

JOURNEY OF THE UPRIGHT

A PATH OF FAITH, TRUTH,
AND VICTORY



The path of the upright is like the light of dawn,
that shines brighter and brighter unto the perfect day.

PROVERBS 4:18
PASTOR DAVID HALL

Our generation's Upright and the Bride of Christ
are one and the same.

JOURNEY OF THE UPRIGHT

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DEDICATION

Jeremiah 29:11

*“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord,
“plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give
you hope and a future.”*

And what a future it has become—from the humble beginnings of a Facebook Bible study to the creation, by God’s hand, of Immanuel World Ministries, now serving 68 nations across six continents.

I thank God for the divine inspiration He gave me many years ago. Yet it is for this time that God has purposed it to be brought forth.

May your journey begin—or continue—here with this book, which will encourage and empower you to remain on the narrow and sometimes lonely road that leads to Eternity.

As you read *Journey of the Upright*, let the themes of integrity, perseverance, and walking the path be your guides.

May God bless and keep you until His Coming,

Pastor David Hall

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ENDORSEMENTS

Seven endorsements are presented in the order approved by the author. Additional contributions will be inserted as they are received.

ENDORSEMENT I

To David, who poured his soul, truth and unwavering principles into these pages. Watching you bring this book to life has been one of the greatest privileges of my life. May your words guide others as your life has guided me. The road of an upright man is not always easy, but you never waver. Thank you for your vision, your sacrifice, and your endless love.

Edie Hall

Wife and best friend of Pastor David Hall for 32 years

ENDORSEMENT II

May I recommend this book to you. I have worked with Pastor David for fifteen years to exalt Jesus Christ as Lord.

In these pages, he expresses the truth of the hour from a heart of love and compassion for those who are wandering in darkness.

Beloved, may your heart be open to receive this message of genuine love. May the blessings of peace, joy, and love be yours through Christ Jesus, the soon-coming King of kings.

Pastor Richard Thornhill

Dallas, Texas

Joined Immanuel World Ministries in August 2011

ENDORSEMENT III

I met Pastor David in 2018. This was by God's design.

I was in a very difficult season of my journey with Christ. I resolved to pray that God would send someone who understood what was happening to me. Needless to say, God moved in Pastor David's heart to contact me from the other side of the world.

We have been brothers and friends ever since.

I have known Pastor David to be a true and sincere follower of Christ Jesus. Over the years, he has shown such love and kindness that they could only be sustained by the power of the Holy Spirit. His humility is a work that could only come from the Lord Jesus Christ.

I have served as a pastor with Immanuel World Ministries since 2019. Together with Pastor David, our senior pastor, and our other dear pastors and sisters, we continue to endeavor to share the true gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ throughout the world.

Pastor David has a very deep love for God and His Holy Word. I recommend that every true believer in the Lord Jesus Christ read his book, Journey of the Upright, as it will truly be a blessing to their hearts.

Thank you, Pastor David, my friend and brother. May God continue to use you in these last days.

Pastor Mark Lewis

South Africa

Joined Immanuel World Ministries in February 2019

ENDORSEMENT IV

Journey of the Upright is a compendium of rich end-time spiritual truths and realities, written to awaken double-minded Christians and encourage the Bride of Christ to continue pursuing a deep and intimate relationship with the Bridegroom, our Lord Jesus Christ. It will be of immeasurable value to every believer who makes each page a point of profound reflection and a matter of the heart.

It has been a great honor to know Pastor David P. Hall, the author of this inspiring Christian work, for the past several years. He is a loving, caring, humble, kind, generous, powerful, and anointed man of God. I will never forget his heart for ministry—especially to the Bride of Christ—his sound doctrine, and his commitment to the Body of Christ.

Pastor David is a mentor, teacher, father, and true shepherd who will not tolerate wolves. His great vision has impacted many nations across Africa, Asia, and throughout the world.

I encourage you to read this book. May the Lord establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints (1 Thessalonians 3:13).

Pastor Richard Kato

Evangelical Redeemed Worship

Nansana, Kampala, Uganda

Joined Immanuel World Ministries in April 2019

ENDORSEMENT V

Pastor David P. Hall is one of the most genuine men of God I have ever known, and I am deeply grateful that God brought him into my life.

His zeal and passion for the living God—and for His sheep—are difficult to put into words.

I believe the fruit he bears speaks for itself. It flows from the Father's heart within him, where the King of Glory rules and reigns in the chambers of his heart.

He is also one of the humblest men I have ever met. That is why I listen to him and admire him: he esteems others above himself, which is a rare trait.

Finally, I admire his passion for the Word, his ability to explore its depths, and, through the Holy Spirit, his diligence in making Scripture his foundation and in being a “good Berean” (Acts 17:11).

For these reasons and many more, I am eagerly looking forward to reading this book. My prayer is that everyone who reads it will carefully consider all the spiritual “meat” they are sure to find within its pages. My prayer over Journey of the Upright is that God will be glorified and His people quickened through this work, written by His diligent servant, son, and undershepherd.

Pastor T. Andrew Farley

New Zealand

Joined Immanuel World Ministries in 2025

ENDORSEMENT VI

I have had the privilege of knowing my beloved friend and confidant, Pastor David P. Hall, since 2019, when I was walking through one of the most difficult and painful seasons of my entire life. His healing words of wisdom lifted me and encouraged me to run my race well. It was during this time that the Lord began teaching me more deeply what it truly means to become part of the Bride of Christ—to be set apart for Him, to walk in truth, to count the cost, and to understand that following Jesus wholeheartedly can sometimes bring rejection, misunderstanding, and pain. The journey isn't always easy—but He is worth every step. This is why I believe Journey of the Upright carries such an important message for the times in which we are now living!

This book is the fruit of Pastor David's years of study, prayer, and devotion to the Word of God. It is more than a book—it is a roadmap and a blueprint, encouraging believers to walk in truth, live with purpose, recognize deception, refuse compromise, and remain faithful to Christ until the end.

Isaiah 26:7 declares: "The way of the just is uprightness." The journey of the upright is not about being perfect. It is about having a heart fully surrendered to God—allowing Him to teach us, correct us, refine us, and lead us deeper into His truth.

In a world where compromise and deception are increasing and biblical truth is continually challenged, we need discernment, courage, and an intimate love relationship with Jesus Christ that cannot easily be shaken. For the Bride of Christ, preparation matters. Our lamps must remain burning, our hearts surrendered, and our eyes fixed upon our coming Bridegroom.

My prayer is that as you read Journey of the Upright, the Holy Spirit will speak personally to your heart. May you be challenged, strengthened, encouraged, and equipped to stand firmly upon God's Word and faithfully continue the journey He has called you to walk. As the Apostle Paul declared in 2 Timothy 4:7: "I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith."

Thank you, Pastor David, for your friendship, guidance, love, and faithfulness to the Word of God—and for pouring years of prayer, study, and devotion into this work. May Journey of the Upright encourage many to choose the narrow way, draw closer to Jesus, stand without compromise, and finish strong.

The journey isn't easy. But with Jesus, it is worth every step.

Adri van der Wath

New Zealand

Joined Immanuel World Ministries in 2022

ENDORSEMENT VII

I first met Pastor David Hall in August 2005 and began working in his ministry in November 2014.

Over the ensuing years, he promoted me from Administrator to Director of Administration at Immanuel World Ministries.

Working for Pastor David has been my greatest honor.

I highly recommend that you obtain a copy of his new book, Journey of the Upright, and let it bless your life, as it has mine.

Veronica Kouba

Houston, Texas

Joined Immanuel World Ministries in November 2014

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Above all, I give thanks to Almighty God and to the Holy Spirit, whose guidance has sustained this journey and whose Word remains the sole authority for every truth presented in these pages.

I thank my wife for her love, prayers, encouragement, and faithful partnership throughout this journey. I am also grateful to the pastors, ministry staff, family, friends, and readers who have supported this work and who continue to stand with Immanuel World Ministries in proclaiming Jesus Christ.

May every contribution to this book serve one purpose: that readers would know Christ more deeply, surrender fully to God's sovereignty, walk uprightly before Him, and be prepared for His coming.

Pastor David Hall

INTRODUCTION

There are moments in every believer's life when the Holy Spirit begins to awaken a deeper hunger—not merely to know about God, but to know Him more intimately through His Word. This book was born from such a journey.

For more than fifty years I have devoted myself to the study of Scripture, allowing the Bible to interpret itself through careful examination of its historical setting, original context, and the consistent testimony of God's Word from Genesis to Revelation. Along the way, the Holy Spirit has continually opened my understanding, revealing truths that have strengthened my faith and deepened my appreciation for God's eternal purpose.

Journey of the Upright is an invitation for you to begin that same journey.

This is not a book of religious opinions or human philosophy. Rather, it is a step-by-step exploration of the Scriptures, encouraging every reader to search the Word diligently, to test every conclusion, and to discover the treasures God has hidden for those who seek Him with an honest heart.

As you travel these pages, you will encounter subjects that have challenged believers for generations. We will examine God's eternal plan, the identity and calling of the Upright, the Bride of Christ, the Chosen, spiritual discernment,

perseverance, and the unique responsibilities of those living in what Scripture describes as the final generation.

History, biblical context, and Scripture itself will serve as our guides, always pointing back to the Lord Jesus Christ.

My prayer is not that you simply agree with every conclusion presented here. My prayer further, is that you will open your Bible, search the Scriptures with renewed passion, and allow the Holy Spirit to lead you into all truth. The Bereans were commended because they “searched the Scriptures daily, whether those things were so” (Acts 17:11). May that same noble spirit characterize every page you read.

The Christian life is not merely about arriving at heaven one day. It is a journey of transformation—a daily walk with Christ in which He shapes us into His likeness and prepares us for His glorious appearing. The path of the upright grows brighter as we continue walking in obedience to His Word.

If these pages encourage you to love Christ more deeply, trust His Word more completely, and live with greater expectation of His return, then this work will have fulfilled its purpose.

Now, with your Bible open and your heart prepared, let us begin our journey together.

‘Journey of the Upright’

PART 1

Beginning Your Journey as an Upright Saint

Chapter 1

The Spirit Bears Witness

The “UPRIGHT” and the “Bride of Christ”, in our final generation are one and the same, as joint heirs with Christ.

Romans 8:16-17 “The Spirit itself bears witness with our spirit, that we are the children of God: And if children, then heirs; heirs of God, and joint-heirs with Christ; [if so be that we suffer with him,] that we may be also glorified together.”

Being a joint heir with Christ (Romans 8:17) means that believers, through faith, are adopted into God’s family and entitled to share in Jesus’ spiritual inheritance, glory, and authority. It signifies an equal right to the Father’s promises—including eternal life and the kingdom—received through Christ’s sacrifice, often linked to sharing in his sufferings. Key aspects of this biblical concept include: • **Identical Standing:** Believers are recognized as children of God, receiving the same inheritance rights as Jesus.

Comprehensive Inheritance: This includes Christ’s glory (John 17:22), riches (2 Corinthians 8:9), and inheritance of “all things” (Hebrews 1:2).

- **The Condition of Suffering:** The inheritance is linked to walking in Christ’s footsteps, which may include sharing in his sufferings to also share in his glory (Romans 8:17).

- Present & Future Reality: While fully realized in eternity, this status gives believers access to spiritual authority, grace, and new life today.
- What "Joint Heir" Specifically means?

Unlike simple inheritance, being a joint heir means having shared, undivided ownership. According to Roman law of that era, all heirs inherited equally. In the context of Romans 8, this means Christians don't get a "smaller portion" than Jesus; rather, they share in all that belongs to Him. Key Scriptural Context

- Romans 8:16-17: Confirms that if we are children of God, we are heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.
- Galatians 4:7: Asserts that you are no longer a slave but a child of God, and thus an heir through Him.
- Ephesians 1:6: Mentions believers are "accepted in the Beloved" (Jesus). Essentially, being a joint heir with Christ means that God does not look at the believer as a stranger, but with the same love and favor as He looks at His own Son, granting them full citizenship in the kingdom.

Chapter 2

Pursuit of Uprightness

This first chapter is presented today as a sobering wake up call to our generation. The biblical path of the Upright begins with our pursuit of righteousness, characterized by integrity, intentional avoidance of evil, and total trust in God. It is described as a "highway", a narrow road, that leads away from wickedness, protecting one's life through watchful, principled, and intentional, godly living.

Key Aspects include:

A Shift from Evil: The primary focus is departing from evil and avoiding the crooked paths of the unrighteous.

Guided by Integrity: Upright individuals are guided by moral and ethical consistency (integrity) rather than selfish gain.

- **Heart Transformation:** This journey begins with an upright heart, transformed by grace, leading to righteous actions and speech.
- **Divine Guidance:** The upright rely on God's strength rather than their own, finding that He makes their path straight and secure.
- **Intentional Living:** It is a careful, conscious way of life—"watching where you are going"—which ensures security and preserves the soul.
- **Results of the Journey**

- Protection: By avoiding evil, the upright avoid the snares, troubles, and destruction that befall the wicked.
- Peace and Stability: The path is marked by peace, providing solid, steady ground, often described as a "level path".
- Blessing: God is promised to favor the upright, withholding no good thing from them. In essence, the 'journey of the upright' is a spiritual, upward path (like the rising sun), where one's life becomes increasingly aligned with divine wisdom, righteousness, and holiness.

PART 2

DEPARTURE

Chapter 3

Warning

Before continuing, I offer an urgent word of warning to all who would pursue the Journey of the Upright.

‘The World is filled with False Teachers, aka Wolves in Sheep’s clothing’. (Matthew 7:15) "A wolf in sheep's clothing" describes a deceitful person who appears harmless but harbors dangerous or exploitative intentions. This phrase originates from the Bible, where Jesus warned his followers about false prophets who are "ravenous wolves" in disguise, using "sheep's clothing" to hide their true, destructive nature.

Recognizing these individuals involves observing that their actions and words do not align, and that their ultimate goal is self-enrichment or control rather than genuine connection. “They have a form of godliness, but deny the power thereof.” (2 Timothy 3:5) Luke’s warning to this final generation was very clear, and frightening in Luke 21:36, “Watch you therefore, and pray always, that you may be [found] worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.” Luke warns of the urgency of the time and Season in which our final generation now

lives. We are to prepare our lives for the soon coming of our bridegroom.

Most of the world, and many in the Church, cannot see this truth now. Proverbs 25:2 gives further warning by saying this: "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter." Searching it out is one thing, and we respect and encourage those who do, but we must never fail to advise of our dependence on the Holy Spirit to test and prove our faithfulness, to lead and guide us into His truths. 2 Timothy 3:5-17 "Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with many lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." • Paul then issues this command: "Have nothing to do with such people."

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, long-suffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer

persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished unto all good works.” In 2 Timothy 3, the apostle Paul describes the nature of people in the last days. In his description, he warns of people who are characterized as “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (verse 5). We see this everywhere if we are awake and submitted to our Father’s sovereignty. Paul often uses contrast to emphasize an attribute he wishes to highlight. In 2 Timothy 3:1–4, he gives Timothy a long list of sinful behaviors and attitudes that are contrary to God’s will. In verse 5 he tells Timothy to avoid those who [state] they are Christians with their mouths—but have a “form” of godliness—who act as unbelievers—they deny the power of godliness, by having no transformation in their lives, and producing no fruit!

Chapter 4

The Way of Blessedness

The way of uprightness, or righteousness, is the way of blessedness; and the way of crookedness is the way of wretchedness.

It has been established that the Blessing of the Lord is one benefit of godly character.

Psalms 1:1 says, Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful.

Psalms 24:3-5 says, Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation.

You see, there is the blessedness of uprightness. The upright person shall receive the blessing of the Lord. Job 1:1 says, There was a man in the land of Uz, whose name was Job; and that man was perfect and upright, and one that feared God, and eschewed evil. Job was a righteous man, and Job 1:10 shows his blessing because of his uprightness. Job 1:10 says, Hast not thou made an hedge about him, and about his house, and about all that he hath on every side? thou hast blessed the work of his hands, and his substance is increased in the

land. The way of uprightness or righteousness is the way of blessedness; and the way of crookedness is the way of wretchedness. Beloved, make up your mind to be upright so you can enjoy the Blessing of the LORD.

Chapter 5

Knowing them by their Fruit

Let the Upright warn others.

We will know them by their fruit! (Matthew 7:15-20; Galatians 5:22-23)

Those who have a form of godliness are those who make an outward display of religion. They present themselves as godly, but it is all for show. There is no power behind their religion, as evidenced in the fact that their lives are unchanged. They speak of God and continue to live in sin, and they are fine with that arrangement.

As commentator Charles Ellicott wrote, “These, by claiming the title of Christians, wearing before men the uniform of Christ, but by their lives dishonoring His name, did the gravest injury to the holy Christian cause” (Ellicott’s Bible Commentary for English Readers, entry for 2 Timothy 3:5).

[These false Christians are destructive, and create chaos among the brethren.] Paul warns that they will “creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts”, and that they are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:6–7).

He compares them to the wicked magicians who opposed Moses and warns that their folly and corrupt minds will be revealed to all eventually

(verses 8–9). The power of God, which should accompany the form of godliness, is shown through the Holy Spirit and results in the transformation of our lives.

True Christians are fruitful and obedient to Christ, seeking to become like Him, and servants to all. They choose to learn to speak as He spoke, walk as He walked, and do the things He did.

(John 14:12) “Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and even greater works shall He do also, because I go to My Father.

The Holy Spirit indwells the believer (1 Corinthians 6:19) and enables him to bear certain fruit: love, joy, peace, goodness, kindness, gentleness, faithfulness, patience and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23).

These are the attributes of a true Christian, as opposed to Paul’s list of sins in 2 Timothy 3:1–4. Paul’s exhortation to Timothy falls in line with James’ explanation how to identify a true faith (James 2:14–26).

True faith will be evidenced by good works, which will occur naturally. If a person says he is a Christian but shows no evidence in his life by bearing the fruit of the Spirit, we have to make a judgment about him and avoid that person.

He may have a form of godliness, but he is denying God’s power by not letting himself be controlled by

the Spirit. In fact, if his faith is not genuine, he cannot be controlled by God's power, because the Holy Spirit does not dwell in him.

Chapter 6

Folly to him

“The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned” (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The natural person may have a form of godliness, but he denies God’s power in the way he lives, and by the choices he makes.

Only faith in Jesus Christ can bring justification and the transformation he so desperately needs (Colossians 1:21–22; Romans 5:1–2).

"Having a form of godliness but denying its power" refers to someone who presents a religious or pious exterior, but lacks genuine inner spiritual transformation and a deep relationship with God, as found in 2 Timothy 3:5. Their fruit reveals no evidence of being born again. No proof of an inward transformation into Christlikeness by the Holy Spirit.

This means outwardly they are performing religious acts, like attending church or presenting themselves as praying, while internally rejecting the Holy Spirit's transforming power to effect real change in their heart and life.

This phrase describes hypocrisy, where a superficial adherence to religious customs

substitutes for the actual work of God's grace, and the Bible advises to "turn away" from such people. In essence, a "form of godliness" is a religious facade without the substance of God's power, and it is a warning to believers to guard against spiritual hypocrisy in their own lives and to separate themselves from those who exhibit it.

Chapter 7

Trying Times

We live in trying times, Saints. We must seek wisdom and discernment, but above all, we must seek Christ with all our strength, pursuing Him, that we may be transformed into His image and likeness!

Our time is short, with absolutely no time to waste!

The Bride of Christ walks the lonely path of the Upright. Watching and praying patiently for the return of our Bridegroom for us. (Luke 21:36)

We do not adhere to possible dates, but recognize the season of His return is well underway, requiring our making ourselves ready. (Rev. 19:7-8)

- We know we were chosen to inhabit the final generation Saints of God. (Rev. 14-1-5)
- We are faithfully preparing our life to be ready for Christ's coming for us, as His bride.
- We do not cease to watch for His return, and pray we will be [found] worthy to escape all that is coming upon the earth.
- We fulfill our duties to God under His sovereignty in full submission, always acknowledging Him as our source, and our strength.
- We are fruit bearers in great abundance. And we share God's truth with all who can receive it.

- So far as the Pre-tribulation Rapture timing, we must leave this in our Father's trusted hands. To do otherwise is a distraction to us. The Bible makes it abundantly clear that among the final generation's bride of Christ, as detailed in Revelation 14:1-5, we are not to seek the day and time of our Bridegroom's coming, but we faithfully seek to make ourselves ready, patiently awaiting His return. Toward this, scripture declares He will "come in a day and hour you think not", and that He "will come like a thief in the night. Our [only] focus until He comes for us are these:
- Submitting completely to our Father's sovereignty, surrendering our will to Him.
- Learn and practice obedience and the fruit of the Spirit. (John 14:15; Galatians 5:22-23)
- Make ourselves ready (Luke 21:34-36; Rev. 19:7-8)
- Caring for His household (Matthew 24:45-47), by feeding His sheep with His truths; encouraging, protecting, convicting them, and by praying for them. These are our duties and responsibilities until He comes, Saints. We leave everything else in His loving and faithful hands.

TRUST HIM AND HIS JUDGMENT & APPOINTED TIMES!

Anyone predicting a date or time for the Pre-Tribulation Rapture of His Bride should be passed by as a false teacher, with our humble prayers for them.

Scripture makes it clear no one knows the day or hour. Separation from them is mandatory, according to Paul. Stay focused on the prize, Saints! Let's run our race to win it, as Paul declared in 1 Corinthians 9:24-25.

1 Corinthians 9:23-27 "And this I do for the gospel's sake, that I might be partaker thereof with you. Know you not that they which run in a race run all, but one receives the prize? So run, that you may obtain. And every man that strives for the mastery is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a corruptible crown; but we an incorruptible. I therefore so run, not as uncertainly; so I fight, not as one that beats the air: But I keep control of my body, and bring it into subjection: lest that by any means, when I have preached to others, I myself should be a [castaway] (lose my rewards). How are you going to be found worthy?"

Remember that the only thing that will make me worthy to escape the soon coming Great Tribulation, is my **Upright position in Christ**.

Can a Christian be deemed "not worthy" to escape? Our worthiness comes from our position [IN] Christ. Luke 21:34-36 "Be on guard, so that your hearts will not be weighted down with dissipation

and drunkenness and the worries of life, and that day will not come on you suddenly like a trap; (35) for it will come upon all those who dwell on the face of all the earth. (36) "But keep on the alert at all times, praying that you may have strength to escape all these things that are about to take place, and to stand before the Son of Man."

The context is obviously the return of Jesus which will come, like a trap, upon all those that dwell on the earth. So the context of His statement has the whole world in view. The coming judgement is upon all on this earth. Yet there is an escape! And how important it is to those that dwell on this earth that they are considered worthy to be rescued at this time and are included in this way of escape!

So how is one considered worthy by God?

Our worthiness comes through faith in the Lord Jesus.

The work of God, according to Jesus, is to believe in the One He sent (John 6:29). To "believe" in Jesus requires evidence through our obedience to His commands. (John 14:15) It is also through our faith that a person is declared righteous in God's sight (Rom 4:3-6).

Uprightness and Righteousness are one and the same, as pursued intensely by those surrendered to the sovereignty of God.

And in our Final Generation, these are the few, the remnant, numbered among our generation's 'Body

of Christ', who are *not compromised with this world*.

They are “making themselves ready” for His coming. (Revelation 19:7-8)

Chapter 8

How are we Worthy?

J. Vernon McGee on Luke 21:36 writes: How are you going to be worthy? The only thing that will make me worthy is my position in Christ. Therefore, I have trusted Him as my Savior, and I have committed my way to Him, so that if I am alive at the time of the Rapture, I'll be going to meet Him in the air by the grace of God. To commit our way to Him is to commit to become transformed into what He created us to be.

Become like Him in every way.

Recognize that you are in Christ, and Christ is in you. (2 Cor. 5:17)

So why does Jesus tell us to pray that we may be counted worthy? He is emphasizing the importance of making sure we are in this escape from the Great tribulation, for those born in the final generation. The alternative will be terrible! He is emphasizing the importance of making sure that you are truly born again and a child of God. In every generation, there are 'possessors' of God and there are 'professors' of God. In other words, there are those that have the spirit of God and those that simply [say that they know God], but will be found out on that day.

It is very important, as a true believer, to be watchful and alert in these final days in which we now live. *We want to be found doing our Lord's will when He returns.*

The foundation of our worthiness is the inward surrender of our hearts and wills to God's sovereignty. Jesus warned us that those who truly love Him will obey His commands and will be found faithfully laboring in His kingdom on earth when He comes (Matthew 24:45–47).

