

FOOD SACRIFICED TO IDOLS

(One of God's Great Mysteries)

Part I

{1} Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. {2} And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. {3} But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him. {4} Therefore concerning the eating of things offered to idols, we know that an idol is nothing in the world, and that there is no other God but one. {5} For even if there are so-called gods, whether in heaven or on earth (as there are many gods and many lords), {6} yet for us there is one God, the Father, of whom are all things, and we for Him; and one Lord Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and through whom we live. {7} However, there is not in everyone that knowledge; for some, with consciousness of the idol, until now eat it as a thing offered to an idol; and their conscience, being weak, is defiled. {8} But food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. {9} But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. {10} For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol's temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? {11} And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? {12} But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. {13} Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble. (1 Cor 8 NKJV)

Chapter 1

FIRST THE NATURAL, THEN THE SPIRITUAL

(FOR HE WHO HAS EARS TO HEAR)

The goal of this book is to communicate God's truth concerning His food. The doctrine of food comprises one of the mysteries of Scripture. When we understand the teaching about food we will also comprehend the meaning of true Christian communion. Explanations of some Biblical passages that are necessary to fully understand this doctrine, like the offerings of Israel at the Tabernacle, will necessarily be brief herein. I will not be expounding the detailed meaning of each aspect of each offering. Now I know what the writer of Hebrews meant when he wrote, "Of these things we cannot now speak in detail." (Heb. 9:5) To speak in detail requires the explanation of mysteries and God requires that we each learn to solve mysteries for ourselves. Nevertheless, He has appointed some as teachers to explain the doctrines and some as prophets to enlighten the teachers concerning the mysteries of God.

The table of communion represents one of the many mysteries of Scripture. Most of us see communion as the sharing together each Sunday, or from time to time, a piece of bread or cracker and a cup of wine or juice. We solemnly read I Corinthians 11 and look around at each other "recognizing" that each person we see is a self-proclaimed Christian. We believe we have thus "discerned the Lord's body." (1 Cor. 11:29) Then we take our bread and wine and believe we have had true communion, but we have not yet understood it. Communion is spiritual and it is a mystery.

Paul's dissertation on communion represents the culmination or summary of his teaching on "things offered to idols" which begins in verse one of chapter eight. The next four chapters deal extensively with this one issue, but be forewarned, "*Now concerning things offered to idols: We know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love edifies. And if anyone thinks that he knows anything, he knows nothing yet as he ought to know. But if anyone loves God, this one is known by Him*" (1 Cor. 8:1-3, NKJV) For twenty three years I saw "food sacrificed to idols" as a Corinthian problem. After all, who among us has ever seen, much less eaten, literal food sacrificed to a literal idol? I have not and do not know anyone who has. So, I thought I understood "food sacrificed to idols." I thought *I knew*. But I did not know anything yet as I ought to know (and know that I still don't!). But, now I have a little insight into this food of which Paul found important enough to write four chapters about in 1 Corinthians alone. Once we understand this doctrine we will begin to see it everywhere.

Paul begins his teaching this way because here he introduces Christians to a profound mystery. Jesus often set off His mysteries with these words: "*he who has ears to hear, let him hear.*" Isaiah says the same thing in a similar way in chapter 28, verse 23 of his book: "*Give ear and hear my voice, listen and hear my speech.*" When we see these and similar cues we need to understand that we have just entered into the world of God's concealed word. Paul prepares us, though, to apprehend God's mysteries early in his book. He says,

{7} But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, {8} which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. {9}

But as it is written: "Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, Nor have entered into the heart of man The things which God has prepared for those who love Him." {10} But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. {11} For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God. {12} Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. {13} These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. {14} But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. {15} But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one. {16} For "who has known the mind of the LORD that he may instruct Him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Cor 2:7-16 NKJV)

Behold that the natural man does not receive, or understand, the things of God. Brethren, this is the natural *Christian* man who does not comprehend the things of the Spirit of God. This is the Christian who does not walk according to the Spirit, who does not walk in obedience to Christ's commands. This is the carnal Christian Paul describes in Romans:

{1} There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. {2} For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death. {3} For what the law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, {4} that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. {5} For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. {6} For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. {7} Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the law of God, nor indeed can be. {8} So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. (Rom 8:1-8 NKJV)

Before Paul gets to the spiritual meat of his epistle he tells his readers that he could not previously speak to them *"as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ. I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able; for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?"* (1 Cor. 3:1-3, NKJV) The Book of Hebrews says that *"solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil."* (Heb 5:14 NIV) The doctrine of food sacrificed to idols is solid food.

So, how do we begin to comprehend the hidden mysteries of Christ? We approach God and His Word in humility. We understand and confess that we do not know the deep things of God. We know that we cannot understand His Word in the futility of our own thinking. We

willingly confide to Him that **we do not have ears to ear, nor eyes to see his spiritual truths.** Therefore, we cry out to Him, “Father open my ears that I might hear. Open my eyes that I might see. I long to understand your ways and pray for more of Your Holy Spirit that I might walk in them.” This is the cry of the heart upon which God has begun to write His law, such laws as:

{1} My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, {2} turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, {3} and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, {4} and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, {5} then you will understand the fear of the LORD and find the knowledge of God. {6} For the LORD gives wisdom, and from his mouth come knowledge and understanding. (Prov 2:1-6 NIV)

*{3} "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. {4} Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. {5} Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. {6} **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled.** (Mat 5:3-6 NIV)*

We have foolishly assumed that the fulfillment of Jeremiah’s prophecy found in Hebrews 8:8-12, that God would put His laws in our minds and write them on our hearts, would be like going to a fast-food restaurant. We have believed that we would suddenly just have all of God’s laws and ways written on our heart in one quick instant. No, a thousand times no! God does not work that way with us. He puts His laws into our minds and writes them on our hearts as we yield ourselves to Him in obedience to the Gospel of Jesus Christ. This obedience comes only **after** we have believed in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of our sins. This, in fact, represents the whole purpose of our trials and tribulations, that we will be conformed into His image **according to our own free will.** As John says,

*And now, dear children, continue in him, so that when he appears we may be confident and unashamed before him at his coming. {29} If you know that he is righteous, you know that everyone who does what is right has been born of him. How great is the love the Father has lavished on us, that we should be called children of God! And that is what we are! The reason the world does not know us is that it did not know him. {2} Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. **But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is.** {3} **Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure.** (1 John 2:28-3:3 NIV)*

Or, as Paul ends his teaching on food sacrificed to idols, “*If we [Christians] judged ourselves, we would not be judged.*” (I Cor. 11:31) Yes, “food sacrificed to idols” is a mystery indeed, and we have not yet even begun to talk about it.

In order to begin to comprehend the hidden mysteries of Christ we must approach God and His Word in humility. We understand and confess that we do not know the deep things of God. We know that we cannot understand His Word in the futility of our own thinking. We willingly confess to Him that **we do not have ears to ear, nor eyes to see His spiritual truths.**

Therefore, we cry out to Him, “Father open my ears that I might hear. Open my eyes that I might see. I long to understand your ways and pray for more of Your Holy Spirit that I might walk in them!” As long as we approach God’s Word in our natural minds and attempt to understand it by only logical reasoning, we will never apprehend its truth. As Paul began this book he wrote, “These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.” (1 Cor. 2:13) Jesus says, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life.” (John 6:63)

First, in order to even see that food sacrificed to idols has any relationship to communion read 1 Corinthians 10:21, “*You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and of the table of demons.*” (NKJV) Previous verses show the relationship between food sacrificed to idols and the table of demons. Now it certainly is true and a matter of history that particular cultures did offer natural food on pagan altars. It is also true that Israel itself at one time offered “food” to God in the form of its sacrifices at the Tabernacle and the Temple. Of course, these sacrifices were not meant for God’s consumption as in pagan worship. They symbolized religious and prophetic truth. Today it may be that some cultures still do offer actual meat to their god (idol) because they are ignorant of the one true God. It is also true that in Biblical times this food was eaten by the heathen priests or even sold in the market. Paul’s teaching clearly deals with the obvious, natural aspect of this reality.

But, we must understand this, the Word of God is “*first the natural, then the spiritual.*” (1 Cor. 15:46) Isaiah tells us that the Word of God is “*precept upon precept, precept upon precept, line upon line, line upon line, here a little, there a little*” (Isaiah 28:10) In other words, we do not get all of God’s truth at once. We must build upon a proper foundation a little at a time, as God gives growth. As He Himself says, “*It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; but the glory of kings to search out a matter.*” (Proverbs 25:2) And just who is a candidate for receiving the spiritual and secret knowledge of God’s Word? To whom will He teach knowledge? Whom will He make to understand His message? As Isaiah says, He will only teach and to make to understand those weaned from the milk (of God’s Word) and drawn from the breasts (of babes in Christ who can only teach the milk of the Word). See Isaiah 28:9.

All of Isaiah 28 reveals much truth concerning food sacrificed to idols and true communion, but we must begin our study well before this. We must go all the way back to the Bible’s first mention of the word “table.” We first find the word in Exodus 25:23 where the Hebrew word “shulchan” is translated “table.” Here we see the description of the “table of showbread” that Moses was to place in the holy place of the tabernacle of the congregation. The word “showbread” literally means “bread of faces.” The use of the table is first clearly seen in Exodus 25:30, which verse may be literally translated, “*And you are to put on the table the Bread of Faces, before My face, continually.*” The spiritual significance of this first table is profound and to understand it we must apprehend the symbolism of the Tabernacle, its furnishings, its sacrifices.

Chapter 2

THE BASIC SYMBOLISM OF THE TABERNACLE

The Importance of the Sacrifices at the Altar

Five main sacrifices were required at the bronze altar in the courtyard of the Tabernacle. These prophetically represent the believer's approach to God after his initial faith in Christ. We must remember that an Israelite was spiritually saved by his Passover sacrifice, not his sacrifices at the bronze altar. Similarly, Christians are saved by faith in the atoning blood of Jesus, not by their works. See Ephesians 2:8-9. The Bible clearly shows that Jesus was the Passover lamb slain for the sins of the world, and Paul specifically states this in 1 Cor. 5:7. Christians are saved, though, unto good works according to Ephesians 2:10. The altar sacrifices as a whole represent the good works required by God and they correspond to the elementary truths of God's Word revealed in Hebrews 6:1-2.

The detailed instructions for building the Tabernacle are found in the last sixteen chapters of the Book of Exodus. This comprises about forty percent of the entire book which clearly shows the Divine importance of this structure and its furnishings. Practically the entire Book of Leviticus centers around the sacrifices offered there. The tabernacle itself consisted of three parts, an outer court, a sanctuary or holy place, and an inner sanctuary or most holy place. In type, these three components depict the three aspects of man, body (the outer court), soul (the holy place), and spirit (the most holy place). God deals with man in terms of salvation from the inside out, while man deals with God from the outside in. Let me explain.

The first dealings of God with us are totally according to His will for us, i.e., by His sovereign design. This is the meaning of Ephesians 2:8-9, "*For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: it is the gift of God: {9} Not of works, lest any man should boast.*" (KJV) A man has utterly nothing to do with his own spiritual salvation. The most holy place, like a man's spirit, represents the presence and rule of God. This is why Jesus said, "*The kingdom of God is within you.*" (Luke 17:21) It is to this place that one's salvation first comes. In the Scripture, whenever we see salvation in the past tense, the context deals with one's spiritual salvation. This is a salvation that can never be lost or forfeit. It is totally by grace and has nothing to do with ourselves. Even though the salvation is by faith in the Son of God, that faith itself is the gift of God and was not produced by my own wisdom. The truth of this means that man does not enjoy a free will until God sovereignly saves him from his sins. The grace and the faith that bring one's salvation come utterly from God.

Free will, however, does come into existence after one's spiritual salvation. This is when we can either obey or reject the Gospel. Sadly, many Christians do reject the goodness of God to their own hurt. Most of Scripture deals with this aspect of one's salvation, i.e. what one does after he believes in the efficacy of the blood sacrifice for sin. Paul declares that the choices we make after knowing God have profound consequences. He says,

*Wherefore, my beloved, as ye have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, **work out your own salvation with fear and trembling.** {13} For it is God which worketh in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure. {14} Do all things without murmurings and disputings: {15} That ye may be blameless and harmless, the sons of God, without rebuke, in the midst*

of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom ye shine as lights in the world; {16} Holding forth the word of life; that I may rejoice in the day of Christ, that I have not run in vain, neither laboured in vain. (Phil 2:12-16 KJV)

Likewise, the writer of Hebrews extends five severe warnings to those Christians who would reject the upward call of Christ. One such grave warning ends thus:

For ye have need of patience, that, after ye have done the will of God, ye might receive the promise. {37} For yet a little while, and he that shall come will come, and will not tarry. {38} Now the just shall live by faith: but if any man draw back, my soul shall have no pleasure in him. {39} But we are not of them who draw back unto perdition; but of them that believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb 10:36-39 KJV)

Here we clearly see a salvation different from the one of which we have known and been taught in the past. We see that a Christian may “*believe to the saving of the soul.*” On the other hand we also learn that a Christian may not so believe and that one could actually “*draw back unto perdition (destruction)*” and, hence, lose his (soul) salvation. This explains why this salvation is to be worked out “*in fear and trembling.*” It is nothing to be presumed and taken lightly. This salvation corresponds to the sanctuary of the Tabernacle, the holy place. We will soon see how the articles within this room correspond to the saving of the soul.

Finally, we come forth into the outer court. Here we deal with the third aspect of God’s salvation of men. The outer court clearly represents the outer man, or the body. It corresponds typologically to the salvation or glorification of our bodies of flesh. As Paul says,

Behold, I show you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, {52} In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. {53} For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. {54} So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. {55} O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? (1 Cor 15:51-55 KJV)

Interestingly, however, man’s dealings with God are exactly the reverse of His dealings with us. We begin working out our salvation in the flesh with the food sacrifices at the first Tabernacle furnishing, the brazen altar. The Book of Leviticus details the many explicit sacrifices required by God and here we will attempt to show the basic typology found in the sacrifices upon that altar of bronze.

The bronze metal itself, of which the altar was made, symbolizes God’s judgment on sin. The various sacrifices presented there deal with that aspect of God’s relationship with us. We know that we can only come to God if we are cleansed of our sins by the blood of Jesus. As Hebrews teaches, “*For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, {14} how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God?*” (Heb 9:13-14 NKJV) The basic typology of

Scripture shows that the shedding of blood in all of the animal sacrifices points to Jesus' shed blood on the cross for our sins. Interestingly, however, each of the five major Levitical sacrifices typifies a particular aspect of our walk with God **after** spiritual salvation. None deals exclusively with the one-time sacrifice for sin that Jesus accomplished on the cross. The Passover lamb itself typifies that sacrifice.

God required all of Israel to make the Passover sacrifice because that is the sacrifice that brings us into a relationship with Him. The man who refused to keep Passover was made to bear his own sin and was to be cut off from his people. See Numbers 9:13. In the same way each one of us must believe that Jesus shed his blood for our sins in order for the death angel to "pass over" us and allow us to begin a relationship with God. If we do not believe in Jesus we will bear our own sins and will likewise be "cut off." This Passover typology demonstrates that all of Israel that participated in Passover stood on the same ground of salvation as the believing Christian. This salvation, though, concerns our spirit, not our souls. We will see this more clearly later when we examine chapter 10 of 1 Corinthians which shows that Israel, although believers in God, did not work out their (soul) salvation in fear and trembling.

The tabernacle itself consisted of three parts, an outer court, a sanctuary or holy place, and an inner sanctuary or most holy place. In type, these three components depict the three aspects of man, body (the outer court), soul (the holy place), and spirit (the most holy place). God deals with man in terms of salvation from the inside out, while man relates to God from the outside in. Man first begins to relate to God by means of the ultimate sacrifice, that of God's Son on the cross for our sins. His death brings us life in the spirit. The Hebrew Passover as originally ordained by God painted a picture of Jesus' impending crucifixion. A perfect, unblemished male lamb was slaughtered for each person in the nation. The lamb's blood was spread upon each house's doorpost and lintel, thus making the sign of the cross. Thus began and begins each man's walk with God in spiritual salvation. This sacrifice is mandatory. Without it we cannot even "see the Kingdom of God." (John 3:3) Without receiving the Passover sacrifice we would be forever cut off from God's people.

Now concerning the Tabernacle, its outer court contained two main pieces of furniture, the brazen altar and the bronze laver. Both typify spiritual realities for the Christian. Both consist of bronze and both deal with God's ongoing judgment of sin in the believer's life. The Book of Leviticus describes five main sacrifices to be made upon the altar, 1) the whole burnt offering, 2) the meal, or grain, offering, 3) the peace offering, 4) the sin offering, and 5) the trespass offering. None of these offerings directly symbolize the blood sacrifice of Jesus because, again, that is typified by the Passover sacrifice. Instead, these all relate to working out our (soul) salvation in fear and trembling.

Concerning these five offerings Bullinger comments that "Jehovah begins with the burnt offering and ends with the sin offering; we, in our approach, begin with the sin offering and end with the burnt offering." (Companion Bible, Lev. 1:3) Let us, then, begin with the trespass offering and see where we will end up.

Chapter 3

FOOD SACRIFICED TO GOD

(Typology of the Outer Court Offerings)

The Trespass Offering

Detailed instructions for the trespass offering are found in Leviticus 5 through 7. The primary aspect of trespass offerings deals with atonement for intentional sins after salvation. The instructions for this offering say that the offeror must confess that he has sinned in a particular thing. See Leviticus 5:5. This typifies or symbolizes the place where every Christian should begin his pilgrim walk in this world, repentance from sin. This corresponds to the first elementary teaching of Christ found in Hebrews 6:1. Before one begins such a walk, though, he first believes upon the Lord Jesus for salvation from death. Christ's blood establishes the expiation (atonement) or propitiation (conciliation with God) for our sins. His blood establishes our justification before God and results in our new spiritual life. The angel of spiritual death thus passes over us. The Passover sacrifice typifies all of this. (Note: A type is an historical thing or event that prophetically pictures a future spiritual reality)

After this salvation, however, one begins (or should begin) to learn the ways of the Lord. He begins to learn God's law so that he will know what God considers to be sin. When he commits a sin thereafter he is convicted by the law as a lawbreaker and must make atonement for that sin. Many Christians believe that their initial belief in Jesus already atones for these intentional sins that they commit after salvation, but the Bible does not teach this. It is because of this mistaken doctrine that the majority of churches ignore and despise God's law. The purpose of the trespass offering was to show the continuing necessity to come to God for forgiveness of sins. Many writings from the New Testament reveal the truth of the assertions made above.

For example, the fact that Jesus Christ establishes our relationship or reconciliation with God outside of any works of the law Paul makes clear in Romans:

{20} Therefore by the deeds of the law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the law is the knowledge of sin. {21} But now the righteousness of God apart from the law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, {22} even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; {23} for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, {24} being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, {25} whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, {26} to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. {27} Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the law of faith. {28} Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law. (Rom 3:20-28 NKJV)

But then Paul, in order to answer the questions of antinomian (against the law) Christians both then and now, asks, “Do we then make void the law?” He answers, “Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish (to cause to stand) the law.” Paul thus proclaims that the atonement of Christ, i.e. His justification of sinners, effects the exaltation of the law, not its demise. This is exactly contrary to most Christian thinking at the end of the age.

The initial purpose of Christ’s sacrifice was to establish peace with God through Him. (Romans 5:1) Hebrews tells us that this great offering cleanses our conscience from dead works (sins) in order to enable us to serve the living God. (Hebrews 9:14) Paul then states that once we have faith in Christ’s foundation of reconciliation with God we shall be (future tense) saved by His life. (Romans 5:10) The purpose of the reconciliation is that we might “reign in life through the One, Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:17) This speaks of potential positions of rule available to Christians in the coming Kingdom of God. It is available to all who believe, but it will only be achieved by those who receive (actively take hold of) Christ’s abundance of grace and gift of righteousness. (Romans 5:17) This is why Paul also instructs us to work out our own salvation in fear and trembling. (Phil. 2:12)

The trespass offering, then, demonstrates typologically the very first works of a newborn Christian, repentance of known sin. This explains why the Book of Hebrews places repentance first in its list of elementary doctrines as follows:

Therefore leaving the principles of the doctrine of Christ, let us go on unto perfection; not laying again the foundation of repentance from dead works, and of faith toward God, {2} Of the doctrine of baptisms, and of laying on of hands, and of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. {3} And this will we do, if God permit. (Heb 6:1-3 KJV)

Unless we learn this primary lesson well, the writer says, we can never “go on to perfection.” (Hebrews 6:1) The normal Christian life, according to John, is the life without (much) sin, but “if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1) From the very beginning God provided a means by which the one who does sin may once again become clean before Him and that way was the trespass offering.

Failure to repent of sin is one of the most telling signs that we stand at the very end of the age. Lawlessness and unrepentance mark today’s Laodicean Christians and their institutionalized “form of godliness.” Lawlessness fulfills Paul’s prophecy to Timothy:

{1} But know this, that in the last days perilous times will come: {2} For men will be lovers of themselves, lovers of money, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, {3} unloving, unforgiving, slanderers, without self-control, brutal, despisers of good, {4} traitors, headstrong, haughty, lovers of pleasure rather than lovers of God, {5} having a form of godliness but denying its power. And from such people turn away! {6} For of this sort are those who creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, {7} always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth. {8} Now as Jannes and Jambres resisted Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men of corrupt minds, disapproved concerning the faith; {9} but they will progress no further, for their folly will be manifest to all, as theirs also was. (2 Tim 3:1-9 NKJV)

If we cannot even fulfill the most basic of the five sacrifices how will we ever enter into the sanctuary, much less the Holy Place of God's actual presence? As John says, "And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming." (1 John 2:28) Do you see here how it is possible for even a Christian to "be ashamed" at His coming? The purpose, then, of the trespass offering was not to bring initial salvation or our first forgiveness of sins, but to provide a means by which a believer could maintain forgiveness and purity before God for his intentional sins and thus be unashamed before him.

Interestingly, the Hebrew word for the trespass offering is "asham," and is pronounced with a long "a." Thus the trespass offering was the offering given because one was ashamed of his sins. According to Leviticus 5:5 the offerer had to confess the explicit sin for which the offering was given before the offering was presented to God. The asham offering therefore corresponds to our need for daily repentance that God requires if we are to rule and reign with Christ in His Kingdom. The trespass offering thus did not represent an Israelite's initial forgiveness from sin or establish his relationship with God. The Passover sacrifice accomplished that. "Now the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you are. And when I see the blood, I will pass over you; and the plague shall not be on you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt." (Exo 12:13 NKJV) The Passover sacrifice and its blood on a Hebrew door was "a sign," that is it was an historic event with specific prophetic implications.

Laodicean Christians, you see, are rich, at least in a worldly way and Jesus said, "It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter into the kingdom of God." (Mark 10:25) Surely, most people stare in astonishment when they become confronted with Scriptures that warn them that they may well miss participation in the Kingdom of God. So did Jesus' very own disciples, for the Scripture says, "And they were **astonished out of measure**, saying among themselves, **Who then can be saved?**" (Mark 10:26) Here, once again, we see Scriptures dealing with the salvation of the soul, not one's initial spiritual salvation. In answer to this question Jesus says, "With men it is impossible, but not with God: for **with God all things are possible.**" (Mark 10:27) So, there is hope for us, but will we listen?

The trespass offering of Leviticus 5:1-6:7 dealt with specific boundaries placed upon man's activities directly by God. To trespass means to go beyond a point that you have the legal right to go. Webster's dictionary defines trespass as "an actionable wrong against another's person, property, or rights." The word "actionable" means that one can be brought into a court of law for conviction and determination of the proper punishment. Another of Webster's definitions for trespass is "a sin." To trespass the boundaries of God's law is to sin. As Paul says, "by the law is the knowledge of sin." (Romans 3:20) Whenever someone mistakenly or knowingly violated God's law he was to bring a trespass offering to the bronze altar that stood in the court of the Tabernacle. Judgment would there be made upon the offering on behalf of the offerer. The offering would atone for the sin of the offerer. The trespass offering, therefore, speaks of observance of God's law, even in minute detail.

This does not mean, however, that the trespass offering typifies the mature believer. Actually it pictures the first steps in our walk with God. It demonstrates typologically the very first works of a newborn Christian, repentance of both intentional and unintentional sins. If we do not first obey God's Word by some type of outside force (internal Holy Spirit pressure) we will never find that God's law has been written on our hearts.

This explains why the Book of Hebrews places repentance first in its list of elementary

doctrines. (Hebrews 6:1-2) Unless we learn this lesson well, the writer says, we can never “go on to perfection.” (Hebrews 6:1) The normal Christian life, according to John, is the life without (much) sin, but “if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” (1 John 2:1) From the very beginning God provided a means by which the one who does sin may once again become clean before Him and that way was the trespass offering.

