

The Minister's Manual

**Sharpening the Spiritual Vision
of a Shepherd**

Paul G. Caram

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For further information or
additional copies contact:

Zion Christian Publications

Box 256

Ulysses, PA. 16948

Phone (814) 848-9775

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Introduction

Statistics tell us that the *average* minister influences around 10,000 people during his ministerial career. This survey includes ministers in small towns, not only those in large cities. By the contacts he makes when he performs weddings or funerals, by the newspaper articles he writes, by radio interviews, by graduation speeches, prayers made at dedications, hospital visits, or the taped messages he preaches that are sent to family or friends, the average cleric touches thousands of lives. The power and opportunity he possesses to mold and shape minds is unspeakable.

Like People / Like Priest

(Hosea 4:9)

The condition of a nation is directly related to the condition of the Church in that nation, and the condition of the Church is directly related to *the condition of its ministers*. A minister has the power to turn people to righteousness or to worldliness. When a nation is backslidden and ripe for judgment, it is the result of a priesthood that has lowered God's standards (Ezek. 22:26, 44:12, Lam. 2:14).

A river cannot rise any higher than its source, and neither can a congregation rise any higher than the shepherd who is leading them. When the minister has limited vision, he produces a church with limited vision. It is an irrevocable law of our Creator that every living thing reproduces "after his kind" (Gen.1:11, 12, 21, 24, 25; 5:3). A horse reproduces a horse, a cow reproduces a cow, an oak tree reproduces an oak tree, a black person reproduces a black child, a short person reproduces a son or daughter who is short in stature, and a lax leader reproduces a congregation that is mediocre. Contrariwise, the godly leader who has an ongoing vision produces followers who are moving on in their walk with God.

Not long ago, there was a pastors' seminar that was attended by 350 leaders. Each shepherd spoke of expanding his sphere of influence and enlarging his church, but not one of them expressed a concern for having a new meeting with God in his personal life.

“Draw me, we will run after thee”

(Song 1:4)

When the shepherd has a fresh encounter with God, it is equivalent to the whole congregation having a new meeting with God. The spirit that overshadows the pastor will overflow and cover the entire church. Followers truly become like their leaders and mentors. This is the reason it is so important for the shepherd to continue to grow and expand in his own spiritual life, because with superior knowledge, he will produce superior Christians. The Apostle Paul could not be satisfied with ordinary, superficial knowledge. He earnestly sought for “the excellency of the knowledge of Christ” (Phil. 3:8).

Superior Seed Produces Superior Fruit

Paul desired supreme knowledge for two major reasons: First of all, advanced, precise knowledge is needed to know Christ. Having been utterly transformed in his own life by this knowledge, Paul endeavored to *plant* these same truths in his converts. He understood that knowledge on a higher level would develop all the excellent fruits of the Spirit in his followers and bring them to perfection.

From Milk to Meat / From Babes to a Bride

The Lord desires to change the spiritual diet of His Church in these times. The *milk* of the Word [elementary truths] can only produce little children, but to grow into maturity and eventually into His Bride, it requires *meat* [or the deeper truths].

In some crusades, when the invitation is given to receive Christ, thousands raise their hands to accept God's gracious gift of salvation. At that moment, multitudes of spiritual infants are born, but these newborn babies are in need of much care and attention. Therefore, unless we teach them well and get them rooted and grounded in the truth, most of them will die and return to the world. This could be likened to the episode of Luke 5:4-6, when the young disciples threw out their net into the sea and "enclosed a great multitude of fish," but then their net broke.

Preaching and Teaching Are Very Different

The Great Commission of the Lord Jesus Christ has two aspects: Mark 16:15-16 records the command to "preach" the gospel to every creature under heaven, while Matthew 28:19-20 is the command to "teach" all nations. Preaching involves getting the lost *saved*, but teaching involves getting the saved *established*. In one day we could have 10,000 babies birthed into the kingdom, but it requires time, training, and growth to produce "kings and priests" unto our God (Rev. 5:9-10).

What is the Spiritual Level of our Flock?

When we stand before God, we will not only give account to Him for our personal life and family, the Lord will also examine the spiritual state of our flock. Are we going to present to the Lord "children" who have never grown, or a fully developed and glorious bride "without spot or blemish" (2 Cor.11:2, Prov. 27:23).

As a shepherd, we need to be several steps ahead of our congregation in order to lead them into God's purposes and into rest. Israel's Journey from Egypt unto Zion (including all the experiences in-between) serves as a marvellous road map for the shepherd to help guide his flock into the ultimate purposes of God for their lives.

In this little book, we are looking at the inner-life of the leader. We will be considering the leader's personal life and marriage, his vision, the temptations he faces, God's view of success, the privileges and responsibilities of leaders, and the eternal rewards and honors that are given to those who are faithful.

In the closing chapters, we have a message especially designed to challenge the young people in your church, and then we want to look at the end-time harvest God has promised the Church in our times. For *after* the greatest revival ever known to man, a great test will come in order to separate the wheat from the tares.

It is our prayer that the following pages will enrich and bless your life, through Christ our Lord. Amen!

* * * * *

Chapter One

VISION

Vision Determines Our Steadfastness

Why are some believers up and down, but others are constant and steadfast in their walk with the Lord? Even some ministers are ready to retire in their forties, while fellow colleagues continue to press on to their dying breath. What is it that decides whether a man is going to be slack or ongoing?—*It depends upon his vision!*

What is Vision?

Vision is the result of God opening our eyes and giving us a glimpse of our future and His plan for our life and eternity. Suddenly, we are struck with awe and a holy fear of coming short of that divine plan. There is a defined mark to press toward, and we are overwhelmed with a sense of destiny. A man with real vision has a new focus; he is not looking at this short, fleeting life with all of its lures and attractions. His gaze is fixed upon an eternal goal, especially a position in heaven near the feet of the Lord Jesus.

Abraham Saw Beyond — He Saw New Jerusalem

Why would Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (and their wives) be willing to live in tents in a strange land? It was because of something they saw *beyond* this mortal life (Heb.11:9-10). Abraham saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, and his eternal reward in heaven. Most of all, the Lord Himself was “his exceeding great reward” (Gen.15:1). Abraham's nephew, Lot, did not have the same vision. Therefore, he would naturally be more enticed with the things of this life. Without inquiring of God, Lot used *his natural eyes* to determine where he would dwell. Thus, he chose to settle in Sodom, a land that *looked* so beautiful, but was ripe for judgment (Gen.13:10-13).

Joseph Had Vision — But His Brethren Did Not

There is a reason Joseph succeeded and his brethren failed. Joseph had a dream (Gen. 37:5-10), and without knowing all the details, he understood that he had a destiny to fulfill. This brought a holy fear into his heart not to come short of the divine plan. Joseph's dream also supplied him with supernatural strength to endure many years of injustices, delays, difficulties and disappointments.

Promises and Vision Keep Us On Course

According to Peter, “great and precious promises” enable us to partake of His divine nature, and to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet.1:4). What caused Joseph to run from adultery when he was tempted by his master's wife? He had “great and precious promises” from God! Joseph had a dream, a destiny, and holy fear. He knew that he *must not* come short of God's important plan for his life (Gen. 39:7-12). Thus, Joseph fled from temptation, but his brothers fell into many hurtful snares and sins.

Joseph possessed three major things that his brethren did not have, and therefore, they failed. Many ministers fail because of the lack of these three essential things:

- 1.) An Eternal Vision—(promises, a defined goal, and a destiny). I am not speaking of promises of having a bigger church or more influence, but of having eternal promises that go beyond this life.
- 2.) Holy Fear — A *holy fear* results when we have promises, a fear to not come short of God's purposes. Holy fear *keeps us on course* and urges us to *flee* from temptation and pride as did Joseph.
- 3.) Captivity —Joseph first had to pass through *years of difficulty*. These trials developed *iron* in his soul and deep humility, thus preparing him to be a world harvester. People fail when they have not passed through captivity.

Esau Had No Long-Range Vision

Esau was shortsighted. He was a man who lived only for *present appetites* (Gen. 25:29-34). Hebrews 12:16 terms him a “profane” person. This means he treated sacred things lightly. Esau was also a fornicator, an indication that he was only living for the present time, not with eternity in view. The sale of his birthright for one morsel of food is mentioned in the New Testament to warn every one of us not to sell eternal rewards for a short, temporary pleasure. Sometimes a minister is tempted to compromise and lower God's standards in order to have a bigger church and wider acceptance, but in the final analysis, he will lose it all, including God's favor (see Mt. 5:19).

Jesus Endured the Cross Because of the Joy Set Before Him

We are commanded to “Look unto Jesus,” the Author and Finisher of our faith (Heb.12:2). Jesus is our role model. Therefore, we are to adapt His mentality in every situation. How could the Lord Jesus ever have endured such contradiction of sinners and unbelievable injustices, humiliation, and pain? It was “*the joy set before Him*” that enabled Him to endure! His eyes [or vision] were upon the eternal reward awaiting Him. He “despised” [or scoffed at] the shame. Jesus *compared* those six cruel hours upon the cross with *eternity* and esteemed the price of the cross to be nothing.

“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be *compared* with the glory which shall be revealed in us” (Romans 8:18).

“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, *worketh for us* a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory ... while we look not at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen ...” (2 Corinthians 4:17-18).

Without a Vision, People Dwell Carelessly

“Where there is no vision, the people perish [or cast off all restraint]” (Prov. 29:18). When there is no clearly defined mark to press toward, people live recklessly. Many believers are unaware that eternal rewards can be lost, and that there can be severe demotions in the kingdom of heaven if we are not faithful to our call or life's work. When people *waste most of their lives* and barely make it into heaven, the Lord cannot say to them, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” This can only be said to the faithful (Mt. 25:21,23).

The Loss of One's Crown

If we, as ministers, are unfaithful to our task, God will have to raise up someone else to do our work, and our crown will be given to another (Rev. 3:11). There is an example of this in the life of a good man named Barnabas. After a very intense argument with Paul in Acts 15:36-40, Barnabas left Paul, and also vanished from the narrative of the Book of Acts. This is a lesson to us to always guard our hearts and never leave the place where God has planted us in anger or exasperation (cf. Isa. 52:12). Barnabas should have been the co-founder of the churches of Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, Ephesus, and many others. However, instead of *Paul and Barnabas*, it is henceforth *Paul and Silas*. In a very real sense, Silas took the crown that should have been given to Barnabas (See Rev. 3:11).

Investing and Building in the Invisible

We are commanded to “seek those things which are above” and to “set our affections on things above, not on things on the earth” (Col. 3:1-2). Jesus taught us to “Lay up for ourselves treasures in heaven” where thieves cannot break through and steal. He is telling us to invest in our heavenly home, and to build in the invisible realm.

A Vision of Our Heavenly Mansion

One night, a fifteen-year-old pastor's daughter was taken to heaven in a dream. Here in heaven she was shown the mansions of her father and mother, who were very godly people. Their mansions were very beautiful. Then the angel that escorted her said, "Now I am going to show you your mansion." When they arrived at the site, all she could see was a few building materials laying on the ground. Then the angel explained, "This is all the material you have provided the builders to construct your home." At that moment, her life was changed forever. She realized that the resources that are used to build our heavenly home are made from the works we do here on earth. By our works and acts of obedience here on earth, we are literally sending up materials to build in the unseen world. By doing the will of God for our lives, we are "laying up for ourselves treasures in heaven, where thieves cannot break through and steal." In heaven there are *many mansions*. When we get to heaven, what kind of home will be awaiting us there? Is our *earthly* home more important than our *eternal* habitation?

Vision of a Better Resurrection

"Others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection" (Heb.11:35b). A "better resurrection" suggests that there is an ordinary resurrection as well. Those great men of history who had the vision of "a better resurrection" were willing to not always choose *the easiest path* in life, a path which much of today's prosperity message emphasizes.

Paul wanted to be raised in *the First Resurrection*, an event mentioned in Revelation 20:4-6. This is a special resurrection, and it is reserved only for qualified believers who will rule and reign with Christ when He returns. Paul wanted to participate in this, declaring, "If by any means I might attain unto the resurrection [from among] the dead" (Phil. 3:11). All of the other saints who do not qualify for this are resurrected at the end of the Millennial Age (Rev. 20:7-15).

Job Saw the First Resurrection and Millennium

To summarize the Book of Job, we could say that God was testing a very good man to make him even more righteous and holy. In his trial, Job was being *made fit* to be in the First Resurrection and to rule and reign with Christ. Job had visions of the Millennial Age, and he saw himself resurrected and standing with Christ during His thousand-year reign upon earth (cf. Job 19:25-27; Isa. 24:23).

Job realized that he was like gold being tried [or purified] in the furnace of affliction (Job 23:10). Job was passing through his own personal “great tribulation” to be eligible for the Millennial Age. The purpose of tribulation is to *purify* the saints (Rev. 7:13,14).

If We Listen Carefully, God Will Tell Us More

What is the secret to receiving more understanding and vision? It really depends upon what kind of heart we have. I believe the key to receiving new understanding lies *in how we respond* to God when He speaks to us. When an individual highly values what God is saying, the Lord will continue to speak more and more to him. But when a man treats fresh truth frivolously, God stops speaking to him, and that man will lose even what he already knows.

“Take heed [how] you hear” (Mk. 4:24, Lk. 8:18). Mark 4:24-25 is God's unit of measure. “Unto you that hear shall more be given.” If a man is listening to God, God will listen to him, and speak more to him. But when a man closes his ears to God, God will close His ears to him, and give him no further light. In actual fact, how we deal with God is ultimately how God will deal with us.

Hosea 4:6 warns: “My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge; because thou hast *rejected* knowledge, I will also reject thee that thou shalt be no more priest unto me.”

The Danger of Loving Only the Superficial

Wisdom cries out in Proverbs 1:20-23. Wisdom is actually Christ Himself, for He is the very personification of Wisdom. In Christ are hid all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge (Col. 2:3). He is our wisdom (1 Cor.1:30).

Thus, Christ is crying out—“*How long will you love simplicity?* ... Turn you at my reproof: behold I will pour out my spirit unto you, I will make known my words unto you” (Prov.1:22,23). Christ has a tremendous longing to show unto man the pathways of life. He yearns to reveal the treasures of His mysteries. He cries out *even to His shepherds* and beseeches them not to *love simplicity* and not to be satisfied with the elementary basics of the Gospel.

As shepherds, we must feed our flock with rich spiritual food that will transform them into kings and priests. It is our responsibility to array our people with the beautiful garments of righteousness, meekness, humility, and wisdom. We are to present our churches to the Lord as a glorious Bride without spot or defect (2 Cor.11:2).

It is a solemn thing to keep our people in *an infancy stage* by only preaching the simple message of salvation and the baptism in the Holy Spirit, and prosperity. These are only elementary truths (see Heb. 6:1-3). Instead, we must impart to them a vision and *take them on* to maturity and glory, and make them fully conformed to the image of Christ.

As God's representatives, it is our duty to know the Word of God in depth and to teach our people “the difference between the holy and the profane and the clean and the unclean.” Otherwise, they will be held back by many of their bondages and never enter rest (Ezek. 22:26, 44:23). Today, there is much sin in the Church because its ministers have failed to make a difference between what is *acceptable* and what is *unacceptable* to God.

Great or Least in the Kingdom of Heaven

“Whosoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, *and shall teach men so*, he shall be called the least [important] in the kingdom of heaven” (Mt. 5:19a).

Matthew 5:19 determines *the eternal rank or position* of a minister when he gets to heaven. It is very crucial, therefore, that a shepherd teach his followers precepts that are perfectly *balanced* and *true*. For when a minister omits other parts of Scripture or bends the Word of God to make it say something it does not mean, he produces something that is false in the hearers which mars the image of Christ in them. This leader is producing a blemished people, and he is deflecting and hindering them from reaching the goal.

James 3:1 warns that *teachers* will be judged by a higher standard and with greater severity than other people. A teacher is more accountable to God than others, for when he teaches a precept that is erroneous, he places the feet of many listeners on a wrong path.

One Christian leader wrote in his book that he was never happy in his first marriage, and he could never grow in his spiritual life and ministry. But now that he has divorced his first wife and married someone else, he states that he is happy and blessed, and his spiritual life and ministry are flourishing immensely.

What effect do you think a book like this is having on thousands of struggling marriages, on people who secretly in their hearts would like to get out of their unpleasant circumstances and start another marriage? A teaching such as the one we just mentioned encourages couples to violate their vows and disregard God's laws on the permanence of marriage (Lk.16:17-18; Mk.10:11-12). Unfortunately, this leader is not only breaking one of the *least* commandments, he is breaking a *major* commandment, and teaching men to do so.

Two Kinds of Ministers

Ezekiel 44:10-16 is a comparison of two different kinds of priests; those who were *faithful* during a time of moral declension in the nation, and those who were *not faithful*. Verses 10-14 is an indictment of the unfaithful Levites who “caused the house of Israel to fall into iniquity” (44:12). This resulted in terrible judgments coming upon the whole nation; and then they were exiled into Babylon.

In 44:12, the Lord places the blame for the nation's condition upon its spiritual leaders. “They ministered unto them before their idols.” The sin of the priests would not be blotted out. They would “bear their iniquity.” As a result of their unfaithfulness, the Lord would not allow them to come into His presence. They would be limited in their approach to God.

“They shall not come near unto me, to do the office of a priest unto me, nor to come near to any of my holy things, in the most holy place; but they shall bear their shame, and their abominations which they have committed” (44:13). The judgment upon the ministers who let down the standards of God and caused the nation to fall into iniquity was that “*they shall not come near unto me.*”

Different Proximities to God

In heaven, some are closer to God than others. Ezekiel 44:10-14 makes it clear that the unfaithful shepherds have limited access to God. These are “the least important in the kingdom of heaven.” However, there was a family of faithful priests, “the sons of Zadok,” who maintained God's standards when the others went astray (44:15,16). Their reward is this: “They shall come near to me to minister unto me, and to stand before me ... they shall come near to my table, to minister unto me” (44:15-16). These are *welcomed* into God's presence, and the Lord Himself is their inheritance (44:28).

Our Ministry is Eternal

In the Old Testament, the priests descended from Aaron, and their ministry ended at death (Heb. 7:23-24); but in the New Testament age, the priesthood is patterned after Christ's Melchisedec order, and our ministry continues on after death (Heb. 5:6). In eternity, we will be continually expanding and growing, and teaching those of lesser maturity. Actually, we *never* stop learning and growing.

Our life here on earth is conditioning us for our eternal ministry. If we are *unfaithful* to our task during our earthly journey, there will be certain elements in our heart that are not developed, and our ministry in heaven will be limited. This is one of the reasons it is so important to fulfill our course here on earth, a task which many fail to accomplish.

David Continues to be a Shepherd After This Life

The Lord chose young David when he was a shepherd tending sheep. David was being trained in his “secular” work to be gentle with lambs, but it was actually preparation to be a spiritual shepherd to a whole nation. He was chosen to feed Israel with spiritual food, and to gently guide them into God's purposes (Psa. 78:70-72).

David was not only a shepherd / king to Israel during his brief life on earth, he will also be resurrected to be a shepherd and a king to Israel during the thousand year reign of Christ when He comes. (See Jeremiah 30:9, Ezekiel 34:23-25, 37:24-25, and Hosea 3:5.)

We can see from the life of David and others that our earthly task is preparing us for our eternal ministry and function in the next life. “All of these things are written” to make us cautious and wise, and also to produce hope and understanding (Rom.15:4, 1 Cor.10:11). Let us not be deflected from our calling by earthly distractions, and thus, lose our crown (See Colossians 4:17, Revelation 3:11).

The Anguish of Dying With an Unfinished Mission

Many years ago, the honorable Brian J. Bailey had an extraordinary encounter with eternity. One night, he literally experienced death. Wearing for many months as a young minister by slander and persecutions, he asked the Lord to take him home to heaven. That night God answered his prayer and allowed him to experience death.

Having come out of his body, he stood there for a few moments looking down at his body and his wife who was asleep beside him. An angel of God who had come for him, was standing nearby, but did not speak. Then, with enormous speed, they departed from this world with a swiftness that far exceeded the speed of light. Yet, the closer they came to heaven, the greater the sadness he felt.

At that time, he understood the *anguish* a Christian feels when he goes to heaven without completing his life's calling. He could see his entire life from birth to death, in a moment of time. Then he saw many blank spaces, which represented his un-lived years. God had purposed to perform many things in and through his life, but he was dying before the time. He also knew that Christ would not be waiting for him with a beautiful smile, nor would he hear the Lord say, "Well done, good and faithful servant."

Dr. Bailey also had a new understanding of Revelation 21:4, which says, "God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes." Many saints will weep (for a moment) before the judgment seat of Christ when they look at all the eternal rewards they are not able to claim because of an unfulfilled mission.

A call is not only an *invitation*, it is a *summons* as well. It is a command to appear before the Great Judge *to give an account* of our life and how we have used our time, talents, and substance. Therefore, it is not only important to make it to heaven, it is also imperative to finish our course in life (2 Tim. 4:7, Jn.17:4, Dan.12:13).

The Ultimate Goal and Vision — To Be on Mount Zion With the Lamb

Revelation 14:1-5 is a picture of those who are nearest to the throne and to the Lamb in eternity. Everything in Scripture points to this scene. Every test, every lesson, every moral law, warning, and exhortation is for one singular purpose—to bring the believer to perfection and cause him to be situated next to the Lamb on Mount Zion (Col.1:28-29). This is indeed the high calling, the mark, and the prize for which Paul and all of us are striving (Phil. 3:10-14). The prize, of course, is to win *Christ Himself* and to become totally His.

The Inhabitants of Mount Zion in Revelation 14:1-5

(The life they lived to inherit the holy mountain)

John saw “*a multitude which no man could number*” (Rev. 7:9). Then he was shown a special, smaller group that *is* numbered (14:1). These have “a name above all names,” for they have the Father's name written in their foreheads, being positioned next to the Lamb upon Mount Zion. They are *without fault before the throne* (Rev.14:5). These are the greatest in the kingdom of heaven.

The New Jerusalem in heaven is very large, perhaps 1500 miles square (Rev. 21:16), and there are many inhabitants in the great city. Some live near the throne, and others are a distance from the throne. Mount Zion is a very high mountain in the city. At the summit of Zion's mountain is the throne of God and the Lamb.

Undoubtedly, there are many mansions dispersed throughout the vast city. Also, there are mansions on different levels as you go up Mount Zion, but at the very top of the mountain is the Lord with the 144,000 (Rev.14:1-5). For a moment, let us look carefully at the characteristics of those who are nearest to the Lord and observe those qualities Christ desires most in His people.

Characteristics of Those on Mount Zion

Humility – This elite group was willing to go *lower in humiliation* than anyone else; therefore God has highly exalted them. (Read Philippians 2:5-9, Mark 10:43,44, Matthew 23:12, Luke 14:11, 18:14.) These saints are just like the Captain of their salvation (Heb. 2:9-11).

Meekness – These who inhabit Mount Zion have become “lambs” and are privileged to dwell with the Lamb. All their ferocious nature has been subdued; there is no vengeance or retaliation in their hearts (Acts 7:60). Those closest to the Lord resemble Him completely, and Christ is the epitome of meekness (Mt.11:29).

Light – The Lamb is the Light (Rev. 21:23), and these who are dwelling with the Lamb have been *thoroughly searched with His Light*. Let us allow God’s light to penetrate the depths of our lives so that we may be *conditioned* to dwell in the full Light. Isaiah was searched by His light (Isa. 6:1-7, cf. Job 42:5-6).

Wisdom – Christ is Wisdom (1 Cor.1:30, Col. 2:3). These on Zion's mountain are dwelling with “Wisdom” and are filled with His wisdom. These are the wisest people in history, for they used the short opportunity afforded them during this life to invest in those things that last forever. They made full use of their time by building in the invisible world, and they made many wise choices.

Vision – These had a *vision of the prize* which is Christ Himself (Phil. 3:8,14; Gen.15:1). Christ is that hid treasure, that pearl of great price (Mt.13:44-46). Vision kept them focused and pressing toward a defined mark. Others with limited vision waste much of their lives on nonessentials. Jesus Himself “endured the cross” because of the joy set before Him (Heb.12:2). We need a vision of *eternity* (Prov. 29:18). “Great and precious promises” help us to escape the corruption that is in the world through lust (2 Pet.1:4). Remember, Joseph ran from lust because of vision and personal promises.

Holy Fear – A vision of eternity strikes holy fear into our heart. The fear of the Lord is cleansing (Psa.19:9), and makes us afraid of coming short of God’s mark. Holy fear keeps us from veering off course (Jer. 32:40). Godly fear is a great treasure (Isa. 33:6).

Dependence – Unto whom is God near? He is nigh unto those of a broken spirit (Psa. 34:18, Mt. 5:3, Mk. 7:25-29). Those who are on Mount Zion with the Lamb are the most dependent upon the Lord, and have “no confidence in the flesh” (Phil. 3:3). Jesus did nothing of Himself, but looked constantly to His Father (Jn. 5:30). These do not trust in their own minds, but wholly rely on God (Isa.11:3).

Grace – These on Mount Zion are seated beside the One who is “full of grace and truth.” Grace is only given to the humble. Therefore, being the most humble and the most dependent, they were granted the most grace. Grace is offered to us in time of need (Heb. 4:16). Many people harden their hearts in trials and refuse grace; but those who are closest to the Lamb have chosen *not* to harden their hearts in times of difficulty. “Abundance of grace” is essential in order to reign with Christ (Rom. 5:17).

Purity and Holiness – Only the pure in heart can see God (Mt. 5:8). Without holiness, no man can see the Lord (Heb.12:14). These on Zion’s mountain have the privilege of looking upon His face from a close proximity. Therefore, for all eternity, they will be changing “from glory to glory” as they behold Him. Holiness involves our motives, morals, and our speech (Jas. 3:2). All the inner paths of our heart must belong totally to Christ. Moral purity is extremely important, for the occupants of Zion are “not defiled with women” (Rev.14:4). They are “virgins,” which signifies moral purity. In their mouth is no guile or deceit (Rev.14:5). Holiness and perfection are measured by the mastery of our tongue more than anything else (Jas. 3:2). The tongue reveals what is really in our hearts (Lk. 6:45).