Our obedience and service do not create our worthiness; they are the visible evidence that our surrender is genuine.

And let us always remember that the Journey of the Upright is ours to choose, when we surrender all to Christ.

Chapter 9

Preparing His Bride for Departure

“Let us be glad and rejoice and give Him glory, for the marriage of the Lamb has come, and His wife has made herself ready.” And to her it was granted to be arrayed in fine linen, clean and bright, for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints.”
(Revelation 19:7-8)

Note: “His wife has made herself ready”, describes those few who have **surrendered their lives** under the sovereignty of God. This requires a commitment to mature as a Christian.

MATURING IN CHRIST IS LIKE CLIMBING A MOUNTAIN

1. Maturing in Christ is like climbing a mountain—a challenging, long-term journey requiring endurance, focus, and reliance on God as the guide. It involves ascending toward godliness (the peak) through intentional, often strenuous, spiritual growth, moving from base camp toward a better view of Him.

- The Struggle and Growth: The path is rarely smooth, symbolizing the trials and struggles that build spiritual muscle. Just as a mountain climber faces unpredictable weather and steep

terrain, the Christian life includes tests that require perseverance.

- A "One Step" Process: Spiritual maturity is rarely instantaneous; it requires taking it "one step at a time," walking in step with the Holy Spirit rather than running ahead.
- Reliance on a Guide: God is the guide and provider, promising to send "angels" to uphold you and offering strength when you are weary.
- The View from the Top: As you grow closer to Christ (the summit), your perspective shifts. The challenges faced below look different from the top, where there is a "spectacular" view of spiritual understanding and grace.
- The Goal is Godliness: The aim is to become more like Jesus, often requiring a "death" to self-will, just as a climber must be prepared to sacrifice comfort for the goal.

II. Alternative Perspective:

Some suggest spiritual growth is less like a mountain climb (getting better) and more like spelunking or going deeper into a cave, where the focus is not on ascending to high heights, but descending into the depths of one's need, allowing more of Christ's grace to flow into the crevices of life.

The Christian life can be viewed as climbing a mountain; it is a metaphor for the journey of faith,

representing a strenuous, intentional ascent toward spiritual maturity and closer union with God and seeking God's guidance. While the Christian path is challenging, God has promised to be with us as our guide and our provider, and as we take this journey God teaches us things along the way, things about ourselves and things of Him, how we need to rely on and trust in Him.

When climbing a mountain, you have to take one step at a time, you cannot run ahead, so too is our walk with God we are to walk in step with Him. Abraham, Moses and Elijah are just a few in the Bible that met God upon the mountain and Jesus went up into the mountain to pray to His heavenly Father. Whatever mountain we face, Jesus is the best guide and will direct our steps when we trust in Him.

Psalms 121 v 1 "I lift my eyes to the mountains, where does my help come from? My help comes from the Lord, the maker of heaven and earth."

It may also be likened to the journey of spelunking a deep, dark cave, not knowing what hazards await along the way. In both cases, our journey of maturing in Christ has a beginning and an end. In the case of a Christian who willingly surrenders everything to God, your journey will involve your entire life experience on earth. Testings, failures, victories, persecution and perseverance are to be expected and embraced, as requirements for our

successfully maturing in Christ. The rewards are eternally priceless.

II. Preparing His Bride

‘FINAL PREPARATIONS FOR HIS BRIDE’S DEPARTURE’

The members of the Bride of Christ are separated out of the final generation Church because of the Church’s compromise with the World.

This is a clear distinction seen in Revelation 14:3-4 (William Tyndale 1535 NT; Geneva 1560).

“And they sung as it were a new song (or Story) before the throne, and before the four beasts, and the elders: *and no man could learn that song/story but the hundred and forty and four thousand, which were redeemed from the earth.*

These are they which were not defiled with false teachings (as Eve was); for they are wise. These are they which follow the Lamb whithersoever he goeth. These were redeemed from among men, being the first-fruits offering unto God and to the Lamb.”

In Revelation 19:7-8, "making ourselves ready" refers to the bride of Christ preparing for the marriage of the Lamb by purifying herself, thus wearing fine linen, which symbolizes the righteous acts of the saints.

These righteous acts are a result of God's grace and believers' faith in Jesus, which enables them to live

lives pleasing to Him, demonstrating their readiness for the coming eternal covenant.

The Bride's Preparation

- **Symbolic Clothing:** The fine linen, described as bright and pure, is the outward representation of the internal purity and holiness of the Bride, as noted in various translations of Revelation 19:7-8.
- **Righteous Acts:** The fine linen is explicitly defined as the "righteous acts of the saints." This means that the readiness of the Bride is expressed through the collective actions of God's people as they live out their faith in Christ.
- **A Gift, Not Earned:** The ability to be clothed in this fine linen is "given unto her" or granted, indicating that these righteous acts, while performed by believers, stem from God's grace. They are not a way to earn salvation but an outgrowth of a life transformed by Christ.

How Believers Make Themselves Ready

- **Personal Relationship:** Getting ready involves building a deeper relationship with Jesus through reading Scripture, prayer, and meditation.
- **Living a Life of Faith:** Believers are called to model their lives on Christ's example, continually seeking to walk in a way that honors Him.

- **Spiritual Purity:** The preparation involves the washing away of sin through the blood of Jesus, leading to a renewed mind and spirit.

In essence, being ready is a continuous process of sanctification, where the Bride, through the empowering grace of God, performs righteous acts that prepare her for the ultimate union with Christ at the marriage supper of the Lamb.

"The bride has made herself ready" is a phrase from the Book of Revelation in the Bible, referring to the Bride of Christ, preparing for Jesus Christ's return and the Marriage Supper of the Lamb.

It signifies a state of spiritual readiness, characterized by a deep commitment to Christ, a life of holiness, and the performance of righteous acts that reflect God's glory.

Key Aspects of a Prepared Bride:

- **Righteous Deeds:** The white linen the bride wears symbolizes the righteous acts of the saints—acts of faith, obedience, love, and service performed for God.
- **Commitment to Christ:** The bride is committed to her Bridegroom, Jesus, through a relationship built on trust, submission, and a desire to please Him.
- **Intimacy and Purity:** The bride has cultivated an intimate relationship with Christ, characterized

by purity and a heart full of love and devotion to Him.

- Focus on the Eternal: The bride maintains an eternal perspective, prioritizing spiritual preparation over worldly distractions and temporal concerns.
- Rejoicing and Glory: The bride will "be glad and rejoice" in the presence of God, bringing glory and honor to Him at the wedding.

The Role of The Bride of Christ

- The individual believer, **through their actions and choices**, contributes to their collective readiness to be transformed into the image and likeness of Christ.
- While Christ provides the ultimate redemption and forgiveness, **the individual actively makes a conscious decision to live a life of holiness and prepare for His coming by praying for the Holy Spirit's help in making us worthy of Him.** (Luke 21:36)

In essence, this phrase signifies the Bride's **active participation** in a spiritual preparation for the ultimate union with Christ, a state of purity, holiness, and devotion reflected through their righteous deeds and unwavering faith.

Marriage is the most intimate of all human relationships, and this metaphor describes the intimacy individual Christ followers now have and

will eternally enjoy serving their Husband (Christ) throughout eternity.

Christ is the head of the body (a separate metaphor with an obvious metaphor to a husband and wife being “one flesh”). He is the head of the relationship between himself and His bride. Jesus is the perfect husband (2 Corinthians 11:2) , who protects, nurtures, provides, and perfects us. Through his indwelling life in us our Risen Lord perfects us so that he “can present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle of any other blemish, but holy and blameless” (Ephesians 5:27, my emphasis).

The Bride makes herself ready inasmuch as the bride trusts in and yields to Jesus so that he can perfect her (us). Who are these few, the 144,000 (Rev. 14:1-5), who are separated from the Church to embody His wife, for this role?

The faithful few who, by the power of the Holy Spirit, are empowered to overcome the temptations of this world, the flesh, and the devil, in this final generation.

We humbly, and with a contrite, and humble spirit, acknowledge we cannot make ourselves perfect, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, without the Holy Spirit.

If any spiritual descriptor fits human beings it is that we have stains, wrinkles and blemishes, and

no amount of stain removal can take away our imperfections so that we can perfect ourselves.

Only Jesus can make us white as snow (Isaiah 1:18). He presents us to himself, we do not present ourselves to him on the basis of our attempts to improve ourselves.

The Bride of Christ is subject to him and follows him – the Bride does not regard any pretender or middle-person to be the equivalent of Jesus. Jesus alone is our divine husband. Jesus alone loved us and gave himself up for us. Total submission, with humility, to the Sovereignty of God is required. This is a commitment that is entered in to with joy and happiness as we keep our focus on eternity with Him.

- “Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear” (Revelation 19:7-8)

A final warning, in closing on this chapter.

‘REMEMBER LOT’S WIFE!’

“Don’t look back!” The story of Lot’s wife, found in Genesis 19, provides the basis for an urgent message.

- As God prepares to destroy the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah, angels lead Lot and his family to safety and give them a critical instruction:

- "Flee for your lives! Don't look back, and don't stop anywhere in the plain!".
- The consequence: Lot's wife disobeys the command and looks back, "and she became a pillar of salt" (Genesis 19:26).
- The lesson: Jesus references this story in the New Testament to teach a powerful lesson about loyalty and commitment to the kingdom of God (Luke 17:32).
- He warns that anyone who puts their hand to the plow and looks back is "not fit for the kingdom of God" (Luke 9:62).

The "Bride of Christ" must be wholly focused on her Bridegroom, the Lord Jesus Christ, to become like Him in every way. *We study His life to speak as He spoke, obey His Father as He obeyed, and do the things He did.*

Luke 21:36 warns us that ONLY those watching and praying for His return, and found worthy, will embody His Bride. The rest of the Church will remain during the tribulation due to their unfaithfulness.

In Christian eschatology, the rapture is an event where believers will be "caught up" to meet Christ in the air before the tribulation begins.

There is one final warning for His bride, which is to 'Remember Lot's wife!'

- Connecting the story of Lot's wife to the rapture, means that Christians should not be attached to their worldly things they are leaving behind when Christ returns. Looking back represents a longing for the old, sinful life, which would be an act of unfaithfulness to the Bridegroom, Jesus.

What "don't look back" means for believers.

The combined message of these two concepts warns believers to be fully devoted to Christ and not to hesitate or cling to their earthly lives and possessions when it is time to depart.

- Leave the past behind: The command signifies a complete departure from a former sinful or worldly way of life.
- Maintain focus: Believers should not be distracted by the material world or regret what they are leaving behind, but should fix their eyes on Jesus.
- Move forward in faith: The instruction is a call for complete obedience and a forward-looking mindset, trusting God's provision for the future rather than longing for the past.

Our love for Christ must be all consuming, filling us with joy unspeakable and full of glory. (1 Peter 1:8)

Keep our focus on Christ, Saints, and leave the cares of this world behind.

Remember that the Bride of Christ seeks to be
Upright in all our ways, always.

Chapter 10

The Bride has Made Herself Ready

Revelation 19:7-8 “Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his Bride has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of Saints.”

THE BRIDEGROOM COMES FOR HIS BRIDE

The Bride of Christ, or the bride, the Lamb's wife, is a term used in reference to a group of related verses in the Bible, in the Gospels, Revelation, the Epistles and related verses in the Old Testament.

Sometimes, the bride is implied by calling Jesus a “BRIDEGROOM”. For over 1500 years, the Church was identified as the bride betrothed to Christ.

However, there are instances of the interpretation of the usage varying from church to church. Most believe that it always refers to the church.

However, scripture makes it clear, when studied contextually, that this is not true. (Revelation 14:1-5; Revelation 19:7-8)

Christ as a BRIDEGROOM

In the Gospel of John, John the Baptist speaks of Jesus Christ as the bridegroom and mentions the bride. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and heard him, rejoices greatly because of the

bridegroom's voice: thus my joy therefore is fulfilled. [John 3:29]

That is the only place in the Gospels that the bride is mentioned, but because a bridegroom must have a bride, all other mentions of the bridegroom imply the bride.

In the Gospels, when Jesus is asked why his disciples do not fast, but the followers of John and the Pharisees do, Jesus answers: And Jesus said unto them, Can the friends of the bridegroom fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.[Mark 2:19] In Matthew 9:15, Mark 2:19 and Luke 5:34, the Apostles are referred to as the friends, guests, or children depending on the translation, of the Bridegroom commonly accepted to be Jesus Christ. The Bridegroom is also mentioned in the Parable of the Ten Virgins.[Mt 25:1-13] Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Mentions of the Bride's Appearance

The Book of Revelation repeatedly mentions the appearance of the Bride. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come

hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. [Revelation 21:2,9-10] In the above passages, John, the author of the Book of Revelation, speaks of seeing the bride revealed and refers to her as the New Jerusalem, first mentioned in Revelation 3:12. And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let him that hears say, "Come." And let him that thirsts come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. [Revelation 22:17] Note - The Greek word for bride is νύμφη (nymfi) as in Revelation 21:2. This word, νύμφη (nymfi), is more specific than that used in chapter 19. Revelation 19:7 which has γυνή (gune) means "wife" or "woman". The context of Revelation 19:7 is marriage so this should inform the reader why numerous Bible translations are consistent with the Greek in translating γυνή as "bride". She is simply a "woman" getting married - a bride. Bride is the word chosen in translations such as NLT, ESV, NASB, ISV etc., [Revelation 21:2]

Comparing the church to a bride in Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul compares the union of husband and wife to that of Christ and the church.[1] The central theme of the whole Ephesians letter is reconciliation of the alienated within the unity of the church.[1] Ephesians 5 begins by calling on Christians to imitate God and Christ, who gave

himself up for them with love.[5:2] Ephesians 5:1-21 contains a rather strong warning against foolishness and letting down one's guard against evil. Rather, the author encourages the readers to constantly give thanks with song in their hearts because of what God has done for all in Christ.

That prelude to the subject's text takes up again the theme of loving submission that began with the example of Christ in 5:2: "Be submissive to one another out of reverence for Christ."5:21

It implies that the "Bride" is the body of believers that comprise the universal Christian Ekklēsia (Church) (lit. "called-out ones").

The ekklēsia is never explicitly called "the bride of Christ" in the New Testament. That is approached in Ephesians 5:22-33. A major analogy is that of the body. Just as husband and wife are to be "one flesh", [Eph. 5:31] this analogy for the writer describes the relationship of Christ and ekklēsia. [Eph. 5:32] Husbands were exhorted to love their wives "just as Christ loved the ekklēsia and gave himself for it.[Eph. 5:25]

When Christ nourishes and cherishes the ekklēsia, he nourishes and cherishes his own flesh. Just as the husband, when he loves his wife is loving his own flesh.[Eph. 5:28]

Members of the ekklēsia are "members of his own body", and must also love their Husband as He loves, because it is written in Genesis 2:24 "and the

two shall become one flesh". In [Eph. 5:31] Paul quotes the Genesis passage as what has been called a "divine postscript".[2]

URGENT NOTE: This is why His Bride will be taken out of the Final Generation Church (Body of Christ), because the vast number of the Body of Christ in our generation are compromised with 'willful sins and with the cares, lusts, and the affairs of this World.'

In writing to the Church of Corinth in 2 Corinthians 11 Paul writes to warn the community of false teachers who would teach of another Christ, and to confess his concern that they will believe someone who teaches a false Christ, other than Christ Jesus of Nazareth whom he preached; Paul referred to the Church in Corinth as being espoused to Christ.

"For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes preach's another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him".[2 Cor. 11:2-4]

Important Note

“No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other, or he who hold to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon.” (Matthew 6:24)

This is why the Bride of Christ is taken out of the Church as the “first-fruits offering to God and the Lamb” (v 4), chosen from this final generation. They must be alive to be translated.

As you study Revelation 14:1-5, you see that only a very small number will be taken as the pre-tribulation offering to become His bride.

II.

Now comes the depths of scriptural reason concerning the true identity of the Bride of Christ.

References (Translated from William Tyndale 1535 NT, and the Geneva 1560 Bible's, and Commentaries) Revelation 14:1-5

“Then I looked, and there before Me (God the Father), was the Lamb (Christ)! standing on Mount Zion, and with Him 144,000 (His Bride) who had His name and His Father's name written on their foreheads. 2 And I heard a sound from heaven like the roar of rushing waters and like a loud peal of thunder. The sound I heard was like that of harpists playing their harps. 3 And they sang a new song (or story) before the throne and before the four living creatures and the elders. [No one] could learn the song/story [except] the 144,000 who had been redeemed from the earth.

Note: No one could understand those chosen and prepared for this role except the 144,000, (those chosen). Family, Church, and the world, could not understand the 144,000. Note: In fact, as they hated Jesus, their bridegroom, they are also hated. (John 15:18)”

4 “These are those who did not defile themselves with women (false teachers, as Eve was beguiled by the devil), for they remained virgins (wise). They follow the Lamb wherever he goes. They were purchased from among mankind (the Church) and offered as the first-fruits offering to God and to the Lamb. 5 No lie, or deceit was found in their mouths; they are blameless.

Revelation 19:7-8 “Let us rejoice and be glad and give Him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and His bride has [made herself] ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear.”

John 14:15 “If you love me, keep my commands.” Only those who learn and practice obedience, and who endure to the end, demonstrate by their obedience their love for Me!

Matthew 25 Parable of Wise & Foolish.

1 “At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. 2 Five of them were foolish and five were wise. 3 The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. 4 The

wise ones, however, took [oil] in jars along with their lamps.

Note: What is this 'Oil'?

Preparation: study the word; refuse willful sins and compromise with family, friend, world; prayer, fasting, praise, thankfulness, obedience, judging self (1 Cor. 11:31), seeking purity and holiness, and always watching for His coming, while fulfilling our duty to share the gospel, our testimony, our love with everyone possible.

You must not grow weary (Gal. 6:9-10), nor depressed in persecution, because your focus and thoughts are always on your bridegroom, remembering the suffering He experienced for us.
5 The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they [all] became drowsy and fell asleep.

Note: The Wise were filled with oil, and always ready, because of their love for the bridegroom.

"At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' " "No," they replied, "there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves." "But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others

also came. 'Lord, Lord,' they said, 'open the door for us!'

But he replied, 'Truly I tell you, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour."

Within these scriptures we behold eternal truth concerning the requirements on those who will embody the Bride of Christ.

The Bridegroom will come for His faithful and true Bride taken out of the unfaithful Church from the final generation, embodied by those who love Him, and demonstrate their passionate love for Him by learning and practicing obedience.

These will be taken [out of the Church] as the fulfillment of Revelation 14:4, as the "first fruits offering to God and to the Lamb.

Shepherds/Pastors, are charged with the responsibility to prepare their flock. Teach them scriptural truth.

The vast majority of the Church (estimated 2.5 billion people) are seen in Revelation 7:9-17, as Tribulation Saints.

This does not mean these are not loved by Christ.

They are!

It does mean they were not prepared and ready when He returned.

The Tribulation will wake them up and prepare their faith in Him.

PART 3

Learning How To Study the Bible

Chapter 11

Studying the Word in Context

The English word “context” is derived from two Latin words meaning “to weave threads” (contextus, from con- ‘together’ + texere ‘to weave’) and so our word signifies that which is connected or woven together.

The expression “context is everything” applies in many areas of life, and it certainly applies in the study of God’s Word. Every beginning student of the Bible soon finds that many statements cannot be taken from their biblical setting and understood or used in isolation.

On the other hand, even experienced Bible students sometimes forget the need to seek context in everything that is studied and especially in looking at difficult or puzzling verses. Context can be more than just reading the chapter in which a verse appears and there are, in fact, a number of different aspects or dimensions of context that all play a part in the successful understanding of scripture.

As Miles Coverdale, sixteenth century translator of the English Bible, wrote: “... it shall greatly help thee to understand scripture, if thou mark not only what is spoken or written, but of whom, and unto whom, with what words, at what time, where, to what intent, with what circumstance, considering

what goeth before, and what follows after.” —
Miles Coverdale, Preface to the Bible, 1535.

This article looks at four of the most important aspects of biblical context with examples and suggested study helps.

1. Overall Context The first and perhaps most important aspect of maintaining context is that of seeing and interpreting every part of the Bible in the light of the whole. Some verses, such as John 3:16, may be clear in isolation, but even then taking in the other verses relevant to this very clear statement expands our understanding and appreciation for its meaning. In many other cases overall context clearly is needed for proper understanding.

Taking John 3:16 as an example of the importance of our studying in context, study John 3:17-21. Here you will see the separation and requirements for salvation.

Then, add John 6:44 for even greater understanding.

Note: Take time now to study John 3:16 through John 3:17-21; and then John 6:44.

In 2 Kings 2:1 the Bible tells us that Elijah was taken up by a whirlwind “into heaven”.

It is easy to misunderstand this statement without overall biblical context. But, when we put other relevant scriptures together we see that from the

biblical perspective, there are three heavens (2 Corinthians 12:2).

Over nine hundred years after the time of Elijah, Jesus Himself said “no man has ascended up to heaven” (John 3:13), meaning the heaven of God. So 2 Kings is evidently talking about the “heaven” that we would call the sky or the atmosphere – just as the Bible speaks of the “dew of heaven” (Genesis 27:28, 39, Deuteronomy 33:28).

In the New Testament, the apostle Paul frequently stresses that salvation comes by faith alone (Ephesians 2:8,9: etc.), yet comparing this understanding with the writing of the apostle James who states that faith without works is dead (James 2:14-26), we get the whole picture.

In fact, if we look further into the writings of Paul himself, we find statements which back this up. Take for example: *“It is not those who hear the law who are righteous in God’s sight, but it is those who obey the law who will be declared righteous”* (Romans 2:13).

So overall, **context** shows that we are saved by faith alone, **but saving faith is never alone** – living faith leads us to right behavior and good works.

Study Helps: For beginning students, putting everything together that the Bible says on a given subject can seem like a daunting task, but there are many study helps such as concordances and topical Bibles that make this task much simpler. Even the

marginal references found in many bibles can be helpful in pulling important scriptures together for overall context.

2. Literary Context It's easy to think of the books of the Bible as being all essentially the same when it comes to studying its message. But the Bible contains many kinds of formats that we must keep in mind if we are to successfully understand what it is saying. Think of the phone book – it's not all the same format: white pages, yellow pages, blue pages, all with their own format and different kinds of information.

The books of the Bible not only have different types of literature – prose, poetry, messages, lists, etc. – within the overall book, but even within individual books.

Take, for example, some of the things said in the Book of Psalms where David exclaims “Break the teeth in their mouths, O God” (Psalm 58:6). Such an example may be easy to see as poetic language which obviously is not meant to be understood literally, but when we remember that about 30% of the Hebrew Bible is written in poetic form it can help us better understand sections of the prophetic books, for example, where sections of narrative text are mixed with sections of poetic text.

Older translations, such as the King James version, tend to obscure this fact by printing everything in the same format. More recent translations, such as

the English Standard Version and New International Version, make a big difference by printing different literary formats in different fonts and layouts. But it's not just the Old Testament where this principle applies.

Take for example, 1 John 1:2: "The Elder unto the well beloved Gaius, whom I love in truth. Beloved, I wish above all things that you may prosper and be in health, even as your soul prospers."

These verses are often taken out of context as though they indicate that prosperity and physical health are things to be highly sought in the Christian life and are of great importance.

In reality this is just a common letter opening expression of that day and age, just as we might write something like "I hope this finds all well with you" at the start of a letter to a friend today. Study helps: Different translations often help to clarify changes in format in the original texts, but not always.

If wording is still unclear, try checking different commentaries on the book in question, though remember that commentaries, by their very nature, may give the personal views of their authors – so you may wish to compare several.

3. Immediate Context Ecclesiastes 7:28, out of context, makes a seemingly startling statement: "While I was still searching but not finding – I

found one upright man among a thousand, but not one upright woman among them all.”

At first sight this sounds like a very sad situation, but if we look carefully at the immediate context, we see that the section beginning in vs. 26 is talking about prostitutes who snare unsuspecting men.

All Solomon is saying here is that although there may be “one in a thousand” men who resist such a woman (clearly using an idiomatic expression for a round number), he found not a single upright woman in this group.

Other verses in this book – Proverbs 12:4, 31:10, etc. – show this is certainly not a condemnation of all women; and the Bible talks of many upright women, of course.

In the New Testament, a scripture with which most Bible readers are familiar is found in the Book of Matthew: “For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them” (Matt. 18:20).

While this verse is frequently taken to mean gathering in church fellowship, the actual immediate context is about correcting someone for a problem (vs. 15-18), and asking God’s help in the process (vs. 19). The teaching here is quite different from how it is often understood out of context.

