land of their bondage), and into another (the land of their inheritance). It was in this new land wherein they would to become a kingdom of priests and enter their rest. But due to their unbelief and disobedience along the way, they fell short of the intended inheritance and rest. Hence, they wandered in the wilderness until their death, short of entering the Land.

Some questions should be asked here:

- Have we been redeemed for the same purpose, that of being taken out of one land (the world) in order to be brought into another land (the Heavenly City) wherein a theocracy will be set up, wherein

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we will be a kingdom of priests?

- Is the heavenly land to be our inheritance, and are we to strive to enter a rest within this heavenly land?
- If so, is it possible that we could fall short of this intended goal, just as the Children of Israel did?

This is the very thing of which Paul warns us not to fall short, using the Children of Israel as our example (I Cor. 10:12). It is also the very thing about which the author of Hebrews warns us in Hebrews chapters three and four using the same example. (We will study more on these two chapters from the Book of Hebrews in Lessons Sixteen and Seventeen.) Here is the example:

- *Just as* the Children of Israel had been redeemed for a purpose (Deut. 6:23), *even so* we have been redeemed for a purpose (Eph. 1:3-14).
- *Just as* the Children of Israel were taken out of one land in order to be taken into another, *even so* are we being taken out of one land in order to be taken into another.
- *Just as* the Children of Israel were redeemed with a view to an inheritance, *even so* have we been redeemed with a view to an inheritance.

This *redemption* is a free gift; the *inheritance* is the reward. Theirs was an earthly inheritance – an earthly kingdom; ours is a heavenly inheritance — a Heavenly Kingdom (*cf.* I Pet. 1:4-7).

This word *inheritance* is an important word to notice in Scripture. What about this inheritance? Read what Paul said to the Church at Colossae.

Colossians 3

23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

According to v. 23, what are Christians supposed to do?

Why are Christians supposed to do this (v. 24)?

Verse 24 is the positive side of the matter. But, as much as some Christians don't like to admit it, Scripture does give a negative side of the matter. Paul states it very clearly in v. 25. What additional incentive is given for Christians who do these things (v. 25)?

It is important to remember that the full scope of salvation has to do with more than simply being redeemed from the bondage of slavery; it has to do with more than simply being delivered out of eternal damnation into eternal life. So it was for the Children of Israel; so it is for us. The Children of Israel were fully redeemed out of bondage through God's actions. But they were redeemed for a purpose; that purpose had to do with an inheritance in a land wherein they would become a kingdom of priests (Ex. 19:4-6). The same is true for us. This is important beyond measure to understand.

Tomorrow we will strive to understand the inheritance. Continue to pray for your understanding.

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Day Four — The Reward of the Inheritance

So far this week we have seen that *the means* of the free gift of salvation is faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ on the cross. Yesterday we began to glimpse *the means* of the reward of the inheritance — our working heartily as unto the Lord (Col. 3:23-25).

First, it is important to know that whenever the word *inheritance* is used, it is used in the sense of a “family.” Inheritance is a family term. If an individual is not in the family, he is not in a position to receive the family’s inheritance. Paul states the idea of the necessity of a family connection before the inheritance is even in view. In the following verse underline the words *and if*.

Romans 8

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God...

From this portion of the passage, what does it take to be *an heir of God*?

17b ...and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together.

Paul makes a distinction in this passage. The spiritual birth places an individual into the family of God. It takes being a child of God in order for one to be an heir (inheritance is a family term). Yet, it takes something more to be a joint heir with Christ, sharing with Him the position of the first-born, and rights thereof. According to v. 17b, what does it take to be a joint heir with Christ?

According to the end of v. 17, what will be *the result* of being a joint heir with Christ?

Obviously, there is a distinction to be made between being *an heir of God* and *a joint-heir with Christ*. It is the distinction of *the first-born*. The first-born son had three distinguishing characteristics in the Hebrew culture:

- 1) he was to be the priest of the family,
- 2) he was to be the ruler over the father’s estate, and
- 3) he was to receive a double portion of the inheritance.

These are the rights of the first-born. It was a very desirable position in the family. And, as we will see later, it was a position that could be forfeited. And though the positional standing as first-born could be forfeited, the standing as a child within the family could never be forfeited (e.g., Esau forfeited his right as first-born, yet was still blessed as a son).

Now that we see that inheritance is a family term, we have also previously seen that the inheritance is a reward for having worked heartily unto the Lord (Col. 3:23-25). We will look at a passage that deals with the foundation which must be laid in order to build works, and how the works are rewarded. Study through this passage carefully.

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I Corinthians 3

11 For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. 12 Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, 13 each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

What/Who does Paul say the foundation is?

Can any other foundation enter into this picture? How do you know?

What are the six building materials mentioned in this passage that can be built upon the foundation? (Group the materials into two separate groups – good and bad.)

Good



Bad

Will all Christians have something for which to be rewarded? Give evidence for your answer.

According to this passage, *how* will the quality of an individual's work be revealed?

When will the quality of his work be revealed?

Who will receive the reward?

Who will suffer loss?

What will happen to the one who suffers loss?

According to this passage, is Paul speaking only to Christians? (Give evidence for your answer.)

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In other words, a person who has the foundation of Jesus Christ in place (having put faith in Him) can, in the end, be found to have his work burned — to the extent of having nothing left for which to be rewarded! Even to the extent of his only being able to escape through the fire! (Isn't that what the passage says? Interesting!)

FYI — The passage we have just dealt with begins with Paul reprimanding the Christians in Corinth for acting as “babes in Christ” (I Cor. 3:1ff) through the action of aligning themselves with various teachers (e.g., “I am of Apollos” or “I am of Paul”) rather than realizing that God uses different people to do various jobs in ministry. The Christians at Corinth weren't focusing on the fact that it is God Who causes growth. This is an interesting thing to think about today! We need to be careful not to do this! “I am a Calvinist.” “I am Armenian.” “I follow so and so!” Evidently, God sees these types of statements as extremely immature!

Following his rebuke for this type of thinking, Paul makes this statement about each man's work –

I Corinthians 3

8b ... and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

What will be the measuring stick to determine an individual's reward?

Are you beginning to see that the reward is connected to ones work? I hope you are!

We've already seen that the inheritance is the reward, not a gift (Col. 3:23-25). Before we close for the day, let's see what the inheritance has to do with. We will look at this idea more closely tomorrow, but there is something I want you to see today. Read the following passages and underline the phrase '*inherit the kingdom of God.*' Then we will consider some questions.

I Corinthians 6

9 Do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived. Neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor homosexuals, nor sodomites, 10 nor thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God.

Galatians 5

19 Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lewdness, 20 idolatry, sorcery, hatred, contentions, jealousies, outbursts of wrath, selfish ambitions, dissensions, heresies, 21 envy, murders, drunkenness, revelries, and the like; of which I tell you beforehand, just as I also told you in time past, that those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God.

Many people believe that both passages deal with sin in the life of *an unsaved individual*, and that *inheriting the kingdom* is the same as our spiritual birth (i.e. our being eternally saved). But is it?

Go back through each passage and as you read, replace the phrases “inherit the kingdom of God” with “be saved” and see if it is true.

Does it make sense that these passages would be dealing with the free gift (which is based upon faith apart from our works)?

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On the other hand, can believers commit such sins? Do believers commit such sins?

Of course believers can and do commit such sins! And, accordingly, these two passages are dealing with Christians and an inheritance which has to do with the kingdom. You see, the inheritance is the reward for right living! The reward for obedience! So it was for the Children of Israel, so it is for us. Yet, God is a forgiving God and He has made a way for sin in a believer's life to be cleansed. It is called *repentance* and *confession*. If you confess your sins, He is faithful to forgive you and cleanse you (I Jo. 1:9).

We will continue to study along these lines, so be patient as you begin to grasp these concepts.

Day Five — The Salvation of the Soul

As mentioned at the beginning of this week's study, this large piece of the puzzle is necessary for clearing up the confusion that exists in the Church concerning salvation. Today's study is a major key. Remember the questions we are considering throughout this week's study:

- Is a person saved through faith and faith alone? Or
- Are works involved in a person's salvation? And,
- Once a person is saved, are they eternally secure? Or
- Can a person lose their salvation?

Have you ever noticed that no matter which position one takes on these issues concerning salvation, it seems that they come up with verses that back up their belief on the matter? Of course, we know that Scripture does not contradict itself.

Really, the confusion is easy to set straight. The problem is that usually people too narrowly consider *the scope of salvation*. That is to say, people don't usually consider that salvation *covers a much broader scope* than the simple free gift of eternal life. All too often people relate *all the verses* that deal with "salvation" to the free gift and in doing so, confuse the issue.

Again, the free gift is only the beginning point. The scope of salvation for Christians is pictured in the scope of salvation for the Children of Israel, *which covers the panorama of their being redeemed from bondage through faith in what God said about the death of the substitutionary lambs* (resulting in their being released from bondage). The panorama of salvation continues *all the way through to obedience or disobedience* (resulting in a reception or loss of their inheritance in the land). This is all *with a view to the theocracy* (a kingdom wherein God rules). The panorama of our salvation will continue to be developed in upcoming lessons. This paragraph is key!

Simply stated, there are some "salvation" verses which deal with the free gift, and there are some "salvation" verses which deal with the reward (or loss) of the inheritance. Whether the passage is dealing with the free gift of eternal life *or* the inheritance in the kingdom, the subject may be referred to as *salvation*. The secret to a proper understanding and a correct interpretation of that passage is a critical look at the *context*. The key question that should be asked is this:

- Is the passage on salvation dealing with faith alone (in the work of Christ) with the gift in view?
- Or is the passage dealing with works and/or obedience with the inheritance in the kingdom in view?

The context makes the distinction.

If the passage is dealing with faith alone, then it is dealing with the free gift — the spiritual birth. But if it is dealing with works, obedience, and/or gain vs. loss, then it is dealing with the reward of the inheritance in

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the kingdom. In the case of the latter, the passage would be referring to the “salvation of the soul” where it may be expressed as the “salvation of the soul”, or is implied in the context.

We’ll look at a few passages which deal explicitly with the phrase “the salvation of the soul” in a moment, but first look back at I Corinthians 6:9, 10 and Galatians 5:19-21 at the end of yesterday’s homework. What do these passages have to do with — faith and the free gift *or* life style and inheritance in the kingdom?

It becomes obvious, doesn’t it?

Let’s look at another passage that exemplifies *salvation* as it is connected with *the inheritance*.

Hebrews 1

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

What do you see as the key word that would identify whether the passage is dealing with the free gift, or the inheritance?

It is clearly stated, isn’t it?

Our spiritual birth affords us the choice to either walk in the spirit or in the flesh. Prior to our spiritual birth, we did not have the choice to walk in the spirit, we could only walk in the flesh for we were dead spiritually. But once we are born spiritually, we can choose!

With the ability to choose, one can begin to work out his “own salvation in fear and trembling” (as Paul commands in Phil. 2:12). The salvation that we are to “work out” is the salvation having to do with the soul, which has to do with the inheritance in the kingdom. It has to do with our choosing to walk in the spirit so as not to carry out the desires of the flesh (Gal. 5:16).

It is *faith and faith alone* that has to do with our spiritual birth, something which cannot be lost. It is *faithful obedience* that has to do with a reception of the inheritance in the kingdom, something that can be lost. The first is the spiritual birth (having to do with our spirit); the second is the salvation of the soul (having to do with our soul). This is what is pictured for us through the example of the Children of Israel (*cf.* Ex. 19:4-6).

Following are some of the passages that *explicitly* deal with *the salvation of the soul* (the phrase itself is expressed in the original language), although there are many, many other passages that *implicitly* deal with the salvation of the soul (the phrase, though not expressed is implied [i.e., passages which deal with obedience, works, gain (profit) or loss with a view to the inheritance in the kingdom]).

Let’s look at those verses which explicitly mention the phrase *the salvation of the soul*. In the Book of James, James is writing to the Church that had been scattered due to the stoning of Stephen and the impending persecution of the Christians in Jerusalem. He writes to them concerning the reason for suffering, and why Christians should consider suffering with joy (1:2ff). James connects this exhortation to the salvation of the soul, encouraging his readers to “*with meekness receive the implanted Word which is able to save [the] soul.*” Read it below.

James 1

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

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Is this passage dealing with faith and faith alone as related to one's spiritual birth, or is it dealing with works beyond faith? What is the evidence?

As you can see, James deals with the salvation of the soul. Then another epistle writer, Peter, deals with the same salvation, only from a different aspect. Both deal with trials as a means of refining faith, connecting *this process* to the salvation of the soul. This salvation (the salvation of the soul) is a process! Study carefully the following passage written by Peter.

I Peter 1

3 Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, 4 to an inheritance incorruptible and undefiled and that does not fade away, reserved in heaven for you, 5 who are kept by the power of God through faith for salvation ready to be revealed in the last time.

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, 7 that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor, and glory at the revelation of Jesus Christ, 8 whom having not seen you love. Though now you do not see Him, yet believing, you rejoice with joy inexpressible and full of glory, 9 receiving the end <5056> of your faith – the salvation of your souls.

end <5056>

According to this passage, describe the inheritance.

Verse 5 deals with salvation. When is this salvation to be revealed?

Peter states the desired *end* of one's faith. What is it?

The Greek word *telos* <5056> translated *end* could have been translated *goal*. The salvation of the soul is the goal of our faith; the salvation of the soul is our faith being brought to its completion or end; the salvation of the soul is the thing toward which we are to strive in our Christian walk.

Remember again, that Paul told the Church in Philippi to “work out your own salvation in fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). This salvation, with which Paul is dealing, has to do with the prize toward which we are to strive (2:14-16; 3:12).

We'll cover one more passage on the salvation of the soul, and then deal with it more thoroughly in the lecture this week.

Hebrews 10

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now

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the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

The writer of Hebrews was encouraging Christians to remain steadfast in their confidence in the face of trials and persecution for a reason (see vv. 32-34). What was the reason?

What are the two possibilities for one who is righteous?

If the one who is righteous continues to live by faith (faithful obedience) what is the outcome?

In the way of a quick review, remember that man was created in God’s image as a three-part being — spirit, soul and body. When man fell, sin affected all three parts of man; and salvation must deal with all three parts. The first to be dealt with in salvation is the spirit of man. This salvation is brought about through faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ, and is the free gift of eternal life. This salvation is eternally secure because of the One Who completed the work, and grants the saved individual passing out of eternal judgment (out of death) into eternal life.

The salvation of the soul is brought about through one’s faithfulness to his/her calling, and has to do with the inheritance in the kingdom during the Coming Age. This salvation is based upon one’s faithful obedience and is shown in Scripture as gain (profit) or loss having to do with an inheritance in the Millennial Kingdom.

The third part of salvation deals with the body. The redemption of the body is inextricably linked to the salvation of the soul. This is the topic of next week’s study. And it is SO exciting to see it presented in Scripture correctly. Keep up the good work.

See you in class.

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Lesson Fourteen — The Full Scope of Salvation: Part 2

Day One — Back to the Beginning...Again

Day Two — Life and Death in Foundation

Day Three — Dead to the Flesh; Alive to the Spirit

Day Four — Resurrection to Life

Day Five — The Redemption of the Body

We have seen that God's eternal plan in creating man in His own image and likeness was for man to rule over the earth. We have also seen that death through sin prohibits man from fulfilling his created purpose. So, we have come to realize that salvation is God's way of bringing man back to the position wherein he is able to fulfill his purpose. (Be sure to understand that this whole picture of salvation is not God's Plan A *or* B, as this was always His ETERNAL PLAN.)

Since death through sin affected all three parts of man, salvation must affect all three parts of man as well. Hence, we need to understand that salvation – in its full scope – has to do with our spirit and soul and body, respectively.

Last week we looked at how salvation is effected in our spirit and our soul. We know that it is through faith in Jesus' death on the cross that our spirit is made alive. This is the first aspect of salvation which must be in place in order for anything else to happen. Remember God is Spirit, and as such, it is only through our being spiritually alive that we can be in union with Him.

Then, once our spirit is alive, we have the ability – through the inworking of the Holy Spirit – to “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). This refers to the salvation of our soul, and it is a life-long process to be realized at the JSOC.

But again, what about the body? How is salvation effected in our body? This will be the subject of this week's study. Study well.

