

*The
Spiritual
Life*

Jesse C. Jones

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Preface

This book attempts to describe the significant spiritual events in the life of man from beginning to end, from the “womb to the tomb” so to speak. Emphasis is placed primarily on patterns God has established, and how development of the spiritual life in man seems to follow these patterns. I believe God has given us these patterns, or clues, regarding our spiritual development so that we can have confidence as He guides us along our path through life. In this regard I believe the dictionary definition of the word “analogy” helps us to understand what God was hoping to achieve: “. . . an explaining of something by comparing it point by point with something else”.

In accordance with the above stated intent I have started with man’s development in the womb, and the spiritual events that occur during the period of gestation. The miraculous steps that occur during this period are compared to the timing of the various feast day celebrations of the Jewish nation. From there we proceed to man’s salvation which is compared to the ancient Jewish marriage rite. The next two chapters deal with how man comes to “be in Christ”, and how the Holy Spirit is in man. The last two chapters deal with where the believer is going at physical death, and the “clothing” he will wear at that glorious time.

In writing this book I have used many different biblical word dictionaries, and lexicons. My primary reference has been the Dickson New Analytical Bible (KJV), and all scripture references are from this source, unless otherwise noted. I have also used the “Interlinear Greek - English New Testament” by Jay P. Green, Sr., and the “Interlinear NIV Hebrew - English Old Testament” by John R. Kohlenberger III. I have used Hodge’s Systematic Theology, and Keil and Delitzsch Commentary on the OT, and lest I forget, I have used Strong’s

Exhaustive Concordance of the Bible as necessary. In Chapters 1 and 2 on development in the womb, and receiving salvation I have referred extensively to the writings of Zola Levitt, who established Zola Levitt Ministries, a teaching and evangelistic association. He also appeared on the television program Zola Levitt Presents for many years prior to his death.

Chapter 1

The Beginning (Gestation)

Gestation: The act or period of carrying young in the uterus from conception to birth; pregnancy.

While studying Zola Levitt's booklet entitled: "The Seven Feasts of Israel" during a series of Sunday night Bible studies, I volunteered to teach the chapter he includes on the remarkable parallel between the human gestation period, and the seven Jewish Feasts ordained by God on Mt. Sinai. I was anxious to undertake this effort because of a question encountered in an earlier study on the body, soul and spirit; namely, when in the gestation period does God give us our human spirit and soul? In the discussion below I have paraphrased Mr. Levitt's information and have added my conclusions regarding this question. I have also included material obtained from Dr. Jeffrey Jones, M. D., MSU College of Human Medicine, Grand Rapids Michigan.

I. Ovulation - The physiological process by which an egg escapes from a sac within the female ovary on the 14th day of the menstruation cycle.

On the 14th day of a female's menstruation cycle an egg escapes from a sac in her ovary fully prepared to share in the formation of a new human life. This "escape" occurs as a re-

sult of the “rupture” of one of the Graafian follicles (sacs) within the female ovary. Similarly, in the evening of the 14th day of the first month of the sacred year during the first Passover, the Jews celebrated their impending “escape” from the Egyptian Pharaoh through a process that I believe could be properly described as a “rupture” of the fabric of Egyptian society; namely, the death of each family’s firstborn.

The Jewish people of that day protected their first-born child by painting blood from a sacrificial lamb on the doorposts and lintel of their houses thus, causing the death angel to “pass-over”. This was the first Passover. Today, at the Passover celebration, Jewish people place an egg on the dinner table to represent the new life of freedom they received at that time. The egg is a symbol of new life, and the 14th day of the gestation period provides the potential for new life, as did God’s Passover.

The meaning of Passover is thus related to the potential for new life: on this day the Jews were protected from the death angel by marking their abode with the shed blood of an innocent lamb (Exodus 12:5). Egyptian families lost their firstborn, which led Pharaoh to release the Jews from bondage, thus freeing them to make a new life in the promised land. In both the OT and the NT the blood of the lamb (or Lamb) delivers those protected from slavery: the Jew from Egypt, and the Christian from sin. It is no coincidence that Jesus was crucified during the celebration of Passover. At the last supper He said, *“This is my blood of the New Testament shed for many for remission of sin”* (Matthew 26:28). John the Baptist identified Jesus as our blood sacrifice: *“Behold the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world”* (John 1:29). Christians now celebrate this event by participating in the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper. Jews marked their abodes with the blood of a lamb; Christians “mark” their abodes (bodies) with the blood of Christ (the sacramental wine). Satan must passover the

Christian just as the angel of death passed over the Jews in Egypt, for when he sees the blood over the doorposts and lintel of the heart he knows he no longer has any authority over that person.

There are four analogous points here:

1. Ovulation and Passover occur on the same day of the month (or cycle).
2. The Jews “escaped” from slavery on this day, and the female egg “escapes” from an ovarian sac on this day.
3. The “rupture” of the Egyptian family resulted in the release of the Jewish nation. The “rupture” of the ovarian sac resulted in release of the female egg.
4. Jews now place an egg on the Passover table representing “new life”. The female egg represents the potential for “new life”.

II. Fertilization - To make the female reproductive cell fruitful by introducing the male germ cell, impregnate or pollinate.

The egg released from the ovary must be fertilized within 24 hours or it will die, and no life will result. When sperm is deposited in the vagina, it travels through the cervix and into the Fallopian tubes. Fertilization usually takes place in the Fallopian tube. A single sperm penetrates the mother's egg cell, and the resulting cell is called a zygote. The term "conception" refers variably to either fertilization or formation of the conceptus (after uterine implantation). The zygote contains all of the genetic information (DNA) necessary to form a child. Half of the genetic information comes from the mother's egg, and half from the father's sperm.

Leviticus 23:6 says that the Jewish feast of Unleavened Bread is to be one day (24-hours) after the Passover, which was on the 14th day, so we see that the time available for fertilization of the egg and the time between the Jewish Feasts of Passover and Unleavened Bread are identical. Deuteronomy 16:3 says, *“Thou shalt eat no leavened bread with it; seven days shalt thou eat unleavened bread therewith, even the bread of affliction; for thou camest forth out of the land of Egypt in haste: . . .”* This seems to indicate that the Jews came out of Egypt in great haste, and the unleavened bread they brought with them was simple to prepare and took less time than leavened bread, since it did not require time to rise. It was called the bread of affliction, possibly because it was less desirable to eat. In the later celebration of this feast the bread reminded the Jews of the stressful manner in which the exodus had occurred, and the seven days of the feast was to be a time of rest and solemn contemplation. In the NT Jesus is our unleavened bread of affliction. He died and was placed in the ground (tomb) in order for us to rise with Him in resurrection. I see a parallel here in the fertilization of the egg pursuant to the new physical life, and resurrection in Christ to new spiritual life.

Unleavened bread is bread without yeast. Yeast brings about a fermentation process that causes bread to rise. Notice that the word fermentation is a form of the word “ferment”, which means a state of excitement or agitation. The word unleavened implies just the opposite. It conveys an impression of peacefulness, restfulness, and a lack of agitation. To enhance the potential for life to develop it seems to be important for the impregnated female be calm, peaceful, and not under stress at this time: she should be in an “unleavened” state of mind. This analogy may also imply that the hopeful mother could enhance her chances of becoming pregnant by not eating anything containing yeast for the seven days required for the egg to be fertilized and travel to its destination in the uterus.

There are three analogous points worth noting here:

1. The egg must be fertilized within 24-hours; the Feast of Unleavened Bread occurs 24 hours after Passover.

2. Fertilization of the egg results in it becoming a viable source of “new (physical) life”.

In the death and resurrection of Jesus, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread, He became our unleavened bread and our source of “new (spiritual) life”.

3. The seven-day Feast of Unleavened Bread was to be a time of rest and solemn contemplation; during the time after fertilization it is important for the hopeful mother to be in an “unleavened” state of mind.

III. Implantation - Attachment of the fertilized egg to the wall of the uterus.

About six days after fertilization the developing embryo comes in contact with the wall of the uterus and attaches to it. As the cells of the embryo divide, the outer cell layer grows into the lining of the uterus to obtain oxygen and nutrients from the mother’s blood. The particular date of the Feast of Firstfruits, celebrating the harvest, is indefinite, since it occurs on the day after the Jewish sabbath, during the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:10-11). It occurs on a Sunday, two to six days after the start of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. We recognize this day as Easter, and for Christians this celebration marks Christ’s resurrection, and the new life available to us through Him.

Remarkably, the timing of implantation in the process of gestation, is also indefinite. The fertilized egg travels down the Fallopian tube to the uterus at its own pace, taking anywhere from two to six days to implant: exactly the same number of days during which the

Feast of Firstfruits can occur. Before embedding into the uterus it first must "hatch" from its shell. It then adheres to the uterine lining and becomes embedded in the uterine epithelial cell layer about day six. The inner cell mass is known as the embryo, whereas the outer cell layers form embryonic membranes. The embryo adheres tightly to the endometrium, where it receives nourishment via the mother's bloodstream. The cells of the embryo now multiply and begin to take on specific functions in accordance with directions from the DNA. This process is called differentiation, and it produces the varied cell types that make up a human being (such as blood cells, kidney cells, and nerve cells).

Implantation marks the point at which the fertilized egg arrives safely in the uterus and begins its formation into what will become a fetus, and then a human being. That this event coincides with Firstfruits seems appropriate, since this is a celebration of God's blessing of the spring (im)planting. It is also strongly related to Jesus' death and resurrection, and the new life now available to those who will become believers. Upon implantation in the uterus the formation of a previously nonexistent human being is initiated: a new (physical) life is starting to be developed. Like the good soil that God provided for the planting of the seed that was later reaped and used to celebrate the Feast of Firstfruits, the lining of the uterus was properly prepared to nourish the new life that would be formed therein. The Bible states that life is in the blood, and this is perfectly demonstrated in the "soil" in which the fertilized egg is implanted.

It was no accident that God chose this day, the exact day on which the Feast of Firstfruits occurs, to raise Jesus Christ from the dead to become His firstfruits of resurrection. Jesus was the first of many that will follow Him in resurrection and rapture, to be with Him forever.

There are four analogous points here:

1. The timing of the Feast of Firstfruits after the start of Unleavened Bread, and the time for the fertilized egg to implant in the uterus after fertilization are both indefinite, but both occur in two to six days.
2. Implantation occurs when the fertilized egg has arrived safely, and attached itself to the wall of the uterus, where it will receive nourishment. Firstfruits occurs after the Jews have reached the promised land and are “attached” to the fertile soil that will provide food for their nourishment, after they have (im)planted it.
3. The “implanting” of the Lord Jesus in the tomb, and the “implanting” of the egg in the uterus are both necessary for providing new life.
4. The blood of Jesus is essential for the believer’s new spiritual life, and the blood of the mother is essential for the new physical life (the embryo) to survive.

IV. A New being - On the 50th day after implantation the embryo (undeveloped stage) becomes recognizable as a human fetus, made in God’s image.

Several scriptures in the Bible refer to the fact that God made man’s spirit: Ecclesiastes 12:7 and Zechariah 12:1 indicate that God “*gave*”, and “*formed*” man’s spirit. Our spirit identifies who we really are, for God is a spirit (John 4:24), and we are made in the image of God. Psalm 139:13 NIV says, “*For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother’s womb.*” I believe the phrase “*my inmost being*” refers to our human spirit, for we know that our *being* is really our spirit that resides in the abode (body) that God forms in the womb, and returns to God at the death of the body (Job 34:14; Ecclesiastes 3:21; 12:7; Acts 7:59). The KJV of this scripture says, “*... thou hast covered me in my mother’s womb*”. This seems to indicate that

God covers the *being* (human spirit) of a person with a body while in the womb. I believe He places the human spirit in the fetus on the 50th day after the fertilized egg arrives in the uterus and begins its growth. It is noteworthy that medical books number the 50 days from fertilization (corresponding to the feast of Unleavened Bread), which begins on the 15th day of the month, rather than on implantation (corresponding to the feast of Firstfruits), which occurs on the first Sunday in the week-long celebration of Unleavened Bread.

Leviticus 23:15-17 says, *“And ye shall count unto you from the morrow after the sabbath, from the day ye brought the sheaf of the wave offering; seven sabbaths shall be complete: Even unto the morrow after the seventh sabbath shall ye number fifty days; and ye shall offer a new meat offering unto the Lord.”* We all know that the Day of Pentecost established by this Word was the day on which God baptized the disciples in the Holy Spirit (poured out the Holy Spirit). If our analogy is valid, following the same pattern, He gives us our human spirit on the 50th day, after the fertilized egg comes to rest in the uterus. God then *covers* the spirit with an abode, a mortal body during the ensuing 220 days of gestation. While on earth our spirit dwells in this abode, this earthen vessel. If we are *in Christ* our spirit (and soul) returns to God in heaven upon physical death to await the rapture and resurrection (Job 34:14). When Christ comes for His elect He will clothe (cover) our spirit/soul with the immortal body He has prepared for us. In some manner that is beyond our comprehension, this immortal body represents the righteous works we allow Christ to perform through our mortal body while on earth.

That the disciples were “new creatures” after receiving the Holy Spirit is without question. They were fearful and hiding just a few days prior to this, but after Pentecost, they were bold and unafraid. Peter, the chief spokesman on the day of Pentecost, had denied

knowing Jesus during His trials and crucifixion, but now was castigating the Jews for crucifying and slaying Him. After Pentecost Jesus' disciples "turned the world upside down"; a complete 180-degrees from before when they were hiding and fearful. They could hardly have reacted otherwise, for they undoubtedly recognized by now that Jesus was crucified on Passover, buried during Unleavened Bread, rose on Firstfruits, and sent the Holy Spirit (as promised) on Pentecost.

In the same way the appearance of this "new person" in the form of a fetus represents a paradigm change, particularly in the lives of the father and mother, but also for God. If this person belongs to Him his name is already written down in the Book of Life, and God is committed to nurturing, disciplining, and loving him unto physical death. This should also be the commitment of the parents, not an easy task in our contemporary world.

This are three analogous points here:

1. Pentecost is 50 days after Firstfruits; the embryo becomes a fetus 50 days after implantation.
2. The Holy Spirit was poured out on Pentecost 50 days after Firstfruits; the human spirit was formed and given when the embryo changed to a fetus 50 days after implantation.
3. The disciples became "new creatures" at Pentecost; the embryo becomes a "new creature" (fetus) on the 50th day after implantation.

V. Ears to Hear - By the first day of the seventh month of pregnancy hearing is fully developed.

Human ears perform a dual function: a) the ears enable the brain to perceive and interpret sound vibrations. They also make it possible to locate the source of the sound and dis-

tinguish one sound from another, and b) the ears serve as organs of balance. Delicate structures located in the inner ear inform the brain about any change in the position of the head and body, and help to maintain equilibrium.

From this we see that the brain and the function of the ears in a human being are very integrated, and therefore, must be developed together. There is also a spiritual aspect of hearing, for many scriptures attest to this fact. The Book of Revelation makes the statement, "*He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches*" several times, apparently emphasizing the importance of our spiritual hearing. Romans 10:14 tells us that we cannot believe without first hearing, and Romans 10:17 says that "*faith cometh by hearing*".