Faithfulness to Duty – Those who are with the Lamb on Mount Zion have “followed the Lamb whithersoever He goeth” (Rev.14:4). In the good times and in the difficult times, they have remained faithful to their duty. Many saints get infuriated with their circumstances and exclaim: “I am not going to take this any longer.” Yet it is during the difficult times that the most grace and the greatest character is developed. In leaving one’s circumstances, major areas of the heart remain unchanged. Isaiah 52:12 warns: “Ye shall not go out in haste, neither by flight.” Let us wait for God’s time. Joy is one of the rewards for faithfulness (Mt. 25:21,23).

Faithfulness to People – Sometimes ministers change the Word of God to gain a wider acceptance. In breaking even the least of God’s commandments and teaching men so, one can become the least important in the kingdom of heaven (Mt. 5:19). By altering God’s Word, something that is not from the Holy Spirit is produced in the people, and it hinders them from being conformed to the image of Christ. Those who are on Zion’s mountain have faithfully taught and adhered to the standards of the Lamb; they have preferred the honor of God more than the honor of man (Jn.12:43).

The Fruit of the Spirit – Those who dwell upon Mount Zion possess all the same virtues as the Lamb and perfectly resemble Him in every way. The fruits of the Spirit are, in fact, the very essence of God’s nature. It costs something to have our hearts changed, and these choice saints were willing to go through the necessary processes to be changed. Those in Zion are rewarded with the most joy, for in His presence *is fullness of joy* (Psa.16:11).

Unselfishness – Divine love is *total unselfishness* (1 Cor.13:4-7). The love of God is perfected in us as we do the will of God and live an obedient life (1 Jn. 2:5). The “lambs” on Mount Zion have been *perfected* in love and unselfishness by an obedient life.

Death to Self / A Victorious Life – During their short time on earth, these have repeatedly said, “Not my will but thine be done.” In every way they bear the likeness of Jesus. By “delighting to do God’s will,” they won the victory over Satan, the self-willed One (see Rev.12:11).

An Excellent Resurrection – These who dwell upon Zion are the choicest of mankind throughout all the ages. They are the finest of the harvest, “the *firstfruits* unto God and to the Lamb” (Rev.14:4). These are “the spirits of just men made perfect” (Heb.12:22-24), who will receive the finest resurrection. Here again is the mark, the goal, and the prize — it is to win Christ, to have a superior resurrection, and to be as close to Christ as possible for all eternity (Phil. 3:10-14, Jn.17:3). In summary, this is the whole message of God's Word—to be where He is, to know Him, and to be like Him.

* * * * *

Review — Vision:

As we have stated, the minister himself needs an eternal vision and personal promises from God. We can only bring our flock to the level that we have attained in our personal lives. Let us briefly summarize the important points we have just covered.

Vision is essential for the following reasons:

- Vision gives us a defined mark to press toward, a sense of destiny.
- Vision strikes holy fear in our hearts, making us afraid to fall short.
- Our vision determines whether we are steadfast or inconsistent.
- Without an ongoing vision, people dwell carelessly (Prov. 29:18).
- Esau had no vision; therefore, he threw away eternal rewards.
- Without vision, people live only for the present life and its appetites.
- Jesus endured the cross because of *the joy set before Him*—eternity.
- Abraham was willing to live in tents; he saw his eternal home.
- Lot had no real vision and chose to live in Sodom, losing his family.
- Because of vision and promises, Joseph fled adultery (2 Pet.1:4).
- Joseph succeeded, but his brethren who had no vision failed.
- Promises and vision keep us on course and marching forward.
- Someone else will take our crown if we are not faithful (Rev. 3:11).
- “Set your affections on things above, not on things of the earth.”
- Jesus said to lay up treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19,20, cf. Col. 3:1,2).
- By our good works, we send up building material for our eternal home.
- For *a better resurrection*, we cannot choose the easy path (Heb.11:35).
- The First Resurrection is for *committed* believers only (Rev. 20:4-6).
- All the others are resurrected at the end of the Millennium (20:7-15).
- Job had eternal vision and promises. This preserved him in his trial.
- Job saw himself resurrected and reigning with Christ (Job 19:25-27).
- The purpose for great tribulation is to *purify* the saints (Rev. 7:13,14).
- The key to having vision and understanding is to be a good responder.
- If we take seriously what God says, He will continue to tell us more.
- If we take lightly what He says, He will stop speaking to us (Lk. 8:18).

- Wisdom [Christ] cries out, “How long will you love simplicity?”
- If we preach only elementary truths, we will produce spiritual infants.
- We are called to produce “kings and priests” unto God.
- We must teach people what is *acceptable* and *unacceptable* to God.
- If we don't, we will hold our people short of God's mark (Eze.22:26).
- Teachers will be judged by a higher standard (Jas. 3:1).
- Our rank in heaven is determined by what we preach here (Mt. 5:19).
- When a minister encourages others to break marriage vows and not work out their problems, he is helping to destroy society and bring judgment upon a nation.
- Unfaithful ministers cause a nation “to fall into iniquity” (Eze. 44:12). They will lose their eternal ministry of “ministering unto the Lord.”
- Faithful ministers are welcomed into God's presence (Eze. 44:15,16).
- In heaven, some are closer to the Lord than others.
- Our ministry goes beyond this life into the Millennium and eternity.
- King David, a keeper of sheep, later became a shepherd to the whole nation. He will be resurrected and be a shepherd to Israel during the Millennial Age, and will continue thus on into eternity.
- It is not only important to make it to heaven. We must finish our task. Many tears will have to be wiped away when people behold all the rewards they are unable to claim because they were not faithful, and did not bring joy to God.
- God cannot say, “Well done good and faithful servant” to everyone.

- Our ultimate goal and vision is to be with the Lamb on Mount Zion.
- Everything in Scripture points to this scene in Revelation 14:1-5.
- Study the characteristics of those who are “with the Lamb.”
These are the virtues we should also strive for in order to be as close to Christ as possible for the endless ages of eternity.

Chapter Two

THE LEADER'S HOME AND MARRIAGE

The next most important thing after having a personal meeting with God and receiving a vision from God, is the home life and marriage of the leader. Satan's greatest attack is against the leader himself and his family. If the adversary can injure the marriage of the shepherd, he will do great damage to the entire flock as well. "Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered" (Zech.13:7b).

The Church is a collection of families. The pastor and his wife are a role model to the other marriages. Therefore, if the home of the pastor fails, his ministry fails. If a man's message does not work at home, it will not work in the church either.

The First Qualification for Being a Leader

When the Apostle Paul listed the qualifications for leaders, he always started with one's marriage (1 Tim. 3:1-5, Titus 1:5-9). When a leader allows or endorses divorce, it will spread throughout his congregation, and sooner or later it will touch his own children and perhaps even his own marriage.

The Need for a Growing Marriage

The concept of having "a growing marriage" is a new idea to some. Actually, there is only one way to grow in our marriage, and that is by growing *spiritually*. To grow spiritually means we are growing in grace, wisdom, understanding, forbearance, longsuffering, meekness, forgiveness, and all of the other virtues of divine nature. And there is only one way to grow spiritually, and that is by *a life of obedience*.

Obedience—the Key to Growth

Obedience is the key to spiritual growth, and it is also the key to growing in our relationships with others, especially our spouse. Unity, purity, and love are the result of continuously paying attention to the things God is pinpointing in our personal lives. Therefore, every time we heed what God is addressing in our hearts, there is a new purification and further transformation. “Obeying the truth” brings us *unto* “genuine love” and unity (1 Pet.1:22).

The love of God is “perfected” in our lives as we *continue to obey* the Words of Christ (1 Jn. 2:5). By an obedient life, we take on the characteristics of the One who created marriage, and we become a sweeter and more desirable marriage partner. On the other hand, when God confronts a person about certain issues in his heart, but he resists or ignores them repeatedly, he will stop growing. Thus, the issues in his heart that cause disunity remain unremedied.

The Marriage That Did Not Grow

(Isaac and Rebekah - The Classic Example)

If any marriage was going to flourish, it should have been the marriage of Rebekah and Isaac. Abraham had prayed that God would bring to Isaac the right bride (Gen. 24:7). Signs were asked of God to confirm God's choice (Gen. 24:12-20). Not only was Rebekah a productive, industrious person, she was also very beautiful and very willing to leave her country to follow a husband (Gen. 24:58).

Isaac was Abraham's “son of promise.” In fact, all of Abraham's promises were passed on to Isaac. In Isaac's seed, all the world was to be blessed. Isaac was a hundredfold believer who became very great (Gen. 26:12-14), and he was also a man of peace. When the Philistines envied him and blocked up all his wells, he did not fight or argue over them. He simply moved to another place and dug other wells (26:15-22). Isaac and Rebekah were wonderful people.

A Good Beginning—A Poor Ending

The point we are trying to make here is that the marriage of Isaac and Rebekah started on a good foundation. Everything was done honorably. First, prayer to God was made for the right wife, and confirmations and signs were sought. Both Isaac and Rebekah were of “the same kin.” Spiritually, this means they had the same background and calling. Both were progressive and hard-working, and God confirmed that this marriage was chosen by Him. Regrettably, their marriage did not grow, for as the years went by, they grew further and further apart.

Ignored and Unresolved Issues in the Heart

There were issues in the lives of both spouses which they never faced. “Isaac loved Esau . . . but Rebekah loved Jacob” (Gen.25:28). In this case, we see that partiality was a serious problem in the hearts of both parents. One parent loved one son, but the other parent favored the other son. Unfortunately, this was a selfish love.

In addition to partiality, Isaac had stomach problems. He loved food, and this is the reason he favored Esau who brought him venison. Esau clearly inherited this weakness from his father, for both were governed by appetites. Later in life, Esau sold his birthright for a bowl of lentils (Gen. 25:30-34). And even though Esau was a profane person and a man of carnal appetites, Isaac was determined to pass on the blessing and call of God to Esau. Yet, before he would lay his hands upon Esau and pass on the blessing, he first wanted a big venison dinner. Rather than fasting and praying, he wanted a full stomach! Thus, we can see a spiritual dullness in Isaac (Gen. 27:1-4).

It is obvious that *communication* in this marriage had never grown. When parents confide in a son or daughter more than in one another, we know it is not a happy and growing marriage. It is plain to see that Rebekah was in closer fellowship with her son Jacob than she was with her husband. (Read Genesis 27:5-17).

In Genesis 27, Isaac was about to place his hands upon Esau to pass on to him the blessing and promises by the prophetic word. However, before he did so, Isaac wanted a venison dinner and he sent Esau hunting. When Rebekah was aware of the situation, she carefully instructed Jacob, her favorite son, to go to his father (whose eyesight was now dim) and *pretend* to be Esau.

We can readily see where Jacob received his manipulative nature. Certainly, it was not from Isaac or Abraham, but from his mother who taught him to lie and deceive. *Deceit* was the generational iniquity of her family in Padan-aram. Rebekah's brother, Laban, was an arch-deceiver (Gen. 29:25-26, 31:7).

Many years earlier, Rebekah had given birth to the twin boys, and at that time God said to her, “the elder will serve the younger” (Gen. 25:23). Rebekah understood from the beginning that Jacob the younger should receive the blessing, and not Esau the firstborn. Believing that God could *not* bring this to pass without her help, she usurped authority over her husband and took matters into her own hands, which the Word of God warns women not to do (Prov.14:1). The result of this action led to a divided home, for Esau was so enraged over the stolen blessing that he purposed to murder Jacob, who had to flee from home for twenty years. As far as we know, Rebekah never saw Jacob again. Let us now review these points:

- Isaac and Rebekah were the father and mother of the nation of Israel.
- Their marriage was ordained of God, but it did not grow.
- Marriage must continue to grow, and that comes only by *obedience*.
- Spouses must deal with problems God addresses, or the marriage fails.
- People cannot say “I married the wrong one” because of difficulties.
- Rebekah tore down her own home by taking matters into her hands.
- Rebekah gave her deceitful nature to Jacob, but it did not end here.
- Jacob produced sons that were deceivers like himself. They lied to him about Joseph (Gen. 37:31-35). Rebekah's deceit was reproduced in her grandchildren. Mothers must be careful what they plant in children.

Geographical Obedience

While we are on the subject of obedience, let us consider for a moment the importance of *location*, or being in the *place* that God has chosen for us to serve Him.

Deuteronomy 12:13-14 warns: "Take heed to thyself that thou offer not thy burnt-offerings in every place that thou seest: But in the place which the Lord shall choose." God warns His people (and it applies to every generation) that He will only accept our sacrifice and service if we are *in the location* that he has chosen for us. Otherwise, His purposes are not accomplished and He has no pleasure in our service for Him.

"He shall choose our inheritance for us" (Psa. 47:4). God carefully selects *where* and *unto whom* we minister. God warned Paul shortly after his conversion that Jerusalem would not receive his message. Paul reasoned that they knew his former life and he was well acquainted with the customs, and he was confident that he could relate to them. However, God had a totally different plan. The Lord said, "I will send you far away unto the Gentiles" (Acts 22:17-21).

The Minister Who Left His Inheritance

A dear minister and his family left England and went to Africa as missionaries for a number of years. This brother had astounding results as God used him over and over to perform tremendous miracles and to preach the Gospel. As time went on, his children grew into teenagers, and he left Africa and the land of his inheritance to educate his four children back in England. Even though he was pastoring a church, he was not in *the place* that God had chosen. Therefore, he and his wife lost their joy and were continually arguing. His four children, for whom he had left his inheritance, were all backslidden and going their own ways.

This couple left the rich inheritance God had given them in Africa and tried to serve Him in some other capacity, but they were not accomplishing God's will. Therefore, they lost their joy as well as God's favor. All of their children, whom they idolized and esteemed more important than God's will, fell into Satan's temptations.

It is essential to stay in the center of God's will, for in the center of His will is *protection* and *happiness*. When parents are not in the place of God's choosing, their children are far more vulnerable to the attacks of the evil One. Later in life, this minister had a meeting with God and returned to Africa where he experienced tremendous restoration of his ministry before he died.

Prosperity is Not Always a Sign That God is Pleased

Another family who was called to the mission field, returned to a more comfortable life in Europe and opened a Christian bookstore. The bookstore flourished, but this was not the task God had chosen for this Christian couple. Often, we assume that success is a sign that God is well pleased, but this is not always the case.

Story of An Unsupportive Pastor's Wife

In this section we are talking about the importance of being in the right geographical location. There was a man from New Zealand whose ministry was having a profound effect upon the Philippines. Thousands were coming to the Lord. His wife, however, had little interest in the salvation of souls; she could only think about home. In fact, she made life so miserable for her husband that he was forced to leave a fruitful ministry and return to New Zealand, where he languished in some other form of insignificant service for the Lord. A number of years later this woman died. During her funeral service, all of her children lamented publicly of the terrible grief she had brought to their father, and to the Gospel. That is how she was remembered on earth. How is God going to remember her?

The Importance of the Leader's Wife

Christianity must succeed at home and in the parsonage, or it will not work in the church. A wife has tremendous influence on her husband. Actually, the quality of the leader's wife is going to determine whether he succeeds or fails in the ministry. A wife is “the neck that turns the head,” as the saying goes. A woman will “move her husband” and *urge him* to take certain courses of action (Judg.1:14). Therefore, it is imperative that a leader's wife be consecrated to God or she will “move” her husband to take a lesser path.

A number of years ago, a denomination had a major division, with two-thirds of the pastors leaving the organization. My first inclination was to feel sorry for some of the pastor's wives whom I thought had been “dragged” out of the Fellowship when their husbands left. To my surprise, I began to realize that many of these wives were not only in agreement with their husbands to leave the vision, they were actually the *instigators*. I have learned over the years that more often than not, a man makes a major decision to go in a certain direction *because* his wife is in support of it.

The Wives of the Apostles

It required a high degree of dedication to be married to one of the apostles of the Lord. Frequently, their husbands were away from home or out of the country; but occasionally, the wives travelled with the apostles (1 Cor. 9:5). These ladies had to conquer homesickness, inconveniences, and sometimes loneliness in order for the ministries of their husbands to succeed. Therefore, the leader's wife must also have *vision*. She must look beyond this natural life and place a higher premium on the purposes of God than on her personal preferences and sentiments. The leader's wife is a model to all the other women around her, and must be able to teach the ladies to invest more in eternity than in their earthly lives and homes.

Leaders Must Lead Their Wives

What we are saying here about a leader and his wife could also be said of any couple. A man must help his wife, for she is his greatest asset and influencer. A wife can have many fears, and she needs a patient and loving husband to help her overcome these fears. Even as Christ washes His bride with words of wisdom and love, so a man should do the same to his wife (Eph. 5:25-29).

Take Time to be With Your Spouse and Family

A leader must not be so busy in the Lord's work that he has no time to spend with God or his family. If a man's relationship with his spouse is strained or not growing, it affects his family, his church, and his relationship with God. Job never neglected his family. He rose early in the morning and prayed for each of his children, offering up expensive sacrifices for them (Job 1:2-5).

Have Sufficient Rest

A well-known leader, whom God used to heal thousands of people, took little time to sleep. Consequently he was so exhausted that he started drinking liquor to keep himself awake. This led eventually to acute alcoholism, and he died an alcoholic. Therefore, *even in our service for God*, it is imperative to be “temperate in all things” (1 Cor. 9:25, 2 Tim. 2:5).

Taking time to rest is being spiritual, and it is also being wise. Even God rested the seventh day. Satan attacks us when we are weary (Deut. 25:17-18). Therefore, we should get proper rest, and not allow our nerves to be run down. “Cast all your cares upon Him” (1 Pet. 5:7), and do not be overwhelmed with the problems of the people. Avoid unnecessary stress in your marriage and home. Guard your heart and your home by spending some quality time with the Lord, your spouse, and your children.

Unity Between the Leader and His Wife

The most difficult thing in life is getting along with other people. The entire Bible is based upon relationships: our relationship with God, and our relationship *with people* (see Mt. 22:36-40). Unity is a very important subject in the Word of God because when there is unity, there is also unbelievable power (Gen.11:6). When a couple is in harmony, especially a leader and his wife, mighty faith and power are released (Mt.18:19; Deut. 32:30).

Unity Begins in the Individual

In order to have unity in the Church, there must be unity in the families, since the Church is a composite of families. But to have unity in a family, there must be unity between a husband and wife. To have unity between a husband and wife, it *first* requires unity in the heart of the *individual*. Therefore, unity begins in *me*.

Unity does not begin in a couple, it begins in the individual. If I am not at peace with myself and with God, I cannot be at peace with my spouse. If my heart is divided and my loyalties are divided, I can have no peace. If I love God but I also love the world, there is *conflict* in my heart because I am trying to serve two masters and I find no peace. If my will is in opposition to God's will, there is no peace. However, if my heart is in agreement with God, I will then have great peace. *Peace* and *unity* are the same exact word in the original Greek. Therefore, a united heart has peace.

David Prayed for a United Heart

David prayed for a united heart in Psalm 86:11. This was prayed after he fell into sin with Bath-sheba. David loved God (Ac.13:22), but he also loved another man's wife; thus, his heart was divided and he had lost all of his peace and joy (Psa. 51:10-12, Psa. 32:4-5).

Unity Requires Much Effort

There are four essential things that are necessary to have unity, and all four involve *a death to self* and *putting others first* (Eph. 4:1-3).

Humility, Meekness, Longsuffering, and Forbearance

Humility—(or lowliness) *honors others before itself* (Rom.12:10), and “*esteems others better than itself*” (Phil. 2:3). Unity is found in the low place, but when people exalt themselves and assert their opinions and preferences without having any regard for others, there can never be unity. In marriage, each should be willing to listen politely to the other's point of view, and not always insist on “what I want.” Many times differences between spouses are not a matter of right or wrong, but a matter of *preference*. For example, a husband may say, “Let's go home the fastest way on the expressway” but the wife replies, “I would rather go the slower, scenic way.”

Meekness—is *a holy acceptance of our circumstances*. Meekness can be likened to a young colt that has been trained and thus, has accepted the bit and bridle. Jesus Himself was “meek and lowly in heart” (Mt.11:28-30). He taught us to *learn* these two things from Him, and that in so doing, we would “find rest for our souls.” In marriage and in the ministry, we must learn meekness and humility. Are you *angry* about your circumstances, or are you able to *accept* them?

Longsuffering—is *a quality of self-restraint when provoked*. Being “slow to wrath” is associated with *understanding* (Prov.14:29). We are rough with others when we do not understand them.

Forbearance—is *to bear with or tolerate irritations and flaws in others for a long time*. If a spouse does something that annoys you greatly and God has not changed that fault, this is an opportunity to develop forbearance and grace in your life. God can use this very irritation to make you into a great and noble person.

A Leader and His Wife Have Differing Roles

The pastor's wife must know her place and her role, because it is not the same as her husband's. Spiritually, she is not wearing the same "uniform." The leader is anointed to carry the burden of the ministry, not his wife. Therefore, the wife must not involve herself in matters and responsibilities that God did not intend for her. When the wife is engrossed with everyone's problems, and is on the telephone trying to counsel people from morning to evening, she will wear herself out, and she will also wear out her husband.

God is not the God of confusion, but a God of *order* (1 Cor.14:33). *Everyone* in the church must be wearing the right uniform and know their defined limits. There will always be trouble when people do not remain in the vocation wherein they have been called, but go beyond their boundaries.

Husbands Must Study Their Wives

In 1 Peter 3:1-6, Peter instructs wives to be in a right relationship with their husbands, but in 3:7, Peter exhorts the husbands to dwell with their wives "according to knowledge." This is knowledge that is acquired "by study, effort, and experience." It requires time, effort, and experience to obtain sensitivity to a spouse. Men and women are actually very different. Therefore, each should study the other and know what constitutes his spouse. Male and female think and respond differently to situations. Their body chemistries are different, as well as their emotions, thought-patterns, and makeup. A man cannot expect his wife to react as a man would, and neither should a woman expect a man to react as she does. Men and women must dwell together in knowledge of these differences and work at them. Otherwise, there will be numerous misunderstandings and frictions which hinder their growth and prayers.

Review — The Leader's Home and Marriage:

- The leader's home and marriage is a model for all the other homes.
- The Church itself is composed of homes and families.
- Satan attacks the leader and his home more than anything else.
- “Smite the shepherd and the sheep will be scattered (Zech.13:7b).
- The first qualification for being a leader is *a marriage in order*.
- The marriage of a leader must grow; and growth comes by obedience.
- God's love is perfected in us as we give heed to the issues He addresses.
- Isaac and Rebekah's marriage started on a good foundation.
- The marriage did not grow because they ignored issues in their lives.
- Being in the right *location* is very important (See Deut.12:13-14a).
- God will not receive our sacrifice if we are not in the right place.
- Also, His purposes are not accomplished if we are in some other place.
- Remember the man who left Africa to educate his four children.
Being in the wrong place, they lost their joy and also God's favor.
Moreover, the children were not protected from the enemy, and fell.
- Remember the story of the wife who would not support her husband.
This man had to move back to New Zealand to please his wife.
He had to leave the revival he started, and thousands suffered for it.
At her funeral service, even her children dishonored her.
- Often when a leader makes a major decision, his wife has influenced it.
- The wives of the Apostles had to overcome many inconveniences.
- A husband must lead his wife, and wash her with words of wisdom.
- A leader must not be too busy that he has no time for God and family.
- Remember the great healing evangelist who died an alcoholic. He took no time to rest, which led to returning to a former drinking problem.
- Unity does not begin in a couple, it begins in the *individual*.
- If I cannot get along with myself, I cannot get along with another.
- A spouse with no peace in his heart cannot bring peace to a union.
- Unity requires much effort—a death to self, and putting others first.
- Unity comes from: humility, meekness, longsuffering, and forbearance.
- Unity also requires a surrendered mind and surrendered opinions.
- A leader and his wife have different roles, different “uniforms.”
- Spouses must study one another and defer to each other.

Chapter Three

SUCCESS FROM GOD'S VIEW

The Vision of Two Churches

A number of years ago, Dr. Brian Bailey and his wife visited a certain city in Greece; and in this city there were two particular churches. One church had 3,000 people, while the other had around 200. The pastor of the large church considered himself to be quite superior to the pastor of the smaller church. However, one night, God gave a vision and showed the two churches *as He saw them*. In the church of 3000 there were only nine lights, meaning that only nine people in that large congregation were shining for Christ; but in the second church—200 lights burned brightly for Jesus. Nearly everyone in the second church was on fire for God. Certainly, the lesson is very clear. God is not interested just in large numbers but in how many *lights* we have shining in our church. The Lord is interested in having “trees of righteousness” that are rooted and grounded in Him; for in the times of testing that are coming, many large churches that are filled with *uncommitted believers* will be blown away by the storm and dwindle to nothing.

All Our Works Will Be Tried by Fire

On another occasion, a man had a vision of several people going to heaven. One of the people he saw was an evangelist, who carried in his hands a tremendous amount of works. The angel at the entrance smiled, took his works, and put them into the fire of God. Yet, all that came out of the fire was a little heap; that was all the evangelist had left. Most of his life's works had been reduced to ashes when they were tried in God's fire. After that, he saw a little lady. She only had a small pile of works to present to the angel; but after it was placed in the fire, nearly everything remained intact. The little lady actually had more to show in eternity than the evangelist.

We Want “Fruit That Remains”

It is the *works that remain* which will count for eternity (Jn.15:16). Everyone's works must be tried by the fire of God (1 Cor. 3:12-15). It is not how many people we have in our church, but how many that are committed to God and on fire for Him. Therefore, we pastors must labor to bring people into righteousness (not just salvation), because the people entrusted to our care represent our works and the fruit of our ministry. This is why we must have the true anointing and the true message, for then we will have fruit that *abides*. It is better to have a handful of fine flour than a bushel of chaff!

The Wrong Way to Measure Success

Too often success is measured by worldly standards—numbers, popularity, enticing personalities, publicity, and money. When the tests come, however, all of these could be consumed in a moment if they are not founded upon the solid rock of obedience (Mt.7:26-27). After three-and-a-half years of ministry, Jesus did not appear to be successful. Many of His disciples had deserted Him (Jn. 6:66), and one of the twelve apostles even betrayed Him. At one point, Christ appeared to be *a total failure* as He hung upon a cruel cross; yet in God's eyes He was the greatest Champion of all time. How, then, does God measure success? And what is true prosperity?