Day One — Back to the Beginning...Again

Before we begin today, let's be technical about the terminology used in Scripture referring to the various aspects of salvation. Besides the generic terms often used “salvation” or “saved” (context would reveal with which aspect of salvation the passage is dealing):

- when referring to the spirit, the Scriptural terminology is “spiritual birth;”
- when referring to the soul, the Scriptural terminology is the “salvation of the soul;”

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- when referring to the body, the Scriptural terminology is the “redemption of the body,” as we see stated in...

Romans 8

23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

Then we see Paul dealing with all three parts of man being “preserved complete...at the coming of the Lord” here:

I Thessalonians 5 (NASB³)

23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your *spirit* and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

To more clearly understand how Scripture deals with the redemption of the body, we would first have to understand what it means that we have been *created in God’s image and likeness*, which takes us back to beginning again – back to foundation.

The Hebrew word naming God in Genesis 1:1 is Elohim (or Elohiym) which indicates the Almighty One is more than one, as this word is written in a plural form. Subsequent Scripture, of course, reveals He is Three parts – Father, Son and Holy Spirit. And so, when He created Man in His own image and likeness, He created him a three-part being – spirit, and soul, and body.

And then in this passage we can get further description:

Psalm 104 (the Psalmist speaking of God)

1 ... You are very great: You are clothed with honor and majesty, 2 Who cover Yourself with light as with a garment...

And then in this passage, we can see that this very description portends His Rulership...

I Chronicles 16

23 Sing to the LORD, all the earth; Proclaim the good news of His salvation from day to day. 24 Declare His glory among the nations... 25 For the LORD is great and greatly to be praised... . . .27 Honor and majesty are before Him; Strength and gladness are in His place. 28 ...Give to the LORD glory and strength. 29 Give to the LORD the glory due His name; ...31 Let the heavens rejoice, and let the earth be glad; And let them say among the nations, “The LORD reigns.”

Using phrases from these two passages, will you describe God?

³ I used the NASB translation for this verse as this translation maintains the original use of the word “and” in *both* places in the text as it was in the original language, denoting that the spirit and soul are separate, not one and the same. This is essential to understand when trying to grasp the full scope of salvation.

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So we see that God:

- is covered in light as with a garment (i.e., glory)
- is clothed in splendor and majesty
- honor and majesty are before Him

The thing to note about God's image as portrayed is that His very image demonstrates rulership. God the Father is enthroned in the heavens, *covered in glory (as with a garment) and clothed in splendor and majesty*, executing sovereign rule over all of creation. And presently, Jesus sits at His Father's right hand, Himself glorified, as He awaits His return to the earth when the Father will send Him back. (The passage in I Chronicles is a description of the time when Jesus comes back to the earth to reign supreme over all the earth).

Now... since man was created in God's image and likeness for the stated purpose of rulership, it is evident that glory, splendor and majesty were to be his as well. The Psalmist wrote in

Psalm 8

4 What is man that You are mindful of him, And the son of man that You visit him? 5 For You have made him a little lower than the angels, And You have crowned him with glory and honor. 6 You have made him to have dominion over the works of Your hands; You have put all things under his feet, 7 All sheep and oxen-Even the beasts of the field, 8 The birds of the air, And the fish of the sea That pass through the paths of the seas.

Speaking about man in this passage, how does the last half of v. 5 reflect what we have learned about God's image and likeness?

But even though we know God created man to have dominion over the earth, for the present we can clearly understand that man is not yet in that position of rulership. In speaking of man, the author of Hebrews says:

Hebrews 2

7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him.

And so, we do not presently see man *glorified, clothed in splendor and majesty*, fulfilling his created purpose, do we? And we know why, don't we? Death, brought about through Adam's sin, affected all of mankind. But we need to go back to the Garden, 6,000 years ago to see what happened, because here is where our understanding of how salvation must affect *the body* as well as the spirit and soul. It is quite exciting how this all fits together!

We've become quite familiar with God creating man in Genesis chapter one, and even how Genesis chapter two drops back into the 6th day of chapter one and fills in the detail of *how* God created the Man and Woman. But we need to review this process in order to shed a little different perspective on that which we have yet to consider:

Genesis 2

7 Then the LORD God formed man of dust from the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living being.

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From what did God create the man?

And once He formed the man, what did God do?

Then we read:

Genesis 2

18 And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

What does God say He is going to do now?

Why do you think the Man would need *a helper comparable to him*? A helper to do what? (Your answer needs to be derived from the information given so far in Scripture.)

So, let’s read about God making this helper:

Genesis 2

21 And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs, and closed up the flesh in its place. 22 Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man. 23 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.” 24 Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. 25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

Name the steps which God used to form Adam’s helper:

How did Adam describe his helper?

Then in vv. 24, 25, how does God refer to the Woman?

And so, within the context of this foundational information given by God in the first two chapters of the Bible, God establishes the institution of marriage, and it is all with the idea of the Woman helping the Man to fulfill their God-given purpose. Can you see that?

And then, how does God describe the two of them in v. 25?

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Keep these things in mind as we continue our study this week as these things are *foundational*. If these concepts are not in place, then much will be missed in our understanding of how God works through what He lays out in these early and very important chapters. We'll end today with this from Psalms:

Psalm 11

3 If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?

See you tomorrow.

Day Two — Life and Death in Foundation

Yesterday we saw that God created Man from the dust of the earth and breathed the breath of life into him. We also saw that Man was to have a comparable helper, and how God made that helper from a part of his body. Then God called the one taken from the Man's body, his wife. Hence, God instituted the marriage relationship within the context of Man's created purpose, with the Woman being formed out of his body to be his helper. (That last sentence is important to remember as we move forward in our understanding the scope of our salvation.)

Today we want to consider a couple of other things that transpired in the Garden. We'll begin by looking at the last verse of Genesis chapter two. In speaking of the man and woman, God said:

Genesis 2

25 And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.

The Hebrew word used here for naked is the word *arowm* and can indicate a *partial nakedness*. So how would the man and the woman be partially naked, and why does God state that they were not ashamed?

In order to answer that question, and in order to understand that salvation, in its full scope, restores what Adam lost in the Garden, wouldn't we really need to understand what both LIFE *and* DEATH looked like at the beginning? This is the topic we will consider today. Let's look at life (before the fall), and death (after the fall) with respect to all three parts of man.

- **His spirit**
Before the fall, Adam had spiritual union with God. After the fall, he became *separated* from God, and in that sense, *he died spiritually*.
- **His soul**
Before the fall, Adam's soul was pure, being one with his own spirit in union with God. After the fall, his soul became corrupted, separated from God's purity – his mind, will and emotions were no longer pure, and in that sense, *his soul died*.
- **His body — the physical entity which housed his spirit and soul**
Before the fall, Adam's body had been covered in glory. After the fall, he became *separated* from the covering of God's glory, and in that sense, *his body died*.

In understanding all of this, we have to remember that death – with respect to man – never means annihilation; death only ever means separation. And if you run that out into both the Coming Age and the eternal ages

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future, death would mean not being able to participate in (being separated from) the purposes of God with respect to the created purpose of man.

- Though Adam's *spirit* died that day, it still existed, but *had become separated* from God.
- Though Adam's *soul* died that day, it still existed, but *had become separated* from the purity of God.
- Though Adam's *body* died that day, it still existed, but *it had become separated* from the glory with which it was once covered (and would now, at some point, return to dust).

And so, just as God said they would, the Man and the Woman died that day! They died spiritually, soulically, and physically. And since death is presented this way in foundation, we would need to understand death in this way throughout the remainder of Scripture. Remember Psalm 11:3!

In this respect, one could even say that the very essence of LIFE, as seen in the foundation, is really being in God's image and likeness *and* in the place of being able to step into the purpose for which Man was created; and DEATH, in foundation, is *no longer* being in God's image and likeness and not able to participate in the purposes of God.

If man would ever be able to fulfill the position for which he had been created, he would have to be in the image and likeness of God. This is what salvation, *in its full scope does* – it brings man back into the image and likeness of God, allowing him to fulfill his created purpose. Man's spirit *and* soul *and* body would have to be brought back to the original state as in foundation, as well as in our opening passage today: **I Thessalonians 5:23 Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.** (NASB)

Then Paul deals with all three aspects of salvation in Romans chapter five:

Romans 5

8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were still sinners, Christ died for us [the Gospel of Grace]. 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from wrath through Him. 10 For if when we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life.

From this passage in Romans, we can see that we have been *saved* by Christ's death — referring to our spiritual birth (v. 8)! But as Paul states it, "*much more then... we shall be saved by His life*" (v. 9). And it is the "much more then..." that deals with things beyond our spiritual birth.

One thing that needs to be mentioned here is that the soul and body are inextricably linked. This can be seen in this passage:

Leviticus 17

11 'For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul.'

In the same way then, the salvation of the soul and the redemption of the body are inextricably linked as well. If an individual receives the salvation of his soul, he will also receive the redemption of the body as well. And as we can see in the Romans 5 passage, referring to a salvation/redemption that is yet future, which is brought about through the power of Christ's *life* – His resurrection.

This *future* salvation is also mentioned in Hebrews chapter nine in this way:

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Hebrews 9

27 And inasmuch as it is appointed for men to die once and after this comes judgment, 28 so Christ also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him. (NASB)

Why will Christ appear a second time?

Unlike the first coming, this coming is without reference to sin. According to v. 28, how was His first coming with reference to sin?

According to this passage, for whom will He come this next time?

As we will see at the end of our lesson this week, this *future* salvation has to do with an inheritance in the coming Kingdom of Christ as a firstborn son of God.

Day Three — Dead to the Flesh; Alive to the Spirit

Today we will strive to grasp a clearer understanding of the what *working out of our own salvation* would look like. That which Baptism points to will give us further understanding of ‘working out our own salvation.’

Baptism is to follow our having died with Christ through faith in His finished work on the cross. It pictures for us *our burial and resurrection with Christ*. We can see this in the Children of Israel having “died” in Egypt (via the substitution of the paschal lambs) the night of the Passover. Then God brought them out of Egypt and put them on a path to the Promised Land. But between Egypt and the Promise Land lay the Red Sea, through which they were taken. In Scripture, the sea often refers to a place of the dead. So, we see the Children of Israel being “buried” in the Red Sea, but then were brought up out of the sea on the eastern bank. This being *brought up* pictures our resurrection with Christ, in order to walk in newness of life. Paul lays it out like this:

Romans 6

5 For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection, 6 knowing this, that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with, that we should no longer be slaves of sin. 7 For he who has died has been freed from sin. 8 Now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him. 9 knowing that Christ, having been raised from the dead, dies no more. Death no longer has dominion over Him. 10 For the death that He died, He died to sin once for all; but the life that He lives, He lives to God. 11 Likewise you also, reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus our Lord. 12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey it in its lusts. 13 And do not present your members as instruments of unrighteousness to sin, but present yourselves to God as being alive from the dead, and your members as instruments of righteousness to God.

What are vv. 5-7 saying?

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And then vv. 8-9 explains what happens when we die with Christ. What is it?

And then Paul explains what this should mean to us, and how we are to live with this in mind. What can we learn from vv. 11-13? What are we to do and not do?

Paul also taught Timothy about this dying and living with Christ with respect to rulership in the kingdom, shedding more light on the complete picture.

II Timothy 2

11 This is a faithful saying: For if we died with Him, We shall also live with Him.

12 If we endure, we shall also reign with Him. If we deny Him, He also will deny us.

13 If we are faithless, He remains faithful; He cannot deny Himself.

If we have died with Christ, what shall we also do? (v. 11)

Having died with Him, we must endure. What happens if we endure? (v. 12a)

If we don't endure; if we deny Him that, what happens? (v. 12b)

In all of this, if we do not have faith in things beyond our having died with Him, then what happens? (v. 12)

This “faithful saying” as Paul calls it, really encapsulates the complete picture of *the whole purpose of God*. A person who has died with Christ, through faith in the death of Jesus, **and** who reckons his old nature to have *died with Him* [see Rom. 6:11 above] can live in the power of His resurrected life, and in so doing, *he will endure* (he will continue reckoning his old nature dead and buried and continue to walk in the Spirit), then that person will reign with Jesus.

But the passage does not stop there! If we *deny Him* (i.e., deny Him our endurance), then what will Christ do?

What do you think the word *faithless* means in v. 13?

If we are faithless, what will God do, and why would He do that?

The person who puts faith in the death of Jesus thereby coming into spiritual *life* now possesses a *new nature* – a spiritual nature which is in union with God's Spirit. However, this person still possesses his *old nature*, which is inherited from Adam in that his soul is still corrupted and his body is still devoid of glory. And in that condition – possessing two natures – the person has very moment-to-moment choices to make. He can either choose to

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- Walk according to the flesh, fulfilling the desires of the flesh, or
- Walk according to the Spirit, fulfilling the desires of the spirit.

Of course, we'll remember that a person *not* possessing the new nature through spiritual birth through faith in Jesus Christ cannot make this choice, since he only possesses the old nature inherited from Adam, and can only live under the law of sin and death. He cannot walk according to the Spirit until he has come into union with God through spiritual birth.

Paul tells us that there are two distinctive outcomes for believers in making either choice!

Romans 8

1 There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. 2 For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death... ..5 For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. 6 For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. 13 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. 14 For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Paul begins chapter 8 of Romans explaining that *there is now no condemnation* (Lit., no negative judgement) *for those who are in Christ Jesus*. But there is caveat connected to not receiving negative judgment.⁴ According to the last half of verse 1, what does this person *not* do, and what does he do?

From this passage, make a list the two choices put before a believer and the result of either choice:

Choice and Result living one way

Choice and Result living the other way



The Lord Jesus offered His disciples (and by extension, He offers us) the same choice:

Matthew 16

24 Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. 25 For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it. 26 For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his

⁴ One might notice that a few English translations do not have the last half of verse 1 contained within. The reason for this is that the Greek manuscripts used for those translations did not have that phrase. But really whether or not that particular phrase is included in v. 1 is of no moment, as the following text of Rom. 8 expounds on the thought regardless.

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soul? 27 For the Son of Man will come in the glory of His Father with His angels, and then He will reward each according to his works...”

Jesus says that if any one desires to become His disciple, there are certain qualifications to be met. You and I must:

- *Deny ourselves.* That would mean that we would stop thinking that we are entitled to be weak in our flesh. If God says to stop complaining, we stop complaining. If God says to stop lying or cheating or slandering or gossiping, etc., etc., we stop lying and cheating and slandering and gossiping, etc., etc. If God says to stop indulging the flesh in...whatever, we STOP! And in doing these things, actually we...
- *Take up our own cross.* Taking up our own cross is a metaphor for dying to our fleshly desires. **Christ died in the flesh leaving us an example as to how we are to die to the flesh.** (Peter succinctly explains the example we have in Jesus: **1 Peter 2:21 For to this you were called, because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps: 22 “Who committed no sin, Nor was deceit found in His mouth”; 23 who, when He was reviled, did not revile in return; when He suffered, He did not threaten, but committed Himself to Him who judges righteously; 24 who Himself bore our sins in His own body on the tree, that we, having died to sins, might live for righteousness--by whose stripes you were healed.)**

And then denying ourselves and taking up our own cross would put us in the position to

- *Follow Christ in discipleship.* While spiritual birth is a free gift, our becoming His disciple costs a great deal! *The cost is our reckoning ourselves dead in Him, buried with Him and raised with Him in order to walk in His resurrection power.* And it is well worth the cost; well worth the exchange of our fleshly life here and now, for life that is truly life in the Coming Age.

The choices we make on a day to day basis will have direct bearing on our future life or death when the Son of Man comes in the glory of His Father with His angels, in order to recompense every man according to his deeds. The choice is really up to us!

As we close for today, will you write out what you have learned in today’s lesson?

Day Four — Resurrection to Life

After what we learned yesterday, we may ask the question – How would walking in the spirit be done on a day-to-day basis? The answer really is fairly basic: We would need to study to know and understand God’s Word, and strive to obey it! Paul, knowing what is at stake, gives insight into how he strove to do this. The preceding context of the passage we are about to read shows that Paul was willing to lay aside all that he had previously striven for in order to “gain Christ.” When you read this passage, ignore the verse separation between 8 and 9, so that you can see that gaining Christ was not striving to do good works in the flesh, but rather striving to do it through faith. Remember that faith is not passive; faith is very active! So then through that active faith, Paul strives to do v. 10, so that v. 11 can become a reality. (Just work through this passage with these things in mind...you’ll see what I mean.)

Philippians 3

7 But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. 8 Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ 9 and 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; 10 that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, 11 if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead.

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What has Paul done that he might gain Christ?

