

**CHRIST IN YOU
THE HOPE OF GLORY**



Joseph Herrin

**Christ in You -
The Hope of Glory**
Joseph Herrin

Shining a light on the glorious future of the sons of God.

Colossians 1:27

God willed to make known the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles,
which is Christ in you, the hope of glory.

Christ in You - The Hope of Glory

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Foreword

A word of explanation is necessary at the start of this book. In this work you will find this writer using names in reference to God the Father and God the Son that are more faithful to their Hebrew original than the names and titles generally in use by the church today. The name Yah, or Yahweh, will be found in reference to God the Father, and the name Yahshua will be utilized when speaking of the Son.

This usage is not intended to be divisive, nor does it serve as a renunciation of the usage of titles such as Lord or God. Neither is it a condemnation of those who choose to call the Son of God Jesus. My intent as a teacher of the Bible is simply to illumine and instruct. There is great meaning in the Hebrew names of the Father and the Son, and these names are directly related to one another, as well as bearing many significant relationships to other historic figures from the Bible, some of whom serves as types and shadows of the Son of God.

For example, Joshua, the Israelite leader who led the people of God across the Jordan and into battle to take possession of the land of Canaan bears the same name as the Messiah. They both were called Yahshua. The Son of God also began His ministry at the Jordan River as He was baptized by John. Both men labored to establish a kingdom dedicated to Yahweh, the first external and natural, the latter internal and spiritual.

Yah is the name used in reference to the Father on forty-nine separate occasions in the Old Testament. Most Christians have utilized this name of God without knowing that they were doing so. Whenever the word hallelujah is uttered, the speaker is literally exclaiming "Praise Yah," for this is the meaning of the Hebrew word from which it is derived. The longer name Yahweh is found an additional 6,828 times.

The name of the Son is likewise significant, for Yahshua is understood to mean "Yah's Salvation." The Gospel writer indicates that this is the meaning of the name given to the Savior at His birth.

Matthew 1:21

"And she will bear a Son; and you shall call His name Yahshua, for it is He who will save His people from their sins."

It has been the practice of this writer for many years to use these names, which more clearly represent their Hebrew originals. It is my hope that their employment in this book might aid the reader by bringing forth light on relationships that are obscured, as well as promoting an increased intimacy with God the Father by calling Him by His memorial name, instead of a title which men have substituted.



A Wider View

I believe much of the current tendency of the saints to get caught up in false moves of God, their inability to discern truth from error, the tendency toward low living, and an absence of honor and dignity in their character and activities is the result of having too narrow a view of the work of God. Most Christians spend very little time seeking to understand the mysteries of God. Few have comprehended the grand scope of God's work with mankind. Most Christians look very narrowly at the present moment, its needs and activities. Many are consumed with daily concerns, and this chokes them and makes them unfruitful.

Luke 10:41-42

"Martha, Martha, you are worried and troubled about many things. But one thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part, which will not be taken away from her."

Matthew 13:22

"And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who hears the word, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful."

Being consumed with paying bills, feeding a family, working a job, raising children, pursuing secular education, spending manifold hours in leisure and entertainment, and attending the meetings of their church, a majority of Christians find that the spiritual seed sown in their life becomes unfruitful, choked out as if by a multitude of weeds. These Christians rarely, if ever, spend time before God seeking to discern things that are not delivered to them from ministers and Bible teachers who stand in their pulpits, or whom they observe on television.

Nearly all Biblical teaching being proclaimed in this hour is at an elementary level. Few Christians have gone beyond the spiritual equivalent of learning their letters and numbers and the names of colors. Most are still in kindergarten. All Christians must start out at a basic level, but it is not the desire of the Father that we remain perpetually focused upon elementary matters. There is a time when the sons and daughters of God are to move on to deeper things. Consider for a moment how much focus in the church is currently upon those things that the apostle Paul described as "elementary teaching."

Hebrews 6:1-3

Therefore leaving the elementary teaching about the Christ, let us press on to maturity, not laying again a foundation of **repentance from dead works** and of **faith toward God**, of **instruction about washings**, and **laying on of hands**, and **the resurrection of the dead**, and **eternal judgment**. And this we shall do, if God permits.

What are elementary teachings about the Christ? I dare to suggest that there is probably nothing you have heard from a minister in any present day church that Paul would not define in this way. Many ministers repeat teachings endlessly that focus upon sin, repentance, salvation through the death, burial and resurrection of Christ, faith, judgment

and resurrection. In addition there are endless teachings on spiritual gifts, Christian service, prayer, evangelism, and the admonition to study Scripture. (Not to mention the many false teachings which make up a large percentage of those things taught to Christians today.)

I am not downplaying the need to lay a foundation of elementary teachings. The elementary cannot be skipped over. A good foundation must be laid. But God would have His sons and daughters to press on to maturity. As important as the message of redemption from sin and death is, the Scriptures declare that there are higher and deeper things. It is my desire to share some things in this writing that go beyond the elementary to focus upon deeper and higher subjects. As the apostle Paul said, “and this we shall do, if God permits.”

Few Christians understand why they are here at all. Few understand that which is the inheritance of the saints of God in the ages to come. Few discern the fact that this current age is only a preparatory work for something much greater. To them, this age is all there is. Their thoughts, considerations, activities, and spiritual pursuits are therefore severely limited by this myopic viewpoint.

There is great benefit in examining the ultimate goal of God’s work among the creation. His goal was never simply to save mankind from sin so they could go to heaven one day. Sin and salvation are intermediary issues of great importance, but they do not encompass the broader desire of God in His work with man. Yahweh’s original reason for creating mankind is not found in these doctrines, and a life that does not see beyond them will be hindered in the pursuit of God’s highest and grandest desire. We must discern Yahweh’s intent in creating mankind. His purposes have not changed.

God’s plan for you and I is so enormous, so glorious, and so staggering that many who will read about it will doubt whether these things can be so. Some coming to realize the truth will wonder how they could have ever missed seeing the truth of their calling, for the message is abundantly manifest throughout the word of God. Yet even in discerning the truth, many will stagger at the great faith required to walk in it.

I began to write of the profound plan of God in creating mankind four years ago. Seven or eight chapters of this book were written and sent out to my mailing list at that time. I found, however, that the saints were not ready for this writing. I have no illusions, knowing that most are still not ready. Many who encounter this teaching will not be able to receive the things declared, for they are truly astounding.

Hebrews 5:11-14

Concerning [these things] we have much to say, and it is hard to explain, since you have become dull of hearing. For though by this time you ought to be teachers, you have need again for someone to teach you the elementary principles of the oracles of God, and you have come to need milk and not solid food. For everyone who partakes only of milk is not accustomed to the word of righteousness, for he is a babe. But solid food is for the mature, who because of practice have their senses trained to discern good and evil.

Some will distort what is proclaimed. Some will charge me with heresy. Some will find what is written unpalatable and will get up from the table. Yet some will be able to receive these words, and it is for these few that they are written.

Four years ago I was not fully prepared for these truths myself, but the Spirit has brought me back to them again. I believe there is a reason He has done so at this precise time. Many difficult things must be passed through by the children of God in the days ahead, and it will be necessary to keep in view the great goal before us. The coming days will

be as a race that requires much endurance. Those who will run best will be those who discern what awaits them at the finish line. The cross is best borne when we can see the joy that lies beyond it.

Hebrews 12:1-2

Let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, fixing our eyes on Yahshua, the author and perfecter of faith, who for the joy set before Him endured the cross...

When I began to send out the chapters of *The Hope of Glory* four years ago, I was met with objections. None of the objections convinced me of error in that which was being shared. The chief objection was simply that those reading could not see the purpose and benefit of that which was being declared. A hope of future glory seemed to lack immediate relevance.

I am convinced, however, that understanding the things which will be shared in the chapters of this book will be radically transforming. They will encourage the fainthearted. They will add resolve to those who are wavering with taking up the cross. They will help to renew a commitment to follow Christ wherever He would lead. They will result in a real and profound joy at the plan of the Father for His sons and daughters. They will also lead to a greatly heightened mindset, lifting the saints of God above the shallow expectations, low living, and base thoughts that are so prevalent among Christians today.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding as you read,

Joseph Herrin



The God Who is a Father

Sometimes we cannot see the forest for the trees. Sometimes things are so much in our face that we cannot discern what it is we are looking at. One of the most common appellations used by Christians in referring to God is “Father.” Calling God “Father” is both proper, and scriptural.

Matthew 6:9

"Pray, then, in this way: '**Our Father** who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name.'"

Galatians 4:6

"And **because you are sons**, God has sent forth the Spirit of His Son into our hearts, crying, '**Abba! Father!**'"

Referring to God as “Father” is something that Christians often take for granted. Most have not taken time to deeply consider the ramifications of God being our Father. It will serve us well to take a penetrating look into this matter. In approximately 270 occurrences the word “Father” is used in reference to God’s relationship to mankind. We find the first occurrence in what is referred to as “The Song of Moses.”

Deuteronomy 32:6

Is not He your Father who has bought you? He has made you and established you.

Beyond this, there are hundreds of additional instances where men and women are called the sons, daughters, children, seed, and offspring of God. It is apparent that fatherhood is very important to the heart of God.

We can learn something about Yahweh’s purpose for man as we look at the creation account in Genesis. Notice in the following verses the repetition of the phrase “after their kind.”

Genesis 1:11-12

Then God said, "Let the earth sprout vegetation, plants yielding seed, and fruit trees bearing fruit **after their kind**, with seed in them, on the earth"; and it was so. And the earth brought forth vegetation, plants yielding seed **after their kind**, and trees bearing fruit, with seed in them, **after their kind**.

Genesis 1:24-25

Then God said, "Let the earth bring forth living creatures **after their kind**: cattle and creeping things and beasts of the earth **after their kind**"; and it was so. And God made the beasts of the earth **after their kind**, and the cattle **after their kind**, and everything that creeps on the ground **after its kind**; and God saw that it was good.

Every living thing God created upon the earth had the ability to reproduce after its kind. Sheep give birth to sheep. Oak trees produce other oak trees. Salmon produce salmon.

Everything brings forth after its own kind. Having demonstrated this principle the Lord then declared:

Genesis 1:26-28

"Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness..." And God created man in His own image, in the image of God He created him...

Yahweh brought forth something after His kind. Does it not follow logically that man is a god, even as his Father is God? Man is not merely a beast. Man is not the evolutionary equivalent of a glorified ape. The original thought of Elohim, the triune God, was to create a being fashioned in His own image, after His own likeness, bearing such a likeness to Himself in all aspects that He could say, "This is My son!"

Satan, the great deceiver, has done such a profound work in diminishing mankind's understanding of the intent of God in forming man, that many Christians who have sat in churches and studied the Scriptures all of their lives recoil at such a straightforward declaration of God's design for man. Some hearing the words that man is a god, would cry "blasphemy!" They would pick up stones to cast at the one who would make such an assertion. The Jews did so when Christ suggested the same, and the Christian religious mentality does so today.

I have come across many Christians on Internet websites who proclaim that the message of sonship is heresy. They warn other Christians to stay away from those who proclaim a message of sonship. I do not doubt that some who have taught on this topic have entered into error. There is leaven present everywhere, for "we know in part and we prophesy in part" (I Corinthians 13:9). Some in their exuberance in understanding a truth they had not previously seen, run with such enthusiasm to share the message that their words outstrip their actual revelation.

Despite this tendency, it is very ill advised to cast out a doctrine that is pervasive throughout the Scriptures. Just because most have not understood it, or because the orthodox teaching of the day does not include it, is no reason to decry it as heresy. If God says something is so, and He declares it repeatedly, then it must be so.