Success—Doing the Will of God

Success is measured by one supreme issue—whether or not we have accomplished the will of God for our lives! If we have done the will of God, our works will *remain* and not be lost. The will of God for the Lord Jesus Christ was to go to the cross; but the cross is not the popular way. To the natural eye, Jesus looked like a total failure; but quite to the contrary, *by His obedience* He defeated Satan and all of the other fallen angels and demons.

Christ conquered a fallen nature that man could never subdue, and He paid man's debt. Besides all of this, what He had planted in the lives of the twelve apostles for three-and-a-half years produced astounding fruit. These men and the Scriptures they wrote became the foundation stones of the Church (Eph.2:20), with Christ Himself being the Chief Cornerstone.

A Great Ministry is No Indication That God is Pleased

There is something that needs to be settled in the Church today—and that is the erroneous way we evaluate success. True success is not measured by popularity, charisma, personality, and large crowds. This is the world's idea of success. Neither is success measured by demonstrating the spiritual gifts or having the anointing of God. The anointing and the spiritual gifts are *not* evidence that God is pleased (Mt. 7:22-23, 1 Cor. 9:27). God gave Israel miracles, healing, protection, and provision during their wilderness journey, even while they were rebellious and out of His will for forty years. None of these blessings are proof that God is pleased with us.

The Presence of God is Not Always a Sign of His Pleasure

Even having the presence of God is *not* necessarily an indication of God's favor. God said to rebellious Israel: “My presence shall go with thee” (Ex. 33:12-17). Yet, this was only because God is long-suffering and gracious. Some congregations assume that God's favor is upon them, and therefore He is sanctioning what they are doing because His presence is with them; but this is not necessarily so. *Doing the will of God is more important than feeling the presence of God.* Jesus did not feel good as He went to the cross; He did not feel the anointing and the glory as He went to Calvary; but that was the will of God for Him, and that was far more important. Success cannot always be measured by feeling the glory of God. Success is when we do the will of God, for by doing this, our works *remain*.

Example of the Two Greatest Men of History

Christ was visited on the Mount of Transfiguration by the two greatest men of history—Moses and Elijah (Lk. 9:29-31). Moses, the great Lawgiver, had died nearly 1500 years earlier, and was later resurrected by Michael the archangel (Deut. 34:5-6, Jude 1:9). Elijah never died, but had been translated into heaven 950 years before. These two great men were sent from heaven by God the Father, to encourage and strengthen the Lord Jesus Christ to enable Him to go the cross to die for our sins. The central theme of their conversation was “*his death which he should accomplish at Jerusalem*” (Lk. 9:31). In a technical sense, Moses and Elijah had a part in our redemption, for they were instruments of God to aid Christ in going to the cross.

These two men are “the two anointed ones who stand before the Lord of the whole earth” mentioned by Zechariah (Zech. 4:11-14). Also, they are prophesied of by John in Revelation as the coming “two witnesses” whom Jerusalem will reject in our times and add to their bloodguiltiness (Rev.11:3-12).

Here are the two greatest men of the human race. One stands at the right hand of Christ, and the other on His left hand. These are positions that James and John wished to have, but positions that had already been determined by God the Father (Mt. 20:21-23).

For a moment, let us compare the lives of these two men: Moses was *well known*, but Elijah was relatively *unknown*. Moses had a congregation of three million, but Elijah's congregation was only 100—two companies of 50 men who were holding services in caves. Moses' family is well known. We know about his father and mother, sister and brother, his upbringing, his education, his years of preparation in the wilderness, the ten plagues he issued on Egypt, the forty years in the wilderness, and much more. But of Elijah, almost nothing is known. What can we learn from this vivid illustration?

What Can We Learn From the Two Greatest Men?

This scene on the Mount of Transfiguration portrays two men who are the greatest in the kingdom of God. One man was very well known, with a church of three million, and the other man was not nearly as well known, with a small church of one hundred (1 Kg.18:13). Therefore, we cannot judge greatness or success by the size of our church, or the realm of our influence, or by how well known or publicized we are. What determines the greatness of a person is whether or not he has accomplished God's will for his life.

The Importance of Doing the Will of God

The will of God is the specific “desire, wish, gracious design or plan” that God has ordained for each individual. God's plan for your life may be *entirely different* from the plan that God has for another person. For this reason, we cannot look at another man and try to copy what he is doing. We should ask God for the particular plan he has for *our* life. God told Moses to number the ranks of Israel, but when David did the same thing, he was judged. What was right for one man was wrong for another.

Every battle in Scripture required a different strategy. Each battle involved different circumstances, and the battle plan was different. We cannot have an overreliance on “principles,” nor should we randomly select a Scripture and apply it to our situation. Prayer and divine counsel must be sought for each situation. The plan that worked for a fellow pastor may not necessarily work for us.

Rather than telling God what we want to do for Him, and asking Him to come and bless our endeavors, we should say, “Lord, what do *you* want me to do? I have come to do thy will, O God.” To do otherwise is to *make ourselves God*, and to make God our servant. Let us avoid reversing our roles with God.

Doing the Will of God Insures Our Salvation

Not everyone who confesses Jesus as “Lord,” is going to enter the kingdom of heaven, but there is one sure way of knowing that we are going to go to heaven—and that is “by doing the will of the Father which is in heaven” (Mt. 7:21, Lk. 6:46, 13:23-27, 1 Jn. 2:15-17).

Matthew 7:21-23 is a preview of the judgment seat of Christ. It is a horror scene of many who performed *many wonderful works in Christ's name*, yet are denied entrance into the kingdom of God. The individuals mentioned in these passages are those who were used by God to preach, cast out devils, and perform miracles; but they were *trusting* in their great ministry and anointing to save them, while they were living in iniquity behind the scenes. In actual fact, they were doing *their own will* in this life, and not the will of God.

Crooked Fence Posts Serve a Purpose in a Fence

Once God gave a vision of a beautiful fence with many straight posts. However, among the straight posts there were also *crooked posts*. God said, “Just as these crooked posts serve a purpose in the fence, there are people that I use in the ministry who are not straight,” but we know that in the end, they do not remain. God used “the jawbone of an ass” in Samson's hand to slay a thousand Philistines. This indeed was a peculiar instrument of deliverance, but afterward the instrument was *discarded* (Jud.15:15-17). We do not want to be used by God as an instrument in His hand, and then be cast aside by Him (1 Cor. 9:27).

“And the world passes away, and the lust thereof: *but he that doeth the will of God abideth for ever*” (1 Jn. 2:17). When people spend their lives doing their *own will*, they make terrible errors of judgment, and the result is bitterness and hardness; but doing the will of God produces a sweetness in our hearts and prepares us for eternity.

We do not want to be as “scaffolding” that is used to build the Church, but later is removed, not becoming a part of the Church. Doing the will of God is a like a buttress or reinforcement that strengthens and insures our salvation. Not everyone who calls Jesus “Lord” and does “many wonderful works in His name” is going to go to heaven. However, it is in *doing the will of God* that we are assured of entering heaven's gates.

Satan's Proposition to the Chief Shepherd

The Tempter came to the Lord Jesus and offered to give Him all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them, if Jesus would simply yield to his spirit (Lk. 4:5-7). This is an interesting situation because Jesus fully understood that everything belonged to Him anyway. Christ was *the heir of all things* (Heb.1:2), and He knew there was coming a time when “all power in heaven and in earth would be given unto Him” (Mt. 28:19, Rev.11:15); but first He had to accomplish the will of His father by going to the cross.

Therefore, the Tempter was proposing to Jesus *a quick way* into His own inheritance. *Immediately* Jesus could have “the kingdoms of this world and the glory of them.” In other words, by following the adversary's instructions, He could have it all *right now* and He could avert the shame and reproach of the cross.

Satan's Offer to the Shepherds

If Satan offered the Chief Shepherd *a fast way* into His inheritance, he certainly will offer the same to us, Christ's under-shepherds. Satan knows how to give a minister a large church overnight. All the minister needs to do is follow his instructions—have fleshly music to draw in the young people, and tell the people that God loves them unconditionally no matter how they live. And if the pastor has couples who are unhappy in their marriage, he can tell them, “God has someone new for you.” And God will give you the nicest car, the best home, and all the money you want.

Satan knows exactly what the natural man wants — money, health, happiness, pleasure, freedom from depression, peace, security, comfort, honor, vindication, material blessings, the easiest way out of his problems, lavish promises that have no conditions, and to be told, “God accepts you and is pleased with you, just as you are.”

The Temptation to Compromise for Wider Acceptance

One man of God went into a large church of 9000 people, and while he was sitting there, God said to him, “Only 876 of these people belong to Me.” Less than ten percent of that large congregation belonged to the Lord. The others were like the multitudes who followed Jesus only for the loaves and fishes (Jn. 6:10-15, 26-27, 66), but when God tested their hearts, many went back and walked with Him no more (Jn. 6:66). Why would a church of this size have such a small percentage that truly belonged to the Lord? Because only *half* the Gospel was being preached there and not the whole truth.

Only the Blessings are Preached / Not the Curses

God loves to give many good gifts to his children (Mt. 7:11), and let there be no mistake about this! He is a generous and benevolent Father who lavishes us with many good things. I am convinced that He would give us even more if it would not harm us. The trend in the Church today, however, is to preach only the blessings and *ignore the consequences* for disobedience. In some churches the penalty for sin is totally disregarded. Sad to say, one of the fastest growing churches in America entirely circumvents the sin issue in order to gain more acceptance.

“Behold, I set before you this day a blessing and a curse; A blessing, if you obey the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day: And a curse, if you will not obey the commandments of the Lord your God, but turn aside ...” (Deut.11:26-28).

When Israel went into the land of inheritance, they were commanded to recite all the blessings for obedience, and the curses for disobedience (Deut.11:29, 27:9-13, 28:1-68). Some people say, “Well, that is just the Old Testament.” But the Apostle Paul tells us that “all these things are written for our admonition and our learning” and “all scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, reproof, correction, and instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect...” (1 Cor.10:11, Rom.15:4, 2 Tim.3:15-17).

Include All the Pieces of the Puzzle

The Scriptures are like a large puzzle; we need all the pieces of the puzzle in order to have the whole picture. Therefore, if we omit certain scriptures when we preach, and only emphasize our favorite passages, we are giving people only part of the picture, and we are only telling them *part* of the truth. To tell our people that God desires to bless them, and never tell them that there are consequences for disobedience is *to neglect to protect them* from the dangers of eternal judgment.

Rightly Dividing the Word of Truth

Paul exhorted Timothy, a younger minister, to study in order to be “a workman that does not need to be ashamed, rightly able to divide the word of truth” (2 Tim. 2:15). In the original Greek, to “rightly divide” an object meant *to cut a straight line*. Here we have a picture of perfectly dividing something down the middle, resulting in two equal sides or something that is *perfectly balanced*. This is the way we must handle every subject in the Scriptures. Each subject must be carefully examined using *all* the Scriptures, and not just some of the Scriptures; otherwise, our conclusions will be lopsided. Most error is the result of an *exaggeration* of something that is true. While over-emphasizing certain Scriptures, it glosses over or omits the others; thus, it becomes error.

Paul Taught the Whole Counsel of God

In Acts 20:17-38, the Apostle Paul gathered all the leaders of the churches of Ephesus together for a farewell message. In actual fact, this is *a pastor's conference*, for he is addressing “leaders only” in these passages. His example to them had been exemplary. He was consistent and steadfast “at all seasons” (Ac. 20:18). Paul was not in the ministry for money or popularity (Ac. 20:33-35). In verses 26-27, he testified that he was “pure from the blood of all men” for he had “not shunned to declare unto them *all* the counsel of God.”

Paul Had “Clean Hands”

Paul was very honest when he preached. He did not shrink back from declaring *everything* people needed to hear (Ac. 20:20). Not only did he preach the blessings, he also warned of the consequences for disobedience. He was “pure from the blood of all men,” a reference to Ezekiel 3:17-21. Ezekiel was a “watchman” to God's people. If a righteous man turned away from God, Ezekiel was obligated to warn that man. If Ezekiel did not faithfully warn him, the blood of this erring man would be upon his hands. Ezekiel would be held responsible to God for not warning a straying believer. Like Ezekiel, we must be faithful watchmen to God's people and not have anyone's blood upon our hands (Ac. 18:6). Let us not “love people into hell” by telling them only *part of the truth*.

Building on a Good Foundation

In Matthew 7:24-28, Jesus is comparing two men and the houses they built. These houses represent our life, our marriage, our ministry, and all of our life's works. The first man listened to the words of the Lord *and obeyed them*; he was a wise man who was building his whole life and ministry upon a solid foundation. He was digging deep and building his life upon a rock (cf. Lk. 6:47-49).

When the storms came to test the durability of his house, it remained fully intact because he was founded upon the rock of *obedience*. We can be sure that our “house” is going to be tested. Our life, marriage, and ministry will be assaulted vehemently by the storms of life; but if we are grounded in obedience to the words of the Lord, our house will not fall.

The House That Fell

It takes time to dig our foundations deep. Foundations are hidden under the ground and no one sees them. Foundations have no outward glory; they represent the *hidden years of preparation* in our lives. Many people want instant success, and they take no time to dig deep to lay a good foundation. Their building goes up quickly and it seems to be flourishing marvelously, but when the storms come, that house collapses and great is the fall of it (Prov. 20:21).

What kind of house are we building? Is our house founded upon obedience to the words of the Lord? Are we building according to His specifications, or are we building according to our own dimensions? Let us not be so *success oriented* that we ignore the words of the Lord and copy all the ways of the world. Many “houses” and works that are started for God are falling today, and many others are going to fall in the future because they are not founded upon the rock of obedience to the words of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The Ultimate Success

Someone was taken to heaven and shown a magnificent mansion, which was superior to many other mansions. The visitor enquired, “Who owns this mansion,” and the angel answered, “The poor widow who gave her last two mites” (Mk.12:41-44). Here was a poor, unknown woman who had given her all to the Lord, being reckoned in heaven to be among the most honorable. Let us remember that greatness is not determined by how well known we are on earth, but whether we have accomplished God's will.

Review—How God Views Success:

- A particular church of 3000 had only nine lights shining for Jesus.
- The church nearby had only 200, but nearly all were on fire for God.
- Success is measured by how many are *really committed* to the Lord.
- All our works will be tried [or tested] by God's fire.
- The *works that remain* after the test are what really count for eternity.
- It is better to have a handful of fine flour than a bushel of chaff.
- We cannot measure success by worldly standards:
money, numbers, publicity, popularity, charisma.
- Success is when a person accomplishes God's will.
- Jesus appeared to be a total failure, but He accomplished God's will.
- Jesus did not feel the glory or presence of God as He went to the cross.
- Doing the will of God is more important than feeling God's presence.
- Having God's presence is not always a sign that God is well pleased.
- Rebellious Israel had God's cloud of glory, but they were disobedient.
- Moses and Elijah are the two greatest men of history.
- One was well known, and the other is basically unknown.
- Moses had 3,000,000 people in his church; Elijah had 100.
- Greatness is not determined by numbers, money, or influence.
- Doing the will of God insures that we are going to heaven (Mt. 7:21).
- There are *many* who acknowledge Jesus, but are not going to heaven.
- Crooked fence posts serve a purpose in a fence, for a while.
- God uses some people who are not straight, but then rejects them.
- The jawbone of a donkey was *an instrument of deliverance*.
- Later that “instrument” was tossed aside (Judg.15:15-17, 1 Cor. 9:27).
- Satan offered Jesus all the glory of the kingdoms of this world.
He was offering him *a fast way* into his own inheritance.
- Satan offers ministers a fast way into their inheritance, using his ways.
Then the work collapses, and Satan has stolen their inheritance.
- We must not compromise in order to have a wider acceptance.
- Some preach only the blessings, but avoid the consequences for sin.
- In one church of 9000, only 876 belonged to Christ.
- We must be honest and tell people the whole truth, not just parts of it.
- Our hands must be clean from the blood of all men (Ezek. 3:17-21).
- If we build on the foundation of obedience, our house will never fall.

Chapter Four

MONEY

Money Reveals Our Character

There are over 2,000 passages of Scripture that pertain to the subject of money. The money issue is so important that Jesus touches the topic in two thirds of His parables. The question is not how much money we have but how well we manage it, and the place it has in our heart. Money affects our spiritual life; it reveals the person we really are! Thus, the handling of our finances is going to determine whether we succeed or fail in the Christian life.

Money reveals:

- One's *affections* and *top priorities*.
- If a person has *a good conscience*.
- If a person has *good judgment, wisdom, and discipline*.
- Where someone places his *security*, and whether he is *obedient*.
- If someone is a person of *faith*. Ultimately, our relationship to money reveals our level of commitment to Christ.

Money is a Spiritual Issue

All of the above are spiritual issues—conscience, affections, priorities, time, security, faith, obedience, wisdom, discipline, self-control, and commitment. Often we separate the secular from the spiritual, but money is indeed a major spiritual matter. It was money that caused Judas, *a major apostle*, to lose his soul.

The Church is Not a Business

The Church is a family; it is not a money-making organization. Also, the leader himself is a father and a shepherd more than he is a CEO. Although a pastor is certainly an administrator and organizer, his primary function is to be that of a gentle shepherd, a father, and an example to his flock.

The Church must never be operated as if it were a business, and it should not be used to make a profit (1 Pet. 5:2, Ac. 8:20). A minister of the Gospel should concentrate on being a spiritual leader—one who hears from God and cares for the needs of the congregation.

The Richest Preacher of All Time

King Solomon is unquestionably the wealthiest minister in the Bible, and in all of human history. Unfortunately, he fell into the three greatest temptations that confront a pastor — in the areas of *money*, *motives*, and *morals*.

Solomon was a temple-builder, song-writer, preacher, and writer of Proverbs. While Solomon loved the Lord, his heart was over-occupied with commerce and a multitude of excessive desires. By the end of his life, Solomon was a backslidden and depressed minister who testified that everything was “vanity,” empty, and meaningless. He had lost the presence of the Lord, and the garden of his heart was overgrown with lust for money, women, and the praise of man. In Ecclesiastes, Solomon gives a personal testimony of his dismal spiritual condition (See also 1 Kg.11:6, 9).

Ecclesiastes 2:2-8 lists *some* of the entanglements of the Preacher:

1. Comedy / laughter (Usually comedians are very unhappy.)
2. Great works (building programs, business, commerce)
3. Nice houses (One extravagant house was not good enough.)
4. Gardens, orchards, vineyards
5. Pools of water, aqueducts
6. Numerous employees (servants)
7. Ranches, cattle
8. Large bank accounts with much silver and gold
9. Hobbies—peculiar treasure of kings (jewelry, art, rare coins, etc)
10. Music with every kind of instrument

Keeping Our Eyes On the Eternal Riches

Solomon had lost sight of having the Lord for his reward, as well as the eternal riches that awaited him in heaven. Therefore, he became a slave to the visible. Having lost the inner reality of God's presence and joy, he attempted to fill that void by experimenting with “everything under the sun.” So often when a man loses touch with God, he tries to recreate *materially and tangibly* what he has lost in his soul. Thus, Solomon engaged himself continuously and feverishly with endless projects and hobbies.

Abraham and Job Were Rich But Humble

Abraham was *very* rich (Gen.13:2), but his eyes were on eternity, not on his earthly possessions. He looked for the heavenly city, New Jerusalem (Heb.11:10), and God Himself was his “exceeding great reward” (Gen.15:1). Riches themselves are not evil; it is *the love of money* that is a root of every evil (1 Tim. 6:10). Job also was very wealthy but very *dependent* upon God (Job 1:1-8). When he lost everything in one day, he fell down and worshipped (1:20-22). I am convinced that God would give us much more if it would not harm us. God knows our limits. Let us ask Him to give us what He knows is best for us, nothing less and nothing more (Prov. 30:8-9).

Character—The Most Important Thing in Life

Character is the most important thing in life. When we breathe our final breath and our spirit leaves our body to go into eternity, the one main thing we take with us is *our character*. Good character is the result of always choosing to do the right thing, especially when doing the right thing is related to pain or personal cost. Our character is also closely related to money. Money reveals who people really are. For example, when a family inheritance is divided up, if there is hidden covetousness in the hearts of family members, it will surely become known (cf. Lk.12:13-15).

Dangers of Dishonesty

Recently a minister in Africa was killed in a car accident, but after four days he was miraculously raised from the dead. This incident is well documented, and a video has been made of his testimony. During those four days, the spirit of this minister was outside of his body. He was able to see the mortician preparing his body for burial, but he also was allowed to see both heaven and hell. When he entered hell in the lower parts of the earth, he saw a pastor there who confessed that he had stolen money from his church and he desperately wanted to repay it and get out of that terrible prison in hell. Of course, it was too late to change his past deeds or escape his eternal doom.

Many Other Evils are Associated With Theft

Stealing invites many other evils into the heart. When a person steals, he will also lie to cover up his sin. A thief is also a deceiver, pretender, manipulator, and a hypocrite (Jn.12:3-7). Darkness enters the heart, and his light is snuffed out (Mt. 6:23). The same is true of adultery. One sin is often connected to many other sins.

A Major Apostle in Hell

Judas was not only a minister of Christ, he was a major apostle and one of the original twelve. He walked with Jesus, and interacted with Him for three years. Judas sat and listened to the greatest Teacher in the universe, and he had the finest role model before him. He was anointed with power to cast out unclean spirits, and to heal all manner of sickness and disease (Mt.10:1). This means the apostle Judas had authority over cancer, heart disease, diabetes, and all other diseases. Judas also was sent out to preach, along with his fellow apostles (Mt.10:5-8). But Judas loved money, and this was an area of his life that he would not allow God to change.

Hearing But Not Obeying

Judas had the most profound Tutor of all time! He sat and listened as the Master warned, “Beware of covetousness” (Lk.12:15); “Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth but lay up for yourselves treasures in heaven” (Mt. 6:19-21); “You cannot serve God and money” (Mt. 6:24); “If you have not been faithful [with money], who will commit to your trust the true riches” (Lk.16:11); “Out of the heart proceed evil thoughts...thefts, covetousness” (Mk. 7:21,22); “And why do you call me Lord, Lord, and *do not* the things which I say?” (Lk. 6:46, cf. Mt. 7:26).

The Fall of a Man of God

Judas was an apostle with a ministry of signs and wonders, but he was a man who refused to face a problem in his heart—the problem of covetousness. It is very dangerous when God warns a man about *danger areas in his life*, and that man ignores the warnings.

No man of God who is walking with the Lord *suddenly* falls into sin. You will find that when a man of God crashes, he has been ignoring or resisting check after check from the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, he has made it *a habit* in his life to close his ears to the warnings and pleadings of the Lord. Thus, he has a major downfall.

The Reason Deception Gains a Stronghold

James 1:22 is a warning against self-deception. This deception is the result of hearing the Word of God and even agreeing with it, but not obeying it. Judas heard the Word, but the Word was received in shallow, stony soil; and he only endured for a short time (Mk. 4:4-7, 4:16-19). Covetousness continued to dominate his life, and eventually it led to his betrayal of the Lord. He ended up selling his soul for thirty pieces of silver.

The Foolish Man Who Built His House Upon the Sand

Judas was that man (among others) who built his house upon the sand. He heard the words of the Lord *but did not obey them*. Thus, he is likened unto a foolish man who built his house on a poor foundation, and when the storms of life came, not only did his house collapse, but “the fall of it was great” (Mt. 7:26-28). That “house” is our life, our ministry, and all of our life's works. Although Judas had an apostolic ministry, his end was terrible. It may be of interest to note that the final “offense” that caused Judas to betray the Lord was over a money matter (Jn.12:3-7, Mt. 26:6-16).

Money was “the stumblingblock of his iniquity” (Ezek.14:3-5). When a person does not deal with an “idol” in his heart, he will eventually stumble over that very thing. The reason people stumble over something is because they are walking in darkness.

Obedience is the Greatest Aspect of Wisdom

Wisdom has many facets: it is ability, skill, insight, foresight, depth, and much more. But above all of these, the greatest characteristic of wisdom is *obedience*. Jesus taught us that anyone who heard His words *and obeyed them* is like a wise man who is building his house [i. e. entire life] upon a rock (Mt. 7:24-26). Solomon was given extraordinary wisdom, yet he violated everything he wrote in the Proverbs. He did not obey his own message; thus, he became “an old and foolish king who would no longer be admonished” (Eccl. 4:13). Although he had wisdom, he was not wise!

Deuteronomy 4:5-6 tells us plainly that the *keeping* of the laws and statutes of the Lord “is our wisdom and our understanding.” Obedience is actually the greatest aspect of wisdom. What would it profit a man if he gained the whole world and lost his own soul? (Mt.16:26).

Even Demons Know if We Are Honest

There was an evangelist who had a great deliverance ministry, with tremendous authority over demons. One day someone gave him a large amount of money, but the situation was not honest before God. That night he held a deliverance service, and someone in need of deliverance came to the altar for prayer. When the evangelist said to the demons, “Come out of him in the name of Jesus,” the demons replied, “We saw the money you took this afternoon! We have no respect for you, we are not afraid of you, and we will not come out!” The evangelist had to go and give back the money which he received dishonestly, and the next night when he said, “Come out of him,” the demons fled in fear and trembling.

Although demons do not know everything, the spirit world does know more about us than we might think. Many of them know if people are genuine or not. The account in Acts 19:13-17 suggests that the spirits know who has the authority and who does not. “And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you?” (Ac.19:15).

Money—One of the Greatest Factors in Marriage Breakups

Our churches are made up of families. As ministers, it is essential to teach our families the importance of rightly handling money because financial troubles are one of the greatest contributors to marital stress. Many pressures in marriage are because of financial hardships, which result in arguments, hardness, and divorce. Therefore, it is of utmost importance that our people know how to be discreet in their money affairs. Overspending, lack of discipline, unwise investments, misuse of the credit card, and failure to tithe are some of the common causes of financial bondage. Let us strive to have our congregations financially free so that they are at peace and flourishing, and also at liberty to do the will of God.

Few Are Faithful

In the late 1940s, God poured out His Spirit in many places of the world. At that time in the USA. God sent many evangelists to bring salvation and healing to multitudes. However, as the years passed, the revival fire diminished in the personal lives of many of these leaders because of pride, compromise, greed, and moral failures.