Study Helps: This kind of contextual setting doesn’t usually need tools, though good commentaries can sometimes help if the verse just isn’t making sense. Also remember your Bible’s marginal references –

sometimes they will point to a similar section of scripture where the same point is explained more clearly.

4. Cultural Context

Sometimes only knowledge of the cultures in which biblical stories are set can help us to understand exactly what a biblical narrative means. In Genesis 15: 9-21, for example, in the story of God sealing his covenant with Abram, God instructed Abram to take various animals and sacrifice them, dividing them into halves in such a way that someone could walk between the halves of the carcasses. Genesis then states: “When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking fire-pot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces. On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram ...” (Genesis. 15: 17-18a).

This strange event is understandable when we realize that in many ancient Near Eastern cultures, land ownership “contracts” were sealed by the participants dividing sacrificed animals or walking between the parts of the animals.

Without this cultural context the details of the story would be difficult to understand, but knowing the background helps us to see that God was simply utilizing the legal practices of the time in order to confirm his promises to Abram/Abraham.

In the New Testament, the story of the women who anointed Jesus’ feet and head (Matthew 26:6-13,

Mark 14:3-9, Luke 7:36-50, John 12:1-8) can be much better understood in cultural context.

When we understand that a “denarius” was the average wage earned by a laborer for a full long day of work, and that the perfume used by the women would have cost upwards of 300 denarii – almost a year’s wages (Mark 14:5), we begin to realize the sacrifice these women, who were not rich, were making in their gifts.

Usually cultural context does not affect our understanding of doctrine or principles of living, but it can frequently illuminate the biblical stories and make them more understandable and real to us.

Study Helps:

Carefully selected background books can help with understanding cultural context, but many are very detailed and it can be difficult to find the information needed.

This is an area in which the internet shines. Doing a search for “dividing animals in sacrifices,” “biblical sacrifices + ancient Near East” or just “Genesis 15: 17-18” may find information on the background for the example used here.

It is often worth doing a quick online search for background information (being careful to evaluate the quality of the site, of course) when cultural context is not clear. Keeping these four types of context in mind can answer a good many questions

about the scriptures and make them seem less puzzling.

They can also deepen our understanding of the scriptures and make them more meaningful to us.

Chapter 12

Context is King

Studying the Word in Context (Part II)

Context is king, as they say. But when it comes to studying the Bible, context is far and wide also. A verse is contextualized in a passage; a passage in a biblical book; a biblical book in a particular place and time; and each time and place is characterized by language and culture.

Yet the biblical writings are not limited to the ancient world. “All Scripture is breathed out by God and profitable . . . for training in righteousness” (2 Tim 3:16). The Bible is both ancient and eternal. It is contextualized to then and applicable now. When we neglect the context, we risk losing the true meaning of the original expression of God’s intent.

We re-contextualize Scripture each time we read it as we mature by the power of the Holy Spirit

.

How can we honor Scripture’s context while applying it today?

To answer this question, let’s look at a commonly cited statement from Jesus: “Give to the one who begs from you, and do not refuse the one who would borrow from you” (Matthew 5:42). How should we understand this verse today? Should I simply give to anyone who asks of me, or did Jesus

mean something else entirely? In four steps, we will analyze this verse and its surrounding context. The results will likely surprise you. Contextualize the verse within its passage. By looking at what comes before a verse and after it, we can identify the larger discourse and overall themes.

Matthew 5:42 is couched between Jesus' comments about two sayings his audience would have known well. "An eye for eye" is a "principle, often referred to as *lex -talionis* or the 'law of retaliation' (see Exodus 21–24)," and that it "contrasts with the unexpected generosity that a member of the kingdom of heaven should display."

Commentaries will explain that "You shall love your neighbor" is a quotation of Leviticus 19:18. But "hate your enemy" is not a direct Old Testament quotation; instead, it could be an allusion to a number of verses or "a colloquialism of the time."

By taking a closer look at these statements (before and after v. 42), we can see the passage's larger theme: Jesus is addressing how to treat someone who has wronged you, not what to do when someone asks you for money.

Step 1: Use a study Bible—especially its overview notes on a range of verses. Step 2: Contextualize the passage in the book and in its original context. A Bible dictionary is a great place to learn basic

information about a biblical book and its original context.

Step 2: Other good resources include study guides and commentaries written for a general audience. Matthew 5:38–48 is part of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt 5–7), which according to Lexham Bible Dictionary is the first of “five large blocks” of Jesus’ teachings in Matthew. With this context in mind, N. T. Wright in *Matthew for Everyone* categorizes Matthew 5:38–48 under the heading “Loving your enemies.” Wright explains that Jesus is contrasting his views with first-century Israelite teaching: Jesus offers a new sort of justice, a creative, healing, restorative justice. The old justice found in [parts of the Old Testament] was designed to prevent revenge running away with itself . . . [But Jesus] reflect[s] the astonishingly patient love of God himself.” Jesus’ disciples should reflect God’s self-sacrificial love; this is the intent of God’s law.

Application-based commentaries often emphasize the “big picture” of a biblical book, which helps with contextualizing a passage. Supplement this with a Bible dictionary to see multiple options for outlining a biblical book.

Step 3: Look at key words and phrases, based on the original language and culture. The tools and resources in Logos Bible Software offer great help for understanding key terms.

One resource in Logos is a set of handbooks created by the United Bible Society to provide guidance for cross-cultural Bible translators. These handbooks are filled with rich insights for personal study.

“Tunic” (or “coat”) and “cloak.”

The United Bible Society Handbook on Matthew states, “The outer garment (cloak) was both an article of clothing and a covering for the night. Israelite law did not permit it to be kept from its owner overnight. . . . The coat was a long, close-fitting garment worn next to the skin. . . .

Translators may prefer to say ‘your garment that is of little value’ and ‘your outer garment that is more valuable’” (149–50). Jesus is saying if anyone desires to wrong you, be generous in return. “Tax collectors.”

The UBS Handbook notes: “The Roman system for gathering taxes made for inequality and oppression, and that is one reason that in the Gospels tax collectors are quite often grouped together with sinners” (154–55). Society is often corrupt, so that’s not where the Christian finds his or her ethical code. “Gentiles.” As the UBS Handbook explains, using the translation “‘those who do not know God’ for gentiles has often been a useful model” (156). In the Bible, the term “gentiles” does not refer to an ethnic or geographic group of people. It essentially means everyone who does not know the God of Israel. “Perfect.” The UBS Handbook emphasizes that “Perfect in the Greek

has the meaning of having come to completion or wholeness; it can refer to maturity or to moral and ethical integrity” (156). Jesus’ disciples seek to live as God intended. That is the only way to have a complete life.

Translation guides and Bible commentaries are worth exploring, even if you’re not a pastor or scholar. They often include detailed notes on specific words and phrases, unpacking meaning related to the Bible’s original languages (Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic) and cultural context.

Logos Bible Software has resources for every level of study.

Step 4: Apply the passage to your life and community The purpose of Matthew 5:42 is bigger than what I do when someone asks me if I can spare some change. It’s about loving even my enemy—loving like God does. Is giving someone I don’t know a little money the best way to show God’s love? Probably not, since there are better ways to do that, such as engaging in real conversation and connecting someone with services that can empower them to find a job, overcome addiction, or obtain housing.

But the real question of Matthew 5:42 is: Do I love my enemies like Jesus loves me?

Do I seek to show them God’s love?

We, who pursue living an Upright life as Christ certainly did, must love our enemies! This is mandatory!

Chapter 13

How to Study the Scriptures

In this chapter, you are asked to read the brief introductions presented in both New and Old Testaments.

Old Testament

Genesis — Moses - 1446 BC

God creates the universe and fashions humans in His own image and places them in a perfect environment. The humans rebel against God and lose their paradise. The rebellion gets so bad that God wipes out humanity with a flood, but He graciously preserves Noah and his family. Later, God chooses and blesses the family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (or Israel) and promises them a land for their many descendants.

Through this family, God plans to bring a Savior to reconcile the sinful world to Himself.

Exodus — Moses - 1405 BC

The children of Israel, now living in Egypt, are forced into slavery. God prepares an Israelite named Moses to lead the people to freedom. The king is loath to let the slaves go, so God sends a series of plagues upon the Egyptians. Moses leads the Israelites through the Red Sea, which God

miraculously parts for them, and to Mt. Sinai. Camped at Sinai, the Israelites receive the Law of God, including the Ten Commandments. The Law is the basis of a covenant between God and people He has rescued, with promised blessings for obedience. The people promise to uphold the covenant. Leviticus — Moses - 1405 BC In the Law, God establishes a sacrificial system to atone for sins and a series of festivals for Israel to observe as days of worship. God gives Moses plans for a tabernacle, a tent where the sacrifices can be offered and God will meet with His people. God specifies that the rituals and ceremonies of the tabernacle are to be overseen by the family of Aaron, Moses' brother.

Numbers — Moses - 1405 BC

The Israelites arrive at the border of Canaan, the land God had earlier promised to Abraham. But the people following Moses refuse to enter the land, due to their lack of faith and their fear of Canaan's inhabitants. As a judgment, God consigns the Israelites to wandering in the wilderness for 40 years, until the unbelieving generation passes away and a new generation takes their place. God sustains His rebellious people with miraculous provisions throughout their time in the wilderness.

Deuteronomy — Moses - 1405 BC

The new generation of Israelites is now ready to take possession of the Promised Land. Moses gives a series of final speeches, in which he reiterates the

Law of God and promises that one day God will send another Prophet reminiscent of the power and mission of Moses. Moses dies in Moab.

Joshua — Joshua - 1380 BC

Joshua leads the children of Israel across the Jordan River (parted miraculously by God) and into Canaan. God overthrows the city of Jericho by knocking its walls down. Joshua leads the people in a successful campaign to conquer the whole of Canaan. With a few exceptions, the Israelites remain faithful to their promise to keep their covenant with God, and God blesses them with military victories. After the land is subdued, the Israelites divide Canaan into separate territories, giving each of the tribes of Israel a lasting inheritance.

Judges — Samuel - 1050 BC

Joshua dies, and, almost immediately, the people begin to turn away from the God who had blessed them. Rather than driving out all the land's inhabitants, they allow some of the Canaanites to survive, and the Israelites begin to worship the gods of the Canaanites. True to the terms of the covenant, God sends enemies to oppress His people. The suffering they endure causes them to repent, and God responds by sending leaders to rally the people and defeat the enemies, bringing peace to the land again. This cycle is repeated several times over a span of about 300 years.

Ruth — Samuel - 1050 BC

During the time of the judges, a famine strikes the land, and a man of Bethlehem takes his family out of Israel to live in Moab. There, he and his two sons die. His widow, Naomi, returns to Israel along with one of her daughters-in-law, a Moabite named Ruth. Back in Bethlehem, the two women face hardship, and Ruth gathers what food she can by gleaning in a barley field owned by a man named Boaz. Ruth is noticed by Boaz, and he gives her extra help. Since Boaz is related to Naomi's late husband, he has the legal opportunity to redeem the family property and raise up an heir in the name of the deceased. Ruth asks Boaz to do just that, and Boaz agrees. He marries Ruth and purchases the property that had belonged to Naomi. Boaz and Ruth become the great-grandparents of Israel's greatest king, David.

1 Samuel — Samuel - 970 BC

In answer to prayer, Samuel is born to a barren woman, who then dedicates her young son to the tabernacle. Samuel is raised by the judge and high priest, Eli. Early on, Samuel begins to receive messages from God and becomes known as a prophet. After Eli's death, Samuel becomes Israel's final judge. The people demand a king to make them more like other nations. Samuel advises against it, but the Lord directs Samuel to grant their request. Samuel anoints Saul as the first king. Saul starts out well, but he soon begins to act in

pride and ignore God's commands. God rejects Saul as king and instructs Samuel to anoint another person to take Saul's place: that person is David, chosen while still a youth. David becomes famous in Israel for slaying the Philistine warrior Goliath, and Saul grows jealous to the point of madness. The king begins to pursue David, whose life is in constant danger as he takes refuge in the wilderness. Men loyal to David gather to him. Samuel dies, and, later, Saul and his sons are killed in a battle with the Philistines.

2 Samuel — Nathan - 970 BC

David is crowned king by his tribesmen in Judah, and they make the city of Hebron the capital of Judah. After a brief civil war, all the tribes of Israel unite under the leadership of David, God's choice. The capital is moved to Jerusalem. God makes a promise to David that a son of his will rule on the throne forever. David seeks to follow God's will, and God blesses David with victories over foreign enemies. Sadly, David falls into the sin of adultery and tries to cover his sin by having the woman's husband killed. God pronounces judgment on David's house, and trouble begins. David's daughter is raped by her half-brother, who is then killed by Absalom, another of David's sons, in revenge. Absalom then plots to overthrow David and take the throne. He gains a following, and David and those loyal to him are forced to flee Jerusalem. Absalom is eventually killed in battle, and David

returns home in sorrow. Near the end of his life, David disobeys God and takes a census of the people, a sin for which God sends judgment on the nation.

1 Kings — Jeremiah- 580 BC

King David dies. His son Solomon takes the throne, but his brother Adonijah challenges him for it. After repeated attempts to usurp authority from his brother, Adonijah is executed. King Solomon is blessed by God with great wisdom, riches, and honor.

He oversees the building of the temple in Jerusalem and dedicates it to the Lord in a grand ceremony. Later in life, Solomon forsakes the path of righteousness and serves other gods. After Solomon's death, his son Rehoboam takes the throne, but his foolish choices lead to a civil war, and the nation is fractured in two. Rehoboam remains king of the southern kingdom, and a man named Jeroboam is crowned king of the ten tribes to the north. Both kings practice idolatry. Through the years, David's dynasty in the southern kingdom occasionally produces a godly king; most of the kings are wicked, however. The northern kingdom is led by an unbroken series of wicked rulers, including the idolatrous Ahab and his wife Jezebel, during whose reign God sends a drought to punish Israel, along with a mighty prophet, Elijah, to point the people back to God.

2 Kings — Jeremiah - 580 BC

Elijah is translated to heaven, and Elisha takes his place as God's prophet in Israel. Jehu becomes Israel's king and wipes out the wicked family line of Ahab. In Judah, Ahab's daughter becomes queen and attempts to kill all of David's heirs, but she fails. Wicked kings rule in both nations, with the exception, in Judah, of a few reformers such as Hezekiah and Josiah. Israel's persistent idolatry finally exhausts God's patience, and He brings the Assyrians against them to conquer the people of Israel. Later, God brings the Babylonians against Judah as a judgment, and Jerusalem is destroyed.

1 Chronicles — Ezra - 440 BC

A genealogy traces God's people from Adam to the kingdom years, with a focus on David's family. The rest of the book covers much of the same material as 1 and 2 Samuel, with an emphasis on the life of David.

2 Chronicles — Ezra - 580 BC

This book covers much the same material as 1 and 2 Kings, with an emphasis on David's dynasty in Judah. The book begins with the construction of the temple under Solomon, and it ends with the destruction of the temple by the Babylonians, with a proclamation, in the last few verses, that the temple would be rebuilt.

Ezra — Ezra - 440 BC

After 70 years of captivity in a foreign land, the people of Judah are allowed to return to their homeland to rebuild. A descendant of David named Zerubbabel, together with some priests, begins to rebuild the temple. Political opposition to the rebuilding forces a halt in construction for about 15 years. But then the work continues, encouraged by two prophets, Haggai and Zechariah. About 57 years after the temple is completed, Ezra the scribe arrives in Jerusalem, bringing with him about 2,000 people, including priests and Levites to serve in the temple. Ezra finds that the people living in Judah have lapsed into sin, and he calls the people to repentance and a return to the law of God.

Nehemiah — Nehemiah- 420 BC

About 14 years after Ezra's arrival in Jerusalem, Nehemiah, the king's cupbearer in Persia, learns that the walls of Jerusalem are in a state of disrepair. Nehemiah travels to Jerusalem and oversees the construction of the city walls. He is opposed by enemies of the Jews, who try to thwart the work with various tactics, but the wall is finished with God's blessings in time to observe the Feast of Tabernacles. Ezra reads the book of the law publicly, and the people of Judah rededicate themselves to following it. The book of Nehemiah

begins with sadness and ends with singing and celebration.

Esther — Mordecai - 440 BC

Some exiled Jews have opted not to return to Jerusalem and have stayed in Persia instead. Xerxes, the king of Persia, chooses as his new queen a young woman named Esther. Esther is a Jewess, but she keeps her ethnicity secret at the behest of her cousin Mordecai, who has raised her. A high-ranking official in the kingdom, a man named Haman, plots a genocide against all the Jews in the kingdom, and he receives the king's permission to carry out his plan —neither he nor the king knowing that the queen is Jewish. Through a series of divinely directed, perfectly timed events, Haman is killed, Mordecai is honored, and the Jews are spared, with Queen Esther being instrumental in it all.

Job — Elihu - 2000 BC

A righteous man named Job suffers a series of terrible tragedies that take away his wealth, his family, and his health. Even after losing everything, Job does not curse God. Three friends come to commiserate with Job, but they eventually speak their minds about the situation, advancing the notion that God is punishing Job for some secret sin. Job denies any sinfulness on his part, yet in his pain he cries out to God for answers—he trusts God, but he also wants God to explain Himself. In

the end, God shows up and overwhelms Job with His majesty, wisdom, and power. God restores Job's fortune, health, and family, but the answer to why Job had suffered God never answers.

Psalms — David + 6 others - 1450-430 BC

This collection of songs includes praise to the Lord, cries of the needy, worshipful adoration, laments, thanksgiving, prophecy, and the full spectrum of human emotion. Some of the songs were written for specific occasions, such as traveling to the temple or crowning a new king. Proverbs — Solomon - 935 BC A collection of moral teachings and general observances about life, this book is directed to those in search of wisdom. Subjects include love, sex, marriage, money, work, children, anger, strife, thoughts, and words.

Ecclesiastes — Solomon - 935 BC

A wise older man who calls himself the Preacher philosophizes about life, looking back over what he has learned from his experiences. The Preacher, having lived apart from God, recounts the futility of various dead-end paths. Nothing in this world satisfies: riches, pleasure, knowledge, or work. Without God in the equation, all is vanity.

Song of Solomon — Solomon - 965 BC

A king and a humble maiden express love and devotion to each other through their courtship, leading to a joyous and affirming consummation of the marriage on the wedding night. The song

continues to depict some of the difficulties faced by the bridegroom and his bride in their married life, always coming back to the yearning the lovers have for each other and the undying strength of love.

Isaiah — Isaiah - 965 BC

Isaiah is called as a prophet in Judah and brings God's messages to several kings. God proclaims judgment against Judah for their religious hypocrisy. The prophet then delivers messages of warning to other nations, including Assyria, Babylon, Moab, Syria, and Ethiopia. For all of God's anger against His people in Judah, He miraculously saves Jerusalem from an attack by the Assyrians. Isaiah predicts the fall of Judah at the hands of Babylon, but he also promises a restoration to their land. Isaiah looks even farther ahead to the promised Messiah, who will be born of a virgin, be rejected by His people, and be killed in the process of bearing their iniquities—yet the Messiah, God's righteous Servant, will also rule the world from Jerusalem in a kingdom of peace and prosperity.

Jeremiah — Jeremiah - 585 BC

Jeremiah is living during the time of the Babylonian invasion of Judah, prophesies Babylon's victory over Judah, a message that brings him much grief from the proud kings and false prophets in Jerusalem. Continually calling God's people to repent, Jeremiah is regularly ignored and even persecuted. Through Jeremiah, God promises

that He will one day establish a new covenant with Israel. The prophet lives to see the fall of Jerusalem and predicts that the people's captivity in Babylon will last 70 years.

Lamentations — Jeremiah - 585 BC

In a long acrostic poem, Jeremiah weeps over the destruction of the land of Judah. The reproach and shame of God's people is overwhelming, and all seems lost. Yet God is just in His discipline, and He is merciful in not destroying the rebellious nation completely; God's people will yet see God's compassion.

Ezekiel — Ezekiel - 573 BC

This is a book of prophecies written in Babylon by Ezekiel, a priest-turned-prophet. Ezekiel deals with the cause of God's judgment against Judah, which is idolatry and the dishonor Judah had brought upon God's name. Ezekiel also writes of judgment against other nations, such as Edom, Ammon, Egypt, and Philistia, and against the city of Tyre. Ezekiel then promises a miraculous restoration of God's people to their land, the reconstruction of the temple, and God's rule over all the nations of the earth.

Daniel — Daniel - 530 BC

As a young man, Daniel is taken captive to Babylon, but he and three friends remain steadfast to the Lord's commands, and God blesses them with honor and high rank in the Babylonian Empire. They have enemies, though: Daniel's three friends

are thrown into a fiery furnace, and Daniel into a den of lions, but God preserves their lives in each case and bestows even more honor upon them. Daniel survives the overthrow of Babylon and continues prophesying into the time of the Persian Empire. Daniel's prophecies are far-reaching, accurately predicting the rise and fall of many nations and the coming rule of God's chosen king, the Messiah. Hosea — Hosea - 755 BC Hosea's mission is to call Israel to repentance, as God is poised to judge them for their corruption and idolatry. At God's command, Hosea marries a wife who is unfaithful to him, and then he must redeem her from prostitution. This sordid experience is an illustration of Israel's spiritual adultery and the fact that a loving God is still pursuing them to redeem them and restore them to their proper place.

Notice:

Chapter 2: 19-20, where God the Father promises Hosea He will be betrothed to Israel again forever. Then, notice Revelation 7:1-8 to see His bride being prepared in John's vision of the final generation.

Joel — Joel - 800 BC

Joel ministers in Judah during a time of drought and a locust plague, events that are signs of God's judgment on the nation. Joel uses the current judgment to point the people to the future, worldwide judgment of the Day of the Lord, and he calls on everyone to repent. Joel's final promise is

that the Lord will dwell with His people in Zion and bring great blessing to the restored land.

Amos — Amos - 760 BC

Begins with pronouncing judgment against Damascus, Tyre, Edom, and Gaza, among other places. The prophet travels north from Judah to Israel to warn that nation of God's judgment. He lists their sins and extends God's invitation to repent and be forgiven. After the destruction of Israel, God promises, there will be a time of restoration.

Obadiah — Obadiah - 845 BC

From their seemingly secure, rock-bound homes, the Edomites had rejoiced at Judah's fall, but Obadiah brings God's sobering message: Edom, too, will be conquered, and that without remedy. God's people will be the ultimate victors.

Jonah — Jonah - 780 BC

Jonah a prophet in Israel, is instructed by God to go to the Assyrian capital of Nineveh to prophesy against it. Jonah disobeys, attempting to travel away from Nineveh, but God intercepts him at sea. Jonah is thrown overboard and swallowed by a great fish. In the belly of the fish, Jonah repents, and the fish spits him back on dry ground. When Jonah prophesies in Nineveh, the Assyrians humble themselves before God and repent, and God does not bring judgment upon them. Jonah is angry that

God has forgiven the people he hates, and God reasons with his obstinate prophet.

Micah — Micah - 725 BC

In a series of three messages, Micah calls on both Judah and Israel to hear the word of God. He prophesies of coming judgment on both kingdoms and foresees the blessed kingdom of God, ruled by a king who would be born in Bethlehem. Micah ends his book with a promise that God's anger will turn and that God's people will be restored.

Nahum — Nahum - 655 BC

prophecy concerns the destruction of Nineveh. Nahum gives the reasons for it and promises God's judgment on this nation that had once terrorized the rest of the world. Unlike God's judgment against Israel, the judgment against Nineveh will have no respite, and the destruction will not be followed by restoration.

Habakkuk — Habakkuk - 620 BC

The prophet questions God about something he cannot understand: namely, how God can use the wicked Babylonians to punish God's own people, Judah. The Lord answers by reminding Habakkuk of His sovereignty and faithfulness and that, in this world, the just will live by faith.

Zephaniah — Zephaniah - 625 BC

warns of the coming Day of the Lord, a prophecy fulfilled, in part, by the invasion of Babylon and, more remotely, at the end of time. Other nations

besides Judah are also warned of coming judgment, including Philistia, Moab, Cush, and Assyria. Jerusalem is called to repent, and the book ends with a promise from God to restore His people to favor and glory.

Haggai — Haggai - 520 BC

Haggai lives and preaches during the time of Zerubbabel and Zechariah.

The reconstruction of the temple had begun, but opposition from the Jews' enemies has halted the work for about 15 years. Haggai preaches a series of four sermons to spur the people back to work so that the temple can be completed.