The goal of all Christians should be to dwell in the presence of God. David cries, “How lovely is Your tabernacle, O LORD of hosts! My soul longs, yes, even faints For the courts of the LORD; My heart and my flesh cry out for the living God. ... For a day in Your courts is better than a thousand. I would rather be a doorkeeper in the house of my God Than dwell in the tents of wickedness.” (Psalm 84:1-2,10 NKJV) Hebrews declares “without holiness no one will see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14 NIV)

Trespass Types of Sin

The first sin of the trespass group deals with “hearing the utterance of an [false] oath” and refusing to tell the truth to the civil authorities about the matter even though one is an eyewitness to the truth of the issues involved. (Lev. 5:1) Such refusal to uphold the law in society breaks down the social order, especially in a nation like Israel based upon God’s perfect law. We have witnessed many examples of this type of sin in recent well-publicized trials of important political and entertainment figures. The refusal to tell the truth in a court of law destroys the entire legal system. It is impossible to reach a just result when witnesses lie under oath. All of society ultimately suffers from this breach. The specific intentional sins mentioned in Leviticus 6 regarding the asham offering also relate to sins of lying. Lies and deception characterize the lawless time in which we live, and, unfortunately, even many Christians who live in these times.

To lie and to deceive exhibit characteristics totally contrary to God’s will for our lives. Deceptive Christians may claim God as their father, but Jesus’ words will condemn them just as they did the Pharisees: “You belong to your father, the devil, and you want to carry out your father's desire. He was a murderer from the beginning, not holding to the truth, for there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks his native language, for he is a liar and the father of lies.” (John 8:44, NIV) John proclaims that “all liars” will have their place in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. (Rev. 21:8) He also declares that all Christian liars will have their place outside the Kingdom and City of God. (Rev. 22:15) This is the place of “weeping and gnashing of teeth” and “outer darkness” that Jesus repeatedly warns His people about.

The second type of sins in the asham (trespass) group relates to mistakenly or unintentionally becoming unclean. (Lev. 5:2-3) The Hebrews were required by God to not touch certain things, like dead animals. These requirements mainly concerned ritualistic or ceremonial laws that do not usually specifically apply to Christians. Nevertheless, they carry prophetic import and application. God commands Christians to maintain a life of separation from the ways of the world, but sometimes we become unclean unintentionally simply by living in the world. We may see a highway billboard, for example, that provokes lustful or covetous thoughts. We need to learn to take every thought captive to Christ immediately and repent of any ground of uncleanness we allow to enter our souls. This is how we apply this aspect of the asham offering to our walk with God.

The third type of sin specifically enumerated relates to vows of the mouth “to do evil or to do good.” (Lev. 5:4) We must learn to control our tongues as James so forcefully warns us in the third chapter of his book. He likens our tongue to a spring that pours forth both fresh and

bitter water since we both bless and curse with our mouth. He asks, "Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?" (James 3:11, NKJV) Clearly, the answer is, "No!" Then he asks, "Who is wise and understanding among you?" (vs. 3:13)

Uh oh, we have come to a mystery again! James teaches, "If anyone does not stumble in word, he is a mature man, able also to bridle the whole body." (vs. 3:2) The trespass offering, therefore, is the first step toward maturity in that it brings us into an awareness of the importance of our words. Jesus warns us, "I tell you that men will have to give account on the day of judgment for every careless word they have spoken. For by your words you will be acquitted, and by your words you will be condemned." (Mat. 12:36-37) We need but remember one command for our speech: "Speak the truth in love." (Eph. 4:15) Or, as David put it, "I do not hide your righteousness in my heart; I speak of your faithfulness and salvation. I do not conceal your love and your truth from the great assembly." (Psalm 40:10) Hopefully, when we end this study, we will be able to answer "I am," to James' last question quoted and will have already taken care of "every careless word" with our Lord by making our ashram offering (repentance with fruits thereof) while we yet have time.

The fourth type of sin Leviticus mentions here involves unintentional sins "regarding the holy things of the LORD." (Lev. 5:15) After all, what is God's real desire for us? "And you shall be holy men to Me..." (Ex. 22:31) The word translated "holy" above is the Hebrew word "qodesh." It first occurs in the passage where God calls to Moses from the burning bush, saying, "Do not draw near this place. Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground." (Ex. 3:5) To be in the presence of God means to stand on holy ground. Even though unintentional this was a very serious sin because in addition to the ashram offering the priest imposed a twenty percent fine upon the offender. (Lev. 5:15-16)

The penalty was severe because the goal of our existence is to dwell in the presence of God continually. John explains this as follows:

{28} And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. {29} If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. {2} Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. {3} And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 John 2:28-3:3 NKJV)

Here we see that the words "righteousness" and "purity" are synonyms for holiness. Our goal, says John, is to "see Him as He is." However, there is only one way to see Him as He is. We must purify ourselves, i.e., become holy. In fact, Leviticus 5:6 says that the trespass offering is brought as a "sin offering" and a "sin offering," argue many Bible scholars, is really a "purification offering." (See Gary North, *Leviticus*, (Tyler, Texas: Institute for Christian Economics, 1994), p. 89, quoting Gordon J. Wenham and p. 108, quoting Jacob Milgrom)

Another key verse that uses the word "qodesh" is Exodus 26:33, "And you shall hang the veil from the clasps. Then you shall bring the ark of the Testimony in there, behind the veil. The veil shall be a divider for you between the holy place and the Most Holy." The words translated "the holy place and the Most Holy" are, in Hebrew, "qodesh qodesh qodesh." So, we see that the

interior of the Tabernacle is a most holy place indeed!

The fourth aspect of the asham, then, dealt with unintentional mistakes regarding a Hebrew's sacred relationship with his holy God. This speaks of growing in the grace and knowledge of God. Clearly, when the person first committed his error he did not know it. At some point, perhaps through the instruction of the priests or clan elders, he did become aware of his sin. At that time he confessed his sin and brought his trespass offering "to the Lord" as "a sin offering." Then the priest made "atonement for him concerning his sin." (Lev. 5:5-6)

To confess means "to speak the same thing as." Thus when an offender confessed his sin it meant that he would speak the same thing as God. This, too, is what it means for us to "confess Christ." Those who truly confess Christ speak the same word that Jesus speaks. Their words and their actions agree with His commands. We see, then, that the goal of the trespass offering was to prepare one to stand unashamed in the holiness, or presence, of God.

The fifth detail of the asham offering involved any unintentional violation of any of God's laws. The Scripture says, "If a person sins, and commits any of these things which are forbidden to be done by the commandments of the Lord, though he does not know it, yet he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity." (Lev. 5:17) This is where the common law precept "ignorance of the law is no excuse" comes from. Mankind is presumed to know the law, even God's law. When an Israelite discovered he had violated God's law he had to make amends for "he is guilty and shall bear his iniquity."

The same is true of us. Rather than denying God's law and declaring it to be worthless, void, and mere legalism, we need to esteem and live according to its precepts. Jesus declared,

{20} "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. {18} "For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one jot or one tittle will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled. {19} "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. {20} "For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven." (Mat 5:17-20 NKJV)

The asham offering teaches us to honor God's law in all its fulness. Thus we will fulfill the law of Christ and speak the same Word that He speaks even today.

Intentional sins comprise the sixth, and final, group within the asham category. (Lev. 6:1-7) Notice that six is the number of man. The specific acts mentioned here relate to lying, robbery, extortion, and coveting (keeping what another has lost or given to him for safekeeping). Paul declares that "neither thieves, nor covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor extortioners will inherit the kingdom of God." (1 Cor. 6:10) Clearly, the sins mentioned here are very serious sins. They are so serious, in fact, that in addition to the asham offering the offender must return the stolen property to the victim and pay him an additional twenty percent of the stolen item's value. Further, he must pay the treasury of Lord the "valuation" that the priest determines as punishment for his deceit. (Lev. 6:5-6), which was probably an additional twenty percent of the stolen item's value. See Leviticus 5:16.

The asham offerings begin and end with lies and deceit. The reason is that repentant doers of Christ's Word will dwell with Him, but unrepentant liars will be cut off from His people.

John blesses and warns,

{14} Blessed are those who do His commandments, that they may have the right to the tree of life, and may enter through the gates into the city. {15} But outside are dogs and sorcerers and sexually immoral and murderers and idolaters, and whoever loves and practices a lie. (Rev 22:14-15 NKJV)

The New Testament clearly shows a continuing accountability to God for our sins. The trespass offerings prophetically teach the necessity of staying clean before God. The bronze altar speaks of judgment. When the offerer brought his trespass offering to the tabernacle, the priest would “make atonement for him concerning his sin.” (Lev. 5:6) Because of this atonement the offerer himself was not judged. His offering took his place. Several types of offerings could be made by the Israelite sinner depending upon his wealth, but the result was always the same, “The priest shall make atonement for him, for his sin that he has committed in any of these matters; and it shall be forgiven him.” (Lev. 5:13) The offering itself, of course, prophetically looked to the sacrifice of Jesus in order to effect forgiveness. The result was the same then as it is today, however. When the sinner confessed and repented of his sins, he was forgiven. Judgment was appeased.

Participation in the trespass offering by true repentance therefore begins the Christian journey of holiness. This journey eventually leads into the Tabernacle’s sanctuary and finally ends in the presence of God in the Most Holy Place. As John says, “And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming.” (1 John 2:28) John tells us that even Christians can “be ashamed” at His coming. Our review of the specific sins mentioned in Leviticus showed that the purpose of the trespass offering was not to bring initial salvation or our first forgiveness of sins. Instead, the atonement offering provided a means by which a believer could maintain forgiveness and purity before God, even if he sinned. Thus he could stand unashamed before Him. The offering prophetically applies to us in the doctrine of repentance from dead works (sins).

The critical question for us at the end of the age, though, is this: Of what do we repent? Few people, including Christians, retain the knowledge of sin because they have cast God’s law out of both their church and their understanding. Christians indulge in the most blasphemous of activities and do not even feel a need to repent. The reason for this is that they have been trained by their leaders that they have been saved by grace (true) and that their sins will never be counted against them (false). Such teaching is heresy. The immediate result of such doctrinal error is a seared conscience and a mind that does not love the truth. Because they do not love the truth they are deluded by deceiving spirits. See 2 Thes. 2:1-12. Yes, even Christians can be deluded if they do not love the truth.

The final judgment on one who does not love God’s truth is the destruction of his soul, and this is true even for the Christian. “For,” according to Hebrews, “if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sin, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries.” (Hebrews 10:26-27) The writer ends his dire warning as follows:

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: {37} "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. {38} Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws

back, My soul has no pleasure in him." {39} But we are not of those who draw back to perdition [destruction], but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb 10:36-39 NKJV)

I believe that this critical need to love the truth is why most of the specific intentional sins mentioned with respect to the trespass offering concern acts of lying and deception. Those with a habit of lying clearly do not love the truth, so the trespass offering also relates to our commitment to walk according to God's revealed truth. This corresponds to "repentance from dead works," the first of the elementary doctrines of Hebrews 6:1-3. If we trespass in sin by living contrary to that truth we must repent. This directly parallels the Christian warrior's first piece of armor, the girdle of truth about our loins. (Ephesians 6:14) First note that all other pieces of armor are attached to the girdle. Without it the knight stands naked. Similarly, without the knowledge of truth, the believer stands naked before God and will be ashamed at His coming.

Also, the loins represent the most vulnerable place on a man's body. Attack the loins and a man lies helpless. The first piece of a knight's armor protects his loins. Truth, likewise, abides as our first defense to destruction by the enemy of our souls. Thus, the Christian's first responsibility lies in learning and obeying God's truth. For, if we violate the truth, we sin against God and fall prey to the devil's wiles. Repentance, of course, answers our sin, but we cannot repent until we know our trespass. This is the first lesson of the Old Testament sacrifices. Many of us never get beyond even this first sacrifice because preachers teach us to despise God's Word as "legalistic" and never tell us that God's law defines sin. We don't study His Word to discern that some of our teachers are wrong and, hence, never learn those things of which we ought to repent. If we do not know the truth, then we cannot progress with God. We cannot advance to the second offering, which, in our approach to God, is the fourth offering mentioned in Leviticus.

Woe, woe, woe unto those who fail to repent of their known sins and who fail to find out what God requires of him. He who has an ear to hear let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.

Chapter 4

THE SIN OFFERING

Leviticus 4 comprises the main passage about the sin offering. In this chapter God provides rules for four separate types of sin offering, 1) for the sinning priest, 2) for the whole congregation, 3) for the ruler of the people, and 4) for the common citizen. The sin offering was for an “unintentional sin,” that is, a sin committed because of an error in understanding of the commandments of God. The fact that a sin offering was made, however, implies that the offerer had recently come into a knowledge of his sin. This speaks of the ongoing nature of our relationship with God. “To whom much is given much is required.” (Luke 12:48) As a believer continues his journey with God he will come to understand more of God’s truth. With truth comes accountability. Mature believers are responsible for greater holiness before God than the babe in Christ. As we mature we become cognizant that things we used to do and teach without defiling our conscience now render us unclean and thus soil our white garments. We must, therefore, repent of such actions and doctrine.

The stark reality that Christians can spoil their white spiritual garments becomes clear in Christ’s letter to the Church at Sardis. Jesus declares,

{2} "Be watchful, and strengthen the things which remain, that are ready to die, for I have not found your works perfect before God. {3} "Remember therefore how you have received and heard; hold fast and repent. Therefore if you will not watch, I will come upon you as a thief, and you will not know what hour I will come upon you. {4} "You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. {5} "He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels." (Rev 3:2-5 NKJV)

Jesus ends this letter like all his letters to the seven churches, “He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.” (Rev. 3:6) In other words, He is telling us a mystery here. This is why so few people understand the Biblical doctrines centering around His coming again, doctrines like the salvation of the soul, ruling and reigning in the Kingdom of God, the choosing of the Bride of Christ, and food sacrificed to idols. We do not have an ear to hear what the Spirit says to the churches until we humble ourselves before Him and pray for such an ear. A hearing ear is the gift of God.

The sin offering is divided into four separate groups because of the specific role of each group in God’s society. First, we see that if the “anointed priest” sins, he will bring guilt upon all the people of Israel. This is a serious and sober warning to us. It speaks of the accountability of religious leadership, whether as a father, mother, pastor, teacher, evangelist, prophet, or apostle. Those under our authority, and especially our children, will bear the guilt of even our unintentional sins. This is because our sins will lead them into sin.

A clear example of this principle is the great sin of Aaron when he fashioned the golden calf idol and presided over Israel’s worship of it that we see in Exodus 32. Aaron himself made the molded calf. He even built an altar to it and proclaimed “a feast to the LORD.” Then “they

rose early on the next day, offered burnt offering, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play.” (Ex. 32:4-6) This is one of the key verses quoted by Paul when he teaches about food sacrificed to idols. It occurs in 1 Corinthians 10:7 in the passage concerning our responsibility to learn from Israel’s example.

When Moses came down from the mountain of God to see this great sin he “saw that the people were unrestrained (for Aaron had not restrained them, to their shame among their enemies.” (Ex. 32:25) Then Moses pronounced judgment upon the people, saying, "Thus says the LORD God of Israel: 'Let every man put his sword on his side, and go in and out from entrance to entrance throughout the camp, and let every man kill his brother, every man his companion, and every man his neighbor.'” (Ex. 32:27)

The sons of Levi did according to the word of Moses and killed three thousand men of their brethren that day. Yet Moses, a Levite, did not kill Aaron, his brother who was actually responsible for the sin. We see here that the anointed priest, Aaron, brought guilt upon the people and that the people, not the priest, were judged accordingly. The LORD proclaimed this principle to Moses when He revealed Himself to him. “And the LORD passed before him and proclaimed, "The LORD, the LORD God, merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abounding in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, by no means clearing the guilty, **visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children's children to the third and the fourth generation.**" (Ex. 34:6-7) Children pay for their parents mistakes.

Likewise do church members bear the iniquity of the sins of their leaders. We know that some Christian leaders sin deliberately and the members who tolerate such sins surely suffer for it. But, this sin offering covered unintentional sins against the Lord’s commandments. (Lev. 4:2) This prophetically speaks of the sin of teaching false doctrine, even when the leader does not know that his teaching is false. James warns, “My brethren, let not many of you become teachers, knowing that we shall receive a stricter judgment.” (James 3:1) Paul teaches, “Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, **rightly dividing the word of truth.** But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness.” (2 Tim. 2:15-16)

Here is a major clue concerning our mystery of food sacrificed to idols. God required that food be sacrificed to Him by the anointed priest who sinned in some aspect of his ministry of the things of God. We know that “man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of the LORD.” (Deut. 8:3; Mat. 4:4; Luke 4:4) The ministry of the anointed priest concerned the Word of God, God’s commandments. Jesus said,

{48} "I am the bread of life. {49} "Your fathers ate the manna in the wilderness, and are dead. {50} "This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. {51} "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world." (John 6:48-51)

{53} Then Jesus said to them, "Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. {54} "Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. {55} "For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. {56} "He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in

him. {57} "As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. {58} "This is the bread which came down from heaven; not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever." (John 6:53-58 NKJV)

Notice that Jesus says His flesh is "food indeed," i.e., real food and that His blood is "drink indeed" in verse 55. What is He saying? Is He really saying that we should eat his literal flesh and drink his literal blood. Of course not. His disciples were offended by this teaching (vs. 61), so Jesus had to explain what he meant. He said, "The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life." (John 6:63) Remember that before Paul introduces the doctrine of food sacrificed to idols he first says, "These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. (1 Cor 2:13-14 NKJV) He says this to prepare us for the spiritual content that follows.

At one point Jesus says that "man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God." Then we hear Him say, "He who eats this bread will live forever." Which is right? Both. The first instruction relates to natural bread, the kind we must eat to sustain our physical bodies of flesh. The second concerns spiritual bread, or spiritual food. Spiritual bread is the Word of God, the words of Christ. Spiritual bread is true doctrine. Now we can understand that the first sin offering required the anointed priest to sacrifice when he erred in teaching or performing the commandments of God, i.e., when he erred concerning the doctrine of the Holy One.

This shows us that doctrinal errors are critically important because they "bring guilt upon the people." (Lev. 4:3) One example will prove this beyond doubt. Most, if not all, of today's mega-ministries all support the public school system in some fashion or another. I have never heard a well-known or popular preacher or teacher ever tell his listeners, "To send your children to public school is a sin." Yet the Bible clearly teaches that in "free" countries to send one's child to a public school is indeed a grave sin. Why? To do so is to force his instruction in the things of Satan and God tells us to have nothing to do with the deep things of Satan. (Rev. 2:24) Instead, the Bible teaches us to train our children in the fear and admonition of the Lord. (Eph. 6:4; Deut. 6:6-7)

How many Christian parents have grieved over the drug abuse and sexual activity of their children? Have you? How many have attempted to de-program their children from false evolutionary teaching? How many Christian parents have counseled their daughters to have abortions when they became pregnant out of wedlock? How many Christian parents have given their sons money to pay for their girlfriend's abortion? How many have seen their children turn away from their faith? Our leaders err regarding education and abortion and they bring guilt upon us. We, in turn, bring guilt upon our children, who will also bring guilt upon their children. We will all pay a heavy price unless we soon see widespread repentance for these and similar sins.

Before the Face of God

The anointed priest who sinned was to bring a "bull to the door of the tabernacle of

meeting before the LORD, lay his hand on the bull's head, and kill the bull before the LORD." (Lev. 4:4) The Hebrew word "paniyim" is translated "before" both times in this verse. Remember, paniyim means "face," so the instruction here is to literally bring the sacrificial bull before the face of God. This speaks of coming into God's presence in a real way. The priests were to understand that their sacrifice actually occurred in front of the very face of God. They were to know that they stood in His presence.

To make this even more clear God required that they "take some of the bull's blood and bring it to the tabernacle of meeting." (Lev. 4:5) They had to actually go into the Holy Place of God's presence inside the tent of God's dwelling. How fearful this must have been! Then he was to "dip his finger in the blood and sprinkle some of the blood seven times **before** the LORD in front of (**before**) the veil of the sanctuary." (Lev. 4:6) This sprinkling occurred before the face of God before the face of the *separatrix* (veil) of qodesh (holiness). Beyond the separatrix lay the ark containing the testimony of God and therein dwelt the very presence of God. Now we have come to that most holy doctrine of separation from the things of the world.

The anointed priest was now directly confronted with his awesome task of correctly teaching his people to be a holy nation, separated unto the things of God. He would, therefore, have remembered the words of God to Moses:

{5} "Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. {6} And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." (Exo. 19:5-6, NKJV)

And this is exactly our role as Christians today for, says Peter,

{9} But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; {10} who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. {11} Beloved, I beg you as sojourners and pilgrims, abstain from fleshly lusts which war against the soul.... (1 Peter 2:9-11, NKJV)

Thus we understand that the sin offering concerns the issues of separation (sanctification) from the things of the world and of holiness before God. Another word for sanctification and holiness is "righteousness."

In simple terms, then, the sin offering deals with "faith" issues. For, as Hebrews says, "without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him." (Hebrews 11:6) The sin offering therefore corresponds to the second elementary teaching from Hebrews 6:1, "faith toward God." As a Christian grows in his faith he learns the ways of God and comes to understand that the very way in which he lived his past (Christian) life was sinful before God. He therefore repents of his earlier unintentional violations of God's Word.

Because of the sin offerings proximity to the presence and holiness of God, we also see that this offering corresponds to the second article of clothing donned by the warrior of God, the breastplate of righteousness. (Eph. 6:14) Two Biblical words that equate to righteousness are

“faith and love” as Paul tells us in 1 Thessalonians 5:8 when he calls the breastplate “the breastplate of faith and love.” Notice the tie-in to faith again.

Now we come to a very interesting truth. The first two sacrifices of which a Christian should learn to partake correspond to God’s authority to rule the universe and to the Christian’s potential authority to rule and reign under King Jesus in the millennial Kingdom. Ethan the Ezrahite writes,

Righteousness and justice are the foundation of Your throne; Mercy and truth go before Your face. (Psa 89:14 NKJV)

The study of God’s Word clearly reveals that “truth” is another word for God’s justice and that “mercy” describes “righteousness.” This verse is just one instance of making this comparison.¹ Therefore we comprehend that righteousness and truth form the foundation of God’s throne, of His very authority to rule. Thus He reveals that the first two articles of Christian armor, truth and righteousness, establish the foundation of a Christian’s life and his ability to rule, just as they establish the foundation of God’s throne!

Likewise, repentance from intentional sins and pursuit of God’s holiness so that we learn to repent of our past unintentional sins with respect to God’s sanctity frames the foundation of our walk with God. The sin offering for the erring anointed priest speaks to us of repentance for teaching and continually sitting under and learning false doctrine. It prophetically pictures atonement for offering food sacrificed to idols to God’s people. This is the lesson of the sin offering. But, now that we know the truth, will we repent? Jesus warned, “When the Son of Man comes, will He really find faith on the earth?” (Luke 18:8)

¹See *The Separation* by this author in order to study these two concepts in detail.

Chapter 5

THE BRONZE LAVER

(Baptism)

"You shall also make a laver of bronze, with its base also of bronze, for washing. You shall put it between the tabernacle of meeting and the altar. And you shall put water in it, {19} "for Aaron and his sons shall wash their hands and their feet in water from it. {20} "When they go into the tabernacle of meeting, or when they come near the altar to minister, to burn an offering made by fire to the LORD, they shall wash with water, lest they die. {21} "So they shall wash their hands and their feet, lest they die. And it shall be a statute forever to them; to him and his descendants throughout their generations." (Exo 30:18-21 NKJV)

The words “baptize” and “baptism” come from the Greek word “baptizo” and mean “to make fully wet in a ceremonial ablution.” (Strong’s) An ablution is “a cleansing, or purification by water.” (Webster’s 1828 Dictionary) Baptism, then, concerns the whole concept of cleansing by water in the Scriptures. To understand the word we must know something about God’s use of the word “water” in Scripture. “Water” itself is a mystery, even in the natural. It is the only compound known to man that becomes lighter, instead of heavier, when it freezes, for example. This is why ice floats and does not sink to the bottom of a lake, killing everything between it and the sandy bottom. The word “water” first appears in Genesis 1:2 where we read, “The earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters.” A few verses later we read,

{6} Then God said, "Let there be a firmament in the midst of the waters, and let it divide the waters from the waters." {7} Thus God made the firmament, and divided the waters which were under the firmament from the waters which were above the firmament; and it was so. {8} And God called the firmament Heaven. So the evening and the morning were the second day. (Gen 1:6-8 NKJV)

Notice that “heaven” divides or separates the waters below it from the waters above it. Somehow the waters below relate to man and the waters above to Jesus Christ. On one hand, a man’s body is said to consist of 70 percent water. On the other, Christ is the Word (John 1) which is also the Water (Eph. 5:26). Currently there exists a division between the waters above heaven and the waters below. The waters above the firmament are spiritual, but the waters below are natural and of the flesh. This is the mystery of the waters.

Exodus 30 shows that every anointed priest who appeared inside the Tabernacle or who offered a sacrifice first had to wash in the bronze laver according to the explicit instructions of Moses. God said, “They shall wash with water lest they die.” (Ex. 30:20) God’s called priests today (Christians) must also wash in water lest they die. Most Christians do not understand this. The washing required of the priests pointed ahead to the truth contained in Ephesians 5:26, “the washing of water by the word.” This is how Christ sanctifies, or sets apart, His Bride unto perfection. This refers to the “one baptism” of which Paul speaks in Ephesians 4:5 and we will examine this aspect of baptism a little later. Hebrews 6:2, however, refers to baptisms in the plural, so in this chapter we will consider the entire “doctrine of baptisms.”