And because these are things that Paul DOES (i.e., things beyond simple faith in Christ's death), we can know that he is doing this POST his spiritual birth. Can you see that?

Verse 10 explains why Paul does these things. Why is it?

Then in v. 11, Paul summarizes the goal of doing all these things. To what does he want to attain?

Now the question is: Why would Paul *strive to attain to the resurrection from the dead*, when he knows that every person who has been born and dies will be resurrected from death?

The nuance of his statement is not seen in the English translation, as it is in the Greek. When he says: "if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead," he literally said, "...if by any means I may attain to the *out-resurrection* from the dead." The Greek word *anastasis* means *to stand up* in the way we would understand resurrected – a standing up from death. But in v. 11, Paul uses a prefix before the word *anastasis*. He uses the word *exanastasis*. The prefix *ex* would show a *standing up out of*.

By the power of God, Jesus *stood up* from physical death (v. 10). And because of His resurrection, so will all of mankind *stand up* from physical death. Whether saved or unsaved, everyone who has ever lived and died will be resurrected (will stand up) and come into judgment before Jesus as Judge. Everyone!

- Christians will be resurrected to the JSOC;
- Jews will be resurrected to judgment upon the earth in the wilderness at the end of the Tribulation;
- Saved Gentiles (Gentiles who were saved during the Tribulation) will stand at the Sheep and Goat Judgment; and then,
- The unsaved will be resurrected to stand before Jesus after the Millennium at the Great White Throne Judgment.

And Paul knows that! So, what is Paul saying here?

Paul is revealing his desire to attain to something that not all Christians will attain to. In v.11, Paul is dealing with the time when the Church will stand before the JSOC. There, judgments and determinations will be meted out to all individuals making up the Body of Christ, and as a result of these judgments and determinations, a part of Christ's Body will *stand up out of* the remainder of His Body. Those within the Body of Christ, who attain to this out-resurrection, will have done so because they chose to follow Paul's example of *suffering the loss of all things in order to gain Christ*. They will be those who have striven to

- Know Christ, and
- The power of His resurrection, and
- The fellowship of His suffering – being conformed to His death.

To KNOW CHRIST:

We can only come to **know Christ** through the WORD, since Jesus is the Word made flesh. There is transforming power in this Word – the Word transforms us from the inside out, bringing about the metamorphosis of becoming like Christ, which is the process of the salvation of the soul. It is in knowing Him (His Word) that we can know –

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The Power of His Resurrection:

Based upon what we can know from His Word (which can only be understood through an alive spirit), then we are to *consider/reckon* our fleshly nature as having died with Christ. But not only that, we also need to consider/reckon our old nature *buried with Him*, as it is only through death and burial, that we have the ability to walk in **the power of His resurrection** (through our redeemed spirit working in conjunction with the Holy Spirit). This is what is pictured for us in Baptism. And it is only through walking in His resurrection power that we can *continually* join Him in –

The Fellowship of His suffering, being Conformed to His Death:

Remember, Jesus died *in* the flesh leaving us an example of how we are to die *to* the flesh. And it is the continual dying to the flesh – keeping our old nature in the place of death, that is the working out of our salvation in fear and trembling, the salvation of the soul. And it is this aspect of salvation which allows us to be part of those out-resurrected from the dead – those who will *stand up out of* those within the Church who had not desired such things. Those who had not desired such things, and adjusted their lives accordingly will suffer the loss of their soul, and a result will be *separated from the Christ and His glory* during the 1,000-year reign of Christ over the earth. This separation is seen as death for the Millennium.

This death is millennial in scope, not eternal, and is brought about by the lack of one's willingness to die to the flesh and walk by the spirit during this pilgrim journey. (Remember *death* is seen as being separated from God's purpose for man's creation.)

So, with all of that in mind, will you go back and reread the previous passage, then continue with the passage below. Please do that now.

Philippians 3

12 Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected <5048>; but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. 13 Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, 14 I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

15 Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. 16 Nevertheless, to the degree that we have already attained, let us walk by the same rule, let us be of the same mind. 17 Brethren, join in following my example, and note those who so walk, as you have us for a pattern. 18 For many walk, of whom I have told you often, and now tell you even weeping, that they are the enemies of the cross of Christ: 19 whose end is destruction, whose god is their belly, and whose glory is in their shame--who set their mind on earthly things. 20 For our citizenship is in heaven, from which we also eagerly wait for the Savior, the Lord Jesus Christ, 21 who will transform our lowly body that it may be conformed to His glorious body, according to the working by which He is able even to subdue all things to Himself.

Verse 12 must be connected back to v. 11. What has Paul not yet attained?

He also states that he is not yet perfected <5048>. Look up that word in the Appendix and write out what he is saying about himself.

perfected <5048>

Through the use of this word, what is Paul saying about himself?

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And because he has not yet accomplished his goal, he goes on to say what he does (vv. 12b-14). What does he do?

Then what does Paul encourage his readers to do in vv. 15-17? Be specific.

In vv. 18-19, Paul describes Christians who do not follow his example. How does he describe them?

What does he say in v. 20?

Compare v. 19 with v. 20. Do you see that, as a Christian, we can either set our minds on *earthly* things, **or** realize that our citizenship is in heaven, thereby setting our minds on heavenly things? And if we follow Paul's example, v. 21 tells us what the result will be. What is the result of setting our minds on heavenly things as opposed to earthly things? (And this is related back to the out-resurrection in v. 11.)

This is all part of the process of the salvation of our soul, as we “work out our own salvation with fear and trembling” (Phil. 2:12). And, as stated previously, the salvation of the soul is inextricably linked to the redemption of the body. If you attain to one, you will have attained to both; if you do not attain to one you will not attain to the other. But

Remember, suffering (i.e., dying to the flesh) always precedes glory, which brings us to the redemption of the body. We'll look at that more closely tomorrow. See you then.

Day Five — The Redemption of the Body

We'll begin today by reading this simple verse:

Romans 7

24 O wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death?

What does Paul desire to be delivered from here?

To understand what Paul is saying in these middle chapters in the Book of Romans we would have to understand life and death in the way it is laid out at the foundation of Scripture. We looked at this in Day Two of this week's lesson. Do you remember what happened *to the bodies* of the Man and the Woman at the moment they died – the moment they ate from the forbidden tree? Write it out:

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Let's consider a few questions: When you received the free gift of eternal life (your spiritual birth), did anything change in/with your body?

Do you still have a corrupted soul – a soul with a propensity to sin? (You may also want to review what happened to their souls once Adam and the Woman ate the forbidden fruit. See Day Two.)

So, the only part of our being that has been redeemed even at *this point* is our spirit, right? The birth of our spirit is what gives us the new nature. Now we no longer have a dead (separated) spirit; we have an alive spirit, which is in union with God. And THAT is life eternal from the moment you believed.

Presently, every Christian has an alive spirit, housed alongside a corrupted soul within a body that is devoid of glory, a body that is in the process of aging and which will eventually return to dust (unless we are part of the group to be raptured). As we have seen, the salvation of the soul is the life-long process, which began the moment we received our spiritual birth, the process which allows us to be changed from the inside out through the metamorphosis brought about by the renewing of our minds through the Word of God. But this process does not *just happen* as a result of our being spiritually alive. It is a process which is brought to completion *through our working in conjunction with the Holy Spirit*, as we allow Him to change us. THIS is what Paul refers to when writes:

Philippians 2

12 Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; 13 for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure.

What did Paul say that Christians are to do?

And according to v. 13, HOW will this working out be accomplished?

To see that the salvation of the soul is connected with the redemption of the body, let's observe the following passage. But while observing it, please do not forget what you learned yesterday about Paul's striving...

Romans 8

10 And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. 11 But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you.

What does Paul say about the body in the first part of v. 10?

And *if we allow the Spirit of God to dwell in us*, then according to v. 11, what will God do for our mortal bodies?

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Again, this deals with our walking in Christ's resurrection power through making choices in line with the Spirit (which is why the picture of Baptism is so important), and if we do that then God *will give life to our mortal bodies*. But what would THAT life look like? This is why we began week's Lesson by going back to the beginning. We have to understand what LIFE looked like in foundation. At the beginning, LIFE was not just an individual who could breathe, move, feel and communicate. Life was much more!

LIFE was being in God's image and likeness in a place of preparedness to rule, thereby fulfilling God's created purpose! Please make sure you understand that sentence.

Yes, in the end, our mortal bodies will put on immortality (either through resurrection or rapture), but we must understand that the resurrection/rapture of the body is **not** the redemption of our bodies; immortality is not the "salvation" of the body! Again, all people, both saved and unsaved, will receive immortal bodies in the end.

And so we will remember that *the death of the body* – as it is presented in foundation – *is the loss of the covering of glory*. And so we can know that the "salvation" with respect to our body has to do with *the reception of glory*, and it linked to the salvation of the soul. If one aspect is realized, the other will be as well. That is why Paul deals so extensively in Romans chapter eight with walking according to the Spirit and experiencing life, *or* walking according to the flesh (being carnally minded), and experiencing death.

In these middle chapters of Romans, Paul is dealing with life and death in the Coming Age, not life and death in Eternity. (We have learned about the distinctions between the Coming Age, and the future Ages of Ages.) So, Paul is dealing with truths having to do with the Coming Age, and not the Eternal Ages beyond the Coming Age. And since the salvation of the soul and the redemption of the body are inextricably linked, Paul goes on to clearly state what the redemption of the body is in the following passage:

Romans 8

16 The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, 17 and if children, then heirs--heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together. 18 For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us. 19 For the earnest expectation of the creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. 20 For the creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; 21 because the creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God. 22 For we know that the whole creation groans and labors with birth pangs together until now. 23 Not only that, but we also who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, even we ourselves groan within ourselves, eagerly waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body.

The redemption of our body is the aspect of salvation that deals with the death of our body – its lack of glory, as seen in foundation. The *redemption of our body* will bring about the covering of glory and the reception of the royal garments of splendor and majesty, which portend rulership.

This glory will be granted only to those who shared in the suffering of Christ – shared in His death, just as we read in the previous passage – *if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him*. Through following Christ's example of dying, we will have denied ourselves, have taken up our cross and followed Christ (Mt. 16:24). Figuratively, we would have died with Him, been buried with Him, and been raised with Him in resurrection **in order to** walk in newness of life – to walk in the Spirit, having the power to continue to do so – on and on. All of which will result in the salvation of the soul at the JSOC, which in turn brings about *the redemption of our body, our adoption as a son* (v. 23). See also Eph. 1:5.

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The Greek word for *adoption* comes from a compound Greek word that literally means *son-placing*; it is taking a son within the family (v. 16 above) and placing him as a firstborn (seen in v. 17b above). *That* is the adoption, which is yet future; *that* is the redemption of the body! (Doesn't it say just that?) And within the Kingdom of the SON, it will only be *firstborn sons* who will rule with Christ, only joint-heirs with Him who are glorified, having suffered with Him by continually dying to the flesh during this pilgrim journey.

That is why the full scope of salvation is so important to understand. Salvation is more than just our spiritual birth, as so many in the Church today believe it to be. Salvation must bring the whole of man back to the place he was in foundation, having been made in the image and likeness of God, ready to step into the position for which God created him.

Can you grasp the magnitude of how important this is? Oh! I HOPE you can!

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Lesson Fifteen — Full Scope of Salvation: Part 3 Faith, Works, and the Reward

Day One — Justification by Faith

Day Two — Justification by Works

Day Three — The Rich Young Ruler

Day Four — Works and the Reward in the Gospels

Day Five — Works and the Reward in the Epistles

In the past two week we learned about the full scope of salvation. We realized the importance of identifying the three-part nature of man and how redemption must deal with all three parts. We saw that the free gift of eternal life is based upon faith in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Period. We saw that this salvation is related to one's spirit; it is one's spiritual birth, which cannot be gained through one's own works. Nothing can be added to or taken away from this salvation. It is fully secure, for it is fully based upon Christ's finished work, not upon man's work. And this is the salvation which *takes place in a moment of time (the moment the person exercises faith) and has to do with life for eternity.*

We also learned that the salvation of the soul has to do with the reward of the inheritance, which will be realized during the Millennial Era — the Coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ. The reward is given as a result of faithful work on the part of the individual who had previously put faith in Jesus Christ. This salvation is based upon one's continual walk of faith – faithful obedience to the commands of Christ. *Thus, this salvation is a process, which takes place during one's Christian life, as one strives to obediently complete the work that God had foreordained for him and has to do with the inheritance being realized in the Coming Age.*

At the resurrection/rapture of the Church, all Christians will receive their incorruptible bodies (I Cor. 15:52-54). Those Christians who have realized the salvation of their souls will then receive the redemption of their bodies which will be the reception of the Glory, and the adoption as sons.

With these distinctions in mind, this week we are going to continue examining the relationship between the salvation of the soul with works and the reward, as these relate to the Coming Age. Please pray for a clearer understanding.

Day One — Justification by Faith

Remember we have learned that once a person is *spiritually* alive, then and only then, is he in a position wherein he can operate *in the spiritual realm*. A person who is dead spiritually cannot operate in the spiritual realm, just as a person who is dead physically cannot operate in the physical realm.

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Lesson Fifteen

This week we will see more clearly how both faith and works come into the picture subsequent to the initial moment of faith and the spiritual birth, having to do with the salvation of the soul and the redemption of the body. Anything done in the spiritual realm (by one who is spiritually alive) falls into either of two categories — on the one hand, a saved individual can perform *works according to faith*, and in the end be rewarded for their work; or on the other hand, he can perform *works according to the flesh*, and in the end suffer loss for those works. Judgments and distinctions are made at The Judgment Seat of Christ at which time a believer's work will be tested by fire (I Cor. 3:11-15). The goal is to accomplish works according to faith!

But how does a *saved individual* perform *works according to faith*? Paul gives us insight into the answer to this questions in two of his letters, revealing something of interest concerning a life of faith. He quotes the prophet Habakkuk when he writes —

Romans 1

17 For in it [the gospel] the righteousness of God is revealed from faith to faith; as it is written, “The just shall live by faith.”

Notice the phrase “from faith to faith.” A person is initially justified (saved) by faith! But that is just a beginning point! The person who has been *justified by faith* should continue to *live by faith*. It is “from faith to faith.”

Then Paul uses the quote again in his letter to the Church in Galatia.

Galatians 3

11 But that no one is justified by the law in the sight of God is evident, for “the just shall live by faith.”

The Law was given to Israel with a view to receiving one's inheritance (Deut. 4:21). It is the same for the commands of Christ. The commands given in the New Testament are given with a view to receiving one's inheritance. Neither had/has anything to do with one's eternal salvation. Keeping the Law was *never* given as a means of salvation (of the soul). In fact, the Law was given *after* the people had been redeemed, and it was given with a view to entering the land (Lev. 26; Deut. 28). Abraham's descendants were redeemed in Exodus chapter twelve; the Law was given in Exodus chapter nineteen forward. Knowing this, Paul expresses that this fact should not be overlooked!

That there are points of justification in an individual's life after salvation is made clear as Paul writes to the believers in Galatia. Paul tells them that the Law never justified *anyone at any time*. Justification only comes through faith — both initially and thereafter.

Just as the Law was to be *faithfully* kept in the Old Testament in order for one to enter the land of promise (an earthly land), so the commands of Christ are to be *faithfully* kept in the Epistles in order to enter our land of promise (a heavenly land).

In the Books of Romans and Galatians, Paul explains the fact that the Old Testament Law had its place prior to the coming of Christ. Though no one has been justified through works of the Law *apart from faith*, yet, through the Law came the knowledge of sin (Ro. 3:20). Paul writes that the Law was given as a tutor for *right living* (cf. Gal. 3:24, 25). But when Jesus came, He fulfilled the Law (He did not nullify the Law) and now, rather than a written Law, God gives His Spirit as the means for *right living* through the Word. Through walking in the Spirit, Christians are now to keep the commandments of Christ with a view to the inheritance in the kingdom. Obedience comes subsequent to the initial act of faith and obedience is a matter of the heart. In order to please God, the commandments of Christ must be kept through faith, rather than through a legalistic attitude. *Faithful obedience to what God said* is what pleases Him (Heb. 11:6). It is through an

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individual's actions based upon their *belief in God's Word concerning the inheritance and the kingdom* that will please God and allow one to be granted the inheritance.