The Feast of Trumpets (Leviticus 23:24-25; Numbers 29:1) calls the congregation into remembrance before Jehovah, that He might bless them by His favor and grace. It was referred to as the memorial of blowing of trumpets, or the day of the trumpet-blast. It was an introduction to the entire seventh month during which the complete atonement for the sins of the congregation, and the wiping away of all the uncleannesses that would separate them from God occurred. In the biblical record of the Feast of Trumpets Israel was commanded to memorialize the day by blowing trumpets, and to keep the day as a Sabbath of rest. The timing of this ancient feast coincided with the beginning of Israel's civil new year. After 70 AD the two observances became inseparably connected. In time the Feast of Trumpets was largely overshadowed by the Jewish new year, becoming known as *Rosh Hashanah* (head of the year).

There are three analogous points here:

1. Both of these events occur on the 1st day of the seventh month.

2. In the book of Revelation the Lord speaks to us in prophecy by first announcing it with the sound of the trumpet. The fetus had to have a fully developed balance system for his soon-to-happen travel exiting the womb, as well as the ability to respond to the new world he was about to enter.

3. We must have spiritual ears to hear what the Spirit is saying to the churches during the last days, for God will announce the coming of His Son, and our resurrection or rapture at the last (seventh) trumpet. When we hear the last trumpet blast we are to drop everything and prepare to meet the Lord (Revelation 10:7, 11:15).

VI. The Blood Changes - The hemoglobin of the blood changes from that of the fetus to that of a self-respiring human being, with its own circulating system.

To quote from Zola Levitt's booklet "The Seven Feasts of Israel": "It is necessary for the fetal blood, which carries the mother's oxygen through the baby's system, to change in such a way that the baby can carry the oxygen that it, itself, would obtain upon birth. Technically, the hemoglobin of the blood would have to change from that of the fetus to that of a self-respiring and circulating human being. The fetus does not breathe, but rather depends on the oxygen obtained through the mother's blood circulation. Naturally, this system must be changed before birth, and that change occurs in the second week of the seventh month, and to be precise, on the tenth day." The change that occurs must prepare the fetus to be able to breathe on its own, which requires the blood to flow through the lungs, where it receives oxygen for distribution to the many cells within the body.

Leviticus 23:27-28 says, *"Also on the tenth day of the seventh month there shall be a day of atonement: it shall be an holy convocation unto you; and ye shall afflict your souls, and offer an offering made*

by fire unto the Lord. And ye shall do no work in that same day: for it is a day of atonement, to make an atonement for you before the Lord your God". Leviticus 17:11 says that *"For the life of the flesh is in the blood, and I have given it to you upon the altar to make atonement for your souls; for it is the blood that makes atonement for the soul"*. Israelites had to present a blood sacrifice to the Lord through the high priest on the Day of Atonement. If the blood was acceptable, then there would be forgiveness and life. Likewise, with the fetus, the blood must change to allow for life outside the womb. The Day of Atonement and the blood change in the fetus both occur on the tenth day of the seventh month.

There are three analogous points here:

1. Both of these events, the Day of Atonement and fetal blood change, occur on the tenth day of the seventh month.
2. On the Day of Atonement the Israelites brought a blood sacrifice to the priest, who represented God. If the sacrifice was "acceptable" their sins were forgiven. On the tenth day of the seventh month the fetal blood must undergo a change to make it "acceptable" for the newborn child to breathe on his own.
3. Leviticus 17:11 emphasizes the fact that this sacrifice results in the soul's acceptability to God. When God sees that the blood change in the fetus has been made, He is ready to "breathe" into the fetus so that it becomes a living soul.

VII. A Living Soul - By the 15th day of the seventh month a normal baby has two healthy lungs. If it is born at that point it can breathe on its own.

Leviticus 23:34 says: *Speak unto the children of Israel, saying, The fifteenth day of the seventh month shall be a feast of tabernacles for seven days unto the Lord."* The Feast of Tabernacles is

known by at least two names in scripture. Most often it is referred to as “Tabernacles”. The English word “tabernacle” is from the Latin *tabernaculum*, meaning “booth” or “hut”. It acquired this name from the biblical requirement for all Israelites to dwell in temporary shelters during the celebration. It was an annual reminder of God’s provision during the 40-year wilderness sojourn, when Israel had lived in similar shelters. This final feast of the year is also known in scripture as the “Feast of Ingathering” (Exodus 23:16, 34:22), for it was observed after all crops had been harvested and gathered.

After the 15th day of the seventh month the baby can be delivered safely because the lungs and other internal organs are fully developed, and it can breathe on its own. In other words the baby’s body (tabernacle) has been completed and he/she can live in it, just as the Israelites lived in their tents (tabernacles) during the 40-year sojourn in the wilderness. Prior to this time the fetus had tabernacled in the mother’s womb, a temporary shelter. Everything needed has now been gathered into the body, and it can live on its own outside the body of the mother.

I believe this is the time that God (figuratively) breathes into the fetus, and it becomes a living soul, or being, with a unique personality, equipped with all the necessary operating parts, and ready for existence outside the womb. We receive our soul from God, and I believe He gives it to us in the womb, just as He does the spirit. The Hebrew word *nephesh* and the Greek word *psuche* are interpreted by the English word soul. Both of these words have to do with the breath of life, which only God can give, or take away. I believe God gives us our soul on the 15th day of the seventh month, just as indicated above. Vincent’s Word Studies in the New Testament says that “The soul is the principle of individuality, the seat of personal impressions. It has a side in contact with both the material and the spiritual ele-

ment of humanity, and is thus the mediating organ between body and spirit.” If we accept this definition, the soul is the mediating organ between the spirit and the body, so it seems unlikely that it would have been given until the formation of the body was completed. It receives impressions from the human spirit which originate with the Holy Spirit, and from within (from the body - actually the biblical heart), and arbitrates between them by exercising the will. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of the Old and New Testament says that, “The spirit may be recognized as the life principle bestowed on man by God, the soul as the resulting life constituted in the individual, the body being the material organism animated by soul and spirit.”

The Bible seems to say that the soul can be separated from the body, but it cannot be separated from the spirit. Vincent’s Word Studies says that Hebrews 4:12 is not to be understood as dividing soul from spirit, or joints from marrow. He maintains that the joints and marrow in this scripture should be thought of as representing the joints and marrow of the soul and spirit. In other words, this scripture refers to the Word of God penetrating to the very depths of the soul and spirit, to sift and analyze evidence residing within the heart. This seems to accord with Galatians 5:17 in that the spirit is at war with the flesh (heart), and the word of God penetrates to the depths of the soul and spirit to assist in resolving the resulting skirmishes. Job 34:14-15 NIV clearly indicates that both the spirit and soul return to God at man’s physical death: *“If it were his intention and he withdrew his spirit and breath, all mankind would perish together and man would return to the dust”*.

This is a five-point analog:

1. The Feast of Tabernacles and completion of the fetus' development to become a baby boy or girl occur on the 15th day of seventh month of the sacred Jewish calendar, and the gestation period.
2. The Israelites lived in "tabernacles" during the sojourn, and the newborn's *being* (spirit/soul) "tabernacles" within his/her body.
3. God breathes into the fetus and it becomes a living soul (person/identity) at this time. God also formed the nation of Israel (giving it identity), during the 40-year sojourn in the wilderness.
4. Joshua was trained during this time of "tabernacles" to be the new "soul" of Israel: he was to be the intermediary between Israel (the body), and God (the Spirit), just as the soul of the newborn is the intermediary between his/her body and spirit.
5. Joshua also seems to represent the will of the nation of Israel, just as the newborn's soul represents his/her will.

One other additional point of interest should be noted in our discussion of the timing of gestation and the celebration of the Jewish Feasts. The period of time from the Feast of Tabernacles to the next celebration (the Feast of Dedication on December 25th) is exactly 75 days, or two-and-one-half months. Although the Feast of Dedication was not one of the feasts ordained by God on Mt. Sinai, this is interesting because the Feast of Tabernacles occurs on the 15th day of the seventh month, which is six-and-one-half months into the pregnancy. Thus, we note that the Feast of Dedication occurs at a time very near to a gestation period of nine months, on the 25th of December.

Closure

We see a remarkable relationship between the Jewish feasts and the important events in the gestation period of a human being. Beyond this, I have argued that God gives us our human spirit and our soul at specific times during the nine-month gestation period, and that these events occur at the identical sacred calendar time of Jewish feasts that seem to have great correspondence. I believe God gives us these mysteries to increase our faith, which is necessary for belief, the key to “being” Christ in our evil world.

None of the above discussion can be construed as an argument for freedom to terminate (abort) a pregnancy at any time during the gestation period. God recognizes the fetus as a *being* when He forms and implants the spirit, which, as suggested above, occurs on the 50th day after the fertilized egg arrives in the uterus and begins its growth. The entire act of reproduction (from conception to delivery) has been ordained by God, and any interference by man to negate this creative act is a very serious offense indeed. To terminate a pregnancy after the spirit has been implanted is to cause the spirit to return to God who gave it, a very fearsome thought, identical to the act of murder.

Chapter 2

The Bride of Christ

The relationship between Jewish marriage customs in OT times, and God the Father's choosing and arranging the marriage of the bride of Christ, is nothing short of amazing. Zola Levitt, a messianic Jewish writer and teacher, has written several excellent study books drawing attention to the relationship between the life of Christ and various Jewish feasts and ceremonies. His book entitled: *A Christian Love Story*, describes the Jewish marriage rite in considerable detail. Material on this subject is also available from sources on the internet, and I would advise anyone with an interest in understanding the majesty of God, and His plan and control of the believer's life, to consult these sources.

In this chapter I hope to show how God's plan for believers, follows the ancient Jewish marriage rite in implementation. My intent is to draw attention to the remarkable parallelism between God's plan for the church (the bride of Christ), and this ancient Jewish ceremony, the first step of which suggests God's choosing of the bride (the elect) before the foundation of the world. I ask the reader to put aside any preconceived notions he/she might have about the subject of predestination, and judge this writing strictly on the basis of the analogy presented. Judge the analogy to see if it rings true, then deal with any teaching presented by searching God's Word. One thing I believe is important in this regard: if

we accept the statement in the Bible that God *chooses us, we do not choose Him*, it should not affect our seeking opportunities to witness for Christ in any way whatever. God wisely does not give us any information about who has, or who has not been chosen. Therefore, we must assume that every one we contact has been chosen, and it may well be God's plan to use us in the drawing process associated with that person's life.

The argument for the analogous relationship between the ancient Jewish marriage rite and God's plan for the bride of Christ is presented in six steps, outlined below.

I. Betrothal

Betrothal was the first step in the ancient Jewish custom of marriage. The betrothal was somewhat like an engagement, except that it was considered binding. The groom's father selected the future bride, and arranged the betrothal. The groom then made a covenant, or contract, agreeing to provide for the bride, and a price (or earnest) was paid as evidence that the groom was serious. Once this contract was signed and witnessed by two people, the arrangement was considered binding. At that time the contract was sealed by sharing a cup of wine, and the groom made a speech of promise, assuring the bride that he would come for her soon.

The betrothed couple were considered married, although they had no physical or sexual contact, nor did they live together until their wedding day. The only way that a betrothal could be broken was to get an orthodox divorce, called a "get". The word betroth or betrothed is used in the KJV of the OT 13 times. Possibly the most informative scripture regarding betrothal is that in Hosea 2:18-20: *"And in that day will I make a covenant for them with the beasts of the field and with the fowls of heaven, and with the creeping things of the ground: and I will break the bow and the sword and the battle out of the earth, and will make them to lie down safely."*

And I will betroth thee unto me forever; yea, I will betroth thee unto me in righteousness, and in judgment, and in lovingkindness, and in mercies. I will even betroth thee unto me in faithfulness: and thou shalt know the Lord.” This scripture records the fact that God the Father made a covenant to betroth a remnant of the Jewish nation to Christ in the last days. We know that this scripture also pertains to all believers, for Romans 9:24-25, which quotes Hosea 2:23, says: *“Even us, whom he hath called, not of the Jews only, but also of the Gentiles? As he saith also in Osee, I will call them my people, which were not my people; and her beloved, which was not beloved.”* From this we understand that the Father (God), of the groom (Christ), betroths those who come to Christ under the new covenant in the same way that the Jewish father selects and betroths the future bride of his son.

The Greek word for *betrothed* is interpreted as *espoused* in the KJV of the NT. This word is used four times: three in reference to Mary’s relationship with Joseph, and once by Paul in his second letter to the Corinthians. Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary of Old and New Testament Words defines betrothed as, “to be promised in marriage”. Webster’s Dictionary defines betrothal as a “mutual pledge to marry”. We noted above that in the ancient Jewish custom the future bride was selected (to be betrothed) by the father of the groom. God the Father’s selection (betrothal) of those who will (in the future) become Christ’s bride introduces the divisive subject of predestination. The words *election* and *chosen*, which are defined below, are the two words most often used in the bible to describe believers.

1) *Election* refers to God the Father choosing (predestinating) those that would be regenerated, saved, and sanctified, before the foundation of the world. The word elect is used in the KJV of the OT three times, all in Isaiah. Two of these references pertain to God’s election of Israel, and one refers to the coming Messiah. The word elect (elected, election,

elect's) is used 22 times in the KJV of the NT, 21 of which refer to the election of the body of Christ (the church), and one to elect angels. Two scriptures applicable to this subject are: *"Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the spirit, unto obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ:."* (1 Peter 1:2) and *"... that the purpose of God according to election might stand, not of works, but of him that calleth."* (Romans 9:11). The passage in Romans draws attention to the fact that a person's works have nothing to do with being chosen, receiving the benefits of Christ's sacrifice, and becoming part of Christ's body (bride).

2) *Chosen*, as used in the NT, conveys the idea of choosing recipients to bestow special favor and privilege. The word chosen is used in the KJV of the OT 94 times, 21 of which refer to God the Father choosing Israel, or the Savior. Chosen is used in the KJV of the NT 30 times, nine of which refer to the body of Christ (the church) being chosen out of the world. Some of the scriptures referring to the elect being chosen or predestinated include: *"Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that ye should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatever ye shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it you."* (John 15:16). *"According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will"* (Ephesians 1:4-5). *"In whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestinated according to the purpose of him who worketh all things after the council of his own will"* (Ephesians 1:11). *"For whom he did foreknow, he also did predestinate to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren"* (Romans 8:29). From these scriptures we see that God the Father chose believers before the

foundation of the world. In our analogy this corresponds to the Jewish father's choosing (betrothing) the future bride for his son.

How is God's *choosing* brought about in our lives? God forms our human spirit while we are in the womb. Zechariah 12:1 NIV says, "... *The Lord, who stretches out the heavens, who lays the foundation of the earth, and who forms the spirit of man within him. . .*" Our human spirit, present within us at birth, was dead to God initially due to our inheritance in Adam. When Adam accepted the authority of Satan over that of God in the Garden of Eden, his human spirit (the real Adam), through which God communed and had fellowship, died immediately (Genesis 3:3). Death in the OT means ultimate separation from God (Theological Word-book of the OT, by Harris, et. al.). Man's human spirit could no longer commune with God: it was dead to God. Without this vital inner life source, Adam's body began the slow decaying (dying) process that eventually led to his physical death. This is the curse that Adam passed on to all mankind (Romans 5:12). However, the elect respond to the *drawing* of the Father, so that when they receive Christ their spirit is *quickened*, or made alive to God, once again. . John 6:37-39, 44 indicates what happens at this time: "*All that the Father giveth me shall come to me; and him that cometh to me I will in no wise cast out. For I came down from heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of him that sent me. And this is the Father's will which hath sent me, that of all which he hath **given** me I should lose nothing, but should raise it up again at the last day. No man can come to me, except the Father which hath sent me **draw** him: and I will raise him up at the last day*" (emphasis added). Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon says that the word *draw* in this scripture is used metaphorically to mean "to draw mentally and morally". This drawing process is also described in the NT as "*washing of the word*", which begins the process of making us clean so that so that we can receive the Holy Spirit.