The first, and oftentimes only, baptism that a Christian ever understands is that ceremonial act we call “Christian baptism.” Remember, the priests had to wash in order to offer any of the five sacrifices, including the trespass and sin offerings. We saw above how these offerings relate to repentance of sin and faith toward God, the first two elementary teachings of Christ. It is clear, then, that this washing in the Bronze Laver prefigured the baptism of John and what we currently know as Christian baptism. John’s baptism was a baptism of repentance from sin. The people responded to John’s message because of their faith in and fear of God and His coming judgment. Through the washings at the Bronze Laver, therefore, we see how the priestly offerings and duties relate to baptism, Hebrews’ third elementary doctrine.

Many of us are immersed in a similar small sea or laver of water after we first believe in Jesus’ atoning sacrifice. Others are sprinkled with water by a minister of the congregation either after conversion or as a child. Both methods merely *represent* the washing of water by the word and picture the new Christian life of dying with Christ and living with him. This baptism is not the real thing that God requires. Men’s methods of baptism are effective for obeying the

Scriptures concerning an initial, elementary act of faith. If an infant is baptized by the command of his parents it fulfills the requirement of Acts 16:33, for example. If an older child or adult comes to saving faith in Jesus and gets baptized, this fulfills the Scriptures according to Acts 8:12. Simply being immersed in or sprinkled with water, however, is only the beginning of the teaching about baptism. The ceremonial act itself is only a picture and does not effect the actual washing that God requires. It certainly does not bring anyone salvation as some believe.

Baptism's main lesson comes through understanding the following verses from Hebrews and Peter:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart. (Heb 4:12 NKJV)

{18} For Christ also suffered once for sins, the just for the unjust, that He might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh but made alive by the Spirit, {19} by whom also He went and preached to the spirits in prison, {20} who formerly were disobedient, when once the Divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. {21} There is also an antitype which now saves us; baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ, {22} who has gone into heaven and is at the right hand of God, angels and authorities and powers having been made subject to Him. (1 Pet 3:18-22 NKJV)

These two passages concern the Gospel truth of the salvation of the soul versus the salvation of the spirit. Our soul consists of our mind, will, and emotions. Paul teaches the tripartite nature of man in 1 Thessalonians 5:23. He teaches us in the Book of Romans to put these abstract organs under the rule of the spirit. Only then, says he, can we please God. (Romans 8:6-10) Salvation of the spirit comes by faith alone in the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ for our sins. It is a one time, once for all, event that cannot be lost or given away. Salvation of our soul, however, concerns a process of which a believer may or may not choose to participate. This is why Paul said, "Work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" and then ties this salvation specifically to works of obedience. (Phil. 2:12)

Hebrews 4:12 informs us that the division of a man's soul and spirit occurs by the working of the water of the word. Peter tells us that Noah and the flood prophetically point to soul salvation "through water," i.e. the washing of water by the Word. Some people erroneously teach that this passage from Peter illustrates that a person cannot be spiritually saved until he is baptized. This adds a work to one's initial faith in order to be saved. But, it is clear that Peter is not describing initial salvation by baptism because he says that this work is the "answer of a good conscience toward God." (vs. 23) Since it is the "answer" of a good conscience, the conscience must have been cleansed before the answer was given.

Hebrews 9:13-14 makes it clear that it is the blood of Christ that cleanses the believer's "conscience from dead works to serve the living God." It is only because one's conscience has been cleansed by faith in the Blood of Jesus that he goes on to immerse or wash himself in Christ's Word. This is how we renew our minds and conform our beings to the ways of God. The words of Peter even prove that he is not talking about literal water because this baptism does

not remove filth from the flesh like natural water does. Another way to interpret these words of Peter's is to realize that this baptism does not specifically concern repentance, which is the act by which we clean ourselves spiritually. In other words when Peter says that this baptism is not for the removal of the filth of the flesh, he is saying that this baptism does not relate to repentance for sins of the flesh. He is not, therefore, talking about John's baptism. Remember, first the natural, then the spiritual. Here Peter addresses the soul salvation of the believer, not one's initial spiritual salvation. In a later chapter we will see that the Book of Hebrews deals entirely with issues concerning the salvation of the soul.

We should now understand why it is so extremely difficult for believers to move on to spiritual maturity. Most of us do not even understand the third elementary teaching of Christ. We mistakenly believe that the doctrine of baptisms relates only to John's baptism, which is a baptism of repentance. Others do see that the doctrine also includes the "baptism of the Holy Spirit" that we see in Acts 1:5 and 1:8. This is the earnest of the Holy Spirit that Jesus gives when we believe. (2 Cor. 1:22; 5:5) Sometimes it comes with evidence of speaking in tongues or other miraculous signs. Often it does not. Regardless of the way that the Holy Spirit comes to us, if we believe in Jesus, we will be aware that He lives within us. "Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified." (2 Cor. 13:5)

Now we see that the doctrine of baptisms includes 1) John's Baptism or the baptism of repentance which is the baptism that many churches require for admission to their ranks, 2) the baptism of the Holy Spirit, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory, and 3) the baptism represented by Noah which is the washing of water by the Word. This is also known as the baptism of fire. John said, "I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Mat. 3:11) The baptism with fire is the baptism of Christ's word.

We recognize that the washing of water by the word is the baptism of fire by the teachings of God's prophets. First, Moses proclaimed, "The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: **from his right hand went a fiery law** for them. Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words." (Deu 33:2-3 KJV) Notice here the relationship of God's "fiery law" to receiving His "words." Years later Jeremiah prophesied, "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. **'Is not My word like a fire?'** says the LORD, 'And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?'" (Jer. 23:28-29, NKJV) Here we see another direct correlation between God's Word and fire. Thus we understand that the washing of water by the Word works like fire in our lives. It purges the dross from our fleshy soul, renews our mind, and conforms us into the image of the Holy One of Israel.

Fourth, and finally, we see in Scripture the baptism of suffering.

But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" {39} They said to Him, "We are able." So Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink the cup that I drink, and with the baptism I am baptized with you will be baptized; {40} "but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it is prepared." {41} And when the ten heard it, they began to be greatly displeased with James and John. {42} But Jesus called them to Himself

and said to them, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. {43} "Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. {44} "And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. {45} "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many." (Mark 10:38-45 NKJV)

Mark tells us that the final baptism is the baptism of death to self. Paul tells us that suffering with Christ is required in order to share in His glory. Concerning himself he writes, "that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead." (Phil. 3:10-11). In the very next verse Paul admits that he had not yet attained this resurrection of which he hoped. But, didn't Paul believe in Jesus? Hadn't he been baptized? Hadn't Paul been saved? Yes. Yes. Yes. But, he was not yet sure if he had reached the goal of his salvation, the saving of his soul. It was only late in his life, just before his death, that he could say,

For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. {7} I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. {8} Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing. (2 Tim 4:6-8 NKJV)

Here we find one of the keys to attaining the salvation of our souls. It means we must "love His appearing." We must be looking for the return of Jesus Christ, examining all things to see if the day is at hand. We do not want to be like the Jews who missed His first coming and, therefore, become guilty of missing His second coming. For, if we crucify him a second time, there remains no sacrifice for sin. See Hebrews 6:6 and 10:26. These, then, are the lessons of baptism which the Brazen Laver teaches. This comprises the third elementary teaching of Christianity.

Chapter 6

HE WHO LOSES HIS LIFE FOR MY SAKE....

The Peace Offering

The third altar sacrifice is the “peace offering” and was offered as “food, an offering made by fire for a sweet aroma” to God. (Lev. 3:16) This offering corresponds to a believers trusting walk with God in the assurance of faith that he stands clean before God. Having repented of all known intentional and unintentional sins, as represented by the trespass and sin offerings, he now walks in peace with God. Leviticus 7:11-21 reveals that the peace offering was offered for “thanksgiving,” (vs. 12), or as a “vow or voluntary offering.” (vs. 16). David writes, “I will freely sacrifice to You; I will praise Your Name, O Lord, for it is good.” (Psalm 54:6) Hebrews proclaims, “Therefore by Him let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name.” (Heb 13:15 NKJV) The peace offering thus foretells true praise and worship of God, offered thankfully and voluntarily by His own people.

But, the prophetic reality of the peace offering also speaks to the purpose, or goal, of true worship, which is to convey our love to our Beloved. For, as Jeremiah prophesies,

The voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the voice of those who will say: "Praise the LORD of hosts, For the LORD is good, For His mercy endures forever"; and of those who will bring the sacrifice of praise into the house of the LORD. For I will cause the captives of the land to return as at the first,' says the LORD. (Jer 33:11 NKJV)

Leviticus 3 tells us that the peace offering was a freewill offering. It was not offered in response to sin, nor was it mandated on some particular occasion. The peace offering was the only offering that the people, as opposed to the priests, were allowed to eat. The offering, therefore, speaks of voluntarily choosing the ways of Christ and consenting to becoming His Bride.

In John 6 Jesus tells us that He was the “living bread which came down from heaven,” and that we must eat this bread if we desire eternal life. He says, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you.” (John 6:53) This was an extremely difficult saying for the Jews to accept. It sounded like Jesus was talking about cannibalism. In fact, “from that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more.” (John 6:66) Jesus Himself thus became the stumbling stone and rock of offense prophesied by Isaiah. As Peter writes,

Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." {7} Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," {8} and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. {9} But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of

darkness into His marvelous light. (1 Pet 2:6-9 NKJV)

This verse in Peter ties the “stone of stumbling” to the praises of the chosen and, hence, to the voluntary thanksgiving (peace) offering. We must understand that those who are “disobedient to the word” include Christians as well as non-Christians and that they have no right to partake of this offering. Only those who obey the Word can proceed to the peace offering. Only these have determined that they will eat His flesh, i.e., that they will endeavor to hear and obey His Word. This is why the people could eat of the peace offering.

It is interesting that one of the reasons for making a peace offering was because of “a vow.” What greater vow can be made than that between a man and his wife? Clearly the peace offering points to the future wedding vow between the Son of God and His beloved Bride. I believe that the vow here speaks of our promise to remain loyal to Him and holy before Him. It therefore prophesies the betrothal of the Bride of Christ to the Son of God. This means that we promise to remain chaste and virtuous before Him. The Scriptures clearly correlate idolatry and adultery. These sins were forbidden in the second and seventh commandments of Moses. To commit idolatry is to commit spiritual adultery. So here we come to another profound lesson of our theme of food sacrificed to idols.

So long as the offerer does not prostitute himself by making offerings to other gods (idolatry), and he offers a sacrifice in accordance with Levitical law, his offering will be accepted by the Lord. On the other hand, if he worships idols or other gods, or disobeys the ceremonial commandments, God will not accept his offering. Similarly, we Christians commit idolatry and spiritual adultery when we walk according to the precepts of the world rather than the commands of Christ. As Paul teaches, we are “not without law to God, but under the law to Christ.” (1 Cor. 9:21) When we live without regard to the law of Christ we commit idolatry and spiritual adultery. We become disqualified from participation in the prophetic significance of the offerings.

Also note that the third aspect of dressing in the armor of God is to shod our feet with the preparation of the gospel of peace. (Eph. 6:15) “The gospel” here means far more than telling people that Jesus died for their sins. It entails the full counsel of God, all of the great commission: “{19} Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, {20} ”teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.” (Mat 28:19-20) We become prepared to share the gospel of peace with others when we learn the precepts of God and walk in their counsel. Otherwise, we do no more than did the Pharisees, of whom Jesus warned, “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves.” (Mat. 23:15)

The Grain (Firstfruits) Offering

The grain offering represented both a voluntary and a mandatory offering. The firstfruits aspect of the offering, Lev. 2:12-16, had to be offered by each Israelite according to Exodus 23:19 and 34:26. Other grain offerings could be made as freewill offerings. These were made by free choice. The grain offering, therefore, speaks of voluntary obedience to God and this is a critical lesson for us to learn.

When the grain offering was offered voluntarily it became a “sweet aroma to the Lord.”

(Lev. 2:2). This conveys the preciousness in God's sight of the one who willingly lays down his life for his God. However, the mandatory firstfruits offering "shall not be burned on the altar for a sweet aroma." (Lev. 2:12) Mandatory obedience does not bring the same reward as willing obedience. This is the lesson of law versus grace. "And the law is not of faith, but 'the man who does them shall live by them.'" (Gal. 3:4) Does the life of grace, then, nullify the law? Paul asked this same question and answered emphatically, "Not at all! Rather, we uphold the law." (Romans 3:31) The law is holy and good, says Paul. It is an instructor that teaches us the ways of God and leads us to Christ. (Gal. 3:24)

When we must obey a strict set of rules to please God, we find ourselves under law, and this is not bad or evil. It is simply is not the best way. One of the purposes of the law is train us to *want* to live God's way. It is when we voluntarily obey God because we love Him and His ways that we fully live by grace and faith. This was as true in Old Testament days as it is in New Testament times. Grace describes life by the Spirit of God and comprises the theme of Paul's book of Romans. In truth, before we believed in Jesus as our Savior we possessed no power to serve God. We had no desire to obey Him. After we believed in Him and received the "earnest" of the Holy Spirit we possessed power to obey Him. The problem then became one of exercising our own will to obey Him by His power in us. The grain offering thus represents a transition in the Christian life from mandatory obedience to Gods law to voluntary obedience. Here we learn that we obey Him because we want to obey Him. We want to obey Him because we know that His ways are right, full of peace, and the best way to live.

Grain itself is the basic element of which bread is made and an essential foodstuff of domestic animals, or meat. Grain, therefore, is the basic building block of much of the food we eat. Leviticus tells us that only the priests were allowed to eat part of the grain offering. The laymen offerers could not eat even of their own grain offering. This shows that the grain offering relates in a special way to priests. Sometimes the grain was offered as fine flour and sometimes as baked bread. It was always offered without leaven (leaven typifies sin and false doctrine) and with oil, frankincense, and salt.

The symbolism thus is this: the bread speaks of Christ and His Word, the oil represents the Holy Spirit, the frankincense indicates the prayers of the saints, and salt shows the preserving, purifying, and seasoning effect of believers in the world. The prophetic implication is this: the grain offering paints a picture of the believer (priest) who has consumed the flesh of Christ (bread, the Word of God) and has assimilated that Word into his being by prayerfully (frankin-cense) looking to the Holy Spirit (oil) to open his eyes and ears. He approaches God and His Word without preconceived notions of traditional or denominational doctrinal correctness (unleavened). Then, he does what he has heard by faith. (James 1:22-27) The effect of his faithful life upon the world is shown by the salt of the grain offering.

The reason that only the priest could eat of the sacrifice is because this offering prophetically applies only to Christians who learn to eat Christ's flesh. Only they can become priests before Him. Not every Christian currently walks in such a role, but each of us is called to do so.

We know that in the Israelite society the priest stood between God and man. Only a priest could enter into the Tabernacle wherein dwelt the presence of God. Only the priest could offer the blood on the mercy seat on the Day of Atonement once a year. The High Priest who offered the blood of atonement clearly typified Jesus who once for all offered His blood in the true tabernacle that is in heaven. Hebrews declares,

{6} Now when these things had been thus prepared, the priests always went into the first part of the tabernacle, performing the services. {7} But into the second part the high priest went alone once a year, not without blood, which he offered for himself and for the people's sins committed in ignorance; {8} the Holy Spirit indicating this, that the way into the Holiest of All was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle was still standing. {9} It was symbolic for the present time in which both gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot make him who performed the service perfect in regard to the conscience; {10} concerned only with foods and drinks, various washings, and fleshly ordinances imposed until the time of reformation. {11} But Christ came as High Priest of the good things to come, with the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands, that is, not of this creation. {12} Not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption. {13} For if the blood of bulls and goats and the ashes of a heifer, sprinkling the unclean, sanctifies for the purifying of the flesh, {14} how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered Himself without spot to God, cleanse your conscience from dead works to serve the living God? (Heb 9:6-14 NKJV)

A Christian priest, therefore, is one who serves God as an intercessor. Priests cry out to the Lord day and night for his justice and his mercy, for them, their families, their nation, and their world. Remember, justice and mercy describe the foundation of God's throne and the foundation of the Christian life. The trespass and sin offerings speak of these concepts. The grain offering represents the offering of the priesthood. But, since most of us are not yet priests, what, then, do we do?

Therefore, laying aside all malice, all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and all evil speaking, {2} as newborn babes, desire the pure milk of the word, that you may grow thereby, {3} if indeed you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. {4} Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, {5} you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. (1 Pet 2:1-5 NKJV)

If coming to understand the application of the Old Testament sacrifices stirs your heart to desire to become a priest, then begin to obey the Word. Start with Peter's exhortations. Get rid of your selfish and impure thinking and feed upon Jesus. Desire the pure milk of His Word first. When you learn to drink the milk you will soon be ready for the grain and the meat!

Although the grain offering speaks of the priesthood of believers, it does not condone the practice of the Nicolaitans. Nicolaitans established and perpetuated the clergy/laity distinction in the churches. The grain offering points to the priesthood of all believers. The fact is, however, that not all "believers" believe the truths of God's Word and all do not go on with God to function in their calling. Those who do not go on with God end up sacrificing food to idols, rather than to God.

The Burnt Offering

The burnt offering was the only offering wherein the entire body of the sacrificial beast was consumed by fire. It, therefore, represents the total giving over of oneself unto the Lord. This is God's goal for each of us and explains why the burnt offering comes first in the Book of Leviticus. It also represents death to self, so it is the last that we come to understand because no one wants to die. Here is the picture of the burnt offering:

{23} Then He said to them all, "If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. {24} "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will save it. {25} "For what profit is it to a man if he gains the whole world, and is himself destroyed or lost? {26} "For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, of him the Son of Man will be ashamed when He comes in His own glory, and in His Father's, and of the holy angels. (Luke 9:23-26 NKJV)

The burnt offering represents the voluntary sacrifice of the Bride of Christ who willingly offers herself a "living sacrifice." It also represents the sacrificial life of the Royal Priesthood that gives itself to intercession for the sins of the world. This offering thus speaks directly to separation from the things of the world. Romans 12:1-2 says,

I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. {2} And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God. (Rom 12:1-2 NKJV)

The burnt offering also demonstrates our willingness to submit to God's "fiery law." We choose to allow the law of Christ to purge the dross from these jars of clay.

*And this is the blessing, wherewith Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. {2} And he said, The LORD came from Sinai, and rose up from Seir unto them; he shined forth from mount Paran, and he came with ten thousands of saints: from his right hand went **a fiery law** for them. {3} Yea, he loved the people; all his saints are in thy hand: and they sat down at thy feet; every one shall receive of thy words. (Deu 33:1-3 KJV)*

The Bride of Christ and the Royal Priesthood represent only those Christians who have "made themselves ready" for their Lord by living according to Christ's Word, i.e. righteously, in a sinful world. See Revelation 19:7-8. They have voluntarily submitted to their husband's sanctifying and cleansing "washing of water by the word," (Eph. 5:26). This is why the Levitical priest had to "wash the entrails and the legs [of the burnt offering] in water." (Lev. 1:13) The water for this washing surely came from the bronze laver that stood before the Tabernacle's entrance. This water prophesied the living water that comes only from Jesus Christ. We clean our insides by the "washing of the water by the word." This is why it is so important to continually read and meditate upon God's Word.

Jesus Himself acted out this sacrifice when he washed the disciples' feet. Jesus thereby prophetically demonstrated those words of Ephesians 5:26 and the burnt offering of Leviticus chapter 1. He washed the disciples' feet just as the Levite priests washed the feet (legs) of the burnt offerings. Jesus was showing that he intended His disciples to become burnt offerings (living sacrifices) for the Kingdom of God. This could only be accomplished in them by the washing of water by the Word. Note that the Word literally washed their feet! This is also what the words "born of water" mean in John 3:5. And all of this can only be accomplished by the power of the Holy Spirit working in our lives. Therefore Jesus says, "Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God." (John 3:5, KJV) Hence, only those Christians willing to offer themselves as a living sacrifice, i.e. become a burnt offering to God, can "enter the Kingdom of God."

*{17} This I say, therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you should no longer walk as the rest of the Gentiles walk, in the futility of their mind, {18} having their understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God, because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart; {19} who, being past feeling, have given themselves over to lewdness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. {20} But you have not so learned Christ, {21} if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus: {22} that you put off, concerning your former conduct, the old man which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lusts, {23} and **be renewed in the spirit of your mind,** {24} and that you put on the new man which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. {25} Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor;" for we are members of one another. {26} "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath, {27} nor give place to the devil. {28} Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good, that he may have something to give him who has need. {29} Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. {30} And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. {31} Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice. {32} And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you. {1} Therefore be imitators of God as dear children. {2} And walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us, an offering and **a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling aroma.** (Eph 4:17-5:2 NKJV)*

The Bride of Christ renews her mind by the washing of her Husband's Word. In obedience to that Word she separates herself from worldly ways and practically demonstrates her nonconformance to its principles. She walks as a pilgrim and sojourner in this world. The world, nay, even most of her own brethren, cannot understand her. And this is because they have refused to love God's truth and apprehend the reality of God's Word. Jeremiah proclaims,

{28} "The prophet who has a dream, let him tell a dream; And he who has My word, let him speak My word faithfully. What is the chaff to the wheat?" says the LORD. {29} "Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer

that breaks the rock in pieces? (Jer 23:28-29 NKJV)

Most of us Christians have taken God far too lightly. We have become much too “chummy” with Him. We refuse to see Him in the light of Daniel:

{9} "I watched till thrones were put in place, And the Ancient of Days was seated; His garment was white as snow, And the hair of His head was like pure wool. His throne was a fiery flame, Its wheels a burning fire; {10} A fiery stream issued And came forth from before Him. A thousand thousands ministered to Him; Ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, And the books were opened." (Dan 7:9-10 NKJV)

When the Bride's Beloved comes to take her away then those who refused to watch and prepare for Him will wonder why they, too, were not chosen. Then they will cry out, “Return, return, O Shulamite; Return, return that we may look upon you!” (Song of Solomon 6:13) The Bride of Christ and the Royal Priesthood (the Priesthood of the Order of Melchizedek - see the next chapter), therefore, comprise the overcomers, or firstfruits, of God. This group consists only of Christians who willingly obey the fiery law of their Lord and live a life of holy repentance before Him. This is the prophetic significance of the burnt offering.

*{28} Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. {29} For our God is **a consuming fire**. (Heb 12:28-29 NKJV)*

PART TWO

THE LAW

{1} Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? Are you not my work in the Lord? {2} If I am not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you. For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord. {3} My defense to those who examine me is this: {4} Do we have no right to eat and drink? {5} Do we have no right to take along a believing wife, as do also the other apostles, the brothers of the Lord, and Cephas? {6} Or is it only Barnabas and I who have no right to refrain from working? {7} Who ever goes to war at his own expense? Who plants a vineyard and does not eat of its fruit? Or who tends a flock and does not drink of the milk of the flock? {8} Do I say these things as a mere man? Or does not the law say the same also? {9} For it is written in the law of Moses, "You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain." Is it oxen God is concerned about? {10} Or does He say it altogether for our sakes? For our sakes, no doubt, this is written, that he who plows should plow in hope, and he who threshes in hope should be partaker of his hope. {11} If we have sown spiritual things for you, is it a great thing if we reap your material things? {12} If others are partakers of this right over you, are we not even more? Nevertheless we have not used this right, but endure all things lest we hinder the gospel of Christ. {13} Do you not know that those who minister the holy things eat of the things of the temple, and those who serve at the altar partake of the offerings of the altar? {14} Even so the Lord has commanded that those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. {15} But I have used none of these things, nor have I written these things that it should be done so to me; for it would be better for me to die than that anyone should make my boasting void. {16} For if I preach the gospel, I have nothing to boast of, for necessity is laid upon me; yes, woe is me if I do not preach the gospel! {17} For if I do this willingly, I have a reward; but if against my will, I have been entrusted with a stewardship. {18} What is my reward then? That when I preach the gospel, I may present the gospel of Christ without charge, that I may not abuse my authority in the gospel. {19} For though I am free from all men, I have made myself a servant to all, that I might win the more; {20} and to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those who are under the law, as under the law, that I might win those who are under the law; {21} to those who are without law, as without law (not being without law toward God, but under law toward Christ), that I might win those who are without law; {22} to the weak I became as weak, that I might win the weak. I have become all things to all men, that I might by all means save some. {23} Now this I do for the gospel's sake, that I may be partaker of it with you. (1 Cor. 9:1-23)

Chapter 7

THE ROLE OF THE LAW IN THE LIFE OF A BELIEVER

In chapter 9 of 1 Corinthians Paul applies certain Old Testament laws to particular New Testament circumstances. Most of us have, for some (a specific) reason, never realized nor understood this. Our minds have been blinded to the truth of what Paul does in this chapter because we have eaten food sacrificed to idols all of our lives. We have believed the doctrine of demons that says, “adherence to and application of God’s Law is legalism and to be avoided by the devout Christian.” This chapter clearly shows and conclusively proves that such a view is heresy.