Psalms 82:6

I said, "***You are gods, and all of you are sons of the Most High.***"

Who is in view here? Some have declared that it must be the angels, for the suggestion that it is a reference to mankind is offensive to them. To say that man is a god goes against their understanding of the word humility. Humility, however, is not thinking lowly of oneself. Humility is agreeing with God's thoughts. It is seeing things as God sees them. The man who understands that all things were created by God, and nothing of value in man's makeup was arrived at by his own power and effort, will refrain from boasting before God.

James 1:17

Every good thing bestowed and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...

Man does not need to see himself as a worm in order to be humble. Man can discern that he was created in the image and likeness of God, and confess it to be so, and be humble.

As long as the man understands that he has nothing personally to boast in, that he did not fashion himself, nor did his own thought lead to his creation, then a man is not made more humble by denying the grandness of his design. In truth, to deny what God has done is an act of pride. Some men glory in their abasement. Wisdom and humility is simply agreeing with the mind and thought of God.

It was not angels God had in mind when He had the psalmist pen the words “You are gods.” Who are the “sons of the Most High”? Yahshua the Messiah, the firstborn Son of God, reveals their identity.

Luke 6:35

"But love your enemies, and do good, and lend, expecting nothing in return; and your reward will be great, **and you will be sons of the Most High.**"

It is man who is spoken of in Psalm 82:6. It is therefore man who is in view in the statement “You are gods.” Why is this difficult to comprehend? Why does it strike so many as blasphemy? If man was created in the image and likeness of God, then does it not follow that man was created like God, and he will one day be revealed in similar glory and power as a son of God? Yahshua quoted the verse above when the Jews charged him with blasphemy for calling Himself the Son of God.

John 10:33-37

The Jews answered Him, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy; and because You, being a man, make Yourself out to be God." Yahshua answered them, "Has it not been written in your Law, 'I said, you are gods'? If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came (and the Scripture cannot be broken), do you say of Him, whom the Father sanctified and sent into the world, 'You are blaspheming,' because I said, 'I am the Son of God'?"

If a person were to carefully study the passage above they could discern many things. I have read numerous commentaries on this passage declaring that Yahshua was speaking of the angels, suggesting the angels were the ones who delivered the word of God to mankind. A plain and careful reading of this passage reveals that it was not Yahshua's intent to declare that the angels are gods, but that mankind are as gods. Yahshua was telling the Jews, “If your own law says that man is a god, then why do you charge me with blasphemy for saying I am the Son of God?” If one believes the angels were being referred to as gods, then the argument loses its force. It becomes a meaningless argument.

Yahshua was very clear, however. He speaks to the Jews in this way, “Has it not been written in YOUR Law, ‘I said, YOU ARE GODS?’” The Your and the YOU are references to the same entities. Christ is speaking of mankind. Christ then continues with the words, “If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came....” To whom did the word of God come?

I Kings 12:22

But **the word of God came to Shemaiah the man of God...**

Chronicles 17:3

And it came about the same night, that **the word of God came to Nathan...**

Luke 3:2

The word of God came to John (the baptist), the son of Zacharias, in the wilderness.

The word of God came to men of God anointed by God. This is what Yahshua is referring to. As the apostle Peter declared:

II Peter 1:21

For the prophecy came not in old time by the will of man: but holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Ghost.

Let us be very specific, lest there should be any doubt in identifying those who are being called gods. Christ's reference of those to whom the word of God came was in this particular instance a reference to those the prophet Asaph was speaking unto. Asaph was the author of Psalm 82, so when the Lord declares, "If he called them gods, to whom the word of God came..." He is referring generally to all those who received the words of the Law and the prophets. Yet He is also referring specifically to those who received the specific words he was quoting from Psalms 82. Asaph was a priest and prophet, and he is the author of this Psalm. To whom was Asaph writing? Was he writing to men or to angels? We know he was writing to men, and we are among those to whom he wrote.

Some might still hesitate to believe. They may say, "If you call man a god, then you are setting up man to be worshiped." Let me be very plain. I am not saying that man is the original God, whose name is Yawheh (I AM that I AM). I am saying that man is the offspring of the original God. Man is the offspring of Yahweh even as an acorn falls from an oak tree and produces something in the exact image of the original.

Malachi 2:10

"Do we not all have one Father? Has not one God created us?"

I Corinthians 8:5-6

For even if there are so-called gods whether in heaven or on earth, as indeed there are many gods and many lords, yet for us there is but one God, the Father, from whom are all things, and **we exist for Him**; and one Lord, Yahshua Christ, by whom are all things, and **we exist through Him**.

There are many gods, but there is only one Father of all. As sons of God, we are as gods, but "we exist for Him." Though these sons of God are also to rule as lords, there is one who is "Lord of lords" and "we exist through Him." Therefore, mankind is to worship the One **for whom** we exist, and the One **through whom** we exist. Does it diminish God the Father in any way to say that He is the Father of gods? No! Just the opposite. Yahweh is magnified by this fact.

Before we leave the discussion of the identification of who is being spoken of in Psalms 82:6, let me cite the following verse.

Hebrews 1:5

For to which of the angels did He ever say: "You are My Son, today I have begotten

You"? And again: "I will be to Him a Father, and He shall be to Me a Son"?

Yet regarding men the following is written:

Romans 8:15-17

For you have not received a spirit of slavery leading to fear again, but ***you have received a spirit of adoption as sons by which we cry out, "Abba! Father!" The Spirit Himself testifies with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him so that we may also be glorified with Him.***

It is man who was created to be a joint heir with Yahshua the Messiah, the firstborn Son of God. God has appointed men to be fellow heirs with His Son. We are not only heirs, but brothers.

Romans 8:29

For those whom He foreknew, He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son, so that He would be ***the firstborn among many brethren...***

The reason men call the teaching of sonship heresy is that we now see Yahshua as ascended to glory, seated at the right hand of God. We see man at present not clothed in this same glory. Our image in contrast with the glorious image of the firstborn Son of God is very humble. We do not yet appear as gods.

I John 3:2

Beloved, now we are children of God, and ***it has not appeared as yet what we shall be. We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him***, because we shall see Him just as He is.

At this time it has not yet appeared what we shall be. We are merely in the womb of our formation. We have not yet emerged as that mature image and reflection of God for which we are destined. But the Scriptures declare repeatedly that we will be altogether different than our present appearance. The transformation will be so awesome, so enormous, so incredible, that it defies description. "It has not appeared as yet what we shall be." But we shall be like unto the firstborn Son of God in glory!

Romans 8:29-31

For those whom He foreknew, ***He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son***, so that He would be the firstborn among many brethren; and these whom He predestined, He also called; and these whom He called, He also justified; ***and these whom He justified, He also glorified.*** What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who is against us?

What shall we say to these things? If our minds could get a glimpse of what awaits the saints we would sit in stunned silence. It has been Yahweh's intention from the beginning that man should be a perfect copy of His image and likeness. Yet before God can bestow

upon mankind His glory and power, He must form in mankind His Spirit and character. This is the work of this present age of man. God is seeking to form an image of His own holy and righteous character within mankind that these men might be resurrected in glory.

Our current humble existence upon this fallen earth, struggling against the bonds of this sinful flesh that encapsulates us, has been designed with perfect wisdom to provide the fertile ground out of which a life in the image and likeness of God might emerge. Only those who wage war against the passions and desires of the flesh, crucifying the body of sin that enshrouds them, will find a new spiritual creature emerging when this body is left behind. Like the eaglet struggling to emerge from the shell of the egg, and the butterfly struggling to escape the cocoon, we must strive to overcome all that binds us within this body of death, this sinful flesh. Only as we successfully wage this war will we find ourselves fitted for the glory of the ages to come.

I John 3:2-3

We know that, when He appears, we shall be like Him, because we shall see Him just as He is. ***And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.***

To those who would argue that they do not see the value of such a teaching as that found here, I would point them to the words of the apostle above. He spoke of the future hope of sharing in the glory of the Son of God as a glorified son of god. He then declared that “everyone who has this hope... purifies himself.” ***Everyone.*** Perhaps the reason for so much low living among Christians today is that they do not have a vision of the glorious destiny set before them. Perhaps this is why so many are content to glory in the flesh, as vile and wicked as it is. Having a hope for nothing beyond the mortal frame they now possess, they become satisfied with a pursuit of carnal pleasure, living for the moment. These do not see the far surpassing glory which God intends for them.

God is a Father. Fatherhood is central to His nature. He will not rest content until He has sons who share His image and likeness in all aspects. These will share His Spirit. These will be conformed to His righteous character. These will receive glory and power in long ages to come. They will truly be as gods!

Raise your vision. Elevate your sights. God has far higher things planned for you than you have previously imagined.

I Corinthians 2:9

Just as it is written, "Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him."



The Powers of the Age to Come

Yahweh is at this time preparing His sons to walk in the powers of the coming age. What is experienced in this age is but a “taste.” God has given men tokens of the power and authority of the coming age.

Hebrews 6:5

And have tasted the good word of God and ***the powers of the age to come...***

This power was observed in Moses whom God appointed to be “as god to Pharaoh.”

Exodus 7:1

Then Yahweh said to Moses, "See, I make you as God to Pharaoh, and your brother Aaron shall be your prophet."

Moses had an experience beyond any other man of his age. He was given the privilege of wielding the powers of the age to come. Moses took the staff in his hand, and with it wielded the power of God. Moses turned the waters of the Nile into blood. He smote the earth and the dust became gnats. He raised his staff and frogs came up upon all Egypt. He struck the land with plagues of locusts and destroying insects. He called out to Yahweh and great hail with fire and lightning came down upon the land of Egypt. At the word of Moses darkness fell upon the land, a darkness so deep it could be felt, and no man dared to move from his place for three days.

At the command of Moses miraculous events transpired until Moses and the God he served were held in high esteem by all the people. This power continued throughout the journey in the wilderness. Moses stretched out his staff and the waters of the Red Sea parted. Moses prayed and the Lord sent quail. He struck the rock in the desert and water flowed forth.

Why did God choose this man to wield the powers of the age to come? Moses had been prepared for this task.

Numbers 12:3

Now the man Moses was very humble, more than any man who was on the face of the earth.

In order for you and I to be entrusted with the powers of the age to come, we too must be perfected in humility. This humility was not something that Moses was born with. It had to be fashioned in him. Moses in his youth was not the humble man he would later become. Stephen speaks of the young Moses in this way:

Acts 7:22-25

And Moses was educated in all the learning of the Egyptians, and he was a man of power in words and deeds. But when he was approaching the age of forty, it entered his mind to visit his brethren, the sons of Israel. And when he saw one of them being treated unjustly, he defended him and took vengeance for the oppressed by striking down the Egyptian. And he supposed that his brethren understood that God was

granting them deliverance through him; but they did not understand.

At the age of forty Moses was at the height of all his natural powers. He had the best education the world could offer. He was a man of power in words and deeds. He discerned that he had been created for a purpose, and the purpose was to deliver his people from the bondage of Egypt. Moses supposed that his people would recognize his ability and call, but they did not recognize it. Using his own power, Moses struck down a lone Egyptian, but he did not free a single Israelite.

Moses at forty is like the majority of mankind. They look to their natural abilities to accomplish every goal and desire. This self-sufficiency causes men to be independent of God. Feeling adequate in themselves to accomplish the purpose of their heart, even a God-given destiny, they do not wait upon God to direct their steps, nor do they look to God to bring it to pass. The result always falls short of the will and pleasure of God.