Financial Integrity and Accountability

In his earlier years, Dr. Billy Graham and his team met together to discuss the temptations and snares that come upon ministers. Together they sought the Lord for wisdom to avoid these terrible pitfalls. Thus, they determined to be open and transparent with one another, and to be accountable financially to the public for all the donations that came in from their crusades. Over the years the Graham organization has maintained their honesty with finances, and they are also among the few who have remained on course. We have observed that honesty and transparency with *finances* is one of the greatest keys to staying on God's path and being kept from spiritual disaster.

Faithful in Natural Things / Faithful in Spiritual Things

Jesus taught us that faithfulness in the smaller, natural matters of life is an indication of how we will handle spiritual matters. Then He made a specific reference to *money* (Lk.16:10-11).

We have observed that ministerial students in Bible schools who never pay their tuition bills never succeed in the long run in the ministry either. When students are not honest with financial affairs, it is an indication that their hearts and consciences have little sensitivity to the Holy Spirit. Having no conscience about unpaid bills is a warning sign of eventual spiritual calamity.

Invest in the Better and Enduring Substance in Heaven

“A wise man gives what he cannot keep, that he may gain what he cannot lose.” Let us teach our people to invest in eternity, in “the better and enduring substance” that is reserved in heaven for us (Heb.10:34, 1 Pet.1:4). We should pour our lives into those things that we can take with us when we die. These are the “works that follow us” into eternity (Rev.14:13). Below are a few examples.

RICHES TO INVEST IN THAT WILL ENDURE FOR ETERNITY:

- A good name—God's respect for us (Prov. 22:1, Lev.26:9)
- Divine nature—“gold tried in the fire” through trials (Rev. 3:18)
- Our heavenly home—treasures in heaven (Mt. 6:19-20, Col.3:1-2)
- A people who are our inheritance (Psa. 2:8, Phil. 4:1)
- Our relationship with the Lord Himself, who is our Treasure and our exceeding great reward (Gen.15:1)—Let us *win Christ*.
- A position in heaven close to Christ (Rev.14:1-5, Mt. 5:19).
- A better resurrection for our bodies (Heb.11:35, Phil. 3:11).
- Treasures of darkness—insights gained in dark times (Isa. 45:3). Some things cannot be learned in heaven (Rev.14:3).
- Contentment and all the virtues of divine nature are treasures. All the fruits of the Spirit are developed through an obedient life, and are taken into eternity with us (Gal. 5:22-23, 1 Tim. 6:6-10).

Joseph of Arimathea

At the trial of Jesus, the Jewish supreme court (which consisted of seventy members) voted to have Jesus crucified. However, the vote was not unanimous. A wealthy man, Joseph of Arimathea, dissented (Lk. 23:50-53, Mt. 26:65-66). This godly man was not only wealthy in natural riches, he was even more wealthy with eternal honor, for he is known in the Word of God for all eternity as a man who stood up for Christ in the face of fierce opposition.

Review — Money:

- Money is a spiritual issue—it reveals our character.
- Money involves conscience, affections, priorities, time, and much more.
- The Church should not operate as a business or money-making outfit.
- Ministers should spend time hearing from God and feeding the flock.
- Solomon was a preacher but he was preoccupied with *commerce*.
- Solomon lost the presence of the Lord, thus, he reverted to hobbies.
- Money is *not* necessarily related to pride or humility. For example:
- Abraham was rich, but humble. Yet, poor people can be very proud.
- Character is the most important thing in life. Good character means we do the right thing, even when it is difficult. Our character is what we take with us into eternity when we die.
- Money, and how we handle it, reflects our true character.
- One pastor who had stolen money from his church was seen in hell.
- Stealing is more than one sin. *It corrupts the whole soul*.
- Stealing opens the door to Satan, who is a thief (Eph. 4:27,28, Jn.13:27).
- A thief also lies, deceives, manipulates, and covets what others have.
- Dishonesty and bribes bring spiritual *blindness* (Deut.16:19, 1 Sam.12:3).
- Judas had an apostolic ministry but refused to deal with covetousness.
- He heard the words of the Lord, but would not obey them (Mt. 7:26-28).
- Judas built his life upon the sand, and later his whole life collapsed.
- No man of God *suddenly* crashes or falls into sin.
- He has been warned repeatedly by God, but he ignored the warnings.
- Deception gains a stronghold when people *hear* but not *obey* (Jas.1:22).
- The power of sin is in one's *love* for it. Allow God to purge you.
- If we are dishonest, the spirit world is watching us and knows it.
- Even demons know if a minister is genuine or not.
- Mishandling of money is one of the greatest reasons for marital breakdowns. Ministers must teach their people how to manage money.
- Having good financial integrity is a great key to staying on course.
- People who have no conscience about unpaid bills will not last.
- People without financial integrity have no sensitivity to the Spirit.
- Let us invest in *the true riches*, in those things which last forever.

Chapter Five

MOTIVES

Our motives for being in the ministry must be right. Therefore, we should ask ourselves the following questions: What is my ultimate intention for being in Christian service, and what is propelling me? Am I driven with a spirit of competition? Am I comparing myself with others? Am I trying to outdo my peers? Do I need to have something that is bigger and better than my brethren? Is my reward the praise of men, or the honor that comes from God alone? Am I striving to save the souls of men at any cost and to glorify God alone, or am I trying to draw attention unto myself?

Gathering the Harvest With Christ

“He that is not with me is against me; and he that gathers not with me scatters abroad” (Mt.12:30, Lk.11:23). We are called to be “laborers together with God” (1 Cor. 3:9). We are God's fellow-workers, but when a harvester does things his own way and not God's way, he will end up scattering the sheep instead of bringing them together. In the end, he might actually do more harm than good.

Whose Glory Are We Seeking?

Are we building our own kingdom, or are we seeking to build God's kingdom? Are we striving to magnify His name, or are we desiring to glorify our own name? In a leadership meeting near Ephesus, Paul warned that some of the ministers who were present would later “*draw away disciples after them*” (Ac. 20:30). The mark of a true shepherd is that he will turn people to the Lord, and not draw them unto himself. A minister will never be bothered with envy or jealousy if his motives are pure because he will not be *in competition* with others. As ministers, our only goal should be to lift up the Lord and to help others in their walk with God.

Some Preach Christ Out of Envy and Rivalry

“Some indeed preach Christ even of envy and [rivalry]; and some also of good will” (Phil.1:15). Envy and jealousy have always been maladies of the human heart. Even in the twelve apostles there was ambition and argument over who was going to be first in the kingdom of God (Mk.9:33-37, 10:35-45). Christ had to continually deal with this problem, for even around the communion table “there was a strife among them, which of them should be accounted the greatest” (Lk. 22:24-27). However, fifty-four days later, all the brethren were “in one accord” on the Day of Pentecost. After seeing their Lord brutally beaten and slain, they no longer cared who was going to be number one. Thus, we can see that brokenness and humility are essential for having victory over envy and jealousy.

Conquering the Ancient Foes of Envy and Jealousy

Let us try to analyze these two problems of envy and jealousy. In a real sense, both are similar in that they are rooted in the problem of *comparing* and *competing* with others, yet they have differences.

Envy

Envy, by definition, is “to dislike, to oppose, to have ill will against someone who possesses some advantage or something superior.” Isaac's neighbors, the Philistines, envied him because he was mightily blessed of God. Therefore, they urged him to leave the region by stopping up all his wells. Likewise, envy is a major reason for the blocking up of revival wells (Gen. 26:12-16).

Genesis 30:1 tells us that “Rachel envied her sister” because Leah had children but she was barren. Joseph was envied by his brothers because he was set apart from them by “a coat of many colors.” (See also Genesis 37:5 and Acts 7:9.)

Envy also *blinded* the theologians of Jesus' time so that they were unable to recognize their Messiah or understand His teachings. They were well aware that His authority was far superior to theirs, for “He taught them as one having authority and not as the scribes” (Mt. 7:28,29). Thus, they envied Jesus. Even reprobate Pilate understood that it was *envy* that prompted the chief priests to deliver Jesus to him to be crucified (Mt. 27:18, Mk. 15:10). Envy is what nailed Jesus to the cross. Envy is one of the works of the flesh mentioned in Galatians 5:21. Carried to an extreme, envy can destroy the soul.

Jealousy

Jealousy can be summed up as “the demand to be number one.” Jealousy opposes all rivals. For example, when David became competition to King Saul, the king tried to kill him. Jealousy can be “as cruel as the grave” (Song 8:6). The Word of God tells us in Exodus 34:14 that God's very title is *Jealous*; yet He alone reserves the right to demand to be *Number One* because He is the owner of the universe. But when *man* tries to exalt himself and draw men to himself, he is cursed with a perverted, vexatious spirit of jealousy. Jealousy (called *emulations* in the KJV), is also one of the works of the flesh (Gal. 5:20).

Envy and *jealousy* are both the result of an uncrucified ego. The damage they can cause can be seen by the following illustration: Once twelve missionaries in Africa gathered together daily to pray for a visitation from God. Suddenly, God answered their prayers and a thousand people surrounded the little compound as God began to move by His Spirit and perform miracles. The sad part of the story is this, and it is all too common: Two of the ladies who prayed the most fervently for the revival were the first to oppose it. What was the problem? It was envy and jealousy! Perhaps God was using people they did not like or deem worthy. Whatever problems they may have had in their lives, we can see how these unresolved “heart problems” *distorted* and *opposed* what God was doing.

In Acts 28:3, the fire that was started by Paul caused a snake to come out of the fire and fasten onto his hand. There is a divine message in this little episode. God's fire is what causes these snakes (demonic spirits) to manifest. Therefore, before revival fire comes, let us ask God to deal privately with these little curled up snakes of envy and jealousy.

Ten Cures for Envy and Jealousy

1.) A Pure Heart (Pure Motives) — This means our whole objective is to bring glory to God alone, while we ourselves are willing to fade from the picture. When God visited Wales in 1906, news media from all around the world came to interview Evan Roberts, one of the main leaders of the revival. He said to the media: “God is moving in all twelve provinces of this country, and he is using many other men and women. Go and interview them.” He *deflected* all attention away from himself and from his locality.

2.) No Comparing — When men boast that their church is the fastest growing in the region, they are *comparing*. However, Paul tells us that by measuring and comparing ourselves with one another, we are not wise (2 Cor.10:12). The Word of God commands us not to do this. Peter looked at John one day and said, “Lord, what will this man do?” Jesus answered and said in effect, “It is not important to know what your brother is doing, just follow Me” (Jn. 21:20,21).

3.) No Competing — As we have already mentioned, even the twelve apostles were not exempt from the spirit of competition as they argued around the communion table about “who should be accounted the greatest” (Lk. 22:19-26). What did it take to break the spirit of competition in these early apostles? It required the death-blow of *failure* when they all forsook Jesus in the Garden. After this defeat, they saw their Lord brutally slain. Yet, soon after, we find them all together in the upper room *in one accord*.

4.) Do Not Care Who Gets the Credit — Our former president, Ronald Reagan said: “There is no limit to what a man can accomplish, if he does not care who gets the credit.” Now if we are only seeking to draw attention to God and not to ourselves, why should we care who gets the credit for anything that is accomplished for God? He has a record of all our works: “The Lord who sees in secret shall reward you openly” (Mt. 6:6). Do we really believe this, or does our faith need more purifying? (1 Pet.1:7). Are we seeking to glorify God, or are we seeking our own glory? (Jn. 5:44, 12:43).

5.) Esteem Others Better Than Yourselfes — This is the setting aside of our ego, as we put on the garments of humility and brotherly kindness. Paul exhorts: “Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves” (Phil. 2:3-4). Also he tells us “in honor preferring one another” (Rom.12:10). Humility is the key to unity, and it is the key to conquering envy and jealousy.

6.) Have Your Own Promises From God —Having your own promises from God gives you immense inner strength: and then you have no need to look at others or measure yourself by them. Abraham had promises from God; therefore, he never felt threatened by others, and he never worried about people confiscating anything from him. For example, when there was a strife over land, he gave Lot the first choice of territory (Gen.13:5-9). Abraham could afford to be generous because he knew that one day he would be the owner of all the land anyway.

Ask God for personal promises, even promises that go beyond this life into eternity. When you have specific promises from God, you will win the victory over envy and jealousy, and also you will be a very *secure* person.

7.) God's Acceptance of Others is Not His Rejection of You —

The Jews believed that they were God's chosen people above all others. Therefore, when God accepted the Gentiles and made them fellow-heirs of the same promises, the Jews were moved with jealousy. They did not want to share their position of being number one with anyone else. Thus, they contradicted and blasphemed Paul's message (Acts 13:42-45). The Jews should have accepted the Gospel with joy, and rejoiced to have it shared with other hungry souls. God's acceptance of the Gentiles was in no way a rejection of the Jews. It was actually to their honor that the Good News was going out from Israel to all the other nations of the world. We should adapt the same attitude. If we see God blessing other churches, let us rejoice that the needs of others are being met and that God is being glorified.

8.) Appreciate the Function of Other Members of the Body —

Every organ of the human body is different, yet is vital to the well-being of the rest of the body. We are only a *part* of the body of Christ; and we are interdependent upon one another for survival. Therefore, we should appreciate the function of other members, rather than competing with them. All too often people struggle with self-rejection because they feel their function is less important than that of others, but Paul deals with this attitude in his writings to the Corinthians. See 1 Corinthians 12:15,16:

“The foot cannot say, because I am not as important as the hand, therefore I am no good at all. Or, the ear cannot say, because I am not as important as the eye, I am not important at all.” No! This is insecurity and self-rejection; and this fosters envy. Some parts of the body are covered and some are seen, but this does not mean that the parts that are covered are not as important. There are many keys on a piano, and some are sounded more than others, but this does not mean that the keys that are used less often are not important. What would a piece of music sound like if certain keys were missing?

9.) Realize That We Are All in Different Seasons — Everyone is in a different spiritual season in his life. God knows the various seasons of our lives. Some people blossom early in life and some blossom later in life. This is another reason we cannot compare ourselves with others. God has a totally different plan for you than He might have for your brother or sister. The Apostle John is only mentioned *in two accounts* in the book of Acts, while Peter stands out as the predominant figure in much of the book. Peter came forth in his ministry *earlier* in life, but John emerged *later* in life. John came to the forefront thirty years after Peter had died. Perhaps John's ministry superseded the ministry of all the other disciples when he wrote the book of Revelation and his Gospel.

10.) Have the Love of God Perfected in You — The Scripture says that “love does not envy, and [is not *self-seeking*],” which is the root of jealousy (1 Cor.13:4-6). Envy and jealousy are the exact opposite of divine love and divine nature.

Love is unselfish, but envy and jealousy are self-seeking and self-centered. The young Corinthians envied one another, and the immature Galatians devoured one another; but Paul calls them both “little children” (1 Cor. 3:1-3, Gal. 4:19).

Let us all grow into spiritual manhood, which is reflected by the unselfish divine nature of brotherly love and unity. It is *here* (in this state of love and unity) that the Lord commands the blessing, even life forevermore (Psa.133:1-3).

Note: These ten simple keys to victory over envy and jealousy are suitable for Christians on every level, whether they are young in the faith, or older and in positions of leadership.

Summary of Envy and Jealousy:

- Jealousy and envy are similar, but with separate meanings too.
- Envy is to dislike or wish ill of another because he or she has some special advantage or possesses something superior.
- Jealousy is the demand to be number one; and it opposes all rivals.
- Both are the result of comparing and competing.
- Both are the result of pride and an uncrucified ego.
- Both are the result of not having the love of God perfected.
- God deserves to be number one. His name is Jealous (Ex. 34:14). Yet, He alone deserves to be first because He owns the universe.
- We have jealousy when *we* are trying to be number one, because we are trying to take something that belongs to God.
- Satan wanted God's position, and he is motivated by jealousy.
- When we seek to be the biggest and best, our motives are wrong.

Keys for Overcoming Envy and Jealousy:

- Deflect all glory and attention from ourselves unto God and others.
- Do not compare or measure ourselves with our brethren.
- Do not compete with others or try to outdo others.
- Do not care who gets the credit for something.
Remember, our reward comes from Him who sees in secret.
- Esteem others better than ourselves, and give honor to others.
- Have our own personal promises from God. Then we will not worry about anyone taking something from us, and we will also become a very secure person within.
- Understand that God's acceptance of others is not His rejection of us. If God is pouring His blessings on others, this does not mean He is bypassing us. The others may need it more than we do!
- Appreciate other members of the Body. Our human body has many organs and functions, but all serve to keep the body alive.
- Realize that we are all in different seasons. Some people blossom earlier in their ministry than others. Example: Peter versus John.
- Love does not envy. Have the love of God perfected in you.

Jesus Rides into Jerusalem on a Donkey

In this chapter, we are talking about our motives. Therefore, we need to ask ourselves: “Who am I trying most to impress?” Only a truly great person could have ever made his entry into Jerusalem riding upon a donkey. Today, a lesser man would have insisted that his appearance first be well publicized, and that his coming be preceded by a parade with 120 trumpets blasting aloud, and that he enter by a limousine or a helicopter. For this very reason, a minister should avoid being a dramatic showman or a celebrity, as he seeks instead to be a humble representative of Christ the Servant / King (Zech. 9:9). (See also Mt. 21:1-10, Mk.11:1-10, Lk.19:35-40, Jn.12:12-15.)

The Example of Two Tomato Plants

One day a man of God observed two tomato plants growing side by side. He observed that while the first vine was strong and had thick, husky limbs, the tomatoes were not only small but also very few. The vine beside it, however, was exactly the opposite. It was scrawny and unattractive, yet it was producing huge tomatoes because all the strength of that vine was going into the fruit, not into itself. The first vine had little fruit because all of its strength was going into *itself*, not into the fruit.

The proof of a man's ministry is not how much *he* is coming forth, but by how much he is helping *others* to come forth in their lives and ministries. We do not want to be like that first tomato vine whose life was absorbed in itself while producing little fruit. As ministers, it is better for us to have a more ordinary appearance, while our life and anointing is flowing into all of our offspring.

The Praise of Man or The Praise of God

Perhaps the greatest test of all is the same test that Adam faced when he came home one day and learned that his wife had eaten of the forbidden fruit. Suddenly, Adam had a choice to make. He did not want to lose his wife and her affection, but neither did he want to disobey and lose God's favor and affection.

Adam's Greatest Weakness and Ours

Eve was deceived, but Adam was not (1 Tim. 2:13,14). In the absence of her husband, she had been beguiled by the serpent. When Adam learned that Eve had eaten the forbidden fruit, he knew he was going to lose her. Thus, in order not to lose her, he identified himself with her and also partook of the fruit, fully aware of what he was doing. The root sin, therefore, of Adam, was that he chose human love over God's love. This is perhaps the greatest weakness of the human race, for we were all "in Adam."

Man's Honor More Than God's

Here is one of the very greatest struggles of life, and it involves a choice that every one of us must make: Which do we prefer most—man's honor or God's honor? Satan was able to work and speak through the immature, unperfected Peter because "he savored the things of men and not the things of God" (Mt. 16:22,23). When Jesus told his apostles that He had to go to the cross, Peter rebuked the Lord and said, "This shall never be." Peter thought that if his Hero died, all of his dreams of becoming great would also be lost. Because of his unpurified motives, Peter had unwittingly become an instrument through which Satan could work. The devil who also wishes to have glory, found in Peter a channel through which he could express himself and oppose the purposes of God.

Compromise — A Great Temptation to Ministers

Whose approval and affection are we seeking, God's or man's? All of Adam's fallen race struggles with this issue, not just God's ministers. For wider acceptance, it is a temptation to preach only the messages that people love to hear. *Compromise* can help us to have a bigger church and to look more successful, but in the end, we will lose our inheritance. Also, the people we tried to please will eventually despise us for not telling them the whole truth.

Dangers of Success and Prosperity

There are many dangers associated with success. What would happen to your heart if you could walk down the street as Peter did and have everyone who came under your shadow be healed? This would be headline news all over the world. Everyone would be lifting you up as though you were a god with superhuman powers. Unfortunately, the heart becomes lifted up with pride overnight unless we are given *the cup of pain* to go along with our successes.

For Power, Pain is Necessary—or Pride Results

You will notice in the Book of Acts that every time the apostles did a miracle, almost immediately they were beaten, slandered, or thrown into prison—and that is just what they needed! Otherwise, they would have become infected with conceit and haughtiness. Therefore, if we want to be used mightily by God, we must be willing to drink *the cup of pain*, or we may soon be destroyed. This is the reason Paul could say that he “took pleasure in infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses” (2 Cor.12:10).

Paul received information in heaven that he was not allowed to divulge here on earth. Therefore, his unusual revelation required “a thorn in his flesh,” not only because of the lofty thoughts Paul would have of himself, but because of what others would think of him. Paul would have been “exalted above measure” (2 Cor.12:6-9).

The Most Dangerous Time in the Life of David

As strange as it may seem, the most dangerous time in David's entire life was after “the Lord had given him rest round about from all his enemies” (2 Sam. 7:1). At this time he grew lax and then he fell into adultery with Bath-sheba (2 Sam.11:1-5). In the past, David had to continually rely upon God to supply his needs and to protect him in battle, but now that he had rest *he lost his dependency upon the Lord*. This is indeed a very dangerous time for anyone.

Satan Loved Position More Than Relationship

The adversary had a major failure in the area of motives. He lusted for position and power but cared little about his relationship with God. In fact, he wanted to usurp God's position and "be like the Most High" (Isa.14:12-14). Therefore, if we are going to gain the victory over Satan, we need to pass the tests that he failed.

Abraham Loved God More Than the Promises

Let us remember that we were *born to be tested* (Job 7:17-18). God tested Abraham to see if the call and promises were more important to him than his relationship with God (Gen. 22:1-2). Since Isaac represented all the promises, God put Abraham to the test and said, "Give it all back to me." Give Me Isaac! God will also test His ministers to see if they value their relationship with Him more than their ministerial positions.

Job Loved God More Than He Loved the Blessings

The accuser charged that Job was only serving God for the benefits (Job 1:8-11). This was the very issue of which Satan was the most guilty (Rom. 2:1). Therefore, when Job fell down and worshipped God after losing everything he owned, it was a deathblow to Satan. By his excellent response to injury and loss of earthly goods, Job had defeated Satan. He had overcome the wicked one "by the word of his testimony" (Job 1:20-22, Rev.12:10-11). All of these things are written to show us the pathway to victory (Rom.15:4).

The True Prosperity Message

God loves to bless His people, heal their bodies, provide for all their needs, and much more. Unfortunately, all of these blessings can be preached while *avoiding* the most important issue of all, and that is the blessing of a changed heart. *It costs us something* to have our hearts changed, and many are not willing to preach this message.

Let Us Preach the Whole Truth

Often the Church employs fleshly music and gifted motivational speakers to get the people excited and to have a large church, but they do not preach about the cost of being a true Christian. It is easy to assume that large numbers and an overflow of finance is a sign of God's approval, but this may not always be the case.

Ways to Measure the True Anointing

The most important thing in life is godly character with a changed heart, which is developed by doing the will of God for our lives. It is the true anointing that will convict and warn us of danger areas in our lives that are causing us to come short of God's purposes. However, these issues are often glossed over and substituted with enticing words that contain little life-changing substance.

A motivational speaker is exciting, interesting, eloquent, humorous, and often demonstrative; but it is possible to have all of these abilities and still not touch *the real issues* in people's hearts. Elijah made the mistake of looking for God only in the spectacular, but one day God spoke to him in a still small voice (1 Kg.19:11-13). Let us not confuse the “dramatic” or “exciting” as the ultimate signs of the anointing. God can certainly be dramatic, but inspiration is not always measured by perspiration. Here are several ways to measure the true anointing:

- Is the message true? Not – “Is it exciting and stirring me up?”
- Is it convicting me of my *real* needs and sins?
- Is it washing and cleansing me?
- Is it transforming my heart and causing me to live differently?
- Is it making me more aware of eternity?
- Is it truly drawing me closer to God, and to others?
- Is it producing holy fear in me not to fall short of God's plan?

Review — Motives:

- What is my ultimate intention and goal in my Christian service?
- What actually is driving and propelling me in my ministry?
- Am I seeking my own glory or God's glory?
- Am I building my kingdom or God's kingdom?
- Am I drawing men to God or drawing men to myself?
- If I gather the harvest my way and not God's way, I will scatter it.
- Am I comparing myself with and competing with my Christian peers?
- Competition was a significant problem in the twelve apostles.
- Envy and jealousy are rooted in *comparing* and *competing*.
- Only a great person (like Jesus) could ride into Jerusalem on a donkey.
- Lesser, “little” people need fanfare and publicity upon their arrival.
- One tomato vine was strong and husky, but had little fruit.
Another tomato vine was small and thin, yet had much large fruit.
One vine put all its strength into *itself*, the other put it into its fruit.
Let us pour our life into our *seed* and not draw attention to ourselves.
- The proof of my ministry is how much I help *others* to come forth.
- Adam chose human love above God's love; this was his root sin.
- We have to make the choice—either to please God or to please man.
- It is a temptation for ministers to *compromise* to hold onto their people.
- Success and prosperity are very dangerous because of *pride*.
- When God uses us mightily, we need persecution to keep us low.
- The most dangerous time in David's life was when he had no problems.
- Satan failed in the area of motives; he grasped for position and power.
- We have to pass the tests Satan failed. Thus, our motives must be right.
- Abraham's relationship with God was more important than promises.
- Job loved God more than blessings; he worshipped when he lost them.
- We defeat Satan by having a right testimony in hard times (Rev.12:11).
- True wealth is investing in eternal treasures (Col. 3:1,2).
- It is very costly to have our heart changed. This message is essential to our eternal inheritance, but is often *shunned*.
- *Inspiration* cannot be measured by *perspiration*. A speaker might be very dramatic and exciting, yet possess little life-changing substance that touches *the most important needs* in the hearts of his listeners.

Chapter Six

MORALS

“The path of the just grows brighter and brighter,” said the preacher and proverb writer. Unfortunately, his own path grew darker and darker, so that by the end of his life he suffered from acute depression and disillusionment (Prov. 4:18, Eccl.1:2). Solomon did not obey his own sermons, nor did he stay on the path of the just. Instead, he turned aside to other women and did not “guard his own heart with all diligence” as he exhorted us to do (Prov. 4:23).