Here Paul takes two specific Old Testament laws and applies the principle of each to a New Testament matter. First he uses the law of Moses, “You shall not muzzle an ox while it treads out the grain,” to teach that ministers of the gospel should be paid in the natural for their spiritual work. (vss. 7-11) Second he shows that the law which provided food from sacrifices to the Levite priests establishes the principle that “those who preach the gospel should live from the gospel. (vs. 13-14) These two examples alone conclusively prove that Old Testament laws still apply during New Testament times.

In verses 19 to 22 Paul declares that he is even willing to live under Old Covenant ceremonial practices if it will help to win Jews to Christ. He also says that he is willing to live without any of these if it will help win the Gentile. He makes it clear, however, that although he may live as a Gentile “without the law,” he never lives as one “without law toward God,” but always lives “under law toward Christ.” (vs. 21) The meaning of this phrase has become another one of God’s many mysteries in these latter days. The rest of this chapter explains what Paul means and will help us to live under law toward Christ as well.

{1} Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope, {2} To Timothy, a true son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord. {3} As I urged you when I went into Macedonia; remain in Ephesus that you may charge some that they teach no other doctrine, {4} nor give heed to fables and endless genealogies, which cause disputes rather than godly edification which is in faith. {5} Now the purpose of the commandment is love from a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith, {6} from which some, having strayed, have turned aside to idle talk, {7} desiring to be teachers of the law, understanding neither what they say nor the things which they affirm. {8} But we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully, {9} knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, {10} for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine, {11} according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God which was committed to my trust. (1 Tim 1:1-11 NKJV)

Paul begins his first letter to his young disciple, Timothy, with a command to teach “no

other doctrine” than that explained to him by Paul himself. He begins his explanation of this doctrine with the purpose or goal of the gospel and the Law. The goal of the “commandment” or gospel is love. This Godly love proceeds from “a pure heart, from a good conscience, and from sincere faith.” This corresponds to what we know to be the greatest commands given by Christ, to love God and to love men. Jesus tells us that all of the Law and the prophets are summed up in these two commands. (Mat. 22:37-40) Since these two commands “sum up” the Law, this means that the two commands are defined by the Law and the prophets. Otherwise the phrases “love God” and “love men” have no meaning. We simply could not know what “love” means without the instructions of the rest of the Bible.

Understanding the Book of Romans

Paul also says, “Now we know that whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” (Rom. 3:19) This succinctly describes the purpose of the Law and really conveys the same meaning as Paul’s teaching in 1 Timothy 1:8-10. The difference is that Paul tells Timothy exactly who is under the Law. He lists fourteen specific sins and then adds the sins of “any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine.” What is sound doctrine but the truth of God’s Word? And what is God’s Word but the Law, the prophets, and the New Testament? Paul tells Timothy that the Law is for every single person who commits any of the fourteen specific acts or anything else contrary to sound doctrine. Do you happen to know any Christian who commits any of these fourteen acts or any other sin that is contrary to sound doctrine? Is the Law, then, for that Christian? Paul says that it is.

To argue in this way appears to place us back under the Law, but we have to admit that this is Paul’s argument. Before I explain this more fully, though, I should point out that Paul only mentions “moral” law in this section of Timothy. He does not say that the Law is made for anyone who fails to get circumcised or who does not offer sacrifices at the temple in Jerusalem. In fact, he mentions no “ceremonial” laws at all. The reason for this is that Christ’s death, burial and resurrection fulfilled all of the Old Covenant ceremonial laws. Those laws still prophesy many truths to us, but the New Testament makes it clear that we must not continue any of the ceremonial law practices except the prohibition of eating blood. (Acts 15:29) Paul’s book to the Galatians speaks entirely to these issues. It is clear that Paul does not put moral law in the same category as the ceremonial because when he finishes his instruction about circumcision he reminds them to be careful to walk according to the moral law. (Gal. 5:13ff)

I have just used a principle of Biblical interpretation that is very helpful and easy to remember as follows: “The Old Testament laws are maintained in the New Testament era unless they are modified or eliminated by explicit New Testament doctrine.” The New Testament clearly eliminates the Old Testament ceremonial law. It clearly continues our obligation to the moral law. There is a contrary hermeneutic (principle of Biblical interpretation) that goes like this: “The Old Testament is repealed unless it is repeated.” This doctrine cuts off almost all relevance of the Old Testament and has given us bizarre doctrines like forbidding the use of musical instruments in church worship. The preceding principle is easily remembered by the phrase, “*the Old Testament is maintained unless modified, not repealed unless repeated.*”

It is true, however, that the attempt to strictly obey God’s moral law in the power of our flesh will lead to a dead legalism. Paul makes it very clear in the first few chapters of Romans that no one can perfectly obey God’s moral law. First he teaches us the reason for the Law

saying, “whatever the Law says, it says to those who are under the Law, that every mouth may be stopped, and all the world may become guilty before God.” (Romans 3:19) But, then he states, “Therefore by the deeds of the Law no flesh will be justified in His sight, for by the Law is the knowledge of sin.” (Romans 3:20) Then he shows us why the sacrifice of Jesus is so important.

{21} But now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets, {22} even the righteousness of God, through faith in Jesus Christ, to all and on all who believe. For there is no difference; {23} for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God, {24} being justified freely by His grace through the redemption that is in Christ Jesus, {25} whom God set forth as a propitiation by His blood, through faith, to demonstrate His righteousness, because in His forbearance God had passed over the sins that were previously committed, {26} to demonstrate at the present time His righteousness, that He might be just and the justifier of the one who has faith in Jesus. {27} Where is boasting then? It is excluded. By what law? Of works? No, but by the Law of faith. {28} Therefore we conclude that a man is justified by faith apart from the deeds of the Law. (Rom 3:21-28 NKJV)

We learn two major principles from all of these things stated so far. First, a knowledge of the Law brings with it a knowledge of sin. The Law declares the entire world guilty before God. Second, since we stand guilty, we therefore need a savior to save us from the wrath of God. That Savior is found in the face of the man Jesus Christ. When God gives us grace and faith to believe in His Son, then we become justified before God. To be justified means to be declared just, or righteous. This comes to us by faith in Christ alone.

Immediately after stating that justification comes by faith alone, apart from the Law, Paul asks, “Do we then make void the Law through faith?” He quickly answers, “Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the Law.” (Romans 3:31) “Now wait a minute,” some say. “I thought that ‘to establish the Law’ meant I was getting into legalism. After all, didn’t Paul say, ‘You have become estranged from Christ, you who attempt to be justified by the Law; you have fallen from grace?’” (Gal. 5:4) Yes, Paul does say that. How, then, can both be true? Let’s continue reading Romans to find out.

Immediately after declaring that Christians must “establish the Law,” Paul uses the examples of Abraham and David to show that God has always declared His people righteous based upon their faith in Him. The purpose of the justification by faith is to bring “peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Romans 5:1) Justification by faith, therefore, establishes our relationship with God. Paul then uses the rest of chapter 5 to declare that “through one Man’s righteous act the free gift came to all men, resulting in justification of life.” (vs. 18) Finally, at the beginning of Chapter 6 he starts to explain the comment he made all the way back in Romans 3:31.

The Mystery of Sanctification According to Romans 6 through 8

He says, “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not!” (Romans 6:1-2a) Then Paul explains the symbolism of Christian baptism, of dying with Christ and living to God. This, brethren, is the second death, and we have a choice to either partake of it voluntarily now, after believing in Jesus, or of being forced to partake of it at

the end of Christ's millennial reign. See Revelation 20:11-15. The "second death," therefore does not necessarily refer to "second" in terms of time. It is "second" in terms of type. To "die with Christ" (Romans 6:8) does not refer to physically dying. It speaks of that which Christ teaches all of his disciples, "For whosoever will save his life shall lose it; but whosoever shall lose his life for my sake and the gospel's, the same shall save it." (Mark 8:35) The word for "life" in this verse is the Greek word "psuche" which means "soul." We, therefore, can choose to partake of the second death now or be forced by God into it later. If we choose to do so now, we will ultimately "save" our lives (souls) and qualify to reign with Jesus in the Millennial Kingdom. Christ's experience of the second death also vicariously becomes ours so that we do not have to taste of the Lake of Fire. (Note: the Lake of Fire is not Hell. Hades is thrown into it in Revelation 20:14) Now Paul proceeds to tell us how we can lose our soul in this life in order to save it in the next.

Chapters 6, 7, and 8 of Romans tell us how to live a sanctified life, i.e. how to work out our (soul) salvation in fear and trembling. First, Paul tells us to "reckon" ourselves dead to sin, but alive to God in Christ Jesus. (vs. 6:11) The word "reckon" is an accounting term and means "to count" on this fact as truth. This reckoning may be the most difficult thing a Christian can do. It is a total act of faith. Paul explains the spiritual reality of our standing in Christ in Colossians as follows:

{9} For in Him dwells all the fullness of the Godhead bodily; {10} and you are complete in Him, who is the head of all principality and power. {11} In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, {12} buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead. {13} And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, {14} having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. {15} Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it. (Col 2:9-15 NKJV)

This passage relates spiritual realities, things that we can only accept and believe by faith. We do not now see any of it and we experience very little of it as well. Verse 10 says we are "complete" in Him. My body is getting old and I have allergies to grasses and trees. I don't feel like I am a "complete" anything, yet Paul says that I am. Verse 11 says that my body of the sins of the flesh has been cut off, circumcised by Christ's circumcision (sacrifice). I know that sin still dwells in these members of mine and I do not feel like my body of the sins of the flesh has been cut off. Verse 12 says that I have been buried with Him in baptism and raised with Him, yet I am still here on the ground never having died. Verses 13 and 14 declares that I have died, have been made alive in Him, and have been forgiven of all my sins and debts to God. How? Because Christ took the "certificate of debt with its requirements" that was against me and "nailed it to the cross." (vs. 14) I have never physically died and cannot verify that I was "made alive in Him." I certainly cannot see any cross with a "certificate of debt" nailed upon it. I can only accept these assertions by faith. I cannot experience them in any way whatsoever. Nevertheless, I know that these words are true. How? By faith.

Now when we go back to Romans 6:11 we can understand that to “reckon” means to count upon the things Paul proclaims as a fact by faith. “Reckoning,” then, is a faith term. By faith I consent to baptism. My going down in the waters of baptism symbolizes my death with Christ. My coming up out of the waters symbolizes my resurrection with Christ. By faith I reckon that I have died with Christ and that I am raised up with Him. By faith I reckon that Jesus nailed the Law to the cross, forgave me of all my sins, and made me alive with Him. I do not now see any of this. I cannot see that my sins are forgiven, nor anything else about the reality of my position in Christ. I have the witness of the Holy Spirit in my heart, but all of these truths I only apprehend by faith.

Then, in Romans 6:12, Paul tells us “do not let sin reign in your mortal body, that you should obey its lusts.” Now, according to Romans 7:7, the Law defines sin. The only way that I can attempt to keep sin from reigning in my body is to know exactly what constitutes a sin. Paul’s command, therefore, puts us back under law, does it not? No, Paul says when we have come to faith in Christ we live under grace, not under law. (Romans 6:15) He does, however, command us to present our bodies henceforth to God rather than to sin. (Romans 6:12-16) He is telling us here that, having come to faith in Jesus, we now have a choice. We either choose to serve God or we choose to serve sin.

Next, in Romans 7:1-6 he proves that the Law no longer rules over a believer because the believer is dead, he has died through the body of Christ on the cross of Christ. Now, you and I have not yet physically died have we? Paul clearly is not speaking about our mortal death. He speaks here of what the Bible calls “the second death.” (Rev. 20:14) This is the death of “the flesh,” or as the New International Version translates this phrase, the “sinful nature.” See, for example, Romans 7:5 and 7:18. You and I can only accept the fact of our second death by faith. The second death deals with the law. If I receive by faith the fact that I am dead to the law, the law no longer exercises jurisdiction over me.²

What, though, do we do concerning the Law after we reckon that Christ nailed it to the tree and that we ourselves are dead to it? Is it true, as so many say, that the Law has no significance to us any longer? Let’s look at a few questions and answers from Paul to try to discern the truth.

“Do we then make void the Law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the Law.” (Romans 3:31)

“What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? Certainly not! How shall we who died to sin live any longer in it?” (Rom. 6:1-2)

“What then? Shall we sin because we are not under law but under grace? Certainly not!” (Romans 6:15)

“What shall we say then? Is the Law sin? Certainly not! On the contrary, I would not have known sin except through the Law. For I would not have known covetousness unless the Law had said, ‘You shall not covet.’” (Romans 7:7)

“Has then what is good become death to me? Certainly not! But sin, that it might appear sin, was producing death in me through what is good, so that sin through

²See the discussion of jurisdiction later in the next chapter.

the commandment might become exceedingly sinful.” (Romans 7:13)

Now let’s look at Paul’s own view of the Law that leads him to his conclusions.

*“because you have in the Law the embodiment of knowledge and truth--”
(Romans 2:20, NIV)*

*“Therefore the Law is holy, and the commandment holy and just and good.”
(Romans 7:12)*

“For we know that the Law is spiritual, but I am carnal, sold under sin.” (Romans 7:14)

“For I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man.” (Romans 7:22)

*“I thank God; through Jesus Christ our Lord! So then, with the mind I myself
serve the Law of God, but with the flesh the Law of sin.” (Romans 7:25)*

*“For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the
flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. For to be
carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. Because
the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor
indeed can be.” (Romans 8:5-7)*

Does it appear to you, then, that Paul considers the Law of God to be something that we cast underfoot to the realm of “mere legalism.” On the contrary, Paul asserts here in Romans 8:5-7 that the spiritual mind, i.e. the mind given to the things of the Spirit, is subject to God’s Law.

The Role of the Holy Spirit in the Believer

Most of Romans 7 deals with the dilemma in which many of us find ourselves from time to time, that is, that we continue to do sinful things even though we do not want to do so. Paul assures us here that this is the result of sin still dwelling in our flesh. He finally makes a distinction between himself and his flesh. In Romans 7:25 he says that his “mind” really represents or lines its thinking up with himself, that is, with his inner man or spirit, not his flesh. Vine’s says that this word “mind” denotes “the seat of reflective consciousness, comprising the faculties of perception and understanding, and those of feeling, judging and determining.” One of Vine’s definitions for the word “soul” is “the seat of the sentient element in man, that by which he perceives, reflects, feels, desires...” We understand, then, that the word “mind,” is another word for “soul.” Thus, Paul speaks here of our soul. He is saying that his mind conforms itself to his inner man (born again spirit) versus his flesh. The deposit of the Holy Spirit we Christians possess exists in our spirit. The mind can choose to either agree or disagree with the spirit.

Some teach that the word “mind” in Romans 7 speaks of man’s spirit, but this is clearly not the case. Paul uses the word “pneuma,” translated “spirit,” with regard to himself in Romans 1:9. In Romans 2:29 Paul makes it clear that his “spirit” has been circumcised by faith in Christ.

This means that that which was flesh within his earthly spirit has been “cut off” by faith in Christ. Hence his spirit is now pure. Consider Hebrews 4:12 again:

For the word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart.

Here we see the contradistinction of our soul and spirit and learn that only God’s Word can work to divide these two organs in our experience of God. Romans 12:2 teaches us to be “transformed by the renewing of our mind.” We do this by ceasing to conform to the ways of the world and by allowing the water of God’s Word to wash our minds. The mind, therefore, clearly relates to our souls, not our spirits.

The Bible teaches us that our spirit is reborn upon faith in Jesus Christ, but neither our soul nor our flesh is reborn immediately upon coming to faith. Paul says, “It is the Spirit Himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God.” (Romans 8:16) I know that I am a Christian by the witness of Him in my spirit, not by my thinking, will, or emotions. “It is imperative that a believer know he has a spirit, since ... every communication of God with man occurs there. If a believer does not discern his own spirit he invariably is ignorant of how to commune with God in the spirit. He easily substitutes the thoughts or emotions of the soul for the works of the spirit.”³

Paul teaches the key to the victorious Christian life in verse 7:6, “But now we have been delivered from the Law, having died to what we were held by, so that we should serve in the newness of the Spirit and not in the oldness of the letter.” The very reason why we have been delivered from the Law, says Paul, is that we “should” serve God in the newness of the Spirit. This is why God gives us the earnest of the Spirit when we believe. This is also how we know that we belong to Christ. “Examine yourselves as to whether you are in the faith. Test yourselves. Do you not know yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you?; unless indeed you are disqualified.” (2 Cor. 13:5)

But, we must understand that we do not have to serve God after we believe in Jesus. In fact, many Christians do not. Paul says we “should” serve him. He does not say we will or that we are forced to do so. In fact, in Romans 8 he says just the opposite.

For the Law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the Law of sin and death. {3} For what the Law could not do in that it was weak through the flesh, God did by sending His own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh, on account of sin: He condemned sin in the flesh, {4} that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. {5} For those who live according to the flesh set their minds on the things of the flesh, but those who live according to the Spirit, the things of the Spirit. {6} For to be carnally minded is death, but to be spiritually minded is life and peace. {7} Because the carnal mind is enmity against God; for it is not subject to the Law of God, nor indeed can be. {8} So then, those who are in the flesh cannot please God. {9} But you are not in the flesh but in the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you. Now if anyone does not have the Spirit of

³Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc. 1968), Vol. I, p. 31.

Christ, he is not His. {10} And if Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the Spirit is life because of righteousness. {11} But if the Spirit of Him who raised Jesus from the dead dwells in you, He who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through His Spirit who dwells in you. {12} Therefore, brethren, we are debtors; not to the flesh, to live according to the flesh. {13} For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live. {14} For as many as are led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God. (Rom 8:2-14 NKJV)

Romans chapter 8 clearly teaches that Christians may live either according to the principles of the flesh or the principles of the Spirit. In other words we will subject our souls to the rule of the flesh or to the rule of the Spirit that lives in our spirit. Yes, it is true that we are not “under law.” So long as I keep in step with the Spirit’s leading, the judgments of the Law cannot touch me, even if I make mistakes along the way. If, however, I sin willfully after I have received this knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for my sins. All that awaits me then is the fearful expectation of God’s judgment and fiery indignation. (Hebrews 10:26-27) Again, “*For if you live according to the flesh you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.*” (Romans 8:13) This is the death of the lake of fire.

And just what are the principles of the flesh versus those of the Spirit? Only God’s Law can answer this question for us, for, if you will remember, “the Law is spiritual” and this law is the “embodiment of knowledge and truth.” (Romans 7:14; 2:20) This, my brethren, is why the Law continues to be so very, very, important in the life of the believer. We do not perfectly hear our spirits within us. We do not, therefore, perfectly hear the Holy Spirit’s instructions to us. The Word of God, the Law, thus acts as a second witness to communicate the truth of God to us. We need to learn that every matter is established by two or three witnesses. (Deut. 19:15; 2 Cor. 13:1)

Many, many Christians claim to be led of the Spirit and disregard the Word by participating in regular sinful behavior. They are not led of their spirit; they are led by their minds that have not been renewed by the washing of water by the Word. Paul can say that his body does what he does not want to do because he can also say that he “delights in the law of God according to the inward man.” (Romans 7:22) Otherwise, would he not be doing the things that he wanted to do?

The “inner man” is the spirit of man that has been quickened by the Holy Spirit through faith in Christ. Paul “delights” within his own soul, or mind, according to the delight of his inner man, or spirit. His spirit, of course, delights in God’s law and thus Paul, since he washes his mind in the water of the Word, also delights in God’s law within his own mind. How can we call a thing evil when the Holy Spirit delights in it? Yet, there are many Christians who do exactly this with God’s Law.

Chapter 8

THE LAW'S RELATION TO THE SALVATION OF OUR SOULS

{24} Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may obtain it. {25} And everyone who competes for the prize is temperate in all things. Now they do it to obtain a perishable crown, but we for an imperishable crown. {26} Therefore I run thus: not with uncertainty. Thus I fight: not as one who beats the air. {27} But I discipline my body and bring it into subjection, lest, when I have preached to others, I myself should become disqualified. (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

The verses above briefly introduce us to the doctrine of the salvation of the soul, another of God's mysteries. We know this because Paul says, "Run [the race of faith] in such a way that you may obtain [the prize]." Most of have been taught that we all obtain the "prize" of eternal life and becoming co-rulers with Christ in the Kingdom of God. It is true that our spirits live forever, but some of us will taste the lake of fire before we learn to serve God in righteousness. On the other hand, it is not true that we will all become co-rulers with Christ in His Kingdom. This "prize" awaits only those who "run in such a way that [they] may obtain it."

Soul Salvation and the Work of the Holy Spirit

We now see that the first eight chapters of Romans encourage believers to obey God by the power and working of the Holy Spirit Who dwells within their spirits, not by the power of their flesh. Romans teaches us that we simply cannot obey God's law through the efforts of our own sinful nature. Paul makes it abundantly clear, however, that we can obey the mandate of God by living according to the Holy Spirit. The wording in Romans focuses our attention upon the mind of man and we have seen that this really speaks of man's soul. The battle ground of the spiritual man really is his own soul. Paul concisely states the issue to the Philippians as follows:

{12} Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; {13} for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. (Phil 2:12-13 NKJV)

Notice how Paul says that it is God (Holy Spirit) who works in us both to will and to do His own "good pleasure," i.e. God's will. Also notice that the "salvation" here cannot be that same salvation that comes to us by faith alone according to Ephesians 2:8. Works have nothing to do with that salvation according to Ephesians 2:9. The "work" of Philippians corresponds with the "good works" of Ephesians 2:10 and consists of those things we do by the Spirit after we come to faith in Christ. This exactly parallels Paul's teaching in Romans. Thus we see that the Book of Romans speaks of our initial justification (spiritual salvation) by faith in Christ alone and then proceeds to discuss the salvation of the soul. The salvation of our soul is effected through the working of God's Spirit in our spirit. This doctrine of soul salvation eludes the

understanding of most commentators. The term “sanctification” actually applies to the salvation of our souls. The word means “to be set apart for God’s use.” When we lose our souls (lives) for God’s sake, we find that we have been set apart for His use. When we understand this idea of the salvation of the soul, we will realize why so many people consider the book of Romans so difficult to understand. The doctrine also opens our understanding to the role of the Law in the victorious Christian life.

Under the Law to Christ

We know that Jesus Christ is the One who gave the Law through Moses for we read, “Thus the LORD used to speak to Moses face to face, just as a man speaks to his friend.” (Ex. 33:11) Yet, nine verses later, after Moses asks to see His glory, God declares, “You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!” (Ex. 33:20) Moses was not allowed to behold the glorified spiritual reality of God. When God appears to man in both the Old and New Testaments it is always Jesus in the robe of flesh. No living man has beheld the Face of the Father for, according to John, “No one has seen God at any time. The only begotten Son, who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him.” (John 1:18, NKJV)

The apostle also says, “For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ.” (John 1:17 NASB) The New American Standard Bible does not make the same error as do most translations. It does not add the word “but” after “Moses.” The word “but” is not in the original Greek and should not appear in this verse. The reason this word often appears is because men attempt to set the “grace and truth” revealed by Jesus against the Law that was given by Moses. John 1:17 reveals that Jesus perfectly portrays the grace and truth contained in the Law that was delivered to Moses.

Jurisdiction of the Law

Now, in order to understand the Biblical teaching about law we must understand the significance of the word “jurisdiction.” Jurisdiction means “the authority to interpret and apply the law.” (The American Heritage Dictionary) A definition that I like better, taken directly from the meaning of the components of the word itself, is “the authority to speak the law.” Jesus is the Word and He “speaks” the truth, the Law, into all areas of life because He possesses the authority, or jurisdiction, to do so. Once we understand the concept of jurisdiction we will be better able to comprehend Paul’s teaching concerning the Law.

“To them that are without law, as without law, (being not without law to God, but under the Law to Christ,) that I might gain them that are without law. (1 Cor. 9:21)

How is it that Paul can say “we are not under the Law” in Romans 6:14 and “I am under the Law to Christ” in 1 Corinthians 9:21? Are these not two totally contradictory statements? We learned in Colossians that Christ nailed the Law to the cross, thus wiping away the requirements of the Law that were against us. (Col. 2:14) Does Paul then turn around and apply these requirements to believers?

It is interesting that most translations of the Bible use the word “under” in both 1

Corinthians 9:21 and Romans 6:14, including the NIV, NAS, KJV, and NKJV, yet the original letters use two different Greek words. The word used in Romans 6:14 is the word “hupo” and refers to “an inferior position or condition,” (Strong’s) i.e. underneath something in terms of physical “position” or beneath someone or something in terms of a hierarchical or spiritual “condition.” Paul says in Romans, then, that the Law no longer retains spiritual or hierarchical mastery over us. We Christians are not under the Law’s spiritual dominion.