In order for a man to truly accomplish the will and pleasure of the Father, the man must be broken. He must come to place no confidence in the flesh. He must see himself as totally inadequate to do anything for God in his natural abilities. He must understand that only God can truly accomplish His desires, and He requires nothing from man other than complete surrender and obedience. Moses had to come to a place where his pride in his own attributes and abilities was shattered. His rejection by his people at the age of forty was the beginning of this breaking process. The work was continued through the next forty years in the wilderness as Moses tended his father-in-law's sheep in the land of Midian.

What a breaking this was for one such as Moses. It was the equivalent of a man with a doctorate's degree from Harvard, who had been a mover and shaker in the corporate world, being sent to a small, backwoods community to flip burgers, scrub toilets, mop floors and wash dishes for forty years. During this period of Moses' life he was completely emptied of all his former self-confidence. He came to know in a deep way that he had nothing to offer God. He was no prize catch that God should glory in.

How foolish are Christians today who boast of some learned, talented, or wealthy man who has come to Christ, or who has joined their church? They brag that they will now be able to accomplish so much for God because a man of stature has come to Christ. In truth, the opposite is true. Until the man is broken he will never be of any use to God. He must not look at his own abilities as being of any value to God.

Psalms 147:10

[Yahweh] does not delight in the strength of the horse; He does not take pleasure in the legs of a man.

I Corinthians 1:26-29

For consider your calling, brethren, that there were not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble; but God has chosen the foolish things of the world to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to shame the things which are strong, and the base things of the world and the despised, God has chosen, the things that are not, that He might nullify the things that are, that no man should boast before God.

What do we have that God has not given to us? What do we have that God needs? The answer to both questions is the same. **NOTHING!** Does the Almighty Who created man

need anything from His creation? Of course not!

Isaiah 46:11

Truly I have spoken; truly I will bring it to pass. I have planned it, surely I will do it.

Daniel 4:35

And all the inhabitants of the earth are accounted as nothing, but He does according to His will in the host of heaven and among the inhabitants of earth; And no one can ward off His hand or say to Him, 'What hast Thou done?'

Isaiah 40:15, 22

Behold, the nations are like a drop from a bucket, and are regarded as a speck of dust on the scales... It is He who sits above the vault of the earth, and its inhabitants are like grasshoppers...

Moses had to come to a place where he understood clearly his own utter weakness and worthlessness in the eyes of God. Moses had nothing to offer God, though he had the best education the world could offer and was considered a prince among men. Before God he was insignificant. He was a speck. The entire nation of Egypt was as a single drop of water. How much less was one man among the nation?

Until we see ourselves in this same light, we will not be ready to be entrusted with the powers of the age to come. Moses was so reduced in his sight that when God appeared to him when he was now eighty years old, Moses sought to convince God that He had chosen the wrong man, for Moses had NOTHING to offer God.

Exodus 4:10, 13

Then Moses said to Yahweh, "Please, Lord, I have never been eloquent, neither recently nor in time past, nor since You have spoken to Your servant; for I am slow of speech and slow of tongue... Please, Lord, now send the message by whomever You will."

Moses judged rightly that he had nothing to offer to God. There was nothing within Moses to commend himself to God for this work. This is precisely why Moses was chosen. God was looking for a man who would wield the powers of the age to come, and who would not boast in what was done through him. Moses' testimony after being used of Yahweh in such a profound and powerful manner was always that it was Yahweh who had done it. Moses did not take credit for the work of God. Moses did not promote himself, nor did he seek any selfish profit from that which God chose to do through him.

Exodus 18:8-9

And Moses told his father-in-law ***all that Yahweh had done*** to Pharaoh and to the Egyptians for Israel's sake, all the hardship that had befallen them on the journey, ***and how Yahweh had delivered them.***

Is not our tendency to speak of what we have done for God? Our journey upon this earth is designed to teach us the same humility observed in Moses. Yahweh will lead His

sons and daughters through wilderness places in order to teach them how dependent they are upon Him. He will place them in circumstances where they have no answer, no strength to deliver themselves or others, that they might come to look to Him alone. Yahweh will lead all of His elect into circumstances where they are reduced to poverty in every area of life that they might not boast in any ability, gift, or possession. In this way men are taught to reckon upon the strength of God, viewing themselves as utterly detestable in themselves.

II Corinthians 12:9-10

And He has said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for power is perfected in weakness." Most gladly, therefore, I will rather boast about my weaknesses, that the power of Christ may dwell in me. Therefore I am well content with weaknesses, with insults, with distresses, with persecutions, with difficulties, for Christ's sake; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

Although Moses was reduced to the point of being the humblest man on the face of the earth, there was an occasion when he stumbled and misused the powers which were entrusted to him. Toward the end of the Israelite's forty year journey in the wilderness, the people once more grumbled against Moses, for they thirsted for water. Yahweh instructed Moses to speak to the rock and water would come forth.

Yahweh does all things according to His perfect wisdom and counsel. There were many things signified in this event, and speaking to the rock was a great parable to teach truth to the people of God. Moses, however, being impatient with the grumbling of the people did not carry out the instruction of Yahweh. Instead of speaking to the rock, Moses struck the rock with his staff, and this act was displeasing to God.

Numbers 20:12

But Yahweh said to Moses and Aaron, "Because you have not obeyed Me, ***to treat Me as holy in the sight of the sons of Israel***, therefore you shall not bring this assembly into the land which I have given them."

Later when Moses besought the Lord to allow him to enter the land of promise, Yahweh commanded Moses to not even speak of the matter. Yahweh defined Moses' transgression with the following words:

Deuteronomy 32:51-52

Because ***you broke faith with Me in the midst of the sons of Israel*** at the waters of Meribah-kadesh, in the wilderness of Zin, because ***you did not treat Me as holy in the midst of the sons of Israel***.

Moses was given as a sign to the people. Repeatedly we see the repetition of the phrase "in the sight of the sons of Israel." Those who are entrusted with the power of God must also reflect God's character. They must manifest God to those who observe God's power in them. The power is a testimony of God's presence, therefore the action and life of the one yielding the power must be in harmony with the One they are representing. The miracles of God are designed not only to show forth His power, but to reveal His divine nature and to bring forth a prophetic message.

Consider how important a matter it is to be completely yielded to God. There are many

ministers today who cry out for the power of God. Men are given gifts of the Spirit, and are entrusted with anointings, albeit relatively weak and small in comparison to that of Moses, or the apostles, or the Son of God. Yet, even with these small anointings these men are not careful to do only what God commands, and to speak only what He places in their mouths to speak. These men are moved by selfish motives, and act out the passions and desires of the flesh. They peddle the anointing, seeking to gain in reputation, or wealth; to incur some favor from those who are wealthy and powerful, or to gain the affection and admiration of the people of God.

Will not God judge these even as He judged Moses? Will they not disqualify themselves from entering into all that God would have granted them? Because these do not treat God as holy in the midst of the people of God, they will not prosper. The anointing will pass to another, and their ministry will be brought to an end they did not wish. Though they cry out to God, He will not repent.

For this reason it is necessary that all those who would be entrusted with the power of God be first subjected to a fiery wilderness experience where they learn to humble themselves before God. They must learn to fear God, and to despise the flesh with its pride and stubborn will. Unless one submits to this difficult preparation, they will find themselves corrupted by the power they earnestly desire. They will become puffed up as they observe God manifesting Himself through them in power.

The apostle Paul was given a taste of the powers of the age to come. Yahweh manifested His power through Paul, as well as granting visions and revelations to Paul that belonged to the age to come.

Acts 19:11-13

And God was performing extraordinary miracles by the hands of Paul, so that handkerchiefs or aprons were even carried from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out.

Can you understand how a man who has not been taught a deep humility and been broken before God would make a shipwreck of his life if he were granted a similar experience of power today? It is reported that there are ministers currently who claim some healing anointing and they are SELLING handkerchiefs to be used to heal the sick. Such men should tremble in terror at the thought of such a diabolical action. Will they take the anointing of God and peddle it for personal gain?

II Corinthians 2:17

Unlike so many, we do not peddle the word of God for profit. On the contrary, in Christ we speak before God with sincerity, like men sent from God.
(NIV)

It is necessary that a man be thoroughly broken in order to be entrusted with power. A man must not desire anything for self.

I Timothy 6:7-10

For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either. And if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge

men into ruin and destruction.

There are Christians in this hour who are falling into temptation which will result in ruin and destruction. They have taken the gifts of God and sought to use them to fulfill “foolish and harmful desires.” If you and I are wise, we will plead with God to withhold His power from our lives until we have been thoroughly broken and humbled before Him. When we are content with whatever He chooses for us, being content to have nothing beyond food and raiment, when we are desiring His will and pleasure above all else, only then will we be ready to receive His power.

This age is designed to ready the sons of God for the age to come. God will deal with our flesh severely in order to prepare us to walk in a “taste” of that which is to come. Even this taste can undo a man who has harbored some idol in his heart. If he seeks anything for self, the power of God can be his undoing. Some men, finding that God will not give them this power apart from the cross, open themselves up to seducing spirits from Satan. These unclean spirits will give men spiritual power apart from the requirement of being broken first. The use of this power is always attended with fleshly manifestations. Ministers who have not crucified the flesh offer a fleshly appeal to many. Carnal and immature believers are promised a release of finances, of worldly success, and even of spiritual power, yet apart from the working of the cross.

The apostle Paul was among the most mature spiritual sons of God in his generation. Even so, because of the surpassing nature of the power revealed in his life, and the exceptional nature of the revelations given to him, it was necessary that God preserve him from the corrupting influence of pride by giving him a thorn in the flesh.

II Corinthians 12:2-7

I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago - whether in the body I do not know, or out of the body I do not know, God knows - such a man was caught up to the third heaven. And I know how such a man - whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, God knows - was caught up into Paradise, and heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak... And because of the surpassing greatness of the revelations, for this reason, to keep me from exalting myself, there was given me a thorn in the flesh, a messenger of Satan to buffet me - to keep me from exalting myself!

Paul does not identify the nature of the revelations given to him. He declares that he “heard inexpressible words, which a man is not permitted to speak.” These revelations were a taste of things to come. In the coming age man will have the honor of being privy to some of the deep things of God that are at this time inexpressible. There is no way to make them known to man in his current sinful state without risk of injury to the man.

What is the nature of the risk? According to Paul, the danger to man is pride. Paul buffeted his body in order to keep it under subjection. Yet the revelations given to him were so great that his own ability to rule over the flesh’s tendency toward pride was insufficient. It became necessary for God to give Paul a thorn in the flesh to humble him. This was an act of grace. The thorn served to deflate the pride of the flesh. The thorn served as a needle to poke a hole in the inflated balloon of the flesh letting the air of pride out.

Once Paul understood the reason for the thorn in his flesh, he no longer asked God to remove it. When we understand the power that Yahweh plans to entrust to His sons, we will

no longer shrink back from the working of the cross in our lives. The flesh must be crucified, for it will distort and misuse every gift of God. This misuse of the power of God will always result in harm to others and judgment upon ourselves.

During this age Yahweh has designed our experiences to prepare us to shoulder the powers of the age to come. This is why so many of the Christian's experiences are humbling, and painful. The flesh recoils at the cross, but it must be crucified. Yahshua said that all who would follow after Him must take up THEIR CROSS daily.

Luke 9:23-25

And He was saying to them all, "If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross daily, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it."