Our Sermons Are Often For Ourselves

We should pay better attention to the messages that come out of our own mouths when we preach, because often the Holy Spirit is speaking not only to our listeners, but first and foremost He is trying to speak to us. Such was the case with Solomon. Every proverb he preached was a warning by the Spirit *to himself*. Ironically, he ended up violating virtually everything he preached. Therefore, when we prophesy, “*The Lord says to His people ...*” remember, we are one of those people! The message is for *the speaker* as well.

The Warnings Against Adultery and Moral Sin

Wisdom is directly related to moral purity throughout the Proverbs, and constantly there is a warning against adultery and moral sin. “But whoso committeth adultery with a woman lacks understanding: he that doeth it destroys his own soul. A wound and dishonor shall he get; and his reproach shall not be wiped away” (Prov. 6:32,33). Even during the Millennial Age when David is resurrected, David's sin of adultery is still remembered, for the Scriptures continue to declare his sin, even though he is forgiven. Long before the Age of the Law, adultery was considered a hideous crime (Job 31:9-11).

Moral Impurity Brings Darkness and Deception

Several years ago a man of God was invited to preach at a large church of several thousand, and his message was on David's sin of adultery. After he finished his sermon he sat down beside the host pastor on the platform, leaned over, and whispered, "You are that man." This pastor, of the large and successful church, was involved with *six* women in the congregation. The pastor was totally unmoved and unaffected as the man of God confronted him with his sin.

A Seared Conscience

Adultery is not just one sin, it is actually many sins. It brings in numerous evil spirits and hypocrisy, including terrible spiritual blindness. I have known people who were so *intoxicated with lust* that they lost all their common sense and were totally oblivious to the damage they were causing their spouse and many others.

This is what Paul terms, "a seared conscience" (1 Tim. 4:2). In the original language, *seared* means "to cauterize." This is the act of deadening tissue by branding or burning the flesh so that it is unresponsive and no longer has feeling. Paul is applying this to the effect that sin has upon the conscience. When a person sins, immediately his conscience is inflamed; but with repeated sins there is less and less feeling until there is no guilt felt whatsoever.

Paul describes people with *a deadened conscience* as those who are "past feeling" (Eph. 4:19). Homosexuality is another example of a seared conscience. This sin goes against nature, for even the animal kingdom knows the difference between male and female. The coming Antichrist is a homosexual who has "no desire for women" (Dan.11:37). This man from hell will "change times and laws." He will justify and make acceptable every moral sin (Dan. 7:25). Consequently, every heart that is not right will be drawn to him.

Samson's Immoral Life

Samson was mightily anointed by God to deliver Israel from the Philistines. After a failed marriage, he went from one woman to another (cf. Jud.14:2-3, 16:1, 16:4), and yet God continued to anoint him. For example, in one day, he slew a thousand Philistines (Jud.15:14-16), but soon after, he was with a harlot (Jud.16:1-3). When he realized that his enemies surrounded the city, he laid hold of the gates of the city, pulled them out of their foundations, and ran with them to Hebron, some forty miles away. These gates must have weighed several thousand pounds!

God's Longsuffering and Patience

An issue we must face in the Church today is the fact that the anointing and a great ministry is not always a sign of God's approval. God continued to anoint Samson, even while he was living in moral sin. This was not God's approval of his lifestyle, but rather it was God's longsuffering and patience with Samson. God gives people time to repent (Rev. 2:21). However, with no repentance, there was coming a time shortly after when the Spirit of the Lord was going to depart from Samson and he would lose both of his eyes (Jud.16:20-21).

“God is Making Special Exceptions for Me”

Deception overtakes a person who practices the sin of adultery, especially the minister who still seems to be flourishing in his ministry. The one living in adultery resorts to rationalization and assumes—“God is making *special exceptions* for my situation.” (Everyone feels that his situation is exceptional.) Also, the fact that God's Spirit is still with them further substantiates *in their minds* that God is excusing and exempting them from the consequences of adultery, but it is just *not* true.

It is Better to Lose an Eye if it Keeps Us Out of Hell

It was the mercy of the Lord to allow Samson's enemies to subdue him and to put out both of his eyes (Jud.16:21). Jesus taught us that if our eye is causing us to offend, as in adultery, it would be better to lose an eye than to lose our eternal soul in hell (Mt. 5:27-29, 18:9). I believe the Lord Jesus Christ had Samson in mind when He taught us this lesson. Evil spirits can get into the heart through the eyes. Eyes that are used for pornography and immorality can destroy a man's soul in hell. When Samson lost his eyes, he came to his senses (and to repentance); and this saved him from hell.

Having a Great Ministry Does Not Save Us

Adultery deadens the conscience, and it brings a stupor over the mind. There was once a prophetess who fell into adultery. When she was faced with the matter, she slickly replied, “God would never reject me; my ministry has helped so many people, and too many of my prophecies have come to pass.” This woman was *relying* on her ministry and good works to save her; she thought that God would excuse her sin because she had such a successful ministry. Unfortunately, there will be “many” in this category who on the day of Judgment will say, “Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied *in thy name*, and *in thy name* cast out devils, and *in thy name* we have done many wonderful works.” The Lord will sadly respond: “Depart from me, you who [habitually practice lawlessness], I never [got to know] you” (Mt. 7:21-23).

We Know a Man by His Fruit, Not by His Gifts

We know a person's character by one supreme thing: “You shall know them by their fruits” (Mt. 7:20). Spirituality and strength are *not* measured by one's extraordinary gifts and abilities, but by fruit—by how much of the fruit of the Spirit one has (Gal. 5:22,23).

A Man's Strength is Measured by Wisdom and Self-Control

Proverbs 16:32 is the standard by which we measure strength – and that is by one's ability to “rule his spirit” (Prov.16:32). Even though Samson was strong outwardly, he was weak inwardly, for he was manipulated by women and controlled by his emotions. If we intend to “rule the nations” (Rev. 2:26-27), we must first learn to rule our own spirit. Strength is also measured by wisdom (Prov. 25:4), and by how much of the fruit of the Spirit has been developed in us.

The Problem of Immorality in the Church Today

This is a wicked and adulterous generation. The conditions in the earth are becoming just as they were in the times of Noah when God had to destroy the earth with a flood (Gen. 6:5-7, Mt. 24:37). Not only is the world growing darker each day with iniquity, but even the Church itself is being infiltrated with all kinds of worldliness and immorality. For example, in a particular church in Australia, all the musicians who were performing on the platform were living in adultery and fornication. Can you imagine what kind of spirit was getting into the young people as the musicians were performing! It was a thriving church outwardly, but it had no standards of holiness. Sad to say, this church is representative of many churches today, yet the problem always goes back to the leaders and the standards they are not willing to uphold.

Why Do Ministers Fall?

There was a group of twenty-five ministers in France who experienced a wonderful visitation from God. Several years later, nine of them had fallen into adultery. God said, “The reason they fell is because they did not move on in their Christian walk.” There was an over-familiarity with the basic doctrines they held, and they were satisfied to remain on the spiritual plateau to which they had attained. Therefore, they lost the reality of God's presence, drifted into compromise, and became open targets for Satan's attack.

Success and the Stupor it Brings

As we have mentioned earlier, the most dangerous time in the life of David was not when he stood against Goliath, or when he was fleeing from the armies of king Saul. During those times David was relying totally upon the Lord to preserve him and to meet his daily needs in the wilderness. However, it was when the Lord had established David as king and had given him rest on every side from all of his enemies that he grew lax and fell into adultery (2 Sam. 7:1, 11:1-5). God had lavished David with every good thing, including honor, position, power, wealth, and a beautiful home; but then David grew careless and felt accountable to no one. He had a sense of “taking whatsoever he desired” (Eccl. 2:10). Thus, he partook of the forbidden fruit—he took another man's wife and fell into the terrible sin of adultery. Can we see in this Bible account *the added temptations* we are going to face when God begins to bless us?

A Private Life With No Accountability

It is good to be “in the light” and to be transparent with others. When people are too private, they are easier prey for the enemy. Most sins are committed under the cover of darkness where they are well hidden; but Satan's power is broken when one's deeds are brought to the light. It is dangerous to be overly private or unaccountable to others. Many Christians today, including ministers, are hooked on pornography on the internet. This spirit is more addictive than heroin. The problem can be so well hidden in one's private life that even the spouse is unaware of what is going on.

I have had good ministerial friends destroyed by Satan over this issue of pornography on the internet. According to Numbers 33:52, the Israelites had to destroy “all the pictures” in Canaan because of the evil spirits that were resident in them. This is a warning to us that if these *secret sins* and pictures are not faced, they will destroy us and our ministry.

Taking No Stand on the Permanence of Marriage

Another major reason for moral failure in the ministry is the unwillingness of ministers to stand for the permanence of marriage. Many condone divorce and remarriage, and solemnize second, third, and fourth marriages. When a minister blesses such marriages, he brings a spirit into the church and encourages others to also divorce and remarry. Often this spirit overtakes the minister's own family. As a result, his children marry divorced people, or divorce may even hit his own marriage.

Not long ago, a Christian leader stated in his book that he was unhappy in his first marriage, and could never grow in his spiritual life and ministry. Now that he has divorced his first wife and married someone else, he claims he is happy and blessed, and his spiritual life and ministry are flourishing immensely. Can you imagine the impact this is having on thousands of struggling Christian marriages who secretly would like to get out of their unpleasant circumstances and have a fresh romance in their lives?

Listen to the Right Voice

A testimony like this encourages thousands of couples to break their vows before God. What message is this sending to the next generation?—That when they have problems in their marriage, just end it and start another one, and God will bless it. I would like to suggest to my fellow ministers, and even plead with them: “Please, uphold God's standards on marriage, and also be more discerning of the books your parishioners are reading.”

A book has a spirit in it—It has the spirit of the author; and we are going to receive the spirit and mentality of that author. Therefore, it is very important to whom we *listen* and to whom we *follow*, because we are going to end up where they are going.

Life's difficulties must be assessed by God's Law, instead of our own logic. For this reason, when people are having struggles in their marriage, we cannot counsel them using our emotions and natural mind. Therefore, *before* encouraging anyone to divorce and marry someone else, please consider the following consequences:

- It always brings guilt.
- It is the result of a hardened heart (unforgiveness); and it is not blessed.
- It will injure the struggling marriages of others.
- It will limit their service for God (1 Tim. 3:2, Titus 1:6).
- There are special consequences for violating God's marriage laws.
- There are added domestic problems with an extra set of in-laws.
- There is a greater tendency for the children to divorce later in life.
- Incest is a greater problem—stepchildren / stepparents.
- It brings a loss of discernment and a spirit of rationalization.
- It is a broken vow and a broken covenant that God cannot bless.
- It is against the testimony of Jesus, which is the spirit of prophecy. (cf. Rev.19:10). The “spirit of prophecy” is what Christ would say.
- It brings added battles with lust (Lk.16:17,18, Mk.10:1-12, Rom.7:1-3).
- It hinders one from fully ascending Mt. Zion (Psa.15:4, a broken vow).

People should never assume that *marriage to someone else* is going to alleviate their problems. It is much more likely to do the opposite, especially since divorce is a direct violation of the commandment of the Lord. Several years ago statistics in America showed that 50% of marriages ended in divorce, but in second marriages, the divorce rate was 70%. This is telling us that remarriage to someone else only *compounds* the problem. With an added set of inlaws, there is more friction between step-children and step-parents, problems with alimony, court hearings, difficulties with visiting rights, and much, much more. After all of man's endless reasons and rationalizations to defend divorce and remarriage, I believe we will find in the final analysis that God was right all the time, and that He meant exactly what He said about the subject.

Over the years I have heard numerous prophecies uttered over people who were endeavoring to marry divorced people, but this goes *against* the testimony of Jesus, which is the true spirit of prophecy (Rev.19:10, Mk.10:9-12). Ahab had 400 prophecies confirming his direction in life, but every one of them was wrong (1 Kg.22:6). True prophecy never *contradicts* the Word of God; and Jesus is “the Word of God” (Rev.19:13). He is the Truth.

The God of all Hope

There will be multitudes coming into the Church when revival sweeps the world, and many of them will have already been divorced and remarried. When the woman at the well found Jesus as her Savior, she had been married five times, and the man she was living with was not her husband (Jn. 4:16-18). Yet, when this woman found “The Fountain of Living Waters,” the source of all joy, she brought the whole city to Jesus (4:28-30, 39-41). With true repentance, anyone can be fruitful and productive, irrespective of their past mistakes and sins. Here was a woman with a bad past who was bringing an entire city to Christ. Let us summarize what we have just said, and add a few more remarks:

- Divorce and remarriage is against God's New Testament law.
- A minister must not solemnize or condone divorce / remarriage.
- We should *accept* everyone who comes to Christ.
- With true repentance, anyone can be productive for Christ.
- There are always consequences for divorce and remarriage.
- This limits one from having *certain positions* in the Church.
- Nevertheless, there are *many other ways* to be fruitful for God.
- You should *not* command second marriages to break up.
- Eggs cannot be unscrambled and neither can domestic problems be unscrambled. We should understand that while divorce and remarriage is not right, it is forgivable; but it has consequences.

The Need to Forgive an Adulterous Spouse

There was a certain enthusiastic woman who had led over 500 people to Christ. Her husband, probably not as dedicated as she, fell into the terrible sin of adultery, but deeply regretted his mistake and begged his wife for forgiveness. Devastated by his infidelity, she refused to forgive him; but in doing so, she also turned her spirit against God. She lamented bitterly, “Lord, I have been faithful to You, but You have not been faithful to me.” As time went on the woman's offense worsened, as she continued to reject the grace of God in her time of need (Heb. 4:16). As a result, at her death, she was cursing God. This lady, who in her younger years had pointed so many people to heaven, did not end up going to heaven (1 Cor. 9:27). What a fearful thing it is to die with a heart in that condition!

One's Salvation Depends Upon Forgiving Others

People are offered grace [which is divine enablement] when they are tempted or devastated (Heb. 4:16, 12:15). To reject this grace is to cut off oneself from divine help, causing the heart to turn evil with bitterness and wickedness. Jesus warned that “If we do not forgive men their trespasses, neither will our Father forgive us our trespasses” (Mt. 6:14-15). As ministers, it is important to warn our congregations of the perils of not forgiving others.

Keys to Escaping Immorality

Regarding the sin of immorality, Solomon testified: “Whoso pleaseth God shall escape from her; but the sinner shall be taken by her” (Eccl. 7:26). The first key to avoiding the pitfall of moral sin is *to please God*. Solomon was actually saying that he had not pleased God, for he had fallen many times into this dreadful snare and had not been protected by God. It is also important where we set our eyes, for many sins begin with the eyes. Job said that he had made a covenant with his eyes (Job 31:1). He had determined to keep his eyes and heart focused away from sensuality.

Joseph was the man who *ran* from temptation (Gen. 39:7-13). He was very wise, as he removed himself from vulnerable situations. Joseph also feared the Lord and was aware that God was watching. Once again, it is our “great and precious promises” that help us “escape the corruption in the world through lust” (2 Pet.1:4).

The Pastor's Counsel

One day a young man came to his pastor's office and said, “Pastor, I am losing my faith. I cannot believe anymore.” He expected the pastor to try to augment his faith by quoting Scriptures, but the pastor who was older and wiser knew what was at the source of the young man's problem. He simply said, “And what have you been doing?” The young man's head hung down in disgrace.

Moral sin brings darkness into the soul. When issues are not right in the heart, people lose their understanding and faith. Jesus said; “*How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?*” (Jn. 5:44).

What is at the Root of Atheism?

Atheism and agnosticism *begin* with immorality, which is accompanied by guilt. In an attempt to dull the mind of this guilt, a person rationalizes that **if** there is no God (or we cannot be sure there is a God), then there can be no standard of right and wrong, and there is no judgment. Thus, the root of a mixed up mind is immorality and a rejection of God. Daniel 9:13 says that when people “turn from iniquity, they will understand truth.” As long as an individual is not repentant, he will remain in darkness and bondage. Therefore, it is fruitless to debate with an atheist, for he has been smitten by God with a reprobate mind (Rom.1:21-32). “None of the wicked shall understand, but the wise shall understand” (Dan.12:10).

Review — Morals:

- Solomon's path grew darker and darker because he was disobedient.
- Often a preacher's messages are just as much for himself as for others.
- Wisdom is directly related to moral purity throughout Proverbs.
- Adultery is actually many sins, and it cauterizes the conscience.
(One minister was involved with six women in his church.)
- The coming Antichrist will justify every kind of immorality.
- God still anointed Samson, even when he was living in moral sin.
- God was giving him “space to repent,” not approving his sin.
- With no repentance, God later removed His Spirit from Samson.
- Samson had to lose both of his eyes to bring him to repentance.
- It is better to lose an eye if it keeps us out of hell (Mt. 5:27-29, 18:9).
- Many rely on their great ministry to save them, but it will not.
- We judge a man's character by his fruit, not by his special gifts.
- The musicians of a certain church were all living in immorality.
This represents the fallen standards of many churches today.
- Nine out of twenty-five pastors fell into adultery. If we do not move on in God, we will lose His presence and Satan will attack us.
- Success is dangerous because we forget to rely on God.
- Satan ensnares people who are *too private* and accountable to no one.
- When no stand is taken on the permanence of marriage, a spirit comes into the church encouraging couples to divorce and remarry.
- When a leader tells everyone how blessed he is since he has divorced and married someone else, he will ruin endless other couples.
- Be very careful of the books you read; you get the author's spirit.
- There are *many consequences* to divorce and remarriage.
- The divorce rate is even higher for those in a second marriage.
- Even 400 prophecies to confirm your direction can be wrong.
- Christ means exactly what He says regarding divorce / remarriage.
- With *true repentance*, everyone can be fruitful in Christ, even if the past has not been good. (Example: The woman at the well: John 4.)
- To escape immorality—please God and have His protection; keep your eyes away from temptation; remove yourself from vulnerable situations; have vision and the fear of the Lord; uphold God's standards on marriage, and do not solemnize divorce and remarriage.

Chapter Seven

MUSIC

Having the right music in our churches is critically important because it affects the presence of the Lord and the moving of the Holy Spirit. True worship and praise brings a revelation of God that transforms us to be like Him. It also releases the spiritual gifts and brings deliverance, healing, and the spirit of prophecy for direction (1 Sam.16:23, 2 Kgs. 3:15). The right music is a key to revival and a growing church. God created music; it is a part of Himself, and heaven is filled with music. Thus, right music and pure worship are conditioning us for heaven and eternity. Pure worship also helps to keep us on course and enables us to hit the mark for our lives.

The Influence of Music

The spiritual condition of the Church at any time in history has always depended on the condition of its music, praise, and worship! Music has tremendous power. It can move our people into God's purposes or away from them. We are influenced greatly by music; therefore, the music we have in our churches must be holy. God surrounds Himself with praise, worship, and the beauty of holiness (Psa. 96:9). Is our music fulfilling this divine purpose? Is it edifying the Lord and drawing us closer to Him?

Satan is Attacking the Church in the Area of Music

Today there is a great attack of Satan in the area of music, as he infiltrates the Church with his sounds and beat. After all, Satan is the fallen worship leader of heaven, and he knows all about *anointings* and the power and sway of music. Satan uses his fabulous musical abilities to lure people away from God unto himself, and he does so with music that has *a counterfeit anointing*.

Music is an Integral Part of Satan's Kingdom

Satan's whole desire is *the worship of himself*; and he uses music to obtain it. Nebuchadnezzar demanded worship for himself and his image; and he required it *with the sound of the music* (Please see Daniel 3:5, 7, 10, 15). This is prophetic of our times, when Satan will produce an imposter to this world, the Antichrist (Rev.13:4, 13:8).

Music is one of the greatest tools Satan has to bring man into bondage. Music is known by the fruit it produces. For example, rock music is associated with the rebel culture. Therefore, if you let your children listen to it, they will rebel against God and you. Rock music is also connected with immorality, drugs, and spiritism. The evil spirit that works through a rock artist will get into those who imbibe it. Music is worship! What are we worshipping?

Christian Rock

The main thrust of Christian rock is *beat*. Often the message conveyed is not scripturally correct and the artists are usually filled with the spirit of the world. But God does not want His people to use Satan's styles, or put Scripture to the melodies of the world. This is like bringing in the ark of the covenant on a new cart (1 Chron.13:1-14; 15:12-13). It is wrong to try to bring God's presence using our own methods. He is very particular *how* His presence is brought in, and He judged Israel for doing it contrary to His order.

Therefore, we should have music and lyrics that edify God and promote His high calling. There is music that *expresses* emotion, and there is music that *incites* emotions. We should avoid the latter one. Some music is produced in the outer court, some is produced in the holy place, and some is produced in the holy of holies. Let us seek to point our people to the highest plateau in God. Our music must be right. Music will attract us either to holiness or to worldliness. It may be good also to lose our *need to be entertained*.

“Ye worship ye know not what” (Jn. 4:22). It is possible for Christians to think they are worshipping God, but in reality be giving themselves to music and worship that is from a wrong spiritual source. Joshua heard “a noise” in the congregation (cf. Ex. 32:17-19). The worship in Israel had degenerated into clamor, but true worship is not a noise or clamor. Worship becomes a noise when the flesh is reigning instead of God. Have we lost our discernment and sensitivity in the area of music? Today there is a tremendous need for consecrated musicians, and godly leaders who can guide and direct them. Actually, the proof that a church is healthy is in the quality of its music and its worship.

Several Ways to Evaluate Music

- What kind of person is the artist or worship leader?
Is he or she consecrated to God, or an *entertainer*?
- Observe *titles* and the *pictures* on CD covers.
Do they glorify God, or do they glorify the flesh and the person?
- Does the music minister to the Lord? Is it edifying to Him?
Is it “worship in the beauty of holiness?”
- Does the music genuinely draw people to the Lord,
or does it draw people to a *beat* and into a frenzy?
- Does it communicate a true message? Is it theologically correct?
- What kind of people follow the music — the carnal or the godly?
- Does it copy the world's sounds and lyrics?
Are Satan's styles being used?
Are the words Christian, but the melodies from the world?

Review — Music:

- Right music is important because it affects the presence of the Lord.
- True worship brings transformation, and a revelation of God.
- Anointed music releases the spiritual gifts, healing, and prophecy.
- Right music is a key to revival and a growing church.
- Pure worship helps to keep us on course.
- The spiritual condition of the Church is known by its music.
- Music can move people unto God, or away from God.
- Satan is infiltrating the Church with his sounds and his beat.
- Satan is the fallen worship leader of heaven.
- He fully understands music, and anointings.
- He draws people to himself *with music that has a counterfeit anointing*.
- Nebuchadnezzar commanded the worship of his image with the sound of *all kinds of music* (Dan. 3:5, 3:7, 3:10, 3:15). The coming Antichrist will also use music to bring worship to himself and to Satan.
- Music is one of Satan's greatest tools to bring man into bondage.
- Christian rock music emphasizes beat, and appeals to the soul.
- Often Christian rock artists are worldly, sensual entertainers.
- It is wrong to use Christian words to Satan's music and beat.
- God's people were judged for trying to bring in God's presence using their own methods (God's holy ark brought in on a new cart).
- Our music should express emotion but not stir people into a frenzy.
- Some music is outer court music, some music is birthed in the holy place, and some music comes from the holy of holies.
- We should ask God for pure worship from within the veil.
- Music attracts us either to holiness or to worldliness.
- Sometimes believers do not know what or who they are worshipping.
- Israel's worship had degenerated into a noise (Ex. 32:17-19).
- Worship becomes a noise when the flesh is ruling instead of God.
- There is a great need today for holy, consecrated musicians.
- Many worshippers *flatter* God (Psa. 78:35-37), but do not live right.
- Much of today's music is *fleshly entertainment* and it appeals to the flesh. It has little conviction or anointing. Let us bring people to Christ with the *true* anointing and conviction. Then our converts will stand.

Chapter Eight

DISCERNMENT

Three Kinds of Spirits

According to 1 Corinthians 2:11-12, there are three categories of spirits: the spirit of man, the Spirit of God, and the spirit of this world. Man's spirit is the battleground, with the other two spirits competing to gain possession of a person to dwell there.

God Wants to Find Rest in Man

Although God has created the heavens and the earth, He wants each one of us to create something for Him. He asks: "What kind of a house will you build for me, and where is the place of my rest?" (Isa. 66:1,2, Ac. 7:48-50). Our Lord desires each of us to create *within ourselves* a home in which He may comfortably dwell and find rest. Truly, our bodies are the temples of the living God and His Spirit dwells within us (1 Cor. 6:19,20). When Jesus used a whip to drive out the money-changers from the temple, it was symbolic of Christ's making a new entrance into our lives to oust all those things that are offensive to Him. Ultimately, God's chastenings are for our benefit, that He may have a more suitable place in which to dwell.

Demons Also Want to Find Rest in Man

On the other hand, demons also want to take up residence in man. When a spirit is cast out of a man, the spirit walks through desolate places "looking for rest" (Mt.12:43-45). Then the evil spirit says to himself, "I will return to my house from whence I came out." It is obvious from this passage that demons want to inhabit a body and find rest there. The reason the evil spirit wanted to go back to his house [or to the person from whom he was cast out] was that he felt so comfortable and welcome there. Thus, the real problem is not the demon, but a *heart* that gives him an invitation to return. Remember that the strength of sin is in one's *love* for it.

The Problem of the Human Heart

We are talking about discernment here. Man's greatest problem is not the devil, but a heart that invites him to come in. Therefore, unless something changes in the heart, the door will be left open and the devils will continue to come back in. Once, as an evangelist was praying for a woman, the Holy Spirit showed him that the crookedness in her body was actually caused by a spirit of bitterness. This woman held a tremendous hatred in her heart toward her sister-in-law from a past offense, and this had allowed the evil spirit to enter and gain control of her. The evangelist thus told the lady that she had to forgive her sister-in-law. When she did so, the evil spirit left her and her body became straight once again.