John 6:39-40 says that God the Father gives those to Christ that He has chosen, and Christ will lose none of them, but will raise them up at the time He comes for His bride (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). This is a very reassuring passage of scripture since it affirms that those in whom the *washing* or *drawing* process is initiated will be brought into Christ, and will be raised up when He comes in the rapture and resurrection. It seems likely that God the Father chooses (betroths) those that will come to Christ (be included in His family) when He forms the human spirit. Psalm 139:13 KJV says, "*For Thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb.*" The word "*reins*" in this verse is interpreted to mean "*my inmost being*" by John Kohlenberger's Interlinear NIV Hebrew-English Old Testament. The human spirit is said to denote the entire immaterial consciousness of man (Theological Wordbook of the OT by Harris, et. al.). This seems to validate the assumption herein that the term "*my inmost being*", in Psalm 139:13 actually refers to our human spirit. The human spirit that God forms within us will be *quickened* when we believe into Christ. God awakens our human spirit at this time so we can communicate with the Holy Spirit we receive when we join Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection.

To summarize this part of our argument: in the ancient Jewish tradition, the father of the groom selects the bride for his son. This is considered to be analogous to God the Father choosing those that will be betrothed to Christ. Notice that the betrothal is a promise to marry, not the marriage itself. We might be inclined to think that some of the betrothed could later refuse to sign the contract to become the bride of Christ, but the scripture from John indicates that Christ loses none that the Father has given Him, and this must refer to those who have been betrothed.

II. The Groom's Promise And The Bride's Acceptance

The groom makes a covenant or contract in the next step of the Jewish marriage process. This contract assures the bride that she will be properly provided for in the proposed union, and that the groom will come for her soon. In this contract the groom states the price he is willing to pay the father of the bride for taking her out of the family. The groom then presents the contract to the bride and if she accepts, she drinks from a cup of wine offered by the groom. This seals the betrothal agreement, and the couple is considered married, although the actual ceremony will come later, after the groom comes for the bride.

We know that Jesus introduced the new covenant (Jeremiah 31:31), which says that God's law will be written on the hearts of His elect, and He will be their God, and they will be His people. This promise is also quoted in Hebrews 8:8-12, which adds that God will be merciful, and He will remember their sins no more. This is a promise to love, protect, and care for the bride, just as in the contract in the Jewish marriage process.

Jesus paid the ultimate price for His bride when He went to the cross as the sacrificial Lamb to pay for her (really our) sins. By this act He made a way for us to be reconciled to God the Father. In the Jewish marriage the bride leaves her biological father (family) to become joined to the father (family) of the groom. In our analogy the bride's father must represent Satan, who we belong to until we receive Christ and are delivered from our old sin (Adamic) nature (Matthew 13:38). The price that Christ paid on the cross was what was necessary to redeem mankind from Satan's control. This brings Adam's failure into proper perspective: it was the greatest crime ever committed, for it caused our Lord and Savior to go to the cross. No higher price could be exacted than that.

When we come to Christ, repent of our sins, have our human spirit quickened, and receive the Holy Spirit, we are basically committing ourselves in marriage to Christ, just as the Jewish bride commits herself to the groom when she drinks from the cup. The cup represents Christ's blood. John 6:53-56 says: *"Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him."* Notice that this scripture includes the phrase *"and I will raise him up at the last day"*. This is essentially the identical statement that Christ made about the chosen, or betrothed, in the scripture from John 6:37-39, 44 quoted above. We know from this that the individuals referred to, who are to be raised up, are the betrothed, who have now agreed to the contract by drinking Christ's blood. They are to become one with Christ spiritually in the same way that man and wife should become one flesh (Ephesians 5:31).

To summarize this second step: Christ, our bridegroom, presents the new covenant (contract for marriage) and pays the greatest price that could be paid for the privilege of making us His bride. We agree to the arrangement when we come to Christ (when we take the cup representing His blood), and promise to become one with Him (He in us and we in Him). The father of the bride (Satan) is thus paid in full and he no longer has any claim on our life, unless we give it back to him. God the Father is now our father, and He puts the knowledge within us that we are His children (Romans 8:16).

III. Preparations of the Bride and Groom

After the contract was presented, the price paid, and the bride had accepted the offer, the bridegroom went to prepare a wedding chamber in which the union would be consum-

mated. While the bridegroom was gone the bride made preparations for her marriage. One of these preparations was a requirement for the bride to have a ritual, or cleansing, bath for purification. Although the Hebrew word for this ceremony is the same as that for baptism (mikvah), this requirement dates from the time of Moses, rather than from that of John the Baptist. Baptism is representative of the cleansing bath since it is a ceremony that shows the death of the old sin nature and reception of a new identity in Christ. Baptism is a ceremony that depicts the cleansing that has occurred. Ephesians 5:26 says that Christ sanctifies and cleanses the church (the bride) by the “*washing of water by the word*”, so we know that we are purified by the Word of God. This purification (or washing) is a necessary step in the union with our bridegroom, for we know that the Holy Spirit can only reside in a purified temple (body).

When God the Father begins to draw us it is the beginning of the process of making us clean so that so that we can receive the Holy Spirit. This is referred to in John 13:6-10, when Jesus was about to wash Peter’s feet. Jesus told Peter that unless he was washed clean he would have no part with Him. He went on to say that all the disciples had been washed clean, except one. This incident occurred **before** Jesus was crucified, and shed His blood for our sins. This *washing* is also referred to in other places in the NT, so we know that we are cleansed by receiving the word, and mixing it with faith. I recently heard a talk on prevenient grace, which I think is another term for describing this *washing* process. The speaker defined prevenient grace as “grace that keeps us from destroying our own soul”. As Jesus told Peter, washing us with the word is necessary if we are to become one with Him. Titus 3:5 says that we are saved by the “*washing of the regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost*”. It seems that this washing begins with God the Father drawing us, and ends at our

physical death, but the method God uses to bring this about changes as we mature in our walk. When we join Christ in His death and resurrection we are regenerated, and after we are regenerated the sanctification process begins. God, through the Holy Spirit, begins to purify us from within. The Jewish bride was also to prepare herself for her new life and new identity. As Christians we do this by becoming more Christlike, through the renewal of our minds (Romans 12:2), and by increasing the power of faith working in us (2 Thessalonians 1:3). We become more like Christ by allowing Christ to take over more and more of our lives. We do this by following the guidance of the Holy Spirit in our thoughts and actions, and by spending time in God's presence, talking to Him (praying) and listening. In this process of sanctification, we decrease and He increases.

The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13, was given by Christ to warn of the consequences of not being prepared when our bridegroom (Christ) comes for us. We must be wise and maintain oil in our lamps so that when He comes we will be prepared. Five of these virgins did not take oil (a metaphor for the Holy Spirit) for their lamps, and they were not ready when the bridegroom came at midnight (a time when they did not expect him). As a result, they were shut out of the marriage feast. When they asked to be let in the bridegroom said "*I do not know you*". This is an important warning for new believers: they need to go beyond believing in the Lord to believing *into* Him. Believing in Him is to believe in the historical fact that He came to earth as a man to save sinners, but to believe *into* Him is to eat His flesh and drink His blood (John 6:53), and thus become like Him.

The groom is also busy during this time building a wedding chamber (chuppah) in his father's house. Jesus told the disciples in John 14:2-3 GNT, "*In the house of my Father's there are many abodes: otherwise I would have told you; I go to prepare a place for you; and if I go and pre-*

pare for you a place, again I am coming and will receive you to myself; that where I am, ye also may be."

When the bridegroom's father says that the wedding chamber is ready, the bridegroom will go to retrieve his bride. In this scripture the "place" (wedding chamber) that Jesus has gone to prepare seems to correspond to a place in the Father's house. John 2:16 indicates that the Father's house is the temple, and John 2:21 further identifies the Father's house as the temple of Christ's body. Through Christ's death and resurrection His body is now the church, made up of all believers who have joined Him in His death and resurrection. The abodes on earth represent members of the body of Christ here on earth, but Christ is preparing abodes for believers in God's temple in heaven, as well. The abodes that Christ is building are the immortal bodies believers will be clothed in at resurrection and rapture. 2 Corinthians 5:1 says that if our earthly house (natural body) is dissolved we have an eternal house (spiritual body) in heaven.

1 Corinthians 15: 35-50 provides a wonderful description of the mortal (natural) body that we sow in death, and the immortal (spiritual) body that we are given by God at resurrection.

"But some man will say, How are the dead raised up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is the glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in

power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption."

This passage of scripture compares our natural body to a seed placed in the ground. The new life, the pattern of which is contained within the seed, rises out of the seed only after the seed loses its identity (dies). Although God gives our resurrected bodies the form He chooses, based on our works (2 Corinthians 5:10; Romans 2:6; Revelation 22:12), there is something about our earthly bodies that retains the pattern for our immortal bodies. The wording in the above scripture seems to imply that each of these spiritual bodies is unique, and the glory of one differs from that of another. Since our immortal body manifests the righteous acts accomplished while we were on earth (Revelation 19:8), this seems perfectly logical. However, we also know that our spiritual body retains something that identifies us as the person we were on earth, for the Bible indicates that we will recognize people in heaven. Further, the apostles and many others recognized Christ when He appeared to them after resurrection, even though His appearance was changed. There was something about Christ's immortal body that caused His friends to recognize Him. Our true earthly identity seems to be vested in the spirit/soul given to us in the womb, which upon death immediately goes to heaven (Job 34:14; Ecclesiastes. 12:7; Zechariah. 12:1). Our human spirit

is really who we are, and our physical body is just the house we live in while on earth. Our soul integrates our body with the spirit God gives us in the womb, and thus, we are born a tripartite person: body, soul, and spirit. God made us after His triune image: Father, Son, and Holy Ghost (Genesis 1:26-27). Like the seed, our old house dies (decays) while we are in the ground, but we receive a new house upon resurrection. Just as the seed contains the embryo, our old house contains the pattern for new life (possibly DNA). Christ fashions a new immortal body (abode) using our righteous works, similar to the way He formed our original earthly bodies in the womb (Ps. 139:15-16). In this He seemingly follows the pattern or plan used when He formed us in the womb. He then clothes our spirit/soul with this new body at rapture and resurrection. I believe our new house is designed by God to reflect the degree of holiness achieved in our lives while on earth. Our human spirit (by direction of the Holy Spirit), is the source of the transformation in our minds that causes us to grow in holiness through sanctification. God measures our holiness by the righteous works done in our body while on earth (1 Corinthians 3:13-15).

To summarize this third step, Jewish tradition requires the bride to undergo a purifying bath and to make other preparations in anticipation of her upcoming marriage. The new believer is washed by the word, and receives the washing of regeneration when his spirit is quickened. The ceremony of baptism is the external manifestation of the new believer's purification. The sanctification process, wherein our minds are renewed and we become more like Christ, prepares us for the ultimate consummation of our union at resurrection/rapture.

IV. The Bridegroom Comes For His Bride

In the Jewish tradition when the father was satisfied with the wedding chamber he would tell the bridegroom to go and steal his bride away from her family. The groomsmen

would run ahead of the groom, sound a ram's horn trumpet (shofar), and shout that the groom was coming. The bride would then gather her belongings and accompany the wedding party back to the groom's father's house. Christ's fulfillment of this is described in several scriptures, but possibly the most informative is in 1 Thessalonians. 4:16-17, which says, *"For the Lord himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of a the archangel, and with the trump of God: and the dead in Christ shall rise first: Then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air: and so shall we ever be with the Lord."* This description of Christ's coming to steal the church out of the world is referred to as the rapture (for those believers that remain), and resurrection (for those in the grave). The word rapture is not found in the KJV of the Bible, nor is it found in most other versions. It comes from a Latin word meaning to *snatch away*, which conveys the suddenness of our rising to meet the Lord in the air.

As in the Jewish marriage tradition, we note that the Lord comes with a shout and a trumpet, and the dead in Christ rise first, followed by those believers who are still alive. Together, these two groups comprise that part of the bride still on earth, who meet the bridegroom in the clouds, and remain with Him forever after.

To summarize this fourth step: Christ comes for His bride in what is known as the rapture or resurrection. He comes with a shout and the sound of a trumpet in just the same way that the Jewish bridegroom comes for his bride. The Jewish bridegroom comes with his friends (groomsmen), and Christ comes with His angels, and (presumedly), the spirit/souls of the saints who are in heaven. The Jewish bridegroom takes his bride to the wedding chamber, or chuppah, he has prepared, which is attached, or part of, his father's house. In the same way Christ gathers His bride in the clouds and clothes the spirit/soul with the

body that has been prepared. It is interesting that the Bible does not give the location of the body. When asked by the disciples where those “*taken*” would be transported, Jesus answered, “ *Wheresoever the body is, thither will the eagles be gathered*” (Luke 17:37; see also Matthew 24:28). The joining of our risen bodies with our spirit/souls seems to happen when we join Him in the clouds. From there we assume that Jesus takes the bride to His Father’s house (heaven), where He has prepared the wedding chamber (abode).

V. Consummation Of The Union

In the Jewish tradition the bride and groom enter the wedding chamber where the marriage is consummated. The best man waits outside until the groom tells him that the marriage has been consummated, and he then tells the guests, who begin the celebration. This celebration lasts for seven days, which leads many expositors to conclude that Christ will be in the wedding chamber with His bride during the last seven years, before He returns to earth. However, Jewish tradition indicates that the bridegroom does not leave the bride for duties such as war, etc., for a period of only one year. We know that the rapture/resurrection occurs near the end of the Great Tribulation; thus, a period of one year before Christ returns for Armageddon seems logical. This would be the period during which God pours out His wrath on evil men on earth.

There is little information in the Bible about what happens after Christ and His bride arrive back in heaven. This is thought to be the time when the believer’s works are judged at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10). A marriage is consummated (finalized) when the bride and groom come together in the physical act of love: by this act they are said to *know* one another. As our savior, mediator, intercessor, and judge Christ *knows* us completely, and through His judgment of our works by the refiner’s fire we come to *know* Him in

a way that we have not experienced before (1 Corinthians 3:13). If our works survive 2 Corinthians 5:10 says that we will *receive* the things done through the body. Our immortal body in some way manifests the works that survive the fire. He will reveal the thoughts and intents of our heart behind these works and show us the fruit of those acts, which we are seldom aware of if they are truly done by Christ within us. This evaluation of our works will not only be shown in our bodies, but will undoubtedly determine our place in the millenium government of Christ, and in the new heaven and earth. Revelation 19:7-8 says that we will be clothed in fine linen which represents the righteous acts of the saints.

To summarize this fifth step: Christ's clothing of us with our new body and external apparel, prepared and selected, in part, from our righteous works corresponds to the consummation of the marriage in the wedding chamber in the Jewish tradition. To consummate means to bring to fulfillment. Certainly the judgment of our works and receiving the reward He has prepared, could be considered the fulfillment of our relationship in Him: we come to *know* Him in a new way through this momentous event at his judgment seat.