It was no idle word that the Lord spoke when He prophesied that His disciples would do greater works than He did.

John 14:12

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do..."

As incredible as this seems, Christ was testifying that His disciples would do greater works than walking on water, calming the storm with a word, casting out demons, and even raising the dead. If we are to do greater works, we must first be conformed to the image of Christ. We must be as submitted to seeking the will and desire of the Father as Yahshua.

John 5:19-21

Yahshua therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him, that you may marvel."

Yahshua only did that which the Father revealed to Him to be His will. Moses did the same in all of his works, save one. Yahshua ALWAYS did the will of the Father. Yahshua did all things "in like manner" as the Father. He never deviated from the will of His Father. We too must come to this place of surrender.

Man is born captive to sin and the desires of the flesh. Our experiences here in this age are designed to cause the spiritual seed in us to mature and to arise to ascendancy over the flesh. Day after day we are brought to occasions where we must choose to walk according to the direction of the fallen nature of Adam, or the higher nature of the Spirit Who indwells us. As we consistently choose the way of the Spirit, putting to death the desires of the flesh, we will find ourselves fitted to receive power. Yahweh is committed to bringing His sons to a perfect maturity in this regard. We are to be fully conformed to the image of Christ, the firstborn from the dead.

Ephesians 4:13-15

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of

God, *to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ... we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ...*

What glory awaits the children of God! We are told that Yahshua endured the cross as He looked to the joy set before Him. What joy is also set before those who share in His suffering? Paul states that our sufferings are not even worth being compared with the glory that is about to be revealed to us and in us. The glory that awaits the sons of God is such that when it is revealed none will think it blasphemy to hear the words "Ye are as gods."

We will be like the Firstborn Son of God. We will be like the Firstborn Son of God in His glory. We will be as gods. We will be radiant in the glory that is bestowed upon us. Yahshua's delight and hope as He drew closer to the cross was in seeing His disciples crowned with glory, sharing in the glory that was His own destiny. He spoke of this shortly before His crucifixion.

John 17:5

"Now, Father, glorify Me together with Yourself, with the glory which I had with You before the world was... The glory which You have given Me I have given to them, that they may be one, just as We are one..."

The saints' future is to share in the glory that belongs to Christ; to share an inheritance with Him for ages to come; to share His authority, and to rule and reign with Him. The sons of God are to bear the power of gods in the ages to come. They must therefore be brought to a complete surrender to the will and pleasure of their Father. They must come to a complete conformity to the One who created them. Only then can He trust them with His divine power and authority.

God has determined that all men should come to this place of resurrection life and power. Yet not all will arrive at this state at the same time, nor will all be granted power, glory and authority in the same measure. We will look at what the Scriptures say in this regard in the next chapter.



The Number of the Firstborn

There is a wonderful theme found throughout the entirety of the Bible relating to those who are the firstborn. The firstborn male that opens the womb was always reserved, set apart, as holy unto Yahweh.

Exodus 34:19

The first offspring from every womb belongs to Me...

That Christ Yahshua was the firstborn from the womb of a virgin was not by happenstance. It was the design of the Father in heaven. Yahshua would serve as a pattern for a group of elect, overcoming, firstfruits from among mankind who would be reserved as holy unto Yahweh.

Luke 2:22-23

And when the days for their purification according to the law of Moses were completed, they brought [Yahshua] up to Jerusalem to present Him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, "Every first-born male that opens the womb shall be called holy to the Lord")...

Attaining to the number of the firstborn is a goal every Christian should strive towards. The Old Testament laws and practices centered around the firstborn serve as types and shadows of those who will be the first to attain to the resurrection from the dead, ascending to a glorified condition as the preeminent sons of God. This preeminence of the firstborn was revealed in Yahweh's choice of the firstborn male from every Israelite family to serve as priest. These firstborn males were "holy unto Yahweh." In every way the rights and privileges of the firstborn were superior to those born after them.

Colossians 1:18

And he is... the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.

I know some will be prone to object that this declaration is specifically in reference to Christ. This is true, but one must consider that Christ is more than Yahshua, the Son of God. Christ is a many membered body.

I Corinthians 12:12-13

For even as ***the body*** is one and yet ***has many members***, and all the members of the body, though they are many, are one body, ***so also is Christ.***

To understand the promises of God to the firstborn one must come to embrace a truly Biblical mindset concerning the identity of Christ. Christ is not one person. The word Christ means "anointed." Yahshua, the Son of God is Christ. So too are those who are members of His body. Yahshua is the Head. As Head He holds a preeminence among His brethren. The Head is set atop the body, even as Yahshua resides in the highest place among those who are numbered among the body of Christ.

It is destined that all God's sons will attain to the stature of Christ, being conformed to the maturity of Yahshua, who is the Head.

Ephesians 4:12-13

To the building up of the body of Christ; ***until we all attain to*** the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, ***to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.***

This attainment to the stature of Christ does not occur at the same time for all the sons of God.

I Corinthians 15:22-23

For as in Adam all die, so also ***in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order...***

What does this mean, "In Christ all shall be made alive"? This is speaking of the resurrection from the dead. Not all will be resurrected at the same time. There is a resurrection for the sons of God that the apostle John describes as "the first resurrection." This is the resurrection of the firstborn. Those who attain to the first resurrection will be preeminent in all ways over their brethren who will be resurrected at a later time.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection...

As we read in the previous Scripture, the firstborn to open the womb was reserved unto God. This is the meaning of the phrase "holy unto Yahweh." The word *holy* indicates being set apart for a specific call, role or purpose. The firstborn are set apart specifically for Yahweh. It is evident that there is a correlation between the first resurrection and the types and shadows of the firstborn in the Old Testament, for John writes "Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection." This perfectly corresponds to the rights of the firstborn. Their blessings exceeded that of their brethren, and they were set aside as holy unto Yahweh.

Yahweh's plan of taking the firstborn male for Himself was altered in practice, but not in principle, when the Israelites transgressed in the wilderness by fashioning for themselves a golden calf and degrading themselves in its presence. From this point forward we find that Yahweh used a substitute for the firstborn male. He chose men willing to qualify themselves as firstborn by paying a great cost. This was a foreshadowing of those whom Christ would one day invite to "count the cost" of being His disciples. The tribe of Levi was alone among the tribes of Israel in answering Moses' cry, "Whoever is for Yahweh, come to me" (Exodus 32:26). Because Levi accepted the cost of obeying Yahweh, irregardless of what He might require of them, every male from Levi became holy unto God. Yahweh took the men from the tribe of Levi in exchange for the firstborn males of all the other tribes.

Numbers 3:40-41

Then Yahweh said to Moses, "Number every first-born male of the sons of Israel from a month old and upward, and make a list of their names. And you shall take the Levites for Me, I am Yahweh, instead of all the first-born among the sons of Israel..."

A tremendous revelation comes forth as one looks carefully at this event that God has recorded for the benefit of Christians today. What was it that Levi did to obtain the right of the firstborn?

Exodus 32:27-29

"Thus says Yahweh, the God of Israel, 'Every man of you put his sword upon his thigh, and go back and forth from gate to gate in the camp, and kill every man his brother, and every man his friend, and every man his neighbor.'" So the sons of Levi did as Moses instructed, and about three thousand men of the people fell that day. Then Moses said, "Dedicate yourselves today to Yahweh - for every man has been against his son and against his brother - in order that He may bestow a blessing upon you today."

God gave to Levi the right of the firstborn because they chose allegiance to God, and obedience to His command, over every natural bond and affection. The Levites were commanded to kill their brothers, sons, friends and neighbors. They were to show pity to none, but to fully carry out the will of God.

What God required the Levites to do was an act their own souls despised. These men did not want to kill their brothers, sons, friends and neighbors. I am confident that it was with a heavy heart, and tears, that the Levites obeyed Yahweh that day. It was an exceedingly costly obedience. Nevertheless, the Levites chose God that day over every natural relationship.

In the New Testament we see a direct, and profound, parallel to this event. Christ also gave an invitation to men and women to count the cost. He told them that to be His disciple, and to be qualified to be numbered among the firstborn, they too must hate the ones who are closest and most dear to them.

Luke 14:25-26

Now large crowds were going along with Him; and He turned and said to them, "If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

Fifteen hundred years before Christ spoke these words, Moses stood at the foot of Mount Sinai and spoke to another large crowd. The invitation both Moses and Christ gave to those they spoke to was essentially the same. "Who is willing to pay the cost of taking the Lord's side over and above the side of man? Who is willing to obey God even when His will causes you to do that which is hateful to those natural relations which are the closest and dearest to you? Will you stand with God, rather than men?"

People of God, this is how you and I must qualify ourselves to be numbered among the firstborn. We must surrender our lives and our wills to the direction of God. Whatever He requires of us we must do. Even if Yahweh leads us to actions that are hateful to those close to us, we must choose to obey God rather than men. I can say with confidence, Yahweh will try every man and woman in this area. It is costly to be numbered among the firstborn.

When Moses numbered the men from the tribe of Levi that day, their number was precisely 22,000. Numbers are very significant in Scripture. This number has tremendous importance. Twenty-two is a number that signifies cutting off wickedness. It appears in

Scripture at places where God was executing judgment upon the wicked.

I Kings 14:20

The time that Jeroboam reigned was twenty-two years; and he slept with his fathers.

I Kings 16:29-30

Now Ahab the son of Omri became king over Israel in the thirty-eighth year of Asa king of Judah, and Ahab the son of Omri reigned over Israel in Samaria twenty-two years. Ahab the son of Omri did evil in the sight of Yahweh more than all who were before him.

II Kings 8:26-27

Ahaziah was twenty-two years old when he became king, and he reigned one year in Jerusalem... He walked in the way of the house of Ahab and did evil in the sight of Yahweh, like the house of Ahab had done, because he was a son-in-law of the house of Ahab.

Each of these three men were exceedingly wicked. We each of them we find the number twenty-two featuring prominently. After twenty-two years Yahweh took the life of Jeroboam, the man who caused all Israel to enter into idolatry. After twenty-two years of ruling, Yahweh took the life of Ahab. Ahab's son-in-law was twenty-two when he began to reign, and Yahweh removed him after only one year.

On the day Israel transgressed before Yahweh by fashioning for themselves a golden calf, and debasing themselves before it, there were 22,000 Levite males.

Numbers 3:39

All the numbered men of the Levites, whom Moses and Aaron numbered at the command of Yahweh by their families, every male from a month old and upward, were 22,000.

The Levites answered God's call to remove the wicked from among them that day. They slew every man his brother, his son, his friend, and his neighbor. By carrying out this costly obedience, choosing to do what was hateful to their own soul in order to honor Yahweh, they obtained for themselves the right of the firstborn.

Christians will be required to make no less of a sacrifice today. Christ invited ALL who were gathered to Him to count the cost before they started down the path of following Him. He told them that it would cost them everything. Many have begun to follow Christ, but when submission to the will of God became too costly, they shrank back. Many have in this way disqualified themselves. These ones will not attain to the first resurrection, nor be numbered among the firstborn of God.

The honor of being numbered among the firstborn is no slight honor. Yahweh was Himself the inheritance of those so chosen. The Levites were granted access to the presence of Yahweh that was unique among their brethren.

Numbers 18:21-23

"And to the sons of Levi, behold, I have given all the tithe in Israel for an inheritance, in return for their service which they perform, the service of the tent of meeting. And

the sons of Israel shall not come near the tent of meeting again, lest they bear sin and die. Only the Levites shall perform the service of the tent of meeting...