Rebellion is Like Witchcraft

“For rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft, and stubbornness is as iniquity and idolatry” (1 Sam.15:23). *Rebellion* and *stubbornness* are open doors for other spirits to come into the heart, for Satan is attracted to anything compatible to his nature. A certain man in a mental hospital was asked by a counsellor, “Would you rather be right or would you rather be out of here?” He quickly replied, “*I would rather be right,*” which was, of course, an indication of his obstinacy. Because of his debilitating and unreasonable attitudes, he could no longer cope with life or get along with others. Likewise, many mental and emotional disorders result from issues that are unbecoming to the soul, such as: hatred, unforgiveness, stubbornness, and pride. All of these are open doors for evil spirits to come in and take possession.

For What Will a Person Use His Freedom?

While we long to see people delivered from their torments and diseases, there is something else that we need to consider, and often this issue is overlooked—How will this person use his new found freedom? And for what will he use his healthy body?

Set Free to Serve God, Not Ourselves

When Jesus healed the ten lepers, only one of them returned to give God glory (Lk.17:11-19). The others were thrilled to be healed, but only one of them used his healthy body to glorify God. When God releases people from their bondages, it is imperative to warn them that their new-found freedom and blessing must be used to serve the Lord; it should not be used to live for themselves. When God set His people free from Egyptian bondage, they were set free to *serve Him* (Ex. 4:23); but instead of serving the Lord they rebelled in the desert and wanted to return to their old lifestyles.

Freedom is Dangerous

Unlimited freedom is dangerous! God has had to place limits on man since the time of the Fall (Gen. 3:16-19). Without restraints, man becomes hopelessly corrupt, but these restrictions help to contain a wild, rampant fallen nature; and they are used by God to keep man on course. If these restraints are thrown off or if liberty is granted prematurely, liberty will be “used for the flesh” (Gal. 5:13). Unfortunately, many who are healed refuse to make a real commitment to Christ *and turn back* (See Mt.10:20-24, Jn. 6:60-66).

The Problem is Not Ignorance

Man's greatest problem is not Satan or ignorance of the truth. Therefore, let us have discernment and understand the *real* problem. It is the obstinate, self-seeking, revolting nature in man. Peter asked Ananias, “Why did Satan get into your heart?” (Ac. 5:3). Satan found a way into the heart of Ananias because of his ulterior motives. He wanted to appear to be more generous than he actually was. Thus, he thought nothing of lying in God's presence and telling the church that he had sold everything he had and given it to the poor. Hearts like this are where Satan finds a resting place. Let us “give no place to the devil” but submit ourselves unto God (Eph. 4:27, Jas. 4:7).

Review — Discernment:

- There are three classes of spirits: Man's, God's, and the World's.
- Man's spirit is the battleground; the other two seek control of it.
- God wants to find rest in us (Isaiah 66:1-2, Acts 7:48-50).
- Demons also want a resting place in man (Mt.12:43-45).
- Unto whom shall we open the door? Will it be unto God or unto evil?
- God asks us, “What kind of house will you build for Me?”
- We are the temple of God; He wants to feel at home in us.
- He would purge His temple of offensive things with a whip.
- Evil spirits also want to take up residence in our “house.”
- Demons come into a person who “opens the door” to them.
- We are commanded to “give no place to the devil” (Eph. 4:27).
- The strength of sin is in one's love for it.
- Never mind the devil, the real problem is the heart.
- We cannot always cast out demons; some want to hold on to them.
- One person had 60 demons. The ministers cast out all of them except for the last one who said, “I want to come out but she won't let me.”
- One lady's body was crooked because of a spirit of bitterness. She first had to forgive her sister-in-law before the spirit would leave.
- Rebellion is as the sin of witchcraft; evil spirits get into the rebellious.
- Many mental and emotional disorders are from evil spirits, but they come in because of bitterness, pride, stubbornness, and hatred.
- The real problem is the human heart and its fallen nature.
- God had to impose *limits* upon man to control a wild nature.
- When God removes limits from a person, the question may be asked, “What will a person use his freedom for—God or self?”
- Many people who are healed or blessed, go their own ways.
- When Israel was freed from Egypt, they rebelled in the desert.
- When the ten lepers were healed, only one glorified the Lord.
- In cities where Jesus did most of His mighty works, many did not make a commitment to Him and turned from Him (Mt.10:20-24).
- Peter asked Ananias, “Why did Satan get into your heart?”
- We must never give Satan an advantage over us (2 Cor. 2:10-11).
- Satan does not get into a clean heart (Jn.14:30).

Chapter Nine

MINISTERS — A MESSAGE FOR YOUR YOUTH

As paradoxical as it may seem, the most important decisions in life have to be made when we are young. These choices involve:

- Vocation—the choice of career and education for our life's work.
- Spouse —the selection of a lifelong companion.
- Location—the place and environment where we will live.
- Commitment to God—either surrendering our life to God, or running our life independently of Him.

As ministers, we need to tell our young people that the choices we make when we are young affect our future and our eternity. The early years of our life are “sowing” years. When we are old, we will reap the things that we have sown. This is the reason Solomon warns young people: “Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth, while the evil days come not, nor the years draw nigh, when thou shalt say, I have no pleasure in them” (Eccl.12:1).

Statistics tell us that most people who are age sixty-five and older are not happy, and that is because they are reaping the fruit of the *wrong choices* they have made in their lifetime, especially in their youth. Solomon himself was old and downcast as he preaches his classic sermon called Ecclesiastes. He was in his *reaping years*, thus, he urges young people not to live as he did in his early life.

The Dangers of Living According to Our Passions

The young man who “walks in the ways of his heart and in the sight of his eyes” makes a disaster of his life, and will answer to God at the judgment seat (Eccl.11:9-10; 12:1). From his youth, Solomon had indulged in anything he desired (Eccl. 2:10,11), but now in his senior years he was experiencing great disillusionment in his soul. We can avoid much sorrow and a life of regret if we would make the right choices when we are young.

It is Easier to Change When We Are Young

Character is more easily molded and shaped during our formative years. In the early stages of our lives we are more flexible. An oak tree beautifully illustrates this truth. A tiny oak tree is limber and can be easily bent in one direction or another; but when that tree is eighty years old, it is established and firm and cannot be greatly changed. Therefore, tell your young people that it is during their younger, impressionable years that they have *the ideal opportunity* to be fashioned into a godly person, if they so choose.

According to statistics, people who do not make a commitment to Christ by the age of twenty-five, *seldom* commit themselves to Him later in life. Therefore, it is imperative that we put our lives into the hands of the Master Potter when we are young and pliable. As life passes by, we are being shaped (year after year) into that man or woman that we are going to be for all eternity. Yet, the decisions we make *in our youth* are the most crucial of all because we are selecting the course we will travel on for the rest of our lives. The choices we make *in our youth* will determine what our spiritual condition will be at the end of our lives. One major example of this is whom we choose to marry.

The Second Most Important Decision in Life

Next to deciding to follow Christ, the most important issue of a Christian is whom we select as a lifelong marriage partner. A spouse will either move you closer to God, or away from God. Also, the person you marry is going to determine whether your children follow the Lord or the ways of the world. When Christians marry unbelievers, they are endangering the eternal state of the lives of their children. In such homes, the children usually follow the sensual and worldly ways of the unbelieving parent. This is why it is so important to stress to our youth that it is evil in the sight of the Lord to marry a nonbeliever.

Seriousness of Infatuation

There was a fifteen year old girl, the daughter of a minister, who went to a Christian youth camp. During this time she met a young man with whom she became enthralled, but he was not a person of integrity. Totally overcome with her emotions, she ran away with him and married him, but within one week she hated him (cf. 2 Sam.13:15). Let us consider some of the far-reaching effects of her irresponsible action:

- She was damaging God's plan for her life.
- She was jeopardizing her future happiness.
- She was injuring her parents, their ministry, and her church.
- She was endangering the spiritual lives of her future children.
- And a multitude of other ramifications.

Tell your young people that infatuation deprives a person of common sense and sound judgment. Proverbs 23:26 pleads, “My son, give me thine heart.” The Spirit of God beseeches us to give our emotions and affections to God, to place our hearts in His hands. If we do not rule our passions, we are going to do great injury to ourselves and to many others as well.

The Reason for Apostasy and Consequent Judgment

Apostasy begins with a breakdown in the home. The earth became exceedingly wicked in the times of Noah, but the moral decay *started* when the godly began marrying the ungodly (Gen. 6:1-3). The children of such marriages were rebellious, and the next generation became even more rebellious, until God had to destroy the whole earth with a flood. This is the direction our world is heading today, just as it was in the days of Noah (Mt. 24:37). By marrying an unbeliever or an uncommitted Christian, a person is adding to the transgression of the nation, and jeopardizing the chances of his children going to heaven.

God Alone Knows What Will Make Us Happy

Emotions can change overnight; what you love today you may hate tomorrow (cf. 2 Sam.13:1-15). Man thinks he knows what he wants and what will make him happy, but the mind and emotions are very unreliable and deceptive. God alone knows what will make a person happy, and therefore, we must rely totally on Him for direction, especially in the area of selecting a lifelong mate.

God alone knows the hearts of all people (1 Kg. 8:39; 2 Chr. 6:30). A person may seem to be committed to God today, but what will he or she be like five years from now, or ten years from now?

Remember:

- Only the Lord knows what will really make us happy.
- Only the Lord knows who is best suited for us.
- Only the Lord knows the heart of a prospective mate (Ac.1:24).
- Only the Lord knows the future and what a person will do.

Therefore, allow God to choose for you, and *wait* for His time.

Make a vow to the Lord to wait for His time and His choice.

Our Mind and Emotions are Unreliable

A young airplane pilot and his trainer went into the sky one day for a practice flight. As the plane entered the clouds, the trainer wanted to teach the young pilot an important lesson. He said, "Without looking at your instruments, tell me when you feel the aircraft has leveled off." Therefore, using only his feelings and sensations, the trainee told his trainer when he felt the plane was level. Then the instructor told him to look down at his instruments. Much to his surprise, the plane was nearly upside down! His teacher wanted him to know that by relying only on his instinct, he would make *terrible mistakes*. Likewise, we must measure our position by a standard that is higher than our feelings or our natural mind. We need divine help from God, and from his Law.

Life is Filled with Counterfeits

There is one thing the human heart is looking for and one thing alone, and that is happiness. Yet, the heart of man searches for satisfaction in the wrong places, using the wrong approaches.

Satan and an ungodly world system offers young hearts many *counterfeits* in order to rob them of eternal life and happiness. Lot, Abram's nephew, thought Sodom was an ideal place to live, but it was ripe for judgment. Lot never inquired of God, which was a terrible mistake. He simply used his eyes and impulse to make his choice (Gen.13:10-13), but he ended up losing everything.

The Idolatry and Emptiness of Human Love

Perhaps the greatest disappointment and disillusionment in life is the emptiness of human love, when human love is our goal. Anything that replaces the Lord or that is valued more than the Lord Himself is an idol. Every idol will eventually turn rotten, and ultimately that object we love more than God will be detested. Such is the emptiness of human love when God is left out. Let us remember that “fulness of joy” is found in God's presence (Psa.16:11), not in human love. There are many illusions in life that glitter with false hopes and promises, but if we choose the will of God we are *choosing life* and we will find true happiness.

The Reason God Made Us

Revelation 4:11 tells us the purpose of creation: “For thou hast created all things, *and for thy pleasure* they are and were created.” Everything God has made (including ourselves), was for His own pleasure. We were made to bring pleasure to God, and when we are accomplishing this, we will find fulfillment. However, if we are living for our own pleasure and if we are doing our own will (as so many do), we will never find satisfaction or fulfillment.

Am I Seeking My Pleasure or God's Pleasure?

In order to find happiness, we must first understand why God made us and then cooperate with that plan! The supreme purpose for God creating man is that He might have a lover and friend, one who seeks to honor Him in everything (Jn. 8:29). Pleasing the Father was the whole emphasis of Jesus when He was on earth. But there is a controversy in the human heart because people are “lovers of their own selves” and “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (2 Tim. 3:2,4). Thus, we are contending with a fallen nature.

Man's Root Sin — I Run My Own Life, Not God!

God never detaches Himself from humanity; it is humanity who cuts himself off from God (Ac.13:46). *The source of sin* in mankind is that people run their own lives, seek their own interests, and leave God out. Man follows his own inclinations and passions without inquiring of God. Therefore, people make grievous errors of judgment and then they suffer from its consequences.

Man is dependent upon God for everything. We are unable to understand ourselves or find the answers for the puzzles of our hearts (Jer.10:23). We cannot control what tomorrow brings, nor can we change an evil nature (Jer.13:23). Therefore, realizing our utter dependence upon the Creator, would we dare to live our lives independently of Him, or make any major decisions without first consulting God for His direction, input, and blessing?

Heroes / Role Models

A well known lecturer has observed that Christian young people backslide because they admire the wrong heroes and desire to emulate them. The Word of God warns us not to “envy the wicked” (Prov. 23:17; 24:1,19). Teenager, do you have posters in your room of ungodly Hollywood actors, rock stars, or TV personalities?

Young people are imitators. They take on the characteristics of the people they admire—they dress like them, talk like them, and act like them. When a young person goes after the wrong “heroes,” he or she is following Satan and the world. Therefore, I want to urge every young heart to choose the right heroes and to admire only those who honor the Lord. Remember, if you are in awe of the wrong people, your heart will be turned away from the Lord.

Hollywood actors and celebrities are perhaps the most empty and unhappy people in the world, yet people look enviously upon them and wish to be like them. Elvis Presley was a very lonely man. He could not be seen in public without being smothered with hordes of fans. He had to rent a shopping center at 3:00 a.m. just to be alone to relax and browse through the store. People pay a terrible price for popularity and positions of power. Their life is owned by the public, and often they are manipulated by Satan.

Friends / Acceptance

Paul warns: “Be not deceived, evil [associations] corrupt good manners” (1 Cor.15:33). Wrong friendships corrupt a person. Many years ago a young lady in my Sunday school class started mixing with worldly girl friends. Shortly after, she was involved with shoplifting. This was the effect the wrong companions had upon her character (See 2 Chron. 24:17-19; Prov.13:20).

Dinah was a daughter of Jacob (Read Genesis 34:1-31). Lonely, and wanting friends, she “went out to see the daughters of the land.” Being with the wrong girl friends, she met the wrong fellow and fell into moral sin. Her brothers, grieved with this action, murdered the young man. Then the whole family had to relocate for fear of retaliation. All of this upheaval started when Dinah “went out to see the daughters of the land.” Immorality almost always starts with rebellion and having the wrong friendships. Young people, please guard your hearts and walk with godly companions!

Often a young heart will do almost anything to have acceptance and love, even at the cost of compromise or sexual impurity. I want to repeat something that I have already said: If human love is your goal, you are going to be greatly disappointed. Any love we place higher than God's love is *idolatrous*, and that thing will turn rotten. Such is the emptiness of human love when God is left out.

Do Not Touch the Forbidden Fruit

Every young man and woman faces the same scenario that confronted Adam and Eve in the Garden. They were commanded not to eat of the forbidden fruit. This temptation is reenacted every time a young man and woman are dating, and that is the temptation of premarital relations. This is forbidden fruit. To become *one flesh* is only lawful and blessed in marriage. Violation of this divine law brings a curse—guilt, shame, abortion, and many other complications, including God's frown. Therefore, let it be a firm conviction in your heart to keep yourself pure before marriage. Be honorable during courtship, and remove yourself from vulnerable situations. How you conduct yourself during courtship is laying a foundation for the rest of your life, and the lives of your children.

The Time Issue

To a five-year-old in kindergarten, one year is twenty percent of his life, but to a fifty-year-old man, one year is only two percent of his life. Hence, as we grow older, time literally passes faster. An adolescent or someone in his early twenties does not have the advantage of experience or perspective. Thus, a young heart is tempted to avert the necessary preparations that precede success, and seize his “inheritance” immediately. There is a great danger in the heart of a young person to want instant success—to rise quickly to heights he is not capable of managing. The Scriptures warn repeatedly against this danger as seen, for example, in the life of the prodigal son (Lk.15:12,13; cf. Prov. 20:21).

The Proof of Our Commitment —Waiting for God's Time

Our commitment to Christ is proven by *the test of time*. God will test us by *delays*. When Israel had a delay in the wilderness, they quickly turned from the Lord and wanted to return to their former life-styles (Ex. 32:1). Thus, their commitment to the Lord was superficial (cf. Mt. 24:48-51). Remember that God has extraordinary blessings reserved for all those who *wait* for Him (Isa. 64:4). Therefore, let us not grow impatient and go our own way when nothing seems to be happening. It may be a test.

Do not give God deadlines! Wait for God's time. Allow Him to establish a deep foundation in your life. Let God perform His special and intricate work in your heart *when you are young!* Then your industry, marriage, and ministry will last and prosper.

Signs of Strength

Only courageous people go to heaven! Of all the sins that keep men and woman out of heaven, *the first one* is fear or being cowardly (Rev. 21:8). Therefore, if we are hoping to go to heaven, we have to overcome fears. The more we fear God, the less we fear man. Courage is the result of living right, for “the righteous are as bold as a lion” (Prov. 28:1). When you are righteous, you lose all your fear of man; the only one you fear is God.

Jesus said, “If you are ashamed of me, I will be ashamed of you” (Mk. 8:38, Lk. 9:26). Christ conquered shame! He did not hide His face from shame and spitting (Isa. 50:6). Now that *Christ is in us*, we also have the ability to overcome shame and reproach. He is the *source* of our strength and courage. The apostles were filled with the mighty Spirit of Christ. When they were publicly humiliated, they “rejoiced that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his Name” (Ac. 5:41). Being filled with Christ's Spirit is the key for having the victory over shame and the fear of man.

The Need for Grace

Grace is the only thing that transforms our life (1 Tim. 1:13-14). Unless God sovereignly gives us His grace, nothing ever changes, in spite of all our self-improvement programs. Grace is actually *a substance* that God imparts to us, and when He does, we are different. Grace sustains and fortifies us in our times of need (Heb. 4:16). Grace is *enablement*, the ability to carry a heavy load (1 Cor. 15:10). It is only by grace that we are able to keep our hearts free from bitterness (Heb. 12:15). “The heart is established with *grace*” (Heb. 13:9). Hence, grace is essential for emotional stability. Grace supplies us with the power *to obey* when God asks us to do something (Rom. 1:5). Grace is so effective that its evidence can be plainly *seen* (Ac. 11:23). However, grace is only given to those who humble themselves (Jas. 4:6; 1 Pet. 5:5,6; Prov. 3:34). In conclusion—grace comes through a tender relationship with God, and by an obedient life.

The Gift of Repentance

Repentance is a gift of God (Rom. 2:4). It enables a hard heart to melt, and an obstinate mind to change (Zech. 12:10). Repentance is a gift of God's grace and it comes by the anointing. Unless God grants the gift of repentance, people cannot change. We cannot say, “I will live as I please and when I am old, I will repent.” No, a person might not be able to repent, soften, or change (Isa. 55:6). Let us ask God *daily* for this anointing of repentance.

The Fear of the Lord

The fear of the Lord is one of the seven spirits of the Lord mentioned in Isaiah 11:2. Thus, holy fear is an anointing and it is also a treasure (Isa. 33:6); it is the beginning of wisdom and it preserves us from many snares and heartaches. Holy fear keeps us on course and makes us aware of the day of judgment and eternity. Let us ask God for *a double portion* of the spirit of the fear of the Lord.

Review — A Message For Your Youth

- The most important decisions in life have to be made in our youth.
- In our youth, we are choosing the path we will travel on for life.
- These decisions involve: Choice of education for our life's work; Selection of a lifelong mate; Location; To serve God or serve Self.
- The years of our youth are “sowing” years. We reap later in life.
- We reap *more* than we sow. (Jacob produced *many* deceitful sons).
- Issues we do not deal with in our youth come out in our seed.
- Most people over sixty-five are unhappy; these are the reaping years.
- In his old age, Solomon was sad because of seeds sown in his youth.
- Solomon indulged in everything he wanted (Ecc1.11:9-10; 2:10-11).
- Remember *now* thy Creator in the days of thy youth (Ecc.12:1).
- It is easier to change during our younger, formative years.
- A young oak tree is flexible, but an eighty year-old oak cannot be bent.
- People who do not accept Christ by age twenty-five, often never do.
- The most important decision for a Christian is his choice of a mate.
- Marrying an unbeliever endangers the eternity of your children.
- Usually the children follow the ways of the unbelieving parent.
- Emotions are deceitful. What we love today we may hate tomorrow.
- Infatuation deprives a person of common sense and sound judgment.
- If we do not rule our passions, we will injure many others and ourself.
- Apostasy begins with a breakdown in the home; (wrong marriages).
- God destroyed the earth with a flood because of this very issue.
- Each generation gets progressively worse until God has to judge.
- The days of Noah are being repeated today.
- Do not add to the sin of the nation by marrying an unbeliever.
- God alone knows what will make us happy and who is best for us.
- Do not rely on your own mind or instinct to make decisions.
- Like an airplane pilot, rely on your instruments, not on your instinct.
- Consult God on the issue of marriage or you will make a big mistake.
- The human heart seeks one thing only—happiness.
- Satan and an ungodly worldly system offers us many counterfeits.
- Do not be like Lot who relied on his eyes and impulses for direction.
- He chose to live in Sodom, but he was walking into a trap; he lost all.

- Human love (exalted above God's love) brings great emptiness.
- Every “idol” eventually turns rotten and we will detest that thing.
- If we choose God's love and His will *first*, we shall find happiness.
- We were created by God, and *for* God, to bring Him pleasure.
- When we put God first and bring Him pleasure, we find pleasure.
- Man's problem—he is a lover of *himself* instead of a lover of God.
- The root of man's sin is that he runs his own life and leaves God out.
- Never make decisions without consulting God for His input and will.
- Young people backslide because they envy the wicked and desire to be like them. We must not have the wrong heroes or admire the wicked.
- A young person imitates those he admires. Who are *your* heroes?
- Hollywood actors are often the most unhappy people in the world, yet people want to be like them. This is a contradiction, is it not?
- Wrong friends will corrupt you. You will do the same things they do.
- Dinah had worldly girl friends. Being with the wrong crowd, she met the wrong boy and fell into fornication. Then her brothers murdered the boy, and the whole family had to relocate.
- Do not touch the forbidden fruit. Do not participate in premarital sex. Premarital sex results in guilt, shame, loss of respect, and God's frown.
- Your future home depends much on your conduct during courtship.
- The *time* issue is very difficult for a youth. Delays are necessary to test us, but also to develop a strong foundation within so that when God gives us an inheritance it will last and be blessed (Prov. 20:21). That inheritance is a family, an occupation, a ministry, and more.
- Only courageous people go to heaven; fear keeps people out of heaven.
- Are we more afraid of what people think of us than God? (Jn.12:43).
- Christ overcame shame (Isa. 50:6); we can too—for He is in us.
- Boldness comes from being righteous (Prov. 28:1).
- People often are fearful because things are not right in their hearts.
- Grace is the only thing that changes us; self-improvements do not last.
- Grace is a divine substance; God imparts it to those who are humble.
- Grace comes through a relationship with God and by an obedient life.
- Repentance is a gift of God; it is an anointing (Rom. 2:4, Zech.12:10). This anointing melts hard hearts, and changes obstinate minds.
- Holy fear makes us afraid to sin and conscious of the Judgment Day.
- Holy fear keeps us out of hell. Pray for *a double portion* of holy fear.

Chapter Ten

ISRAEL'S JOURNEY—OUR ROAD MAP

For Direction

As ministers of the Gospel, our responsibility is to give direction to those who follow us. Ultimately, our goal is to bring our people into God's purposes, and into rest. Israel's journey from Egypt and finally unto Mount Zion, is an extraordinary road map to help us guide our flock unto maturity and perfection (Col.1:28). This road map not only illustrates where we have come from and where we are headed, it also shows us what to expect along the way.

For Location

Israel's journey is found in many places of God's Word. Paul taught extensively from the journey (1 Cor.10:1-15; Heb. 3:7—4:11). It is mentioned throughout the Psalms, the Prophets, and the Gospels. The journey of Israel is a divine blueprint for the walk of each believer, for it provides a sense of location. It helps us find our position in life. Each place on this journey is a landmark which helps us find our way to the next step or experience.

The Ultimate Destination

The objective of a Christian leader is to bring his people unto glory and perfection. In order to accomplish this, he must lead his flock through many phases. After delivering our people from Egypt (the world) by the message of the blood of the Lamb, we then have to move them through the waters of baptism, through the Red Sea. Then we must bring them to Sinai where Israel came in the third month, the feast of pentecost. This represents the baptism in the Holy Spirit. Yet, we cannot camp here for Sinai (the pentecostal experience) was in the wilderness. We are called to pass our ten tests in the wilderness, cross our Jordan, drive out thirty-one kings, and finally arrive at Mt. Zion—the place of glory, power, and unity.

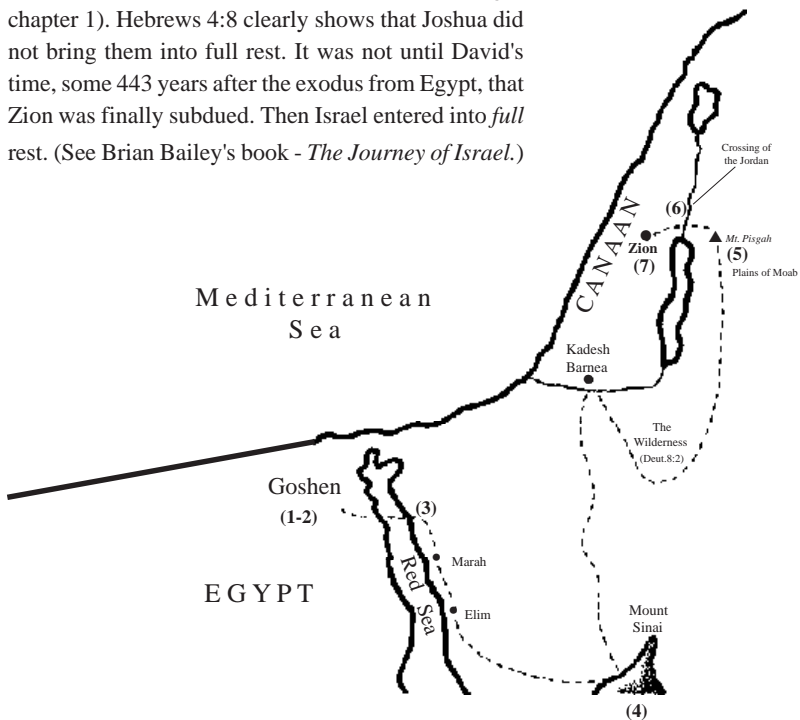
ISRAEL'S JOURNEY FROM EGYPT TO ZION In Seven Phases / In Conjunction with the Seven Feasts

1. **Egypt** – Deliverance from Egypt (the world) by the blood of the Lamb.
2. **Egypt and ever after** – feeding upon the pure Word of God.
3. **Red Sea** – passing through the waters of baptism.
4. **Mt. Sinai** – a type of Pentecost, being filled with the Spirit.