Zechariah — Zechariah - 520 BC

A contemporary of Haggai and Zerubbabel, Zechariah encourages the people of Jerusalem to finish the reconstruction of the temple, a work that has languished for about 15 years. Eight visions relate God's continuing plan for His people.

Judgment on Israel's enemies is promised, along with God's blessings on His chosen people. Several messianic prophecies are included, predicting the Messiah's coming, His suffering, and His eventual conquering glory.

Malachi — Malachi - 470 BC

Ministering to post-exilic Israel, Malachi calls God's people to repentance. The prophet condemns the sins of divorce, bringing impure sacrifices, withholding tithes, and profaning God's name. The

book, and the Old Testament, ends with a description of the Day of the Lord and the promise that Elijah will come before that dreadful day.

New Testament

Matthew — Matthew - 50 AD

The ministry of Jesus Christ is presented from the point of view that Jesus is the Son of David and thus the rightful king to rule from Israel's throne. Jesus offers the kingdom to His people, but Israel rejects Him as their king and crucifies Him. Jesus rises again and sends His disciples into all the world to proclaim His teaching. Pay particular attention to chapter 20:23b, where Jesus states, "but to sit at my right or left is [not for me to grant]. [These places belong to those] for whom they have been prepared by my Father." Now read Revelation 14:1-5, paying particular attention to vs 4. Verse 4 fulfills Matthew 20:23b.

Mark — Mark - 52 BC

The ministry of Jesus Christ is presented from the point of view that Jesus is the Righteous Servant of God. Jesus obeys the Father's will and accomplishes all He had been sent to do, including dying for sinners and rising again from the dead.

Luke — Luke - 55 AD

The ministry of Jesus Christ is presented from the point of view that Jesus is the Son of Man who came to save the whole world. Jesus shows the love

of God to all classes of people, regardless of race or gender. He is unjustly betrayed, arrested, and murdered, but He rises again.

John — John - 60 AD

The ministry of Jesus Christ is presented from the point of view that Jesus is the Son of God. Jesus speaks at length of His nature and work and the necessity of faith, and He proves that He is the Son of God through a series of public miracles. He is crucified and rises again.

Acts — Luke - 62 AD

This sequel to the life of Christ follows the ministry of the apostles following Jesus' ascension. The Holy Spirit arrives to fill and empower Jesus' followers, who begin to preach the gospel in the midst of mounting persecution. Paul, a former enemy of the Christians, is converted and called by Christ as an apostle. The church begins in Jerusalem, expands to Samaria, and spreads to the Roman world.

Romans — Paul - 57 AD

This theological treatise, written by Paul on one of his missionary journeys, examines the righteousness of God and how God can declare guilty sinners to be righteous based on the sacrifice of Jesus Christ. Having been justified by faith, believers live in holiness before the world.

1 Corinthians — Paul - 55 AD

The church in Corinth is riddled with problems, and the apostle Paul writes to give them God's

instructions on how to deal with various issues, including sin and division in the church, marriage, idolatry, spiritual gifts, the future resurrection, and the conduct of public worship.

2 Corinthians — Paul 56 AD The problems in the church in Corinth have for the most part been worked through, and Paul writes this letter to encourage them, to explain the love gift he is collecting for Judean Christians, and to defend his apostleship against critics who are speaking out against him.

Galatians — Paul - 52 BC

False teachers have infiltrated the churches in Galatia, falsely suggesting that works of the law (specifically circumcision) must be added to faith in Christ in order for salvation to be real. In no uncertain terms, Paul condemns the mixture of law and grace, showing that salvation and sanctification are all of grace. Christ's salvation has set us free. We rely on the Spirit's work, not our own.

Ephesians — 61 BC

Salvation comes by grace through faith in Christ, and not by our own works. The life Jesus gives, to Jew and Gentile alike, results in a new heart and a new walk in this world. The church is the Body of Christ, and marriage is a picture of Christ and the church. God has provided spiritual armor to wage spiritual battle.

Philippians — Paul - 61 BC

Writing this letter from a Roman prison, Paul thanks the church in Philippi for the love gift they had sent him. The gospel of Christ is advancing in the world, despite hardship, and Christians can rejoice in that. We are urged to humble ourselves as Christ did, be unified, and press toward the goal of pleasing the Lord in all things.

Colossians — Paul - 61 BC

Despite what false teachers might claim, Jesus Christ is the Savior, Lord, and Creator of all things. In Him, all believers are made alive and complete; they need not submit themselves to manmade regulations or the mandates of the Old Testament law. The new life we have in Christ will affect our relationships with spouses, parents, children, masters, and servants.

1 Thessalonians — Paul - 50 AD

Paul reviews the start of the church in Thessalonica, and he commends them for their steadfast faith. Believers are encouraged to live pure lives and to maintain the hope that Jesus will return. When Christ comes again, He will resurrect believers who have died and will rapture those still living to be with Him forever. The Day of the Lord is coming, which will result in the judgment of this world.

2 Thessalonians — Paul - 52 AD

The church of Thessalonica is enduring persecution, and some believers wonder if the Day of the Lord had already arrived. Paul assures them that what they are experiencing is not God's judgment. Before that terrible day comes, there must be a worldwide rebellion, a removal of the Restrainer, and the rise to power of the man of lawlessness. But God will protect His children. Until the time that Christ returns, keep doing what is right.

1 Timothy — Timothy - 62 AD

Timothy, the pastor of the church in Ephesus, is the recipient of this letter from Paul. A pastor must be qualified spiritually, be on guard against false doctrine, pray, care for those in the church, train other leaders, and above all faithfully preach the truth.

2 Timothy — Paul - 64 AD

In this very personal letter at the end of his life, Paul encourages Timothy to hold fast to the faith, focus on what is truly important, persevere in dangerous times, and preach the Word of God.

Titus — Titus - 62 AD

Titus, an overseer of churches on the island of Crete, has the job of appointing elders in the churches there, making sure the men are qualified spiritually. He must beware of false teachers, avoid

distractions, model the Christian life, and enjoin all believers to practice good works.

Philemon — Paul - 62 AD

Paul, In this short letter to Philemon, a believer in Colossae, the apostle Paul urges him to show the love of Christ and be reconciled to a runaway, thieving slave. Under Roman law, the slave could face severe punishment, but Paul urges grace for the sake of Christ. Philemon should welcome his slave back into the household, not as a slave now but as a beloved brother in Christ.

Hebrews — believed to be Paul - 55 AD

There are Jewish members of the church who are tempted to return to the Jewish law. The author of this epistle urges them not to look back but to move on to full spiritual maturity, by faith. Jesus Christ is better than angels and better than Moses, and He has provided a better sacrifice, a better priesthood, and a better covenant than anything in the Old Testament. Having left Egypt, we must enter the Promised Land, not continue to wander aimlessly in the wilderness.

James — James - 48 AD

In this very practical book, James shows what faith lived out looks like. True, saving faith will affect our prayer life, our words, our response to trials, and our treatment of others.

1 Peter — Peter - 62 AD

The apostle Peter writes to believers under persecution in Asia Minor, addressing them as “God’s elect, exiles scattered” (1 Peter 1:1). He reminds them of the grace of God, assures them of their heavenly home, teaches them to exhibit holiness, instructs them on marital relations, and encourages them as they face suffering.

2 Peter — Peter - 64 AD

With his death impending, Peter writes the churches, exhorting them to follow the Word of God, identify and avoid false teachers, and live in holiness as they await the second coming of Christ.

1 John — John - 85 AD

God is light, love, and truth. Those who truly belong to Christ will seek fellowship with His redeemed; walk in the light, not in darkness; confess sin; obey God’s Word; love God; experience a decreasing pattern of sin in their lives; demonstrate love for other Christians; and experience victory in their Christian walk.

2 John — John - 85 AD

The Christian life is a balance of truth and love. We cannot forsake truth in the name of love; neither can we cease loving because of a misdirected notion of upholding the truth.

3 John — John - 85 AD

Two men are contrasted: Gaius, who shows his commitment to truth and love through hospitality;

and Diotrephes, who shows his malice and pride through a lack of hospitality.

Jude — Jude - 65 AD

The message of the gospel will not change. But there are men who attempt to pervert the message and teach false doctrines to benefit themselves and lead people astray. These men must be resisted in the truth.

Revelation — John - 95 AD

Remember that this is a vision given to John of future events. Jesus is the Lord of the church, and He knows the condition of each local body of believers. The end times will be marked by an increase in wickedness, the rise of the Antichrist's one- world government, and the fury of Satan against God's people on earth. God pours out His wrath on a rebellious and unrepentant world in a series of judgments that steadily increase in severity. Finally, the Lamb of God returns to earth with the armies of heaven, defeating the forces of evil arrayed against Him and setting up His kingdom of peace. Satan, the Antichrist, and the wicked of every age are thrown into the lake of fire, while the followers of Christ inherit a new heaven and new earth.

PART 4

Preparation for Upright Living

Chapter 14

RAPTURE DOCTRINE - COMPLETE HISTORY

What did the first century church fathers believe about the Rapture?

Were they pre-tribulation or post-tribulation?

What did the disciples of the Apostles of Jesus Christ teach about the Rapture?

This chapter will present the writings of the early church fathers – from those who learned under the disciples of Jesus Christ, to the church leaders of the second and third centuries, on the Rapture – the supernatural removal of all Bible-believing Christians from Earth to enter Heaven.

While the writings of the first, second and third century Christian church fathers are not Scripture and not on par with the Bible in any way, it is informative to see how the early church leaders interpreted Scripture in addition to what they learned directly from those closest to The Lord Jesus Christ. And definitively, the few writings still in existence on the end times, put the timing of the Rapture before the Great Tribulation.

This chapter will also serve to dispel some of the common misconceptions, and false teachings about Rapture theology as, for example, being something

invented in the 19th century by a man named John Darby. “John Darby Invented The Pre-Tribulation Rapture”

Did he?

Answer: No!

Ancient writings on the Rapture | Pre-tribulation rapture defended John Darby has been incorrectly, and falsely credited with “inventing” the Rapture.

All over the internet there are many articles and videos that claim the Rapture doctrine was “invented” in 1830 by a man named John Darby. (Read Proverbs 25:2 to see why God allows this,)

The following is an excerpt that summarizes this false theory:

“The Rapture doctrine, which was the invention of the Plymouth Brethren led by John Nelson Darby (1800-1882), has today been adopted by most Baptist, Pentecostals, Assemblies of God, and a variety of other fundamentalist sects.

The idea that Jesus Christ will return for His true Church just before the beginning of the Great Tribulation in a secret gathering or “catching away” was an important part of Darby’s teaching. The movement in which this teaching **began** originated in small groups in England and Ireland about 1828 and by 1831 was part of the official teaching of the Plymouth Brethren.

By 1860, the “John Darby - Creator of the Rapture theory - “rapture” - had made its way to the United States.

Today, prophecy pundits and “end-time” revivalists preach the John Darby ‘Rapture’ Creator with boldness, as if it were established dogma from the time of Christ until the present.

The truth is that the first historical reference to the Rapture doctrine comes from the Plymouth Brethren.

Not only is the Rapture not found in the teachings of the Church, but even “end-time” heretics throughout the centuries never dreamed of proposing such a novel idea. For example, the 4th century Montanists, who preached both pre-millennialism and that they knew when Christ would return, never ventured so far as to create another 2nd coming of the Lord in a secret rapture.

In all the writings of the Scriptures, the Early Fathers, and the Ecumenical Councils, there is no mention of two 2nd comings of Christ.” (source) [Emphasis added].

In short, the objection is that rather than being a real part of the Bible, which it is, the entire idea of a pre-Tribulational Rapture, was just an invention by an innocent guy named John Darby (who was simply correctly interpreting the Bible) and “not even heretics” ever used it. This is very strong language, but is it true? The Darby Creation is false.

- TRUTH FROM 130 AD & AFTER -

Were there no ancient Christian writings about the church being Raptured before Great Tribulation?

An examination of early church writings shows that this charge is false and there were some church fathers who indeed wrote about the Rapture.

Irenaeus Irenaeus (130 A.D. – 202 AD) was a bishop of the church in Lyons, France. *He was an eyewitness to the Apostle John (who wrote the Book of Revelation) and a disciple of Polycarp, the first of the Apostle John's disciples.*

Irenaeus is most known for his five-volume treatise,

‘Against Heresies’ in which he exposed the false religions and cults of his day along with advice for how to share the Gospel with those were a part of them. In his writings on Bible prophecy, he acknowledged the phrase “a time, times and dividing of times” in Daniel 7 to signify the 3 ½ year reign of the Antichrist as ruler of the world before the Second Coming of Christ. He also believed in a literal Millennial reign of Christ on earth following the Second Coming and the resurrection of the just.

On the subject of the Rapture, in ‘Against Heresies 5.29’, he wrote: “Those nations however, who did not of themselves raise up their eyes unto heaven, nor returned thanks to their Maker, nor wished to behold the light of truth, but who were like blind

mice concealed in the depths of ignorance, the word justly reckons “as waste water from a sink, and as the turning-weight of a balance — in fact, as nothing;”(1) so far useful and serviceable to the just, as stubble conduces towards the growth of the wheat, and its straw, by means of combustion, serves for working gold. And therefore, when in the end, the Bride of Christ, those taken out of the Church, shall be suddenly caught up from this, it is said, “There shall be tribulation such as has not been since the beginning, neither shall be.”(2) For this is the last contest of the righteous, in which, when they overcome they are crowned with incorruption.”

Irenaeus, (130 AD) - Further

In this passage describes the bride leaving the sinful world just before unprecedented disasters.

Note his use of the term “caught up” which is Rapture terminology as that is the meaning of *harpazo*, the term for “caught up” in the King James Bible describing the Rapture in 1 Thessalonians 4.

He then quotes Matthew 24:21 where The Lord Jesus Christ says: “For then shall be great tribulation, such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time, no, nor ever shall be.”

And it is during this time that those who convert to Christianity during the final years will receive the

incorruptible crown mentioned by the Apostle Paul in 1 Corinthians 9:25.

In Irenaeus' belief, the Rapture took place prior to the end times Great Tribulation.

Cyprian Cyprian (200 AD – 258 AD) –

Cyprian was Bishop of the church in Carthage. During his short stint as leader of the church, he guided the flock through intense persecution at the hands of the Roman Empire. In 258 AD, after spending seven months of confinement to his home by order of Roman authorities, he was beheaded for his faith.

Several of his works still exist today. In ‘Treatises of Cyprian’, he wrote in describing the end times Great Tribulation: “We who see that terrible things have begun, and know that still more terrible things are imminent, may regard it as the greatest advantage to depart from it as quickly as possible.

Do you not give God thanks, do you not congratulate yourself, that by an early departure you are taken away, and delivered from the shipwrecks and disasters that are imminent?

Let us greet the day which assigns each of us to his own home, which snatches us hence, and sets us free from the snares of the world and restores us to paradise and the kingdom.”

Again we see use of language commonly found in reference to the Rapture as Cyprian describes the judgments of the end times as “imminent.” And he makes his belief on the timing of the Rapture when he wrote that Christians who are ready will have an “early departure” and be “delivered” from the

devastating global judgments that come during the Day of The Lord.

In line with the Apostle Paul who wrote that “God has not appointed us to wrath, but salvation..”

Cyprian expressed joy and encourages the believing reader to rejoice that the Bride will be “taken away” before the disastrous Great Tribulation. Just as The Lord Jesus Christ in Matthew 24 used the same language of one “taken away” and the other “left.”

Additionally Cyprian references the mansions which The Lord Jesus Christ promises to come back and take His believers to in John 14. “Let not your heart be troubled: ye believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.” – John 14:1-3.

As Beginning and End detailed in our article “The Red Moon Rapture – The Biblical Timing of The Rapture”, in both the Matthew 24 passages (“one taken, the other left”) and in John 14 (“..receive you unto myself..”) the Greek word *paralambanō* is used for taken and receive. The meaning of that word is “join to one’s self” indicating that Jesus is coming to fully unify with His church – which takes place at the Rapture.

Clearly Cyprian believed and taught that the Rapture takes place before the Great Tribulation. Ephraim The Syrian Ephraim (306 AD – 373 AD) Ephraim was made a deacon in the church in Syria in 338 and later became the bishop of Nisibis. Although he was made a “saint” in the Roman Catholic Church, he was not involved in Catholicism and did not even live in the Roman Empire until the final years of his life. The book Pseudo Ephraim was one of his still existing works. It was called “Pseudo” because of later dispute over authorship.

However the book’s one reference to the rapture is very compelling: In his work, On The Last Times 2, he wrote: “We ought to understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, what is imminent or overhanging. Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated), and there is not other which remains, except the advent of the wicked one in the completion of the Roman kingdom.

Why therefore are we occupied with worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages? Why therefore do we not reject every care of worldly business, and why is our mind held fixed

on the lusts of the world or on the anxieties of the ages?

Why therefore do we not reject every care of earthly actions and prepare ourselves for the meeting of the Lord Christ, so that he may draw us from the confusion, which overwhelms all the world?

Believe you me, dearest brother, because the coming (advent) of the Lord is nigh, believe you me, because the end of the world is at hand, believe me, because it is the very last time.

Or do you not believe unless you see with your eyes?

See to it that this sentence be not fulfilled among you of the prophet who declares: "Woe to those who desire to see the day of the Lord!"

For the Bride of Christ, the "first fruits offering to God, and to the Lamb" (Rev. 14:4), the elect of God, are gathered prior to the tribulation that is to come, and are taken to the Lord, lest they see the confusion that is to overwhelm the world because of our sins. And so, brothers most dear to me, it is the eleventh hour, and the end of the world comes to the harvest, and angels, armed and prepared, hold sickles in their hands, awaiting the empire of the Lord. And we think that the earth exists with blind infidelity, arriving at its downfall early.

Commotions are brought forth, wars of diverse peoples and battles and incursions of the

barbarians threaten, and our regions shall be desolated, and we neither become very much afraid of the report nor of the appearance, in order that we may at least do penance; because they hurl fear at us, and we do not wish to be changed, although we at least stand in need of penance for our actions!”

With a sense of great urgency and strong warning, Ephraim writes that the end times are upon this world and could start at any moment.

How much greater should be our warning in our final generation. We must wake up to who we were created to be: “formed in the image and likeness of God” to become like Him.

This text very clearly states the Bride, the elect of God, born again believers in The Lord Jesus Christ, will be “taken to the Lord” before the Great Tribulation. Ephraim also identifies the Old Testament “Day of The Lord” and the end times Great tribulation as the same event (in line with the teachings of the Beginning and End Rapture Series). Ephraim quotes Amos 5:18 which says: “Woe unto you that desire the day of the LORD! to what end is it for you? the day of the LORD is darkness, and not light.”

The point he makes is that a Christian should know the Day of The Lord is coming. In the first part of the passage Ephraim notes that: “We ought to

understand thoroughly therefore, my brothers, what is imminent or overhanging.

Already there have been hunger and plagues, violent movements of nations and signs, which have been predicted by the Lord, they have already been fulfilled (consummated)”

And not only that but that true Christians will be taken away before it starts. Here he is describing the first 3 of the first 4 seals of Revelation 6 – wars, famines and plagues.

These are the same end times signs Jesus Christ describes in Matthew 24: And as he sat upon the mount of Olives, the disciples came unto him privately, saying,

Tell us, when shall these things be? and what shall be the sign of thy coming, and of the end of the world? And Jesus answered and said unto them, Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. And ye shall hear of wars and rumors of wars: see that ye be not troubled: for all these things must come to pass, but the end is not yet. For nation shall rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom: and there shall be famines, and pestilences, and earthquakes, in divers places. All these are the beginning of sorrows. – Matthew 24:3-8. Jesus describes these events as “the beginning of sorrows.” He also says

that when these things come to pass “the end is not yet.”

Ephraim’s writing agrees with this interpretation as he says those same events have been “fulfilled (consummated)” in his day, but it was still not the actual Great Tribulation. This also falls in line with Beginning and End’s Rapture series as explained in our article Who Are The Four Horsemen Of The Apocalypse? (The first four seals of Revelation 6 were opened at the time Jesus Christ ascended to Heaven. And the rapture itself does not occur until the opening of the 6th Seal.)

Ephraim in very strong language warns the reader not to be consumed with the cares of the world because the world in its current form, is coming to an end. As the Second Advent or Coming of The Lord Jesus Christ grows near, believers are to look to Heaven and set their hearts on pleasing God. It is clear that Ephraim distinguishes the Second Coming of Christ from the rapture, placing the Rapture before the Great Tribulation to come.

The Early Church Believed In The Rapture

Who invented the Rapture idea? | What did Church fathers say about the Rapture? |

Again, John Darby did NOT invent the rapture. The ancient writings are clear – the belief in the Pre-Tribulation Rapture has existed since the days of the Apostles.

Although there are not a great number of writings on the end times from the early centuries of the church, there is no question that there was a belief in the Rapture among the church fathers and they taught it with strong language and scriptural support.

In terms of the timing of the Rapture, the early church fathers placed it before the end times Day of The Lord/Great Tribulation.

But the writings of church fathers can serve as useful commentaries (just as we use Bible commentaries today in our studies), and certainly prove that the Rapture doctrine existed well before John Darby, and has been a part of Christian belief since the earliest days of Christianity.

Chapter 15

Evidence of Our Calling

Evidence of our calling. How do we know if we are a member of the Bride?

ACCEPTANCE BY THE WORLD & CHURCH

If the world, the Church, and your own family hates you, then you are walking the very narrow path.

The Hatred of the world John 15:18-19 “If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.”

Have you noticed how the world treats you?

How about the Church, out of which you came?

Here is a common factor noticed by the early Saints of the 16th, 17th, & 18th century Saints.

Not only were they rejected by the world, but even people they knew in the Church rejected them. Was this not also true of Christ?

You may have noticed their discomfort when you are present, even as the Pharisees were with Christ. In spite of your best efforts for friendship, it seems to elude you. If you don't make contact, you rarely, if ever, hear from them.

This is the unspoken difficulty noticed by those who have decided to answer the call of Revelation

19:7, "... the marriage of the Lamb has come, and his Bride has made herself ready;" *As we come to understand our calling, learning and practicing the requirements to make ourselves ready, chief among them is to "come out from among them."* (2 Cor. 6:17)

- No longer can we compromise with the world.
- No longer can we participate in gossip, laugh at off color jokes, attend events that compromise our testimony, experience joy in sin.
- The World notices, and so do those compromised in the Church, which sadly, includes most, including (often) those in leadership, and members of our own family.
- How about you? Have you noticed? Fear not! This is one of many elements of the evidence indicating who you are in Christ, and of your destiny to be married to Christ forever!

Chapter 16

THE 'BRIDEGROOM' COMES FOR HIS BRIDE

The Bride of Christ, or the Lamb's wife, is a term used in reference to a group of related verses in the Bible, in the Gospels, Revelation, the Epistles and related verses in the Old Testament. Sometimes, the bride is implied by calling Jesus a "BRIDEGROOM". For over 1500 years, the Church was identified as the bride betrothed to Christ. However, there are instances of the interpretation of the usage varying from church to church. Most believe that it always refers to the church. We now know it is not the Church as a whole, due to their failure to prepare (Rev. 19:7).

Christ as a BRIDEGROOM in the Gospel of John.

John the Baptist speaks of Jesus Christ as the bridegroom and mentions the bride. He that hath the bride is the bridegroom: but the friend of the bridegroom, which stands and hears him, rejoices greatly because of the bridegroom's voice: thus my joy therefore is fulfilled.[John 3:29] That is the only place in the Gospels that the bride is mentioned, but because a bridegroom must have a bride, all other mentions of the bridegroom imply the bride.

In the Gospels, when Jesus is asked why his disciples do not fast, but the followers of John and the Pharisees do, Jesus answers: And Jesus said

unto them, Can the friends of the bridegroom fast, as long as the bridegroom is with them? but the days will come, when the bridegroom shall be taken from them, and then shall they fast.[Mark 2:19] In Matthew 9:15, Mark 2:19 and Luke 5:34, the Apostles are referred to as the friends, guests, or children depending on the translation, of the Bridegroom commonly accepted to be Jesus Christ. The Bridegroom is also mentioned in the Parable of the Ten Virgins.[Mt 25:1-13] Then the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom.

Mentions of the Bride of Christ's Appearance

The Book of Revelation repeatedly mentions the appearance of the Bride. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.