Understand then that this is a parable of things to come. In the plan of Yahweh He has determined that there should be a firstfruit group of saints to enter into the glory of resurrected life in Christ. The portion of those who attain to the first resurrection will far exceed the glory of those who follow. Those who attain to the first resurrection will excel all others in privilege, power, authority, honor, riches, and glory.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but ***they will be priests of God and of Christ*** and will reign with Him for a thousand years.

In this verse we can discern a relationship between the right of the firstborn and the significance of the first resurrection. Levi became a substitute company for all of the firstborn males of Israel. They were “priests of God.” Those who attain to the first resurrection are accorded a similar honor, albeit on a tremendously magnified scale. It is my desire to show you the surpassing excellence of attaining to the number of the firstborn that I might provoke some to jealousy, inciting them to pursue the attainment of this elite company. The apostle Paul spoke of his own earnest yearning to attain to this group.

Philippians 3:10-14

To get to know him, and the power of his resurrection and fellowship of his sufferings, becoming conformed unto his death, - ***If by any means I may advance to the earlier resurrection, which is from among the dead:*** Not that I have, already, received, or have, already, reached perfection, but I am pressing on - if I may even lay hold of that for which I have also been laid hold of by Christ Jesus: - Brethren! I, as to myself, reckon that I have, not yet, laid hold; one thing, however, - the things behind, forgetting, and, unto the things before, eagerly reaching out, With the goal in view, I press on for the prize of the upward calling of God in Christ Jesus.

[Rotherham Emphasized Bible]

Note the fervent pursuit of the high calling of God in Christ Yahshua! Paul understood that there is a premier resurrection from the dead. There is a place of attainment in the resurrection where one is granted a closer abiding in the presence of the Father. There is a special reward for those who are numbered among the firstborn, and Paul earnestly contended for the prize. He buffeted his body and kept it under subjection that he might not be disqualified. He ran the race as one who was not without aim, for he knew what awaited those who crossed the finish line first. Paul applied all diligence, all discipline, all focus and determined effort, in the pursuit of attaining to the number of the firstborn from the dead.

If you and I have any inkling of what awaits the firstborn we would also be gripped by the pursuit of this high calling.

I Corinthians 9:24-27

Do you not know that those who run in a race all run, but only one receives the prize? Run in such a way that you may win. And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.

Paul clearly had something in mind here other than the common view held today by a majority of Christians concerning what awaited him in the afterlife, in the resurrection from the dead. Paul discerned that there was a prize for which to strive. Paul was raised as a Pharisee. He knew the Law and the prophets. Paul discerned the types and shadows of the Old Testament and he discerned that something of a profound nature was foreshadowed in the laws of the firstborn and the laws regarding firstfruits. He wanted to be numbered among that elite company.

In the Old Testament, the firstborn was considered the strength and honor of the Father.

Genesis 49:3

Reuben, ***you are my first-born; My might and the beginning of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power.***

Reuben was the firstborn son of Jacob. In what is spoken of him we can discern the role God has chosen for the firstborn. What does it mean to be “preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power”? The word preeminent is defined as “surpassing all others.” Those who attain to the first resurrection will surpass all others in the resurrection from the dead, both in dignity and in power. Most saints have no understanding that there will be distinctions in the resurrection, but the Scriptures plainly teach that there will be VAST distinctions among mankind in the resurrection from the dead.

I Corinthians 15:39-42

All flesh is not the same flesh, but there is one flesh of men, and another flesh of beasts, and another flesh of birds, and another of fish. There are also heavenly bodies and earthly bodies, but the glory of the heavenly is one, and the glory of the earthly is another. There is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for star differs from star in glory. ***So also is the resurrection of the dead.***

There will be those in the resurrection of the dead who are preeminent, surpassing all others. These will have a glory as of the Sun shining in its strength. There will be others who have the glory of the moon and the glory of the stars. Consider that there are as many stars in the daytime sky as there are in the nighttime sky. The stars cannot be seen during the daytime due to the far surpassing glory of the Sun. The Sun in its radiance is so magnificent that it renders invisible to the eye of man all the other heavenly bodies.

There will be saints in the resurrection whose portion is as the Sun, while many others will be as the moon and the stars. The apostle Paul declared that there is an imperishable

wreath for which we are contending. It requires great focus, aim, sacrifice and discipline to receive the reward of the firstborn. Yet how many Christians today are running without any aim or discipline? Most do not perceive that there is a prize to be won, and a high calling above all other callings to strive toward.

Those who attain to the number of the firstborn will excel all others as the Sun excels the stars, as a man excels a fish. Perhaps you have not been taught the truth of the resurrection from the dead. Perhaps you have been lulled to sleep by the vain and errant prattle of ministers and Bible teachers who proclaim that it is simply enough to confess Christ that you might go to heaven when you die. Perhaps you have been content to live as the majority of Christians, enjoying the pursuits and pleasures of the world while declaring your love for Christ. Do not be deceived. There were eleven tribes out of twelve who were disqualified for the privilege of being numbered among the firstborn. Only those who paid the cost were chosen to be holy unto Yahweh, to receive God as their inheritance.

Deuteronomy 10:8-9

At that time ***Yahweh set apart the tribe of Levi to carry the ark of the covenant*** of Yahweh, ***to stand before Yahweh to serve Him and to bless in His name*** until this day. Therefore, Levi does not have a portion or inheritance with his brothers; ***Yahweh is his inheritance***, just as Yahweh your God spoke to him.)

Everything in this Scripture is a parable of the firstborn from the dead. Levi would carry the ark of the covenant. This is a type of those who would carry the full and glorious likeness of Christ. Levi would stand in the presence of Yahweh, while access to His presence would be restricted to all those who embraced the idolatry of the world.

Ezekiel 44:12-13

Because they ministered to them before their idols and became a stumbling block of iniquity to the house of Israel, therefore I have sworn against them," declares Yahweh God, "that they shall bear the punishment for their iniquity. And they shall not come near to Me to serve as a priest to Me, nor come near to any of My holy things, to the things that are most holy; but they shall bear their shame and their abominations which they have committed."

In the day of judgment there will be many of God's children who will understand that although they were called to serve as priests before God, because they did not separate themselves in a pure devotion to God, but were doubleminded, pursuing the same idols of mammon and worldly success and pleasure as the world, they will not be granted access to the presence of Yahweh. This is a terrible tragedy, and it is reason enough to strive to attain to the number of the firstborn. What astounding things must be contained in the type and shadow of the Law where Yahweh told the tribe of Levi that He would be their inheritance! In all the ages to come it will be clearly revealed that there is nothing of greater value, glory, majesty and surpassing excellence, than to have Yahweh as a possession.

The majority of Israel were disqualified from being selected to be God's priests, His firstborn. Eleven tribes were not allowed to serve the Tabernacle, or to carry the ark of the covenant. Only one tribe attained to this honor. This same pattern is revealed in the life of Jacob's twelve sons. Reuben was the firstborn of his father. The preeminence should have

been his, but he disqualified himself, and the right of the firstborn was given to one who excelled his brothers in purity and devotion to God, even Joseph.

Genesis 49:3-4

“Reuben, you are my first-born; My might and the beginning of my strength, preeminent in dignity and preeminent in power. Uncontrolled as water, you shall not have preeminence, because you went up to your father's bed; then you defiled it - he went up to my couch.”

Reuben had sexual relations with Bilhah, the concubine of his father. This became known to Jacob, and Reuben forfeited the honor and dignity of the firstborn. In place of dignity he received shame. In place of power he was made weak. Another who was more worthy took his place.

Consider the message of this event. Many Christians today are truly the children of their heavenly Father. They could walk in all the preeminence of those who are the firstborn from the dead. Yet many forfeit this right because of uncontrolled passions. In order to satisfy some passion or desire of the flesh, they give themselves over to actions that are disgraceful and should not be named among the saints of God. Little do these ones know how much they are forfeiting. They will discover that their sin has been akin to that of Esau, who for a bowl of stew sold his birthright to his brother Jacob. In the eyes of God, such a trade is among the most grievous transgressions named among men.

Hebrews 12:15-17

See to it that no one comes short of the grace of God... that there be no immoral or godless person like Esau, who sold his own birthright for a single meal. For you know that even afterwards, when he desired to inherit the blessing, he was rejected, for he found no place for repentance, though he sought for it with tears.

Reuben cast away the preeminence that would have been his for a single sexual encounter with Bilhah. Esau sold his birthright to satisfy the momentary hunger of his belly. Multitudes of Christians are making similar diabolical transactions in this hour. When they stand before God they will see what they have forfeited. Like Esau they will cry out bitterly with tears for God to allow them to receive the blessing reserved for the firstborn from the dead. But God will not hear. God will not repent. Their choice will stand. Truly there will be weeping and wailing and gnashing of teeth among the children of God on that day.

What is required in order to attain to the number of the firstborn? We know that one will not be able to live as the majority of their brothers and attain this honor. There were twelve sons of Jacob, but only one was chosen. This son was the eleventh born. He was among the youngest, and he had a different spirit than his brothers. This son of Jacob was spiritually minded, and he had an unusual attachment to his father. Joseph loved his father, and his father loved him. After spending years in Egypt, Joseph's thoughts were constantly turned toward his father whom he loved.

Genesis 43:27

Then [Joseph] asked them about their welfare, and said, "Is your old father well, of whom you spoke? Is he still alive?"

Genesis 45:13

Now you must tell my father of all my splendor in Egypt, and all that you have seen; and you must hurry and bring my father down here."

Genesis 46:29

And Joseph prepared his chariot and went up to Goshen to meet his father Israel; as soon as he appeared before him, he fell on his neck and wept on his neck a long time.

As you are sojourning in this land of Egypt (the world) are your thoughts continuously turning toward your Father in heaven? Do you yearn to be in His presence, partaking of His fellowship? Is this desire revealed in the time you spend in prayer and the study of His word? Or are you captivated by all the pleasures and pursuits of this world, with its allure to the sensual nature of man? Do you stand apart from your brothers in your devotion to your father? Do you turn away from sin as Joseph turned away from Potiphar's wife who sought to seduce him, or are you as Reuben who failed to curb his fleshly lust and had sexual relations with his father's concubine? The choices we make now in this life will determine whether we will attain to the preeminence of the firstborn from the dead.

The firstborn always received a double portion from their father when the inheritance was given to the sons.

Deuteronomy 21:17

But he shall acknowledge the first-born... by giving him a double portion of all that he has, for he is the beginning of his strength; to him belongs the right of the first-born.

As we have seen, being granted the right of the firstborn is a spiritual parable. This right is not granted according to natural order, but according to worthiness, and love for the Father. Thus Jacob received the double portion instead of Esau, and Joseph received the double portion instead of Reuben.

Genesis 48:21-22

Then Israel said to Joseph, "Behold, I am about to die..., and I give you one portion more than your brothers, which I took from the hand of the Amorite with my sword and my bow."

Genesis 49:22-26

Joseph is a fruitful bough, a fruitful bough by a spring..., from the God of your father who helps you, and by the Almighty who blesses you with blessings of heaven above, blessings of the deep that lies beneath, blessings of the breasts and of the womb. The blessings of your father have surpassed the blessings of my ancestors up to the utmost bound of the everlasting hills; May they be on the head of Joseph, and on the crown of the head of the one distinguished among his brothers.

In the resurrection from the dead there will be those who are distinguished among their brothers. Their blessings will surpass the blessings of all others. The blessings of their Father in heaven will be on the head of those who attain to the number of the firstborn.