On the other hand, the Greek word used in 1 Corinthians 9:21 is “ennomos,” which means “subject to” in a legal sense. (Strong’s) It also means “within law,” or “in law.” (Vine’s) This word basically means exactly the opposite of the word “lawless” which is the translation of the Greek word “anomos.” We find this word used by Paul in 1 Timothy 1:9-10 where he says, “knowing this: that the Law is not made for a righteous person, but for the Lawless (anomos) and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, for the unholy and profane, for murderers of fathers and murderers of mothers, for manslayers, for fornicators, for sodomites, for kidnappers, for liars, for perjurers, and if there is any other thing that is contrary to sound doctrine....”

The conclusion of the matter, therefore, is this: Christians must realize that they are under law to Christ. They live subject to His legal authority over their lives. They must act, therefore, according to Christ’s moral law which is revealed in both the Old and New Testaments. In Matthew 5-7, for example, we see that Christ’s law is even stricter than that commonly understood by practitioners of the Old Covenant law. This is not to say that Christ’s law differs from that revealed in the Old Testament, but only to say that He understood it better and could thus explain it with more precision than could the Pharisees.

To be under Christ’s Law does not mean, however, that we are “under the Law” in terms of jurisdiction. The Law possesses no jurisdiction over the believer who walks according to the Spirit. Christ, however, does possess jurisdiction over us. We must obey His Law because He tells us to. Our flagrant disobedience of Christ’s Law demands His second crucifixion and subjects Him to open shame. (Heb. 6:6) Hebrews 9:28 declares that Christ can only be offered once for sin. Hebrews 10:26-27 makes it clear that our demand for a second sacrifice brings God’s judgment and fiery indignation upon us. If Christians refuse to submit to Christ’s Law they will be forced to submit to God’s Law in the lake of fire.

The Rod of Iron

God Himself says to His Son, Jesus Christ, the High Priest of the Order of Melchizedek, "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." (Heb 1:8-9 NKJV) This passage quotes Psalm 45:6-7, the Psalm of the King who rules in “truth, humility, and righteousness.” (Psalm 45:4). The King’s “scepter of righteousness” is none other than the “rod of iron” that we find in the following verses:

You shall break them with a rod of iron; You shall dash them to pieces like a potter's vessel. (Psa 2:9 NKJV)

'He shall rule them with a rod of iron; They shall be dashed to pieces like the potter's vessels'; as I also have received from My Father; (Rev 2:27 NKJV)

She bore a male Child who was to rule all nations with a rod of iron. And her Child was caught up to God and His throne. (Rev 12:5 NKJV)

Now out of His mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it He should strike the nations. And He Himself will rule them with a rod of iron. He Himself treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. (Rev 19:15 NKJV)

We know that the “rod of iron” is the “scepter of righteousness” because 1) the same Greek word is used for both terms in the New Testament and 2) the foundation of God’s throne is righteousness and justice according to Psalms 89:14 and 97:2. We know that a king’s throne symbolizes his legal authority to rule and to pronounce the Law. A king rules his land from the decrees that issue from his throne, i.e., from the mouth of him who sits on the throne. A scepter is “a staff (or rod) carried by a sovereign as an emblem of authority.” (American Heritage Dictionary) A scepter, therefore, is a sign of legal jurisdiction or law. The scepter of righteousness is thus a scepter of law but, as applied to those who refuse to willingly obey Christ, it is a rod of iron. Why is this scepter a “rod of iron” and not a “rod of gold?”

The nations over which these overcomers rule do not obey Christ when jurisdiction is given to them. They begin to rule at the beginning of Christ’s millennial reign, a time when most people of the earth do not esteem the laws of God. God’s law, therefore will be considered harsh at first the world’s inhabitants. The rule of law will be that described by Jeremiah:

"Is not My word like a fire?" says the LORD, "And like a hammer that breaks the rock in pieces?" (Jer. 23:39, NKJV)

The rod of iron is the iron hammer that beats the hard hearts of earth’s inhabitants into hearts of flesh. The rod of iron represents the fiery law that burns the flesh of men into submission to God that we find described by Moses:

{1} Now this is the blessing with which Moses the man of God blessed the children of Israel before his death. {2} And he said: "The LORD came from Sinai, And dawned on them from Seir; He shone forth from Mount Paran, And He came with ten thousands of saints; From His right hand Came a fiery law for them. {3} Yes, He loves the people; All His saints are in Your hand; They sit down at Your feet; Everyone receives Your words. (Deu 33:1-3 NKJV)

Moses here prophesies the coming of Christ to rule according to His Law. Notice that in His right hand are both the “fiery law” and “His saints.” These saints represent those who will rule with a rod of iron, i.e. with His fiery law. The overcomers of Revelation 2:26-27 qualify to rule by God’s law because they willingly submitted to that law during their time of testing in this world. No, they did not obey in the power of their flesh. They obeyed by submitting their flesh to the will of the Holy Spirit who lives inside them. They learned to “die daily” and partook of the second death during their lives, just as Christ did on the cross. They know that the Kingdom of God is within them now, instructing them in all righteousness and writing His law on their hearts. Tomorrow, on that Day, the great Millennial Day of rest, the Law will have been written fully within them and they will be qualified to rule with their King! The great promise awaits all of those who learn to cry out with King David, “How I love Your Law! It is my meditation all

the day!” (Psalm 119:97)

Chapter 9

COMMON OBJECTIONS TO THE RELEVANCE OF THE LAW TO BELIEVERS

In this section I will mention some common objections to the relevance of God's law and give short answers thereto based upon the doctrines taught above.

Objection: Obedience to the Law is merely external and can never bring about the holiness that God requires.

Answer: The Law is the standard of Christ's righteousness and justice. It is the foundation, the basis, of His authority to rule and govern the universe. The Law embodies the knowledge and truth of God. One of God's major goals with us is to write His Law upon our hearts, thus conforming us to His image, and qualifying us to rule with Him. We prove our agreement with God and His ways by living according to His Law. When we choose to agree with God concerning His Law we will allow the Holy Spirit to complete His work in us, thus truly becoming the holiness of God.

Objection: The Bible instructs Christians to walk according to the Spirit. We are no longer guided by external law, but have the inner witness of the true law within us.

Answer: This is a very dangerous doctrinal error. I have met countless Christians who profess to be led of the Spirit and yet indulge in manifold sins of the flesh and never manifest a hint of guilt. The reason they can do this is because they have believed the doctrine of demons that says that we must no longer obey God's Law. These have literally fallen prey to the great delusion prophesied in 2 Thessalonians 2:1-12.

The truth is that if we love the truth we will begin to agree with Paul's teaching concerning the Law as taught in this chapter. *Only then will God begin to write His Law on our hearts.* The promise of Hebrews 8:10 is not "fast-food" religion. The complete writing of God's Law upon our hearts is the goal of our faith. It is the consummation of a righteous life and the prophetic fulfillment of the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle and the Temple. When this fully occurs in us we will be allowed to see God face to face for then we shall be "like Him!" (1 John 3:2)

Objection: Isn't it true that the Holy Spirit now plays the role that the Law once played, for remember, Jesus says,

{7} "But I tell you the truth, it is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper shall not come to you; but if I go, I will send Him to you. {8} "And He, when He comes, will convict the world concerning sin, and righteousness, and judgment; {9} concerning sin, because they do not believe in Me; {10} and concerning righteousness, because I go to the Father, and you no longer behold Me; {11} and concerning judgment, because the ruler of this world has been judged. (John 16:7-11 NASB)

Answer: No, it is not true that the Holy Spirit plays the role of the Law in a believer's life. The Holy Spirit can only convict the world concerning sin and its need to believe in Jesus if He has the Law with which to work. This is true because it is the Law that defines sin. (Romans 7:7) If we cease teaching the Law, the Holy Spirit has no basis or ground upon which to bring conviction. We have no reason to even believe upon Jesus in that case and all preaching is vain. When men have become completely lawless the Holy Spirit can no longer work in this world. This explains the current lawlessness we see in high places and also explains why the Antichrist is called "the man of lawlessness" in 2 Thessalonians 2:3. He is soon to be revealed.

On the positive side, the Holy Spirit has freedom to work in a believer's life when the believer agrees with Him regarding the truth of God's Law. In addition, we must see that the Law is part of the Word and the Word is Jesus Christ. The Law, therefore, identifies more with Jesus than the Holy Spirit. We also know that the Holy Spirit always speaks of Christ and His Word according to these verses:

{13} "However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. {14} "He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you. (John 16:13-14 NKJV)

And remember this verse: "Thy righteousness is an everlasting righteousness, **And Thy law is truth.**" (Psalm 119:142, NASB)

Objection: The law does not remain. It's requirements were fulfilled and now that which was a type has been replaced by its antitype, the Holy Spirit dwelling within the sons of God.

Answer: The Holy Spirit, as seen above, is not the prophetic fulfillment, or antitype, of the Law. Also the Law remains until every "jot and tittle" of the Law is fulfilled. (Mat. 5:18) Many, many prophecies of the Law (the law and the prophets) have not yet been fulfilled, thus proving the continuing existence and relevance of the Law. Also, Jesus is the "goal" of the Law, not the "end" of the Law in terms of the Law's demise. Just as Romans 10:4 states, the goal of the Law and of Jesus is our righteousness. When we learn to love the Law and allow the Holy Spirit to write that Law on our hearts we will truly become righteous.

Objection: Isn't it true that the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees was based upon the works of the Law and such righteousness was not acceptable to God?

Answer: The righteousness of the Pharisees was not acceptable to God because it was leavened with their own false doctrines. In addition Romans teaches us that no one can perfectly obey the law. The doctrine of the Pharisees, like that of today's ministers, was largely food sacrificed to idols, i.e. God's Word sacrificed to man's idol of mammon. The Pharisees ignored the heart of the Law which is found throughout the Old Testament and is part of the Law as succinctly stated by the prophet:

*“He has told you, O man, what is good; And what does the LORD require of you
But to do justice, to love kindness, And to walk humbly with your God?” (Micah
6:8)*

Objection: Paul was constantly persecuted by the Jews because he taught that circumcision was of no benefit to the believer and that keeping the Law could not produce righteousness acceptable to God.

Answer: Colossians teaches us that the crucifixion of Christ is the antitype of circumcision. (Col. 2:9-15) Jesus experienced the second death for us by His sacrifice. For us this represents the death of “the flesh” or the sinful nature. The second death had no power over Jesus, however, because He had no sinful nature to crucify or circumcise. His death, therefore, was for our benefit. It is by His death that we vicariously experience the second death. We know this speaks of the second death for we do not experience the first, or bodily, mortal death, by believing in Jesus. All but the last generation of overcomers will physically die and someday rest in a grave. Old Testament circumcision was thus a ceremonial law with prophetic implications that were fulfilled in Christ. We must distinguish ceremonial from moral law.

We also now see that when we begin to love and willingly keep the Law that the Holy Spirit writes that Law upon our hearts, thus conforming us to the image of Christ. Keeping the Law, therefore, is acceptable to God. It simply does not bring our justification before God. Only the sacrifice of Christ does that. We must learn to distinguish between the salvation of the spirit which comes by the grace of God and the salvation of the soul that comes through the works of a man as he is empowered to will and to do those works by the Holy Spirit acting in conformity to God’s Law. This defines our accountability before God. Otherwise grace becomes a license to sin.

Summary

Now we see that Jesus Christ perfectly fulfilled the Law and that He is the goal of the law. (Mat. 5:17; Rom. 10:4) We also know that Jesus “nailed” the requirements of the Law that were against us to the cross. He did this spiritually, not physically. This establishes the spiritual fact that we who live according to the Spirit no longer live under the Law’s jurisdiction, or authority. This also explains why we no longer offer sacrifices of bulls and goats for our sins and why we do not require circumcision of believing males.

We do, however, now see two aspects to the Law, ceremonial and moral. Galatians clearly teaches us not to obey ceremonial laws in order to achieve our justification before God. Romans further teaches us that no one can perfectly obey the moral law either and that all men, without Christ, stand guilty before God. Paul clearly teaches, however, that although Christians are not “under” the Law’s jurisdiction, they are under Christ’s legal jurisdiction. This makes us accountable to Christ’s Law, which is a moral law. This explains why Paul takes care to make sure believers realize they still must obey the moral law in Galatians 5:13-6:10, just after he seems to have killed and buried the Law in the preceding verses.

According to Jesus Himself, His Law is to love God with all of our heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. (Mark 12:30-31) Paul says that the Law is fulfilled in

one command, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." (Gal. 5:14) Paul also states,

{9} For the commandments, "You shall not commit adultery," "You shall not murder," "You shall not steal," "You shall not bear false witness," "You shall not covet," and if there is any other commandment, are all summed up in this saying, namely, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." {10} Love does no harm to a neighbor; therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. (Rom 13:9-10 NKJV)

Thus we see that the moral Law embodied in the last five of the ten commandments defines how we love our neighbor. Further study shows how the first five of the ten commandments defines how we love God.⁴ If we do not take the time to know God's Law we will not understand what He means when he tells us to "love." We will equate it to mere emotion rather than to His righteousness and justice, the two Biblical terms that define Christ's Law and His authority to rule the universe.

Righteousness and justice together define "agape," the love God commands us to have for Him and one another. The Greek word "agape" or "agapao" is the word used by Jesus when He states His greatest commands. Agape means "to love in a moral sense." (Strong's) Finally, the Word of God teaches us that we cannot agape, i.e. obey Christ's Law, except by the working of the Holy Spirit through our own born again spirit. Thus we realize the role of the Law in the life of the believer.

⁴See the chapter entitled "Righteousness: Christ's Greatest Command" from the book *The Separation* by this author.

Part 3

ENTERING THE TABERNACLE

(Lessons from Israel's Past)

{1} Moreover, brethren, I do not want you to be unaware that all our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, {2} all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea, {3} all ate the same spiritual food, {4} and all drank the same spiritual drink. For they drank of that spiritual Rock that followed them, and that Rock was Christ. {5} But with most of them God was not well pleased, for their bodies were scattered in the wilderness. {6} Now these things became our examples, to the intent that we should not lust after evil things as they also lusted. {7} And do not become idolaters as were some of them. As it is written, "The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play." {8} Nor let us commit sexual immorality, as some of them did, and in one day twenty-three thousand fell; {9} nor let us tempt Christ, as some of them also tempted, and were destroyed by serpents; {10} nor complain, as some of them also complained, and were destroyed by the destroyer. {11} Now all these things happened to them as examples, and they were written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the ages have come. {12} Therefore let him who thinks he stands take heed lest he fall. {13} No temptation has overtaken you except such as is common to man; but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it. {14} Therefore, my beloved, flee from idolatry. (1 Cor 10:1-14 NKJV)

Chapter 10

THE HIDDEN BOOK OF REVELATION

Too many Christians do not take the warnings of 1 Corinthians 10 very seriously. They have been taught for so long by so many that their salvation by grace precludes any serious judgment by God, both in this life and in the one to come, that they now believe that every warning of the Bible concerns non-Christians. Such an understanding directly contradicts the clear teaching of Paul in this passage, in all the rest of the Bible, and particularly in the Book of Hebrews. Such teaching is one of the many foods sacrificed to idols in our day.

Many of us wonder how Israel could ever have sinned in the ways described in the Bible. We foolishly believe that we are somehow better than them. "We would never do what they did!" we say or think. But, who among us could take his entire family into the desert without food and water and trust God, even when everyone is thirsty and the water they do find after three full days is bitter and undrinkable? Who among us can even trust God to provide for our needs outside of employment in a big corporation or the government?

{22} So Moses brought Israel from the Red Sea; then they went out into the Wilderness of Shur. And they went three days in the wilderness and found no water. {23} Now when they came to Marah, they could not drink the waters of Marah, for they were bitter. Therefore the name of it was called Marah. {24} And the people complained against Moses, saying, "What shall we drink?" Exo 15:22-24 NKJV)

I thank God that I have never had to find out what I would do in a situation like this one encountered by Israel. Therefore, I take the warnings of 1 Corinthians 10:1-14 very seriously. I want to take Paul's admonition to heart and find out what idolatry really is. I do not want to be unaware of what befell Israel. The Book of Hebrews, I believe, will help us understand both these things and will also give us a better understanding of the Old Testament Tabernacle. We know that the only person allowed by God to enter the Tabernacle was the Levite priest. Everyone else had to remain in the outer court, coming no closer to God than to the altar of sacrifice. From Hebrews we learn that the natural Levitical priesthood looked forward to the spiritual priesthood of the order of Melchizedek. Only the Book of Hebrews talks in detail about Melchizedekan priesthood. Remember, with God it is first the natural, then the spiritual. One must have spiritual eyes and ears to understand the Book of Hebrews.

This book does not appear all that difficult or spiritual to many Christians. The Melchizedekan priesthood of which it speaks, however, represents a spiritual priesthood, one that we do not even now truly recognize. Because Hebrews deals almost exclusively with this topic it is one of the most obscure books of the New Testament. Most believers mistakenly apply the many warnings of destruction in this book to unbelievers, but beware. The warnings speak to us. I see Hebrews as Paul's Book of Revelation concerning the Bride of Christ and her inheritance. (By the way, the end of the book even solves the mystery of food sacrificed to idols!) So, let's begin to take hold of its profound doctrine.

{8} But to the Son He says: "Your throne, O God, is forever and ever; A scepter

of righteousness is the scepter of Your Kingdom. {9} You have loved righteousness and hated lawlessness; Therefore God, Your God, has anointed You With the oil of gladness more than Your companions." (Heb 1:8-9 NKJV)

(Heb 5:6-8 NKJV) As He also says in another place: "You are a priest forever According to the order of Melchizedek"; {7} who, in the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, and was heard because of His godly fear, {8} though He was a Son, yet He learned obedience by the things which He suffered.

In the quoted verse from chapter one, God the Father speaks to God the Son and tells Him that His throne shall last forever. Moreover, the scepter of His Kingdom shall be a scepter of righteousness. And why? Because Jesus, God the Son, loves righteousness and hates lawlessness. We must see and understand this relationship between righteousness and lawfulness. To be unrighteous is to be lawless. To be righteous is to be perfect, lawful in all one's ways. And it is exactly because Jesus loves righteousness and hates lawlessness that His Father is pleased to anoint Him as King and Priest according to the order of Melchizedek.

This introductory verse from Hebrews quotes Psalm 45, verses 6 and 7. This psalm begins in tribute to the great King and uses words reminiscent of the Song of Songs to describe Him. Song of Songs describes the relationship between Jesus Christ, the Bridegroom, and she who would be His Bride. Here in Psalm 45 we see the Bridegroom who is also a great King.

(Psa 45:2-4 NKJV) You are fairer than the sons of men; Grace is poured upon Your lips; Therefore God has blessed You forever. {3} Gird Your sword upon Your thigh, O Mighty One, With Your glory and Your majesty. {4} And in Your majesty ride prosperously because of truth, humility, and righteousness; And Your right hand shall teach You awesome things.

Here God the Son is gracious, blessed forever by the Father. But, He is also mighty, glorious, and majestic. Truth, humility, and righteousness describe His prosperous rule, for the law was given through Moses and Jesus fulfilled the spirit of the law in both grace and truth. See John 1:17. Verse 9 of Psalm 45 introduces us to the King's Bride, the Bride of Christ. She is clothed in gold which represents the purity of God. She has been purged of all dross, all sin, and "stands" in the presence of the King in "gold from Ophir." Then she speaks to us who also aspire to this most exalted of positions.

(Psa 45:10-11 NKJV) Listen, O daughter, Consider and incline your ear; Forget your own people also, and your father's house; {11} So the King will greatly desire your beauty; Because He is your Lord, worship Him.

The Bride announces the innermost thoughts of her King. She says, "Listen, my daughter, my fellow believer. Open your spiritual ears. Pray for God to give you understanding and believe that He will. Now, consider and do not forget what I am telling you. Make choices that demonstrate that you have truly heard my words. I speak to you that very word that God spoke to Abram so long ago, 'Get out of your country, from your family, and from your father's

house, to a land that God Himself will show you!’ Then, and only then, after you have separated yourself from the idolatry of the world, will the King, my King, greatly desire your beauty. For only after you decide to obey Him and free yourself from the sins that bind you will my King purge your dross and dress you with gold as I now am. Come now! Worship the King because He is your Lord! Offer yourselves a living sacrifice and He will raise you up to show you what you must do.” The Queen calls for the sacrifice of separation. Can you hear her?

Now the King’s Father announces the prize awaiting all who will hear and obey:

Instead of Your fathers shall be Your sons, Whom You shall make princes in all the earth. {17} I will make Your name to be remembered in all generations; Therefore the people shall praise You forever and ever. (Psa 45:16-17 NKJV)

Hebrews’ First Warning

The Book of Hebrews announces the coming of the great King who will be remembered and praised forever. It takes us at once to many places in the Old Testament that prophesy concerning Him. It reminds us of our destiny to become His chosen Bride and His chosen princes who will rule the earth with Him. This is the **great salvation** that Hebrews discusses. But, then, immediately the book strikes us with its first warning:

Therefore we must give the more earnest heed to the things we have heard, lest we drift away. {2} For if the word spoken through angels proved steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just reward, {3} how shall we escape if we neglect so great a salvation, which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by those who heard Him, {4} God also bearing witness both with signs and wonders, with various miracles, and gifts of the Holy Spirit, according to His own will? (Heb 2:1-4 NKJV)

“Therefore we must?” Saying “must” to a Christian is pretty risky business these days. The very word smacks of “legalism” and doesn’t sound like “grace” at all. Who is the “we” in this passage anyway? It is we to whom God has “spoken” in these last days “by His Son.” according to Hebrews 1:2. It is we who have “heard” the Word of God according to verse 2:1. It is we who might “neglect so great a salvation” as that described in Psalm 45 and warned of in verse 2:3. Yes, “we” are “us.” Christians, therefore, must not be deceived into believing that this and the four other major warnings of Hebrews deal with the unsaved. Each warning contains admonitions for the born again believer, not the unregenerate natural man who could never understand these admonitions to begin with.

And what is this “so great” salvation of which he boasts? Hebrews 2:5 tells us that this salvation concerns “the world to come.” Hebrews chapter 3 explains that this salvation deals with the very dwelling (house, or tabernacle) of God. In chapter 4 we learn that this salvation has to do with the Sabbath “rest” of God, which is the thousand year reign of Christ in the Kingdom of God that all of Scripture points to. Chapter 5 teaches that this “great” salvation relates to the reign of Christ “according to the order of Melchizedek,” to Christian maturity and to the discernment of good and evil.

Clearly, Hebrews does not refer to the salvation known as being “born again” or spiritual

“regeneration.” Once that supernatural birth occurs, it’s done. We can’t get un-reborn and we can’t get spiritually unsaved, not even if we want to. This great salvation of which Hebrews speaks is that salvation which deals with the soul of man, that is, with his mind, will and emotions. See 1 Thes. 5:23. It is salvation that can be lost or won depending upon our freedom of choice according to Matthew 16:24-26. Ephesians 2:8 and Romans 9 makes it clear that man has no freedom of choice regarding his spiritual salvation. Hebrews speaks of the salvation that promises rule and reign with the Mighty One for all those who overcome. See Revelation 3:21. On the other hand, it is a salvation that we can neglect to the gnashing of our teeth or the actual perishing of our souls. See Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:7-4:13; 6:4-8; 10:26-31; 12:25-29; 2 Thes. 2:10; 2 Peter 2:12; Rev. 3:5; Mat. 24:51; 25:30; Luke 12:46.

The Second Warning

{7} Today, if you will hear His voice, {8} Do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion, In the day of trial in the wilderness, {9} Where your fathers tested Me, tried Me, And saw My works forty years. {10} Therefore I was angry with that generation, And said, 'They always go astray in their heart, And they have not known My ways.' {11} So I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter My rest.' {12} Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; {13} but exhort one another daily, while it is called "Today," lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. {14} For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end. (Heb 3:7-14 NKJV)

Hebrews now takes us to the wandering Israelites after they refused to believe God and conquer the land of Canaan. We must comprehend that all Israel was saved at this time. “*For indeed the gospel was preached ... to them.*” Hebrews 4:2. They had sacrificed the lamb and placed its blood over their doors at that first Passover. Their sins were covered and the death angel passed over them. An Israelite here is a type of a saved person, then, although a disobedient and unbelieving one. They represent Christians who will not be allowed to enter into the Kingdom of God. Hebrews 3:19 says, “*we see that they could not enter in because of unbelief.*” Just as Israel, except for Caleb and Joshua, did not enter into Canaan because of unbelief so will a Christian be kept out of the Kingdom of God because of unbelief.

The final verse of this passage speaks of those who have become “partakers of Christ.” The word translated “partaker” is from the Greek word “metecho” which, according to Strongs, means “to share or participate” and by implication means to “belong to, eat (or drink).” Notice the analogy to food here once again. The same Greek word is used in Hebrews 5:13 which says, “*For everyone who partakes [eats] only of milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness, for he is a babe.*” Paul goes on, “*But solid food belongs to those who are of full age [mature], that is, those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil.*” (Heb. 5:14)

Hebrews chapter four teaches us to “be diligent to enter that rest” of God. Through the Scriptures, both Old and New, we understand that the rest of God is the Sabbath day rest. Further, we understand that the Sabbath given to Israel was a “sign” that pointed to the millennial day of rest, that thousand years when Jesus will reign as King over the earth. The Sabbath given to Israel was a type of the millennial day. See Genesis 2:1-3; Exodus 31:13-17; 2 Peter 3:8; Rev.