And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb's wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God. [Revelation 21:2,9-10]

In the above passages, John, the author of the Book of Revelation, speaks of seeing the bride revealed and refers to her as the New Jerusalem, first

mentioned in Revelation 3:12. And the Spirit and the bride say, "Come." And let him that heareth say, "Come." And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely. [Revelation 22:17] Note - The Greek word for bride is νύμφη (nymfi) as in Revelation 21:2. This word, νύμφη (nymfi), is more specific than that used in chapter 19. Revelation 19:7 which has γυνή (gune) means "wife" or "woman".

The context of Revelation 19:7, is marriage so this should inform the reader why numerous Bible translations are consistent with the Greek in translating γυνή as "bride".

She (remember that in eternity there are no male or female, Jew or Gentile. We are all one in Christ."Galatians 3:28) is simply a "woman" getting married - a bride. Bride is the word chosen in translations such as NIV, NLT, ESV, NASB, ISV etc., [Revelation 21:2]

Comparing the Church to a Bride

In Ephesians 5:22-33, Paul compares the union of husband and wife to that of Christ and the church.

[1] The central theme of the whole Ephesians letter is reconciliation of the alienated within the unity of the church. Ephesians 5 begins by calling on Christians to imitate God and Christ, who gave himself up for them with love.[5:2] Ephesians 5:1-21 contains a rather strong warning against

foolishness and letting down one's guard against evil. Rather, the author encourages the readers to constantly give thanks with song in their hearts because of what God has done for all in Christ. That prelude to the subject's text takes up again the theme of loving submission that began with the example of Christ in 5:2: "Be submissive to one another out of reverence for Christ." 5:21 It implies that the "Bride" is the body of believers that comprise the universal Christian Ekklēsia (Church) (lit. "called-out ones").

The ekklēsia is never explicitly called "the bride of Christ" in the New Testament. That is approached in Ephesians 5:22-33.

A major analogy is that of the body. Just as husband and wife are to be "one flesh", [Eph. 5:31] this analogy for the writer describes the relationship of Christ and ekklēsia. [Eph. 5:32] Husbands were exhorted to love their wives "just as Christ loved the ekklēsia and gave himself for it. [Eph. 5:25] When Christ nourishes and cherishes the ekklēsia, he nourishes and cherishes his own flesh.

Just as the husband, when he loves his wife, is loving his own flesh. [Eph. 5:28] Members of the ekklēsia are "members of his own body" because it is written in Genesis 2:24 "and the two shall become one flesh". In [Eph. 5:31] Paul quotes the Genesis passage as what has been called a "divine postscript".

[2] In writing to the Church of Corinth in 2 Corinthians 11 Paul writes to warn the community of false teachers who would teach of another Christ, and to confess his concern that they will believe someone who teaches a false Christ, other than Christ Jesus of Nazareth whom he preached; Paul referred to the Church in Corinth as being espoused to Christ. "For I am jealous over you with godly jealousy: for I have espoused you to one husband, that I may present you as a chaste virgin to Christ. But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes preach's another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit, which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted, you might well bear with him".[2 Cor. 11:2-4] In the writing to the Church in Rome, Paul writes, "Wherefore, my brethren, ye also are become dead to the law by the body of Christ; that ye should be married to another, even to him who is raised from the dead, that we should bring forth fruit unto God".

[Romans 7] Here, Paul seems to suggest that the Church is to be married to Jesus Christ of Nazareth, who was raised from the dead. Of this, Holy Scripture leaves no doubt.

So, who is Paul describing within the Church?

A remnant, a few who are set apart to be taken away (as Enoch was), learning and practicing obedience, out of love for our bridegroom, Christ.

Paul acknowledges the ever-present sinfulness that must be dealt with among those in the church.

Contextually, we have learned it is not until the final generation described by Christ in Matthew 24 and 25, that His Bride is distinguished from all others, in all generations.

We also see in Matthew 20:23, Jesus has further distinguished the greatest of all honors being reserved for His coming Bride.

It is these 144,000 (Revelation 14:1-5), taken from the final generation, who Father will seat to His Son's left and to His right in eternal glory. This answers the 'Sons of Thunder', James and John, who asked Jesus if they could sit next to Him on His left and right. (Matthew 20:20-28)

Jesus said they "knew not what they asked", explaining this was reserved for "those chosen by His Father." This clearly, taken in scriptural context, refers to His Bride. (Revelation 14: 1-5; distinctly separate from Revelation 7: 1-8 (the Jewish Bride of Abba Father who divorced them because they sacrificed their children to Baal. Hosea 2:19-20; and the Tribulation Saints Revelation 7:9-17)

Studying the Bible in context is critically important.

Context is King

Chapter 17

CHOSEN

Possessing this understanding is foundational to those chosen as Shepherds (Pastors) of His sheep, and to all who desire to be faithful and upright to Christ until He comes. Those chosen to fulfill Romans 8:1, and much more. Romans 8:1

“There is therefore now no condemnation to them which are [in] Christ Jesus, who [walk not] after the flesh, but [after the Spirit].

This teaching is not for everyone.

Only those scripturally ‘Chosen’ will comprehend and discern the depths of the eternal truths offered here.

Luke 21:36 “Watch ye therefore, and pray always, that ye may be accounted worthy to escape all these things that shall come to pass, and to stand before the Son of man.”

You may ask, what about those not chosen? The World cannot comprehend the things of God. 1 Corinthians 2:13-14 “And this is what we speak, not in words taught us by human wisdom, but in words taught by the Spirit, expressing spiritual truths in spiritual words. The natural man does not accept the things that come from the Spirit of God. For they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually discerned.”

The Beginning

2 Timothy 1:9 “He has saved us and called us to a holy life—not because of anything we have done, but because of his own purpose and grace. This grace was given to us in Christ Jesus ... before the beginning of time”

Before the foundations of the world were formed, God sealed us in Christ. (Ephesians 1)

This is a very hard understanding for the mind of man to comprehend. How is this possible? It is only possible when we understand the Sovereignty of our Creator over all of His creation. We know that He is Omnipresent (present everywhere all the time), and Omnipotent (all powerful, where there is nothing He cannot do), but Sovereign over all would mean that He must also be Omniscient (All knowing, where there is nothing God has not and does not know from the beginning to the end, the Alpha and Omega). For God to have sealed us in Christ from the beginning is difficult for us to believe.

We ask, “Why me? Or, “Why not me?”

Did God know who would believe and therefore sealed only those who He foreknew would believe?

Answer: No!

This is not what the Scriptures state.

God selected, or chose, all who would be saved, and among those chosen, all were sealed forever in

Christ before the the foundations of the World were laid..

Further, we must remember that we were saved by His grace and not by our works.

Truly, this is a vast mystery worthy of our investigating further. Join us as we dig deeper into the 'Chosen'.

Ephesians 1:4-6, 11-12 "4Even as [in His love] He chose us [actually picked us out for Himself as His own] in Christ before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy (consecrated and set apart for Him) and blameless in His sight, even above reproach, before Him in love. 5For He foreordained us (destined us, planned in love for us) to be adopted (revealed) as His own children through Jesus Christ, in accordance with the purpose of His will [because it pleased Him and was His kind intent]-- 6[So that we might be] to the praise and the commendation of His glorious grace (favor and mercy), which He so freely bestowed on us in the Beloved...

11In Him we also were made [God's] heritage (portion) and we obtained an inheritance; for we had been foreordained (chosen and appointed beforehand) in accordance with His purpose, Who works out everything in agreement with the counsel and design of His [own] will, 12So that we who first hoped in Christ [who first put our

confidence in Him have been destined and appointed to] live for the praise of His glory!"

I (A) God's Sovereignty to "CHOOSE" those who will be saved.

The verses that we want to focus on speak of being chosen by God.

I must confess that I wrestled with understanding these verses. At first glance, they seem to give the impression that those of us who have come to put our faith in Jesus did so because we could do nothing else, since God "chose" us and "predestined" us to do so. Who can fight the will of God? If He decided we would follow Him, what else could we do? This seems inherently unfair for those who were not chosen, because there are eternal consequences for not being reconciled to God.

I had two main objections to understanding these verses as negating our free will to choose to put our faith in Jesus. First, 1 Timothy 2:4 tells us that God wants everyone to find salvation in Jesus. Yet if we are all predestined to one path or the other by Him, then in what sense is it rational for Him to want it to be other than He already predestined it to be?! My second objection is that if we were created in God's image, that means that we were created with a freedom to choose to love or not to love. Anything less than that makes us less like God and more like rocks or trees.

I have searched many commentaries on these verses, and I can tell you that there is much disagreement about their meaning. So after I share what I have come to understand these verses to mean, please feel free to believe differently. I want you to understand, however, that I have done my best to be faithful to God in coming to a correct interpretation of what God is trying to communicate.

As I sought God for help in understanding what He meant by these verses (Clearly, the Apostle Paul wrote these words under divine inspiration, so that they are indeed God's truth for us), a phrase from elsewhere in the Bible came to mind: "many are called, but few are chosen." I searched and discovered that this is Jesus' conclusion to the parable of the wedding feast, found in Matthew 22:1-14; also found in Matthew 20:16) In this parable, a king is preparing a wedding feast for his son. The important people that he invited to the wedding refused to come, even after multiple invitations. So the king sent his servants out to the streets and invited anyone they could find. Many people accepted the invitation.

One man came to the banquet, but refused the wedding clothes provided for Him (the Bible doesn't say they were provided for Him, but providing special wedding clothes to the guests was indeed the custom of the day). He was promptly

expelled from the banquet, into what might easily be seen as Hell.

Then Jesus immediately says, *"For many are called, but few are chosen."* In Matthew 20:16, the Brothers' James and John are desiring the seat to Christ's right and left when He comes into His kingdom. Jesus replies in vs 23, *"to sit on my right hand, and on my left, is not mine to give, but it shall be given to [them] for whom it is prepared of my Father."*

When considering the Parable of the Vineyard found in Matthew 20 as a whole, vs 23 seems to be pointing to Father's choice for His Son's bride.

Revelation 14:1-5

This seems to say that to be "chosen" (which incidentally is the same word in Greek as the one used in Ephesians 1:4), all you have to do is to accept the invitation (i.e., to follow God) and put on the new clothes (i.e., put on Jesus). Seems pretty simple. So why does Ephesians 1:4 say that we were "chosen in Him before the foundation of the world"? It's because we were chosen in Jesus (in the Matthew 22:14 sense of being chosen), and that Jesus was God's plan -- His way -- for reconciling man to God, and that this plan of Jesus being the way was established before the foundation of the world.

The word "predestined" is incomplete by itself. It begs the question, "Predestined to or for what?" Here we see that those who would become

believers were predestined to being adopted by God (v. 5) and to either receive an inheritance, as some translations say, or probably more accurately, to be God's inheritance (v. 11). Since the word translated "predestined" means literally "to define beforehand", we might understand these verses to say that for those of us who received God's invitation of salvation through faith in Jesus Christ and who are living this life by faith in Him, God determined beforehand to adopt us as His very own children and that we would be His precious inheritance.

While I am delighted to have come away from this study with an understanding of being "chosen" and "predestined" that is consistent with my understanding of other parts of the Bible dealing with the nature of people and the desires of God, all that focus has taken away from really appreciating the richness of this passage in describing God's plan for us. We see here that God's plan is that we should be holy, which the Amplified Bible tells us means that we are consecrated and set apart for His purposes. This sounds to me like we are commissioned as God's special agents, ready at a moment's notice to respond to any assignment that He may give us. Sometimes we don't feel this way, but this is indeed God's intent for us, and the way that He sees us.

God also has made us blameless in His sight.

This means that even though we struggle with temptation and sometimes fail in our struggles, God has declared us "not guilty" and without fault, because Jesus was without fault, and when we put on Jesus (by believing in Him), we put on His righteousness that covers our unrighteousness.

I mentioned this before, but it may not have sunk in: verse 5 says that we are God's adopted children!

Sometimes people incorrectly claim that all people are God's children. But the fact is, until people are reconciled to our Father through Jesus, they are children of darkness. It is only through this process of reconciliation by faith that we are adopted as God's own children. And as a child of God, you are indeed special! He knows you -- even every hair on your head is numbered -- but you are not just a number to Him. He knows you very well, and indeed made you just as you are, and it was not a mistake. Indeed, you are special as you are! See Psalm 139 for some very inspiring reading about the vastness of the knowledge of God in relationship to us.

Because of all of these undeserved benefits that have been given to us, the Apostle Paul spontaneously praises God, for His wonderful and amazing grace (unmerited favor and mercy) that is the reason for our blessings, given because of and through Jesus.

In fact, as an awareness of our most-favored status with God soaks in, it is difficult not to praise God for these blessings that were lavished on us.

“Thank you, Lord, for your wonderful grace that brings us new life and favor, and that we are now brought into your very household as your beloved children!”

Note: Our thanks to - Marvin Vincent, Word Studies in the New Testament.

I. (B) “Who are the elect (“Chosen”) of God?”

Answer: Simply put, the “elect of God” are those whom God has predestined to salvation.

They are called the “elect” because that word denotes the concept of choosing. Every four years in the U.S., we “elect” a President—i.e., we choose who will serve in that office. The same goes for God and those who will be saved; God chooses those who will be saved. These are the elect of God.

As it stands, the concept of God electing those who will be saved isn’t controversial.

What is controversial is how and in what manner God chooses those who will be saved.

Throughout church history, there have been two main views on the doctrine of election (or predestination).

One view, which we will call the prescient or foreknowledge view, teaches that God, through His omniscience, knows those who will, in the course

of time, choose of their own free will to place their faith and trust in Jesus Christ for their salvation.

On the basis of this divine foreknowledge, God elects these individuals “before the foundation of the world” (Ephesians 1:4).

This view is held by the majority of American evangelicals.

As we will see, it is false.

The second main view is the Augustinian view, which essentially teaches that God not only divinely elects those who will have faith in Jesus Christ, but also divinely elects to grant to these individuals the faith to believe in Christ. This would prove to be the fulfillment of John 6:44, where Jesus clearly states, “No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me draw him: and I will raise him up at the last day.”

In other words, God’s election unto salvation is not based on a foreknowledge of an individual’s faith, but is based on the free, sovereign grace of Almighty God. God elects people to salvation, and in time these people will come to faith in Christ because God has elected them.

The difference boils down to this: who has the ultimate choice in salvation—God or man?

In the first view (the prescient view), man has control; his free will is sovereign and becomes the determining factor in God’s election. God can provide the way of salvation through Jesus Christ,

but man must choose Christ for himself in order to make salvation real. This is False!

Ultimately, this view diminishes the biblical understanding of God's Sovereignty. This view puts the Creator's provision of salvation at the mercy of the creature; if God wants people in heaven, He has to hope that man will freely choose His way of salvation.

In reality, the prescient view of election is no view of election at all, because God is not really choosing—He is only confirming. It is man who is the ultimate chooser. Therefore, this view is in error!

The correct view:

In the Augustinian view, God has total control; He is the one who, of His own sovereign will, freely chooses those whom He will save.

This must be firmly established within your foundational understanding of scriptural truth!

LISTEN CAREFULLY:

‘GOD not only elects those whom He will save, but He actually *accomplishes their salvation*. He makes the elect desire salvation and actually brings the elect into cooperation with His divine and eternal purposes.’

Rather than simply making salvation possible, God chooses those whom He will save, and then completes the work that saves them. Jesus declares Himself to be the Author and Finisher of our faith! Hebrews 12:2

This view puts God in His proper place as Creator, and totally Sovereign!

The Augustinian view is not without problems of its own, but these ‘problems’ are easily resolved.

Critics have claimed that this view robs man of his free will.

If God chooses those who will be saved, then what difference does it make for man to believe? Why preach the gospel? Furthermore, if God elects according to His sovereign will, then how can we be responsible for our actions?

These are all good and fair questions that need to be answered. A good passage to answer these questions is Romans 9, the most in-depth passage dealing with God's sovereignty in election.

The context of the passage flows from Romans 8, which ends with a great climax of praise: "For I am convinced that... [nothing] in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:38-39). This leads Paul to consider how a Jew might respond to that statement. While Jesus came to the lost children of Israel and while the early church was largely Jewish in makeup, the gospel was spreading among the Gentiles much faster than among the Jews. In fact, most Jews saw the gospel as a stumbling block (1 Corinthians 1:23) and rejected Jesus. This would lead the average Jew to wonder if God's plan of election has failed, since most Jews reject the message of the gospel.

Throughout Romans 9, Paul systematically shows that God's sovereign election has been in force from the very beginning.

Why wouldn't He? He is the eternal God our Father, and creator of all.

Further, He begins with a crucial statement: "For not all who are descended from Israel are Israel" (Romans 9:6).

This means that not all people of ethnic Israel (that is, those descended from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob) belong to true Israel (the elect of God). Reviewing the history of Israel, Paul shows that God chose Isaac over Ishmael and Jacob over Esau. Just in case anyone thinks that God was choosing these individuals based on the faith or good works they would do in the future, he adds, “Though they [Jacob and Esau] were not yet born and had done nothing either good or bad – in order that God’s purpose of election might continue, not because of works but because of him who calls” (Romans 9:11).

At this point, one might be tempted to accuse God of acting unjustly. Paul anticipates this accusation in v. 14, stating plainly that God is not unjust in any way. “I will have mercy on whom I have mercy, and I will have compassion on whom I have compassion” (Romans 9:15).

God is totally sovereign over His creation.

GOD is free to choose those whom He will choose, and He is free to pass by those whom He will pass by. The creature has no right to accuse the Creator of being unjust.

Consider this:

The very thought that the creature can stand in judgment of the Creator is absurd to Paul, and it should be so to every Christian, as well.

The balance of Romans 9 substantiates this point.

As already mentioned, there are other passages that talk to a lesser extent on the topic of God's elect (John 6:37-45 and Ephesians 1:3-14, to name a couple). The point is that God has ordained to redeem a remnant of humanity to salvation. These elect individuals were chosen before the creation of the world, and their salvation is complete in Christ. As Paul says, "For those whom he foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, in order that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (Romans 8:29-30).

It is very clear that the Augustinian View is scripturally supported as we recognize that our GOD is truly Sovereign over all of His creation, and it is HE who has 'Chosen' and Sealed all who are to be saved from the beginning.

Not only did God choose those who are to be saved, but He also does the work by His Spirit.

"Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, saith the Lord of hosts." (Zech. 4:6)

The question of why did He choose one and not another is one of the unanswerable mysteries that we may never know. He is the Potter and we are the clay.

Romans 9:19-21 "You will say to me then, "Why does He still find fault? For who resists His will?"

On the contrary, who are you, O man, who answers back to God? The thing molded will not say to the molder, "Why did you make me like this," will it? Or does not the potter have a right over the clay, to make from the same lump one vessel for honorable use and another for common use?"

II. 'The Awakening'

"Wake up, sleeper, rise from the dead, and Christ will shine on you." Ephesians 5:14

Testimony of Pastor David Hall. (A) I was 'awakened' at the age of 5, over 6 decades ago. My family had vacationed to visit family in another State, and while there we went to an outdoor Camp Meeting at a local Baptist Church. The young preacher was preaching his heart out about Jesus. To this day, I can remember listening intently to his every word and at the end of his sermon he presented an invitation to accept Christ as Savior. I asked my Mother if I could go. She motioned her approval, and I quickly walked to the front. The preacher spent several minutes with me before welcoming me into the family of God. The next Sunday, I was baptized according to scripture. Acts 2:38 "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost."

This moment changed my life forever. It was my awakening. I am sure you may remember your

own. From my present age, I can look back over the many years that have passed and recognize His glorious presence was always with me. I confess that it was He who kept pulling me back into His bosom each time I would wander. I did a lot of wandering, and I know I must have grieved Him many times, for which I have sorrowed greatly. I can tell you from a position of experience that it was Christ who has saved me, and it has been Christ who has kept me saved. I may never know why He chose me for salvation, but I am eternally grateful that He did. He chose that fateful day in the Summer of 1954 for me to be 'awakened' spiritually. He walked with me patiently through each year of my life, and He has never given up on me.

He never gives up on those He has chosen. You are His! We are His dwelling place, the Temple of the Holy Spirit. He has known us since the foundations of the world, when we were sealed by His divine will. Ephesians 1:13-14

The Temple of the Holy Spirit

...19Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own; 20you were bought at a price. Therefore glorify God with your body. 1 Corinthians 6:20

(B) Biblically, a spiritual 'awakening' is not a waking from spiritual sleep but a resurrection from

spiritual death. Everyone is “conceived in sin” (Psalms 51:5), and is spiritually dead at birth. Ephesians 2:1 states that, before we knew Christ, we were dead in transgressions and sins. Because of the sin of Adam, which we inherited, we are all separated from God, who is Life (Romans 5:12). We cannot experience, understand, or relate to a holy and perfect God in our unregenerate (spiritually dead) state, nor can we enter into His kingdom. (John 3:3) Our need for spiritual awakening is profound: “The god of this age has blinded the minds of unbelievers, so that they cannot see the light of the gospel that displays the glory of Christ” (2 Corinthians 4:4). We must be roused; we must be “awakened” spiritually, or, as Jesus put it, we must be “born again” or “born of the Spirit” (John 3:3–8). The true spiritual awakening—the new birth that Jesus spoke of—occurs not by some physical, mental, or emotional process that we control, but by the power of the Holy Spirit. (John 16:8) One who is awakened by the Holy Spirit is recreated into a completely new person (2 Corinthians 5:17; Titus 3:5; 1 Peter 1:3). That new creation is characterized by a new heart that wants to please and obey God and live for Him (2 Corinthians 5:9). The Holy Spirit now in us works to reveal and convict us of our sins, and of our separation from this world. No longer are we of this world.

We are in the world, but not a part of it.

(John 17:16-26)

We have been awakened to a new reality, one that centers on the Savior who redeemed us by the Spirit who awakened us, and we are now a member of the kingdom of God, to which we now belong forever.

This is the true spiritual awakening. It is this moment of ‘spiritual awakening’ that begins a lifelong sanctification process. (Discussed in Part 3)

John 9 records the story of the man born blind, whose spiritual awakening led to an acknowledgement of who Jesus is. This man’s receiving his spiritual sight was accompanied by physical sight. The man spoke of the dawning of new light in his life in simple terms: “One thing I do know, I was blind, but now I see!” (John 9:25).

This epiphany occurs with all who are ‘Awakened’.
We now know the truth of Psalm 36:9, “With You is the fountain of life; in Your light we see light.”

I did not comprehend all of the scriptural teachings concerning this momentous change in my life at the age of 5, but I did recognize that something was amazingly different.

The apostle Paul’s spiritual awakening was sudden and dramatic, when Jesus met him on the road to Damascus and changed his life forever (Acts 9). From then on, Paul’s desire was for all believers to increase in their spiritual awareness: “I pray that

the eyes of your heart may be enlightened” (Ephesians 1:18). The psalmist’s prayer was also for spiritually opened eyes: “Open my eyes that I may see wonderful things in your law” (Psalm 119:18). Our spiritual awakening begins when Jesus sheds His light upon us: “The people living in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned” (Matthew 4:16).

The proper response to the Light of the world should be as natural as getting up in the morning: “Arise, shine, for your light has come, and the glory of the LORD rises upon you” (Isaiah 60:1). When the Holy Spirit awakens us to the truth of Christ and indwells us by grace through faith, we can truly sing with John Newton,

“Amazing grace—how sweet the sound— That saved a wretch like me! I once was lost but now am found, Was blind but now I see.

III. ‘Sanctification’ - Training

When I was a child, I spoke like a child, I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child; when I became an adult, I put an end to childish ways. For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then we will see face to face. Now I know only in part; then I will know fully, even as I have been fully known. - 1

Corinthians 13: 11-12

What is Sanctification?

The definition, which fits nicely with what the Bible teaches, is that it means to be set apart for holy use. It also means to make holy or to purify. This is exactly the goal of every believer in Christ. Like the Old Testament Temple vessels used by the priest, these were to be used for holy purposes and to be pure and to glorify God. Today, Christians have been regenerated by the Holy Spirit and our bodies are the temple of God in which dwells the Holy Spirit and our bodies are vessels to be used for a holy or pure purpose for the glory of God. The origin of this word is from the Latin “sanctus” which means holy or to consecrate. The suffix of “tion” in sanctification is the ongoing or continuing process of this becoming holy. It is a progressive holiness and growing in purity and it takes a lifetime. We are being perfected and this perfection takes time and patience. I thank God that He is patient with me in this process. We cannot see much of our own progress until we start looking back at last year, and the year before and then ten years ago. There should be noticeable differences in a person’s life that are tangible evidences of growth.