Those who would be numbered among the firstborn should study the life of Joseph. His brothers discerned that he was loved of his father above them. This is a spiritual parable. Yahweh will show a greater favor to those destined to be firstfruits unto Him, than He does to others. Jacob made for Joseph a special garment, and the firstborn will be clothed with the favor of God. Yet this favor will cause jealousy among the brothers of the firstfruits company. This is seen not only in Joseph's life, but in the life of Yahshua.

Yahshua came as One destined to receive the inheritance of the firstborn. The Jews had Him killed due to their jealousy.

Matthew 27:17-18

Pilate said to them, "Whom do you want me to release for you? Barabbas, or Yahshua who is called Christ?" For **he knew that because of envy they had delivered Him up.**

It was impossible to deny that the favor of the Father rested upon Yahshua. He manifested a wisdom that could not be refuted. He walked in a power that was clearly divine. Despite the fact that the blessings of the Father rested upon Yahshua, the Jews did not refrain themselves from persecuting this favored Son. In the same way, Joseph's brothers could see that Joseph was adorned in the special garment of his father, but they had no regard for their Father's judgment in this matter. They persecuted Joseph, spoke of killing him, and eventually sold him as a slave into the land of Egypt.

Those who would be firstfruits unto God must anticipate that such rejection by their brethren will be their portion. One cannot be too attached to a desire for fellowship among brethren if they would attain to the high call of their Father in heaven. A time will come when such sons of God will recognize that their devotion and love for the Father will lead them to be rejected by their brethren, and they must be willing to bear the cost. They must be willing to walk alone, separated from the companionship of other earthly relations.

John 1:11

He came unto his own, and his own received him not.

Luke 14:26

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be My disciple."

The walk of the firstborn is a lonely walk. It is a life set aside for the pleasure of Yahweh, our heavenly Father. When one walks with God, they will find themselves with little earthly company. The church today has lots of fellowship. There are myriads of brethren who meet together regularly, feasting together, playing together, dwelling together, while the Joseph's are alone.

One might think that Joseph finally knew fellowship when his brothers came to Egypt to buy grain and were reunited with him, but this is not so. We read the following about Joseph's circumstances.

Genesis 43:32

And the servants set out the food for Joseph by himself, and for his brothers by

themselves, and for those Egyptians who ate with him by themselves, according to the Egyptian custom not to eat food with the Hebrews; for that is an abomination to the Egyptians.

Three groups of people are revealed here in type. The Egyptians are a picture of the world. Joseph's brothers are a type of the church. Joseph is a type of the overcomer in Christ.

We find that those who will walk as overcomers will dine alone. The world despises the overcomer. The church cannot eat from the same table, and therefore the overcomer must dine alone. The overcomer can take food from his table, speaking of the revelations of God, and send them to his brothers, but he will find that it continues to be his lot to abide by himself. As much as his heart may yearn to be seated among his brothers, there is always something that keeps the separation in place. This phenomenon is of God. It serves to keep those who are numbered among the firstborn set apart unto their Father, and protects them from being ensnared in the mixture and impurity of their brethren.

Many truths are discerned through a study of the life of Joseph. In Joseph we see the preeminence to be granted to the firstborn.

Genesis 41:39-41

So Pharaoh said to Joseph, "Since God has informed you of all this, there is no one so discerning and wise as you are. ***You shall be over my house, and according to your command all my people shall do homage; only in the throne I will be greater than you.***" And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "***See I have set you over all the land of Egypt.***"

Pharaoh is in this instance a symbol of God who rules over the kingdoms of men. Egypt signifies the world, and Joseph the firstborn from the dead. (That Joseph is a type of the firstborn from the dead is seen in the event where his brothers took his coat and dipped it in blood and told his father Jacob that a wild animal had killed him. Thus Joseph is pictured as being dead, and later is revealed to be alive, a symbol of the firstborn from the dead.)

We see then in this parable that the firstborn will be granted ruling authority over all the earth. They will be granted divine wisdom and discernment in order to judge and rule the people. Only the Father will be greater, and nothing will be done in all the earth apart from the command of the firstborn from the dead.

At a time not far off, the Father will bring this Joseph Company out of their prison houses. (Note that Joseph was in Pharaoh's prison reserved for those who were ministers in government.) Joseph stands in this instance as those who must be trained under a strict discipline, where all personal freedom and liberty is removed, until they come to do nothing except at the command of God. For a period, such restriction will seem to chafe greatly and appear as a great injustice.

Genesis 40:12-15

Then Joseph said to him..., "Only keep me in mind when it goes well with you, and please do me a kindness by mentioning me to Pharaoh, and get me out of this house. For I was in fact kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews, and even here I have done nothing that they should have put me into the dungeon."

There is a period of perplexity for all who are so trained by God. As they observe the freedom of their brethren, they cannot understand why they are being subjected to experiences much harsher, lonelier and restrictive. The firstborn candidates are living as slaves while their brothers are walking in great liberty, doing as they please. Then an even further narrowing of their lives manifests, pictured in Joseph being cast into prison. All this serves to teach the sons of God to not do anything of their own initiative. They are to live for the will and pleasure of God. They are not free to do anything arising from their soul's desires. They are not free to pursue any worldly possession, any personal goal. They are to come into strict confinement to the will of the Father. They are to move only at His command. They are to be so perfect in this that they speak only what the Father commands them to speak.

John 12:49

"For I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak."

We see that Joseph has come to this same state of complete surrender of his being to the will of God when he is brought to stand before Pharaoh. Joseph has learned to not speak anything arising from self. He makes no petition to Pharaoh to deliver him from his bondage. He does not take advantage of the situation to seek anything for self. He is surrendered to the will and pleasure of God for that moment.

Genesis 41:15-16

And Pharaoh said to Joseph, "I have had a dream, but no one can interpret it; and I have heard it said about you, that when you hear a dream you can interpret it." Joseph then answered Pharaoh, saying, "It is not in me; God will give Pharaoh a favorable answer."

With these words, Joseph revealed that he had come to a place of complete surrender to the will of God. His lips would be given to God that God might speak through him, and this God did.

Joseph's life was much harsher than his brothers. Joseph knew more sorrow, more loneliness, more trials, more injustice than his brethren. Yet the glory and honor that commenced at the hour of his promotion far excelled that of his brothers. When Joseph's brothers came to Egypt they dwelt as despised shepherds.

Genesis 46:33-34

And it shall come about when Pharaoh calls you and says, 'What is your occupation?' that you shall say, 'Your servants have been keepers of livestock from our youth even until now, both we and our fathers,' that you may live in the land of Goshen; ***for every shepherd is loathsome to the Egyptians.***

Joseph's brothers partook of their good things in their youth, and were therefore without honor in their maturity. Joseph, in contrast, knew evil things in his youth, and he was given surpassing glory while his brothers were loathed.

Luke 16:25

But Abraham said, "Child, remember that during your life you received your good things, and likewise Lazarus bad things; but now he is being comforted here, and you are in agony."

People of God, this life is fleeting. Will you pursue a life of ease and comfort and pleasure now, forfeiting immeasurable glory and honor and blessing in the ages to come? Or will you contend earnestly for the crown to be given to those who cross the finish line first?

James 1:12

Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

II Timothy 4:7-8

I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.

Run in such a way that you might attain the crown, for there is a reward for all those who attain to the number of the firstborn.



Each in His Own Order

Because there is almost no knowledge among Christians today concerning the various resurrections from the dead, and the distinctions among them, it seems prudent to lay a solid foundation regarding this topic. The Scriptures actually have much to say about the resurrections (plural), but if you were to ask the majority of Christians today of this topic they would say that they know of only one resurrection. As we have seen in reading John's writing in the book of Revelation, it is plainly declared that there are more than one resurrection.

Revelation 20:4-6

And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of the testimony of Yahshua and because of the word of God, and those who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received the mark upon their forehead and upon their hand; and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed. ***This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection...***

Some in reading this may think that it is stating that there are two resurrections. However, this is itself an erroneous conclusion based upon a misunderstanding of these words. John states "the rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed." What is declared is that there would be a space of a thousand years between the first resurrection (the number of the firstborn) and any subsequent resurrection. There would not be any resurrections during the Millennial period where the firstborn are ruling with Christ. We must look at other Scriptures to determine the total number of resurrections, for the Scriptures reveal that there will be a total of three resurrections of men.

It should not be surprising that there are three resurrections, for three is a number relating to fulness and completion. E.W. Bullinger, in his book *Number in Scripture*, shares the following relating to the number three.

Three, therefore, stands for that which is solid, real, substantial, complete, and entire.

All things that are specially complete are stamped with this number three...

When we turn to the Scriptures, this completion becomes Divine, and marks Divine completeness or perfection.

Three is the first of four perfect numbers.

- * Three denotes divine perfection;*
- * Seven denotes spiritual perfection;*
- * Ten denotes ordinal perfection; and*
- * Twelve denotes governmental perfection.*

Hence the number three points us to what is real, essential, perfect, substantial, complete, and Divine.

E.W. Bullinger notes that “three notes divine perfection.” There are three persons in the Godhead; Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Resurrection is man entering into the fulness of spiritual life. It is embracing the divine perfection for which man was created. We should therefore find it affirming to learn that there are three resurrections, for this number is bound up with the entire doctrine of resurrection and man attaining to divine perfection, being perfect and complete in Christ Yahshua, the Son of God.

We even note this number in relation to the resurrection of Christ, for we are told that He arose on the third day. We observe the relation of the third day and divine perfection in the following words of Christ.

Luke 13:32

And [Yahshua] said to them, "Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and ***the third day I shall be perfected.***'"

Yahshua was speaking truths on many levels with these words. The third day was a reference to His own resurrection, when He would be perfected. Yet it was also a reference to the resurrection of the firstborn sons of God. For two days (two thousand years) the church would be given authority to cast out demons and perform cures. After two days, at the dawning of the third day, the number of the firstborn would attain to the resurrection as firstfruits unto God. This company of men would themselves be perfected, being conformed to the image of the glorified Son of God.

Many Christians understand that a day stands as a symbol for a thousand years, for this knowledge has been restored to many in an hour when it is necessary in order to discern the work of God. For those who are unfamiliar, I will share the following Scripture which serves as a foundation for this understanding.

II Peter 3:8

But do not let this one fact escape your notice, beloved, that ***with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.***

This is a key to understanding many of the types and shadows of the Scriptures. Knowing that a day is as a thousand years serves to unlock the prophetic significance of many events and declarations found in Scripture. We can go back to the first chapter of Genesis and see this symbolism. We are told that as Yahweh moved to re-create the earth in the first chapter of Genesis, that on the third day He caused the earth to arise out from under the waters, for prior to this time the waters covered all things.

Genesis 1:9-13

Then God said, "Let the waters below the heavens be gathered into one place, and let the dry land appear"; and it was so. And God called the dry land earth, and the gathering of the waters He called seas; and God saw that it was good... And there was evening and there was morning, a third day.

On the third day we see the first pattern for resurrection. The land arising out of the

water stands as a symbol of man, whose flesh was formed of the dust of the earth, arising in resurrection life out of the waters of death. That this occurs on the third day is by the design of Yahweh.

Some might object that man is not at the end of day two (two thousand years) from the formation of Adam in the Garden of Eden. This is certainly true, for it has been six thousand years since Adam was created. This places us at the end of six days prophetically, and poised to enter the seventh day. We must keep in mind, however, that the earth has known two men, two Adams. The first was formed six thousand years ago, and the second appeared two thousand years ago.