20:6. This explains why the penalty for disobeying the laws of the Sabbath were so great, i.e. death. This physical death pointed to the potential perishing of one's soul. All of these things demonstrate in type the significance of striving to enter through the narrow door, thus qualifying to rule and reign with the King of Kings. This is no small honor and nothing to take lightly. This is that "so great salvation!"

Separation of the Soul and the Spirit

And now the Lord tells us how we may win our souls and how we may escape the error of Israel: "The Word of God is living and powerful, and sharper than any two-edged sword, piercing even to the division of soul and spirit, and of joints and marrow, and is a discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart." Here we notice a key element of what I call the Doctrine of the Separation. The Word of God, we learn, is able to separate the soul from the spirit. The question for us is this: when will that separation occur? Now, when we voluntarily let the Word separate us? Or, at the judgment seat of Christ when we have no choice? See 2 Cor. 5:10.

But, do not dismay if you find that you are not yet living in the perfection that Jesus requires. Hebrews next comforts us with the reality that Jesus now serves as our High Priest in the order of Melchizedek. See Hebrews 4:14-5:6; 7:1-28. His is a throne of grace as well as of righteousness and justice. Through Him we "obtain mercy and find grace to help in our time of need," those times when we fail. Because Jesus lived and died as a man of flesh and blood He sympathizes with our weaknesses and makes intercession for us when we confess our sins to Him. This is true grace and each of us has access to all of the grace we require, so long as we do not use this grace as a license to sin as was condemned in Jude 4. This is the "grace of God that brings salvation ... to all men. It teaches us to say "No" to ungodliness and worldly passions, and to live self-controlled, upright and godly lives in this present age, while we wait for the blessed hope--the glorious appearing of our great God and Savior, Jesus Christ..." (Titus 2:11-13 NIV)

Now, though, Jesus has become "the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him." See Hebrews 5:9. Brethren, obedience is not grace, but it is accomplished by grace. If we have to obey Christ to obtain this "eternal salvation," then it is by works and not simply a gift of grace. This salvation in Hebrews 5:9, then, speaks of something other than that which most of us have known. This speaks of the salvation of the soul, and now we have also come to Melchizedek.

The Order of Melchizedek

The Book of Hebrews introduces us to Jesus as the King who shall rule after the order of Melchizedek. Melchizedek's name itself speaks prophetically of God's eternal plan. It tells of Jesus who shall rule the earth as the King of Righteousness and Justice. Yet, before the author can explain these things he must first introduce us to the "teaching about righteousness." He must warn us to be weaned from the milk and to grow into maturity and so, He says,

{11} We have much to say about this, but it is hard to explain because you are slow to learn. {12} In fact, though by this time you ought to be teachers, you need someone to teach you the elementary truths of God's word all over again. You

need milk, not solid food! {13} Anyone who lives on milk, being still an infant, is not acquainted with the teaching about righteousness. {14} But solid food is for the mature, who by constant use have trained themselves to distinguish good from evil. (HEBREWS 5:11-14 NIV)

We will not discuss the milk of God's Word here, but will attempt to go on to the meat. First, though, we must understand one thing. If we have not been "constantly using" God's Word in our lives, i.e. reading and meditating on it daily, then we may find ourselves utterly unable to distinguish good from evil and, hence, to understand this vital doctrine. We will also find ourselves unwilling to "go on to perfection" as Hebrews 6:1 exhorts and thus find that God Himself will not even permit us to understand this important doctrine. See Hebrews 6:3. We do find, therefore, that few people understand the meaning and ramifications of righteousness and justice these days. To do so requires one to understand God's Word and in particular, God's fiery law.

And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him, {10} called by God as High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek," {11} of whom we have much to say, and hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. (Heb 5:9-11 NKJV)

Now we come to the solid food of Hebrews. The writer first admonishes his readers for their inability to understand his teaching. He rebukes them for having become "dull of hearing." He does not say that they have become deaf in that they cannot hear external sounds. He speaks of spiritual hearing and his words mean the same as those of Jesus when He says, "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." See Rev. 2:7, 11, 17, 29; 3:6, 13, 22. This is also that of which Jesus speaks when He says,

*{17} "For nothing is secret that will not be revealed, nor anything hidden that will not be known and come to light. {18} **Therefore take heed how you hear.** For whoever has, to him more will be given; and whoever does not have, even what he seems to have will be taken from him." (Luke 8:17-18 NKJV)*

But we have not taken heed of how we hear and we have not taken seriously our responsibility to wash ourselves with the Word of God. Yet this is the means that God has given us to become sanctified, set apart, separated unto His good use according to Ephesians 5:26. We have refused to "receive with meekness the implanted word, which is able to save our souls." (James 1:21) We have not seriously asked Jesus to open our spiritual ears so that we can hear spiritual truth. We have not asked God to open our spiritual eyes and to apply eye salve so that we can see spiritual reality as Jesus commands the churches in Revelation 3:18. Therefore, we have become "dull of hearing." Many who read these words have been saved ten, twenty, forty years, yet who among us is skilled in the "teaching about righteousness" of which Hebrews speaks? Yes, we are those that "seem" to have something, but even what we think we have will be taken away.

(Rev 3:14-19 NKJV) "And to the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write, 'These things says the Amen, the Faithful and True Witness, the Beginning of the

creation of God: {15} "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. {16} "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. {17} "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'; and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; {18} "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. {19} "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent."

Most Christians dwell in the Laodicean Church at the end of the age, the church that all of Scripture prophesied would be devoid of "the faith" when Jesus returns. See Luke 18:8; 2 Peter 2:1-22; Jude; 1 Tim. 4:1-3; 2 Tim. 3:1-9; Rev. 2:20-23; 3:2-5; 3:14-19. But, individuals dwelling in that church still have a little, a very little, time to repent, to come out of their apostate churches, and to become overcomers who will inherit the promises of God.

{20} "Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with Me. {21} "To him who overcomes I will grant to sit with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne. {22} "He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." (Rev 3:20-22 NKJV)

The "teaching about righteousness" of which Hebrews 5:13 speaks is the true teaching of the One who sits on this throne, Melchizedek, the King of Righteousness.

Hebrews' Third Warning

{4} For it is impossible for those who were once enlightened, and have tasted the heavenly gift, and have become partakers of the Holy Spirit, {5} and have tasted the good word of God and the powers of the age to come, {6} if they fall away, to renew them again to repentance, since they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame. {7} For the earth which drinks in the rain that often comes upon it, and bears herbs useful for those by whom it is cultivated, receives blessing from God; {8} but if it bears thorns and briars, it is rejected and near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned. (Heb 6:4-8 NKJV)

Brethren, we must understand that his warning applies to us believers, not to the unregenerate. The unsaved do not "become partakers of the Holy Spirit." The non-Christian does not "taste the good word of God and the powers of the age to come." These words apply specifically and only to the born again believer who has at one time or another fed upon the truth that is Jesus Christ. This passage warns us that the disobedient Christian to whom much was given "is rejected and **near to being cursed, whose end is to be burned.**" This sinning Christian, though, is not cursed. He does not suffer everlasting fire, but he only escapes through the fire. He is, therefore, punished. His spirit will live, but his soul will perish. See 1 Cor. 3:11-15; Rev. 21:8; Hebrews 10:39; James 5:20; 2 Thes. 2:10; 2 Peter 2:12; 3:9; Jude 11; Matthew 16:24-26. Hebrew's third admonition addresses those who have progressed spiritually past the milk of the

word. The warning is severe. Are we really sure we want to proceed on into mature knowledge of the Holy One?

The Ministry of Melchizedek

(Heb 7:1-4 NKJV) For this Melchizedek, king of Salem, priest of the Most High God, who met Abraham returning from the slaughter of the kings and blessed him, {2} to whom also Abraham gave a tenth part of all, first being translated "king of righteousness," and then also king of Salem, meaning "king of peace," {3} without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually. {4} Now consider how great this man was, to whom even the patriarch Abraham gave a tenth of the spoils.

Melchizedek has no father and no mother. He has “neither beginning of days nor end of life.” He is “like the Son of God.” Who could he be? Since he is obviously eternal in nature and is like the Son, we have three options: He is either the Father, the Son, or the Holy Spirit. Since no one has ever seen the Father, then He is either the Son or the Holy Spirit. Since the Son is God in the flesh, I believe that Melchizedek literally is God the Son, Jesus Christ. Therefore the idea of being “according to the order of Melchizedek” does not mean that Jesus Christ is a priest “according to the order of Jesus Christ,” but that Jesus Christ is a priest according to the order of what Melchizedek represents. That is, Jesus serves as the Priest-King of justice and righteousness.

Justice and righteousness, therefore, describe the New Covenant over which Jesus mediates. See Hebrews 8:6. To understand this in its fullness is to understand the teaching about righteousness, the teaching prophesied by Jeremiah:

{8b} "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; {9} "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. {10} "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. {11} "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. {12} "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Heb 8:8b-12 NKJV)

The Melchizedekan priesthood, therefore, is the Royal Priesthood of believers who allow God to write His law upon their hearts. We have a choice brethren, and that choice is either to walk in God's ways according to Christ's law, or not.

Hebrews 9 next explains in detail the necessity of Christ's sacrifice and the work that His blood accomplished by that one sacrifice. It describes how the tabernacle, its furnishings, and

the animal blood sacrifices were types of the heavenly things and of Jesus' own sacrifice. The chapter ends with this statement: *"To those who eagerly wait for Him He will appear a second time, apart from sin, for salvation."* Hebrews 9:28b. We know that not all Christians "wait for" Jesus to return. We know that many Christians do not see their salvation as something future, something beyond their initial forgiveness of sins. The salvation here in Hebrews 9:28, therefore, refers once again to soul salvation.

Hebrews' Fourth Warning

*The Lord is exalted, for He dwells on high; He will fill Zion with **justice and righteousness**. He will be the sure foundation for your times, a rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge; the fear of the LORD is the key to this treasure* (Isaiah 33:5-6).

Isaiah here reiterates the essential teaching of the Proverbs: "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom." Isaiah expands upon Proverbs to reveal that the fear of the Lord is the "key" to the "rich store of salvation and wisdom and knowledge" found only in the Lord who dwells on high. In addition the Lord will "fill Zion with justice and righteousness." Most Christians, however, do not fear God. Therefore they are not wise and they do not have knowledge of soul salvation, justice, or righteousness. They seem to only know that God is their Daddy, their Abba, and they have been told that their Daddy, because of His grace, will never spank them. They have believed a lie and they have willingly believed it because they have not loved the truth. Let us now go on to this knowledge of the truth, but beware of Hebrews' fourth warning (the first three are found in Hebrews 2:1-3; 3:7-4:13; 6:4-8):

{26} For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, {27} but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. {28} Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. {29} Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? {30} For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. And again, "The LORD will judge His people." {31} It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Heb 10:26-31 NKJV)

To understand Hebrews' fourth warning we must remember its third warning that says, *"if they [Christians] fall away ... they crucify again for themselves the Son of God, and put Him to an open shame"* (Heb. 6:6) Here is the secret. If we crucify Jesus once again then "there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins." (Heb. 10:26) Why not? Because as far as we are concerned He is dead, crucified by us. In other words, we Christians put Him in exactly the same place that the Jews 2000 years ago put Him, on the cross. And this, to our shame, is where many of us do place Him. The fourth warning ends with a promise and a dire premonition.

{35} Therefore do not cast away your confidence, which has great reward. {36}

For you have need of endurance, so that after you have done the will of God, you may receive the promise: {37} "For yet a little while, And He who is coming will come and will not tarry. {38} Now the just shall live by faith; But if anyone draws back, My soul has no pleasure in him." {39} But we are not of those who draw back to perdition, but of those who believe to the saving of the soul. (Heb 10:35-39 NKJV)

Notice how this blessing is tied to the Lord's second coming. Notice also that those who draw back from following Him do so to their own destruction (perdition). This represents the destruction of the soul, not the spirit. Brethren, we have a choice to make.

The Fifth and Final Warning

All of chapter 12 of Hebrews comprises its fifth and final warning. Here we learn that the Christian walk must include the painful chastening of God. If we do not experience God's hand of correction, then, says Paul, we are not true sons of God. (vs. 4) Only those who endure it may partake (eat) of His holiness. (vs. 10) We also learn that without this holiness "no one will see the Lord." (vs. 14) This aspect of our relationship with God is absolutely critical insofar as our inheritance is concerned. The beloved John writes concerning this,

{28} And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His coming. {29} If you know that He is righteous, you know that everyone who practices righteousness is born of Him. Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. {2} Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. {3} And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure. (1 John 2:28-3:3 NKJV)

John declares that everyone who hopes to see Him as He is and to be like Him purifies himself. Do you hope that you will someday see your King? Are you working to purify yourself? Paul ends his serious warning as follows:

{25} See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, {26} whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." {27} Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. {28} Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. {29} For our God is a consuming fire. (Heb 12:25-29 NKJV)

Many may believe that the God of the New Covenant differs from the God of the Old, or that His methods of dealing with His people have changed. Not so, says Paul. For just as God gave Moses His fiery law (Deut. 33:2), so even now He is a consuming fire Who will purge the sin from these bodies of flesh.

Food Sacrificed to Idols

And what do all these warnings have to do with food sacrificed to idols? What you have just learned is true doctrine. It is the true teaching of the Word of God. I have not relied upon commentaries or the traditional teachings of men in order to reach my conclusions. I prayed for many hours as I wrote for many hours. I stopped writing for days when I did not understand something. I waited upon God to reveal His truth so that I could understand it and convey it to others. I knew by the Spirit that the Book of Hebrews provided essential understanding to this doctrine of food and as I recently finished reading the book, I saw this:

{9} Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. {10} We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat. (Heb 13:9-10 NKJV)

Here is the interpretation of these two verses in the light of what we now know. “Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. (That is, do not live your life based upon the vain traditions of men that you have received from your fathers that do not accord with *the faith* as revealed in the Holy Scriptures.) For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. (That is, it is good that your heart [thoughts, feelings, mind, will, soul] be established by God’s goodness to you, not with **religious doctrines** that never did profit those who spent their lives in submission to them.)

Here is the definition of food sacrificed to idols. It consists of religious doctrines, supposedly taken right out of the Bible, which proliferate man’s worship of mammon. Jesus tells us that man cannot serve both God and mammon. “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon.” (Mat. 6:24, KJV) Yet, the church’s ministers have for centuries taught as truth doctrines that have held people captive to sin and which have lined their own pockets with silver. These doctrines are nothing less than the food sacrificed to idols of which Paul mysteriously speaks in 1 Corinthians 8-11.

Chapter 11

WOE TO THE CROWN OF PRIDE

At the end of the last chapter we finally came to understand the Biblical definition of “food sacrificed to idols.” Hebrews declares, *{9} Do not be carried about with various and strange doctrines. For it is good that the heart be established by grace, not with foods which have not profited those who have been occupied with them. {10} We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle have no right to eat.* (Heb 13:9-10 NKJV) Here we see that the Biblical definition of “food” is true doctrine. Jesus Himself defined food as doing the will of His Father and finishing His work in John 4:34. The Omniscient One, of course, adds to the revelation given in Hebrews. God’s food, therefore, is truth acting in love. God’s food is to do His will (truth) in His way (love). Many verses of the Bible sum this teaching up in one concise phrase.

Ephesians 4, for example, describes the goal of God’s anointed ministers:

{11} And He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, {12} for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, {13} till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; {14} that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, {15} but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head; Christ; {16} from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love. (Eph 4:11-16 NKJV)

In one phrase that goal can be said to be to equip the saints to “speak the truth in love.” Jesus summed the teaching up in His two greatest commands, to love God with all one’s heart, soul, and mind, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. We all know these verses, of course. The problem has been that we do not know how to define them. Usually we misunderstand “love” to be some type of emotional feeling toward God or another. It will help us to understand what love really is by looking at Old Testament examples that speak about God’s table and the food that should be on that table. This is an application of 1 Corinthians 10:1-14. It also helps to know that God defines love with two words extremely rich in meaning, righteousness and justice.⁵

The Northern Kingdom of Israel Pictures Today’s Church

Ephraim, the principal tribe of the Northern Kingdom of Israel, stands as a type of the Church in the Scriptures. Therefore, when we read indictments against Ephraim or the northern Kingdom of Israel we must learn to apply them prophetically to the Church. The clearest place to see that Ephraim typologically pictures the Church occurs in the Book of Hosea. God used

⁵See the Author’s book *The Separation* where these two concepts are described in detail.

Hosea to pronounce His judgment upon the Northern Kingdom. Their sin was “harlotry,” a Biblical term for idolatry. God commanded his prophet to marry a harlot and to conceive children by her. They had three children and all were given prophetic names directly by God. The third child, a son, was named Lo Ammi which meant “Not-My-People.” Concerning Lo Ammi the prophet wrote,

{9} Then God said: "Call his name Lo-Ammi, For you are not My people, And I will not be your God. {10} "Yet the number of the children of Israel Shall be as the sand of the sea, Which cannot be measured or numbered. And it shall come to pass In the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There it shall be said to them, 'You are sons of the living God.' (Hosea 1:9-10 NKJV)

{18} In that day I will make a covenant for them With the beasts of the field, With the birds of the air; And with the creeping things of the ground. Bow and sword of battle I will shatter from the earth, To make them lie down safely. {19} "I will betroth you to Me forever; Yes, I will betroth you to Me In righteousness and justice, In lovingkindness and mercy; {20} I will betroth you to Me in faithfulness, And you shall know the LORD. {21} "It shall come to pass in that day That I will answer," says the LORD; "I will answer the heavens, And they shall answer the earth. {22} The earth shall answer With grain, With new wine, And with oil; They shall answer Jezreel. {23} Then I will sow her for Myself in the earth, And I will have mercy on her who had not obtained mercy; Then I will say to those who were not My people, 'You are My people!' And they shall say, 'You are my God!'" (Hosea 2:18-23 NKJV)

Many years later Paul explained that this prophecy reached its fulfillment concerning the Gentiles who believed in Jesus. He wrote:

{22} What if God, wanting to show His wrath and to make His power known, endured with much longsuffering the vessels of wrath prepared for destruction, {23} and that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy, which He had prepared beforehand for glory, {24} even us whom He called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? {25} As He says also in Hosea: "I will call them My people, who were not My people, And her beloved, who was not beloved." {26} "And it shall come to pass in the place where it was said to them, 'You are not My people,' There they shall be called sons of the living God." (Rom 9:22-26 NKJV)

So we see that Ephraim prophetically pictured the church. Once we know this we can begin to read the prophets in a new light. One key passage concerning Ephraim and hence, the Church, occurs in Isaiah.28. Let’s examine this chapter in light of what we now understand.

{1} Woe to the crown of pride, to the drunkards of Ephraim, Whose glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valleys, To those who are overcome with wine!

This verse speaks of a proud Church, drunk on wine. To be drunk on wine means to be guilty of misusing God's "water." Jesus first explains the meaning of living water in the second, third, and fourth chapters of John. John two tells the story of the wedding at Cana where Jesus turns the water to wine. Read that chapter and notice the following. Jesus told "the servants," i.e. those who believe in Him, to fill six earthen waterpots with water. Six is the number of man and the fact that the pots were made of stone, or earthenware, and that there were six of them speaks clearly of man. The pots, therefore, prophetically picture believers. These pots, or men, were filled with water at the command of the Word of God. This speaks of individual believers filling themselves with the written word of God and brings to mind Ephesian 5:26 again. Then, mysteriously, the water turns to wine.

We never hear Jesus say, for example, "Water, turn thou into wine!" Instead we have an example of the mysterious working of the Holy Spirit like that described by Jesus to Nicodemus in Chapter 3, "The wind (Spirit) blows where it wishes, and you hear the sound of it, but cannot tell where it comes from and where it goes. So is everyone who is born of the Spirit." (John 3:8) The Holy Spirit turned the water into wine. Similarly, the Holy Spirit breathes upon the water of the word with which we fill ourselves and turns it into wine. The word thus becomes living water in us, or new wine. Jesus explained the need for living water to the woman at Jacob's well in John 4.

Isaiah 28:1, therefore, prophetically pictures a Church that has misused God's Word, or water. Her ministers have used that Word for their own benefit and have become wealthy from it. They have thus become drunk on "wine," on the things of the world. Revelation 17 graphically pictures this reality. John prophesied, "Then one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls came and talked with me, saying to me, *"Come, I will show you the judgment of the great harlot who sits on many waters, {2} "with whom the kings of the earth committed fornication, and the inhabitants of the earth were made **drunk with the wine of her fornication.**"* (Rev 17:1-2 NKJV) We must ask ourselves, why was John so astonished when he saw the harlot? (Rev. 17:6) He stood amazed because he saw the Church at the end of the age as a harlot who had misused God's Word in order to fornicate with idols.

{2} Behold, the Lord has a mighty and strong one, Like a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, Like a flood of mighty waters overflowing, Who will bring them down to the earth with His hand. {3} The crown of pride, the drunkards of Ephraim, Will be trampled underfoot; {4} And the glorious beauty is a fading flower Which is at the head of the verdant valley, Like the first fruit before the summer, Which an observer sees; He eats it up while it is still in his hand. (Is. 28)

Verse 2 above pictures our Lord Jesus Christ. His own judgments will bring His own people back down to earth from their self-exalted positions in the heavenlies. The multitude of ministers and "laypeople" in our day became proud through their misuse of the Word of God. Jesus warns us who do misuse His Word that He will trample us underfoot. To misuse God's Word, of course, means to sacrifice food to idols. We sacrifice God's food to an idol when we interpret the Bible to suit our own agendas. In those cases we sacrifice God's Word, God's food, to the idol of our making. Jesus will severely judge all people guilty of that misuse.

In verse 4 above we see that drunkards on God's wine "eat up" the first fruits of God. This means that their false doctrines spoil God's true vineyard, literally bringing ruin to God's people. Many of the prophets spoke about this grave sin. The next few pages describe the stark

reality of this prophecy. A well known minister, known by some as a prophet, was given a dream by God concerning his and other colleagues' negligent care of their flock. I was led of the Lord to write him the following letter. All identifying names have been removed. My goal here is not to slander the brethren, but to instruct them in the teaching about righteousness.

insert letter here

{5} In that day the LORD of hosts will be For a crown of glory and a diadem of beauty To the remnant of His people, {6} For a spirit of justice to him who sits in judgment, And for strength to those who turn back the battle at the gate. (Is. 28)

These two verses prophesy the coming Day of the Lord, a day that looms very close now. Notice that there will be a "crown of glory and a diadem of beauty to the remnant" of God's people. This speaks of God's overcomers, the Bride of Christ, the Royal Priesthood that will be rewarded and allowed to serve in the Order of Melchizedek, our King. The Lord of Hosts is now bringing a "spirit of justice" to these ones willing to forsake food sacrificed to idols and willing to sit in judgment upon the Harlot Babylon described in Revelation 17. Make no mistake, Satan now battles at the very gate of God's Kingdom rather than the Church battling at the gates of his kingdom. The remnant will receive strength from God to turn the battle around and bring a victory that is according to God's own Word.

{7} But they also have erred through wine, And through intoxicating drink are out of the way; The priest and the prophet have erred through intoxicating drink, They are swallowed up by wine, They are out of the way through intoxicating drink; They err in vision, they stumble in judgment. {8} For all tables are full of vomit and filth; No place is clean. (Is. 28)

Once we understand the doctrine of food sacrificed to idols these two verses become very clear, do they not? The wine, the intoxicating drink, is God's revealed written Word. God's priests and prophets take that Word and use it to reach their own ends. They "mix" God's wine, God's truth, with the doctrines of demons and deceived many. These wolves in sheep's clothing become rich in the things of this world simply by preaching a mixture of God's Word. But, they preach lies in the Name of God. They "err through intoxicating drink." They become "swallowed up" by the very wine that they teach. Their end has become one of being "out of the way" of God's purposes. This clearly describes the Church on the eve of the Day of the Lord, on the eve of the seventh millennial day. These two verses prophesy the Church of the Last Days, the Church of Laodicea.

{14} And unto the angel of the church of the Laodiceans write; These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; {15} I know thy works, that thou art neither cold nor hot: I would thou wert cold or hot. {16} So then because thou art lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spue thee out of my mouth. {17} Because thou sayest, I am rich, and increased with goods, and have need of nothing; and knowest not that thou art wretched, and miserable, and poor, and blind, and naked. (Rev 3:14-17 KJV)

Amazingly, God still approaches His defiled Church with mercy. He says,

{18} I counsel thee to buy of me gold tried in the fire, that thou mayest be rich; and white raiment, that thou mayest be clothed, and that the shame of thy nakedness do not appear; and anoint thine eyes with eyesalve, that thou mayest see. {19} As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten: be zealous therefore, and repent. {20} Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hear my voice, and open the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with me. {21} To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne. {22} He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches. (Rev 3:18-22 KJV)

Verse 20 proves that Jesus still desires us to sit at His communion table and eat His food with Him. But, notice that He puts the burden on us to open the door and to set the table. He has already revealed all things to us. It is up to us to forsake defiled food and to partake of the food that leads to everlasting life. But, how can we do this? Isaiah answers this question in the very next verse of the passage we are now considering.