I believe true character is revealed when no one is watching. If you can imagine that you are a parent and you leave your teenager at home; what that teenager does at home alone is a revelation of their true character. It is not so much what we do when others are watching but what we do when nobody

is watching. What people think of us when they see our actions is what we might think we are truly like and it's probably the way people think we are. When we are alone and only God is watching is the true test of who we are.

Joseph's Sanctification

The Bible teaches that sanctification means to be set apart for holy use. Joseph is an excellent example of the process of sanctification. Joseph was treated unfairly when his brothers sold him into slavery. He would later end up in prison through no fault of his own. His character was revealed when he refused to blame God and turn bitter while languishing in prison for many years. Joseph was in charge of Potiphar's house. Potiphar was the Captain of Pharaoh's Guard. Next to the Pharaoh, this was probably the greatest position of power in all of Egypt. Potiphar trusted Joseph enough to leave him in charge of his entire household (Gen 39:5) and when Potiphar's wife tried to seduce him, Joseph refused. Potiphar must have had a beautiful wife and this lady had to have had great riches. When she tried to grab Joseph to lie with her, he not only ran but he ran so fast he left his cloak. He left his cloak but kept his character. When fighting temptations to sin, the Christian can do one of two things; fight or flight. That is, we can resist temptation and fight it through prayer or we can take flight. James said when we are tempted we must resist the devil and

he will flee from us (James 4:7) but Paul said we must flee from sexual temptation, indicating we shouldn't just resist but run (1 Cor 6:18)!

Can you imagine how hard it was for Joseph to resist this urge, day after day?

This temptation must have gone on for many days, remember, Potiphar's wife had to be one of the most beautiful women of Egypt.

At times like these, the work of the Holy Spirit is indispensable, able to convict us of things that we know are clearly wrong.

Not only did Joseph not want to violate God's law but he said, "How then could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God" (Gen 39:9)? Joseph thought about God when he was tempted and that is sanctification at work.

When Joseph refused to give into temptation, he sanctified God's name by his doing what was right.

Note: Joseph was Upright in all his ways, repenting when he failed, as we must.

When we glorify God in our bodies, we are being sanctified and we glorify God by our decisions to not sin against Him. In this case, Joseph sanctified the name of God, even in private, where there would have been no eyewitnesses. Joseph's refusal to sin and his fleeing temptation is the perfect model of holiness and it is how we can also avoid sin. This is the process of sanctification. That is exactly the way the Holy Spirit works in us today in

sanctifying us. He tells us when something is wrong, and if we are in a compromising situation we should run, just like Joseph did.

God, the Holy Spirit, tells us when something isn't quite right. He tells us when we are not in a good situation and it is often that quiet, still small voice much like the human conscience. Life is not fair and during such times our growing in holiness or sanctification can be increased. Even when we are in the will of God, there will be times of injustice, like when Joseph was unfairly thrown into prison.

We can justify our sin more easily in times like these and in times of prosperity. What is really pleasing to God is when we do justly when no one is watching and still do so when we are suffering unjustly.

Your Sanctification is the Will of God

God's ultimate aim is for us to be sanctified and grow in holiness, but unless you are regenerated or born again, you have no hope to be sanctified because sanctification takes the power of the Holy Spirit. It is impossible by human effort. Paul says that "...the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want" (Gal 5:17). What is God's will for your life? To be sanctified and to grow in holiness for God says, "Be holy because I, the LORD your God, am holy" (Lev 19:2).

Paul knew this as he wrote, “It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality” (I Thess 4:3). This is exactly why “he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love” (Ephesians 1:4).

How to be Sanctified

As stated earlier, we must be regenerated by the Holy Spirit. We must place our trust in Christ to save us and have faith in the Savior. If our trust and faith is in our self, in our own works, then we will fail miserably. How does this happen then except by the will of God and by His power, for “you were washed, you were sanctified, you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and by the Spirit of our God” (1 Cor 6:11). The key portion of that is “by the Spirit of our God.” It’s not something you do by superhuman effort but by the power of the Holy Spirit and we were justified and “have been made holy through the sacrifice of the body of Jesus Christ once for all” (Heb 10:10). I don’t see anything about me and my efforts here but we do see in

Joseph’s example that he did have to flee temptation and resist evil, so it’s not like we don’t participate in the process at all. It does take time to grow in holiness so don’t expect it to happen overnight (2 Pet 3:18).

Paul writes, “Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already arrived at my goal, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers and sisters, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus” (Phil 3:12-14).

Listen to what Paul had to contribute toward his attaining holiness and how he had to be proactive: He pressed on, he had a goal, he took hold, he forgot the past, and he strained toward it. Those are all the things that he did and Joseph did too. You don’t fall into sanctification, you cooperate with the Holy Spirit and you participate with Him in the process. We see that it involves “sanctification in the Spirit” (1 Pet 1:2) and it is “sanctification by the Spirit” (2 Thess 2:13) that “he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word” (Eph 5:26). The “washing of water with the word” is a direct reference to the Word of God, the Bible. When we read the Bible on a regular basis, this allows the Holy Spirit to sanctify us by the power that is in the Word. Remember there is real power in the active, living, sharper-than-a-two-edged-sword Word (Heb 4:12). It washes us...cleanses us...and gives us access to the power of the Holy Spirit which is the

same power of God that raised Christ from the dead!

Conclusion: Sanctification takes a lifetime.

We will never be completely perfected until that day of His return. We must resist temptation, flee from sin, press on, take hold, have a goal, strain toward, and read the Word of God. These allow the Holy Spirit to work in us, with us, and through us by cooperating and being proactive to avoid sinning against God. We are told to be a living sacrifice. The only problem with being a living sacrifice is that it can crawl off the altar. Paul gives us a fitting conclusion: "I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship. Do not conform to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will" (Rom 12:1-2).

IV. 'Glorification' - Christlike, in the twinkling of an eye.

Colossians 3:4

When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Question: "What is glorification?"

The short answer is that "glorification" is God's final removal of sin from the life of the saints (i.e., everyone who is saved) in the eternal state

(Romans 8:18; 2 Corinthians 4:17). At Christ's coming, the glory of God (Romans 5:2)—His honor, praise, majesty, and holiness—will be realized in us; instead of being mortals burdened with sin nature, we will be changed into holy immortals with direct and unhindered access to God's presence, and we will enjoy holy communion with Him throughout eternity. In considering glorification, we should focus on Christ, for He is every Christian's "blessed hope"; also, we may consider final glorification as the culmination of sanctification.

Final glorification must await the manifestation of the glory of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ (Titus 2:13; 1 Timothy 6:14). Until He returns, we are burdened with sin, and our spiritual vision is distorted because of the curse. "For now we see in a mirror dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I have been fully known" (1 Corinthians 13:12). Every day, we should be diligent by the Spirit to put to death what is "fleshly" (sinful) in us (Romans 8:13).

How and when will we be finally glorified? At the last trumpet, when Jesus comes, the saints will undergo a fundamental, instant transformation ("we shall all be changed, in a moment, in the twinkling of an eye" – 1 Corinthians 15:51); then the "perishable" will put on the "imperishable" (1 Corinthians 15:53). Yet 2 Corinthians 3:18 clearly indicates that, in a mysterious sense, "we all," in

the present, “with unveiled face” are “beholding the glory of the Lord” and are being transformed into His image “from one degree of glory to another” (2 Corinthians 3:18). Lest anyone imagine that this beholding and transformation (as part of sanctification) is the work of especially saintly people, the Scripture adds the following bit of information: “For this comes from the Lord who is the Spirit.” In other words, it is a blessing bestowed on every believer. This does not refer to our final glorification but to an aspect of sanctification by which the Spirit is transfiguring us right now. To Him be the praise for His work in sanctifying us in the Spirit and in truth (Jude 24-25; John 17:17; 4:23). We should understand what Scripture teaches about the nature of glory—both God’s unsurpassed glory and our share in it at His coming. God’s glory refers not merely to the unapproachable light that the Lord inhabits (1 Timothy 6:15-16), but also to His honor (Luke 2:13) and holiness. The “You” referred to in Psalm 104:2 is the same God referenced in 1 Timothy 6:15-16; He is “clothed with splendor and majesty,” covering Himself “with light as with a garment” (Psalm 104:2; cf. 93:1; Job 37:22; 40:10). When the Lord Jesus returns in His great glory to execute judgment (Matthew 24:29-31; 25:31-35), He will do so as the only Sovereign, who alone has eternal dominion (1 Timothy 6:14-16).

Created beings dare not gaze upon God's awesome glory; like Ezekiel (Ezekiel 1:4-29) and Simon Peter (Luke 5:8), Isaiah was devastated by self-loathing in the presence of the all-holy God. After the seraphim proclaimed, "Holy, holy, holy is the Lord of hosts; the whole earth is full of his glory!" Isaiah said, "Woe is me! For I am lost; for I am a man of unclean lips, and I dwell in the midst of a people of unclean lips; for my eyes have seen the King, the Lord of hosts!" (Isaiah 6:4). Even the seraphim showed that they were unworthy to gaze upon the divine glory, covering their faces with their wings. God's glory may be said to be "heavy" or "weighty"; the Hebrew word *kabod* literally means "heavy or burdensome"; Most often, the Scriptural usage of *kabod* is figurative (e.g., "heavy with sin"), from which we get the idea of the "weightiness" of a person who is honorable, impressive, or worthy of respect.

When the Lord Jesus became incarnate, He revealed both the "weighty" holiness of God and the fullness of His grace and truth ("and the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth" [John 1:14; cf. 17:1–5]).

The glory revealed by the incarnate Christ accompanies the ministry of the Spirit (2 Corinthians 3:7); it is unchanging and permanent (Isaiah 4:6-7; cf. Job 14:2; Psalm 102:11; 103:15; James 1:10). The previous manifestations of God's glory were temporary, like the fading effluence of God's glory from Moses' face. Moses veiled his face so that the hard-hearted Israelites might not see that the glory was fading (1 Corinthians 3:12), but in our case the veil has been removed through Christ, and we reflect the glory of the Lord and seek by the Spirit to be like Him.

In His high priestly prayer, the Lord Jesus requested that God would sanctify us by His truth (i.e., make us holy; John 17:17); sanctification is necessary if we are to see Jesus' glory and be with Him in eternal fellowship (John 17:21-24). "Father, I desire that they also, whom you have given me, may be with me where I am, to see my glory that you have given me because you loved me before the foundation of the world (John 17:24). If the glorification of the saints follows the pattern revealed in Scripture, it must entail our sharing in the glory (i.e., the holiness) of God.

According to Philippians 3:20-21, our citizenship is in heaven, and when our Savior returns He will transform our lowly bodies "to be like His glorious body." Although it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, we know that, when He returns in great glory, we shall be like Him, for we shall see

Him as He is (1 John 3:2). We will be perfectly conformed to the image of our Lord Jesus and be like Him in that our humanity will be free from sin and its consequences. Our blessed hope should spur us on to holiness, the Spirit enabling us. "Everyone who thus hopes in Him purifies himself as He is pure" (1 John 3:3).

V. Glory Through Glorification

"Those whom he predestined he also called, and those whom he called he also justified, and those whom he justified he also glorified" (v. 30). - Romans 8:28–30

God's glory is by no means dependent upon the actions of human beings, for He possessed glory long "before the world existed" (John 17:5).

Nevertheless, the Lord has sovereignly chosen to display His glory and further the universe's awareness of this glory through the words and deeds of His people.

Since we are made in the image and likeness of God (Gen. 1:26–28), redeemed human beings, are uniquely able to reflect the refulgent beauty of the Lord in our characters, which is our highest calling. Moreover, because God created us for His glory (Isa. 43:1–7), living according to the vocation the Lord gave us when He made our first parents glorifies Him.

Humanity's initial vocation involved "dominion ... over every living thing that moves on the earth"

(Gen. 1:28), and this task remains ours today. To put it simply, we are called to imitate the Lord's sovereignty over all creation in exercising a delegated sovereignty over the spheres entrusted to us. This means leading our families to serve and worship our Creator. It means stewarding our resources wisely and not exploiting God's creation at the expense of others. It requires us to do everything to the glory of God, serving Him according to His gifts and with a wholehearted desire to please Him (1 Cor. 10:31).

Of course, we can by no means exercise perfectly the sovereignty God delegates to us.

That is why we need the Savior. Having redeemed us, He sends us forth on our original mission to take dominion over creation, bringing all nations into His service through the preaching of the gospel and the discipling of all peoples (Matt. 28:18–20).

Yet, this is not the only way the Lord will be glorified in us. In His grace, our great and holy God has granted that we will actually share in His glory. This passage reminds us of this great truth, revealing the ways in which salvation is worked out in our lives from predestination to glorification (Rom. 8:28–30).

Our conversions do not mark the consummation of our redemption; rather, the Lord will be glorified most fully in us only when He has brought us into our own glorification.

Although we grow in our ability to reflect God's glory over the course of our lives, the remaining presence of sin keeps us from shining forth His light in its full beauty.

One day, however, the Lord will glorify us, removing even the presence of sin from our bodies. At that point, God will bring us into a full state of glorification in order that we might give glory back to Him.

Coram Deo (RC Sproul)

Think about how amazing it is that the Lord has purposed to bring about His own glory in and through our glorification. God could have left us in our sin, and He would have been glorified in our condemnation. Yet, He has chosen His people that He might be glorified not only as Judge but also as Savior (Rom. 9:1–29). Because God has sworn that He will be glorified through our glorification, He cannot fail to bring our salvation to completion in the day of Christ Jesus.

(1) God's glory is by no means dependent upon the actions of human beings, for He possessed glory long "before the world existed" (John 17:5). Nevertheless, the Lord has sovereignly chosen to display His glory and further the universe's awareness of this glory through the words and deeds of His people. Since we are made in the image of God (Gen. 1:26–28), redeemed human

beings are uniquely able to reflect the refulgent beauty of the Lord in our characters, which is our highest calling.

Moreover, because God created us for His glory (Isa. 43:1–7), living according to the vocation the Lord gave us when He made our first parents glorifies Him. Humanity's initial vocation involved "dominion ... over every living thing that moves on the earth" (Gen. 1:28), and this task remains ours today.

To put it simply, we are called to imitate the Lord's sovereignty over all creation in exercising a delegated sovereignty over the spheres entrusted to us. This means leading our families to serve and worship our Creator. It means stewarding our resources wisely and not exploiting God's creation at the expense of others.

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One day, however, the Lord will glorify us, removing even the presence of sin from our bodies. At that point, God will bring us into a full state of glorification in order that we might give glory back to Him. (R.C. Sproul)

(2) If God predestines only some to salvation, why are there verses that say God wants 'all' to be saved?

The answer is simple: The "all" are the Christians who have truly accepted Christ as Savior. These Christians have a changed life, and are voluminous producers of abundant fruit. (Galatians 5:22-23)

2 Corinthians 5:14-15:

"For the love of Christ controls us, having concluded this, that one died for all, therefore all

died; and He died for all, that they who live should no longer live for themselves, but for Him who died and rose again on their behalf."

At first glance the phrase "He died for all", would lead you to think that Jesus died for every individual who has ever lived. But upon a [closer look in context] we see something completely different revealed.

When Paul speaks of people dying, in relation to the death of Christ, he is speaking of the true and faithful Christians who have died in Christ:

"Now if we have died with Christ..." (Rom. 6:8); "If you have died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world..." (Col. 2:20); "For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God" (Col. 3:3); "It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him, we shall also live with Him" (2 Tim. 2:11).

The only ones who have died with Christ are the believers, not the unbelievers. There are many who claim they are christians, but who live for the devil. They are barren, producing no fruit at all. Jesus commands us to "examine their fruit to know if they are of the faith."

Therefore, this verse can only make sense if it is understood that the "all" spoken of is not everyone who has ever lived, but only the Christians: "...that one (Jesus) died for all (the Christians), therefore all (the Christians) died..."

But, you might ask, "If God meant only the Christians, then why did He use the word 'all'?"

I believe it is because from all eternity God knew who He had chosen to be the elect, and the eternal plan of redemption was carried out to reclaim "all" He had chosen.

Therefore, the "all" to Him is the all for which He intended the death of Christ to atone.

It is important here that you understand that sometimes God uses words differently than we do. For example, the Bible says that God only knows believers, not unbelievers. "My sheep listen to my voice; I know them, and they follow me" (John 10:27); "The Lord knows those who are his," (2 Tim. 2:19); "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matt. 7:21-23).

Of course, God knows who everyone is, He is omniscient. But the way He is using the word in contextual relation to the saved, is different than we use it: *He knows the Christians, and doesn't know the non-Christians. This knowing is an intimate, familiar kind of knowing.*

You see, it is important to understand that the Bible best interprets itself. We need to see how it uses words and phrases and then, once we have a clearer understanding, attempt to interpret the Word of God.

1 Corinthians 15:22-23:

"For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming."

Who are the ones who will be made alive?

They are the Christians, and only the Christians. These speak of the grafted-in gentiles.

The Jews in Christ are Messianic's, having found their Messiah.

Note: When we are all in heaven, Galatians 3:28 makes it clear we will be one in Christ. *"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."*

To be "in Christ" is a phrase that describes a saving relationship between the redeemed and the Redeemer: "Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 8:1) (See also, Rom. 6:11; 12:5; 16:7; 1 Cor. 1:2); second, those who are made alive at Christ's coming are the believers.

We will be made alive with Christ: "By his power God raised the Lord from the dead, and he will

raise us also" (1 Cor. 6:14;15-20); "in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed"

The "all" that died in Adam were all that Adam represented: every individual who ever lived. Those "in Christ" are only believers. The "all" therefore can only be the believers, because it says "in Christ all shall be made alive."

If all shall be made alive, then the "all" can only mean the believers because only believers are made alive in Christ. There simply isn't any biblically consistent alternative interpretation. But you might object and say that the first "all" refers to everybody, obviously. So why, then, doesn't the second do the same? Because the second "all" can't refer to everyone. Only the Christians are made alive.

It could be said that everyone, believer and unbeliever alike, will be raised; only the unbelievers are raised to receive damnation. This is true, but it does not fit here in this passage because it is speaking of those who are Christ's; that is, the believers. The "all" of these verses can only be the elect.

When God wants "ALL men" to be saved, they are. However, God predestines who the 'ALL' will be in each generation of man. Those not

called, or elected, to salvation are not numbered among the ‘ALL’.

These would include Christ’s description of ‘Tares’ in Matthew 13, and *all not chosen by Father for salvation*.

Christ died for those He predestined. And He has been working from all eternity to atone for, sanctify, and glorify His elect, those chosen and those called to salvation (John 6:44).

It will occur because God has ordained it to be so.
Amen

Why did God create “Tares”, to look and speak like those chosen or called to salvation?

To test His elect chosen, and the called. Not only does God test, but He sanctifies us.

Sanctification

As previously detailed, Christ commands Christians to “present your members as slaves to righteousness leading to sanctification” (Rom 6:19). Because believers have been set free from their slavery to sin, “the fruit you get leads to sanctification and its end, eternal life” (Romans 6:22).

In sanctification, both God and the Christian have specific responsibilities. Paul commands believers

to “work out your own salvation with fear and trembling, for it is God who works in you, both to will and to work for his good pleasure” (Philippians 2:12-13). God is the one who does the work of making us more like Christ, and we participate in that work by a life of continually turning away from sin and demonstrating our faith in Christ by obeying God’s commands. The Holy Spirit plays a key role in this process; as we walk in the power of the Spirit, we “will not gratify the desires of the flesh” (Galatians 5:16).

In addition to empowering us by His Spirit, God has given us other tools to grow as we ask what sanctification is. Reading, studying, and being taught the Bible enables us to better understand who God is, what he has done for us, and how he calls us to live. Praying expresses our faith in the sovereign power of God to accomplish what only he can do. Fellowship with other believers encourages us to put our faith into practice by loving and bearing with one another. Giving weans our hearts off putting our trust in the fleeting things of this world and shows that we value the work of God even more than our own comfort. Sharing the gospel with others brings us the joy of participating in God’s work of extending his kingdom. All of these are different tools that God uses to make us more like Jesus.

Chapter 18

Christian Doctrine

5 Essential Christian Doctrines

Doctrine 1

The Bible is God's word. Christians believe that the Bible is the infallible word of God, which is sufficient for all we need to live the Christian life. 2 Timothy 3:16-17 Note: We believe the most accurate translation available is the Geneva 1560. It's written in old English, which may require some acclimation, but very rewarding to make the effort, especially when comparing to other translations.

Doctrine 2

God is three persons in one. The Holy Trinity. Christians believe there is one God who eternally exists as three distinct and separate persons (Father, Son, and Holy Spirit). The Bible is clear on this, even though there is no use of the word in English, 'Trinity'. All three persons are equal and eternal. Matthew 28:19

Doctrine 3

Jesus is fully God. Christians believe that Jesus is both fully God and fully human, as the second person of the Trinity. He has always existed as God, and the world was created through him. Read John 1:1-2 for further detail.

Doctrine 4

We are saved by grace through faith in Jesus Christ. “Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen. For by it the elders gained a good report.” Hebrews 11:1-2 Commentary in verse 2 By it the elders — Our forefathers, or the pious of former ages; obtained a good report — Εμαρτυρηθησαν, received testimony, of God’s approbation of them, or were borne witnesses to by God as persons accepted of him. The word is very comprehensive, implying that God gave a testimony, not only of them, but to them, and they received his testimony, as if it had been the things themselves, of which he testified, Hebrews 11:4-5; Hebrews 11:39. Hence they also gave testimony to others, and others testified of them.

This chapter is a kind of summary of the Old Testament, in which the apostle comprises the designs, labours, sojournings, expectations, martyrdoms of the ancients.

The former of them had a long exercise of their patience; the latter suffered shorter, but sharper trials. Our salvation is a foundational gift from God, fulfilling John 6:44 for those called, or chosen by God the Father for salvation through His Son. Our journey begins here, as we wake up to who we are in Christ.

We are then required to grow and mature through sanctification, by the power of the Holy Spirit.

Christians believe that every person is broken by sin and in need of salvation. We are saved by grace alone through faith in Jesus Christ. Ephesians 2:8-9 RC Ryle adds this: The Important Doctrine of Christ Crucified. There is no doctrine in Christianity so important as the doctrine of Christ crucified. There is none which the devil tries so hard to destroy. There is none which it is so needful for our own peace to understand.

By 'Christ crucified,' I mean the doctrine that Christ suffered death on the cross to make atonement for our sins, that by His death He made a full, perfect, and complete satisfaction to God for the ungodly, and that through the merits of that death all who believe in Him are forgiven all their sins, however many and great, entirely, and forever.

Doctrine 5

There's life after death. Christians believe that Jesus is returning in order to set up his kingdom and judge the world. Those who have trusted Jesus for salvation will live eternally in heaven, while others will be eternally separated from the presence of God in hell, a place of eternal punishment for rejecting the truth through God's Son. John 11:25-26 Note: Jonathan Edwards states this a right and deserving punishment.

There are many doctrines in Christianity, but these are the key foundational doctrines of our faith.

Chapter 19

A Form of Godliness

Discussed earlier, but we now go deeper.

A Form of Godliness 2 Timothy 3:5-17 “Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away. For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers (many) lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth.

Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith. But they shall proceed no further: for their folly shall be manifest unto all men, as theirs also was. But thou hast fully known my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, charity, patience, Persecutions, afflictions, which came unto me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra; what persecutions I endured: but out of them all the Lord delivered me. Yea, and all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution. But evil men and seducers shall wax worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived. All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished unto all good works.”

In 2 Timothy 3, the apostle Paul describes the nature of people in the last days. In his description, he warns of people who are characterized as “having a form of godliness but denying its power” (verse 5).

Paul then issues this warning:

“Have nothing to do with such people.”

Paul often uses contrast to emphasize an attribute he wishes to highlight. In 2 Timothy 3:1–4, he gives Timothy a long list of sinful behaviors and attitudes that are contrary to God’s will. In verse 5 he tells Timothy to avoid those who state they are Christians with their mouths—they have a “form” of godliness—but who act as unbelievers—they deny the power of godliness.

Those who have a form of godliness are those who make an outward display of religion. They present themselves as godly, but it is all for show. There is no power behind their religion, as evidenced in the fact that their lives are unchanged. They speak of God and live in sin, and they are fine with that arrangement.

As commentator Charles Ellicott wrote, “These, by claiming the title of Christians, wearing before men the uniform of Christ, but by their lives dishonouring His name, did the gravest injury to the holy Christian cause” (Ellicott’s Bible Commentary for English Readers, entry for 2 Timothy 3:5).

[These false Christians are destructive.]

Paul warns that they will “creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts” and that they are “always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth” (2 Timothy 3:6–7).