Actually the Bible reveals that there are two ways in which an individual can receive justification *after he is saved*. On the one hand, when a person *believes* what God says about something, he receives justification from God. On the other hand, when a person *acts upon that belief*, he also receives justification from God. Thus, there should be many points of justification in a person's life, which are *subsequent* to his initial justification through faith in Christ's work on Calvary. *Subsequent to one's initial justification* (one's spiritual birth), justification can come in two ways:

- 1) through faith alone, and
- 2) through work that emanates out of faith.

And those subsequent points of justification are illustrated in Scripture in several ways.

Since Paul and James both used Abraham as an example of both types of justification *subsequent* to Abraham's initial justification, we will study what they both have written about him. Today we will see how Paul explains justification *by faith alone* in Abraham's life; then tomorrow we will see how James takes exactly the same picture in Abraham's life and shows how he was justified by works that emanated out of his faith. Thus we will see how both faith and works fit together into the whole picture *after a person is saved*.

Neither in Romans chapter four, nor in James chapter two, does the author deal with Abraham's *initial justification*. Both Paul and James deal with a point of justification *subsequent* to his reception of the free gift. Study carefully, and you will see. (Remember that Abraham had been initially saved in Ur, details of which we are not privy to, and consequently he could act by faith in obeying God's command to call him to another country.)

In Romans chapter four, Paul deals with the fact that the Law cannot justify anyone.

Romans 4

**1 What then shall we say that Abraham our father has found according to the flesh?
2 For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God.
3 For what does the Scripture say? "Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness."
4 Now to him who works, the wages are not counted as grace but as debt.
5 But to him who does not work but believes on Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is accounted for righteousness...
...13 For the promise that he would be the heir of the world was not to Abraham or to his seed through the law, but through the righteousness of faith.**

Again, no part of the passage is dealing with Abraham's initial justification! In Romans 4:3 Paul is dealing with an event which took place in Genesis chapter fifteen. Abraham was initially justified by faith unto eternal life at some point **prior** to Genesis chapter twelve. His initial justification would have had to have happened in Ur **prior** to His leaving Mesopotamia, for in Hebrews chapter eleven God commends his faith for leaving Ur, connecting this *act of obedience* to his looking forward to the inheritance (Heb. 11:8, 9)! Any action (work) on the part of an individual would not be (could not be) commended by God, *prior to* God initially justifying that individual through his faith in God's provision of death and shed blood. Therefore, Abraham's justification unto eternal life had to have taken place in Ur, and we are simply not privy to the details of the event because God did not see fit to record it in Scripture. God cannot/will not commend work done *prior to* salvation. Therefore, when Paul deals with an event having taken place — a work on the part of Abraham — subsequent to his leaving Ur, he would have to be dealing with a post-salvation action.

So what is Paul dealing with in showing that "Abraham believed God" and it being "counted to him as righteousness"? Notice in Romans 4:13, Paul connects Abraham's belief with the inheritance. Paul

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recognized that it was the inheritance that was being dealt with in Genesis chapter fifteen. Abraham believed what God said about his heir and the inheritance. (You may want to check the context in Gen. 15 and Rom. 4 to see if what is being said here is factual!)

In Romans chapter four, Paul is dealing with an event (subsequent to Abraham displaying previous faith when he left Ur, and was commended by God [Heb. 11:8]) wherein God reckoned (or accounted) righteousness to Abraham due to *his belief in what God had just revealed*. This refers to events in Genesis chapter fifteen (which immediately follow events in chapter fourteen), wherein God reveals to Abraham that *his reward would be very great!* In the text of Genesis 15:1-5, Abraham immediately related the reward with an inheritance (an inheritance which would be very great!) asking who would be his heir since he was childless. God told him his heir would come from his own body, and in fact, he would have as many descendants as the stars of the heavens. *And Abraham believed what God said!* And God counted it to him as righteousness. Simple, isn't it?

Nothing in the entire scene in Genesis chapter fifteen has anything to do with death and shed blood. In no way does this have anything to do with Abraham's initial salvation. It has all to do with his being blessed for simply believing what God was revealing to him at that moment – about the reward (Gen. 15:1), which is the inheritance (15:4). Abraham's faith (believing what God had just said) became a point of justification for Abraham (*subsequent* to his initial justification), apart from any action taken on the part of Abraham (15:6). Herein he was justified apart from works. He *simply believed* what God said concerning his reward (v. 1) and what God said concerning his descendants (vv. 4, 5), and God counted his faith as righteousness (v.6). (Doesn't the text say just that?)

It was later that Abraham was called to act upon this faith! And that is what we will deal with tomorrow in the Book of James. Before we close for today, go back to the passage printed from Romans, and reread the passage with these thoughts in mind. You will need a good grasp on this in order for our continuing study tomorrow.

Day Two — Justification by Works

Yesterday we saw that the one who has been justified through faith must continue to live by faith. We also learned that a person can be justified through faith even *subsequent* to his initial salvation. And if one continues to live by faith, he should have many points of justification credited to him throughout his walk of faith.

Yesterday we studied an event in Abraham's life wherein he believed exactly what God told him, and God counted that to him as righteousness (Gen. 15:6; cf. Rom. 4:1-5, 13). Today we are going to study this same event in Abraham's life, and with further study, we will see how Abraham later *acted upon that faith* and was additionally *justified through that action/work*. In fact, the faith displayed in Genesis chapter fifteen was later *perfected* or *brought to its end* (its goal) through his action in Genesis chapter twenty-two. While Paul deals with Abraham's faith, James goes further and deals with Abraham's *work as a result of his faith*.

James shows how our good works will *bring our faith to its end — its goal* (Jas. 2:22; cf. I Pet. 1:9). In demonstrating this, James writes –

James 2

**14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have?
Can faith save him?**

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Immediately you should ask yourself — “What salvation is James dealing with in this text?” If the text itself doesn’t give any clues, check the context surrounding it. In this case, James has specifically stated in previous text which salvation his epistle is dealing with. Read it in chapter one.

James 1

21 Therefore lay aside all filthiness and overflow of wickedness, and receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save your souls.

Just because there is a chapter break between this statement in chapter one and what James is dealing with in chapter two is no reason to think that James has changed his focus. He deals with the *salvation of the soul* throughout his entire epistle. If this is understood, the Book of James is a very easy epistle to grasp. *Works done in faith have to do with the saving of the soul.*

Now let’s pick it up again in chapter two, and see what we can learn from the example James gives us.

James 2

14 What does it profit, my brethren, if someone says he has faith but does not have works? Can faith save him? 15 If a brother or sister is naked and destitute of daily food, 16 and one of you says to them, “Depart in peace, be warmed and filled,” but you do not give them the things which are needed for the body, what does it profit? 17 Thus also faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead <3498>...

dead <3498> (Especially note the definition 2b.)

He points out that faith, if it has no works, is dead in the sense that *it is useless toward accomplishing its goal*. Remember the goal of faith is the salvation of the soul (I Pet. 1:9). This is key to understand. And the salvation of the soul (Jas. 1:21) has to do with works, which emanate out of faithfulness. (As we continue, notice James uses the <3498> word again in vv. 20 and 26.)

Continuing

...20 But do you want to know, O foolish man, that faith without works is dead <3498>? 21 Was not Abraham our father justified by works when he offered Isaac his son on the altar? 22 Do you see that faith was working together with his works, and by works faith was made perfect <5048>? 23 And the Scripture was fulfilled which says, “Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness.” And he was called the friend of God. 24 You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only...

...26 For as the body without the spirit is dead <3498>, so faith without works is dead <3498> also.

dead <3498>

perfect <5048>

According to v. 21, was Abraham justified by works?

How could he be justified by works? Verse 22 explains how. How is it?

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Write out the first five words of v. 23:

What is the result of faith being brought to its end (v. 23b)?

Here, James uses Abraham as an example to show how works will justify an individual, *if the work is done according to faith*. James deals with God allowing Abraham to bring that which he believed in Genesis chapter fifteen to its end (or its goal), depicted through his action in Genesis chapter twenty-two, wherein he offered up the son who had been promised to him in Genesis chapter fifteen. And in doing this, the Holy Spirit uses the pen of James to show Abraham as an example of an individual's *faith reaching its goal through a work that emanated out of his faith*. Thus, Abraham was *justified by a work* – this work emanated out of the faith which had been expressed previously.

James is dealing with things beyond the simple faith message. He is dealing with works. Therefore, it is easy to see that the whole book of James is dealing with the salvation we are to work out – the salvation of our souls!

Thus, the faith Abraham had in Genesis chapter fifteen concerning a descendant coming from his own body was brought to its goal through his work in Genesis chapter twenty-two, when he was called on by God to offer his son (the son of the promise) on an altar. He could act in this way (preparing to obediently offer his son, Isaac, on the altar) because he believed that which God had previously and specifically told him concerning this son. Abraham could act, believing that God was able to raise Isaac from the dead (Heb. 11:19)! So both the faith (Gen. 15), as well as the work borne out of faith (Gen. 22) were counted to him as righteousness. Through Abraham's example, James is simply showing the importance of works bringing faith to its intended goal. And he uses very strong words in showing this. (Excuse my straightforwardness here, but this is not just some "pie-in-the-sky" theology that can be accepted or denied by someone's personal preference. In the long run, it is very important to understand these things!)

Think through the statement James makes in 2:26. What do you think that statement means?

James compares the physical body and the spirit (*lit.*, breath), to faith and works. Just as the body without breath would be dead in the physical realm, so would faith without works be dead in the spiritual realm. Without works, faith does not come to its goal! Therefore, faith becomes dead with respect to the salvation of the soul — the salvation with which James is dealing.

So, you see — there is a place for works *subsequent* to the gift of eternal life. And both *faith alone, and works that emanate out of faith* are counted as righteousness.

We'll end with the following passage today. Underline the phrase "work of faith" in v. 3 and notice its context –

I Thessalonians 1

2 We give thanks to God always for you all, making mention of you in our prayers, 3 remembering without ceasing your work of faith, labor of love, and patience of hope in our Lord Jesus Christ in the sight of our God and Father, 4 knowing, beloved brethren, your election by God....

Think on these things. See you tomorrow.

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Day Three — The Rich Young Ruler

Whew! We have covered a lot of material in the past two days! Are you hanging in there? I trust that you are.

Today we want to continue making distinctions between faith and works, as this relates to the salvation of the soul. We will look at a dialogue that Jesus had with a young rich man. As you study through this passage, keep in mind all that you have learned in the past weeks. Remember too, that a passage dealing with the salvation of the soul may not specifically use the phrase “the salvation of the soul.” It may only use the word “salvation” or “save.” The context will make it clear as to which salvation it is dealing with. And sometimes, as we shall see in the next passage, the salvation of the soul is referred to as the *inheritance*.

Mark 10

17 Now as He was going out on the road, one came running, knelt before Him, and asked Him, “Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal <165> life?”

Before we go any further in the passage, let me ask you a question. What is the man asking about — the free gift or the salvation of the soul? And what makes you think so?

At first glance, it may be a little confusing because of the use of the English word *eternal*. The confusion comes as a result of the English translation of the Greek word *aiônios*. Look up the definition:

<166>

(See also the root word <165>)

There is an article in the Appendix entitled [ETERNITY – Is It Eternal or is it Age-Lasting?](#) It would be extremely helpful if you would take a moment and read that now.

With what you just learned, write in your own words the question the rich man asked of Jesus in Mark 10:17.

Having grasped the intent of the question, the remainder of the passage will make more sense to you than perhaps it ever has before. Remember, during Jesus’ public ministry, He was offering the Kingdom of the Heavens to the Jews. Here in Mark chapter ten, both the question and the answer had to do with this offer. Prior to Jesus fulfilling the Law through the sacrifice of His death, *faithful* obedience to the Law was required in order to receive the inheritance, but as we have seen, it had to be more than just outward obedience. Notice how Jesus addressed the heart issue with this rich man.

Mark 10

17 ...”Good Teacher, what shall I do that I may inherit eternal life?” 18 So Jesus said to him, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good but One, that is, God. 19 “You know the commandments: ‘Do not commit adultery,’ ‘Do not murder,’ ‘Do not steal,’ ‘Do not bear false witness,’ ‘Do not defraud,’ ‘Honor your father and your mother.’”

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According to what you have learned in the previous two days, why would Jesus answer his question like this?

As we have seen, keeping the Law was a heart issue. It always has been, always will be! So Jesus addresses the heart issue for this particular man —

20 And he answered and said to Him, “Teacher, all these things I have kept from my youth.” 21 Then Jesus, looking at him, loved him, and said to him, “One thing you lack: Go your way, sell whatever you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, take up the cross, and follow Me.” 22 But he was sad at this word, and went away sorrowful, for he had great possessions. 23 Then Jesus looked around and said to His disciples, “How hard it is for those who have riches to enter the kingdom of God!” 24 And the disciples were astonished at His words. But Jesus answered again and said to them, “Children, how hard it is for those who trust in riches to enter the kingdom of God! 25 It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.”

26 And they were greatly astonished, saying among themselves, “Who then can be saved?” 27 But Jesus looked at them and said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for with God all things are possible.” 28 Then Peter began to say to Him, “See, we have left all and followed You.” 29 So Jesus answered and said, “Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel’s, 30 who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time <2540>, -- houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and lands, with persecutions--and in the age <165> to come, eternal <166> life. 31 But many who are first will be last, and the last first.”

NOTES:

time <2540>

age <165>

eternal <166>

What was the heart problem with this young man?

What would have allowed this man to receive the reward?

Think for a moment. Why would it be difficult for a rich man to enter into the kingdom? (To develop your answer, a hint can be found in v. 21.)

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Notice the connection Jesus makes between “inheriting eternal <aionios> life” (v. 17) and “entering into the kingdom” (vv. 23, 24, 25). They are one and the same! The disciples understood the connection between the question concerning the inheritance to Jesus’ answer concerning entering into the kingdom, by connecting both issues to the idea of “being saved” (v. 26). All three phrases are speaking of the same thing – the salvation of the soul – and Jesus connects it all to life in the age <165> to come (v. 30).

According to v. 30, for a person who leaves his home, brothers, sisters, mother or father or children or farms for the sake of Christ, what will be theirs “now in this time” <2540>? (List all the things mentioned in v. 30.)

What about the use of the word “age” – *aion* <165>? In this text the word is singular in the Greek, not plural. By Jesus’ own explanation, the rich man’s question had to do with life in the Coming Age (singular) as it is connected with the inheritance in the Coming Age (v. 30) rather than eternal life in the ages (plural) to come. Relate the question that the man asked Jesus in v. 17 to the statement Jesus made in v. 30. What relationship do you see?

What will that person receive in the Coming Age?

Now reread v. 31. As it is used in this passage, what does that statement mean?

OPTIONAL STUDY–

As you have time today, you may want to read the article in the Appendix entitled THE RICH YOUNG RULER by Arlen Chitwood. It should prove to be extremely helpful.

Day Four — Works and the Reward in the Gospels

In today’s lesson you will have to draw heavily from what you have previously learned in Lessons Eight through Twelve. Remember the message Christ brought to Israel – “Repent for the Kingdom of the Heavens is at hand.” In the scope of that message, He spoke to them much about works and the reward, but in the end they rejected the message, wanting nothing to do with it or the Messenger. Jesus withdrew the offer of the kingdom shortly before they crucified Him (Mt.21:43) .

In the Book of Acts, the re-offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens was made to Israel by the newly instituted Church, simultaneous with the gospel of grace being given to the Gentiles, which was followed by the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens. Ultimately, the Nation of Israel rejected the re-offer and the Nation was completely set aside. With that being the case, the question must be considered: How does one now read the Gospels? How does one read the portions of Scripture wherein the message of the Kingdom of the Heavens had to do with God’s chosen people, Israel?

With the offer of the Kingdom having been withdrawn from Israel and their having been set aside, the things about which Christ had spoken to the Jews concerning the Kingdom of the Heavens, now no longer apply to Israel. The heavenly realm of the Kingdom was now being offered to the New Nation – the Church. Though Israel as a Nation will yet be reestablished, the Nation will reside on the earth during the Coming Age (emphasis on the Coming Age), rather than in the heavenly city.

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We must understand these things in order to properly read and understand the gospels. Now the words of Christ concerning the heavenly portion of the Kingdom can *only be applied* to the Church, not to Israel. With that in mind, let's work through several large portions of Scripture from the gospels. *Keep in mind that the issues of works and the reward have to do with the inheritance in the Kingdom, not the free gift.* We'll study a few of the parables.