{9} "Whom will he teach knowledge? And whom will he make to understand the message? Those just weaned from milk? Those just drawn from the breasts?" (Is.28)

We must understand that none of the question marks exist in the original Hebrew text. One may discern when a phrase is a question by its context. Here it is clear that the first two sentences are indeed questions and that the last two sentences are the answers to the questions. Isaiah does not ask four questions in verse 9. He asks one, and says it two ways. Likewise, he answers the question once and declares the answer two way. God teaches us here that He can only reveal the knowledge of the Gospel to those who have been weaned from the milk of His Word.

We know from Hebrews 6:1-2 that the milk of God's Word consists in repentance from dead works (repentance of sins), faith toward God, and the doctrines of baptisms, the laying on of hands, of resurrection of the dead, and of eternal judgment. We should learn all of these things just after we believe that Jesus died for our sins in order to bring us into relationship with God. Happily, many of the teachers who promulgate false doctrines still at least teach that one must believe in Jesus Christ in order to be spiritually saved. The other six doctrines are sometimes still taught, but they are not taught very well. Isaiah makes it clear that we must be weaned from these, i.e. that we must live in the truth of these six, before God will teach us His deeper truths. All of these were discussed at the beginning of this book when we explained the prophetic meaning of the five sacrifices at the Tabernacle's bronze altar. Therefore, the Christian must live in the reality of the five sacrifices before he can apprehend God's deeper truths. Please review those sacrifices before you proceed with this teaching.

Chapter 12

WOE TO THE DRUNKARDS OF EPHRAIM

{10} For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little." {11} For with stammering lips and another tongue He will speak to this people, {12} To whom He said, "This is the rest with which You may cause the weary to rest," And, "This is the refreshing"; Yet they would not hear. (Is. 28:10-12)

The way of God is to teach his servants one concept at a time. He teaches us one aspect of the truth and then another. He always builds truth upon truth, and He always builds upon the one true foundation, Jesus Christ. He does not simply open our minds and flood it all at once with the totality of His Word. He did not do this with His first twelve disciples, He did not do it even with Paul, and he will not do so with us. Our God is not the local McDonald's. His truth does not come to us like fast food, quickly and all at once. Too many of us carry a "fast-food" mentality to the things of God.

{13} But the word of the LORD was to them, "Precept upon precept, precept upon precept, Line upon line, line upon line, Here a little, there a little," That they might go and fall backward, and be broken And snared and caught. {14} Therefore hear the word of the LORD, you scornful men, Who rule this people who are in Jerusalem, {15} Because you have said, "We have made a covenant with death, And with Sheol we are in agreement. When the overflowing scourge passes through, It will not come to us, For we have made lies our refuge, And under falsehood we have hidden ourselves." (Isa 28:1-15 NKJV)

Part IV

THE SPIRIT OF JEZEBEL

{1} Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ. {2} Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you. {3} But I want you to know that the head of every man is Christ, the head of woman is man, and the head of Christ is God. {4} Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. {5} But every woman who prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head, for that is one and the same as if her head were shaved. {6} For if a woman is not covered, let her also be shorn. But if it is shameful for a woman to be shorn or shaved, let her be covered. {7} For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. {8} For man is not from woman, but woman from man. {9} Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. {10} For this reason the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. {11} Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord. {12} For as woman came from man, even so man also comes through woman; but all things are from God. {13} Judge among yourselves. Is it proper for a woman to pray to God with her head uncovered? {14} Does not even nature itself teach you that if a man has long hair, it is a dishonor to him? {15} But if a woman has long hair, it is a glory to her; for her hair is given to her for a covering. {16} But if anyone seems to be contentious, we have no such custom, nor do the churches of God.
(1 Cor 11:1-16 NKJV)

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write, 'These things says the Son of God, who has eyes like a flame of fire, and His feet like fine brass: {19} 'I know your works, love, service, faith, and your patience; and as for your works, the last are more than the first. {20} 'Nevertheless I have a few things against you, because you allow that woman Jezebel, who calls herself a prophetess, to teach and seduce My servants to commit sexual immorality and eat things sacrificed to idols. {21} 'And I gave her time to repent of her sexual immorality, and she did not repent. {22} 'Indeed I will cast her into a sickbed, and those who commit adultery with her into great tribulation, unless they repent of their deeds. {23} 'I will kill her children with death, and all the churches shall know that I am He who searches the minds and hearts. And I will give to each one of you according to your works. {24} 'Now to you I say, and to the rest in Thyatira, as many as do not have this doctrine, who have not known the depths of Satan, as they say, I will put on you no other burden.'" (Rev 2:18-24 NKJV)

Part V

THE TABLE OF COMMUNION

{17} Now in giving these instructions I do not praise you, since you come together not for the better but for the worse. {18} For first of all, when you come together as a church, I hear that there are divisions among you, and in part I believe it. {19} For there must also be factions among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you. {20} Therefore when you come together in one place, it is not to eat the Lord's Supper. {21} For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. {22} What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you. {23} For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; {24} and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." {25} In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." {26} For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. {27} Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. {28} But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. {29} For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. {30} For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep. {31} For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged. {32} But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world. {33} Therefore, my brethren, when you come together to eat, wait for one another. {34} But if anyone is hungry, let him eat at home, lest you come together for judgment. And the rest I will set in order when I come. (1 Cor 11:17-34 NKJV)

THE BREAD OF FACES

(INTO THE TABERNACLE)

We have seen that the first mention of the word “table” in Scripture occurs in Exodus 25:23 when the Table of Showbread is introduced. A literal translation of Exodus 25:30, the verse that describes the purpose of the table, is, “You shall set the bread of faces on the table before My face always.” The Hebrew word “paniyim” (face) occurs twice in this verse. When one begins to watch for the word paniyim in the Old Testament he will begin to see some very interesting things! But, why is it important to think about the paniyim of God?

To behold the face of God should be the goal of every believer. David declares, “As for me, I will see Your face (paniyim) in righteousness (tsedeq, or zedek); I shall be satisfied when I awake in Your likeness (temuwnah).” (Psalm 17:15) The word temuwnah, or likeness, first occurs in Exodus 20:4, the second of the ten commandments. God commands us to make no idol, likeness, or image to represent Him in our worship of Him. This is also a command to have the proper doctrine of God in our minds. Otherwise, we worship an idol of our own making. Here is another link to our theme, food sacrificed to idols. The Table of the Bread of Faces is a prophetic picture showing overcoming saints before the face of God.

According to Psalm 41:12 God desires that His people become living beings that He sets before His face continually. David wrote, “As for me, You uphold me in my integrity, And set me before Your face forever.” This terminology draws our attention back to the Table of the Bread of Faces where the bread was continually (daily) set before the presence of God by His sanctified priests. This reveals that the saints who will dwell in the direct presence of God are symbolized by the showbread inside the holy place of the Tabernacle. Psalm 41:12, therefore, manifests part of the prophetic meaning of the Table of Showbread.

We know that no man of flesh can see the face of the living God and live, not even Moses. (Ex. 33:20) The face of God is the glory of God. (Ex. 33:18) A man will not see the glory of the face of God until he himself is glorified, and, according to John, we do not now understand the nature of our future change into immortality. (1 John 3:2) But we do know this: “Everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.” (1 John 3:3) Jesus also declares, “Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God.” (Mat. 5:8). The goal of every Christian, therefore, should be to purify himself so that he may behold the face of God. Since every Christian does not purify himself, however, we know that many Christians either do not care to behold God’s face or do not know that to do so requires their personal holiness. Our goal in writing this work is to exhort the saints to desire to behold the face of God, and in so desiring, to purify themselves of all unrighteousness. This is my prayer for each of us.

Back to Hebrews

In the New Testament the Book of Hebrews very clearly sets forth the important and

difficult journey God sets before us. We have seen that Hebrews contains no less than five stern warnings regarding our potential to fail in reaching our goal. Paul very clearly told his disciples that even he had not yet attained the goal of being set before the face of God continually. He said,

*{8} Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ {9} and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; {10} that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, {11} if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. {12} **Not that I have already attained, or am already perfected;** but I press on, that I may lay hold of that for which Christ Jesus has also laid hold of me. {13} **Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended;** but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, {14} I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. {15} Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you. (Phil 3:8-15 NKJV)*

There did come a time, though, late in his life and just before his death, when Paul could say that he had attained his goal. Writing to Timothy he proclaimed,

{6} For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. {7} I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: {8} Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing. (2 Tim 4:6-8 KJV)

Paul reached a point where he knew he was willing to give everything to God, including his life as a costly sacrifice. He was ready to enter the Tabernacle and be placed as bread upon the Table of Showbread. He would henceforth live continually in the presence of God, beholding the very face of God.

Many of us have wrongly assumed that all Christians will someday behold the face of God and forever dwell in His presence. This assumption is wrong and is not founded upon Scripture. Hebrews prophesies, for example, “Pursue ... holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” (Heb. 12:14, NKJV) Pursuit of holiness is not an option for those who intend to receive the full promises of God.

Inside the Tabernacle

Inside the Holy Place of the Tabernacle sat three articles of furniture. The Table of Showbread was placed on the north side. The Golden Candlestick stood on the south side, and to the west, just before the separatrix dividing the Holy from the Most Holy Place loomed the Altar

of Incense. The Table was built of acacia (shittim) wood. It was covered with pure gold. The acacia wood shows that the table represents man, who is made of earth, like the wood. The overlay of pure gold portrays man as fully refined. His dress has been purged by fire and he now sits in the presence of God continually.

The pure gold “Candlestick” was really an oil lamp that the priests regularly filled with olive oil. According to the command of God, the lampstand was to burn before the Lord continually. (Lev. 24:2) The burning here once again speaks of God’s fiery law. The fact that the Candlestick was made wholly of pure gold speaks of the purity of God and therefore shows that the oil lamp represented the Holy Spirit.

The lampstand itself was made of seven lamps. This speaks of the seven-fold spirit of God revealed in Revelation 3:1 and Isaiah 11:2.

And the spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him, the spirit of wisdom and understanding, the spirit of counsel and might, the spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the LORD (Isa 11:2 KJV)

And unto the angel of the church in Sardis write; These things saith he that hath the seven Spirits of God, and the seven stars; I know thy works, that thou hast a name that thou livest, and art dead. (Rev 3:1 KJV)

Here Jesus tells the Church of Sardis that we are nothing but dead men without the work of the seven Spirits of God in us, the Spirit of the Lord, the Spirit of Wisdom, the Spirit of Understanding, the Spirit of Counsel, the Spirit of Might, the Spirit of Knowledge, and the Spirit of the Fear of the Lord. The symbol of the seven-fold Spirit burned continually before the Table of Showbread. It revealed the way to purity. Purity comes only by the grace and power of the Holy Spirit working with our consent in our lives.

The table illuminated by the Candlestick foreshadows the communion table of the New Testament illuminated by the Holy Spirit. A table is a place where families and Christians gather together in fellowship and in communion of the good things of God. At the table we share the bread God gives us. The bread may be literal food as when we sit to dinner with our families. Or the bread may be the life of Christ when we share communion with other believers. This bread is His flesh. This bread is His Word. This bread is unleavened. This bread is true doctrine, undefiled by the opinions of men. This bread transforms our lives so that we, in turn, become the bread of God. This bread is the fulfillment of the bread of the Table of the Bread of Faces. This bread is the bread that God desires before His face continually. It is also the bread that God will use to feed those who have not yet learned to walk in obedience to Him.

Barley Bread

Barley rather than wheat represents the Bread of Faces in the Bible. Barley bread is the bread of God’s overcomers as we clearly see in John 6 and by the fact that barley ripened at the time of Passover. According to Leviticus 23:5-14 the firstfruits of barley was offered as a “wave-sheaf” offering on the day after the Sabbath after Passover. Here we notice that Passover was also called “the Feast of Unleavened Bread.” The day of the wave offering is also called “the Feast of Firstfruits.” Jesus, the unleavened bread that was offered for our sins, presented Himself

before the throne of God at the very time that the Hebrew priest would have presented the wave-sheaf offering to God. This occurred on the day after the Sabbath after Passover, on the Feast of Firstfruits, or, as we say, on Resurrection Day.

We know that Passover is the time of the barley harvest from Exodus 9:31-31. Wheat ripens about seven weeks later, at the time of Pentecost. Notice that the wheat loaves of Pentecost were made with leaven, whereas the barley loaves of Passover were unleavened. (Lev. 23:6, 17)

Jesus explains the prophetic signification of the barley bread in John 6. This is the chapter where Jesus feeds five thousand men with five barley loaves and two small fish. Later in the chapter He mysteriously speaks about “the Bread of God” proclaiming that He Himself is the “Bread of Life.” (John 6:26-66) This chapter is filled with enigmatic quotations that no one seems to understand. For example, what does Jesus mean when He says, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life?” (John 6:27) Could He really mean what He says? Won’t we and our families die of starvation if we refuse to labor for “food which perishes?” Yes, we might. Jesus requires that we be willing to die before He will feed us with real food. It is only when we willingly forsake the food of this world that we become qualified to partake of the food of heaven. Let me share a personal example of this doctrine in practice.

Two years ago I resumed my full time law practice after serving six years in the Missouri State Legislature. My practice had dramatically dwindled in those six years and since I am a sole practitioner I receive no referrals from colleagues. I felt very clearly at that time that I should not advertise for new clients even though I would now be in town full time. God was telling me to trust him for the provision. He impressed upon me that I was in a situation like that of Elijah the Tishbite by the Brook Cherith. (1 Kings 17:3-6) I believed that God would command my clients to come just as He commanded the raven to bring food to Elijah.

My business was fairly steady for the first year. I always had the money I needed for each bill before the due date. Then things slowed down a bit. Now it seemed as if I did not have the money I needed until the very day that it was due. This was a bit nerve racking, but God impressed upon me that I was now in a place like that of Elijah when the water of the brook was drying up. But, I felt that, like Elijah, I could not make a unilateral decision to move or do something else (like advertise) until God spoke the word to do so. (1 Kings 17:7-10)

Several months later the business slowed even more. Now it seemed that I did not have the money I needed until about the last day that a bill could be paid without penalties. I almost took out an advertisement. But, then I heard that still, small voice, “Will you now be like Saul who offered the sacrifice of his own will without waiting for Samuel to come?” I said, “No, Lord. I will not be like Saul. I will wait for you.”

Business did not get any better over the ensuing months. In fact, it seemed that I had even less open cases than ever before. One day I had to borrow \$3,000 to pay my estimated taxes. But, before they were due I prayed to God and said, “Lord, I know that You provide for me. I also know that You want me to be wise in my dealings with men. If you do not provide the income I need by the day that my taxes are due, then I will know that you want me to advertise. If you do provide, then I will not advertise.” On the very day the taxes were due I received a new client. Within four days I made \$2500 by settling a case that was set for immediate trial. When I added that amount to the few little checks I received over those four days I had \$15 more than I needed for my taxes! Even though I had to borrow to pay the taxes on time, I saw the new client on “D-Day” as God’s provision and a continuation of His desire

that I trust Him completely for my needs rather than by my depending on the ways of the world, even when those ways are not sins in themselves.

The result of my trusting God in this way has been the receipt from Him of the “food which endures to everlasting life.” Last year He gave me the revelation and the time to write one book. Now He is revealing the doctrine of “food sacrificed to idols” to me. I would never have come into the knowledge of these mysteries, and certainly would not have had the time to write them down, but for seeking His food rather than “the food which perishes.”

Jesus’ command, “Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life,” therefore, does not mean that we should not work at worldly labor to provide for our families. God surely wants me to continue practicing law (or making tents) to meet my children’s physical needs, just as He probably wants you to continue physical labor of some kind to meet your needs. It is true that your labor may be limited to the teaching and preaching of the Word, but He must give you faith for this if this is all the work you must do for that food that perishes.

God’s command means that we must prioritize spiritual food, even when it appears that to do so will mean bankruptcy, worldly failure, or starvation. It is especially hard to forsake wealth in a booming economy such as that of the United States in the last few years. Barley bread and the bread that sat on the Table of the Bread of Faces, therefore, speak of a life yielded even unto death. This bread speaks of a life spent before the face of God, a life willing to be broken, just as Jesus broke the bread in John 6, so that the life of Jesus can be spread abroad to those with ears to hear.

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

(INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES)

Further Up and Further In

The Altar of Incense was the final piece of furniture in the Holy Place. It was also made of acacia wood and overlaid with pure gold. It too, therefore, paints a picture of the overcomer. The structure itself represents man, made of the earth. The fact that it showed forth as pure gold signifies its final state before God. This altar again depicts the life of sacrifice or dying to self. The incense that was continually burnt upon it conveys the idea of a life given to prayer and intercession for others. When a man reaches this place before God he is ready to enter the very presence of God! Now we come into the Holy of Holies, the place of union between God and man, the place of union between the Bridegroom and His Bride.

Holiness is our Wedding Garment

The separatrix, or veil, separated the Holy from the Most Holy Place inside the Tabernacle. This speaks of the profound separation that exists between God and man because of man's sinful nature. It also conveys the truth of man's need to separate from worldly idols (mammon) in order to come into the presence of God.⁶ Inside the Most Holy Place we finally come to the goal of our faith.

Within the Most Holy Place dwelt the actual presence of God. Three artistic pieces sat in this room. The first was the "ark of the covenant," which Moses described as follows:

"And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height. {11} "And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around. {12} "You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners; two rings shall be on one side, and two rings on the other side. {13} "And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold. {14} "You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them. {15} "The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it. {16} "And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you." (Exo 25:10-16 NKJV)

Note that once again we see an item made of wood and overlaid with pure gold. Notice

⁶See also the author's book *The Separation*

that this time both the outside and the inside of the ark is overlaid with gold. This speaks of man completely purified, or glorified. We also see that this representation of man contains “the Testimony” within him. This means that the law of God has now been perfectly written on his heart. This is the fulfillment of Jeremiah 31:32-34 and Ezekiel 11:18-20 of which Hebrews speaks thus:

{8} Because finding fault with them [those who live according to Old Covenant practices, including the leavened doctrine of most modern Christianity], He says: "Behold, the days are coming, says the LORD, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah; {9} "not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they did not continue in My covenant, and I disregarded them, says the LORD. {10} "For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the LORD: I will put My laws in their mind and write them on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people. {11} "None of them shall teach his neighbor, and none his brother, saying, 'Know the LORD,' for all shall know Me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. {12} "For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their lawless deeds I will remember no more." (Heb 8:8-12 NKJV)

Many of us Christians make the mistake of believing that this passage teaches that God immediately writes his laws upon the minds and hearts of believers in Christ. We think this because we possess a “fast food” mentality. We have come to think that everything, including the promises of God, should come to us “right now.” But, this is not so. The writing of God’s laws upon our minds and hearts begins as a process; it is not an instantaneous event. There will come a time, the time of our resurrection or glorification, at which God will dramatically change these bodies of flesh into spiritual bodies that fully obey Him. See 1 Corinthians 15:33-58. At this time, however, God requires that we come into agreement with Him regarding His laws and His ways. Now we choose to either allow Him to write His laws on our hearts or we choose to deny Him such access. The errors of what is falsely called “legalism” and unsanctified grace both prevent many Christians from reaching out to God for the provision expounded in the eighth chapter of Hebrews.

This explains why five of the ten virgins in Matthew 25 cannot prepare themselves fast enough to be ready for their betrothed when they finally realize He is coming. The five who are ready understand and already apply, at least in part, the teachings of this book. The five foolish virgins refuse to hear this teaching and they also refuse to ask God to give them ears by which they might hear and eyes by which they might see. Consequently, when they become convinced that He is coming, and beloved, HE IS COMING SOON, they do not have time to prepare their hearts.

For example, I became a devoted, sincere Christian 23 years ago. I made many radical decisions to serve and obey Christ throughout those years. But, it has only been since 1997 that I have truly prepared my heart for His coming. Yet, I thought I was ready for His coming long ago. In late 1996 and early 1997 I heard that the Hale-Bopp comet was coming close to the earth and that it was a harbinger, or sign, of his coming. At that time I was focused on politics, the things of this world. Nevertheless, in the early spring of 1997 I journeyed to a secluded area to view this “sign of the times.” I had heard that this particular date was the time of its closest point

to the earth, and I when I looked up to see it, I was amazed. It was awesome. It was huge, far bigger than any star. I could see its long tail, and I could see that it appeared to be leaving the vicinity of the earth, not coming toward it.

Then, I heard that “still, small voice” that we learn to recognize as God speaking to us. He said, “If that had been Me, you would have missed My coming.” “Oh, no,” I thought. “I do not want to miss Your coming.” That event changed my life because I then began to study the Scriptures concerning His coming. The first profound and new doctrine He taught me was that of the salvation of the soul. At that time I did not distinguish between the soul and the spirit of man, although I vaguely knew the difference. I read the New International Version of the Bible exclusively and that version obscures the teaching of soul salvation considerably. Just compare Hebrews 10:39 from the NIV with the NAS, KJV, or NKJV and you will clearly see this. Since 1997 I have endeavored to work out my soul salvation as Paul described.

The problem with the five foolish virgins is that they have not donned their wedding garments at the time Christ returns for them. Currently, they stand as the dumbfounded man in Matthew 22:12 who tried to attend the wedding without the proper apparel. Of him the King (God) said to His servants, “Bind him hand and foot, take him away, and cast him into outer darkness; there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Mat 22:13 NKJV) Make no mistake. The bound man represents an unprepared Christian. He tries to stand in the midst of Christ’s wedding wearing a defiled garment. (Rev. 3:4) Jesus warns him and those like him, which is most of us at the end of the age, as follows:

{15} "I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. {16} "So then, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will vomit you out of My mouth. {17} "Because you say, 'I am rich, have become wealthy, and have need of nothing'; and do not know that you are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked; {18} "I counsel you to buy from Me gold refined in the fire, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, that the shame of your nakedness may not be revealed; and anoint your eyes with eye salve, that you may see. {19} "As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore be zealous and repent." (Rev 3:15-19 NKJV)

Beloved, there is still a very little time, for Jesus reaches out even to the pitiful wretches of Laodicea, saying, “Behold, I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in to him and dine with him, and he with me.” Remember, we cannot hear His voice until we ask for spiritual ears to hear. Also notice the allusion to food again. Jesus wants communion with us. We must learn to eat food from His altar and we must stop eating food sacrificed to idols. (Heb. 13:9-10)

The Bride of Christ, represented by the five wise virgins in Matthew 25, makes herself ready for marriage by clothing herself in righteous works according to Revelation 19:7-8. She earnestly desires to behold her Husband face to face. She knows that in order to do so she must be like Him. (1 John 3:2) Because she holds this hope she purifies herself by forsaking the sins and conformity of the world. (1 John 3:3; Romans 12:1-2)

All of this explains the purpose for God’s command to place the jar of manna inside the Ark of the Testimony. (Ex. 16:33; Heb. 9:4) The manna was God’s food from heaven. It prophesies the true bread from heaven, Jesus Christ, as we see in John 6. The manna, therefore, speaks of true communion, sharing and eating the truth of God with one another and with God.

We further see that Aaron's rod that budded, which was also placed in the Ark, prophesied resurrection, life from death. The dead wooden rod is a picture of the flesh, of man dead in his trespasses and sins. The fact that the rod budded and produced both flowers and almonds demonstrates God's ability to bring fruitful life from death. It specifically prophesies God's ability to make our carnal lives a fruitful blessing to Him.

The Ark of the Covenant, therefore, pictures the glorified Bride of Christ. She willingly allows her Beloved to write His Testimony upon her heart. Her inside and outside has been purified by God's holy Word, His Manna. Remember, this is represented by the washing of water from the bronze laver of the entrails and legs of the burnt offering. The burnt offering foreshadows Jesus sanctifying us (setting us apart wholly unto Him) by the washing of water by the word. (Eph. 5:26) Finally, the Bride's life produces fruit rendered to God. Read this whole passage of Scripture from Ephesians now and see how all of it relates to this teaching you are now receiving:

{22} Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord. {23} For the husband is head of the wife, as also Christ is head of the church; and He is the Savior of the body. {24} Therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything. {25} Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, {26} that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, {27} that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish. {28} So husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. {29} For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church. {30} For we are members of His body, of His flesh and of His bones. {31} "For this reason a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh." {32} This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church. (Eph 5:22-32 NKJV)

What is the mystery if all the church becomes the Bride? Haven't both believers and unbelievers been saying this for two thousand years? *The mystery is that the Bride allows herself to be washed and sanctified by the Word of her Betrothed so that she may produce fruit for Him. She forsakes food sacrificed to idols and desires only the pure food her Beloved gives her each day.* Am I saying that I am perfect or that I expect you to be perfect before we will be chosen as Christ's Bride? No. I am saying that we must *want* to be perfect. We must come to the place where we grieve and are broken because of our sinful nature. We must desire the covering of our Beloved who ensures our safe conduct to that place of rest and anointing He has ordained for us. And this brings us to His "mercy seat."