I Corinthians 15:45-49

So also it is written, "The first man, Adam, became a living soul." The last Adam became a life-giving spirit. However, the spiritual is not first, but the natural; then the spiritual. The first man is from the earth, earthy; the second man is from heaven. As is the earthy, so also are those who are earthy; and as is the heavenly, so also are those who are heavenly. And just as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly.

"The last Adam" is a reference to Yahshua, the Son of God. He came as the Head of a new race of men. Therefore we have two different genealogies running concurrent to one another. We have the genealogy of the first Adam which is poised to enter its seventh day. We also have the genealogy of the last Adam, which is on the brink of entering the third day. Thus the seventh day and the third day will arrive simultaneously. We will see the many membered body of Christ perfected on the third day, for this is the time appointed for their resurrection.

We can observe this truth in many other instances of Scripture. Following is another Scripture that contains a prophetic message relating to the perfecting of the sons of God.

Hosea 6:1-2

"Come, let us return to Yahweh. For He has torn us, but He will heal us; He has wounded us, but He will bandage us. ***He will revive us after two days; He will raise us up on the third day that we may live before Him.***"

For two days mankind has known a divided state. Those who have been born again of the seed of Christ have known the battle between the Spirit of Christ within them and the sinful flesh. As the apostle Paul declared, "these are contrary to one another." This torn condition of man has existed for the past two thousand years, ever since the first Pentecost when the Spirit descended upon those gathered in an upper room in Jerusalem. It is not the will of God that man should perpetually remain in this divided condition. There is a second salvation where man will be loosed from the bonds of this sinful flesh, and will receive a new, glorified body that does not know sin.

Hebrews 9:28

So ***Christ*** also, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, ***shall appear a second time for salvation without reference to sin, to those who eagerly await Him.***

The time appointed for this to occur is at the beginning of the Millennial period, the seventh day from Adam and the third day from Christ.

In Revelation we read of a great event taking place in the heavens, and this event is a dramatization of the firstborn sons of God coming forth in resurrection power and life.

Revelation 12:1-6

And a great sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, and the moon under her feet, and on her head a crown of twelve stars; and she was with child; and she cried out, being in labor and in pain to give birth. And another sign appeared in heaven: and behold, a great red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and on his heads were seven diadems... And the dragon stood before the woman who was about to give birth, so that when she gave birth he might devour her child. And she gave birth to a son, a male child, who is to rule all the nations with a rod of iron; and her child was caught up to God and to His throne.

What is symbolized here is the birth of the firstborn in the resurrection from the dead. I have a number of Bibles that include notes and headings placed in the text by the translators and editors. Some place a heading over this passage declaring that it speaks of the birth of Jesus. This is misleading, being one more attempt of Satan to deceive the children of God regarding the inheritance that awaits them. John is not writing in the book of Revelation of things that have happened in the past, but of things that will happen in the future.

Revelation 1:1

The Revelation of Jesus Christ, which God gave Him to show to His bond-servants,
the things which must shortly take place...
(NAS)

The woman in the heavens is the church. The child she is giving birth to is the elect saints, the overcomers who attain to the first resurrection. These are caught up to the throne of God, being called to rule with Him. This is a reference to those who will attain to the first resurrection.

Revelation 20:6

Blessed and holy is the one who has a part in the first resurrection; over these the second death has no power, but ***they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years.***

As the number of the firstborn are entering into the power and preeminence due them, the church is fleeing into the wilderness. The church must undergo a further refining, for when the time of the first resurrection came she was not ready.

Revelation 20:5

The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were completed.

There are firstborn sons of God, and there are the later born sons of God. The firstborn are a remnant portion of the whole. These will be a small company in comparison

to the multitude of the sons of God. We see then that the first resurrection from the dead is close at hand, but not all will attain unto it. The majority of Christians will have to await a later resurrection. Before we pass on to speak of the three resurrections, let us look at one more type and shadow that speaks of the fast approaching first resurrection.

As Joshua (a type of Yahshua) led the people of God into their inheritance at the crossing of the Jordan River, we are given clear types of the first resurrection from the dead. The Promised Land serves as a type of the inheritance of the saints, which is their resurrected state in glory. Even as the Jordan had to be crossed, we have to cross over from death into life. Observe now the symbolism of this crossing.

Joshua 3:3-4

And they commanded the people, saying, "When you see the ark of the covenant of Yahweh your God with the Levitical priests carrying it, then you shall set out from your place and go after it. However, there shall be between you and it a distance of about 2,000 cubits by measure. Do not come near it, that you may know the way by which you shall go, for you have not passed this way before."

The ark of the covenant stands as a symbol of the presence of God in His glory. It was forbidden to look in the ark, or to touch it, lest the man should die.

Exodus 33:20

But [Yahweh] said, "***You cannot see My face, for no man can see Me and live!***"

I Timothy 6:15-16

He who is the blessed and only Sovereign, the King of kings and Lord of lords; who alone possesses immortality and dwells in unapproachable light; ***whom no man has seen or can see.***

Joshua commanded the priests to carry the ark into the waters of the Jordan, and all who followed were strictly charged to remain at a distance of about 2,000 cubits. Every detail of the word of God is pregnant with meaning. Yahshua would be the first man to cross into the inheritance prepared for the sons of God. It would be "about 2,000" years before any others were to follow in entering into this same inheritance prepared for the saints in glory. The 2,000 cubits stand for 2,000 years. We should note, however, that it says "about 2,000," for no one knows the hour or the day. We are not told that it would be precisely 2,000 years from the time of Yahshua's resurrection to the time of the resurrection of His firstborn brothers. We are only told that it will be "about 2,000" years.

Joshua 3:5-6

Then Joshua said to the people, "***Consecrate yourselves, for tomorrow Yahweh will do wonders among you.***" And Joshua spoke to the priests, saying, "Take up the ark of the covenant and cross over ahead of the people." So they took up the ark of the covenant and went ahead of the people.

What an awesome foreshadowing of the resurrection of the saints to glory is found in these words. Truly Yahweh would do wonders for those who consecrated themselves.

I John 3:2-3

We know that, ***when He appears, we shall be like Him***, because we shall see Him just as He is. And ***everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies himself***, just as He is pure.

This is the fulfillment of what was observed at the crossing of the Jordan. The wonders Yahweh would do among us is to transform us into His own glorious image. This is the meaning of “consecrate yourselves.” John said “everyone who has this hope... purifies himself.” Do you want to see the wonders of Yahweh? Do you want to attain to the resurrection of the firstborn? Then you must lead a consecrated life. You must be wholly devoted, leading a life dedicated to the will and pleasure of God.

Christ has crossed over ahead of His brethren. A space separates Yahshua and those of His people who follow Him of about 2,000 years. It has now been about two thousand years. All who would attain to the first resurrection must be wholehearted in their pursuit of the goal. Their eyes must be fixed on the finish line. They must let nothing distract them or slow them down.

Joshua 3:14-16

So it came about when the people set out from their tents to cross the Jordan with the priests carrying the ark of the covenant before the people, and when those who carried the ark came into the Jordan, and the feet of the priests carrying the ark were dipped in the edge of the water (for the Jordan overflows all its banks all the days of harvest), that the waters which were flowing down from above stood and rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam, the city that is beside Zarethan; and those which were flowing down toward the sea of the Arabah, the Salt Sea, were completely cut off. So the people crossed opposite Jericho.

What is signified in the words “So it came about when the people set out from their tents”? The apostle Paul gives us understanding.

II Corinthians 5:2-4

For indeed in this house we groan, longing to be clothed with our dwelling from heaven; inasmuch as we, having put it on, shall not be found naked. For indeed while we are in this tent, we groan, being burdened, because we do not want to be unclothed, but to be clothed, in order that what is mortal may be swallowed up by life.

We must leave this tent of mortal flesh in order to enter into our inheritance in Christ. There is a body prepared for us, a dwelling suited to our new status as glorified sons of God.

Note in the account of Joshua leading the people across the swelling of the Jordan that the waters which symbolize death, “rose up in one heap, a great distance away at Adam.” This signifies that all men will have access to the crossing of the Jordan, as far back as Adam. All men will be granted the ability to follow Yahshua across the Jordan into the inheritance prepared for the sons of God.

Let us focus upon one more detail of this narrative, for it will lead us into a discovery of the three resurrections prepared for man. It is written in this account that the priests

stepped into the Jordan while it was in flood “for the Jordan overflows its banks **all the days of harvest.**” These words are as full of meaning as every other detail we have looked at. It was at harvest time that they crossed the Jordan, and this understanding will lead us to a wonderful testimony set in Scripture by the wisdom of Yahweh. All resurrections are pictured as harvests. Even as we harvest the ripe and mature grain of the earth, so too will God reap the earth and gather together those who have come to maturity. Not all mature at the same time. Each one comes to maturity, and therefore resurrection, in their own order.

When Yahweh gave the Law to Moses, He established certain festivals that were to be observed with meticulous detail. Every detail was to serve as a lesson, part of a grand parable, revealing Yahweh’s work with mankind. The Law contained portions relating to the observance of three feasts that the Jews were to observe annually. Each of these feasts occurred at the time of a major harvest in the land of Israel. Following is a list of the feasts and their associated harvests.

Passover - Barley
Pentecost - Wheat
Tabernacles (Sukkot) - Grapes

Deuteronomy 16:16

Three times in a year all your males shall appear before Yahweh your God in the place which He chooses, **at the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Passover)** and **at the Feast of Weeks (Pentecost)** and **at the Feast of Booths (Tabernacles)**...

Three times a year the people of Israel were commanded to appear before God. Appearing before God is symbolic of resurrection. That Moses instructed the Jews to appear three times every year was a foreshadowing of the three resurrections of man (“each in his own order”). In very symbolic language, the word “ingathering” was also used in association with these harvests.

Exodus 23:14-17

"Three times you shall keep a feast to Me in the year: You shall keep the Feast of Unleavened Bread... at the time appointed in the month of Abib..., and the Feast of Harvest, the firstfruits of your labors which you have sown in the field; and the Feast of **Ingathering** at the end of the year, **when you have gathered in the fruit of your labors from the field.** Three times in the year all your males shall appear before Yahweh God.”

God has been laboring in the field of this earth to bring forth mature sons after His image. There will be three harvests of men from the earth, each different in its character even as the three feasts were different, and the crops harvested at each one were different. These feasts would have been nothing without the harvests associated with them. The harvests were the key component of every feast. Each man was to bring with him fruit from the harvest when he appeared before Yahweh.

Exodus 23:15

And none shall appear before Me empty-handed.

God looks for fruit in the lives of men. Tragically, there will be those who appear before God without any fruit to show forth from their lives. These will receive a curse rather than a blessing, even as Yahshua cursed the fig tree that did not have any fruit on it when He came to inspect it.

Even as the fruit was gathered together and the firstfruits brought to Yahweh three times in the year, so will Yahweh send out His angels into the earth to gather together from all mankind those who are mature and fruitful.

Matthew 24:31

"And He will send forth His angels with a great trumpet and **they will gather together His elect** from the four winds, from one end of the sky to the other."

As we saw in the previous chapter, there are vast differences between the three resurrections of men and women to stand before God. There is a preeminence that belongs to those who attain to the first resurrection. The resurrections that follow will be of a lesser glory, honor and dignity. These differences are foreshadowed in the three harvests.

This first resurrection is associated with the barley harvest. Barley is an early ripening crop. It ripens about fifty days before wheat, and is therefore harvested earlier, not having to undergo all the heat of the summer. This is a parable. The overcomers who attain to the number of the firstborn will come to maturity quicker than the rest of the body of Christ. Because they gave themselves eagerly to pursue God's will for them of becoming like Christ, they will not have to experience the heat of the Great Tribulation and the Lake of Fire, even as barley doesn't have to go through the heat of summer.