Luke 19

11 Now as they heard these things, He spoke another parable, because He was near Jerusalem and because they thought the kingdom of God would appear immediately. 12 Therefore He said: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for himself a kingdom and to return. 13 So he called ten of his servants, delivered to them ten minas, and said to them, 'Do business till I come.' 14 But his citizens hated him, and sent a delegation after him, saying, 'We will not have this man to reign over us.' 15 And so it was that when he returned, having received the kingdom, he then commanded these servants, to whom he had given the money, to be called to him, that he might know how much every man had gained by trading. 16 Then came the first, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned ten minas.' 17 And he said to him, 'Well done, good servant; because you were faithful in a very little, have authority over ten cities.' 18 And the second came, saying, 'Master, your mina has earned five minas.' 19 Likewise he said to him, 'You also be over five cities.' 20 Then another came, saying, 'Master, here is your mina, which I have kept put away in a handkerchief. 21 For I feared you, because you are an austere man. You collect what you did not deposit, and reap what you did not sow.' 22 And he said to him, 'Out of your own mouth I will judge you, you wicked servant. You knew that I was an austere man, collecting what I did not deposit and reaping what I did not sow. 23 Why then did you not put my money in the bank, that at my coming I might have collected it with interest?' 24 And he said to those who stood by, 'Take the mina from him, and give it to him who has ten minas.' 25 (But they said to him, 'Master, he has ten minas.') 26 For I say to you, that to everyone who has will be given; and from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him. 27 But bring here those enemies of mine, who did not want me to reign over them, and slay them before me."

What was the nobleman going to do? And who would the nobleman represent in the parable?

What did the nobleman give to his servants? And what did he tell them to do?

Are there any distinctions made in v. 13 amongst the nobleman's servants?

What did the nobleman's citizens say in v. 14? Who do the citizens represent?

When does the nobleman return? And what does he do upon his return?

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Upon the nobleman's return, when he calls them into account, are there any distinctions made amongst the nobleman's servants? What are the distinctions?

Who do these three servants represent?

Were all the servants of the same master? Did they all receive the same thing; and were they all told to do the same thing?

How was the outcome of the servants different from each other?

Now we'll work through another parable.

Matthew 25

14 "For the kingdom of heaven is like a man traveling to a far country, who called his own servants and delivered his goods to them. **15** And to one he gave five talents, to another two, and to another one, to each according to his own ability; and immediately he went on a journey. **16** Then he who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and made another five talents. **17** And likewise he who had received two gained two more also. **18** But he who had received one went and dug in the ground, and hid his lord's money. **19** After a long time the lord of those servants came and settled accounts with them. **20** So he who had received five talents came and brought five other talents, saying, 'Lord, you delivered to me five talents; look, I have gained five more talents besides them.' **21** His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' **22** He also who had received two talents came and said, 'Lord, you delivered to me two talents; look, I have gained two more talents besides them.' **23** His lord said to him, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord.' **24** Then he who had received the one talent came and said, 'Lord, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you have not sown, and gathering where you have not scattered seed. **25** And I was afraid, and went and hid your talent in the ground. Look, there you have what is yours.' **26** But his lord answered and said to him, 'You wicked and lazy servant, you knew that I reap where I have not sown, and gather where I have not scattered seed. **27** So you ought to have deposited my money with the bankers, and at my coming I would have received back my own with interest. **28** Therefore take the talent from him, and give it to him who has ten talents. **29** For to everyone who has, more will be given, and he will have abundance; but from him who does not have, even what he has will be taken away. **30** And cast the unprofitable servant into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

Before the man left, whom did he call and what did he do?

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How did he divide up his possessions, and why did he do it this way?

What accountability was he going to require of his servants?

What/how did the first two do with what they had been given to do?

What was the response of the lord to these two servants?

What did the servant who was only given one talent do with what he was given?

What did the servant say to his lord that was similar to what the unfaithful servant said to the nobleman in the previous parable?

What was the response of the lord with this servant?

How was the lord's response to this servant similar to the response of the nobleman to the servant in the previous parable?

How was the lord's response different than that in the previous parable?

We'll work through a third parable today.

Luke 13

23 Then one said to Him, "Lord, are there few who are saved?" And He said to them,

(Your initial question should be, "OK. Which salvation is being dealt with in this passage?" Remember, check the context and see if faith and faith alone is the crux of the issue, or if works are involved. The answer Jesus gives will tell you, even in His first statement [v. 24].)

23 ... And He said to them, 24 "Strive to enter through the narrow gate, for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able. 25 When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door, and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying, 'Lord, Lord, open for us,' and He will answer and say to you, 'I do not know you, where you are from,' 26 then you will begin to say, 'We ate and drank in Your presence, and You taught in our streets.' 27 But He will say, 'I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart <868> from Me, all you workers of iniquity.' 28 There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. 29 They will come from the east and the west, from the north and the

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south, and sit down in the kingdom of God. 30 And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last.”

Be sure to look up the word “depart <868>“ and write out what you find.

When asked if there are just a few who will be saved (v. 23), what does Jesus say (v. 24)?

Jesus said, “Strive to enter...” This is a clue to what is being dealt with. *Striving to enter* does not have anything to do with the gospel of grace – nothing to do with the free gift of eternal life. It cannot, because more than faith is involved. But *striving to enter* would be striving to enter the Kingdom. There is work that must be done on the part of a saved individual to enter the kingdom. (In fact the word for *strive* in the Greek is *agonizomai*, from which we get our English word *agonize*.) Do you see that in the text of this parable?

Finally notice v. 30 again. Do you see how this thought fits into the whole picture of the Kingdom?

As we close today, do you have any thoughts?

Day Five — Works and the Reward in the Epistles

Yesterday we looked at a few of the parables in the gospels. It has already been noted that during the time the parables were given, Jesus was offering the Kingdom of the Heavens to the Jews. But they rejected the offer of the Kingdom. Due to that fact, the Nation of Israel, as a whole, no longer has the ability to receive *the Kingdom of the Heavens*. Presently the kingdom is being offered to the Church. The epistles are letters written to Christians, each one revealing some aspect about the offer of the Kingdom of the Heavens to the Church, with the total combination of the epistles giving the complete picture. In order to understand the epistles correctly, one has to understand these things.

Today we will spend time perusing a compilation of passages that will give us insight into *why* Christians should do good works. As you read through these passages, write out what you learn in the margins. You might note the *reason* or *result* of the good work/works of faithfulness. You might see the *incentive* spelled out. Think through these passages. Look to see what *God is saying* through them. *Learn* what He wants you to learn. *See* what He wants you to see. (I am having you do this because all too many times people don't *see* or *hear* what is in these passages. It seems that Satan has blinded our eyes or stopped up our ears. Don't let that happen this time! Learn what is within these passages and hold onto what you learn.) I will not be asking questions at the end of each passage. I trust you to critically study through the passages on your own. Begin your study time today in prayer, asking God to open your eyes and ears.

Hebrews 10

34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws

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back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Hebrews 11

6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him

...26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

1 Corinthians 3

8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor...

...13 each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is. 14 If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. 15 If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.

Ephesians 6

8 Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.

Colossians 1

10 that you may walk worthy of the Lord, fully pleasing Him, being fruitful in every good work and increasing in the knowledge of God; 11 strengthened with all might, according to His glorious power, for all patience and longsuffering with joy; 12 giving thanks to the Father who has qualified us to be partakers of the inheritance of the saints in the light.

2 Corinthians 9

6 But this I say: He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully. 7 So let each one give as he purposes in his heart, not grudgingly or of necessity; for God loves a cheerful giver. 8 And God is able to make all grace abound toward you, that you, always having all sufficiency in all things, may have an abundance for every good work.

2 Timothy 3

16 All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, 17 that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work. good work.

Titus 3

5 not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit, 6 whom He poured out on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Savior, 7 that having been justified by His grace we should become heirs according to the hope of eternal life. 8 This is a faithful saying, and these things I want you to affirm constantly, that those who have believed in God should be careful to maintain good works. These things are good and profitable to men.

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...14 And let our people also learn to maintain good works, to meet urgent needs, that they may not be unfruitful.

I Corinthians 15:58

58 Therefore, my beloved brethren, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord.

II John 1

8 Look to yourselves, that we do not lose those things we worked for, but that we may receive a full reward.

Colossians 3

23 And whatever you do, do it heartily, as to the Lord and not to men, 24 knowing that from the Lord you will receive the reward of the inheritance; for you serve the Lord Christ. 25 But he who does wrong will be repaid for what he has done, and there is no partiality.

Having studied through these passages, write out what you have learned.

From a Scriptural perspective, how should we view works in the life of a believer?

We have seen what works do for the individual performing the work; now we will glimpse a couple of passages that reveal what good works/works of faithfulness do within the Body of Christ. Make notes in the margins as to what you learn.

1 Corinthians 12 (Remember that I and II Corinthians were two of the epistles written during the time of the re-offer to the Jews with the Kingdom and Israel in view. Hence, you will see miraculous signs herein.)

4 There are diversities of gifts, but the same Spirit. 5 There are differences of ministries, but the same Lord. 6 And there are diversities of activities, but it is the same God who works all in all. 7 But the manifestation of the Spirit is given to each one for the profit of all: 8 for to one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit, to another the word of knowledge through the same Spirit, 9 to another faith by the same Spirit, to another gifts of healings by the same Spirit, 10 to another the working of miracles, to another prophecy, to another discerning of spirits, to another different kinds of

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tongues, to another the interpretation of tongues. **11 But one and the same Spirit works all these things, distributing to each one individually as He wills.**

Ephesians 4

11 And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, 12 for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, 13 till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; 14 that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, 15 but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head--Christ-- 16 from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love.

What do good works/works of faithfulness do within the Body of Christ?

Jesus' last recorded words in the entire Bible are printed below.

Revelation 22

12 “And behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his work. 13 I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End, the First and the Last.”

Evidently, what does it appear that Jesus thinks of works and the reward?

Write out your overall impression of this week's lesson.

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Lesson Sixteen — The Book of Hebrews: Part 1

Day One — The Foundation

Day Two — The World to Come

Day Three — The Rest

Day Four — Going on to Perfection

Day Five — The Hope of Our Salvation

Last week we studied passages about works and the reward in order to better understand the role of works in the life of a believer. The big picture of the Bible should really be coming together for you by now. I hope you are excited at the possibilities this holds for you! I know I am.

This week and next we are going to take a very brief glance at the Book of Hebrews.⁵ The reason why we will spend two weeks looking at this book is because it lays out the Bible's overall picture in a very succinct, yet brief format. So we will spend some time looking into it. Please pray for your week's study.

Day One — The Foundation

In order to understand the Bible as a whole, a person must begin where God began — with the foundation which has been laid at the beginning. Then, in understanding this foundational material, one will be able to build upon the foundation correctly. This arrangement of material can be clearly seen in the Book of Hebrews. And accordingly, in order for a person to understand this great book, he must begin in chapter one to lay the foundation there, and then begin to build a proper understanding based upon that foundation. This is the way one can correctly understand the Book of Hebrews, otherwise it may be next to impossible. (The whole Bible is laid out the same way.)

The best way to begin our study this week is to read the entire first chapter. Why don't you do that now, seeing what you can glean on your own.

Having only read this chapter one time through, it may not have made much sense to you. (I struggled with it for some time.) If so, with study it will progressively become clearer. This chapter contains seven Old Testament passages, each having to do with a particular facet of the kingdom. And the author didn't just put these passages at this place in the epistle randomly. He had very specific purposes for choosing these passages. It then becomes important to understand his intentions.

⁵ There is a comprehensive study on the Book of Hebrews given by Pastor John Herbert on our Church's website: www.cornerstonejacksonville.com

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That each of these seven passages has something to do with the Coming Kingdom of Jesus Christ can easily be seen if you were to look up the original context of each of the seven passages and study them in their original setting. But for our purposes today (due to time constraints), we will only glimpse Hebrews chapter one. As we work our way through this chapter, remember the portions in quotation marks reveal that these words are quoted from the Old Testament. Study through this first section of chapter one.

Hebrews 1

1 God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, 2 has in these last days spoken to us by His Son, whom He has appointed heir of all things, through whom also He made the worlds; 3 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 at the right hand of the Majesty on high, 4 having become so much better than the angels, as He has by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they.

List all that you learn about the Son in these opening verses, while not forgetting what you have previously learned about the implications of Sonship. (Sonship implies rulership [II Sam. 7:12-14]. You may want to go back and read the indented parenthetical paragraph at the top of pg. 155 for a quick synopsis of this idea concerning sonship. This is crucial. In fact, the author quotes from II Samuel chapter seven in the next verse. We'll get to it in a minute.)

According to this passage, of what is Jesus heir?

Also, He has *inherited* a name better than whom?

With that in mind, continuing reading –

5 For to which of the angels did He ever say: “You are My Son, Today I have begotten You”? And again: “I will be to Him a Father, And He shall be to Me a Son”?

6 But when He again brings the firstborn into the world, He says: “Let all the angels of God worship Him.”

The first quote is from Psalm 2; the next quote is from II Samuel 7; the third is from Psalm 97.

Keep vv. 5 and 6 in context with the opening verses of the book. What emphasis do you think the author is trying to get across, as he lays the foundation for the book?

Did you notice the beginning phrase in v. 6? What is this speaking about?

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These next two quotes are from Psalms 104 and 45 respectively.

7 And of the angels He says: “Who makes His angels spirits And His ministers a flame of fire.”

The quote in v. 7 comes from Psalm 104 wherein the Psalmist praises God for His creative and restorative powers. The quote he uses reveals that angels are God’s ministers (or messengers), showing that they do His bidding. The entire Psalm gives some of the detail of what God has done to (and for) the earth and those that dwell on the earth. The Psalm portrays the *panorama of time* extending from the restoration of the earth to the time when sinners will be consumed from the earth and the wicked will be no more.

8 But to the Son He says: “Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. 9 You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions.”

Then in this quote from in vv. 8, 9 (taken from Ps. 45), the Psalmist reveals that the Father refers to the Son as “God.” This quote is obviously referring to the Son’s Kingly reign. Putting these two verses together, what comparison is being made between the angels and the Son?

The author of Hebrews seems caught up with the idea of the *panorama of time* when he refers to it again in this quote from Psalm 102. In this quote, he deals very specifically with the period of time extending from the beginning of Genesis chapter one — all the way to the Messianic Era and beyond — to the endless Ages of Ages. Read it.

10 And: “You, LORD, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, And the heavens are the work of Your hands. 11 They will perish, but You remain; And they will all grow old like a garment; 12 Like a cloak You will fold them up, And they will be changed. But You are the same, And Your years will not fail.”

The last quote is from Psalm 110 and is fully Messianic in scope.

13 But to which of the angels has He ever said: “Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool”?

Compare v. 13 with the end of v. 3. What comparison do you see?

When will God make Jesus’ enemies a footstool for His feet?

Who are His enemies and where are they now?

What time frame does the author emphasize in these OT passages?

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And finally we come to the last verse in chapter one. The author speaks of “ministering spirits” (angels who are in heaven serving God, who do His bidding [not the angels who are Christ’s enemies]), and who have been sent out for a specific purpose.

14 Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation?

What do these angels do? To whom do they offer this service?

It should now be plain to see what the topic is that the author of Hebrews is dealing with. From all that you have seen so far in chapter one, what is the topic he is dealing with?

Verse 14 confirms beyond a doubt that the author is dealing with the kingdom in the Coming Age, because he is dealing with the salvation that has to do with the inheritance. Too bad for a chapter break here, because the next verse begins with the word “Therefore...” We’ll pick it up tomorrow, but we’ll need to remember where we left off today because chapters one and two are inextricably linked.

Day Two — The World to Come

Did you notice in yesterday’s study of chapter one that the author of Hebrews continually drew comparisons between Jesus and the angels? If we do not realize what he is saying in these comparisons, then the comparisons would hardly make any sense, because Jesus *is* better than the angels, isn’t He? And He has a better name than any and all of the angels, doesn’t He? Of course He does! Then why does the author make such comparisons? And why is it stated that He is the *heir of all things*? Being Creator God, doesn’t He *own all things* already? These are questions which need to be answered if one is to understand what the Book of Hebrews is all about.

The statement in 1:2 that Jesus is *heir of all things* (things related to the earth as it is the earth which is Christ’s inheritance [Ps. 2:8]) implies that He *does not* own all things yet (the things related to the earth). But the Day is fast approaching when He will receive His inheritance! All of these statements must be kept in the context of chapters one and two. So let’s see if we can understand these things more clearly.