THE MERCY SEAT

(INTO THE HOLY OF HOLIES)

Jesus Christ loves each one of us with all of His heart. We all know John 3:16 and that one verse may describe this great love more succinctly than any other. “For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life.” Our God is a God of mercy! Just listen to some of these Old Testament Scriptures:

“Therefore know that the LORD your God, He is God, the faithful God who keeps covenant and mercy for a thousand generations with those who love Him and keep His commandments” (Deut. 7:9)

{5} And I said: "I pray, LORD God of heaven, O great and awesome God, You who keep Your covenant and mercy with those who love You and observe Your commandments, {6} "please let Your ear be attentive and Your eyes open, that You may hear the prayer of Your servant which I pray before You now, day and night, for the children of Israel Your servants, and confess the sins of the children of Israel which we have sinned against You. Both my father's house and I have sinned. {7} "We have acted very corruptly against You, and have not kept the commandments, the statutes, nor the ordinances which You commanded Your servant Moses. {8} "Remember, I pray, the word that You commanded Your servant Moses, saying, 'If you are unfaithful, I will scatter you among the nations; {9} 'but if you return to Me, and keep My commandments and do them, though some of you were cast out to the farthest part of the heavens, yet I will gather them from there, and bring them to the place which I have chosen as a dwelling for My name.' {10} "Now these are Your servants and Your people, whom You have redeemed by Your great power, and by Your strong hand. {11} "O Lord, I pray, please let Your ear be attentive to the prayer of Your servant, and to the prayer of Your servants who desire to fear Your name; and let Your servant prosper this day, I pray, and grant him mercy in the sight of this man." For I was the king's cupbearer. (Neh 1:5-11 NKJV)

The people of Israel in Nehemiah’s day, though, had not obeyed the commands of God. Nehemiah admitted this to God. How, then, could he still expect God to be merciful? Because he knew his Maker. He knew Israel’s history, a history that included God’s forgiveness and mercy toward the extremely wicked behavior of their own great king, David. He must have known Solomon’s prayer to God: “Thou hast showed great mercy unto David my father, and hast made me to reign in his stead.” (2 Chron. 1:8) How is it that God could have been so merciful to King David since David committed adultery with a friend’s wife and then had that friend

murdered in an attempt to hide his sin? God knew his heart, as we see in the following verse:

And Solomon said: "You have shown great mercy to Your servant David my father, because he walked before You in truth, in righteousness, and in uprightness of heart with You; You have continued this great kindness for him, and You have given him a son to sit on his throne, as it is this day. (1 Kings 3:6)

David, like us, was a man of flesh. He committed grievous sins, but in his heart he walked before God in truth, righteousness, and uprightness. God's own testimony about David was, "I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My will." (Acts 13:22) Notice that this testimony is in contrast to that of Saul, the first king of Israel, who God "removed." (Acts 13:22) No, it is not perfection in this flesh that God demands of us. He desires a heart that wants to please Him, a heart that beats for His holiness and purity, a heart that breaks over his own wickedness and fleshly sins. It is this man that God covers with His mercy, and this is the meaning of the mercy seat.

{17} "You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width. {18} "And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat. {19} "Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat. {20} "And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat. {21} "You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you. {22} "And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel. (Exo 25:17-22 NKJV)

The mercy seat was made of pure gold and, therefore, speaks of God Himself. It sat directly on top of the Ark of the Testimony, showing that the one who consents to allow God to write His laws on his heart will one day stand in the very presence of God. Here we also see a picture of the two becoming one, for the lid of a box is part of the box, is it not?

TRUE COMMUNION: PROCLAIM THE LORD'S DEATH UNTIL HE COMES

(The Secret to Church Order)

Thus we see that the true communion described by Paul in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 pictures the prophetic application of the Table of Showbread in the Tabernacle. True communion simply means to share God's truth with one another in love. We do this by the anointing of the Holy Spirit. First, He reveals His truth to us and confirms it in the words of His Book and His servants. Second, he moves us to live, to do, and to share this living Word.

We see, then that the truth is represented by the unleavened bread of communion and that the Spirit is represented by the wine. Remember, "the life is in the blood." (Gen. 9:4; Lev. 17:11; John 6:54) Remember also that it is the "Spirit that gives life." (John 6:63; 2 Cor. 3:6) Communion, therefore, simply means to share God's truth by God's Spirit, or, as the New Testament says, "speak the truth in love."

Paul's condemnation of the Corinthians, therefore, was a condemnation of false doctrine, pride, and arrogance among the believers there. This explains why the topic of communion culminates his teaching on food sacrificed to idols. In essence he was saying that their gatherings amounted to little more than sharing food sacrificed to idols. Their meetings had little to do with God's truth and love. Many of today's churches are themselves guilty of this same sin, but do not know it. This explains why "food sacrificed to idols" remains a mystery even now.

We must understand that in the Book of Corinthians Paul was not concerned about eating literal food any more than Jesus was concerned about earthly food when he answered his disciples, "I have food to eat of which you do not know." (John 4:32) Most of us still respond like those men who asked each other, "Has anyone brought Him anything to eat?" Jesus spoke the same truth to them when he said, "Take heed and beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and the Sadducees." "Beware" of leaven? Why should one be afraid of leaven? Because we have brought with us no bread?" they reasoned. (Mat. 16:6-7)

But Jesus, being aware of it, said to them, "O you of little faith, why do you reason among yourselves because you have brought no bread? {9} "Do you not yet understand, or remember the five loaves of the five thousand and how many baskets you took up? {10} "Nor the seven loaves of the four thousand and how many large baskets you took up? {11} "How is it you do not understand that I did not speak to you concerning bread?; but to beware of the leaven of the Pharisees and Sadducees." {12} Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees. (Mat 16:8-12 NKJV)

The food of God in Scriptures is His truth, His Word, His Son, the flesh and blood of Jesus. This food is represented by the bread and the wine that we typically associate with Christian communion. The bread represents the truth and the wine represents the transforming life of the Holy Spirit, for the life is in the blood, and we know that Jesus was given life by the impregnating seed of the Holy Spirit. His blood *was* the blood of the Holy Spirit and it was indeed life! To speak the truth in love, therefore, means to speak with the bread and wine of God, the truth and Spirit of God.

The Communion of Moses and Jethro

{7} So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent. {8} And Moses told his father-in-law all that the LORD had done to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had come upon them on the way, and how the LORD had delivered them. {9} Then Jethro rejoiced for all the good which the LORD had done for Israel, whom He had delivered out of the hand of the Egyptians. {10} And Jethro said, "Blessed be the LORD, who has delivered you out of the hand of the Egyptians and out of the hand of Pharaoh, and who has delivered the people from under the hand of the Egyptians. {11} "Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above them." {12} Then Jethro, Moses' father-in-law, took a burnt offering and other sacrifices to offer to God. And Aaron came with all the elders of Israel to eat bread with Moses' father-in-law before God. (Exo 18:7-12 NKJV)

This short passage from Exodus gives us a brief and poignant view of true communion. In verse 7 we see Moses bestow true honor and love to his father-in-law. Jethro was not the anointed ruler of God's kingdom on earth; Moses was. Yet, Moses bows before him and kisses him in honor of his stature as a priest of God who ruled his house well and in honor of him who was father to his wife. Moses here obeyed the fifth commandment even before it was distributed to man. Then Moses and Jethro asked each other about their well-being. "How are you?" they asked each other, and they genuinely wanted to know the answer. Then Jethro enters Moses' home in order to commune with him. This verse thus demonstrates "love" for one another.

Next God communicates the essence of true communion. It is to tell other believers how God has delivered one from the hand of God's enemies, how God has judged His enemies, and how God has delivered one from the depths of this world's hardships. True communion does not cover the truth and say, "Everything is fine and rosy," when it is not. Those words are the mark of a "happy church," a church that does not face reality, but hides it behind false smiles and howdy dos.

Verse 9 then demonstrates continuing communion by Jethro's response to Moses' words. He "rejoiced" at the goodness of God in delivering Israel from the hand of its enemies. This in turn led, I am sure, to Moses also rejoicing in God's wonderful and miraculous provisions over the last two months. The mutual rejoicing then led to worship when Jethro "blessed" the Lord for his goodness to Israel and for his deliverance of Israel from the bondage of the world. This, in turn, resulted in greater faith coming to Jethro for he declares, *"Now I know that the LORD is greater than all the gods; for in the very thing in which they behaved proudly, He was above*

them." (vs. 11)

{7} So Moses went out to meet his father-in-law, bowed down, and kissed him. And they asked each other about their well-being, and they went into the tent. (Ex. 18:7 NKJV)

Greet one another with a holy kiss. All the churches of Christ send greetings. (Rom 16:16 NIV)

All the brothers here send you greetings. Greet one another with a holy kiss. (1 Cor 16:20 NIV)

Greet one another with a holy kiss. (2 Cor 13:12 NIV)

Greet all the brothers with a holy kiss. (1 Th 5:26 NIV)

For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Cor. 11:26 NKJV)

The picture of true communion given by Moses and Jethro establishes true church order as well. We learned this on the first Sunday we gathered together after the Lord revealed this picture to us. First, we greeted each other "with a holy kiss." Note that this is a "holy kiss;" it has nothing to do with emotion nor carnality. The men kissed the cheeks of the men and the women the cheeks of the women. Note the wording of 1 Thessalonians 5:26. Only "the brethren" are mentioned. Paul does not instruct the men to kiss the sisters, nor the women to kiss the brothers. Such a practice would soon lead into fornication and we must understand this.

The practice of greeting one another with a holy kiss conveys Godly affection for each other. It tangibly demonstrates that we care about one another's needs and welfare. We respect each other and we hope and want the best for each other. A holy kiss brings our focus off of ourselves and onto our brother's best interest. We visibly portray our true concern about our brother's well-being. We inquire about his circumstances. "How are you really doing," we ask. "Tell us about your trials and temptations and how God has delivered you out of them all! What is going on with you? I want to know how I can uphold you before God when I pray for you." These and similar questions are those we ask after we greet one another with a holy kiss.

We must understand that this is not just a "Quick, tell me your week's trials and tribulations so that we can get onto the worship and the sermon." Let's look at Paul's instructions again concerning communion.

Now in this that I declare unto you I praise you not, that ye come together not for the better, but for the worse. {18} For first of all, when ye come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. {19} For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you. {20} When ye come together therefore into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper. (1 Cor 11:17-20 KJV)

The problem with early church communion, just as today, began at the beginning. We

come together with impure and wrong motives at the very start of our meetings. Many of us come with set agendas as to what we want to see happen or what we want to say and we do so with a wrong motive. Our desire, often, is to get accepted or prove we already are accepted by the church's popular cliques or the pastor's inner circle. Oh, how we attempt to show that we are "approved" by the spiritual leaders so that that approval will be "made manifest" among the common brethren like ourselves.

{21} For in eating, each one takes his own supper ahead of others; and one is hungry and another is drunk. {22} What! Do you not have houses to eat and drink in? Or do you despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing? What shall I say to you? Shall I praise you in this? I do not praise you. (1 Cor 11:21-22 NKJV)

We leaders take the front rows of the church, always, of course, to filter out the "heretic" who "presumptuously" thinks the Holy Spirit has given him a word for the body. There we sit in a line for the first two rows, pastors, associate pastors, special guests from overseas, and those other known and unknown members of the inner circle. We relegate the poor and needy (spiritually and naturally) to the outer edge of the congregation. In doing this we "take our own supper ahead of others." We are "filled with the Spirit," aren't we? Yes, even "drunk" in the Spirit, for haven't so many of us proclaimed that this "high" is better than the one we got in the world before we were saved? Yet, the spiritually poor sit in the outer rows, hungry for communion and never receive it.

Paul tells us here that we should have partaken of communion already in our houses with those people that we esteem so highly that we exalt them over the poor and needy among us. In fact, isn't this often what we have done? Haven't these visiting missionaries and prophets already stayed a day or two in our houses before we show them off to the church? Haven't we already eaten and drank of the good things God is doing in each of our lives? Why then do we exalt them and each other leader when we come together and so "despise the church of God and shame those who have nothing" spiritually or naturally that we deem important?

We leaders must exalt ourselves "first," since, has God not appointed us the rulers of this expression of His body? Yes, and we first *shall* be last when the Lord who called and appointed us casts us into His "outer darkness." See Matthew 8:12. We will find that just as we neither chose nor comforted the poor, neither did God choose us to co-rule with Him. Therefore, says Paul, when we priest and laity "come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord's supper."

Yet, we do think we "eat" the Lord's supper in some regular fashion, don't we? We take the bread, we pass the cup, we look and smile at each other as to say, "Yes, I recognize you as fellow Christians, brother Joe and sister Sue." Thus we believe we have discerned the Lord's body and eaten righteously, according to Paul's word, but we have not understood communion.

Communion begins the moment we meet each other. At that moment the brethren greet the brethren with a holy kiss and immediately convey the love of God to one another. Then these saints begin to share the Lord's doings since they last communed with each other. The Holy Spirit will begin to move among His people and the men and women will sing psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs as He leads them. The women will cover their heads in the presence of God. The saints will pray. The prophet and prophetess will prophesy. Then, the breaking of the bread will begin. The man whom God has anointed will break fresh manna and serve it to each of the

saints who have come into the presence of God.

And, I am not talking about the “bread that perishes.” I speak now of fresh, unleavened bread that God gives directly from heaven. This is the bread of true doctrine, the real flesh of Jesus shared with the real blood of Jesus, the Holy Spirit. This is real food and this is real communion. It is this that brings life to the saints and it is the absence of this that brings death, just as Paul warns.

{23} For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; {24} and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, "Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me." {25} In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me." {26} For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord's death till He comes. (1 Cor 11:23-26 NKJV)

Jesus speaks spiritually here. We must understand this. Otherwise, all that John wrote concerning the miracles of turning the water into wine, of multiplying the bread, of Jesus being the “bread of life,” and of Jesus body and blood being real food and real drink have no meaning at all. Jesus said, *"It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life."* (John 6:63) Communion, therefore, expresses the spiritual reality of the living Christ, expressed in true doctrine (flesh=water=bread) by the power of the Holy Spirit (blood=water turned into wine). This explains why both water and blood poured from His side when stabbed by the spear. Only John records this, and it is John’s book that largely reveals the mysteries of communion. (John 19:34) Later in his life John reiterated this mystery, saying,

{6} This is He who came by water and blood; Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth. {7} For there are three that bear witness in heaven: the Father, the Word, and the Holy Spirit; and these three are one. {8} And there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one. (1 John 5:6-8 NKJV)

Do you see it? The “three agree as one.” The “Spirit, the water, and the blood ... agree as one.” The Spirit changes the water of the Word into the blood (new wine) of the covenant of God’s grace. *This* is true communion. True communion spiritually turns the water of God’s Word into new wine by the Holy Spirit. This new wine contains God’s power to effect His purposes in the earth. This new wine is life, the very opposite of death.

So, we see the following progression in the communion between Moses and Jethro: 1) Showing honor and love for one another, 2) Sharing real life experiences of God, 3) Rejoicing together in God’s goodness to us in this real life, 4) Blessing, i.e. worshiping, God for His deliverance from the bondage and hardships of this real world, 5) Resulting in a greater faith in God for deliverance and provision in this world. This culminates in 6) A life lived as a sacrifice to God, which is shown in verse 12 as a burnt offering to God. The final result is 7) The communion meal “to eat bread” that Jethro, Moses, Aaron, and the elders of Israel share before

the face (*paniyim*) of God. Thus we see a demonstration of true communion in seven distinct aspects. Do you think this was leavened or unleavened bread at this meal? Do you think the seven parts of communion are mere coincidence?

Do not revert again to carnal thinking concerning the seventh aspect of communion here. The sharing of bread before the face of God by the elders of Israel and Jethro meant far more than enjoying mere natural food together. Yes, I believe they did eat of the goodness of that bread, and I believe that it was the manna from heaven. Further, I believe that they continued to share the goodness and revelation of God with one another, thus stirring themselves to greater faith. The unleavened manna represents the true doctrine of God, righteousness and justice, mercy and truth, grace and law. This is true communion and we ourselves will only experience it when we go beyond the trivial and come to understand that our God really is a “consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:29)

PART VI

FOOD IN DUE SEASON

(THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST)

*{44} "Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect. {45} **"Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? {46} "Blessed is that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. {47} "Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. {48} "But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' {49} "and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, {50} "the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, {51} "and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.***
(Mat 24:44-51 NKJV)

OUR GOD IS A CONSUMING FIRE

See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, {26} whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying, "Yet once more I shake not only the earth, but also heaven." {27} Now this, "Yet once more," indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain. {28} Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. {29} For our God is a consuming fire. (Heb 12:25-29 NKJV)

Christians tend to trivialize their own God. We often approach God in a casual and lazy way because we have been so duped by a doctrine of "unsanctified grace." Immediately after God gives us a picture of true communion in Exodus 18 he presents us with a prophetic illustration of that time we live in now. Today, at the end of Satan's six thousand year lease of this earth, God has called his two witnesses to the top of His holy mountain. There now exist at least seven thousand men prepared as Moses and Elijah were prepared to go out into all the earth to prepare God's people for Christ's second coming. They will fulfill the mandate that God gave Moses: "And the LORD said to Moses, 'Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the LORD, and many of them perish. Also let the priests who come near the LORD consecrate themselves, lest the LORD break out against them.'" (Exo 19:21-22 NKJV)

We live in a day when all God's people, prepared or unprepared, want Jesus to break through the heavenlies so that they can gaze upon God. They do not realize that to do so means that their souls will utterly perish in the consumption of His blazing fiery law. They do not yet understand that our God is a holy God and that only the holy ones may look into his holy eyes and gaze upon His holy face (*paniym*). It is the calling of the last days apostles and prophets to warn God's people and prepare them for the Day of the Lord. This is the meaning of those last mysterious verses in the Old Testament:

"Remember the Law of Moses, My servant, Which I commanded him in Horeb for all Israel, With the statutes and judgments. {5} Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet Before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the LORD. {6} And he will turn The hearts of the fathers to the children, And the hearts of the children to their fathers, Lest I come and strike the earth with a curse." (Mal 4:4-6 NKJV)

God is now calling His Law into remembrance, for the Church has long forgotten it. The reign of King Josiah of Judah prophesies this time. The Church, just like Israel and Judah, laid God's Law aside and thought that they could go their own way, with their own laws, and still please God because they were His chosen people. Josiah rediscovered the Law of God and all of Judah repented for a time. In the same way God has been revealing His Law to His last day prophets and apostles. They will go forth in the spirit of Elijah just as Malachi prophesied and

will remind and teach God's people of His Laws. The result will and must be that the revelation of God's ways will restore the heart of love to God's people, for if not, God will "come and strike the earth with a curse."

Exodus 19, I believe, prophetically prepares us to meet our Maker at His second coming. Several verses herein have always mystified me. For example, after Moses "went up to God" at the top of the mountain in the Wilderness of Sinai, why did God almost immediately warn him to "Go down and warn the people, lest they break through to gaze at the Lord, and many of them perish?" (Ex. 19:3, 21) Even Moses was confused by God's command, for he answered, "The people cannot come up to Mount Sinai; for You warned us, saying, 'Set bounds around the mountain and consecrate it.'" (Ex. 19:23) Then, God, almost angrily, replies, "Away! Get down and then come up, you and Aaron with you. But do not let the priests and the people break through to come up to the LORD, lest He break out against them." (Ex. 19:24) What is going on here? These verses are prophetic, and they were written for us who live at the end of the age, just prior to the second coming of Christ. Let us consider the chapter in detail.

Exodus 19 Pictures Christ's Second Coming

{3} And Moses went up to God, and the LORD called to him from the mountain, saying, "Thus you shall say to the house of Jacob, and tell the children of Israel: {4} 'You have seen what I did to the Egyptians, and how I bore you on eagles' wings and brought you to Myself. {5} 'Now therefore, if you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be a special treasure to Me above all people; for all the earth is Mine. {6} 'And you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words which you shall speak to the children of Israel." (Exo 19:3-6 NKJV)

These verses, and especially verses 5 and 6, bring to mind the peculiar calling of both Israel and the Church of the New Covenant. Peter writes, for example,

{4} Coming to Him as to a living stone, rejected indeed by men, but chosen by God and precious, {5} you also, as living stones, are being built up a spiritual house, a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. {6} Therefore it is also contained in the Scripture, "Behold, I lay in Zion A chief cornerstone, elect, precious, And he who believes on Him will by no means be put to shame." {7} Therefore, to you who believe, He is precious; but to those who are disobedient, "The stone which the builders rejected Has become the chief cornerstone," {8} and "A stone of stumbling And a rock of offense." They stumble, being disobedient to the word, to which they also were appointed. {9} But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light; {10} who once were not a people but are now the people of God, who had not obtained mercy but now have obtained mercy. (1 Pet 2:4-10 NKJV)

We know that Israel itself never fulfilled this mandate, so we see in Peter that the prophetic application of the words of Exodus 5-6 occur in Christians. Even now, two thousand

years after the first coming of Christ, we do not see these words fulfilled. No Christian group ever did become the “royal priesthood” or “holy nation” that God desires His people to become. We believe that this occurs at the second coming when Christ comes to personally rule this world.

{7} So Moses came and called for the elders of the people, and laid before them all these words which the LORD commanded him. {8} Then all the people answered together and said, "All that the LORD has spoken we will do." So Moses brought back the words of the people to the LORD. (Exo 19:7-8 NKJV)

Exodus 19 occurs at the time of Pentecost on the Jewish calendar. This was the first “Pentecost” after God delivered Israel from Egypt. From Acts 2:1 we know that the Christian church began upon the same Jewish festival. This first Pentecost of the Christian age was the day upon which God gave the earnest of the Holy Spirit, the evidence of the New Covenant by faith in the person and work of Jesus Christ. The first Pentecost, therefore, prophetically foretells the historical deliverance of men from the bondage of the world by the crucifixion, death, and resurrection of Jesus. The world itself is the antitype of Egypt, the country from which Israel was delivered.

One can also see the Great Commission of Matthew 28:18-20 in these words from Exodus 19:7-8. Moses “laid before them all these words which the Lord commanded him,” for example, corresponds to “teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” And, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do,” relates to “make disciples of all nations,” for a “disciple,” according to Vine’s, is “one who follows one’s [another’s] teaching.” A disciple of Christ, therefore, says, “All that the Lord has spoken we will do,” which is the very thing the Israelites told Moses.

{9} And the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I come to you in the thick cloud, that the people may hear when I speak with you, and believe you forever." So Moses told the words of the people to the LORD. {10} Then the LORD said to Moses, "Go to the people and consecrate them today and tomorrow, and let them wash their clothes. {11} "And let them be ready for the third day. For on the third day the LORD will come down upon Mount Sinai in the sight of all the people. {12} "You shall set bounds for the people all around, saying, 'Take heed to yourselves that you do not go up to the mountain or touch its base. Whoever touches the mountain shall surely be put to death. {13} 'Not a hand shall touch him, but he shall surely be stoned or shot with an arrow; whether man or beast, he shall not live.' When the trumpet sounds long, they shall come near the mountain." {14} So Moses went down from the mountain to the people and sanctified the people, and they washed their clothes. {15} And he said to the people, "Be ready for the third day; do not come near your wives." (Exo 19:9-15 NKJV)

Here we face the “dark cloud,” another of Scripture’s mysterious sayings. Let us try to understand it now. Many of us should remember the Book of Joel here, where the prophet says,

{1} Blow the trumpet in Zion, And sound an alarm in My holy mountain! Let all the inhabitants of the land tremble; For the day of the LORD is coming, For it is

at hand: {2} A day of darkness and gloominess, A day of clouds and thick darkness, Like the morning clouds spread over the mountains. A people come, great and strong, The like of whom has never been; Nor will there ever be any such after them, Even for many successive generations. (Joel 2:1-2 NKJV)

These verses mark the very beginning of that famous passage from Joel quoted by Peter in Acts 2:17-21,

{17} 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God, That I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh; Your sons and your daughters shall prophesy, Your young men shall see visions, Your old men shall dream dreams. {18} And on My menservants and on My maidservants I will pour out My Spirit in those days; And they shall prophesy. {19} I will show wonders in heaven above And signs in the earth beneath: Blood and fire and vapor of smoke. {20} The sun shall be turned into darkness, And the moon into blood, Before the coming of the great and awesome day of the LORD. {21} And it shall come to pass That whoever calls on the name of the LORD Shall be saved.' (Acts 2:17-21, NKJV, quoting Joel 2:28-32)

Today we know that Joel 2:28-32 has not fully come to pass. “The great and awesome day of the Lord” has not yet occurred, but it is coming, and it is coming soon. This explains the force of the words from Joel 2:1-2. The Day of the Lord will indeed be great, awesome, dark, gloomy, cloudy, and terrible. The inhabitants of the earth will tremble as Jesus Christ begins to descend the Mountain of God. Just before this descent He will send forth a people “great and strong, the like of whom has never been....” (Joel 1:2) These people are those represented by such Biblical names as “the Sons of God,” “Gideon’s 300,” “the Overcomers,” and “the two witnesses,” those who come in the power and spirit of Moses and Elijah.