He compares them to the wicked magicians who opposed Moses and warns that their folly and corrupt minds will be revealed to all eventually (verses 8–9). The power of God, which should accompany the form of godliness, is shown through the Holy Spirit and results in the transformation of our lives. The Holy Spirit indwells the believer (1 Corinthians 6:19) and enables him to bear certain fruit: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control (Galatians 5:22–23). These are the attributes of a true Christian, as opposed to Paul’s list of sins in 2 Timothy 3:1–4.

Paul’s exhortation to Timothy falls in line with James’ explanation how to identify a true faith (James 2:14–26).

True faith will be evidenced by good works, which will occur naturally. If a person says he is a Christian but shows no evidence in his life by bearing the fruit of the Spirit, we have to make a judgment about him and avoid that person.

He may have a form of godliness, but he is denying God's power by not letting himself be controlled by the Spirit.

In fact, if his faith is not genuine, he cannot be controlled by God's power, because the Holy Spirit does not dwell in him.

"The natural person does not accept the things of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned" (1 Corinthians 2:14).

The natural person may have a form of godliness, but he denies God's power in the way he lives.

Only faith in Jesus Christ can bring justification and the transformation he so desperately needs (Colossians 1:21–22; Romans 5:1–2).

We live in trying times, Saints. We must seek wisdom and discernment, but above all, we must seek Christ with all our strength, pursuing Him that we may be transformed into His image and likeness!

Our time is short! No time to waste!

Chapter 20

Captivity in Christ

“Captivity in Christ is the only True Freedom that man can find.” John Wendel

What does this mean? Pay careful attention, Bride! Of all the teachings thus far, this is the Greatest!

‘O B E D I E N C E’

We must learn obedience, Saints. Learn and practice this, and everything else in your preparation will fall into place. Where do we begin? By recognizing it is by our “Captivity in Christ” in all things, that we must grasp and hold to tightly in every moment of every day of our life! This will bring success. This humble captivity in Him will strengthen us and prepare us to reflect His life as His Bride.

Obedience in Christ requires discipline! It requires stamina! It requires commitment! It requires refusing to settle for less than perfect obedience! If this was true for Christ, do you think it will not be true for you?

Let us read Hebrews 5:7-9 together “Who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with VEHEMENT CRIES AND TEARS to HIM (His Father) who was able to save Him from death, yet He learned OBEDIENCE by the things which He suffered.” Let us read 1 Peter 4:1-3

together “Death is the wages of SIN. To be saved from death, JESUS had to BATTLE and DENY His own natural inclinations. He had to learn to OBEY GOD’S will because He had a flesh, His own will. This led to suffering in the flesh, but in doing so He OVERCAME ALL SIN.”

We are now called to do the same. Let us now read Matthew 16:24-25 “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. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it.” It won’t be easy, Saints!

It requires commitment, humility, and a love for what Christ did for us that overwhelms our “natural inclinations” to this world, and all its temptations! We must keep our eyes and focus on Him! Now, read with me this amazing scripture found in 1 John 3:2-3 “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” Now join me in this commitment, Saints, as we proclaim together, ‘WE ARE THE BRIDE OF CHRIST, AND WE WILL PURIFY OURSELVES, AND PREPARE OURSELVES TO MEET OUR BRIDEGROOM WHEN HE COMES’!

I pray for each of you to be blessed as your journey in preparation continues. Finally, let us read JESUS

command to us together from Luke 21:36 “So keep watch at all times, and pray that you will be counted worthy to escape all these things that will come to pass, and to stand before the Son of Man.” He is speaking to His Bride!

Chapter 21

5 Fold Ministry Explained

A five point instructional statement made to the young and upcoming leader/teacher Timothy by the aged and wise apostle Paul, namely, to “Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all long suffering and doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2 KJV), is an excellent outline for effective ministry. Whether discharged by a member of the Five-Fold Ministry (apostle, prophet, evangelist, pastor, or teacher), or any mature Christian instructing less mature Christians, these five points of instruction: (1) Preach the word (2) Be instant, in season and out (3) Reprove (4) Rebuke, and (5) Exhort, make up a DIFFERENT—but effective—FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY expression.

I. PREACH THE WORD

To “preach the word” is to herald or proclaim it without conversational-like pausing for the purposes of entertaining feedback or counterargument. It is to proclaim Bible doctrine and make exegesis directly from the scriptures with all its implicit and explicit warnings about judgments and punishments (should there be any soul brave enough, yet foolhardy enough, not to comply with its divine demands). Preaching the word is inherently authoritative, filled with

commands that must be obeyed, and ideas that need to be embraced. Theology, the queen of the sciences, ought to be systematically taught as though it were arithmetic or some established scientific fact (because it is when taught properly). Kenneth Wuest, a Greek scholar, interpreted and translated this “preach the word” portion of scripture as: “Make a public proclamation of the Word with such formality, gravity, and authority as must be heeded.” James Strong’s definition of “preach” is: “to preach, teach, proclaim, tell, often urging acceptance of the message, with warnings of consequences for not doing so.”

Indeed, the constant barrage of warning and implicit urgency within this entire verse of scripture is sobering, and this first phrase: “preach the word” is inclusive of all the diligence and steadfastness and disciplined training resident in the whole of scripture interpreted. Thus, the cornerstone principle of the five principles herein explained is to ever herald or proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Reading, writing, vocabulary, spelling, grammar, and everything else found in the processes of exegeses and like methods of “rightly dividing the word of truth” (2 Timothy 2:15), is therefore an acceptable, and even desirable means by which to school and disciple mankind.

II. BE INSTANT, IN SEASON AND OUT

In other words, be in the moment, imminent, close at hand, really and actually juxtaposed beside your pupils, both when the opportunity presents itself entreatingly so, and when the opportunity seems to be off begging; be therefore ever ready and filled with the doctrine—even when you do not feel like it. A pastor/teacher's job is never done, and their requisite resolve is regularly tested by the daily grind of teaching 'day in and day out' throughout the many weeks, months, and years of their careers.

Hardly is there a better opportunity for modeling the Christian ideal of patient endurance than what is intrinsically built into the discharging of one's long-term employment as a pastor/ teacher.

Perhaps this lesson of diligence and excellence of performance in response to our contextual placement within this mundane reality of life is the greatest lesson of all, because, when everything else is said and done, it is only those who endure to the end which receive the eternal rewards of our faith. Pastor's are teachers, and more importantly, a living example of a life transforming into the image and likeness of Christ.

III. REPROVE

The force of God's Word by the agency of His Holy Spirit is designed to first identify man's dispositional error, to correct it, and only then to encourage him. Thus, reproof, a corrective and

strident action, which literally means: “to expose; to rebuke, refute, show fault; to convince, convict” is the essential first encounter with—or exposure to — God’s fully-orbed truth; it is ultimately a kind, redemptive, and positive thing leveled against a tripartite comprised creature, who is, because of his fall from grace long ago, ignorant of his own physical and metaphysical composition.

Nevertheless, God’s Word is very effectual and revelatory; indeed, “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” (Hebrews 4:12).

In concentric layers, starting outside and moving inward, man is flesh, soul and spirit; the word of God (as outlined in Hebrews 4:12), pierces and divides soul and spirit with no direct mention of flesh excepting the idea of “joints and marrow.”

Watchmen Nee, in reference to this verse, said, “Joints and marrow are embedded deeply into the human body.

To separate the joints outside is to cut across the bones; to divide the marrow inside is to crack open the bones. Only two other things are harder to be divided than the joints and marrow—the soul and spirit.” To reprove, therefore, is likened to the unsavory idea of both cutting across bones and cracking them; it is to tell a fault to our outer man (flesh)—to never allow his baser expression to

define who we are; this is the gospel—yes, the good news—to our flesh.

The spirit by way of the soul is to discipline our animal component—and train it like the dog flesh it nearly is; we do not reason with an ignorant beast, but we do continuously reprove its unbridled and independent expression. To reprove is to deeply correct the most bent and disfigured ideologies ever subscribed to by the damaged imaginations and intellects of fallen man; done properly, and aided by the Holy Spirit, an effective reproof will remove even the most hardened and entrenched dispositions.

IV. REBUKE

The word “rebuke,” is very similar to our proceeding word “reprove,” with perhaps the most significant difference being that its force is directed at the intellect, as it appeals to reason, whereas, a “reproof” is directed at the visceral seat, and is therefore more an emotive charge or command. Thus, rebuking is a more mature way of reproof, allowing the child’s intellect to agree or disagree with any or all reasons behind a censorious charge. It appeals to more of the human entity, subsuming everything a reproof entails, but adding an opportunity for this entity to also agree with the reproof without feeling only viscerally compelled. In other words, the developing child of God is beginning to see the wisdom of restraint and

is therefore now learning to self-censure, or self-discipline.

Strong's rendering of the word "rebuke" entailed several Greek root meanings and shards of nuanced meanings that included these ideas: "to prize a superimposition" or "to tax upon, i. e. censure or admonish; by implication, to forbid." Basically, to place over or above something is the definition of "superimposition" and to "prize" its application suggests a voluntary allowance to be reproved or rebuked—censuring ourselves and forbidding our soul to express itself as a first cause of action is that dying to self that Jesus Christ requires of any who genuinely follow Him.

V. EXHORT

The ravages of exposure—of outside sources finding fault with us, and self-censure (we finding fault with ourselves)—has run its course. We are now tired, lonely, and somewhat discouraged. Perhaps a more gentle approach will yield better results. Perhaps our will is now less resolved to have its own way due to the previous onslaughts of corrective actions. Either way, it is now time to be encouraged or exhorted; to "exhort"—according to Strong—means "to ask, beg, plead, comfort, urge, intreat." It is now more of a question or invitation, appealing to us rather than demanding us. Are we willing, without even a modicum of coercion, to make changes commensurate with corrective instructions? Nonetheless, the bombardment

continues; encouragement is conditional. The refrain has not ceased; corrective action is still required, but now it is being solicited via an appeal to a slowly weakening resolve.

CONCLUSION

When Paul instructed Timothy to “reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction,” he did so because he knew that the time was coming when they would not “endure sound doctrine” (2 Timothy 4:2). I am not so sure this was exclusively some end time statement or future concern, as much as it always represents the immediate future of any individual Christian of any era that has—as his or her goal—the high calling of God in Christ Jesus (or maturity).

Will we—or will we not—endure sound doctrine, the ravages of the cross, and death to self in order to achieve mastery or maturity?

Finally, if we should agree to correction as the norm (and not the exception), and yield ourselves to its prickly path, our discipleship will supersede a purely academic flavor.

We will be like the psalmist who declared “I have more insight than all my teachers,” and why? — because: “Your testimonies are my meditation” (Psalm 119:99). Thus, using scripture as our textbook for life, and perpetually, day in, day out, when feeling well, or not, heralding its message, and allowing its magnificent light to correct us as vigorously as it does, we appeal to the entire tripartite composition of our being.

The gospel in relation to our entire makeup (the *modus operandi* of our discipleship) looks

something like this: To REPROVE is to tell a fault to our outer man, to smite him with open rebuke and never allow his baser expression to define us (this is the gospel in relation to our flesh); to place over or above something is the definition of ‘superimposition’ and to ‘prize’ its application suggests a voluntary allowance to be reproved or REBUKED—censoring ourselves and forbidding our mind, will and/or emotions to express themselves as a first cause of action is the dying to self that God requires if we are to actually gain ourselves in the ultimate sense (this is the gospel in relation to our soul); our God is a consuming fire that we are invited to come near to—our spirits are already addressed and AFFIRMED as perfect (with the Seed of Christ planted in the center of our spirits or hearts), but it takes the continual perfecting of ourselves within the flames of intimacy with the Holy Spirit to maintain this perfection (this is the gospel in relation to our spirit). Added to these three operations is preaching/teaching the word, in season and out; taken together, it is A DIFFERENT FIVE-FOLD MINISTRY.

Chapter 22

How to Pray

What is Prayer? Prayer is the elevation of the mind and the heart to God in adoration, in gratitude, and in a request for the spiritual and material things we need.

Our Lord Jesus Christ instructed us to go into our inner room and there pray to God the Father in secret. This inner room indicates the heart, the essence of our being. "Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God." Philippians 4:6 Prayer is doxology, praise, thanksgiving, confession, supplication, and appeal to God. "When I prayed I was new, but when I stopped praying I became old," wrote a renowned theologian of early Christianity.

Prayer is the path to renewal and spiritual life. Prayer is strength, refreshment, and joy in communion with God.

Through the grace of God and our disciplined efforts, prayer lifts us up to a mindful, loving communion with God in which everything is felt in a new presence of God's grace.

Prayer becomes a personal dialogue with God, a spiritual breathing of the soul, a foretaste of the

bliss of God's kingdom. Daily prayer is essential to a fruitful Christian life. Learn why and how we should pray according to scripture.

Why Should We Pray?

As we pray sincerely within our hearts we grow in prayer.

By the grace of God, we experience the blessing of the presence of the Holy Spirit working within us. To experience the grace of God's holy love, to allow the cleansing and healing work of the Holy Spirit, and to use it as light and strength for daily living -- such are the fruits of true prayer.

Christ tells us in the Gospel of Luke, "how much more will your Father in heaven give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" (Luke 11:13b).

Pray for renewal and the growth of our souls. Pray to give thanks to God for all he provides in our life. Pray to seek forgiveness for our sinfulness as humility is a requirement for prayer.

We are commanded to pray regularly in our life throughout the Bible: "Pray without ceasing" (1 Thessalonians 5:17) "And pray in the Spirit on all occasions with all kinds of prayers and requests. With this in mind, be alert and always keep on praying for all the Lord's people." (Ephesians 6:18) "And he told them a parable to the effect that they ought always to pray and not lose heart." (Luke 18:1) "Continue steadfastly in prayer, being watchful in it with thanksgiving." (Colossians 4:2)

How To Pray

Only the Holy Spirit can guide us to pray as we should. Just as a child learns to walk by walking, we can best learn to pray by praying, trusting in the help of God. Put your whole soul into your prayer and think about the meaning of every word.

Be persistent in prayer and do not yield to carelessness or neglect. Strengthen your prayer through a lively faith in the Lord, a spirit of forgiveness toward others, and genuine Christian living according to God's commandments.

Chapter 23

Fasting is Mandatory

The Prophet Zechariah heard God's pointing to the urgency of fasting rightly: "Speak unto all the people of the land, and to the priests, saying, When ye fasted and mourned in the fifth and seventh month, even those seventy years, did ye at all fast unto me, even to me?" (Zechariah 7:5)

Clearly, it is urgent that we examine our hearts carefully before entering into a fast before the Lord.

Our only purpose must be to honor Him with our humble obedience and a heart submitted to His sovereignty!

The Bible presents several references to people fasting. Scripture with Bible verses for fasting include: Jesus fasted for 40 days in the wilderness prior to beginning His ministry. (Matthew 4:1-11)

The prophet Daniel fasted for 21 days, eating only fruits and vegetables and drinking only water (Daniel 10: 2-3)

In the Book of Luke, a prophetess named Anna stays in a temple while fasting and praying (Luke 2:36-38) David and his men fast until evening after learning about Saul's death (2 Samuel 1:12) Moses completed two 40 day fasts, without food and drinking only water. (Exodus 24:15 - 32:15)

Note: Some believe Moses completed an 81 day fast in Deuteronomy 9. Study this and form your own opinion. Elijah fasted 40 days. (1 Kings 19:28) Paul and Barnabas fasted 14 days. (Acts 27:43)

Personal Testimony

I have personally fasted many times throughout my Christian journey. These included many one 1 day fasts, numerous 3 day, one 5 day fast, a 7 day fast, a 21 Daniel fast, and two water only, 40 day fasts.

Each was precipitated by a great need, and in each case the Lord graciously responded. This was particularly true during each of the 40 day fasts. I recommend that every man called into ministry follow Christ's example by completing a 40 day fast. This could be a 40 day Daniel fast. I do not recommend anyone attempt a 40 day water only fast if God has not called you specifically to do so.

We are required to fast and to pray as an act of obedience. This is not optional.

Pastor's must lead their flocks by being a living example of the fulfillment of scriptures. Those not led by such pastors, as described, I urge you to ask the Holy Spirit to guide your understanding.

He will!

Chapter 24

WHAT IS THE 'OIL' OF MATTHEW 25?

We will seek the counsel of a man born in 1697, just 64 years after the trial in Rome of Galileo for declaring the Earth revolved around the Sun. This was considered to be an act of "Criminal Heresy". Galileo was found "vehemently suspect of heresy" and sentenced to indefinite house arrest, where he remained until his death in 1642.

We are certain that he died still convinced his theory of the Earth revolving around the Sun to be true. John Gill was born in England in 1697, and grew up to become a lover of the deeper understanding of Holy Scripture. He spent thousands of hours throughout his youth and into adulthood learning the scriptures and studying them in the original Hebrew and Greek, having mastered each language.

John would become the Sr. Pastor of a Church in England that would, one hundred years later, be pastored by Charles Spurgeon.

Using John's understanding, let us explore Matthew 25 together concerning the Parable of the Wise and Foolish Virgins, and begin with this mysterious "OIL". He referred to it as "Lamps", stating, "the Bride's lamps were the word of God, the Holy scriptures of truth, particularly the Gospel, and the doctrines of it; which, like a lamp, were lighted in

the evening of the Jewish disposition (before Christ), and will shine the brightest towards the End of the world (End of the Age we see today): these are like lamps both to walk by, and work by, and were a light to all these virgins; some were savingly enlightened into them, and by them; and others notionally (existing in the mind only, and not in the heart), but were taken up, owned, and professed, as the rule of faith and practice, by them all; and that in order to meet and find the Bridegroom, for they testify of Him: or rather an external profession of religion is designed by the lamps, which is distinct from the oil of grace, and the vessel of heart, in which that is; and is that into which the oil is put and burns, so as to become visible: and must be daily recruited, and trimmed with fresh supplies of the GRACE OF CHRIST, without which it cannot be kept up, nor will be of any use and service; and is what may go out, or be dropped and lost, as some of these lamps.”

“Now this was what was taken up by them all (all ten of the virgins); they all made a profession of Christ, and His gospel: some of them took it up aright, upon an experience of the grace of God, and principles of grace wrought in their souls; others, without any experience, and without considering the nature, importance, and consequences of a profession: and so they all went forth to meet the Bridegroom: some in exercise of faith on Him, and in His coming; in love to Him, and His appearance;

desiring, and longing to see Him; expecting, and waiting for Him: others only in a way of a visible profession of religion, and an outward attendance on ordinances.” So what do we make of John Gill’s in-depth study (in Hebrew and in Greek) of this precious oil the Bride of Christ must steward over, taking great care to preserve and protect it, while expectantly, anxiously, longingly waiting for the coming of the Bridegroom?

We understand this oil is the precious Gospel truth, the light of His word, contained within our hearts. We must drink of it without ceasing, embracing it and loving it, since we know that our Bridegroom ‘IS’ the Word.

John 1:1 *“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word ‘WAS’ GOD!”*

We must understand that He loves us, and has loved us from before the foundations of the World. He knew us from Eternity past. He chose us (Ephesians 1), and desires us to be with Him forever.

Of the ten Virgins, however, most will not understand, will not seek to understand, will not embrace who they are, and their eternal destiny. I urge you to fully wake, and fully embrace this calling to prepare. "Pray without ceasing."

Chapter 25

THE OIL

THE WISE VIRGINS HAD EXTRA OIL IN THEIR LAMPS

- I. Now the story goes that the main difference between the wise and foolish virgins was that the wise virgins had extra oil in their lamps. What this simply means is that they had extra HOLY SPIRIT powered revelational knowledge about the reality of the close of the age. I have no problem with the modern day televangelists and teachers and theologians but what just staggers my mind is how by wit and study of human psychology and the appetites of the modern day humans, they have literary swept the truth of the return of JESUS under the carpet and have made such a powerful inescapable truth to appear as a minor or non vital topic, hey have majored on minor things and ignored the major things. JESUS spoke about the end times than any other prophet. The book of Revelation is all about the close of the age. It is literary true that the truth that people ignore or assume or overlook will one day sweep them off like a tsunami...by this I mean the rapture !! Those few brethren who will understand the weight of these matters about the need to arise and shine and prepare for the official arrival of the MESSIAH are the wise virgins...the only danger in this case is that preparation is purely a

personal duty your pastor cannot do it for you, your wife or husband cannot the oil could not be shared goes the story. Having extra oil means having extra knowledge, information, truth, understanding and above allowing the HOLY SPIRIT to sharpen your discernment and spiritual faculties to understand the times and seasons and adjusting adequately on such information so that you may raise a standard against worldly defilements and be found without spot or wrinkle. Remember that one main reason that made JESUS to shed tears is when HE saw that HIS brethren the Jews missed their season of visitation by not understanding the times and season... I'm afraid to let you know that this same thing is happening right now to the ingrafted Gentiles church ! We can sound the alarm and we will continue to so do, and send invitation letters for the marriage supper of the Lamb to both the worldly humanity and the church...but in the long run, decision to take action on such warnings and information goes back to matters of personal choice because such facts as that the will of man is sovereign cannot change. Again it cannot be argued that choosing to become the Bride of CHRIST and preparing for the same is a totally different calling altogether...THE LORD spoke to my hearing that becoming the Bride of CHRIST, the rapture church is the greatest calling of all ages...no

wonder only a few handful remnant will make it
!! Matthew 25:1-10 Revelation 19:7

II. THE “OIL”

... the oil represents the presence of God in our life. It could be taken as the presence of the Holy Spirit. It's the oil that keeps the fire in our heart burning. It is mentioned in the (Matthew 25) parable that the oil is to be purchased. This means that a price is to be paid to obtain the oil. We must have a continual presence of God in our life, we are to pay a price by spending time at the feet of Jesus in prayer and praise. Only a substantial presence of God in our life can keep the fire burning through the dark nights. Such a person who has the fire burning in him at the time of the Bride Groom's return, will go in with Him. If we love Him, we will pursue Him. Our pursuit will grow in intensity as our love for Him increases. To know Him is to love Him, Saints.

OBTAINING OIL FOR OUR LAMPS

Each of us need a constant supply of oil to keep our lights burning brightly. As we know, oil represents our private life (in God) that produces a bright light in a dark world.

This type of oil is produced or “purchased” as we meet with our Bridegroom in the secret place. As we purchase more oil for our lamps, we will develop a passionate love relationship with the Lord that will result in deep intimacy and maturity.

Then, we will be known by our Bridegroom, experience the joy of the wedding feast, and partner with our Bridegroom King for all eternity (1 Cor. 8:3). Each of us must purchase our own supply of oil. As Jesus so clearly tells us in this parable, we cannot borrow oil from anyone else—we have to purchase it for ourselves. The oil could not be shared. Just like we can't depend on another's faith for our salvation, we can't depend on anyone else for an intimate relationship with Jesus. We must go to the dealers ourselves (Matt. 25:9), and we must go often to keep our oil supplies replenished. Purchasing oil will cost us time, money, and even friends. Though buying oil is expensive, the small price that we pay cannot even compare to the rewards we will experience at the marriage supper of the Lamb. The wise virgins knew the expensive cost of oil, but they considered being eternally prepared for Jesus worth any price. It is not always easy to buy oil for our lamps. Bob Sorge in his book, *Secrets of the Secret Place*, explains some of the challenges that we will face: I connect viscerally with the pain of countless believers who carry the conviction that the secret place is central to an overcoming life but who struggle on a regular basis to maintain the secret place as a daily lifestyle. I know what it's like to live below what the Christian walk could be and yet feel almost powerless to change anything. I've watched

myself return persistently to the sources which are no source.

For example, when wanting to get revitalized from a draining day, we will look to television, as though its distractions will renew us—only to be left empty for the umpteenth time. Or, we will attend a church service in the hope that the preacher’s walk with God will infuse us with fresh energy for the journey. But deep down we know that sermons and teachings, although edifying, can never replace the carrying power we find when we sit at His feet and hear His word for ourselves. We don’t need to add another condemning word to the berating voices we all know so well.

What we need, rather, is for our eyes to be lifted to the glorious hope we already carry within. For many believers, setting aside time and energy to meet with God on a regular basis is one of the most difficult disciplines of the Christian faith.

It’s much easier to go to church, attend a conference, serve in a ministry, or even to take part in a corporate fast than to regularly set time apart to seek God personally.

Despite our good intentions, the cares of the world, busyness of life, careers, children, recreation, and so many other “good” things distract us from the secret place. Despite the challenges that we face in pursuing intimacy with God, our mandate is to stay

alert, press through the opposition, and remain focused on our relationship with Jesus.