VI. The Marriage Supper Of The Lamb

When the bridegroom and his wife emerge from the wedding chamber they join the celebration. In the same manner, when Christ presents his bride to the Father arrayed in fine linen, which represents her righteous acts, the celebration in heaven will begin. Revelation 19:9 says that those called to the marriage supper of the Lamb are blessed.

This is the final step in the marriage process and we are now totally joined to Christ. Ephesians 5:27 says that Christ presents us as a glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, one that is holy and without blemish. We are now to act fully as Christ's helpmate in everything He does, including returning to earth for the battle of Armageddon, and in helping Him in

ruling His kingdom on earth during the millennium. This is an awesome responsibility, one that is almost incomprehensible to us while we are still in our imperfect mortal bodies. Nevertheless, this is what God clearly says in several places in the Bible. This is a task that Christ has been preparing us for all along.

Closure

I see an amazing parallelism between the ancient Jewish marriage rite and the choosing, confirming, preparing, sanctifying, snatching away, consummating, and celebrating that Christ brings about in the life of the believer. This parallelism is similar to events or actions in the NT that are presaged by things that occurred in the OT. Many of the ceremonies established by God in the OT forecast events occurring during the life of Christ while He was on earth, and afterward in His dealings with the church (His body on earth). It is hard to escape the fact that God does this to help us to understand what He is trying to teach us. The realization of this has helped me immensely in appreciating the unbelievable exactness and detail by which His plans are brought to fruition. One only has to read scriptures such as Matthew 10:29-30 to realize the marvelous detail to which God has planned every aspect of His dealings with His chosen.

Chapter 3

Grafted In

Romans 6:5 GNT says, "*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of His death, so also shall we be in the resurrection.*" Moulton's Analytical Greek Lexicon says the phrase "*planted together*" in this passage means "metaphorically grown together, closely entwined or united with." Vincent's Word Studies in the New Testament says this phrase does not mean "*planted*", but instead means to "have become", denoting a "process" instead of the simple "to be". "Hence in the RV, have become united, have grown together; an intimate and progressive union; coalescence." Vincent goes on to say the meaning of the phrase, "We shall be also in the likeness of his resurrection," is impossible to reproduce in the English language. He gives a quote from Morison : "If we were united with Him in the likeness of His death (that will not be the full extent of the union), but we shall be also united...". He refers to similar instances of this usage in 1 Corinthians 4:15 and Colossians 2:5. The Concise Columbia Encyclopedia has an interesting comment about grafting: "The primary reason for grafting is to propagate hybrids that do not bear a seed or do not grow true from seed." This seems to bear out the Biblical meaning of this passage of scripture. When Jesus Christ is grafted into our bodies we no longer grow from the seed we inherited from Adam, but instead we grow into the likeness of the One grafted into us spiritually. Thus, believers into

Jesus Christ are said to be “in Christ”. The 1828 Edition of the American Dictionary of the English Language says this about grafting, “A small shoot or scion of a tree, inserted in another tree as the stock which is to support and nourish it. These unite and become one tree, but the graft determines the kind of fruit.” When the Lord is grafted into us He comes to enable us to produce fruit of the Holy Spirit (Galatians 5:22-23). Through sanctification (progressive union) we are conformed to His image: we become one with Him, just as He prayed we would in John 17.

In Watchman Nee’s book entitled: “The Normal Christian Life”, he describes the grafting process as explained to him by a Chinese man who owned an orchard of Longien trees, a fruit tree whose fruit resembles an apricot in size, with a grape-like pulp. The orchard owner said “I lop off the top and graft onto it. Pointing to a particular tree he asked, ‘Do you see that tree?’ I call it the father tree, because all the grafts from the other trees are taken from that one. If the other trees were just left to follow the course of nature, their fruit would be only about the size of a raspberry, and would consist mainly of thick skin and seeds. This tree, from which the grafts for all the other trees are taken, bears a luscious fruit the size of a plum, with a very thin skin and a tiny seed, and of course, all the grafted trees bear fruit like it.” Watchman Nee then asked how this happens? The orchard owner replied, “I simply take a little of the nature of the one tree and transfer it to the other.” Is this great, or what? I cannot imagine a better explanation of what happens when Christ is grafted into us than this. The fruit unregenerate men produce is small (has no value), has a thick, hard surface (difficult to breakthrough to any “sweetness”), and is full of inedible bulk (contains no spiritual food value). But this is what we should expect since the fruit of unregenerate man comes from a worldly heart. The fruit of a believer is the fruit of the Holy

Spirit (love, joy, peace, peace, long-suffering, kindness, goodness, faith, meekness, and self-control).

When our Adamic nature is nailed to the cross with Jesus, that part of us which was producing bad fruit (which was in ascendancy in our lives until that time) is replaced. We are to “reckon” that part of us as being dead: we are totally separated from that old nature because Jesus replaces it with His life-giving nature just like the unproductive part of the tree is replaced by the life-giving graft. Thus, He is grafted into us when we die with Him, and because of this we are joined with Him in resurrection: He replaces the old sin-nature with a “graft” of Himself, and we grow together spiritually, eventually becoming one with His Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17). If we refuse to let Him take over every part of our body, the part we hold back will continue to try to produce bad fruit. I think a good example of this is unbridled sexual lust. How many otherwise seemingly godly ministers have been brought down as result of this frailty. Pride is another example - some ministers become prideful from the fawning adulation they receive, but this would never happen if they gave up the pride of life for the humble servant demeanor of Christ. A particularly bad influence is the love of money, which the Bible says is the root of all evil.

A graft must be attached very tightly to the host tree to be effective. This serves to remind me that my relationship with Jesus Christ needs to be intimate and unassailable: I must **abide** in Christ. Grafting can be used to grow hybrids, which do not grow true to variety if raised from seed. For example, seeds from Macintosh apples almost never produce trees with typical Macintosh fruit. However, a Macintosh scion will produce apples with the same characteristics as its parent. Like the MacIntosh apple tree we can produce no worthwhile fruit from Adam’s seed, but when that old nature is replaced with a graft of

Christ's nature, we can begin to produce fruit of the Holy Spirit. If we continue to fall prey to lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, or the pride of life we will produce unacceptable fruit of the flesh. Grafting can also produce hardier, disease resistant trees. In the same manner, when the Holy Spirit enters our lives, and we follow the guidance He provides, our whole body becomes healthier and hardier. Proverbs 17:22 says, "*A merry heart doeth good like a medicine: but a broken spirit drieth up the bones*".

Hebrews 4:2 indicates that the Word of God must be mixed with faith for an unregenerate man to believe into Jesus Christ. We know that spiritual communication with God is enabled when our human spirit is quickened. This leads me to suspect that the "saving" faith, mentioned in Hebrews 4:2, is related in some way to the enlivened human spirit. Romans 10:17 talks about the faith required for salvation, which comes by hearing the spoken Word of God, "*So then faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God*". Romans 10:14 Recovery Version is helpful in understanding this scripture: "*How then shall they call upon Him into whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe into Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without one who proclaims Him?*" Notice the emphasis on the word "believe(d)" as contrasted to "faith". It is clear from the context of this verse that Paul is talking about belief "unto" salvation, that comes from hearing the spoken Word of God and mixing it with "saving" faith. Thus, we see that salvation comes about when a person hears the Word of God, and mixes it with the faith that God provides to engender belief. From this I can see how the grafting analogy extends to the root of the tree as well. The food (soil nutrients and water) is fed to the tree through the root system. This source of food and water is not changed when the tree receives the graft; neither does the source of energy (the sunlight), necessary for the process of photosynthesis to take place. But, prior to grafting, the

tree cannot process this food, water, and energy in such a way as to form the complex carbohydrates necessary to produce good fruit. The essential ingredient the tree must supply in order for the process of photosynthesis to proceed effectively is chlorophyll, a green pigment found within the plant cell. When chlorophyll absorbs light energy, an electron is excited from a lower energy state to a higher energy state. In this higher energy state, this electron is more readily transferred to another molecule, which starts a chain of electron-transfer steps. Chlorophyll is the only substance in nature able to trap and store the energy in sunlight, and when the tree suffers from an ineffective supply of energy it will be weak and unproductive. In man the food and living water (the Word of God) are available, but unregenerate man cannot receive (process) it. Without faith, which is like the chlorophyll in the tree, man has no power (energy) to change. His human spirit is dead, and the human spirit is the vehicle through which God provides (spiritual) food to man. Until our spiritual receiver is enlivened (quicken), and we have power released through faith convicting our hearts, we have no way of assimilating life-giving (spiritual) food from God. Thus, an unregenerate man cannot produce good fruit; but when he receives the heavenly graft from God, and is able to assimilate (absorb) the food (Word of God and living water) by using the energy (Sonlight) from the Holy Spirit, delivered through the human spirit to the mind (part of the Biblical heart) by faith (Chlorophyll), he is then able to believe (receive) the spiritual food Christ provides. With the energy provided by the "Sonlight" delivered by faith, man is able to sustain this growth process and feed his body with spiritual nourishment. New life replaces the old: the now-regenerated man is gradually conformed to the image of Christ (grows into a beautiful and fruitful tree).

Epilog: After writing this I was astonished to discover that treatments using compounds similar to chlorophyll are being used in cancer prevention, and healing persistent wounds, as well as for other therapeutic uses. “Other molecules with structures similar to that of chlorophyll also play important roles in biochemical electron-transfer reactions. Heme consists of a porphyrin similar to that in chlorophyll. In the red blood cells of vertebrates heme is bound to proteins forming hemoglobin, which delivers oxygen to body tissues” (from Chemical of the Week).

Chapter 4

The Paraclete

John 14:16-17 - *"I will pray the Father, and he shall give you another Comforter (Paraclete), that he may abide with you for ever; Even the Spirit of truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it seeth him not, neither knoweth him: but ye know him; for he dwelleth with you, and shall be in you."*

Many scriptures in the Bible refer to the fact that the believer's body is the temple of the Holy Spirit on earth. 1 Corinthians 3:16 and 6:19 affirm this teaching, and Jesus often referred to His body as the temple (John 2:19-21). Galatians 4:6 also states that we have received the Spirit of his Son into our (believer's) hearts. We have the triune creator of the universe within our bodies, represented by the Holy Spirit. He knows the thoughts and desires of both the Father and the Son, and He is persistently working these into our lives as we abide. This is the way Christ chose to accomplish his work on earth after He ascended to heaven and took his seat at the right hand of God the Father: His body on earth is now represented by many temples (believers) in which the Holy Spirit resides. If you have any doubt about the level of oversight God has over every believer just recall the extremely detailed plan He provided for the Old Testament Tabernacle, and how He equipped the

craftsmen who constructed it. His plan for us is just as exacting, and He gives us the power necessary to be effective in using the gifts He provides to accomplish this plan.

Possibly the best way to understand the role of the Holy Spirit in God's plan is to postulate and answer questions regarding this third person of the trinity:

1. What Was The Role Of The Holy Spirit In Creation?

Everything that was brought about, or “effected”, by God in the OT was performed by the Holy Spirit. Many scriptures indicate that all things were created in the Son (Col. 1:16); however, the manner in which these things came about was similar, in many ways, to the undertaking of major construction efforts today. There must be a “customer” and approving authority, a managing and implementing authority, and a construction or building authority. I see this arrangement between the three persons of the trinity: God the Father authorizes the Son to create the universe and man, the Son speaks the Word by the *breath* of His mouth to bring the plans for the work into being, and the Holy Spirit immediately sets about brooding over the work, causing it to be *effected*. When the Son receives the go-ahead from the Father, He understands completely what the Father is trying to achieve, and the plans the Son speaks into existence incorporate those desires. The Holy Spirit implements these plans and specifications verbatim, for He does only what He hears. Contrary to the typical construction project accomplished by men, there are no change orders when the Son speaks His plan into existence: everything is perfect.

2. What Was The Relationship Between The Holy Spirit And Man In The OT?

The Holy Spirit was only given to certain men and women in the OT who were selected for specific tasks. We know that the Holy Spirit was given to David, for in Psalm 51 he

asked God not to take His Holy Spirit from him. In Genesis 41:38, Pharaoh states that the Spirit of God is in Joseph. Exodus 31:3 indicates that the Lord filled Bezaleel and Uri with the Spirit of God in wisdom, knowledge, and all manner of workmanship. Job 27:3 says that the Spirit of God was in Job's nostrils. The Spirit entered into Ezekiel (Ezekiel 2:2), and Nebuchadnezzar recognized that the Spirit of God was within Daniel (Daniel 4:8). Acts 7:51, records Steven's response to the Jewish council accusing them of resisting the Holy Ghost **as their fathers did**, and Nehemiah 9:30, indicates that God's Spirit was in the OT prophets.

We see from the above that the Holy Spirit was active in the lives of men and women of the OT, but there was a difference in the way He dealt with men under the old covenant, and the way he deals with them under the new. We have noted that much of the work of the Holy Spirit with man in the OT was to give them the working of faith and ability to perform specific tasks such as prophecy, judgment, leadership for the nation of Israel, skillful work in metals and precious stones, etc. In addition to the many teachings of Jesus about the mission and work of the Holy Spirit under the new covenant several scriptures specifically state that some things revealed by the Spirit under the new covenant were not made known under the old (see Ephesians 3:5; 1 Peter 1:10-12).

Jesus came to "*baptize with the Holy Ghost and fire*" (Matthew 3:11). We interpret this to mean that *baptism* in the Holy Spirit did not occur before Jesus came, even though words like "*filled with*", "*came upon*", "*rest upon*", "*poured upon*", "*entered into*", "*fell upon*", "*put within*", and "*pour out*" are used in the OT to describe the relationship between the Holy Spirit and man. Webster says the word "baptism" means to immerse in, and the biblical meaning is to be buried and identified with. We know that God intends for believers to become one spirit

with the Lord: to mingle our human spirit with the Holy Spirit so completely that they become indistinguishable (1 Corinthians 6:17). We know that those who received the Holy Spirit under the old covenant were not baptized (**buried**) in the Holy Spirit, for Jesus had not yet come to earth. Nor did they take on the new identity of Christ(ians), as do those that receive the Holy Spirit (Christ's Spirit) under the new covenant. The OT saints were provided for in a different manner. Hebrews 11:13 says that *"These all died in faith, not having received the promises, but having seen them afar off, and were persuaded of them, and embraced them, and confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth"*.

In many ways the activity of the Holy Spirit under the old covenant was very similar to His activity under the new covenant. One way that has helped me to understand the difference in the way God deals with mankind under the old and new covenants is the different ways we relate to God and His law. Under the old covenant the law was external, and thus, man tried to live in accordance with the written word of the law, in much the same way that we obey the civil laws of our land. Accordingly, men developed interpretations of these written laws so that they were only slightly inconvenienced. Thus, these written laws had little spiritual impact on their lives. Even with these less onerous interpretations, men still failed to comply with these ordinances. Many of the laws of the old covenant had to do with man's relationship with God, and Israel refused to deal with God directly: they chose instead to have an intermediary through which they would deal with God, and the intermediary would then deal with the Israelites. As a result the spiritual leadership fell first on the prophets, then the judges, and finally the kings, but none of these forms of government proved successful. This "middleman" form of dealing with God is one of the things that He

hates (Revelation 2:15), and it is one of the primary things God changed through Jesus' death on the cross.