Since chapter two begins with the word ‘Therefore’, the author must be getting ready to connect what he is about to say with what he has just said. Before you continue, go back over yesterday’s homework quickly reviewing what we learned, then read what follows in chapter two. (Again, too bad for a chapter break here.) Do that now.

Hebrews 2

1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away.

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“We must *give the more earnest heed* to what we have heard.” Let’s grasp this! (The answers to the following questions are all found in chapter one.)

First, what have we heard?

According to Hebrews 1:1, from whom have we heard?

According to Hebrews 1:2, from Whom have we heard?

To what must we give the more earnest heed?

And now from chapter two, if we don’t give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, what will happen?

Now the author brings the Children of Israel into the picture as an example of what could happen if we drift away from the things we have heard. Study what he says.

Hebrews 2

1 Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. 2 For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, 3 how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, 4 God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will?

Make a connection between 2:3 and 1:14. What connection do you make?

Now you have to think this through. The author refers to the covenant made on Mt. Sinai through the mediation of angels and through Moses (*cf.* Gal. 3:19). The Children of Israel promised God that they would obey every word which He spoke to them through Moses (Ex. 24:7). How is the author using the Children of Israel as an example? What is he saying?

According to the implication of 2:2, 3, what happens if we do not give the more earnest heed to the things that we have heard from God as He spoke through the prophets and by His Son (the things reiterated within the quotes of the OT passages in the first chapter)?

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And, just in case the reader misses the point of where all this is leading, the author spells it out clearly in verse 5.

5 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.

In the author's own words, what does he say he is writing about?

We should note here that Hebrews 2:5 encapsulates what the Book of Hebrews is ALL about! Please don't miss that, as it is crucial to your understanding of this book.

Basing the answer to the next question from what you have previously learned concerning the present rulership over the earth, how does the author describe *the world to come*?

That the author is speaking about the Coming Age is confirmed in the next Old Testament quote. He quotes David expressing awe of God's divine plan.

6 But one testified in a certain place, saying: "What is man that You are mindful of him, Or the son of man that You take care of him? 7 You have made him a little lower than the angels; You have crowned him with glory and honor, And set him over the works of Your hands. 8 You have put all things in subjection under his feet." For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. ...

Verse 6 begins quoting from Psalm 8. Go to the Appendix and spend a few minutes studying through Psalm 8. What is David speaking about?

Connect what David is speaking about in this Psalm with the words God said prior to creating man in Genesis 1:26-28. How do they compare?

But there seems to be a problem. We know that due to man's fall, all things have not yet been subjected to man (as it was to be so). And the author of Hebrews obviously recognizes this fact. As you continue to read, underline the phrase "But now..."

8 ...For in that He put all in subjection under him, He left nothing that is not put under him. But now we do not yet see all things put under him. 9 But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, for the suffering of death crowned with glory and honor, that He, by the grace of God, might taste death for everyone.

Comparing Psalm 8 with Hebrews 2:8, it is easy to see that v. 8 is speaking of created man (not the Man, Jesus). It is not until v. 9 that the author speaks of the Man, Jesus. List all the things it says about Jesus.

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Remember the comparisons the author made earlier between Jesus and the angels. Now see what he says about Jesus in v. 9. Why and how was Jesus *made for a little while lower than the angels*? At this point, what do you think?

Let's put it all together. Jesus is the creator of the heavens and the earth. Angels were created to rule over the earth. In seeking to usurp the authority and power of God, Satan led one-third of the angels over this domain in a rebellion against God. The fallen angels, though, remain the present rulers over the earth. Man, having been created to rule over the earth in Satan's stead, was tested for worthiness. But Satan brought about the fall of man through deceiving the woman, which disqualified them from the position they were created to fill. Through Jesus' blood, He reconciled all these things to God, things on the earth and in the heavens (Col. 1:16, 20). But at the present time we do not see everything reconciled (Heb. 2:8). The fallen angels still rule from the heavens over the earth. But the Day is coming when the world will no longer be subjected to the fallen angels, which is exactly what the Book of Hebrews is dealing with — the world to come (Heb. 2:5).

With all of this in mind, go back and reread Hebrews 2:5-9. See if it doesn't make more sense now.

The author of Hebrews is showing us that there is coming a time when all of this will take place. God spoke about these things through the prophets and by His Son (Heb. 1:1, 2). And we need to *give the more earnest heed* to the things that we have heard, so that we *do not drift away* (as the Children of Israel did) from this *so great salvation* (the salvation to be inherited) and incur a stricter judgment than did the Children of Israel (falling short of their inheritance).

Presently, Jesus is seated at the right hand of the Father, waiting until the Father makes His enemies a footstool for His feet — until the Father binds the fallen angels in the bottomless pit for a thousand years. Isaiah 66:1 tells us that heaven is His throne and earth is His footstool. Praise the Lord for all He has done! For all He will yet do!

So what do you think about all these things?

Day Three — The Rest

With all that we have learned from the first two chapters of the Book of Hebrews, we have much, much more to learn. Throughout the book, the author of Hebrews gives five very serious warnings that we all need to heed today, in light of the Coming Age. These five major warnings are precipitated by the foundational truth laid out in chapter one.

We've seen the first major warning in the first part of chapter two, where we are warned not to drift away from the things we have heard, the things that God wants us to know and understand about the Coming

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Kingdom. The second warning is what we will see today. This warning is found in the third and fourth chapters, and has to do with our *striving to enter the rest*. Remember, the inheritance for the Children of Israel had to do with their rest in the Promised Land (eg., Deut. 3:18-20; 4:21, 38; 6:23; 12:9; 25:19; Josh. 1:13; 11:23). And the author focuses on the picture of the Children of Israel and their loss of the rest through their lack of faith and obedience. (This isn't the only place we have seen where the Children of Israel are given as examples for us. Obviously, God is trying to get our attention concerning these things.)

Spend your study time today carefully studying chapters three and four. I have printed them here for you to make study notes in the margins and between the lines. Use as much time as you can in critically reading and studying these passages. These two chapters are full of interest for us. (I am not going to ask many questions on these chapters, because I want you to critically think through them yourself. You should be able to see what you need to see in them.)

Hebrews 3

1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Christ Jesus, 2 who was faithful to Him who appointed Him, as Moses also was faithful in all His house. 3 For this One has been counted worthy of more glory than Moses, inasmuch as He who built the house has more honor than the house. 4 For every house is built by someone, but He who built all things is God. 5 And Moses indeed was faithful in all His house as a servant, for a testimony of those things which would be spoken afterward, 6 but Christ as a Son over His own house, whose house we are if we hold fast the confidence and the rejoicing of the hope firm to the end.

7 Therefore, as the Holy Spirit says: "Today, if you will hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. 10 Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' 11 So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.'"

12 Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; 13 but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. 14 For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, 15 while it is said: "Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion."

16 For who, having heard, rebelled? Indeed, was it not all who came out of Egypt, led by Moses? 17 Now with whom was He angry forty years? Was it not with those who sinned, whose corpses fell in the wilderness? 18 And to whom did He swear that they would not enter His rest, but to those who did not obey? 19 So we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.

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Hebrews 4

1 Therefore, since a promise remains of entering His rest, let us fear lest any of you seem to have come short of it. **2** For indeed the gospel was preached to us as well as to them; but the word which they heard did not profit them, not being mixed with faith in those who heard it. **3** For we who have believed do enter that rest, as He has said: “So I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest,’” although the works were finished from the foundation of the world. **4** For He has spoken in a certain place of the seventh day in this way: “And God rested on the seventh day from all His works”; **5** and again in this place: “They shall not enter My rest.” **6** Since therefore it remains that some must enter it, and those to whom it was first preached did not enter because of disobedience, **7** again He designates a certain day, saying in David, “Today,” after such a long time, as it has been said: “Today, if you will hear His voice, Do not harden your hearts.” **8** For if Joshua had given them rest, then He would not afterward have spoken of another day. **9** There remains therefore a rest for the people of God. **10** For he who has entered His rest has himself also ceased from his works as God did from His.

11 Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall according to the same example of disobedience. **12** For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. **13** And there is no creature hidden from His sight, but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account. **14** Seeing then that we have a great High Priest who has passed through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our confession. **15** For we do not have a High Priest who cannot sympathize with our weaknesses, but was in all points tempted as we are, yet without sin. **16** Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy and find grace to help in time of need.

The first warning had to do with not drifting away from what we have heard in the prophets and in the Lord. What is this second warning in the Book of Hebrews all about? Write out how you would explain it to someone else.

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What is the progression from the 1st warning to the 2nd warning, as they do not stand apart from each other.

See you tomorrow.

Day Four — Going on to Perfection

So far this week we have seen that the author of Hebrews has warned us *to give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard* from God through the prophets and through the Lord, speaking specifically of the inheritance in the Coming Kingdom, referring to this inheritance as *so great salvation* (2:3). We have also seen that he warns us about striving to enter the rest, using the Children of Israel as an example and a warning for us. He shows us that they missed the rest due to *unbelief and disobedience*. On the one hand, he has told us *not to drift away* from coming into an understanding of these things, thereby neglecting the *so great salvation*; on the other hand, he has told us *to be diligent to enter, lest we come short of entering*. In a positive approach, the two warnings are: 1) give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, and 2) be diligent to enter the rest. In a negative approach the two are: 1) don't drift away, and 2) don't fall short. Both the negative and positive aspects are given.

The third of the five major warnings given in the Book of Hebrews is found in chapter six, which we will consider today. But first we must understand some things about a man from Abraham's day – the man, Melchizedek.

Melchizedek was a king/priest of God Most High during Abraham's day. Notice – a *king/priest*. He is a type of Christ pointing to the time when Jesus will come into His Kingdom as the King/Priest according to the order of Melchizedek. It is interesting to note that this man is only mentioned in two places in the Bible prior to his being mentioned in Hebrews. Yet the author of Hebrews says that he has "*much to say about him*" (5:11). What could it be that is so important? Let's look at it.

The first place in Scripture where Melchizedek is mentioned is in Genesis chapter fourteen. This is also the first time war is mentioned in the Bible. Several kings from various city-states in Canaan entered into a war, during which time Abraham's nephew, Lot, had been taken captive. Upon Abraham's victorious return from rescuing Lot, the king of Salem — Melchizedek, a king/priest of God Most High — greets him, serves him bread and wine and reveals more of God's plan to him (Gen. 14:5ff).

The second place Melchizedek is mentioned in Scripture is in Psalm 110. The entire Psalm is Messianic in scope and is printed in its entirety below for your study. (In fact, this Psalm was quoted in Hebrews 1:13. Do you remember?)

Psalm 110

1 <<A Psalm of David.>> **The LORD said to my Lord, "Sit at My right hand, Till I make Your enemies Your footstool."** **2** **The LORD shall send the rod of Your strength out of Zion. Rule in the midst of Your enemies!** **3** **Your people shall be volunteers In the day of Your power; In the beauties of holiness, from the womb of the morning, You have the dew of Your youth.** **4** **The LORD has sworn And will not relent, "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek."**

5 **The Lord is at Your right hand; He shall execute kings in the day of His wrath. 6 He shall judge among the nations, He shall fill the places with dead bodies, He shall execute the heads of many countries. 7 He shall drink of the brook by the wayside; Therefore He shall lift up the head.**

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Make a list of the things in Psalm 110 that make it obviously Messianic.

It is necessary to understand that Jesus is presently ministering in the heavens as our High Priest after the order of Aaron, effecting a cleansing from sin for God's redeemed people (just as the high priests in Israel did in OT days). But when Jesus comes in glory (after the last war between the kings of the earth), He will come as King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek. Read what he says.

Hebrews 5

8 though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. 9 And having been perfected <5048>, He became the author of eternal <166> salvation to all who obey Him, 10 called by God as High Priest “according to the order of Melchizedek,” 11 of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. 12 For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you again the first principles of the oracles of God; and you have come to need milk and not solid food. 13 For everyone who partakes only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. 14 But solid food belongs to those who are of full age, that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil

Verse 8 gives Christ as an example of a Son who obeyed. What does it say of His obedience?

The word *perfected* <5048> (v. 9) means “brought to the goal.” Because He perfected, through obedience by the things He suffered, what did He become?

We should note here that Jesus didn't need to “learn” to obey, but rather He simply obeyed, even to point of death, allowing Him to become the author of salvation. And as the example of obedience through the things suffered, if others would follow His example, they too, would be brought to the end of their goal.

Now you surely are asking yourself the question, “What salvation (v.9) would the author of Hebrews be referring to?” I hope you are! You should be! So what salvation is the author referring to here? And what makes you think so?

You should notice that the text reveals that it is the facet of salvation having to do with *obedience*, which leaves it without question that the passage is dealing with *the salvation of the soul*. The salvation of the soul

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is our end goal, and is realized through suffering – the suffering of dying to the flesh! We can easily see that in this next verse:

1 Peter 1

6 In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials... . . .9 receiving the end <5046> of your faith--the salvation of your souls.

Now note: The word *end* used in I Peter 1:9 is taken from the same word from which the word *perfected* is taken in Hebrews 5:9. Both words have to do with an *end goal*. It is ultimately reaching the *purpose for* and *conclusion of* something. And we see in I Peter that *the salvation of our soul is the end goal of our faith*. Contextually, in both passages, the goal of our faith is brought about through sufferings – the suffering of dying to the flesh. Christ died *in the flesh*, leaving us the example of how we are to die *to the flesh*. And this type of suffering brings us to the *end goal* of our faith – the salvation of our soul.

The author uses Melchizedek as a type of Christ saying, “. . .of him [Melchizedek] we have much to say.” How can he say that? If the Scriptures only mention Melchizedek two times previous to this, how can the author of Hebrews say that he has *much to say about him*?

He has much to say about Melchizedek *because of Who it is that Melchizedek represents*. We can learn much from Melchizedek related to Christ’s coming role as King/Priest. Melchizedek represents Christ in the Coming Age. And in this respect, there is *much to say about him*.

Now go back and read Hebrews 5:8-14. According to the passage, why had these things become hard to explain?

Explain in detail the condition of the believers at the time of this writing. (See 5:11-14.)

Is the author of Hebrews addressing this epistle to *believers*? From this text, how do you know?

According to the text, describe the differences between the immature believer and the mature believer. What would be some characteristics of both?

Immature Believer

Mature Believer



Now we come to what some people believe to be one of the most confusing and/or controversial passages in all of Scripture — Hebrews 6:4-6. It becomes seemingly confusing and controversial when people take this passage out of the context of the chapter (and the book) and try to make it say something it is not saying.

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This passage has *nothing* to do with the free gift of eternal salvation! In fact, this passage lays out the third major warning in the Book of Hebrews, which is written to believers. But trying to see these verses as referring to our free gift does nothing but make it become controversial and confusing! It needn't be so. And it wouldn't be so if one keeps this passage within the context of the chapter and the book. That this is not speaking of one's eternal salvation through faith in Jesus Christ is evident, not only in the preceding text as well, it is also evident in the text that follows. Here again, it is too bad for a chapter break, because chapter six is inseparably linked to chapter five. As you study through this, keep it in context!

Hebrews 6

1 Therefore, leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ, let us go on to perfection, not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works and of faith toward God, 2 of the doctrine of baptisms, of laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. 3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

In verse 1, what is the author wanting his readers to leave something, and move on to something. What is it he is asking his readers to do?

List the six elementary teachings about Christ mentioned in vv. 1, 2.

This may well be one critical piece of evidence that reveals this epistle was most likely written during the re-offer of the Kingdom to Jews during the Book of Acts. These elementary principles were very much related to OT Law, which the author deals with further in Hebrews 9:6-12. And these things, the Jews in the early Church were to lay these things aside, if they were to go on to *perfection...to the end goal*. But even now, there are traditional actions that we may find ourselves bound to that do not lead us to *perfection* – traditions of men that really have no value. These things must be laid aside in favor of faithful acts of obedience to God's Word that would lead on to the salvation of their soul. In fact, the phrase 'let us go on to perfection' is written in passive voice in the Greek, which indicates that this should be understood in the sense of something being done to us rather than our doing the work. It is our 'being carried along to perfection.' This would be perfectly consistent with the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives, as we allow the Word to bring about our inward transformation, making it possible for us *to be carried along to perfection*.