*After failing their 10th test at *Kadesh Barnea*, God said they would never enter His rest. They wandered another 38 years.

5. **Mt. Pisgah** – The last words of Moses (**Deuteronomy**) and his Death – a trumpet call to move from the wilderness into the promised land.
6. **Across Jordan** – deep cleansing, circumcision, the defeating of 31 kings.
7. **Mt. Zion** – the full presence of God, glory, rest, unity (Psa.132:13-16).

The first generation that came out of Egypt died in the wilderness. Then a new generation (led by Joshua) came into the land of promise. Even so, they were slack and settled for a coexistence with their enemies (Judges chapter 1). Hebrews 4:8 clearly shows that Joshua did not bring them into full rest. It was not until David's time, some 443 years after the exodus from Egypt, that Zion was finally subdued. Then Israel entered into *full* rest. (See Brian Bailey's book - *The Journey of Israel*.)



Seven Steps to Spiritual Perfection

Israel's journey from Egypt (the world) to Zion (holiness) was in seven stages. These seven stages coincide with the seven feasts of the Lord. As a believer passes through these seven phases in his walk with the Lord, he will come to maturity and perfection.

The Spiritual Meanings of the Seven Feasts:

(Leviticus 23:4–44)

- 1.) The Passover** – (Salvation by the blood of the Lamb).
- 2.) Unleavened Bread** – (Feeding on the pure Word of God).
- 3.) Firstfruits** – (Baptism in water, resurrection life).
- 4.) Pentecost** – (Baptism in the Holy Spirit, signs following).
- 5.) Trumpets** – (Fresh call to move on; also to prepare for war).
- 6.) Atonement** – (Affliction, fresh cleansing, dying to self).
- 7.) Tabernacles** – (Glory, power, maturity, unity, and more).

1.) The Passover – Salvation

(In Egypt)

Leviticus 23:4-5

Egypt is a symbol of the world but the destination of the world is hell, which is in the lower parts of the earth (cf. Ezek. 32:18). Egypt was known as “the house of bondage” because the Israelites were enslaved and kept in bitter bondage by the Egyptians. When God pronounced judgment upon Egypt, all who applied the blood of the lamb to their lives were spared. Therefore, Israel was saved from judgment by the blood of the Lamb, and thus, they began their journey toward the land of promise (See Exodus 12).

The salvation of Israel was the passover lamb. Egypt rejected the message of the blood and died. Israel believed the message and lived. It is the blood of the Lamb that saves us from judgment. Paul said, “Christ our passover is sacrificed for us” (1 Cor. 5:7). It is interesting that Jesus was crucified during the feast of passover. He is the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn. 1:29).

2.) Unleavened Bread – Pure Doctrine

(In Egypt and Ever After)

Leviticus 23:6-8

Israel had to eat unleavened bread during *the feast of passover*. Then they partook of unleavened bread for another seven days during *the feast of unleavened bread* for a total of eight days.

Bread is symbolic of the Word of God, and eight is the number of resurrection and endless life. This means that after salvation (or passover), we should feast upon the pure Word of God *endlessly* as we quickly make our exodus from Egypt and begin our journey toward Zion. Bread is also a symbol of strength. Our spiritual strength comes from getting into the Word of God and feeding our inner man. *Leaven* represents sin, hypocrisy, and false doctrine (Lk.12:1; Mt.16:6,12). Paul exhorts us to rid ourselves of the leaven in our lives and to keep the feast of unleavened bread, which is the bread of sincerity and truth (1 Cor. 5:8). This we must do endlessly!

3.) Feast of Firstfruits – Type of Water Baptism

(Across the Red Sea)

Leviticus 23:9-11

Having come out of Egypt, the redeemed crossed over the Red Sea where they were severed from Egypt. Going down into the Red Sea and coming out again is a type of water baptism. It is important to get our converts baptized immediately after their salvation experience. Not only does baptism separate us from Egypt (the world), it also breaks the power that is trying to draw us back into the world. Pharaoh and his chariots pursued the redeemed and endeavored to bring them back into bondage. It was in the Red Sea (in the waters of baptism) that Pharaoh and all of his armies were buried and destroyed. Thus, the power and pull of Egypt was broken in the waters of baptism.

An evangelist was holding a Gospel crusade in India, and when he gave the invitation to receive Christ, 10,000 raised their hands. However, when he asked them to submit to water baptism, only eighteen were willing. Water baptism is an identification with Christ; it is a death to our old life and to our old ways in order to live for Christ. Many are unwilling to make this commitment. As ministers, we should stress the importance of being baptized in water. Otherwise, many of our converts will go back to “Egypt.”

Christ is the Firstfruits from the Dead

“But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept” (1 Cor.15:20). Jesus was the firstfruits from the dead, according to the Apostle Paul. Christ fulfilled the feast of firstfruits by His death, burial and resurrection, and His appearance before the Father. We are identified with His death, burial, and resurrection in water baptism. Hence, passing through the Red Sea is associated with the feast of firstfruits. Let us further explain:

According to Leviticus 23:9-11, at harvest time the priest took a sheaf of the firstfruits of the harvest to offer unto the Lord. He actually waved it before the Lord. This was purposely done on Sunday, “the morrow after the sabbath.” If the Lord accepted the firstfruits, He was also accepting the entire harvest. Jesus Christ fulfilled this, for He is the firstfruits of the resurrection. When He rose from the dead early that morning He said to Mary, “Touch me not, for I have not yet ascended to my Father” (Jn. 20:17). Jesus first had to appear before His Father as “a firstfruits from the dead.” When His Father accepted Him, the Father also accepted all of us. “Because He lives, we shall live also” (Jn.14:19b).

“Christ the firstfruits; afterward they that are Christ’s at his coming” (1 Cor.15:23). Therefore, the Red Sea (water baptism), is analogous to being dead, buried and raised with Christ, and is the fulfillment of the feast of firstfruits in our personal lives.

4.) Feast of Pentecost – The Baptism in the Spirit

(At Mount Sinai)

Leviticus 23:15-22

After the Red Sea, Israel came to *Mount Sinai* “in the third month,” which is the month of the feast of pentecost (Ex.19:1-2). Therefore, Mount Sinai represents the baptism in the Holy Spirit. The pentecostal experience was to strengthen them to get through the wilderness and into the promises of God. At Sinai, they had all the signs that accompany the baptism of the Holy Spirit. They saw the fire of God, they heard the voice of God, they experienced provision, miracles, healing, and they were conscious of God’s presence. The people danced for joy—but they were not yet in the land of promise. Let us remember that after Jesus was baptized, He was led by the Holy Spirit into the wilderness to be tested.

After Mount Sinai comes the wilderness. One of the purposes of the wilderness is to deal with the leaven in our lives. What constituted the offering on the feast of pentecost? There were “two wave loaves *baken with leaven*” (Lev. 23:17). It will help us if we can understand the symbolism here. *Leaven* is associated with the pentecostal experience. Leaven is a type of sin, hypocrisy, and false doctrine, and all of this mixture is found in pentecost.

The Holy Spirit is not given to people because they are holy; the Spirit is given to *make* them holy. He comes upon *all flesh*. The Spirit comes upon those who are withdrawing from drugs, alcohol, and immorality, and those who still have *much leaven* in their lives. Some people who are baptized in the Holy Spirit can prophesy with fervor and then live like the devil the next day. There is much leaven (sin and false doctrine) in the ranks of pentecost. Often people think that once you have received the Holy Spirit you are dwelling in Glory Land, but Sinai is in the wilderness. The pentecostal experience is only *a launching pad* into God’s future promises for us.

Therefore, God appoints specific trials that will deal with the leaven in our lives. Israel had nine major trials up to Kadesh-Barnea, and at Kadesh-Barnea they failed their tenth one (See Num.14:22-23). God gave them ample opportunities in the wilderness to be purged of their leaven to prepare them to go into the promised land, but regrettably they rebelled and hardened their hearts (Heb. 3:7-19, 4:1-11).

This is a solemn warning to us: Just like the Israelites who were on their journey to the land of promise, *many* of the redeemed who have been washed in the blood of the Lamb, baptized in water, and baptized in the Holy Spirit, later harden their hearts. During the times of difficulty in the wilderness, many grow impatient and despise their circumstances. Overtaken with criticism and complaining, they spend their lives wandering in aimless pursuits without true guidance, and then they die with unfulfilled promises.

It is crucial to receive grace from God in our times of need and testing (Heb. 4:16, 12:15). By God's grace, let us not harden our hearts in our trials, but *practice* yielding our lives to God. The *habit* of obedience produces obedience. The person we are today is because of the choices we have made in the past. Let us not camp around Mount Sinai (the baptism of the Holy Spirit). The baptism of the Holy Spirit is to strengthen us in our tests to help us to go on to another mountain (Mount Zion cf. Ex.15:17), in the land of promise.

5.) Feast of Trumpets – Fresh Call to Move On

(At Mt. Pisgah Where Moses Gave His Last Words Before His Death)

Leviticus 23:23-25

At the end of the wilderness, Israel came to the plain of Moab where Moses preached his final words before dying. These final words are the Book of Deuteronomy, a review of the past years since coming out of Egypt, and a looking ahead to crossing over Jordan to go into the land of promise. It is a fresh call to move on.

On our map we are going to put feast number five here at Mount Pisgah, which is *the feast of trumpets*. The trumpets were sounded in Israel for three main reasons: 1.) When God wanted to speak afresh; 2.) When the camp had to move on; and 3.), When there was a danger of war (See Num.10:1-10). This is what God is saying throughout the world today—He wants His Church to move on. He wants them to progress beyond the elementary doctrines of Hebrews 6:1-3, where Paul says, “Let us go on to perfection.” Also, God is speaking of great wars and troubles that are coming to the world.

It is one thing to say, “We must move on,” but *unto where?* Israel was still in the wilderness. They had camped around Sinai (pentecost) for some time. Then they wandered in the wilderness. *Unto where* should the redeemed march from feast number five? To feast number six, of course—to *the day of atonement!* They were still in the wilderness. The call, however, was to go across Jordan (circumcision) and to drive out the thirty-one kings (ruling lords of the self life), in order to inhabit the mountain of Zion. Thus, the trumpet-voice of God was [and is] speaking to move on to feast six, *the day of atonement*.

6.) Day of Atonement – Affliction / Deep Inner Cleansing

(Across Jordan, Circumcision, Driving Out 31 Kings)

Leviticus 23:26-32

On your map (pg.108), we have placed feast number five (*the feast of trumpets*) on the Plains of Moab at Mount Pisgah. The trumpet of God is speaking now of the need for a fresh cleansing and holiness. Therefore, we will make the crossing of Jordan the sixth feast, and this is *the day of atonement*. The purpose of affliction, cleansing, and warfare is to bring us to our seventh and final feast, the feast of glory—*the feast of tabernacles*.

The day of atonement is governed by the number *ten* (Lev. 23:27). Ten is the number of trials. When God tells us to move on, our whole life will seem to be turned upside down. There will be one trial after another coming into our lives to purify us. It is time to go beyond pentecost. In pentecost, there is so much leaven (sin, hypocrisy, and false doctrine), but now is the time to cross over our Jordan and experience a circumcision in our hearts. There we will be empowered to do battle with the thirty-one kings (Josh.12:10-24), which represent the ruling lords of the self-life. The slaying of these kings signifies a deeper scrutinizing and dissecting of our inner life of those things that are displeasing to God. Eventually, we will come to Mount Zion, the final stronghold, the place where God has chosen to *localize* His presence (Psa.132:13-16, Psa. 87:2).

The day of atonement represents cleansing: On Israel's journey, it is symbolized by the crossing of Jordan (Josh. 3:1-27) where the people were circumcised (Josh. 5:1-9). This signified the end of the wilderness and the commencement of entering the land of promise. The passage over Jordan also represents the "dead to sin" experience of Romans 6:6. John Wesley called this "the second work of grace" or "sanctification." When we pass our tests in the wilderness, God will bring us to our personal Jordan experience.

After the Jordan experience and circumcision, God's people were never the same (Josh. 5:9). Henceforth, they no longer wanted to return to Egypt. Something had happened in their spirit and in their heart. Then they were able to do battle with the kings in Canaan, the land of their inheritance, and eventually go on to Zion.

Dispensationally, we believe the Church is presently in the sixth feast, *the day of atonement*. So many have desired to camp around Mount Sinai (the pentecostal experience) in the wilderness. But for those whose hearts are in tune with the Spirit, God is taking them across Jordan and doing a deep circumcision in their hearts.

7.) The Feast of Tabernacles – The Presence of God

(At Mount Zion, the Place of God's Habitation)

Leviticus 23:26-32

After Joshua had brought Israel across Jordan and into the land of inheritance, the new generation was circumcised and went into battle against the kings of Canaan. However, Joshua was not able to bring them into *full* rest (Heb. 4:8) because they did not drive out all of their enemies. Joshua warned, “How long are ye so slack to possess the land ... there remaineth very much land yet to be possessed” (Josh.18:3, 13:1).

After Joshua's death, Israel continued to settle for compromise and coexistence with their enemies. Most of all, Mount Zion, the mount to which they were called (cf. Ex.15:17), was still held by the Jebusites.

Several generations later, David, the man after God's own heart became king. At age thirty-seven he subdued the fortress of Zion, the final stronghold, and placed the ark of the covenant there. (See 2 Samuel 5:7; 1 Chronicles 15:25-28; 16:1). Thus, David brought the nation to *the ultimate destination* of their journey and into rest. Zion became the holiest place in the land of Israel (Psa. 87:2). All of the promises and blessings were in Zion. There was such glory, power, worship, unity, and intimacy there! Finally, 443 years after Israel had started their journey out of Egypt, they reached Mount Zion.

David's son, Solomon, built the temple and brought the ark of glory down from Zion and placed it there. The power and glory was so great that the priests were not able to stand up (1 Kg. 8:1-11). Nations came to hear and see the glory and wisdom of God that came from this temple. In conclusion, we could say that the goal of every believer is to finish *his* journey from Egypt to Zion, to come to glory, and then to bring this glory to the nations.

Mount Zion was the ultimate *destination* of the journey of the children of Israel (Ex.15:17), and it is ours as well. Mount Zion is analogous to the seventh feast of the Lord, the feast of tabernacles. The feast of tabernacles was the final and greatest feast of the year for Israel. Dispensationally, it represents the final outpouring of the Spirit in the last days upon the Church. For further study, please refer to Dr. Brian Bailey's, *Journey of Israel*. The feast of tabernacles has many aspects:

It is the Feast of Glory.

It is the Feast of Joy.

It is the Feast of Unity

It is the Feast of Rest.

It is the Feast of Restoration.

It is the Feast of Harvest.

It is the Feast of the Latter Rain.

It is the Feast of Christ's Appearing.

* * * * *

Review — Israel's Journey is Our Road Map

- Israel's journey from Egypt to Zion is a road map for every believer.
 - The journey has specific landmarks to help us find our location.
 - The journey shows us where we are presently in our spiritual walk.
 - It shows us our next step and our ultimate destination — Zion.
 - The journey is in seven phases, in conjunction with the seven feasts.
 - When we pass through all seven, we will be mature and perfect.
 - Salvation by the blood of the Lamb begins in Egypt.
 - Then feasting continually on the unleavened Word of God.
 - Water baptism at the Red Sea, and severing ourselves from Egypt.
 - Then the baptism in the Holy Spirit at Mount Sinai.
 - Having a trumpet awakening to move on at the plains of Moab.
 - Being dead to sin, circumcised at Jordan, and the slaying of 31 kings.
 - And finally arriving at Mount Zion (God's presence and glory).
-
- The ultimate call is not unto Sinai (the pentecostal experience).
 - The high calling is unto Zion, in the land of promise (Ex.15:17).
 - Sinai was in the wilderness, not in the promise land.
 - Some people think they are in Glory Land after receiving the Spirit.
 - Israel failed ten tests in the wilderness (Num.14:22-23).
 - After salvation, baptism in water and in the Spirit—they wandered.
 - Many people *harden their hearts* and *wander* throughout their lives.
 - We must pass our tests in order to be brought to our personal Jordan.
 - After Jordan, there is a new release from our *old nature*.
 - Then we are able to face the giants and the other ruling lords of self.
 - After Jordan, God will plunge deeper into our hearts.
He will dissect our inner life, piece by piece, with His Sword.
 - Finally, we will come to Zion, the habitation and rest of God.
 - All the promises of God are in Zion.
 - David wrote many Psalms about Zion and the manifold blessings.
 - Let us not stop at the Red Sea or Sinai, or the wrong side of Jordan.
 - May we continue to march forward and face head on the enemies (whether these enemies are within or without).
 - Let us finish our journey and come to Zion, the place of holiness.

Chapter Eleven

HARVEST / FOLLOWED BY A GREAT TEST

“And the Earth was Reaped”

“And he that sat on the cloud thrust in his sickle on the earth; *and the earth was reaped*” (Rev.14:16). There is not even a question whether or not revival is coming—God has already decreed that it shall be! When the angel of harvest begins to move in the heavens, we must move together with him on earth, for “we are laborers together with God” to bring in the harvest (1 Cor. 3:9).

The Two Harvests

However, Revelation 14:14-19 tells us there are *two harvests* just before Christ comes: First is the harvest of the righteous (v14-16), which is immediately followed by the harvest of the wicked (v17-19).

Jesus declared that the harvest is at the end of the [age], which is the end of the Church Age (Mt.13:39). At the time of harvest, the wheat and the tares (the godly and the ungodly) will become clearly distinguished, and the tares will be gathered together into “bundles” to be burned up in hell (Mt.13:30). You cannot tell the difference between wheat and tares beforehand; but as the time of harvest comes, the tares stand up stiff and straight and proud, without fruit. The wheat, however, is bowed over in humility, loaded with fruit.

The Good and the Bad Fish

Jesus likens the end-time harvest to a net that is cast into the sea. When the net is full, it is drawn in but it is filled with every kind of fish—both good and bad. Therefore, the fish need to be sorted out, the good from the bad. So shall it be at the end of the [age]; i.e. at the end of the Church Age (Mt.13:47-49).

The Great Test That Follows Revival

Revival always dawns at the darkest hour (Isa. 60:1-5), and the world is about to see the greatest revival ever witnessed by mankind. Our churches will be overflowing, and there will be extraordinary miracles and signs and wonders everywhere. The entire world will see the glory of God and be given the opportunity to make their choice to follow Christ and to lay hold of eternal life. This is like the great net that is thrown out into the sea of humanity that brings in every kind of fish—both the good and the bad.

The False Christ / The False Prophet

Therefore, in order for God to separate the good and bad fish and the wheat from the tares, He will *test* all of humanity. Just before Christ comes again, God will allow Satan to produce *two major imposters* to the world (2 Thes. 2:1-12). These two men are the false Christ, and a miracle worker—the false prophet.

Both are men of the past. For centuries, these two men have been tutored by Satan for this hour. The beast (or Antichrist) comes up from the shores of the Mediterranean Sea (Rev.13:1-8), and the false prophet comes up a little later from the earth (Rev.13:9-18). However, they are also the first to be hurled into the lake of fire when Christ returns (Rev.19:20, 20:10).

The Uncommitted Will Be Drawn to the False

In actual fact, the Lord needs the devil (a deceiver) to test the hearts of His people. God tolerates false prophets and false miracle workers for a time in order *to prove* the hearts of His people (Deut.13:1-3). Everyone who is not honest and sincerely committed to Christ will be drawn to these deceivers. Therefore, God's people must prepare themselves for the coming storm. Unless men and women get rooted and grounded in Christ, they will surely be overpowered and swept away when the Man of Sin makes his appearance.

Many Will Be Offended and Turn Away From Christ

Jesus warns believers that when persecution comes, “many will be offended” and even betray one another. “The *love* of many will turn cold.” (He is addressing believers, as unbelievers do not have the love of God in them). But those who *endure to the end* shall be saved (Read Matthew 24:9-14). Many will turn from Christ when the great storm comes because their commitment to Him is *superficial*. In order to be saved, we must “continue in the faith.”

Take Advantage of the Opportunity

As God pours out His Spirit upon all flesh in the last-day revival, this is *the golden opportunity* for people to have their hearts softened, taught, and transformed. It is a principal of God’s Word that He always sends revival before He judges. Revival strengthens people in order to preserve them through the times of judgment. However, when people do not use that opportunity, they cannot survive the impending storm.

Jeremiah lamented, “The harvest is over, the summer is ended, and we are not saved” (Jer. 8:20). There was a tremendous revival during the reign of King Josiah, but many did not take advantage of it (2 Chron. 34–35). Revival is “harvest time.” It is the time to reap and gather in all that God is offering before the season changes, because after the harvest season there is no more opportunity to prepare for the hard times ahead.

Isaiah warns: “Seek ye the Lord while he may be found; call ye upon him while he is near” (Isa. 55:6). Zephaniah prophesied at the same time as Jeremiah. He warned God’s people to “seek righteousness and [humility]” in order to be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger (Zeph. 2:1-3). This was in reference to the judgment that was coming upon Jerusalem. Many did not heed the warning and were unprotected when Jerusalem was destroyed.

Strong Delusion

After revival, the false Christ will come on the scene. This man will be charismatic, good looking, enticing, able to solve political and economic chaos, and he will also be very persuasive. His delusive powers will sway and overcome all those whose hearts are not right with God (2 Thes. 2:8-12; Rev.13:8; Mt. 24:24).

Only Two Kinds of People

There are many races and nationalities in the world, yet there are only two kinds of people—those who obey God and those who obey the Deceiver; those who are going to heaven and those who are going to hell; those who love the Truth and those who love a lie. Thus, to distinguish the wheat from the tares and the good fish from the bad fish, God Himself will create a world crisis so that everyone will have to choose one side or the other.

Array Yourselves / Which Side Are We On?

There are numerous battles in Scripture where the two opposing armies had to “array themselves for battle” (Jud. 20:20,22,30,33). This means they had to dress in different colors to identify which side they were defending. If everyone had the same color, no one would know which was their enemy or comrade. It is the same in sports—both teams are arrayed in different colors to distinguish them from one another. In the same fashion, God will bring the world to a decision: For Christ or the Antichrist. It will be for one or the other, but not both (Rev.13:8, 17:8; cf. 1 Kgs.18:21).

We Stand Only by True Grace

Peter said we stand only by “the true grace of God” (1 Pet. 5:12). People who are trusting in a false teaching of grace will not be able to stand when the tests come. True grace is not permissiveness. True grace teaches us to deny ungodliness and worldly lusts, and to live soberly, righteously, and godly (Titus 2:11,12).

Presumption—“I am all right as I am”

We are living in an adulterous generation when sin of every kind is becoming *acceptable*. The Antichrist himself is a homosexual who will justify every immoral sin (Dan.11:37,7:25). Anyone, therefore, who is not living right or who is justifying an adulterous or immoral relationship will be swept away by the persuasive rationalizations of the Beast when he comes. For a moment, I would like to recount a brief story that is relevant to this critical issue:

Many years ago, Dr. Brian J. Bailey received a phone call from a pastor. This pastor had an deacon in his church who was troubled by a dream. Soon after the pastor and his deacon visited Dr. Bailey, who sat and listened politely to the deacon’s dream.

In the dream, the deacon was standing in a long line on Judgment Day, each person giving an account of his life before the Judge. One by one, all those in front of him collapsed as they were told their names were *not* written in the Book of Life, and then they were dragged by demons down into hell. The line was getting shorter and shorter, and the man in front of the deacon said, “O, I do not have to worry about anything; I have lived a good life.” Then when he stood before the judgment seat, he collapsed as well, and was dragged down into hell. The same thing happened to the deacon.

Dr. Brian Bailey said to the deacon, “Obviously you were standing in the wrong line.” Then, with great concern he asked; “And what have you been doing lately?” The deacon remained mum, while his pastor explained that the deacon’s wife was now in a mental hospital, and the deacon was living with another woman. He was confident that the Lord was very merciful and “understood” his unusual circumstances. Unfortunately, his adulterous relationship was going to take him to hell, and that was the warning God was giving him in his dream.

As Dr. Brian Bailey gave the interpretation of the dream, the deacon was convicted by the Holy Spirit and agreed to break off his relationship with this other woman.

A year later, Dr. Bailey received another phone call from the pastor, informing him that this deacon had suddenly died. He replied, “What was the spiritual condition of the deacon when he died?” The pastor explained that for six months the elder stayed away from his adulterous relationship, but then he rationalized that God *understood* his lonely situation, and he returned to the woman. Suddenly, he died of a heart attack and he ended up in hell, just as the dream had warned.

This poor man had accepted a false concept of grace that assured him that “God loves you unconditionally, irrespective of how you live.” I would like to recommend to my fellow pastors and leaders that accounts like this should be repeated to our congregations in order to instill the fear of the Lord in many hearts. The word of the Lord still means exactly what it says; “Adulterers and whoremongers God will judge” (Heb.13:4; 1 Cor. 6:9,10; Eph. 5:3-6; Rev. 21:8, 22:14,15; Mt. 5:27-30).

Believers Must Endure to the End

Eternal life is God's gift to man; it cannot be earned. Nevertheless, after new birth, Christ expects to see the fruits of repentance. Man must *continue* walking with Christ and obeying His Word in order to reach the heavenly home (Heb. 3:6,14). It is like the classic story of Pilgrim's Progress. The Christian had to overcome criticism, temptation, rejection, fears, peer pressure, and other snares along life's journey to arrive at the Celestial city. Life is a battle—we must *endure to the end* and not give up, and we are well able to do so by grace. A believer cannot turn from the paths of righteousness and violate God's laws and expect to have everlasting life.