Under the new covenant God writes his statutes on our hearts and gives us the ability and will to obey them (Ezekiel 36:25-27). There is no external enforcement agency to force us to comply with these statutes (which are now internal and spiritual), but we have the very Spirit of God within us working to guide us in the right path. Even when we fail, God has provided forgiveness for us, for He sees us as being *in Christ*. Best of all, we now have direct access to God the Father, and God the Son (our mediator and intercessor), through the Holy Spirit. We also have His written Word to guide us in our walk. This is the way we are strengthened to comply with God's commandments. As this relationship develops we get to the place where we realize that in whatever we do or say we are not only representing Christ, we are Christ to the world. We take His Holy Spirit everywhere we go, whether it is in our closet in darkness, or in the light, ministering the gift that He has given us.

3. What Is The Relationship Between The Holy Spirit And Man In The NT?

A number of phrases are used in the NT to describe the experience of receiving the baptism with the Holy Spirit: "*baptized with the Holy Spirit*", "*filled with the Holy Ghost*", "*the gift of the Holy Ghost was poured out*", "*the Holy Ghost fell on them*", "*the Holy Ghost came on them*", "*I send the promise of my Father upon you*", and "*endued with power from on high*". Many of these descriptive phrases sound a lot like those of the OT, but *baptism* of the Holy Spirit is never mentioned in the OT.

When the Apostles received the baptism of the Holy Spirit they received power and boldness for ministry. They were no longer timid and afraid, but stood up on the day of Pentecost and accused the men of Israel of crucifying Jesus, the Messiah, sent by God and

approved by the miracles He performed. Acts 2:38-39 says that those who are baptized into Jesus Christ (into His death), and who are “*called*” by God will receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. In many cases in the book of Acts new believers who had been baptized for repentance of sins (John’s baptism) were later prayed for by the disciples so they could receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I spent a good portion of my life in the same condition as that of these new believers in Acts before they received the baptism of the Holy Spirit. I recognized that Jesus was the Son of God, and that He had forgiven my sins, but I did not *know* Him personally, and I had never really heard of baptism in the Holy Spirit. After I had a personal encounter with Jesus Christ everything changed. I received the Holy Spirit, but was unaware of it for some time because I was seeking the evidence of speaking in tongues during my prayer time. The common belief at that time (1963), was that tongues was the proof that a person had received the Holy Spirit. Later, I learned that tongues was just one of the blessings that the gift of the Holy Spirit brings to the believer: all I had to do was to realize that I had received the Holy Spirit, and let Him use my vessel to minister whatever gift He saw fit. Luke 11:13 records the fact that our heavenly Father will give the Holy Spirit to those that ask Him.

Before Jesus ascended to heaven He established the church, which He identified as His body on earth. This mystical body was to *be Christ* on earth after He joined His Father in heaven, and this body was to do the things He did, and greater things. To be able to do what Jesus did while on earth the members of His body must be baptized with the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is the source of the power (faith) necessary to accomplish these acts. It is through Jesus’ body on earth that God now works and, judging by the condition of the world, we have not been successful in standing, and holding ground, against Satan. I am

dismayed at the way in which the two major political parties in the US have increasingly become divided over God's law: one apparently feeling that individual human *rights* [sic] take precedence over the governance of the creator. It is not difficult to foresee our country, one so blessed by God in the past, divided along the lines of believers versus unbelievers in the not to distant future.

Jesus identified the Holy Spirit as the Comforter, the Spirit of truth, who would abide with us forever (John 14:16). In John 14:18 He further identifies the Holy Spirit as His Spirit, and in other scriptures the Holy Spirit is referred to as the Spirit of God. The work of the Holy Spirit in man is described in many scriptures, some of His attributes are listed below:

- 1) As our comforter He provides encouragement and alleviation of grief.
- 2) As our sanctifier He renews our minds and conforms us to the image of Christ.
- 3) He witnesses with our spirit that we are sons of God.
- 4) He gives us understanding of the Word of God.
- 5) He knows the mind of God, thus we have access to the mind of God through Him.
- 6) He sets us free from the law of sin and death.
- 7) He gives us power (faith) to be witnesses for Christ.
- 8) He causes us to bear fruit of the Spirit.
- 9) He brings to remembrance the words of Christ.
- 10) He guides us in prayer, worship, and praise.
- 11) The gifts of the Spirit manifested in our lives come from Him.

Where Does The Holy Spirit Reside Within Us?

Although some biblical expositors have concluded that the Holy Spirit comes to reside within our human spirit, I believe there is good reason to question this supposition. Ro-

mans 8:16 says, “*The Spirit Himself witnesses with our spirit that we are children of God.*” The Greek word interpreted as “*with*” here means “to bear witness together with”. Thus, this scripture actually says, “The Spirit Himself bears witness together with our spirit”. The use of the word *together* seems to imply that the Holy Spirit is alongside (*together with*) our human spirit, rather than being within it. This is where we would normally expect a comforter, or friend, to be.

Ephesians 5:31-32 describes the relationship between Christ and the church as being like a husband and wife: in the process of becoming one flesh. This obviously refers to the spiritual relationship between Christ and the church, and indicates that we are in the process of becoming one spirit with Christ. 1 Corinthians 6:17 says, “*But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit*”. The root of the Greek word interpreted “*is*” here means “it is possible, proper”. This same Greek word is used in Hebrews 9:5 to indicate “*it is not now the time*”. The interpretation that seems to be clearly in view here is the process of sanctification that the Holy Spirit undertakes when He comes into the lives of those resurrected in Christ. Although this process will continue the rest of our life on earth, God immediately sees us as the finished product: what we will be when He gives us our robe of fine linen (covering of righteousness), after the rapture and resurrection. This garment is prepared by Christ from the works that we have done on earth that survive the refiner’s fire: works done in our bodies when we let the Holy Spirit lead (see 2 Corinthians 5:10; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15; Revelation 19:8) .

A war is initiated within us when we receive the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit immediately begins His work of renewing our minds (part of the biblical heart), and our flesh, which retains all of the memories, reactions, and emotions learned while we were slaves of the old

Adamic nature, wars against accepting this new way of thinking and acting (Galatians 5:17). As we accept God's will, through the Holy Spirit's guidance, we begin the gradual process of being changed into the likeness of Christ: we become more Christlike. Although the believer's human spirit does not harbor evil, it does have feelings of brokenness and troubling emotions that will change over time as it becomes more aligned with the Holy Spirit. Our human spirit also gains wisdom from the Holy Spirit during this process. The ultimate goal is for our human spirit to become so much like the Holy Spirit that they can be described as being one spirit, just as the godly husband and wife become one flesh. This occurs as the husband and wife rub-off on each other over time, each one accepting the other's ideas, idiosyncrasies, emotions, and beliefs, until they finally become one unit (or flesh). To the degree that we accept the Holy Spirit's guidance we become more like Christ, and our human spirit becomes more like the Holy Spirit. I believe this is the meaning of 1 Corinthians 6:17, and Ephesians 5:31-32.

There are several scriptures in the Bible that seem to imply that the Holy Spirit resides within the heart: Galatians 4:6 says, "*And because ye are sons, God hath sent forth the Spirit of his Son into your hearts, crying, Abba, Father*". We know that scriptures such as this refer to the biblical heart, which includes all of man's mental and moral activity, and is the wellspring of life. Thus, I do not believe that this scripture means that Christ's Spirit resides in a particular part of the body, but rather that it comes to minister to the biblical heart of man, and the biblical heart includes the conscience. Much of the ministry of the Holy Spirit must focus on this part of our hearts since the conscience undergoes great change as we become more like Christ.

There is a remarkable analogy between the body of man and the Jewish Temple. In this analogy it is apparent that the Holy Spirit within regenerated man is represented by the Holy of Holies within the Tabernacle, and the Outer Court represents the body of man. The Outer Court and the Holy of Holies were separate and distinct places within the Tabernacle: one represented the place where God communes with man, and the other represented the place where man communes with the world; but it is worth noting that the Outer Court encloses the Tabernacle, including the Holy of Holies. This supports the fact that the Holy Spirit is located within the body of man, not necessarily in that part of the body that encloses the biblical heart.

The Outer Court

The outer court was the place of worship for the common Israelite, they were encouraged to enter the outer court and bring an animal sacrifice for their sins. The outer court was rectangular in shape, approximately 150 feet long by 75 feet wide. The structure that contained the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was located within the Outer Court. The principal features of the Outer Court included the Brazen Altar (The Altar of Burnt Offering) and the Laver. The Brazen Altar and the Laver were positioned in front of the entrance to the first room of the Tabernacle: the Holy Place. Sin offerings brought by Israelites were slain by the worshiper's own hand, which seems to emphasize the fact that we as individual sinners caused the death of our sacrificial Lamb, Jesus Christ. One of the priests anointed to supervise the sin offering would then sprinkle some of the blood of the sacrifice on the penitent, and would then enter the Holy Place to sprinkle blood on the Altar of Incense. For ceremonies such as the Day of Atonement, the high priest would slay the animal sacri-

fice for the nation's sins. In this ceremony the high priest symbolized God choosing to slay His own Son for the sins of all those that believe into Him.

The principle involved in these offerings was that innocent (animal) life was sacrificed for the sins (not the sin nature) of the penitent(s). There is a difference between our sin nature, and our sins: our sins are the product of our sin nature. It is only through the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ that we are given a new nature, and our old sin nature is sacrificed on the cross, to be "*reckoned*" dead in our lives. Through the ceremony on the Day of Atonement the Israelites understood that their sins had been covered, and cleansed by the death of an innocent animal, but this was not a perfect sacrifice, and it had to be repeated each year. Although the penitent Israelite had his sins forgiven, he could not enter the Tabernacle proper, but he was represented by the priest. The penitent Israelite still had a sin nature, and thus, could not enter the temple. Even the priest, who had been chosen by God, was required to wash himself in the brass Laver before serving at the Altar or in the Holy Place. The outstanding truth behind the ceremony of the sin offering on the Brazen Altar was the necessity of atonement for sin before man could approach Jehovah God.

The Laver was made of the copper looking-glasses donated by Israelite women for this purpose. The size of the Laver in the Tabernacle is not known, but it was apparently a pan-shaped vessel large enough for the priest to wash his hands and feet before entering the Holy Place, or offering sacrifices at the Brazen Altar. The Laver(s) in Solomon's Temple were quite large, since all the sacrifices were washed there before being offered on the Altar. The Laver constructed by Solomon for the temple was 16 feet in diameter. Priests were required to wash their hands and feet in the Laver before entering the Holy Place, and on the

day of Atonement the high priest was required to wash his entire body before entering the Holy of Holies.

The connection between this and the washing of regeneration referred to in the Bible is inescapable. Believers are washed “clean” by the water of the word before the Holy Spirit can enter their bodily temple. Hebrews 10:22 refers to two separate and distinct aspects of this washing. The heart of the believer is sprinkled with Christ’s blood to deliver him from an evil conscience, and the body (actually the flesh) is washed with pure water (Ezekiel 36:25, Hebrews 10:22). It is this washing of the body that is symbolized by the priest washing in the Laver.

The parallelism between the Outer Court and the body of man is striking. It is through our body that we have intercourse with the world, and it is our body that is accessible to everyone we encounter. In this sense it is like the Outer Court, open to all. It is through our body that we sin. The “sin nature” resides in our hearts, but “sin” becomes “fullgrown” through the actions of our external body (the flesh). Jesus taught that sinful lusting in the heart (actually the mind) was just as bad as consummating the sin through the body. The body can be cleansed through the washing of pure water by the word; it takes the blood shed by the perfect sacrifice of the Lamb of God to deliver us from our sin nature. Without the washing of the body in the “spiritual” Laver and the sprinkling of our hearts by the blood of Christ we cannot proceed beyond the Outer Court (the flesh).

Jewish penitents could not worship God until they sacrificed on the Altar of Burnt Offering, and atoned for their sins. In like manner, we cannot *know* Jesus Christ until we have been washed clean and have received forgiveness of our sins. When we receive the equivalent of the blood covering of the sacrifice on the Brazen Altar; a sprinkled conscience, and

our body washed in the Laver by the Word, we become reconciled (at-one-ment) to God. However, the forgiveness of sins and a clean conscience are not the primary goals of Jesus' death and resurrection. The Brazen Altar and the Laver were necessary for the Israelites to have fellowship with God. In the same way, the forgiveness of our sins and burial of our sin nature are necessary for establishing a relationship in Jesus Christ. Those that stop at the Brazen Altar and Laver after receiving forgiveness of sins and a clean conscience, and do not go on to sanctification are missing the major point of Jesus' work on the cross (2 Thessalonians 2:13).

The Holy Place

Only the priests could enter the Holy Place, or Sanctuary, which was separated from the Outer Court by a veil at the entrance. It was approximately 15 by 30 feet in size, and contained the Altar of Incense, the Golden Candlestick, and the Table of Shewbread. When a priest entered the Sanctuary for certain sacrifices and offerings he would take some of the blood of the sacrifice and place it on the horns of the Altar of Incense. The blood of the sacrifice served as a sign to God that the person (or altar, in this case), is rendered acceptable and exempt from judgment. Thus, the prayers offered on the Altar of Incense were received by God, and were considered acceptable. In our allegory, the Holy Place represents our human spirit. Just as the priest had free access between the Outer Court and the Holy Place after he washed at the Laver and placed blood on the Altar, we have reestablished communication between our body and spirit after we have been washed by the water of regeneration (Titus 3:5), and have had our sins forgiven through Christ's shed blood. But at this point in our spiritual development we still do not have a personal relationship with the God of heaven: we must go on into the Holy of Holies if we desire to know God the Father,

and His Son Jesus Christ as our personal father and brother. Until we have entered the Holy of Holies through the torn veil, hidden in Christ, we will not have fulfilled God's plan to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ: to make us holy. Hebrews 12:14 says that without holiness (sanctification), no man shall see the Lord.

The presence of the Altar of Incense in the Holy Place (Sanctuary) seems to indicate that effective prayer comes through activity of the spirit, out of its intimacy with the Holy Spirit: we worship God in spirit (John 4:24). Our spirit listens to the Holy Spirit who has the mind of God and can express His joy. The Altar of Incense was constructed of acacia wood overlaid with gold. Coals from the Brazen Altar were brought into the Holy Place in a censer and were placed in a vessel on the Altar of Incense. The incense was then poured on the coals, thus filling the Holy Place with a fragrant smoke, a sweet-smelling savor to the Lord. The Altar of Incense was located "*without*" the veil which led into the Holy of Holies. This is the veil that was "*rent in twain from top to bottom*" when Jesus died on the cross. The Ark of the Covenant was located just beyond the veil, and when the priest entered the Holy of Holies once each year during the time of Atonement the smoke from the Altar of Incense served to obscure God's presence at the Mercy Seat. This protected the priest from seeing God, which would have led to his death. A story is told that before the priest entered the Holy of Holies, a rope would be tied to his leg so he could be pulled out of the room if he collapsed and died in God's presence. In a sense our human spirit and soul perform a similar function within our bodies: they protect our heart (which is still in the process of being renewed and sanctified) from direct contact with God. No man has seen God face-to-face (Exodus 33:20). Even Moses, when he asked to see God's glory, was placed in the cleft of a

rock, and God put His hand over Moses' face so he could see only God's back parts when He passed by.