We must overcome the oppositions and distractions in order to buy more oil in the secret place. As we do this, we will become wise virgins whom the Lord knows intimately and we will be welcomed into the eternal wedding feast. The secret place is where we buy oil. As we come aside to commune with our Lord, we are renewed in the Holy Spirit, and our oil levels are replenished.

Oil in the lamp represents having an inner reservoir of Holy Spirit reality. It doesn't cost much to get oil for ministry, but it will cost you a lot to get the oil of an intimate relationship with Jesus.

The oil of authentic relationship is bought at the cost of investing time and energy in the secret place. The foolish will allow urgent matters of the moment to pull them away from the secret place after having a minimal filling. The wise will stay and continue to be filled with oil until their hearts are energized by their love relationship with Jesus. Devote yourself to the secret place until your heart is overflowing with love and zeal for your Beloved. Then, make it the first priority of your day to keep that oil replenished. The secret is right here.

The secret place is the threshold for resourcing the replenishment you need to sustain through the dark night of Christ's delays.

Finally: The wise virgins' lights shined brightly because they were empowered by their secret life in God and that is what it means that they had extra oil in their lamps.

In this parable, the lamps symbolize the virgins' external life in God, and it shined forth the light of their relationship with Jesus.

Observe what Jesus said: Matthew 5:14-16 You are the light of the world. A city that is set on an hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a candle, and put it under a bushel, but on a candlestick; and it giveth light unto all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. The wise virgins' light was their godly character. It was the fire of their passion for Jesus and the brilliance of their ministry, service, and good works. It was the power of God working through them because they were fully yielded to the Holy Spirit.

In summary, their light represented the external fruit of their personal walk with our soon arriving Bridegroom. The lamps described in this parable were actually torches that were fed by a small vessel containing oil. These vessels held a small amount of oil and had to be frequently replenished. Without the constant supply of oil, the light would go out quickly. The oil that fueled these lamps was hidden by the vessel that contained it. Just as oil was hidden in flasks, the wise virgins lamps burned

brightly because of their hidden relationship with the Bridegroom. This oil of intimacy could only be purchased by each virgin individually and it could only be purchased in the secret place of intimacy with Jesus (Matt. 25:9; Rev. 3:18).

Chapter 26

Eternity with Christ

Ecclesiastes 3:1 says, "God has set eternity in their hearts."

This means that all of us who are (made in the image and likeness of God) have an intuitive awareness that life does not stop at the grave.

The Bible contains the most compelling and authoritative words ever said about life beyond the grave.

First, it teaches that everyone who dies will be resurrected (Acts 24:15).

Second, we know that everyone will give an account of their life before the holy God (Hebrews 9:27).

Third, the Bible also tells us that, at this judgment, the issue will not be how great a sinner a person was in this life but what he or she did about it.

Did that person turn to a blood-stained cross outside of Jerusalem and acknowledge Jesus Christ as Savior or not? Fourth, the Bible teaches that those who have trusted in Christ will spend eternity with God in heaven, while those who refuse to bow to Christ will spend eternity in isolation from Him in hell.

Now if all this is true, then there are huge implications for those outside the family of God, and for those inside the family of God.

If I were in the first group, several feelings would come over me. For one, I'd feel grateful that the Bible is clear about life and death. I might not like it, but at least it's clear.

Second, I would feel relieved that justice will be accomplished in the world some day, and all the tragedies will finally get put into balance.

Next, I would feel hopeful, because according to the Bible, even someone outside the kingdom of God has a shot at winding up in the right place in eternity, no matter who they are or what they've done. This scandalous message of Scripture is that amazing grace has made everyone eligible.

Everyone "called and chosen to receive it.

Finally, I'd feel sobered, because I would know that every day I slept on this eternal issue, I was playing a dangerous game of roulette with stakes that are supremely high.

Now, here are some urgent implications of eternity for those inside the family of God.

First, when we have our eternity with Christ settled, we can live in an overwhelming sense of peace, since our assurance of heaven is not pinned on our performance, but to the sufficiency of what Christ has done.

Second, we can start looking forward to heaven a little bit. When you see enough suffering in this world, you understand why the Scripture writers look forward to the day when we can finally be

together in eternity in the presence of God, where there is no more crying and no more abuse.

Last, when we live in the light of eternity, we develop an urgent sense of mission, and we serve Him with joy and great happiness, knowing we are working with Him to fulfill His Father's will.

What are we doing with our lives that will outlive the grave?

Are we just Christian materialists, Christian existentialists, Christian hedonists?

Is your life like everyone else's, except for the fact that you know you're going to heaven?

If you read the Scriptures you'll see that the only thing that outlasts the grave is people.

Position doesn't, possessions don't, status doesn't, pleasure doesn't.

So we need to orient our lives around people—touching people, feeding hungry people, ministering to people, discipling people, pointing people to Christ. So be careful not to lose your eternal perspective as you live your life today. (Wm Hybels) One of the greatest responsibilities a Christian has is preparing his others for eternity.

Fail in this, and you have failed why you were chosen before the foundations of the world were created.

EPILOGUE

I. WHO OWNS THE WORLD?

Knowing Our Enemy

Scripture begins with a truth that must govern everything that follows: God is the Creator, and therefore God is the ultimate Owner and Sovereign over all creation.

The earth is the LORD'S, and the fulness thereof; the world, and they that dwell therein. — Psalm 24:1

God's ownership is absolute. Satan does not own the earth, does not rival God as an equal power, and does not possess independent authority. Yet Scripture does describe Satan as the "god of this world" (2 Corinthians 4:4), the "prince of this world" (John 12:31), and the "prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). These titles describe his temporary and limited influence within a fallen world system. They do not diminish the sovereignty of God.

The distinction is essential: God owns the world by right of creation; Satan exercises only such influence as God permits, and only for as long as God permits it.

All Power by Permission

The temptation of Jesus makes this distinction especially clear. Satan showed Jesus the kingdoms of the world and offered Him their authority and glory in exchange for worship (Matthew 4:8-10; Luke 4:5-8). But Luke records an important admission in Satan's own words: the authority he claimed had been "delivered" to him. Satan is not the source of authority. He is a creature operating beneath the sovereign permission of God.

Job gives us the same pattern. Satan could not touch Job's possessions, body, or life beyond the boundaries God established (Job 1:10-12; 2:2-6). The enemy is real, active, and destructive, but he is never autonomous.

This is why Christians must never think of God and Satan as two equal powers struggling for control of the universe. God is God. Satan is a created being. The outcome is not in doubt.

Real — but Defeated

The whole world lieth in wickedness. — 1 John 5:19

Satan's influence in the present world is terrible and widespread. He blinds unbelieving minds (2 Corinthians 4:4), works in the children of disobedience (Ephesians 2:1-2), and opposes the purposes of God. Yet the New Testament announces

that the decisive blow has already been struck through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ.

Now is the judgment of this world: now shall the prince of this world be cast out. — John 12:31

At the cross, Christ canceled the record of debt that stood against His people and "spoiled principalities and powers," triumphing over them (Colossians 2:13-15). Satan is an accuser, but the believer's guilt has been answered by the blood of Christ. The enemy may accuse, tempt, threaten, and oppose; he cannot overturn the finished work of Christ.

What We Must Know About Satan

1. He is not the opposite of God. God is omnipotent, omnipresent, and omniscient; Satan is none of these. He is created, finite, and dependent upon God for his continued existence.
2. He approaches God as a subordinate, not an equal (Job 1:6).
3. He cannot tempt or test beyond what God permits (Job 1:12; Matthew 4:1).
4. He cannot manipulate creation apart from God's permission (Job 1:12, 16, 19).
5. He cannot physically harm God's servant beyond divinely established limits (Job 2:2-6).
6. He cannot take life apart from God's sovereign permission (Job 2:6). Hebrews 2:14 speaks of the devil's power of death, but ultimate authority over life and death belongs to God.

7. He cannot touch the believer outside the boundaries God allows (Job 1:10; 1 John 5:18).
8. He cannot force a believer to sin. In Christ we have been delivered from the power of darkness and brought into the kingdom of God's Son (Acts 26:18; Colossians 1:13).
9. He cannot read the human heart as God does. Scripture repeatedly reserves perfect knowledge of the heart to the LORD (1 Kings 8:39; Psalm 94:11; Matthew 9:4).
10. He does not know the future as God knows it. God alone declares "the end from the beginning" (Isaiah 46:9-10).
11. He does not possess God's revelatory knowledge. Daniel made clear that hidden mysteries are revealed by "a God in heaven" (Daniel 2:27-28).
12. He must flee before a believer who submits to God and resists him (James 4:7).
13. Believers are ultimately victorious through Christ (2 Corinthians 2:14; Romans 8:38-39).

The summary is simple: Satan is dangerous, but he is not sovereign. He is powerful, but he is not all-powerful. He is active, but already judged. Every believer should know the enemy — but should know the Lord far better.

Greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. — 1 John 4:4

II. THE BIRTH OF THE BRIDE OF CHRIST IN GOD'S PLAN

Understanding the Bride of Christ

Man was created for a purpose. After the restoration described in Genesis 1, God announced both the creation of man and the calling attached to that creation: man, made in God's image and likeness, was to exercise dominion under God over the earth (Genesis 1:26-28).

The man was not intended to fulfill this calling alone. The woman was formed from the man and presented to him as his corresponding helper (Genesis 2:18-23). Together, male and female formed the complete human pair commissioned to rule under God's authority.

This pattern matters because Scripture later presents Christ as the last Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45) and uses marriage imagery to describe the relationship between Christ and His people (Ephesians 5:25-32; 2 Corinthians 11:2; Revelation 19:7-8). The first Adam and Eve establish a pattern; Christ and His redeemed people reveal its greater fulfillment.

Adam was not deceived, yet he joined Eve in her fallen condition (1 Timothy 2:14). I understand this as a type that points beyond Adam to Christ: the sinless One entered fully into the consequences of our fallen condition — without Himself sinning —

so that His people might be redeemed (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Christ does not redeem His people merely to rescue them from judgment. He prepares a people who will belong to Him forever, share in His inheritance, reflect His character, and reign with Him according to God's eternal purpose (Romans 8:16-17; Revelation 19:7-8; 22:5).

This is why the Bride's preparation matters. Redemption is God's gift; sanctification is the Spirit's ongoing work in the surrendered believer. The Bride does not save herself. She responds to grace by yielding herself to the One who loved her and gave Himself for her.

Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honour to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife hath made herself ready. — Revelation 19:7

III. FINAL WARNING TO AN UNBELIEVING WORLD

Two realities stand before this generation: the promised return of Jesus Christ and the judgment Scripture associates with the Day of the Lord.

The world is moving rapidly, nations are aligning and realigning, and the spirit of rebellion against God is increasingly visible. None of this should produce panic in the believer. It should produce watchfulness.

At the time of this writing, August 9, 2026, efforts continue to expand the Abraham Accords and to bring additional nations — including Saudi Arabia — into formal normalization with Israel. Saudi Arabia has not yet formally joined. I mention these developments not as proof of a prophetic timetable, but because they remind us how quickly political alignments can change and how carefully believers must watch without becoming captive to speculation.

Many Christian ministries are also looking toward 2033 as a symbolic two-thousand-year milestone associated with the resurrection of Jesus Christ. Such commemorations may be meaningful, but no anniversary gives us authority to set a date for Christ's return. Jesus commanded watchfulness, not date-setting.

The passages that follow have shaped my own study of the final generation: Psalm 83, Psalm 2,

Psalm 46, 1 Thessalonians 5:3, and 2 Thessalonians 2:1-3.

The Nations Conspire Against God

Psalm 83 describes a coalition determined to act against God's covenant people. Students differ over whether the psalm should be read only within its ancient historical setting or whether it also foreshadows later events. Either way, its spiritual principle is unmistakable: human powers can unite in hostility to God's purposes, but they cannot overthrow His sovereignty.

Psalm 2 expands the picture. The kings of the earth set themselves against the LORD and against His Anointed. Human rebellion may take political form, but at its deepest level it is rebellion against God. Heaven is not intimidated. God remains on His throne.

The False Peace

For when they shall say, Peace and safety; then sudden destruction cometh upon them.

1 Thessalonians 5:3

Humanity repeatedly seeks lasting peace apart from the Prince of Peace. Treaties, alliances, military strength, and diplomacy have their proper place, but none can reconcile the human heart to God. The believer is therefore called to sobriety and spiritual readiness.

The Departure

Second Thessalonians 2 begins with Paul's appeal "by the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, and by our gathering together unto him." Two verses later the Geneva Bible renders the key expression, "except there come a departing first." William Tyndale likewise used language of "departing" in his early English translation.

It is important to state the historical evidence accurately. Both the William Tyndale 1535 NT, and Geneva 1560 Bibles , use the English word "departing," in its own marginal notes interpreting that departure as a “© wonderful departure. “ (2 Thessalonians 2:3)

NOTE: All Bible translations published after 1560 AD, interpreted this passage as saying “falling away of the church”.

May we will all agree there is nothing “wonderful” about this!

My conviction rests on the larger context and on my continued study of the passage. Paul has just spoken of "our gathering together" to Christ. I have therefore become persuaded that the language deserves to be examined as a possible reference to a physical departure — the gathering of the prepared Bride to Christ before the Day of the Lord.

Note: Here I insert Proverbs 25:2 for greater clarity:

“It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings (Men) is to search it out.”

Why would God want to conceal something as important as this?

To avoid generational confusion, perhaps, because this scripture was appointed for the final generation.

Sincere students of Scripture may disagree with this conclusion, and I respect the responsibility of every believer to test it carefully. My purpose is not to force agreement. It is to urge examination of the text, its language, its context, and the history of its translation.

The Geneva Bible was first published in 1560 during the reign of Elizabeth I and became enormously influential among English-speaking Protestants. James I later sponsored the translation that became the King James Version of 1611, in part because he strongly objected to some of the Geneva Bible's marginal notes. James was the son of Mary, Queen of Scots, and Lord Darnley — not the son of Queen Mary I of England. Historical precision matters, because truth has nothing to fear from careful examination.

I have also received correspondence from a Greek believer who encouraged me to investigate historical Greek usage more carefully. That correspondence strengthened my determination to keep studying, but personal testimony cannot replace Scripture. The Word must remain the final standard.

I therefore present my conclusion as a conviction reached through study: that the "departure" in this passage may describe the departure of the prepared Bride, gathered to Christ before the Day of the Lord. I ask the reader to search the Scriptures and reach a conclusion before God.

It is the glory of God to conceal a thing: but the honor of kings is to search out a matter. —

Proverbs 25:2

I do not rest this interpretation on numerical coincidences or on elapsed-year calculations. Strong's Concordance numbers are indexes to Hebrew and Greek words, not prophetic codes attached to modern calendar intervals. Scripture, read in context and illuminated by the Holy Spirit, is our standard.

Revelation 14:1-5 has also played a major role in my understanding of a faithful first-fruits company of Saints, who follow the Lamb wherever He goes.

I understand this passage in relation to the Bride and her preparation. Again, I invite the reader to study the passage prayerfully rather than merely accepting my conclusion.

God's Refuge

God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. — Psalm 46:1

The world may tremble. Kingdoms may be moved. Nations may rage. But the throne of God remains

unshaken. Our confidence is not in governments, economies, military alliances, religious institutions, or human leaders. Our confidence is in Jesus Christ.

How Then Shall We Live?

- We should not become fearful; we should become faithful.
- We should not become consumed with speculation; we should become devoted to holiness.
- We should watch and pray without pretending to know the day or the hour.
- We should proclaim the Gospel while opportunity remains.
- We should test every teaching by the whole counsel of Scripture.
- We should value history, language, and translation study without placing any of them above the inspired Word of God.
- We should ask the Holy Spirit to guide us into truth and to make our lives obedient to that truth.

Psalm 83 warns of conspiracy. Psalm 2 reveals rebellion. First Thessalonians 5 warns against false security. Second Thessalonians 2 calls us to careful study of Christ's coming and our gathering to Him. Psalm 46 reminds us that through every age God remains our refuge.

Whether you agree with every conclusion I have reached or not, I ask you to do what every faithful believer should do: open the Scriptures, search them prayerfully, and ask the Holy Spirit to guide you into all truth.

Our hope is not in a translation, a teacher, a political agreement, or an interpretation. Our hope is in Jesus Christ — crucified, risen, ascended, and returning.

Even so, come, Lord Jesus. — **Revelation 22:20**

Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. — **2 Timothy 2:15**

IV. OBEDIENCE IS THE EVIDENCE OF OUR LOVE FOR CHRIST

If ye love me, keep my commandments. — John 14:15

Jesus ties love to obedience because biblical love is more than emotion. It is loyal, active, sacrificial commitment. To call Jesus "Lord" while refusing His commands is a contradiction. Obedience does not purchase His love; it reveals that His love has taken hold of us.

Why Obedience Is the Proof of Love

- Love acts. Words alone are not enough. Jesus connected love for Him with keeping His commandments (John 14:15).
- Obedience reveals trust and surrender. When Christ's command conflicts with our natural desire, obedience declares that His wisdom is greater than our own.
- Obedience deepens fellowship. Submission is not a lifeless checklist; it aligns our lives with the character of the One we love.
- Obedience imitates Christ. Jesus Himself learned obedience through suffering and perfectly submitted to the Father's will (Hebrews 5:8; Philippians 2:8).
- Obedience is a response to grace. We love because He first loved us (1 John 4:19). We do

not obey in order to become loved; we obey because we have been loved and made new.

Obedience proves our love for God (1 John 5:2-3), gives evidence that we know Him (1 John 2:3-6), glorifies Him before the world (1 Peter 2:12; Matthew 5:16), and places us on the path of blessing (John 13:17; Psalm 128:1).

Faith is necessary to please God (Hebrews 11:6), and genuine faith produces a changed life. The believer is a new creation in Christ (2 Corinthians 5:17). The Holy Spirit does not merely change our religious vocabulary; He begins transforming our desires, conduct, relationships, priorities, and character.

This does not mean that Christians become sinlessly perfect in this life. It means that we can no longer make peace with willful sin. We confess it, forsake it, and keep returning to Christ in repentance and obedience.

Thy word have I hid in mine heart, that I might not sin against thee. — Psalm 119:11

Psalm 119 presents the posture of the Upright: delight in God's statutes, hunger for His judgments, a whole heart seeking Him, and a determined refusal to forget His Word. This is not legalism. It is love expressed through surrender.

V. ABUNDANT FRUIT-BEARERS LOVE CHRIST

Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples. — John 15:8

Fruit is not the root of salvation, but it is the evidence of life. Jesus repeatedly taught that trees are known by their fruit (Matthew 7:16-20; 12:33). John the Baptist commanded his hearers to "bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance" (Matthew 3:8).

It is not enough merely to say that we believe in Jesus. Scripture calls us to examine the evidence of that profession. Is the life being transformed? Is the Spirit producing His character? Are we learning obedience? Are we becoming more like Christ?

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance. — Galatians 5:22-23

The works of the flesh and the fruit of the Spirit cannot be treated as equally acceptable paths. Those who belong to Christ are called to crucify the flesh with its passions and desires (Galatians 5:19-24). Jesus calls every disciple to deny self, take up the cross daily, and follow Him (Luke 9:23).

A true follower therefore does not merely profess Christ; a true follower abides in Christ. And the life that abides in the Vine bears fruit.

I am the vine, ye are the branches: He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit: for without me ye can do nothing. — John 15:5

Questions for the Prepared Bride

Are you making yourself ready? (Revelation 19:7-8)

Have you declared war against the willful sins that still seek mastery over you?

Are you being transformed into the image and likeness of Christ?

Are you producing an abundance of fruit that glorifies the Father?

Are prayer and fasting genuine disciplines in your life?

Are you learning and practicing obedience?

Are you refusing to compromise with a world system that is passing away?

Are you watching for Christ's soon return while faithfully serving those He has placed around you?

Saints, these are not questions to answer casually.

The parable of the wise and foolish virgins in Matthew 25 is a call to readiness. The wise did not borrow another person's preparation. Each was responsible to be ready when the Bridegroom came.

No one knows how much time remains before the Father sends His Son. Therefore do not postpone surrender. Do not postpone repentance. Do not

postpone obedience. Do not postpone the secret-place relationship with Christ that keeps the lamp burning.

I urge you: make the decision now to belong wholly to Jesus Christ.

Scriptures on Fruit-Bearing

Jeremiah 17:7-8 — Blessed is the man that trusteth in the LORD... he shall be as a tree planted by the waters... neither shall cease from yielding fruit.

Galatians 5:22-23 — The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance.

John 15:16 — I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain.

John 15:5 — He that abideth in me, and I in him, the same bringeth forth much fruit.

Matthew 3:8 — Bring forth therefore fruits meet for repentance.

John 15:8 — Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples.

Matthew 13:22 — The care of this world, and the deceitfulness of riches, choke the word, and he becometh unfruitful.

Habakkuk 3:17-18 — Although the fig tree shall not blossom... yet I will rejoice in the LORD, I will joy in the God of my salvation.

James 3:18 — The fruit of righteousness is sown in peace of them that make peace.

Proverbs 18:21 — Death and life are in the power of the tongue: and they that love it shall eat the fruit thereof.

Leviticus 26:3-4 — If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them... the trees of the field shall yield their fruit.

Isaiah 55:11 — So shall my word be that goeth forth out of my mouth: it shall not return unto me void.

Hebrews 12:11 — Afterward it yieldeth the peaceable fruit of righteousness unto them which are exercised thereby.

Ephesians 5:11 — Have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, but rather reprove them.

Romans 8:19 — For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.

A Final Word

Beloved Saints, I pray that you have been blessed, challenged, and strengthened by the truths contained within these pages. My prayer is that this book does not end merely with information, but with a decision to start your own ministry: to pursue Jesus Christ with your whole heart, to submit to the Holy Spirit, to love the Word, to

practice obedience, and to bear much fruit for the glory of our Father.

Yes — your ministry. Every believer has a responsibility to carry the true Gospel of Jesus Christ into the opportunities God provides. Feed His sheep. Encourage the weary. Warn the careless. Love the lost. Speak truth in love. And remain ready for the return of our Bridegroom.

And now, little children, abide in him; that, when he shall appear, we may have confidence, and not be ashamed before him at his coming. — 1 John 2:28

God bless you.

Pastor David Hall

END —

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Pastor David P. Hall

Pastor David P. Hall is an ordained minister who has devoted more than fifty years to the study of Scripture. His teaching reflects a lifelong commitment to biblical context, spiritual discernment, and the believer's responsibility to surrender fully to God's sovereignty and walk uprightly before Him.

Journey of the Upright began in July 2012, when God gave him the title and established him on the journey of personal revelation that ultimately became this book. It gathers the fruit of decades of study and pastoral ministry into an invitation for every reader to search the Scriptures, obey Christ, bear lasting fruit, and be prepared for His coming.

IMMANUEL WORLD MINISTRIES

Pastor Hall founded Immanuel World Ministries in 2011 as an international online church with a mission to "take the Gospel of Christ to the whole world, one heart at a time." The ministry serves believers through Gospel outreach, discipleship, prayer, livestreams, podcasts, Bible teaching, prophetic messages, testimonies, and global Christian fellowship.

Today, Immanuel World Ministries provides more than 100 ministry resources, including messages from Pastor Hall, devotionals, Bible studies, prayer resources, testimonies, and e-books. Its free IWM Mobile app and YouTube channels extend this ministry to readers and viewers throughout the world.



A ministry built for a connected world

Through online teaching and freely available resources, Immanuel World Ministries continues to encourage believers to know Christ more deeply, remain faithful to His Word, and live ready for the return of the Bridegroom.

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THE JOURNEY ISN'T EASY. BUT IT IS WORTH EVERY STEP.

Journey of the Upright is the fruit of years of study, prayer, and devotion to the Word of God. It is more than a book—it is a roadmap for those who desire to walk in truth, live with purpose, and finish strong.

Rooted in Scripture and strengthened by history, this book will challenge your thinking, deepen your faith, and equip you to stand firm in a world of compromise.



Discover timeless biblical truths that every believer must know.



Understand the journey God has called you to walk.



Be equipped to overcome the lies, deceptions, and challenges of the last days.



Find encouragement and hope in God's promises for the upright.

*The foundation has been laid.
Now your journey begins...*



DAVID HALL

Ordained Minister •

For over 50 years, David has devoted his life to an in-depth study of the Bible and history—searching, comparing, and rightly dividing the Word of Truth. His desire is to help the body of Christ know the truth, stand firm in it, and finish the race with joy. He and his wife are committed to sharing the Gospel and equipping believers to live for God in these last days.



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