And, as evidenced in the text (vv. 3-6 above), if a Christian does not lay aside the elementary principles (the traditions of men), then how can he go on to perfection? How can he reach his goal? The remainder of the text makes it evident that he cannot. This then forms the third major warning laid out in the Book of Hebrews. It's really a choice each of us has to make: Are we going to *lay aside* the elemental things that really don't matter and strive to enter into the Kingdom through faithful obedience to God's Word, *or* are we going to cling to the traditions we are comfortable with and ignore what God's Word lays out about striving to enter the Kingdom? So very much hinges on this decision.

Think about it.

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Day Five — The Hope of Our Salvation

Today we will complete Hebrews chapter six. Next week we will glimpse the last half of Hebrews chapter ten and most of chapter eleven, thereby touching on the fourth and fifth major warnings in the Book of Hebrews.

Before we tackle the last half of chapter six, briefly review your homework from yesterday. You will need a firm grasp on it in order to continue. Do that now.

We will pick up our reading in Hebrews chapter six. Yesterday we realized that verses 4-6 reveal why God may not allow some Christians to go on to perfection (i.e., reach the end goal of their faith, the salvation of their soul). Today we will continue to see that the reason God may not allow them to reach their end goal is because *if* they continue to cling to elementary things, *then* they will not have produced the fruit that is necessary to reach that end – the fruit necessary to bring them to “perfection”. It really is their choice, and God simply allows for the result to play out.

The author of Hebrews continues to explain. He goes on to say —

Hebrews 6

7 For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; 8 but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.

The author describes ground that drinks in the rain. But there are two different crops and two different outcomes. Describe both crops — the conditions of the crops and the outcome.

Is it the *same ground* that has the possibility of producing different crops? How do you know?

Really, when it comes down to it, we must realize that our good works (our fruit production) must be solidly based upon what God’s Word says! Faith come by hearing, hearing God’s Word (correctly), and acting in accord. We cannot continue to rely on what makes us feel good. We must check what we do with what He has said. See if it lines up.

Continuing —

9 But, beloved, we are confident of better things concerning you, yes, things that accompany salvation, though we speak in this manner. 10 For God is not unjust to forget your work and labor of love which you have shown toward His name, in that you have ministered to the saints, and do minister. 11 And we desire that each one of you show the same diligence to the full assurance of hope until the end, 12 that you do not become sluggish, but imitate those who through faith and patience inherit the promises. 13 For when God made a promise to Abraham, because He could swear by no one greater, He swore by Himself, 14 saying, “Surely blessing I will bless you, and multiplying I will multiply you.” 15 And so, after he had patiently endured, he obtained the promise.

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Write out what you learn from this passage, but keep it in context of what we have learned.

Continuing —

16 For men indeed swear by the greater, and an oath for confirmation is for them an end of all dispute. 17 Thus God, determining to show more abundantly to the heirs of promise the immutability of His counsel, confirmed it by an oath, 18 that by two immutable things, in which it is impossible for God to lie, we might have strong consolation, who have fled for refuge to lay hold of the hope set before us. 19 This hope we have as an anchor of the soul, both sure and steadfast, and which enters the Presence behind the veil, 20 where the forerunner has entered for us, even Jesus, having become High Priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.

Verse 18 mentions two immutable things from which we might have strong consolation. Reading again from verses 13 to 17 what are the two immutable things that God did with respect to Abraham? (Hint: It is specifically stated in v. 13 and 17.)

What is the anchor of our soul?

Based on the last half of chapter six, what does our hope have to do with?

Apparently, how important is *this hope* to God? What makes you think so?

So, how important should it be to you?

One more thing before we end for this week's study. We have seen the author beginning to deal quite a bit with Melchizedek. In fact, the final verse of Hebrews chapter 6 concerning Christ having become a High Priest according to the order of Melchizedek is really an introduction to what follows in the whole of chapter 7, which deals with the superiority of this priesthood over the Aaronic priesthood. Without going into too much detail here, the fact that the author mentions Melchizedek (who was a type of Christ in the Millennium) so much in these middle chapters confirms, yet again, his purpose in writing this epistle. We saw his stated topic for this letter back in

Hebrews 2

5 For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels.

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And that the author now speaks quite a bit about this OT king/priest, reveals that his focus is Messianic in scope; his focus is Christ coming as King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek in the Coming Age. This epistle offers Christians five major warnings about our entrance into or exclusion from the Kingdom as a co-heir with Christ. Warnings we need to heed if we are to “go on to perfection.”

With what you have learned this week, what are things you may need to change in your life? Are you willing to make those changes?

If you would like to read more detail concerning the third warning in Hebrews, you can go to the Church website and search for John Herbert’s series on Hebrews, then look for Parts 17 and 18.
Church website: www.cornerstonejacksonville.com

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Lesson Seventeen — The Book of Hebrews: Part 2

Day One — The Fourth Warning

Day Two — Willful Sin

Day Three — Words of Encouragement

Day Four — Our Role Models

Day Five — The Fifth Warning

Last week we began to peruse the Book of Hebrews. We covered the first three of the five warnings found in this epistle. Here is the essence of the three warnings we looked at last week:

- The essence of the first warning is — don't drift away from what the prophets and the Lord Jesus spoke about the Coming Kingdom, because for all Christians there will be a just recompense. (A recompense that is exactly commensurate with the work done.)
- The essence of the second warning is this — don't harden your hearts so as to miss out on *the Rest*, as the Children of Israel did. Rather, strive to enter the Rest.
- The essence of the third warning is this — We are to press on, through the work of the Holy Spirit, Who will carry us along to *perfection*, which is our end goal – the salvation of our soul, *if* we allow the process. This process will enable us to come into a mature knowledge and understanding of the priesthood of Melchizedek, a type of the future ministry of Christ in His Coming Kingdom.

But beware! If we begin to drift away, harden our hearts, and not allow the Holy Spirit to carry us along to this perfection, then we will receive a just recompense when we stand at the JSOC. God will simply not allow the goal to be reached. And we will begin to see why as we get into the fourth and fifth warnings.

Day One — The Fourth Warning

As we draw closer to this fourth warning, let's be sure we remember where we are and where we have been in the Book of Hebrews. Notice all the foreword-looking we are to do throughout the Book of Hebrews.

Chapter one lays the foundation for the book, presenting seven Old Testament passages, all of which have to do with some facet of the Coming Kingdom. This foundation must be in place in order to understand this epistle. Note that chapter one ends by calling attention to *an inherited salvation* — a salvation to be realized at a *future time* (1:14).

Chapter two contains the first warning. We are warned to *be careful not to drift away from what we have heard from the Father through the prophets and the Son*. A drifting away from these things (things mentioned in chapter one) will bring about a just recompense on the negative side of things (Remember all Christians

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will receive a just recompense – positive or negative.) Then the author stated plainly what he was speaking about — *the world to come which will not be subjected to angels* (v. 5) — a world which will exist at a *future time*.

Chapters three and four deal with the second warning. This warning deals with our striving to enter the Rest and uses the Children of Israel as an example, showing how they failed to enter the Rest in the Promised Land through unbelief and disobedience. We must *not* follow their example, but rather, through faithful obedience, strive to enter the Rest — a rest to be realized at a *future time*. Chapter five speaks of the high priestly ministry of Aaron, comparing it to the high priestly ministry of Christ, Whose blood has been offered once for all time as a propitiation for our sin. Then the author leads us to look from this *present* ministry of Christ in the heavenly sanctuary to His coming ministry when He appears as a King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek during the Messianic Era — pointing to Christ's ministry at a *future time*.

Comparisons are made along the way, one of which is made between the milk of the Word and the meat of the Word, which the recipients of this epistle had begun to regress from the meat back to the milk. This is something that we must be careful of as well. Contextually, the meat of the Word surrounds an understanding of Melchizedek, which we will get to in a minute.

Comparisons are made along the way, one of which is made between the *milk of the Word* and the *meat of the Word*. Recipients of this epistle had begun to regress from the meat back to the milk, and so the author of the epistle rebukes the recipients saying that *by this time they ought to be teachers of the Word* but instead, they *need someone to teach them again the first principles of the oracles of God*. These first principles would have to be seen as the foundational material concerning Christ and His Bride, the full scope of salvation and the 7th Day as set out in the opening chapters of Genesis.

This is a warning we would do well to heed as well. Our understanding of Scripture needs to be built upon the foundation laid out in God's Word at the beginning, and on nothing else. **Psalm 11:3** says *If the foundations are destroyed, What can the righteous do?* It is at the beginning, God began to build His Word, and that is where we must begin as well.

And so we have seen that Hebrews chapter six begins with the admonishment to *'leave the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ* and to *go on to perfection*, spelling out six items which are elementary things upon which the recipients had come to focus. The word translated *'leaving'* has the idea of abandoning; making a complete separation from, and so clearly the *'first principles of the oracles of God'* in 5:12 are not the same as the *'elementary principles of Christ'* in 6:1 that are to be abandoned. (In fact, the word translated *'principles'* is a different Greek word in each location.)

So how are we to understand why those six principles must be left behind?

John Herbert writes:

“Now let's remember that in the early years of the Church the majority of those who became Christians were by birth Jews, who were very familiar with the ritual and practice of the tabernacle; and in Heb.9: 9-10 we can see that these things – the tabernacle/temple rituals – were *'symbolic for the present time'*. And that which was symbolic could not *'make him who performed the service perfect in regard to conscience'* and the reason for this is that these things were *'concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation'*. What is being spoken of here, then in chapter 6:1-2 is the performance of religious ritual for its own sake, that which we might call today, **legalism** – the following of certain religious practices with a view to their performance being accepted as righteousness. These of course are quite useless in that respect and therefore need to be abandoned in favor of acts of faith born of faithful obedience to the word; all things of course having been fulfilled in Christ Jesus our Lord... And of course, it is self-evident that those who would cling to ritual as a means of demonstrating righteousness would be those who are spiritually immature – those who partake only of milk.

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And so, the admonition is to leave, to abandon these practices, and such an abandonment is a prerequisite to what is to be done next – to *'go on to perfection'*. It is not possible to go on, until that which is being clung to is left behind.”

Herein is the third warning. *If the Lord allows* a believer to press on to perfection through coming into an understanding of these things — *and then that individual falls away*, there is no repentance on the part of God concerning the future inheritance, the rest. The Children of Israel did just that. They came into a full knowledge of the blessings which God had in store for them in the Promised Land, but they didn't believe what He had told them about it, and became disobedient — refusing to go in. He turned them back to the wilderness (Num. 14:29-35 [not back to Egypt]), and even though *they* repented (Num. 14:40), they could not change the mind of God concerning their inheritance in the land (Num. 14:41-45). However, pressing on to maturity gives us a greater understanding of what the hope is before us; this hope has to do with the coming era and it becomes the anchor of our very soul, which prevents us from drifting.

Chapters seven through the first half of chapter ten flow together to make a large parenthetical thought — that of the present and future ministries of Christ. As with the rest of the epistle, everything here propels us forward. Christ's ministry in the heavenly sanctuary is on behalf of believers in this dispensation, offering us cleansing for our sin as we travel this journey to our Promised Land, the heavenly city – the New Jerusalem. But His ministry as High Priest according to the order of Aaron in the heavenly sanctuary is only for the present time – this age. There is coming a time – the age to come – when Christ will come as King/Priest after the order of Melchizedek. His acting in the order of Melchizedek is during the Messianic Era out ahead.

All that which is pictured from the Old Testament and depicted throughout the Book of Hebrews draws our attention forward to the Coming Age. And during the present time, Christ offers us hope and cleansing from sin through His present ministry. We only need to repent, confess, and press on toward perfection – the salvation of our soul, our goal.

With a clearer understanding of these things, we come to the fourth warning. We will observe the text today and then look at it more closely tomorrow. The text is printed out in double-space for you to make thorough observation. Study the text carefully today, then we will work through some questions on it tomorrow. (Be sure to note the use of the personal plural pronoun “we” in the opening section of this passage.)

Hebrews 10

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, “Vengeance is Mine, I will repay,” says the Lord. And again, “The LORD will judge His people.” 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. 32 But recall the

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former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

NOTES:

Day Two — Willful Sin

Yesterday we observed the last half of Hebrews chapter ten. Within this passage there is such a stern warning that some might be inclined to think that it is not directed toward believers. But neither the text nor the context will allow any part of it to be directed to anyone other than to believers. Yesterday we briefly mentioned the *context* of the chapters leading up to this fourth warning, reviewing each chapter leading up to it. The context is dealing only with believers and their future hope; so it is with this warning.

The *text* of this warning is also dealing with the future hope — a hope reserved *for believers alone*. This hope has nothing to do with the unsaved! Sinning willfully will never condemn a non-saved person. Rather, it is in having a lack of faith in Christ as the Passover Lamb that condemns a non-believer (John 3:18). A non-saved person would only be expected to sin.

So what does this fourth warning have to do with in regard to believers? How should it be applied? Please pray for more understanding.

Comparing the third and fourth warnings may help us understand that which is involved in *sinning willfully*. The question is: Is the author dealing with *all* willful sin or willful sin *in particular*? Let’s look at it.

The three and a half chapters preceding this fourth warning (chs. 7-10a) constitute a large parenthetical thought dealing with the priesthood of Christ. In these chapters, God lays out specifically how we are

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cleansed from sin's defilement. And though these chapters are placed between these two warnings for this purpose, sometimes it is helpful to go back to the third warning, take out these three and a half chapters (7-10a), and read the fourth warning exactly on the heels of the third. Let's try that.

The third warning —

Hebrews 6

3 And this we will do if God permits. 4 For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, 5 and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, 6 if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame.

It is impossible for whom?

If they do what?

What becomes true, and why?

So let's say that a Christian allows himself to be carried along to maturity, and he becomes enlightened, and tastes the heavenly gift, and partakes with the Holy Spirit, and tastes the good Word of God and the powers of the age to come. What if that individual *then goes on to sin willfully*? (Watch how the fourth warning follows the third warning.)

Hebrews 10

26 For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, 27 but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. 28 Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. 29 Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? 30 For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." 31 It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.

For if *who* goes on sinning willfully?

After what?

Then what?

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In v. 29, what three things has the person done to deserve punishment of this kind?

Was the person described in this passage sanctified? If so, by what was he sanctified?

Did you catch similarities between the third and fourth warnings? They are as follows:

From Hebrew 6 —

For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened... If they shall fall away, to renew them again unto repentance...

and from Hebrews 10 —

For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge <1922> of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins...

So again, what would be the reason that a saved individual may not reach to end of their faith, the salvation of their soul and the redemption of their body?

If an individual, after receiving a mature knowledge of *this* truth — concerning things related to Melchizedek in the age to come, etc. — then falls away (6:6 [falls away from the knowledge]) and willfully sins against this mature knowledge (10:26), what is awaiting that person (10:26ff)?

Please note: This passage is not dealing with sin in general. Each of us will fall into sin, even willful sin. And it is for this reason that chapters 7-10a are placed within the text, as these chapters reveal how God deals with sin in the life of a believer. It is for this expressed purpose Christ is presently ministering on behalf of saved people in the heavenly sanctuary. He is offering cleansing of sin, with His Blood on the Mercy Seat, and as we repent and confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us and to cleanse us from unrighteousness (1 John 1:9). Each of us presently dwells in a body of flesh with all its attributed weaknesses. But if we avail ourselves through repentance and confession to Jesus Christ as our High Priest (Whose blood was offered as a sin sacrifice once for all time), we are washed clean and the confessed sin is *taken away* and remembered no more — forever! Therefore this fourth warning does not have to do with sin in general, even willful sin in general.

Rather, this fourth warning is dealing with willful sin on the part of an individual who *has been allowed by God the Holy Spirit (the Spirit of Grace) to come to maturity* (third warning). And after coming into this mature knowledge, if that individual falls away from *this knowledge* — *sinning willfully against the truths*

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about the kingdom, treating as unclean the blood covenant by which he was sanctified, insulting the Holy Spirit (Who graciously granted him to press on) — there no longer remains a sacrifice for that sin (fourth warning [10:26ff]).

But the ramifications of that sin cannot be eternal, due to the finished work of Christ and the free gift of eternal life. The ramifications for this willful sin will be Millennial. The believer (who has come to this kind of maturity) can expect a very harsh judgment during the Messianic Era. Check the text and see if that is what it is saying.