The Holy of Holies

The innermost room in the Tabernacle was known as the Holy of Holies. This is where God came to commune with the Israelites, and the Holy of Holies came to symbolize the presence of God. Inside the Holy of Holies was the Ark of the Covenant, which contained the tables of the covenant, and, according to Hebrews 9:4, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron's rod that budded (Hebrews 9:4). The OT does not say that these two latter emblems were actually located within the Ark; in fact Exodus 25:16 and 1 Kings 8:9 indicate that nothing was within the Ark but the tablets of Testimony. The Ark was covered by a lid overlaid with gold called the mercy seat. Two cherubim were positioned on this lid, one at each end. They faced each other, looking down toward the mercy seat which was covered by their spreading wings. God dwelt between the cherubim on the mercy seat. The high priest entered into the Holy of Holies only once each year, on the Day of Atonement, to offer the yearly sacrifice for the sins of the nation. As the designated representative of the people by God, he alone was allowed to enter this inner Sanctuary.

In the body of the believer the Holy of Holies represents the Holy Spirit. One of the human spirit's primary functions is to receive guidance from the Holy Spirit. Only Christ can give (fill or baptize in) the Holy Spirit. When we receive the Holy Spirit, and have our human spirit regenerated, we begin to get guidance from God. As indicated above, it was through Jesus' death on the cross that the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies was torn. This occurred in both the Tabernacle/Temple (physically), and in human beings (spiritually). This act by Jesus Christ gave believers free access into God's presence,

which is realized in our lives when we receive the Holy Spirit. When we receive God's Spirit we have the continuous presence of God with us at all times, and we have access to Him any time we seek Him. Through Jesus' action of effectively removing the veil between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, the Holy Spirit now resides alongside (or with) our human spirit, now quickened and alive, and communicating with the Holy Spirit. The relationship that God wants to achieve in our lives is the complete intermingling of our human spirit with the Holy Spirit, so that we become one spirit (1 Corinthians 6:17): just as the bride and bridegroom become one flesh in marriage (Ephesians 5:31), and like the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies, become one room within the Tabernacle. Until this veil is torn and the Holy Spirit enters our bodies, our human spirit receives no communication from God, and the body is ruled by our lusts and pride. Until this happens we are like the Israelites who had to depend on the priest (or some intermediary) to deal with God. This is one belief of the churches in Revelation that God hated: He sent Jesus for the very purpose of reconciling mankind to Himself, and those that followed this teaching refused to accept this reconciliation.

The emblems within the Ark represent the ministry that the Holy Spirit provides from within the Holy of Holies/Holy Place. For believers, the tablets of the law symbolize all of God's law, as taught by Jesus. Moses' law was a law of external compliance, much like the laws of our land are enforced to maintain order and to control society. God changed that by giving us the Holy Spirit (who knows all the law) to write the law in our hearts (really our conscience), and make it an internal guide (Ezekiel 36:26-27). The Holy Spirit, in concert with our human spirit, is constantly providing guidance to mold our conscience. It is the soul of the believer that makes the final decision as to whether the guidance sent will, or will

not be received. If the coals in the Brazen Altar are glowing (the believer is abiding), he will receive this new *code* with gladness. If the believer's conscience is impeded by lust, pride, or other strongholds, his heart is hardened and his soul will not receive the guidance the Holy Spirit provides.

In his book "My Utmost For His Highest", Oswald Chambers has this to say about the Holy Spirit and the believer: "The Holy Spirit has been given; the Lord is glorified - our waiting is not dependent upon the providence of God, but on our own spiritual fitness. The attitude of receiving and welcoming the Holy Spirit into our lives is to be the continual attitude of a believer".

Chapter 5

The Body of Christ

The church body is Christ's body, and thus the church **is** Christ to our world. I refer to the church as God sees it: made up of committed believers everywhere, without regard to particular denominations or church organizations to which they may belong, or have membership. Ephesians 1:22-23 says that God the Father put all things under the feet of Christ and gave Him to be the head over all things to the church, which is His body. Just as our head (brain/mind) controls all the actions of our body through the central nervous system, so Christ was designated by the Father to be head over the church, and to control all its actions through the members of the body. Colossians 1:18 says: *"And He is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things He might have preeminence."*

Of course, we have to hear Christ and know His will, for us to give Him preeminence. I believe the way we can do this is shown in John 14:20-21, which records Christ's words to the disciples as He prepared them for His crucifixion and resurrection: *"At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you. He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me: and he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and will **manifest** myself to him"*(emphasis added). One of the definitions of the word *manifest* in Webster's Dictionary is "to make clear or evident; show plainly; reveal; evince". Thus,

Christ promises to make Himself clear and show His will plainly to members of His body. At this point you may be tempted to ask: “If this is so, why does the church seem to be so ineffective and weak in today’s world, and why is our country (and world) slipping further and further into moral decay with every passing day?” The answers to these questions can be found in God’s word, but we must be willing to seek them as we would a pearl of great price. We will start by discussing some of the fundamentals related to the body of Christ.

What does it mean to be “*in Christ*”?

Romans 5:12 indicates that through one man (Adam) sin entered into the world, and through his sin death became the destiny of all men. Not only did Adam’s human spirit die (become separated from God) when he chose to become his own god and follow Satan, but the ruling nature within his body also changed. This changed nature, was passed on to all mankind, for all men (except Jesus Christ), were in Adam’s loins (DNA). Adam was not created with a sin nature, but he chose to join Eve in *knowing* evil and, as a result, he severed his relationship with God and became a slave to Satan, God’s enemy. To reconcile mankind to Himself God sent His only begotten Son to be a sacrifice (or ransom) for the sin of man. All those that accept Jesus’ sacrifice on the cross, and join Him in death and resurrection, have their sins expunged, and the sin nature is replaced with a new nature: they are *in Christ* (they receive the nature of Christ). Romans 6:5-7 says, “*For if we have been planted together in the likeness of his death, we shall also be in the likeness of his resurrection: knowing this, that our old man is crucified with him, that the body of sin might be destroyed that henceforth we should not serve sin for he that is dead is freed from sin*”. We understand from this that what Jesus did for us on the cross reversed, or negated, the result of Adam’s sin in the Garden of Eden. Whereas

Adam's sin brought death (separation from God), Jesus' death on the cross brought life (reconciliation to God), and our human spirit was *quicken*ed (made alive).

The scripture above also says that if we have really received the death of our "*old man*", we will also "*be in the likeness of his resurrection*", or, we will be united with, or in Him in resurrection. When we are regenerated (reborn), by joining in the death and resurrection of Christ, our sin nature dies, and is no longer our master: we are no longer a slave to sin. Our human spirit, which was dead (to God), is enlivened, and we are for the first time truly free to make uncoerced decisions. This does not mean that we no longer commit sins, but that we now have a choice **not** to sin. This change in our lives is declared publicly when we symbolically bury the old sinful nature in water baptism, and rise up (are resurrected) out of the water with a new godly nature: we are now ready to enter the mind-renewing school of sanctification, and grow into the likeness of Christ.

Being *in Christ* is like being in a building. If anyone wants to harm you when you are inside a building they must gain entry into the building before they can confront you. In the same way, when you are "*in Christ*" Satan can only attack you by first going through Christ. When we belong to God He keeps a vigilant watch over us, and Satan cannot touch us without His permission (1 John 5:18). Of course, we must *abide* in Christ to warrant God's protection: if we fail to stay *in Christ*, for whatever reason, we are vulnerable to Satan's attack. The experiences of the Jewish nation in disobeying God in the OT is a good example: when they followed God they were protected and blessed, when they refused to follow God He could no longer protect them and they were subject to attack from their enemies, who were slaves to sin and Satan.

1 John 5:18 NLT says: *“We know that those who have become part of God’s family do not make a practice of sinning, for God’s Son holds them securely, and the evil one cannot get his hands on them.”*

This does not mean that we no longer commit sins, but that we now have a choice **not** to commit them: we are no longer slaves to sin. This means that when we are regenerated in resurrection we will not **practice**, or **live** in sin. And when we abide *in Christ* the evil one cannot touch us. 1 John 3:5-6 says, *“And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin. Whosoever abideth in him sinneth not: whosoever sinneth hath not seen him, neither known [knoweth] him.”*

When we receive the Holy Spirit, have our human spirit quickened, and our stony (hardened) heart changed, we have everything necessary for sanctification to begin in our lives. This is the process undertaken by the Holy Spirit to make us holy, in the image of Christ. Satan’s attacks come against the mind (part of the biblical heart) through the lust of our eyes, the lust of the flesh, and the pride of life. While God is working to make the heart holy through sanctification, Satan is trying to frustrate his efforts through appeals to these three areas of vulnerability. All the sins of the body come through one of these three areas, and Christ ordained the mystical relationship between the church (His body), and Himself, as head of the body, in part to protect us against such attacks. He knew that we were no match for Satan and his army of demons, so He placed a hedge of protection around us just as He did with Job (Job 1:10). Only God, or we, ourselves, can lower this hedge and allow the evil one to have access.

Ephesians 1:1-20, uses the term “*in Christ*” twelve times, so we know that this phrase is important.

This passage of scripture refers to the riches given to those that are *in Christ*:

Faithfulness
Spiritual blessing
Being holy and without blame
Foreordained to be chosen
Redemption
Remission of offenses
Knowing the mystery of His will
Grace
Wisdom and prudence
Restoration to perfect unity
Inheritance
Sealed by the Spirit of promise
Hope
Power

This list includes most, if not all, of the blessings that believers inherit through being *in Christ*. Still, this does not translate into a working knowledge of what it means to be *in Christ* to me. Possibly one key to personal realization of what being *in Christ* means is related to discernment of the body of Christ (discriminating what they represent). If we are where the Lord wants us to be in His body (the church), and are seeing His gift(s) manifested through us unto the edifying of the body members, we are certainly *in Christ*. Jesus Christ spoke the church into being to create a special relationship with those that believe *into* Him. He identified them as His body, as described in Ephesians 5:22-33.

This passage makes several important points:

- 1) We are to submit ourselves to Christ for He is the head of the church. Just as the brain controls the functions of all the cells and organs of the human body, Christ is to control the actions of the church.
- 2) Christ loves the church and gave Himself for it so that He could sanctify and cleanse it with washing of water by the Word. If the church is hearing and following Christ's directions He will provide teaching that will cleanse the body.
- 3) Christ's shepherding of the church will result in a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing; but that it should be holy and without blemish. The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep, and if one goes astray, he finds it and gathers it up in his arms and returns to the flock.
- 4) Christ nourishes and cherishes the church. Christ feeds and protects the church just as the Robin feeds and protects her chicks.
- 5) We are members of Christ's body, of His flesh, and of His bones. In the same way that we protect the members of our body, Christ protects the members of His body.
- 6) We will become one (spirit) with Christ in the same manner that a husband and wife become one flesh (see 1 Corinthians 6:17). If we are on God's track for our lives our human spirit becomes one (over time) with the Holy Spirit in the same way that a godly couple begin to act alike, and function as a unit, over time.

Ephesians 5:22-32 describes the relationship we have with Christ after we have believed into him, for comparison is made to a man and woman after they have been married, and the

union has been consummated. Christ gathers us together into His mystical body and begins the process of sanctification, the renewing of our minds, so that we can think and act like Christ. This is referred to in the bible as *conforming us to the image of Christ*. The analogy of the union between a man and woman in marriage is perfect. When a man and woman come together as one flesh each one must undergo some reprogramming (renewing) of the mind so that they can come together in agreement on issues that initially were divisive. In the same way, the Holy Spirit shows us God's will in the situations and decisions we face, and if we accept His guidance, gradually we become more Christlike. John 16:14 says that the Holy Spirit receives from Christ and declares it unto us. The decision to follow God's guidance, or not, is a question of the will, which resides in our soul. Ephesians 6:6 GNT says that we do the will of God from our soul. Most English versions of the NT incorrectly substitute the word heart for soul in this passage.

What does it mean to have Christ *in us*.

When we are baptized in the Holy Spirit we receive the Spirit of Christ and thus, have Christ in us (Romans 8:9). Matthew 3:11 Recovery Version says, *"I baptize you in water unto repentance, but he that is coming after me is stronger than I, whose sandals I am not worthy to carry. He Himself will baptize you in the Holy Spirit and fire"*. Christ enters our bodies in the person of the Holy Spirit, and one of His principal purposes is to renew our minds, to conform us to the image of Jesus Christ. Romans 12:2 says, *"And be not conformed to this world: but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God."* This renewal process is referred to in the Bible as *sanctification*, which is defined by Webster as, "to make holy; to make free from sin; purify". As we allow the Holy Spirit to do His work in our lives we become more like Christ, and we do the works of

Christ through our bodies. It is the works done in our bodies after we have received Christ that are judged at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Corinthians 5:10).

How Can We Refrain From Sinning and “Keep” Ourselves?

Receiving God’s life through the Holy Spirit in new birth is the starting point for a Christian walk, the minimum for a believer. If we fail to go on from there to participate in the renewing process it would be like having a new acquaintance to visit our home, but only allowing them into the door, and no further. Unless we invite them into the house, to sit down and begin sharing with each other, we never really get to know our new acquaintance. They can never begin to tell us about themselves and the things they know, and we can never open up our heart as we would with a true friend. Communing with God is an important part of the mind renewing process, for God can show us a better way, and we can gradually begin to change. God wants to show us our place in His body so we can begin to function in the gift He desires to manifest through us. We noted above that 1 John 5:18 says that if we are part of God’s family (Christ’s body) we will not make a practice of sinning, for Christ holds us securely. This scripture says that if we are letting the Holy Spirit lead us, and if we are abiding (standing fast, submitting, and communing with God), the evil one cannot get his hands on us. This is what is meant by *keeping* ourselves.

What Does The Bible Say About The Body?

A wonderful description of Christ’s mystical body is given in 1 Corinthians 12. 1 Corinthians 12: 13-14 says, *“For by one Spirit we are all baptized into one body, whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have all been made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many.* There are no issues that should divide those that are in Christ’s body, for

we are all led by the same Spirit to accomplish God's purposes within our church body. Our worship and fellowship will be blessed because of our unity in the Spirit.

1 Corinthians 12:15-18 says, *"If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now hath God set the members every one of them in the body, as it hath pleased Him.* No matter what your place is within the body, you are as important as any other member, God puts us in the place in the body that we need to be. There should be no jealousy within the body about our relative positions. If we leave the body because of dissatisfaction with our position in the body, or because of some real or imagined hurt, we are basically telling God that we know where we belong better than He does.

1 Corinthians 12: 21-26 says: *"And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of thee: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you. Nay, much more those members of the body which seem more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon them we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness. For our comely parts have no need: but God hath tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism in the body; but that the members should have the same care for one another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member is honored, all the members rejoice with it.* These verses teach us that all the members of the body are necessary for it to function properly, and we need to recognize the weaker members of the body to give them positions of honor. God tempers the body together so that we can share each other's griefs and rejoice in each other's honors.

How Do We Maintain The Health Of The Body?

As indicated above, 1 Corinthians 12:13-27 provides a beautiful description of the body of Christ. It is clear from this passage that members of His body are to love and respect each other, giving the greater honor to the members that lack. If one member suffers, all the members should suffer; and if any member is honored, all the members are to rejoice. It is Christ's agape love, manifested by the members of the body for each other, that is the glue that sticks (tempers) the body together. If we slip into willing sinfulness, regarding iniquity in our heart, or entertain unforgiveness, we allow Satan to breach our hedge, and he will try to reinforce the foothold we have given him by suggesting that what we have done is not really contrary to God's word. Hebrews 10:16-27 describes the new covenant that God makes with believers, and it states that fearful judgment and fiery indignation awaits those that sin willfully, and refuse to become part of Christ's body.