Christians Must Continue in the Faith

Paul declares that Christ is able “to present you holy and unblameable and unproveable in his sight: *If you continue in the faith*, grounded and settled, and not moved away from the hope of the gospel...” (Col.1:22,23). This promise has conditions.

The apostles exhorted believers to “continue in the faith,” and that “through *much tribulation* we enter the kingdom of God” (Acts 14:22). Christ and the apostles never preached an easy gospel. If we are going to heaven, it will require effort and much grace.

Paul told Timothy, a younger minister: “Take heed unto thyself and unto the doctrine” and *to continue in them*. In doing so, Paul said Timothy would both save himself and all who heard him (1 Tim.4:16).

Israel was “cut off” because of their unbelief. Therefore, we must *continue* in God’s goodness, otherwise, we too shall be “cut off” (See Rom.11:20-22). We must continue to be faithful to Christ.

Remaining in the Vine

Christ is the Vine and we are the branches, and His life flows into us as long as we abide in Him. Every branch “in him” (in Christ) that does not bear fruit, He takes away. “If a man abide not in me, he is cast forth as a branch, and is withered; and men gather them, and cast them into the fire and they are burned” (Jn.15:2,6). If a believer does not abide in Christ, he will be a withered branch without fruit and be thrown into the fire. This speaks of the fires of hell.

Fellow ministers, everything we are saying here is in light of the fact that a great test is coming, and there will be many who will be offended and turn back from following Christ. Therefore, we are seeking to brace our people for the storms ahead and to guide them to the Celestial city, and away from the paths that lead down to hell.

When a Christian Turns From Christ and Remains Unrepentant:

- He has insulted and resisted God’s grace (Heb.10:26-31, 12:15).
- The divine light that was in him becomes darkness (Mt. 6:23).
- He is a well without water (2 Pet. 2:17). The Spirit has left him.
- He is twice dead (Jude 1:12, 2 Pet. 2:20-22): formerly dead in sins, then alive in Christ by new birth, then dead in sins again.
- He is a withered branch cut off from the Vine to be thrown into the fire (Jn.15:2,6, Rom.11:22).
- He has departed *from* the faith (1 Tim. 4:1).
This means he was once *in* the faith.
- He aborts the life of Christ within—that holy seed, which is the Word of God (1 Pet.1:23).
- His name will be blotted out of the Book of Life (Rev. 3:5). (To be blotted out of a book means it must first have been written there!).
- He has not made his calling and election sure. He was *elected* (or chosen) unto life eternal, but was not *inaugurated* (2 Pet.1:10).
- He will be judged with the “children of disobedience” unless he repents (Eph. 5:3-8, 1 Cor. 6:9-10).
- He has proven that he does *not* love the Lord.
Love for God is manifested by keeping His Word (Jn.14:21-24).
- He is not doing the will of the Father, but his own will (Mt. 7:21-23).
- He is not enduring to the end, but has *given up*, has been *deflected*, has been *deceived*, or has been *offended* (Mt. 24:24).
- He has chosen the wide gate that leads to destruction, and shunned the narrow gate (Mt. 7:13-14).
- He served two masters, ending up serving the wrong one (Mt. 6:24).
- He has turned from righteousness unto iniquity; none of his past righteousness is remembered (Ezek. 3:20-21; 18:24-27; 33:12-20).
- He is like a dog that returns to his own vomit, or like a sow that returns to her wallowing in the mire (2 Pet. 2:22).

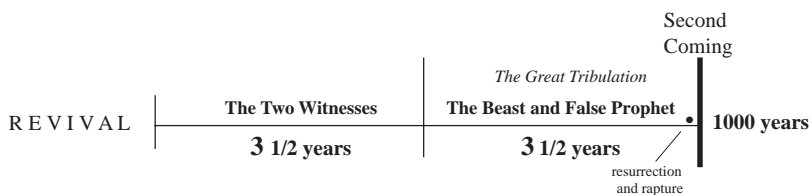
Good and Evil Will Come to Their Full Expression

At the close of the Church Age, good and evil will come to their fullest expression. “Evil men and seducers shall become worse and worse, deceiving, and being deceived” (2 Tim. 3:13). But the righteous shall become more and more glorious (Rev. 7:14, 19:7,8). Whether a person becomes better and better or worse and worse, depends upon whom he follows—Christ or the Antichrist.

The two greatest men (Moses and Elijah) will be sent from heaven, and the two most wicked men of history will be coming up from hell—the beast and the false prophet. Therefore, the epitome of good and evil will converge in our times. This is called by some, *the conflict of the ages*. Consider the following diagrams:



The Church age is 2000 years. It begins at Christ's first coming when He died on the cross and rent the veil. This signified the end of the age of the Law and the beginning of the age of Grace. This age will end when Christ comes again; then the Millennium will begin. However, just before He comes, the imposter, or *the Antichrist* must first come (2 Thes. 2:1-12, Rev.13:5-8). He will have a 3 1/2 year reign and then be destroyed at Christ's coming. God's purpose for the Antichrist is to test the Church after revival, to draw all the wicked out of His Church, leaving a pure Church.



Sufficient Grace

In these last days, some of the saints will be given the privilege of laying down their lives for Christ (Rev. 6:9-11, 20:4). Yet, anyone who is called to make this sacrifice will be given special grace in that hour. The Apostle Peter asserted that he was ready to go “into prison and unto death” for Jesus, but he was trying to stand for the Lord in his own strength, and instead he denied the Lord. It was not God’s will for Peter to die at that time, therefore, there was no grace. Grace is only granted for something that is God’s will. Thirty-six years later, Peter was ready to lay down his life for Christ, and at that time, there was sufficient grace.

Fear Not

Jesus taught us not to fear those who kill the body, for after that there is nothing more that they can do to us. Instead, we are to fear Him who has power to destroy both body and soul in hell (Lk.12:4,5; Mt.10:28). The more we fear God, the less we fear man.

Stephen was fearless. He was given special grace as he was being stoned. God opened his eyes and he saw the Son of Man standing at the right of the Father (Acts 7:54-56). God wants to deliver us from all phobias and anxieties and replace them with divine boldness and assurance. We are to say, “The Lord is my helper, and I will not fear what man shall do unto me” (Heb.13:6, Prov. 29:25).

At the end of time, heaven and earth will flee away at one “look” from the Creator (Rev. 20:11); then He will create a new heaven and earth (Rev. 21:1). When Christ comes again and the heavens split open, the unredeemed will plead for the mountains and hills to cover them, to hide them from the face of Him who sits on the throne (Rev. 6:14-17). God is the only one to fear. Psalm 76:10 says, “Surely the wrath of man shall praise thee.” The Lord will cause all of man’s fury and wrath to glorify Him, for when God rises up, all those who have raged against Him and his people will scream in terror and melt as wax before the fervent heat (2 Thes.1:6-10).

Hatred and Betrayal by Other Believers

The last days will be marked by great betrayal, especially when persecution comes (Mt. 24:9-10, Mk.13:12,13; Lk.21:15-19). Jesus was betrayed by Judas, one of his own twelve apostles. Unfortunately, Christian brethren who are not deeply committed to God will turn against us when persecution comes, and even betray us.

The Overwhelming Powers of Evil

Some years ago, a man of God was taken by a vision into Ceylon (now Sri Lanka). There was a large idol there, and many people were worshipping this idol. Then he was shown a large demon prince who was standing behind the idol, and out from the demon came many arms and hands which forced the people to bow to the idol and himself. Then one of these long arms with a hand came upon the man of God and was forcing him to bow and worship as well. The man of God cried out to God for help, and God rescued him. From this vision, he became keenly aware that during the time of the Antichrist, no one will be able to withstand the power of evil and deception unless they rely completely on God's mercy.

God Uses the Wicked to Purify the Righteous

According to Romans 9:22-23, God uses the wicked to refine the righteous. The vessels of wrath are the wicked, and the vessels of mercy are the righteous. Remember, there are only two kinds of people in the world, God's children and the children of the devil. Those who follow the Antichrist will attack and persecute those who are following Christ. God "endures" the wicked for a time while they do a work of grace in the righteous, then He judges them. Let us be sure we remain on the right side. Let us prepare ourselves, and fortify our lives *before* the great storm comes. If we do not prepare ourselves now, we could be overpowered and forced to follow the wrong god and the wrong spirit and end up joining the children of disobedience.

Review — Harvest / Followed by a Great Test

- Scripture declares (past tense) that “the earth was reaped” (Rev.14:16). Therefore, the issue of an end-time harvest is not even a question. Jesus said, “The harvest is at the end of the [age], Church Age. (Joseph predicted 7 years of plenty followed by 7 years of famine.)
- First is the harvest of the righteous, then the harvest of the wicked.
- The good and bad fish / the wheat and tares must be sorted out.
- Following the great revival, God will allow two imposters to come. They are the “beast” or Antichrist, and the false prophet. These two men will have unbelievable supernatural power. All whose hearts are not right will be drawn to them and be lost. This is the means God uses to separate the righteous from the evil.
- The Church must prepare herself for the coming storm or tribulation. Believers must take advantage of revival. During revival, opportunity is given to have our hearts softened, transformed, and taught.
- Many uncommitted Christians will be *offended* when trouble comes.
- Many brethren will hate and betray one another, even unto death.
- The love of many will turn cold (a reference to believers).
- Deception will be very great. Jesus warned, “Let no man deceive you.”
- Sin is becoming acceptable everywhere, even in the Church.
- Remember the story of the elder whose wife was in the mental hospital. He reasoned “God understands” when he took another woman, but he was living in adultery and lost his soul. Many assume that God’s mercy and grace and compassion allows for adultery under extreme circumstances, but these things corrupt the whole soul.
- Christians whose hearts are not pure will be swept away by the deception of the false Christ and the false prophet when they come.
- We must “endure to the end” in order to go to heaven.
- *All sufficient grace* is available for pressure, persecution, martyrdom.
- God is well able to keep us from falling (Jude 1:24, 1 Pet.1:5).
- We are not to fear man or those who kill the body (Lk.12:4,5).
- Our only fear should be the Creator of heaven and earth.
- Our persecutors will scream with horror and plead for the mountains and hills to cover them and hide them from God’s angry face when He rises up to vindicate His people (Rev. 6:15-17; 2 Thes.1:6-10).

Chapter Twelve

GOD'S ETERNAL PLAN FOR MAN

Knowing Where We Are in Time

On the next few pages there are two charts. The first chart gives a large, panoramic view of the history of the universe; the second one zooms in on the 7000 years of man upon earth. Chronology is important. It is essential to know where we are in time, and what is coming next.

Time Is Marching On

The expression, “it shall come to pass” or “it came to pass” is found about 600 times in Scripture. To describe this phrase, let us picture ourselves walking on a road and seeing an object at a far distance. As we continue walking, the object gets closer and larger. Finally we reach that object, and then go past it. *It has come, and it has passed.* Now we are looking back at the object, and as time goes on it totally disappears from our sight. This is the way life is, and this is a major message of the Scriptures. This life will soon be past, and vanish. The question is – Where will we be in eternity?

Heaven and Earth Shall Pass Away

This present creation is going to pass away.

- Mt. 24:35 “Heaven and earth shall pass away” ... but not His Words.
- 2 Pet. 3:13 “We ... look for a new heaven and a new earth...”
- Rev. 20:11 “From Whose face the earth and heaven fled away” ...
- Rev. 21:1 “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and earth were passed away...”
- Isa. 65:17 “For behold, I create new heavens and a new earth...”
- Isa. 66:22 “For as the new heavens and earth which I will make shall remain.”
- 1 Jn. 2:17 “the world passes away, and the lust thereof, but he that doeth the will of God abideth forever.”

“Wherefore beloved, seeing that ye look for such things, be diligent that ye may be found of him in peace, without spot, and blameless” (2 Pet. 3:14). How important it is to live a holy life, since this present earth is going to pass away (with all the unrepentant), and be put out of the mind of God forever (Isa. 65:17). “But he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 Jn. 2:17b).

When the unredeemed die, their spirits are taken down into the lonely caverns of the earth (into hell), and finally into the lake of fire. At the end of time, this earth and heaven pass away, along with all the inhabitants of hell. “*The second death*” means to be eternally separated from God and forgotten (Rev. 20:6,14-15; 21:8). This is the terribleness of being *lost*. As ministers, let us implore our congregations to live godly lives after new birth, and to lay hold of eternal life (1 Tim. 6:12,19).

Five Titles for the Unredeemed:

(Eph. 2:2; 1 Thess. 5:5-7; Mt.13:38; Eph. 2:3; Lu.16:8)

- *The Children of Disobedience* – people who mock God and His laws, or take them lightly, and run their own lives and do their own will.
- *The Children of Darkness* – people who love darkness rather than light, who love a lie and falsehood rather than the truth.
- *The Children of the Devil* – people who listen to the Wicked One, and *become* like him.
- *The Children of Wrath* – people who suffer eternal judgment because they follow the Doomed One. (People go where their leader goes.)
- *The Children of this World* – people who love the world and the things in the world (1 Jn. 2:15-17; Lk.16:8). These shall **remain** in the world after death (in the lower parts of the earth, in hell). But the children of God do not stay here. They go to heaven and then to the new earth.

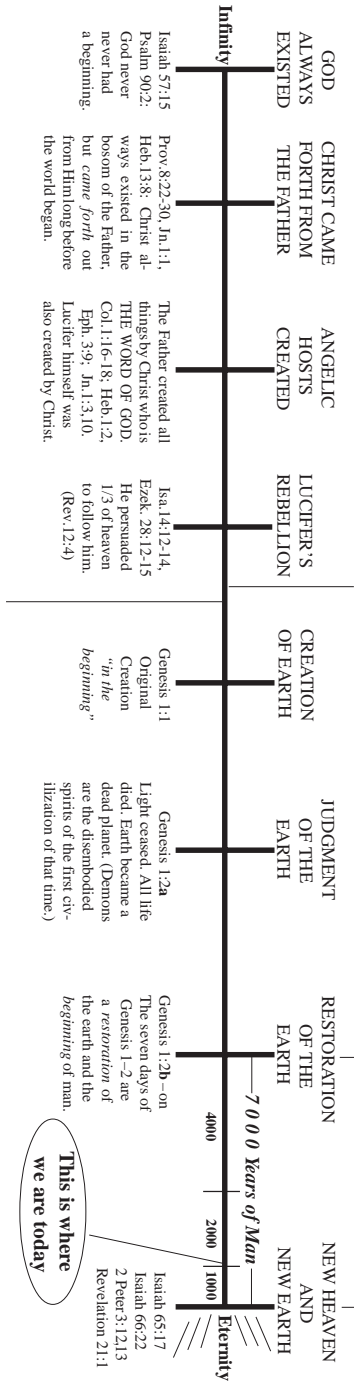
Let us review the chart on *The History of the Universe* on the next page to understand the short span of time allotted to man.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE (PAST, PRESENT, and FUTURE)

After Lucifer's rebellion, the Father and Son determined to create a beautiful earth in which they could thoroughly manifest their love and wisdom. But earth's first inhabitants became corrupt. The first civilization on earth [not man] was infected by Satan, and thus were judged. Demons are the disembodied spirits of the first civilization.

Satan *again* brought his rebellion to earth, this time to Eve and to all of humanity

Satan is hurled into the eternal Lake of fire (Rev.20:10)



God in his foreknowledge knew that man would fail as well. Therefore, it was decided (even before God created the earth) that the Son would come to earth as a man and die for the sins of the world. He was "the Lamb slain before the foundation of the world" (Rev. 13:8, 17:8, Acts 2:23, Eph. 1:4, 1 Pet.1:19-20). The redeemed (those who accepted God's gift of pardon, and who overcame where Satan failed) would confiscate the positions that the Devil and his followers forfeited. (cf. 1 Cor. 6:3).

A further explanation of the above will be given on the following pages

HISTORY OF THE UNIVERSE

(Please use this overview with the chart on page 133)

- God is infinite; He has always existed and never had a beginning. “From everlasting to everlasting, thou art God” (Psa. 90:2). He “inhabits eternity” (Isa. 57:15). We cannot fathom His greatness.
- Long before the creation, the Son of God (who always existed in the bosom of the Father) came forth out of the Father. Jesus said, “I proceeded forth and came from God.” In Proverbs 8:22-30, Christ is personified as “wisdom.” Wisdom (i. e. Christ) was “brought forth” from God the Father (John 1:1).
- The Father and Son together created all the angels, including Lucifer (See Colossians 1:16-18). Christ is the Co-creator of all things. He created all the principalities and powers, dominions, and angelic hosts. All things were made by Him and for Him, and He is *before* all things. God created all things by Jesus Christ, by THE WORD OF GOD (Eph. 3:9, Jn.1:3). Jesus is that Word.
- Lucifer led an insurrection in heaven (Isa.14:12-14; Ezek. 28:12-15) and *became* Satan. He persuaded one-third of heaven to side with him against God (cf. Rev.12:4). Thus, one-third of the inhabitants of heaven were hurled out of their positions. Because of the knowledge they had, God gave them no repentance, and Satan's constant accusation against God ever since is that “*God has no love.*”
- After the uprising, the Father and Son determined to create a beautiful earth in which they could thoroughly manifest their love and wisdom. They wanted creatures who loved God out of their own free choice. The original earth was created long before man, and it was perfect. It is believed at that time that there was an intelligent civilization here, perhaps similar to man, but not man. Satan infected all the earth's original inhabitants and this brought judgment, and therefore, today's demons are believed to be the disembodied spirits of the earth's first dwellers.

The earth became a dead planet, dark, cold, and lifeless for an inconceivable period of time. Genesis 1:2a tells us “the earth *became* without form and void, and darkness was upon the face of the deep.” Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2b is a huge gap of time.

- In Genesis 1:2b, the Spirit of God moved again, saying “Let there be light” after the earth lay desolate for a long undisclosed period of time. The seven days mentioned in Genesis chapter one are actually not a creation but a *restoration* of the earth, a restoration of something already here. On the sixth day man was created, and this was man's beginning, nearly 6000 years ago.
- The seven days in Genesis chapter one are prophetic of the seven thousand years allotted to man. One day with the Lord is as a thousand years (Psa. 90:4, 2 Pet. 3:8). Scripture tells us that man has been upon earth for nearly six days (6000 years). We are about to enter the seventh day—the Millennium. After the Millennium, there will be a new earth. Let us be sure that we are there, and not left here.

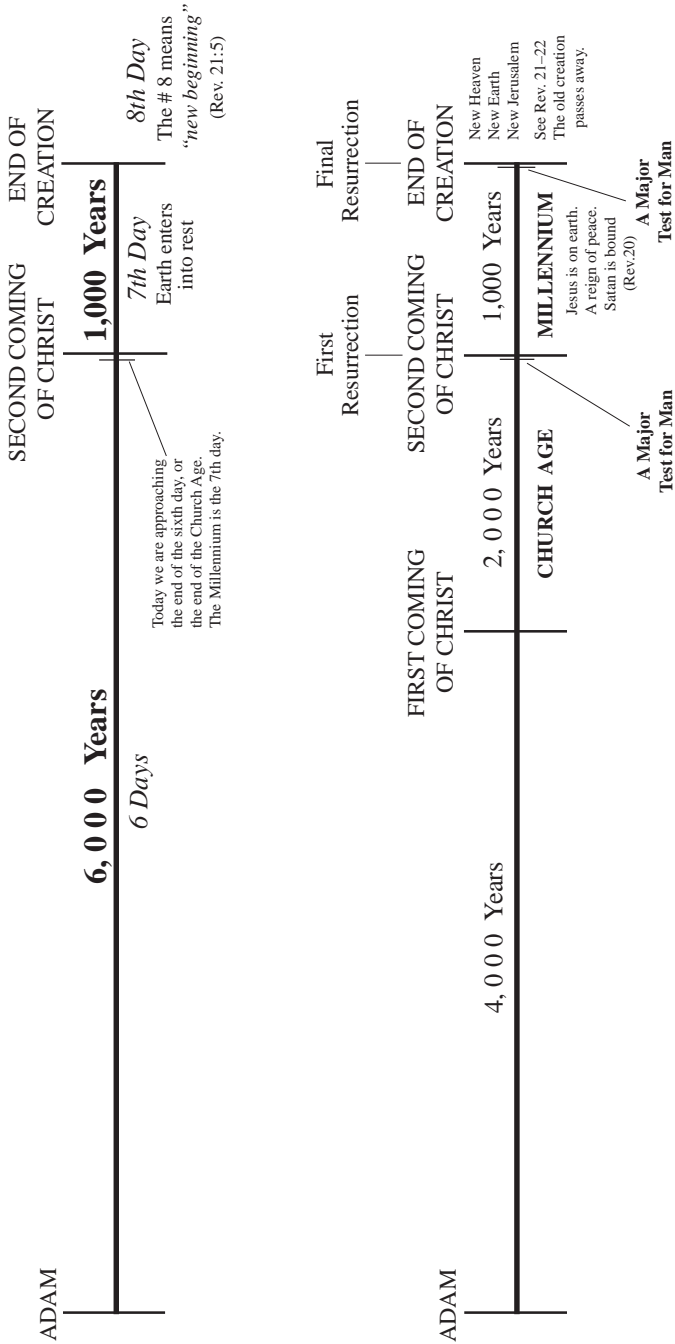
Three Important Things to Remember:

(Why we are here on earth and the choices we must make)

- 1.) We were created to replace heaven's fallen inhabitants (1 Cor. 6:3). Thus, we were born to be tested as seen in our first parents, Adam and Eve (cf. Job 7:17,18). We must pass the tests that Lucifer failed.
- 2.) During our brief time on earth, we are being forged into that final person we will be for all eternity. Life is filled with choices, and these choices will conform us either into God's image or into the image of the Self-willed one (Satan). God has a void in His heart; He looks for love and for those whose nature is compatible to His.
- 3.) We are living at the end of the sixth day. The seventh day is about to come—the Millennium. Therefore, we should understand the times in which we live and prepare ourselves for the pressures just ahead.

AN OVERVIEW OF THE 7000 YEARS OF MAN

A Day With the Lord is as a Thousand years



Summary of The Seven Thousand Years of Man

- God restored the earth in seven days in Genesis 1–2.
- They are prophetic of the seven thousand years of man.
- Each day represents a thousand years (Psa. 90:4; 2 Pet. 3:8).
- There are six days (6000 years) of hard labor and sorrow for man.
- On the seventh day (1000 years, the Millennium), the earth enters *rest*.
- Man is about 6000 years old; we are nearing the end of the sixth day.
- There were four days from Adam to Christ (4000 years).
- The Church Age is two days (2000 years). We are almost at the end.
- After the (seventh day), or the Millennium, this creation ends.
- Then there is a new heaven and earth (Rev. 20:7-11, 21:1).
- Before Christ comes, there is a major test at the end of the Age.
- Satan produces two imposters—the antichrist and false prophet.
- God needs Satan and uses him to test and sift the hearts of men.
- At the Second Coming of Christ, Satan is bound for a thousand years.
- Even when Christ and His glory is seen on earth, man is rebellious.
- The nations must be “ruled with a rod of iron” by the overcomers.
- Even when there is no Tempter, man still has a stubborn nature.
- At the end of the Millennium, God tests mankind one more time.
- Satan is let out of prison one final time (Rev. 20:3, 7-10).
- Incredibly, an enormous number of people follow him (Rev. 20:8-9).
- The human race shall have learned very little from history.
- When God is finished using Satan to test man, He will destroy him.
This is the reason Satan hates the Bible; his fate is pronounced.
- The first resurrection is at Christ’s Second Coming (Rev. 20:4-6).
This is only for believers who qualify to rule and reign.
There are conditions that have to be met to be Christ’s bride.
- The final resurrection is for everyone else—both good and evil.
- The wicked dead are presently in hell, in the lower parts of the earth.
- Hell is temporary; the lake of fire (which is the bottom of hell), is permanent. Everything in hell falls into the lake of fire at the end of the thousand years (Rev. 20:14).
- Then the earth passes away and everyone who is left here (Isa. 65:17).
- *The second death* is to be eternally separated from God and to be forgotten by Him. “But he who does the will of God abides forever” (1 John 2:15-17).

Review — God's Eternal Plan for Man

- God inhabits eternity. He never had a beginning.
- The Son of God, who always existed in the Father, came out of Him. (This was long before the creation of the universe).
- The Father created all things by His Son—The Word of God.
- Jesus is the Co-creator of everything (Heb.1:2; Jn.1:3,10; Eph.3:9).
- Therefore, Christ created Lucifer and all the angels (Col.1:16-18).
- When Lucifer rebelled, he turned one-third of heaven against God.
- Then the Father and Son decided to create a beautiful earth.
- Unfortunately, the inhabitants of the original earth became corrupt.
- The earth [became] without form and void, a dead planet.
- The earth's first creatures were not man, but probably similar.
- Demons are probably the disembodied spirits of the old civilization.
- After an inconceivable amount of time, God restored the earth.
From Genesis 1:2b to 2:2, God restored this earth and created man.
Between Genesis 1:1 and 1:2 is a huge gap of time.
- Thus, 6000 years ago, God restored a cold, dark earth and made man.
- God was still looking for those who loved Him from their own will.
- Adam and Eve, the first man and woman, failed.
- In His foreknowledge, God knew that man would fail. Before the world began, the Father and Son decided to die for the sins of man. (See Rev.13:8, 17:8; Acts 2:23; Eph.1:4; 1 Pet.1:19-20).
- Love must spring from one's own choice.
- You can never force anyone to love you.
- God's provision of salvation and life eternal was His great love.
- People can choose to return that love to God, or reject it.
- Anyone who perishes has chosen to reject God's love and provision.
- Therefore, man was also created to be tested (Job 7:17-18).
- We are called to fill the vacancies left by Lucifer and his followers.
- Therefore, we must pass the tests that they failed, the sin of *self-will*.
- We are called to judge angels (1 Cor. 6:3) and take what they forfeited.
- Am I going to do *God's will* or am I going to do *my will* as Lucifer?
- Is position, power, or human love more important than God's love?
- During the 7000 years of man, God is replenishing heaven with those from earth who have chosen his gracious provision of love and pardon, and have chosen to do His blessed will and not their own will.