(This kind of judgment can be seen in a gospel account. Some of the ones to whom Jesus had been extending the offer of the Heavenly Kingdom fell into this kind of sin. In Matthew chapter twelve, Jesus spells out judgment to those who had full knowledge of the offer being made to them — the Pharisees. They knew who Jesus was — the Son of God. And when they attributed to Satan the power given to Jesus by the Holy Spirit, they blasphemed against the Holy Spirit [the Spirit of Grace [*cf.* Heb. 10:29]. In Jesus' Own words, this sin would not be forgiven them in *this age* nor in *the age to come* [Mt. 12:31, 32]. Eternal judgment was not in view! It could not be in view [see Matt. 12:22-37].)

On the heels of this stern warning, the author goes on with his admonishment and encouragement.

Hebrews 10

32 But recall the former days in which, after you were illuminated, you endured a great struggle with sufferings: 33 partly while you were made a spectacle both by reproaches and tribulations, and partly while you became companions of those who were so treated; 34 for you had compassion on me in my chains, and joyfully accepted the plundering of your goods, knowing that you have a better and an enduring possession for yourselves in heaven. 35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 “For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him.” 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Persecution has always been part and parcel with this message. From the days of Moses and the prophets, when God spoke to His people concerning *obedience* relative to the Land, Rest, and Inheritance even to this present day, persecution has been the lot of a child of God who would believe, live out, and carry on this message.

Let's re-read this passage and think through a few things. Look at vv. 32-34. Circle the phrase *after you were illuminated* in v. 32. From the preceding context and warnings, what do you think the author is referring to when he uses this phrase?

From this passage, list the things that were endured as part and parcel of the *great struggle with sufferings*. In other words, what did they have to endure *after being illuminated*?

The end of v. 34 explains why they endured such treatment. Why was it?

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Not forgetting all that we have learned throughout this epistle — all the author has been dealing with in the warnings — what would the author be referring to *as an enduring and better possession*?

We cannot ignore the tough verses in Scripture, can we?

See you tomorrow.

Day Three — Words of Encouragement

Today we will complete Hebrews chapter ten and introduce chapter eleven. Skim over yesterday's work so you will be in context. Then we'll pick up again at the end of chapter ten.

Hebrews 10

35 Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. 36 For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: 37 "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. 38 Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." 39 But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Write out the essence of vv. 35 and 36.

Based on v. 36, is *the promise* conditional or unconditional?

Then in v. 37, the author quotes from the Old Testament, telling of the imminence of Christ's return with His reward — the positive reward is implied in the text, the negative reward is expressed. (It is interesting that it is laid out this way and not the reverse, don't you think?)

What kind of person is v. 38 dealing with — saved or unsaved? How do you know?

What are the two possibilities given for "the just" (i.e., those who have been justified)?

And if the just one draws back, to what does he draw back?

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But what encouragement does the author give to his readers? He believes they will not be of those who draw back, but rather of those who do what?

Now let's talk about that! In Hebrews chapter eleven, we are about to meet individuals *who have looked forward to these things*, displaying faith through their actions, and in doing so, have *saved their souls*. Introducing — the Old Testament hall of fame! These are individuals whose lives offer us great examples of having done exactly what is mentioned in v. 39 — displayed faith to the saving of their soul. And...

Hebrews 11

1 Now faith <4102> is the substance <5287> of things hoped for <1679>, the evidence <1650> of things not seen.

Study the definitions in verse one.

faith <4102>

substance <5287>

hoped for <1679>

evidence <1650>

Hebrews 11:1 is not as much a definition of faith as it is a statement relating *the result of faith*. With these definitions in mind, how would you describe faith?

The kind of faith described in v.1 is based on what is mentioned exactly in the previous verse (10:39). In 10:39, what phrase describes the faith referred to in Hebrews 11: 1? (Remember there were not chapter or verse divisions in the original writing.)

And what does that kind of faith offer believers? (Compare 10:39 with 11:1.)

It is through *this kind of faith* — faith to the saving of the soul — that these men of old gained a good testimony (v.2).

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And as we have seen in Lesson Fifteen —

Hebrews 11

6 But without faith it is impossible to please <2100> Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder <3406> of those who diligently seek <1567> Him.

Feel free to look up the definitions in this verse —

please <2100>

a rewarder <3406>

seek <1567>

Today and tomorrow we will look at some of the individuals mentioned in chapter eleven and see *what they did* and *why they did what they did*; perhaps we will also understand their outcome as it is spelled out in the text.

As we peer into this Hall of Faith, we will see that these statements are God’s own commendations of these individuals — commendations made of specific Old Testament saints who are mentioned by the author under the direction of the Holy Spirit for specific reasons. This is not a randomly chosen list of names.

Because these individuals *looked forward* to specific things, they *acted* in specific ways; in the end, they will be rewarded for their actions. Please note as you read these statements that — in every instance — these individuals acted “by faith.” Don’t let that phrase slip from your notice.

Let’s get started.

Hebrews 11

4 By faith Abel offered to God a more excellent sacrifice than Cain, through which he obtained witness that he was righteous, God testifying of his gifts; and through it he being dead still speaks.

What did Abel do *by faith*?

Why did he do it?

What is the outcome for him?

Hebrews 11

5 By faith Enoch was taken away so that he did not see death, “and was not found, because God had taken him”; for before he was taken he had this testimony, that he pleased God. 6 But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe

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that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him.

What did Enoch do *by faith*?

This is an interesting placement of v. 6, which is quoted so often, and one with which we can be encouraged as well. But contextually, it could be seen as God's commentary on Enoch. Relating v. 6 to Enoch, what do you think this says about Enoch?

Verse 6 is also good to keep in mind as we continue to read about each of these OT saints.

What is the outcome for him?

Hebrews 11

7 By faith Noah, being divinely warned of things not yet seen, moved with godly fear, prepared an ark for the saving of his household, by which he condemned the world and became heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

What did Noah do *by faith*?

Why did he do it?

What is the outcome for him?

Hebrews 11

8 By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, the heirs with him of the same promise; 10 for he waited for the city which has foundations, whose builder and maker is God.

What did Abraham do *by faith*?

Why did he do it?

What is the outcome for him?

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Hebrews 11

11 By faith Sarah herself also received strength to conceive seed, and she bore a child when she was past the age, because she judged Him faithful who had promised. 12 Therefore from one man, and him as good as dead, were born as many as the stars of the sky in multitude-innumerable as the sand which is by the seashore.

What did Sarah do *by faith*?

Why did she do it?

What is the outcome for her?

Hebrews 11

13 These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off were assured of them, embraced them and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. 14 For those who say such things declare plainly that they seek a homeland. 15 And truly if they had called to mind that country from which they had come out, they would have had opportunity to return. 16 But now they desire a better, that is, a heavenly country. Therefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared a city for them.

What did all of these do *by faith*?

Why did they do it?

What is the outcome for them?

We'll pick up tomorrow. You're doing a great job! Hang in there!

Day Four — Our Role Models

Yesterday we began to peruse the Old Testament Hall of Fame — Hebrews chapter eleven. Today we'll pick up where we left off. I hope you are seeing the developing picture of how one can *please God*. It is essential not only to understand these things, but it is also essential to act upon what we see!

We are continuing in Hebrews chapter eleven where the author brings us back to Abraham.

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Hebrews 11

17 By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, 18 of whom it was said, “In Isaac your seed shall be called,” 19 concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead, from which he also received him in a figurative sense.

What did Abraham do *by faith*? (Do you remember studying this?)

Why did he do it?

The outcome is that he was commended by God.

Hebrews 11

20 By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come.

What did Isaac do *by faith*?

And he was commended by God.

Hebrews 11

21 By faith Jacob, when he was dying, blessed each of the sons of Joseph, and worshiped, leaning on the top of his staff.

What did Jacob do *by faith*?

Scripture reveals that of all of Jacob’s twelve sons, it was Joseph who received the double-portion of the inheritance. Jacob gave the double-portion to Joseph by giving each one of Joseph’s sons a share of the inheritance (Gen. 48:8-22). In other words, Joseph’s two sons received the same inheritance that Joseph’s brothers received. And in this respect, Joseph received the double-portion.

The blessings Jacob gave to Joseph’s sons are written out in Genesis 48:8-22. In these blessings, Jacob spells out his faith, reiterating what God had previously revealed to him. And Jacob was blessing Joseph’s sons according to his belief. In other words, Jacob acted upon what he believed.

And he was commended by God.

And then —

Hebrews 11

22 By faith Joseph, when he was dying, made mention of the departure of the children of Israel, and gave instructions concerning his bones.

What did Joseph do *by faith*?

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The orders that Joseph gave concerning his bones being carried with the Children of Israel in the exodus were based upon what his father told him at the conclusion of Jacob blessing his sons (Gen. 48:22). Joseph believed God through what Jacob had told him, and gave the instructions concerning his bones. Joseph's coffin, within the midst of Israel (Gen. 50:24-26), would be a testimony to Israel during the ensuing years of slavery, a testimony to the fact that God was going to one day take the people out of Egypt and bring them to the land God swore to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (*cf.* Gen. 15:13-14; Gen. 50: 24-26; Ex. 13:19; Josh. 24:32). In this respect, Joseph's unburied coffin in their midst was a visual, constant reminder that God was going to deliver them from bondage — something they were to believe and look forward to. (If you want to check out the timeline of Israel's enslavement in Egypt, refer to pg. 86 in Part I The Old Testament portion of this Survey Study.)

And Joseph was commended by God.

(Notice something in the previous two verses. It is mentioned of both Jacob and Joseph that “when he was dying” he did something. This reveals that both men went to their deaths with these future things foremost on their minds! This is wonderful to see!)

Continuing —

Hebrews 11

23 By faith Moses, when he was born, was hidden three months by his parents, because they saw he was a beautiful child; and they were not afraid of the king's command.
What did Moses' parents do *by faith*?

Why did they do it?

And they were commended by God.

Hebrews 11

24 By faith Moses, when he became of age, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter, 25 choosing rather to suffer affliction with the people of God than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin, 26 esteeming the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt; for he looked to the reward.

List all the things that Moses did *by faith*?

Why did he do such things?

What can be the assumed outcome for him?

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Hebrews 11

27 By faith he forsook Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the king; for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible. 28 By faith he kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest he who destroyed the firstborn should touch them.

What did Moses continue to do *by faith*?

Why did he do it?

Now let's look at a whole list of faithful people —

Hebrews 11

29 By faith they passed through the Red Sea as by dry land, whereas the Egyptians, attempting to do so, were drowned. 30 By faith the walls of Jericho fell down after they were encircled for seven days. 31 By faith the harlot Rahab did not perish with those who did not believe, when she had received the spies with peace.

32 And what more shall I say? For the time would fail me to tell of Gideon and Barak and Samson and Jephthah, also of David and Samuel and the prophets: 33 who through faith subdued kingdoms, worked righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, became valiant in battle, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. 36 Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. 37 They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- 38 of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, in dens and caves of the earth.

Generally, what did these individuals do *by faith*?

The following two verses reveal why they did it:

Hebrews 11

39 And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise, 40 God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect <5048> apart from us.

perfect <5048>

We have seen this word before, haven't we? (It was in last week's lesson.) We saw that the word has to do with *bringing something to its end goal*. But look back up to v. 35. According to the end of v. 35, what will be the outcome for them?

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So how would you connect having “a better resurrection” to being “perfected”?

So how would you understand vv. 39-40?

I hope you get the picture. Based upon their faith, these people performed certain acts (works) that will have age-lasting ramifications because they looked forward to the very things which God desires us to look forward to. By looking ahead, these men and women believed that the things they could see (in the natural world) did not emanate out of that which they could see through faith (11:3), for what they saw in the natural world was disorderly, not God’s original arrangement of things. However through faith, they saw that there is a day coming in which order will exist once more. And because they could see these things by faith, they acted in certain ways that exemplified their faith. This list of faithful saints in Hebrews chapter eleven is given to us for examples of the kind of faith which has the foundation of things seen through faith — future things. We are to reflect upon this as we live our lives here on earth, with the encouragement that these kind of blessings can be ours if we but heed the warnings given to us throughout the Book of Hebrews, believing what God saw fit to tell us through the prophets and His Son (bringing us back to chapter one).

Any thoughts?

Day Five — The Fifth Warning

It is necessary to note once again that there is a flow of thought in the warnings of the Book of Hebrews. Let’s reduce each warning to its irreducible minimum. The flow is this — Don’t drift away from the words of the prophets and of the Lord (2:1-4 [reflecting back on ch. 1]); strive to enter the rest out ahead (chs. 3 and 4); also strive to understand what is involved in this rest; and should you allow yourself to be carried along by the Holy Spirit to a mature knowledge, don’t turn away from this knowledge (6:4-6), because if you heed the first three warnings and come into a mature knowledge of these things and then *sin against this knowledge*, there is a terrifying expectation of judgment (10:26-31). But don’t stop here! The author goes on to point out that there are (as of yet) unseen blessings in heeding these warnings — unseen through physical eyes, but seen through eyes of faith. And this kind of faith is the firm foundation upon which our hope rests.

This is the flow of thought given throughout the Book of Hebrews and it is very important for us to see this. But we need to understand *the other side* of the fourth warning. It is this — *if you heed this warning there is great expectation of reward*; and you, the reader, only need endurance (10:35ff)! Then the author follows this encouragement with some examples of Old Testament saints who have endured conflict, looking ahead to that coming Day, living today *by faith*. They will *yet be rewarded* (ch. 11); they only await us! (Just think of that!)

Based upon the individuals mentioned in chapter eleven, the author goes on to bring us to the fifth warning. This fifth and final warning in the Book of Hebrews concerns itself with *the rights of the first-born son*. Keep in mind what you have learned as you read through chapter twelve.

This first verse mentions *so great a cloud of witnesses*. Referring to this group of Old Testament people in

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the previous chapter as “witnesses” doesn’t mean that they *watch* us. Rather it means that they *are examples* to us. They are witnesses in the respect of being examples for us.

Thoughtfully and carefully read through this chapter. Read with discernment, striving to keep it all in the context of this book.

Hebrews 12

1 Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, **2** looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God. **3** For consider Him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.

4 You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin. **5** And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: “My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, Nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; **6** For whom the LORD loves He chastens, And scourges every son whom He receives.” **7** If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten? **8** But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. **9** Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? **10** For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness. **11** Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. **12** Therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, **13** and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. **14** Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord: **15** looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; **16** lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. **17** For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

18 For you have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, **19** and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words, so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore. **20** (For they could not endure what was commanded: “And if so much as a beast touches the mountain, it shall be stoned or shot with an arrow.” **21** And so terrifying was the

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sight that Moses said, “I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.”) 22 But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, 23 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, 24 to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel. 25 See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, 26 whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, “Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven.” 27 Now this, “Yet once more,” indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. 28 Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. 29 For our God is a consuming fire.

Basically, what do vv. 16-17 say?

Compare Hebrews 12:25 with 2:1-3. What comparison do you see?

As first-born sons, the Children of Israel were warned by God *to heed His Words*. In chapter twelve, the Church is also warned by God *to heed His Word*. And it all has to do with individuals maintaining their first-born status in the family. Hence you have the fifth and final warning in the epistle —

Hebrews 12

14 Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; 15 looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled; 16 lest there be any fornicator or profane person like Esau, who for one morsel of food sold his birthright. 17 For you know that afterward, when he wanted to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought it diligently with tears.

Notice that leading up to this fifth and final warning, the author tells his readers that the Father is going to discipline his sons, and he gives his readers encouragement as to what to do when they are disciplined by the Father (vv. 5-15). It is on the heels of this that the fifth warning is spelled out. And it is interesting that Isaac’s first-born son, Esau (who sold his first-born rights in order to satisfy his fleshly desire) is given as our example.

Then the author brings the whole picture full-circle (12:18ff). He goes back to the type of the Children of Israel in the wilderness at Mt. Sinai (which was seen in Hebrews 2:2 and chs. 3, 4), and brings things forward to another mountain. Reread vv. 18-29, and make the comparisons on the chart. (This will be great discussion material for your class this week. You can review what we have learned in Lesson Six, if you need.)

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The Children of Israel

Christians

The Book of Hebrews closes with some do's and don'ts listed in chapter thirteen. I'll leave that to your perusal, based upon what we have learned these past two weeks. If you have time, please read the chapter through, so that you are familiar with it.

You are doing a great job! This is difficult, I know. I leave you with this passage to consider.

2 Corinthians 5

9 Therefore we make it our aim, whether present or absent, to be well pleasing to Him. 10 For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad. 11 Knowing, therefore, the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; but we are well known to God, and I also trust are well known in your consciences.

Please be persuaded!

A few more lessons on Revelation are forth coming!