God will lower the hedge around us if He sees something in our life that needs correction. Satan can then attack us in the area that is weak, but he does not have total freedom in dealing with us - God is in control and He uses trials like this to teach us, prove us, and make us more like Christ. This must be one of the main goals Christ had in gathering us together as His body on earth - to protect us against the onslaughts of Satan, especially when we are most vulnerable, when we are still babes. Members of the body are to support and encourage each other when under attack by Satan.

Jesus established the sacrament of the Lord's Supper to strengthen us so that we could remain steadfast as members of His body. By partaking of the bread and wine at the Lord's Supper we are nourished and strengthened (Ephesians 5:29-30). The wine represents Christ's blood shed for our sins and when we partake of it in the Sacrament of the Lord's

Supper we are painting the goal posts of our hearts with His precious blood, just as the Israelites painted their door posts with the blood of the sacrificed lamb during Passover, the night before they departed from Egypt. When we celebrate the Lord's Supper we are to recognize the needs of the other members of the body as we come together to participate. According to the Bible, if we fail to "*discern*" the Lord's body, the consequences are serious.

There are three different beliefs regarding the Lord's Supper:

1. The Catholic church (and possibly others) believe that the bread actually becomes Christ's flesh, and the wine becomes Christ's blood as it is received in the sacrament. This is termed *transubstantiation*. The Lutheran church adopts a similar doctrine called *consubstantiation*, in which Christ's body and blood accompany the bread and wine of the sacrament.
2. Most evangelical Protestant churches adopt the symbolic memorialist doctrine of the Lord's Supper. According to this view, Jesus words establishing this sacrament were purely symbolic. To eat the body and blood of Christ simply means to put one's faith in Christ. According to this view, the Lord's Supper is just a memorial, during which we recall what Christ accomplished for believers.
3. The doctrine that came out of the reformation was that promulgated by John Calvin. He maintained that the Lord's Supper is connected with the believer's ongoing union with Christ, and is intimately tied to the believer's sanctification and growth in grace. He maintained that there is a sacramental union between signs and things signified. The signs are not mere symbols of some absent reality but instead invoke the actual presence of Christ's body and blood thru the action of the Holy Spirit within us. If we discern Christ's body (recognize what the elements represent), our union with

Christ is strengthened by partaking. The bread strengthens the individual and corporate body. The blood, which represents life, strengthens our relation with Christ so that His life is manifested in us.

1 Corinthians 10:16-17 says: *“The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ? For we being many are one bread, and one body: for we are all partakers of that one bread.* The word communion as used here means “sharing in the realization of the effects of the blood (i.e. death) of Christ, and the body of Christ, as set forth by the emblems in the Lord’s Supper, of participation in what is derived from the Holy Spirit.” (Vine’s Complete Expository Dictionary, page 115)

John 6:53-56 says: *“Verily, verily I say unto you, Except ye eat the flesh of the Son of man, and drink His blood, ye have no life in you. Whoso eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him.* To eat Christ’s flesh and to drink His blood is to receive His life. To eat is to take food that can be assimilated organically into, and be made a part, of our body. Hence, to eat the flesh of the Lord Jesus is to receive Him within (spiritually), so that we gradually become conformed to His image. John the Baptist said it well: *“He must increase and I must decrease”*. To drink Christ’s blood is to spiritually renew the blood placed on the side posts and lintel of our hearts, thus restating our position *in Christ*, as believers who are not yet perfect, but whose sins have been hidden forever.

1 Corinthians 11:23-26 is the scripture most of us associate with the Lord’s Supper: *The Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when He had given thanks, He*

brake it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also He took the cup, when He had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do ye, as oft as you drink it, in remembrance of me. For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do show the Lord's death till He come. It may be this scripture that has led many Protestant churches to believe that the Lord's Supper is just a memorial to Christ's death, a way of reminding us of the passion of Christ on the cross. It is that, but so much more. I believe this interpretation has resulted in weakening the body of Christ, and has been a great contributor to the lack of *tempering* (mixing or blending together) in the church body.

Hebrews Chapter 10 gives a stern warning to believers that fail to take part in the body of Christ, and refuse to come together to worship, fellowship, and participate in the sacrament of the Lord's Supper. Referring to these believers, Hebrews 10:25-27 Recovery Version says, *"Not abandoning our own assembling together, as the custom with some is, but exhorting one another; and so much the more as you see the day drawing near; For when we sin willfully after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice of bulls and goats for sins, But a certain fearful expectation of judgment and fervor of fire, which is to consume the adversaries"*. This should be a wake-up call for those that feel no need to take their place in the body of Christ, but instead are satisfied to be fed by television ministers and live their lives as "lone rangers". I believe the reason for this strong warning lies in the fact that the mystical body of Christ is the structure Jesus established to carry on His work on earth after His death. If we refuse to become part of that structure, for reasons other than ignorance, sickness, or incapacity, we basically turn our backs on the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. Comments on Hebrews 10:29 in the Recovery Version of the Bible note that this is not referring to the second death, in which unbelievers are cast into the lake of fire and brimstone, but that these be-

lievers may suffer dispensational punishment for their failures. Only the Lord Jesus Christ, our great Judge, is able to look into the heart of those that refuse to take part in His plan for the church, and He is the One that will decide their fate. Hebrews 10:31 observes that *“It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God”*.

To appreciate the great need Christ intended the sacrament of the Lord’s Supper to fulfill in strengthening the body, consider the results of eating the bread and drinking the cup unworthily. 1 Corinthians 11:29-30 says, *“For he that eateth and drinketh unworthily, eateth and drinketh damnation to himself, not discerning the Lord’s body. For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep.”* Other versions of Bible use the word “judgment” rather than “damnation” in this passage. To fail to discern (conceive or recognize) Christ’s mystical body (the church) when we partake in the Lord’s Supper is to fail to realize that this sacrament was given for the purpose of tempering and strengthening members of the church body in His body. His mystical body represents Him (or is Him) in the world since His death and resurrection. Would it make a difference in our world if we were to believe and act on this?

Chapter 6

The Future Abode

John 14:2 KJV: *“In my Father’s house are many mansions: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you.”*

John 14:2 GNT: *“In my Father’s house are many dwelling places. But if not, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you!”*

I. The Believer’s Immortal Body

I believe the KJV of the above scripture from John has led to considerable misunderstanding about the “*place*” Jesus has gone to prepare for believers at their rapture/resurrection. When Jesus goes to prepare a “*place*” for us He follows the ancient Jewish marriage rite in which the bridegroom goes to prepare a “chuppah”, or wedding chamber, after the betrothal has been agreed to by the bride (Hosea 2:19-20). The wedding chamber, which is located in the Father’s house, is the “*place*” where the marriage is consummated. In the above scripture the “*place*” (wedding chamber) that Jesus has gone to prepare corresponds to the abode, or “*dwelling place*”, in the Father’s house. The New Strong’s Expanded Dictionary of Bible Words indicates the Greek word interpreted as “*place*” in John 14:2 is, “a place, indefinite; a portion of space viewed in reference to its occupancy, or as appropriated to it-

self". From this definition we assume that the "*place*" referred to is actually a "location" within the Father's house that becomes identified with the ultimate occupant.

John 2:16 says that the Father's house is the temple, and John 2:21 further identifies the Father's house as the temple of His (Christ's) body (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19). We know that through Christ's death and resurrection His earthly body is now made up of the church, which includes all believers who have been baptized into His body (1 Corinthians 12:13). However, it is also important to recognize that the Lord is sanctifying and cleansing this body so that He might present it in heaven as a glorious church, not having spot nor wrinkle, but that it be holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:26-27): we are His body on earth as well as in heaven. 2 Corinthians 5:1-4 says, "*For we know that if our earthly house of this tabernacle were dissolved, we have a building of God, an house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. For in this we groan, earnestly desiring to be clothed upon with our house which is from heaven: If so be that being clothed we shall not be found naked. For we that are in this tabernacle do groan, being burdened: not for that we would be unclothed, but clothed upon, that mortality might be swallowed up of life.*" We see from this passage of scripture that we are Christ's body, whether on earth or in heaven, and this "*house*" is the spiritual body with which we will be clothed when our marriage with Christ is consummated. Notes on John 14:2 from the Recovery Version of the New Testament say, "According to the interpretation in John 2:16, 21, *My Father's house* refers to the temple, the body of Christ, as God's dwelling place. At first the body of Christ was only His individual body, but through Christ's death and resurrection the body of Christ has become His corporate body, which is the church, including all believers who have been regenerated through His resurrection (1 Peter 1:3). In Jesus' resurrection the church is the body of Christ, which is the house of God (1 Timothy 3:15; 1 Peter 2:5; Hebrews 3:6), God's

habitation (Ephesians 2:21-22), God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). The many abodes are the many members of the body of Christ (Romans 12:5), which is God's temple (1 Corinthians 3:16-17). This is adequately proven by John 14:23, which says that the Lord and the Father will make an abode with the one who loves Him." The conclusion we are drawn to here is that the many "*dwelling places*" in John 14:2 GNT represent the eternal bodies we receive at rapture/resurrection, and the "*place*" He goes to prepare represents the particular location (and possibly authority/responsibility) within the body of Christ (God's temple). In an interesting response to James and John when they asked for a "*place*" of authority in His glory, Jesus replied "*But to sit off My right and off My left is not mine to give, but for whom it has been prepared*" (Mark 10:37-40 GNT). It would seem from this that the "*places*" in the Father's house for risen believers has already been assigned by God the Father.

Two of the three parts of man, viz. spirit and soul, are immaterial, formed and implanted by God and destined to return to Him in heaven, or, in the case of unbelievers, to descend into the Abyss (Hell) to join Satan's other slaves. The body is the third constituent of man, and God creates it through ordained natural processes within the womb of the expectant mother's body. It is material in nature, and is formed by programmed physical processes, whereas the spirit and soul are formed by direct action of God, and given to man in the womb. At death, the earthly body cannot enter God's Kingdom of Heaven since it is not totally holy (still retains sin). It must return to the earth as a seed to die, and give life to the spiritual body that will arise at the resurrection. 1 Corinthians 15: 35-50 was quoted earlier in Chapter 2, but it bears repeating here. This passage of scripture provides a wonderful description of the mortal (natural) body that we sow in death, and the immortal (spiritual) body that we are given by God at resurrection. "*But some man will say, How are the dead raised*

up? And with what body do they come? Thou fool, that thou sowest is not quickened, except it die: And that which thou sowest, thou sowest not that body that shall be, but bare grain, it may chance of wheat, or of some other grain: But God giveth it a body as it hath pleased him, and to every seed his own body. All flesh is not the same flesh: but there is one kind of flesh of men, another flesh of beasts, another of fishes, and another of birds. There are also celestial bodies, and bodies terrestrial: but the glory of the celestial is one, and the glory of the terrestrial is another. There is the glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, another glory of the stars: for one star differeth from another star in glory. So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonor; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, the first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth, earthy: the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have born the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. This passage of scripture likens our natural body to a seed placed in the ground. The new life, the (embryo) contained within the seed, rises only after the seed (husk) dies. Our resurrected bodies take the form God chooses (1 Corinthians 15:38), but He seems to base His choice, at least in part, on the pattern contained within the embryo (DNA?) in the body that arises when the last trumpet sounds. We know that our spiritual body retains something that identifies us as the person we were on earth, for the Bible indicates that we will recognize people in heaven. Further, the apostles and many others recognized Christ when He appeared to

them after resurrection. Even though His appearance was altered there was something about Christ's immortal body that caused His friends to recognize Him. The wording in the above scripture states that each spiritual body is unique, and the glory of one differs from that of another.

1 Corinthians 3:9-12 refers to our earthly bodies as the house (building), with Christ as the foundation, which is built with gold, silver, and precious stones, or with wood, hay, and stubble. Verses 13-15 go on to say that every man's works will be subjected to the refiner's fire, and will "*abide*" or be "*burned*". If our works survive we will receive a reward, whereas, if they are consumed we will suffer loss. It seems clear that these "*works*" will, in some way, be manifested in the house (building, or immortal body) that we inherit at resurrection. If our immortal body in some way manifests the righteous acts (works) accomplished by the Holy Spirit within us while we were on earth, it would seem perfectly logical (see Romans 2:6; 1 Corinthians 3:13-15; 2 Corinthians 5:10; Philippians 3:20-21; Revelation 22:12). Like the seed, our old house dies, and decays while we are in the ground, but we receive a new house upon resurrection. Just as the seed contains the embryo, our old house contains the pattern for new life (possibly DNA). Christ fashions a new immortal body (abode) using the building materials we have sent up to Him (1 Corinthians 3:12), and in accordance with the pattern (embryo) derived from the seed in a way somewhat similar to the way our original earthly bodies were formed in the womb (Psalms 139:15-16). He then clothes our spirit/soul with this new body at rapture/resurrection. Our new house is designed by God to reflect the image of our earthly and our heavenly bodies (1 Corinthians 15:49). Our spirit (through the guidance of the Holy Spirit), is the source of inspiration for the works done in our body

while on earth, and these works make up the spiritual building materials with which our heavenly house is constructed.

Those whose works are totally “*consumed*” by the refiner’s fire will not have any gold, silver, or precious stones with which to construct a spiritual dwelling place: they only provided wood, hay and stubble, which are all consumed by the refiners fire. Although they will still be “*saved*”, they will apparently be “*naked*”, since they provided only building materials that were consumed by the refiner’s fire (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). They presented no “*works*” that survived the refiner’s fire because the Holy Spirit was unable to accomplish anything spiritually useful through them while on earth.

II. God’s Promises Concerning Overcomers

The spiritual condition of the seven churches of Revelation represent the spiritual condition of the end-times church (body of Christ) on earth at the time of Christ’s return; therefore, the promises of the Lord to these church bodies concerning their future in eternity should provide guidance as to what He has in store for us. The relevant passages are given below:

1. Revelation 2:7: *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God”.*

This scripture indicates that those that overcome will ultimately live in the New Jerusalem, for the tree of life is located in the “*midst of the street of it, and on either side of the river’...*” (Revelation 22:2). This tree will yield different fruit each month, and the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. The Greek word interpreted “*overcometh*” in this passage means “to conquer, overcome, vanquish, subdue”. The notes on this verse from the Recovery Version of the NT say, “In these seven epistles, to overcome is to overcome the degraded

situation of the churches. In this epistle, to overcome is to recover our first love toward the Lord, and to hate the works of the Nicolaitans, the hierarchy that the Lord hates.” 1 John 5:4 states that everything generated of God overcomes the world through the power of faith. The believer’s freedom allowing direct communion with God the Father was bought for us at great price when Jesus went to the cross, and the veil in the temple was rent.

2. Revelation 2:11: *“He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death.”*

This refers to Revelation 20:6, which says that those that have been raised in the first resurrection (or rapture), will not be subject to the second death, but will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years (referring to the millennium). Believers must be willing to endure suffering and prison, and remain faithful unto death. Those that claim to be “*Jews*” (Christians) but are not, are guilty of blaspheme, and God will consider them as belonging to Satan’s church.

3. Revelation 2:17: *“To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone, and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that receiveth it.”*

Believers must resist the enticements of the world that try to deflect their focus from the things of God, and draw them into idolatry and sexual sin. The “*hidden manna*” in this passage seems to refer to Jesus’ discussion with the crowd who had been fed with the five barley loaves and two fish, who followed Him the next day to the other side of the Sea of Galilee. Jesus accused them of following Him only because they were seeking to be fed again with “*meat*” (food). In John 6:31-35 and 49-51, Jesus tells them that He is the “*bread which cometh down from heaven, that a man may eat thereof, and not die*”. Revelation 2:17 may refer to the time near the end, when believers into Jesus Christ cannot buy or sell. Like the

Israelites in the wilderness, these believers will not have access to food, and will depend on Christ to give spiritual (and possibly material) food to provide strength, physically and spiritually. The white stone that the Lord gives the overcomer may refer to one of the stones in the heavenly temple referred to in Revelation 3:12. In earthly memorials individuals are often honored with a brick or stone with their name written thereon. If this is the case here, the Lord will give overcomers a white (meaning purity) stone with the overcomer's new name written thereon. God gives everyone that belongs to Him a name that represents their spiritual entity. He actually renamed Abram and Jacob while they were still on earth, and Jesus Christ will have a name written that no man knows, but He Himself (Revelation 19:12).

4. Revelation 2:26: *“And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power (authority) over the nations. And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received from my Father. And I will give him the morning star.”*

These believers have refused to accept the false teaching of the world religion represented by the harlot of Revelation 17, and they have seemingly fought against the teaching of this “prophetess”. To these the Lord says that He will give authority over the “*nations*” that have been totally defeated in the final war of Armageddon. It seems obvious that believers who refuse to accept the teachings of the end-times harlot church, but instead keep the true teachings of God will assist the Lord in ruling the nations of the world after Armageddon, and they will be given the “*morning star*” (Jesus) so they can share His Glory and brightness.

5. Revelation 3:5: *“He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed with white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels.”*

There were apparently “few” here that had not “defiled their garments”. This refers to believers that do the works of God, works that survive the refiners fire, and will thus receive a reward at the judgment seat of Christ. They have not “defiled their garments” with dead works. These will be clothed with white garments signifying purity, and holiness, and the Lord will not blot out their name from the Book of Life.

6. Revelation 3:12: *“Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall no more go out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, which is new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and I will write upon him my new name.”*

This passage seems to be about the New Jerusalem, rather than about the temple of God in heaven. Revelation 21:22 says, “And I saw no temple therein: for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are the temple of it” (speaking of the New Jerusalem). The Father God and the Lamb are the temple in New Jerusalem, thus we conclude that the entire city is a temple: the dwelling place of God the Father and His Son Jesus Christ. These believers had a little strength, had kept the Word of the Lord, and had not denied his name, and He promises to make them a “pillar” (a person of authority, or influence) in New Jerusalem. These believers will live in the city, and will have no need to “go out” for any purpose.

7. Revelation 3:21: *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.”*

These Laodiceans came from a church like many we see nowadays that think they are rich and have need of nothing when actually they are wretched, miserable, poor, blind, and naked. Jesus says they are lukewarm, neither hot nor cold, and He will spew them out of His mouth. But those that He loves He will rebuke and chasten. For those that overcome the dead church, do spiritual works that withstand the refiners fire, and earn white raiment with which to be clothed, the Lord promises to seat on thrones of authority in His government.

III. Conclusions

1. When believers meet Jesus Christ in the clouds we go the Father's temple in heaven where we receive our immortal body. We then return with Christ at Armageddon and reign with Him on earth during the millennium. Later, after the millennium, we go to the heavenly New Jerusalem.
2. The "*place*" we will go to within the Father's house has been determined. It is a location based on the "*works*" done in our earthly vessels through the Holy Spirit ("*works*" that survive the refiner's fire).
3. The abode we occupy for eternity is our immortal body: a body that reflects our earthly "essence", and the degree of conformity to the image of Jesus Christ.
4. Believers will assist Jesus Christ in the administration of His government during the millennium: we will be priests of God and of Christ.
5. Believers that have washed their robes in the blood of Christ have right to the tree of life, and can enter into the New Jerusalem.

Chapter 7

A Reward

1 Corinthians 3:13-14: *“Every man’s work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every [prove each] man’s work of what sort it is. If any man’s work abide which he hath built thereupon, he shall receive a reward.”*

Like many other things that happen to believers after rapture/resurrection, receiving a reward from the creator of the universe is difficult to comprehend: it’s overwhelming. It may be that this feeling of total inadequacy and insignificance in the presence of God is what He is seeking, for we know *“the Lord seeth not as man seeth; for man looketh on the outer appearance, but the Lord looketh on the heart”* (1 Samuel 16:7). In Matthew 25:31-46, when the Lord judges the Nations, the sheep are not even aware of the good works credited to them. Likewise, the goats did not remember their failure to do good works. The Lord places a higher value on good works accomplished in our lives through His Holy Spirit within us than for good works done out of our own sympathy, or under the press of God’s laws we think will win us a place in His Kingdom. I’m sure that we are in for a lot of surprises when we see who receives the greatest rewards on that day.

The Beautiful Garments

It would appear that the garment (or raiment) referred to in Revelation 3:4 (and other NT scriptures) included an inner garment called a coat (*chiton*), and an outer garment called a cloak, or robe (*himation*). This is probably similar to the clothing of the Bride in Revelation 19:8, which is described as “. . . *fine linen, clean (bright) and white (pure) which represents the righteousness (righteous acts) of the saints.*” We know the Bride includes all believers that have inherited eternal life through the righteousness of Jesus Christ. Their clothing is washed bright and pure in the blood of the Lamb. Isaiah 61:10 says “*...he hath clothed me with the garments of salvation, he hath covered me with the robe of righteousness, as a bridegroom decketh himself with ornaments, and as a bride adorneth herself with her jewels.*” We note that these believers have been clothed with garments consisting of the coat and robe of fine white linen, referred to as the white robe of righteousness.

We find two other groups receiving robes in the book of Revelation. Revelation 7:9, 14 say, “*After this I beheld, and lo, a great multitude, which no man could number, of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues, stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes, and palms in their hands...These are they which came out of great tribulation, and have washed their robes, and made them white in the blood of the Lamb.*” There seems to be little doubt that these are the saints that Christ has called forth from the earth in rapture/resurrection, who met Him in the clouds (Matthew 24:29-30). The Word is not absolutely clear whether “all” saints, raptured or resurrected, are included here since the scripture says these came out of great tribulation “*such as was not since the beginning of the world to this time*”. The great tribulation begins around the middle of Daniel’s prophesied last seven years (Matthew 24:21). I am inclined to believe that this great multitude includes all new covenant believers

resurrected and/or raptured at this time. OT believers were delivered from captivity (Ephesians 4:8-10), and taken to heaven by Christ after His resurrection (see Matthew 27:52-53).

The last group of believers that receive robes is described in Revelation 6:9-11 which says, *“And when he had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar the souls of them that were slain for the word of God, and for the testimony which they held: And they cried with a loud voice, saying, How long, O Lord, holy and true, dost thou not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth. And white robes were given unto every one of them; and it was said unto them, that they should rest yet for a little season, until their fellowservants also and their brethren, that should be killed as they were, should be fulfilled.”* It is clear from the text who these martyred believers were, and it is somewhat implied that these, in addition to their brethren, are included in the great multitude described in Chapter 7. Nevertheless, there is justification for believing that these martyrs (overcomers) receive a robe that distinguishes them from others before the throne. In Green’s Interlinear Greek-English NT the Greek word used to describe the martyr’s robe differs from that used to describe other believer’s robes, and, although I can find no authoritative definition of this Greek word it is noteworthy that it contains Greek letter phrases related to both “robe” and “overcometh” (see 1 John 5:4 GNT), which leads to the belief that this is an overcomer’s robe: a robe of one to which greater honor and authority may be given.

To summarize what the Bible seems to teach on the subject of the garments that Jesus Christ gives to raptured/resurrected saints:

- 1) Although the Bible refers to the immortal body believers receive as clothing in 2 Corinthians 5:3, the overall teaching of God’s Word is that believers receive a body that manifests characteristics of our earthly bodies, as well as our degree of confor-

mity to the image of Jesus Christ through works done that survive the refiner's fire (1 Corinthians 3:13-15). I am inclined to believe the the "clothing" referred to in 2 Corinthians is our immortal body, and not an article of clothing.

- 2) The believer's immortal body will be clothed with apparel that represents the level of suffering endured for Christ, as well as the honor/authority given to that immortal during the millennium.
- 3) Those in the company of the Bride of Christ will receive the garments (coat and cloak/robe) of white linen. Those that endure the trials of the great tribulation possibly receive a more ornate robe reflecting that fact.
- 4) Believers who have been martyred for the Word of God, will receive the robe of overcomers, which undoubtedly will reflect the beauty of one who did not bend nor break when facing death.

The Believer's Crown(s)

There is one additional item of apparel we need to consider in our study: this is the crown(s) received by raptured/resurrected saints.

The Crown of Righteousness: 2 Timothy 4:8: *"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 to all them also that love his appearing."*

We see from this passage that all believers that look hopefully to Christ's coming in the clouds to call them home to heaven will receive a crown of righteousness. Our righteousness is a gift from Jesus Christ that we obtain when we are baptized into Him, but we enter the process of sanctification afterwards, during which we are to give up our right to ourselves, and give the Holy Spirit within us freedom to work as He will. It is these righteous

“works” done by the Holy Spirit in our bodies that are recognized by the crown of righteousness. Notice that the crown is “*laid up for me*”, which seem to imply that this crown is formed by the hand of God as deeds (works) on earth are accumulated.

The Crown of Life: **James 1:12:** “*Blessed is the man that endureth temptation: for when he is tried [hath been approved], he shall receive the crown of life, which the Lord hath promised to them that love him.*”

This is a crown signifying eternal life given to the man who has endured painful temptations in which he has proved victorious. In the OT the Hebrew word interpreted *temptation* is used only once, in reference to the Israelites being tempted (tried) in the wilderness. The Greek word *peirasmos*, which is interpreted as temptation in the NT, is used 15 times. In every case it denotes a trial or test, or “to put to the proof”. From this we understand that temptation itself is not good or evil; it is simply a test revealing where we stand in the process of sanctification, and who we really are in Christ. The one that receives this crown has suffered severe tests and has persevered. They have lived with life and vigour and are characterized as being like God Himself in this regard.

Satan used three different appeals in tempting Jesus in the wilderness: lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life. These three seem to encompass all the weaknesses of mankind, and, accordingly, all of Satan’s plans for the destruction of man are focused on the use of weapons that appeal to these three areas. The word lust in the NT is actually the Greek word for desire or longing, and depending on the particular form of the word, can mean earnest desire, ardent desire, irregular or violent desire, cupidity, or impure desire. Lust of the flesh is desire that resides *in* the flesh, and gratification results in some sort of

pleasurable reaction in our emotional or physical makeup. Lust of the flesh includes such things as hunger, health, comfort, sexual gratification, emotional peace, affluence, safety, etc.

Vincent's Word Studies in the NT says, "The desire of the eyes does not involve appropriation. It is satisfied with contemplating. It represents a higher type of desire than the desire of the flesh, in that it seeks mental pleasure where the other seeks physical gratification". There are many mental pleasures that are acceptable: recognizing the beauty in a work of art, enjoying the beauty of mountain grandeur or any of God's creations, or even enjoying the beauty of an attractive woman (or handsome man). It is the word contemplation that leads us into difficulty. Contemplation is defined by Webster as "the act of looking at something intently; thinking about something intently; study; consideration; a looking forward, expectation or intention" Sexual contemplation is undoubtedly the most prevalent result from lust of the eyes in today's world. Men are naturally attracted by a beautiful face and a well-proportioned female figure. It seems obvious that God made us this way for a purpose. James 1:14-15 says, "*But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished [full-grown], bringeth forth death*". We noted above that the Greek word interpreted *lust* means desire, and in this usage an accurate rendering of the above would be, "But every man is tempted when he is drawn away by his own **strong** desire". The use of the word "strong" implies something more than just an admiring glance: it undoubtedly starts with contemplation. In this passage "*enticed*" means "to entrap, take, or catch with a bait." It is used to mean allure, entice, or delude in James 1:14. Thus, we could interpret this scripture in this way: "But every man is tested when he starts to contemplate, and is entrapped (or deluded) by his own strong desire". It is at the beginning (the contemplation stage) of the testing

process that we must draw the line, and go no further. If we move from an admiring glance to indulging contemplation, we have opened the door to enticement. Once a man has been deluded he is hooked (has taken the bait), and is ready to take the enticement to the next level. He is ready to take his strong desire to conception, or fulfillment, which leads to sin: a purposeful act of disobedience to God. Finally, the scripture says that when the sin is full-grown (full stature or measure), it brings spiritual death. I believe the word fullgrown used here could be interpreted as “adopting the sin as a lifestyle” or as a “stronghold”. I believe we can get a feel for the power of this particular appeal when we reflect on the number of men that have fallen victim to its allure. The ultimate end of these victims is often absolute degradation.

I John 2:16 says, *“For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh, and the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life, is not of the Father, but is of the world.”* In many ways I believe pride is the most vulnerable area in which we are tested. Pride is very closely connected to our id, which Webster defines as, “that part of the psyche which is regarded as the reservoir of the libido and the source of instinctive energy: it is dominated by the pleasure principle and impulsive wishing, and its impulses are controlled through the development of the ego and superego”. This is a good description of the old sin nature we receive at birth from our ancestor Adam. However, when we receive Christ we do serious damage to the id, and thus to our pride, since our old Adamic nature died with Jesus on the cross. Both the id and our pride reside in the biblical heart (which includes the mind): Proverbs 21:4 says that a proud heart is sinful, and Proverbs 4:23 says that the heart is the wellspring of life. This sounds very much like one of the definitions of libido: “the driving force behind all human action”. Ezekiel 36:26 says that God gives us a new heart when we receive Christ, so there is good scriptural

basis for the argument that receiving Christ and renewing our minds can result in the slow death of pride. Until we are *in Christ*, and the Holy Spirit begins to renew our minds, the id is the driving force behind all human action. As we accept the Holy Spirit's reprogramming (sanctification), the id gradually diminishes in authority, and we become more Christlike.

The Crown of Glory: **1 Peter 5:1-4** says, *"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind; Neither as being lords over God's heritage [lording it over the charge allotted to you], but being ensamples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, ye will receive a crown of glory that fadeth not away."*

This third crown is reserved for those who rise to positions of leadership in the flock, not by scheming or pushing themselves, but through the respect, honor, and recognition of other members of the body. The requirements for being an elder are given in Titus 1:6-9; 1 Timothy 3:1-7; 1 Peter 5:2. Elders must be blameless, be the husband of one wife, have faithful children (believing children) that are not accused of riotous or unruly behavior, not be self-willed nor soon to anger, not a quarreler, not given to wine, not greedy of ill gain, but hospitable, a lover of good, discreet, just, holy, temperate, clinging to the Word and able to encourage by sound doctrine. This is certainly a tall order that many of us could not measure up to. Denominational churches would have difficulty meeting some of these requirements with their system of assigning and promoting pastors (elders) based on church growth. This crown of glory does not fade away for it represents the glory manifested in Jesus Christ when He comes for those that belong to Him.