Barley differs from wheat in a very critical way. Barley contains little gluten, while wheat has an abundance of gluten. Gluten is the component of grain that reacts with yeast to make the bread rise. Because barley lacks gluten it is often baked as an unleavened bread. This is a parable, for bread represents man's flesh and leaven represents sin. The barley crop speaks of a people whose flesh does not rise up at the presence of sin, for they have crucified the flesh with its affections and desires. These are the overcomers, and like Christ, they rule over the flesh.

Wheat contains an abundance of gluten and it is baked as a leavened bread. This is a picture of God's people who have not removed the sin from their lives; whose flesh reacts strongly in the presence of sin. The action of the yeast in wheat bread continues to cause the bread to rise until the bread is placed in the oven and baked. The heat of the oven stops the reaction between the leaven and the gluten in the bread, and it ceases to rise. This is also a parable of this latter group of Christians who will only turn away from sin, and learn righteousness, as they go through the heat of the Great Tribulation and the Lake of Fire.

These first two resurrections speak of those who are the people of God. Not all those who are God's people walk in a manner worthy of the Lord. Many are living lives of ease and comfort, sin and impurity. Only a remnant of the people of God will attain to the first resurrection. The rest will have to await the next resurrection after the thousand years are over.

Paul wrote of the order of the resurrections, and those who attain to them in the following words.

I Corinthians 15:22-26

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: Christ the first fruits, after that those who are Christ's at His coming, then comes the end, when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

(NAS)

The words from the New American Standard translation represent a common rendering of the words of this passage. I believe the translators have failed to capture the true intent of Paul's meaning, however. Paul was well aware of the symbolism of the harvests as they related to resurrection, and I believe he had this analogy in mind when he penned these words to the believers in Corinth. As it has been previously mentioned, the word Christ means anointed. During the feasts of God the firstfruits were presented to God, and they were anointed.

What is not observed in our English translations is the presence and absence of the definite article "the" in the original Greek. This article is present in the phrase "so also in (the) Christ all shall be made alive," as well as in the phrase "after that those who are (the) Christ's at His coming." This definite article is absent, however, in the phrase "Christ the first fruits." This could be taken to indicate that Paul is not speaking of "the Christ" here as a reference to the Son of God, but that he is speaking of "anointed firstfruits," which is understood to be a company of elect saints.

Numbers 28:26-28

'Also ***on the day of the first fruits***, when you present a new grain offering to Yahweh in your Feast of Weeks... you shall offer a burnt offering for a soothing aroma to Yahweh, two young bulls, one ram, seven male lambs one year old, ***and their grain offering, fine flour mixed with oil...***

It should be noted that anointing the firstfruits was something done specifically with the first feast which was Passover, and with the flour made from the barley. Regarding the second feast associated with the harvest of wheat, the instructions are quite different. Rather than adding oil to the grain, leaven is added.

Leviticus 23:17

You shall bring from your dwellings two loaves of bread to be waved, made from two-tenths of ***an ephah of fine flour; they shall be baked with leaven***, for firstfruits to the Lord.

Leaven symbolizes sin, whereas the removal of leaven is a major part of the Feast of Passover. Christ Yahshua was the firstfruits of those who arose from the dead, and He was without sin. Those who attain to the first resurrection will likewise be those who "crucify the flesh with its passions and desires." Understanding the relationship of the harvests, and their accompanying symbols, we can translate the apostle Paul's words in the following manner:

I Corinthians 15:22-26

For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order: the anointed first fruits (Barley/Passover), after that those who are Christ's at His coming (Wheat/Pentecost), then the remainder (Grapes/Tabernacles), when He delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father, when He has abolished all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet.

Paul attaches to his words on the order of the resurrection the words "He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet." These words express the thought that the resurrection work of God among mankind will not be complete until the enemies of God are dealt with. These will be last in resurrection, and like grapes which are trodden under the feet of man, the enemies of God will be trodden under God's feet, experiencing His wrath.

Isaiah 63:2-6

Why is Your apparel red, and Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? "I have trodden the wine trough alone, and from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger, and trampled them in My wrath; and their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, and I stained all My raiment. For the day of vengeance was in My heart, and My year of redemption has come. And I looked, and there was no one to help, and I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; so My own arm brought salvation to Me; and My wrath upheld Me. And I trod down the peoples in My anger, and made them drunk in My wrath, and I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

God's work among mankind will not be finished until all mankind have entered into that which Paul described with the following words: "For as in Adam all die, so also in Christ all shall be made alive. But each in his own order." All men died in Adam. All shall be made alive in Christ. Even the enemies of God will come to the end of their rebellion, and they will confess that in God alone are righteousness and strength. All who were incensed with God will be ashamed of themselves, and will come to a long awaited repentance. Thus we see that Isaiah describes the day of God's wrath not only as "the day of vengeance," but also as "My year of redemption."

Isaiah 45:23-24

I have sworn by Myself, the word has gone forth from My mouth in righteousness and will not turn back, that to Me every knee will bow, every tongue will swear allegiance. They will say of Me, 'Only in Yahweh are righteousness and strength.' Men will come to Him, and all who were angry at Him shall be put to shame.

This then will be the third and final resurrection. Even as Tabernacles occurred late in the fall of the year at the time of the grape harvest, the enemies of God will be resurrected to a resurrection of judgment, resulting in their redemption. The enemies of God are pictured as grapes which are trodden under foot, and these will be resurrected last of all. This will be the consummation of the work of God among man. Mercy will triumph over judgment, and all will be summed up in Christ.

I Corinthians 15:25-28

For He must reign until He has put all His enemies under His feet. The last enemy that will be abolished is death. ***For He has put all things in subjection under His feet.*** But when He says, "All things are put in subjection," it is evident that He is excepted who put all things in subjection to Him. And ***when all things are subjected to Him, then the Son Himself also will be subjected to the One who subjected all things to Him, that God may be all in all.***

There is an order to God's plan of reconciliation of the creation back to Himself. "Blessed and holy are those who attain to the first resurrection." Truly it will be said, "Many were called, but few were chosen." If you are a son of God, the opportunity is set before you to attain to the number of the firstborn. Will you live in such a way that you might be chosen, or will you be assigned a portion with the wicked?

Matthew 24:48-51

But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat his fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

Yahweh is calling out to His sons in this hour to remove all unrighteousness from their lives. He is calling out to all who have ears to pursue Him with an undivided heart. The path is difficult. There are sorrows and trials that all the righteous must pass through. Yet we are given the following promise:

Psalms 30:5

Weeping may last for the night, but a shout of joy comes in the morning.

We stand close to the morning of the third day. It will be a time of unparalleled joy for a company of overcomers. These have known much of sorrow and difficulty, and their Father in heaven will not be stinting in their reward. He will wipe away every tear from their eyes, and there will no longer be any mourning or crying or pain. The first things will have passed away.



The Afflicted Way

I have but poorly described what awaits the glorified sons of God who attain to the number of the firstborn, and have dimly portrayed the distinctions between the three resurrections of man. I am hindered from providing a clearer picture of the glories of the ages to come by my own limited sight. I have seen these things as through a glass darkly (I Corinthians 13:12).

The best I can urge upon any child of God is simply to believe the witness Yahweh has provided for us in His word. He has said that the first resurrection is worthy of our utmost striving.

Romans 8:18

For I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory that is to be revealed in us.

I cannot describe the glory to be revealed in us, for I have not seen it. The apostle John confessed that "it has not yet appeared what we shall be," but he said we would be like the firstborn Son of God in His glory. Such a state is beyond present comprehension.

I Corinthians 2:9

"Things which eye has not seen and ear has not heard, and which have not entered the heart of man, all that God has prepared for those who love Him."

What awaits the overcoming sons of God will be awesome beyond anything in this present age. God has prepared amazing things for those who have toiled and wept and suffered in this time of formation of His sons.

Matthew 25:34-35

Then the King will say to those on His right, "Come, you who are blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world."

I know I must bring some balance to this teaching, for although the future is glorious beyond description for all who attain to that age to come, there is a cost to be borne at this time. In order to enter into the glory of a resurrected son of God one must be conformed first to the image and likeness of God. This image and likeness is one of character. Christ must be fully formed in us before we can reign as members of Christ over the kingdoms of the earth.

This conforming process is difficult. Yahshua described it in the following way:

Matthew 7:13-14

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. ***For the gate is small, and the way is afflicted that leads to life, and few are those who find it.***"

The most common English translations of the Scriptures say "the way is narrow." The word rendered "narrow" is the Greek word *thlibo*, which the KJV has rendered in the following ways: *afflict, narrow, throng, suffer tribulation, trouble*. The most common

rendering of this Greek word is “afflicted,” and it is fitting to translate it this way in the verse quoted above. The way to life is an afflicted path.

II Timothy 3:12

And indeed, all who desire to live godly in Christ Yahshua will be persecuted.

There is no other way to mature a child of God than to subject them to distresses and difficulties. Much sin is bound up in this flesh, and it is with the utmost difficulty that the spiritual creation formed within us by the power of the Holy Spirit comes to a place of ascendancy over the clamoring passions and desires of the flesh. Pride must be humbled. Selfishness must be replaced with a total selflessness. Lust must be crucified. Hatred must give way to love. Irritability must yield to patience. Fear must be conquered by faith and peace.

We can only make the transformation from fleshly beings to spiritual as we are placed in situations where our character is tried. We must be brought into a variety of circumstances where the natural man will always respond with lust, fear, anger, and a host of other unrighteous thoughts and actions. In each instance our Father, by His Holy Spirit, urges us to arise as spiritual beings in His own image and put down the flesh in order to manifest the glory of God’s character within us.

Some years ago I was brought to a particularly difficult trial. I was perplexed, and grieved and discouraged, causing me to cry out to the Lord for some encouragement. At that very moment He had a family member stick a prophetic word in my hand that they had just received in their e-mail. It was a direct and explicit answer to my cry of anguish. This prophetic word contained the following sentence.

And no matter what the circumstances look like, I am able to work My glory in them, and to make you come forth into the calling and anointing that I have for you.

As I looked at my trial I wondered very much how God’s glory could be manifest in it. There was nothing that appeared glorious to me, for my trial was leading to my being subjected to false accusations and unrighteous judgments resulting in condemnation. In my shortsightedness, the only glory I could envision was for God to end the trial and vindicate me before my detractors.

Since then I have come to understand that God is glorified whenever we manifest His holy and righteous character in the midst of our trials. Although outwardly we may be subjected to shame, God is glorified if we bear up under the trial patiently, crucifying the flesh with its evil passions. When we are slandered and seek to conciliate, when we are reviled and do not revile in return, when we are insulted and speak forth a blessing, then Yahweh is glorified. The greatest glory we can bring to the Father is found in the moments of our most extreme trials.

John 12:27-28

"Now My soul has become troubled; and ***what shall I say, 'Father, save Me from this hour'***? But for this purpose I came to this hour. ***Father, glorify Thy name.***" There came therefore a voice out of heaven: ***"I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again."***

Yahshua was faced with two choices when He saw the cross before Him. He could say, "Father, save me from this hour," or He could say, "Father, glorify Thy name." Yahshua chose to glorify His Father's name by going through the trial and manifesting the meek, humble and loving character of God as He was being subjected to terrible abuse and scorn. The Father was glorified beyond measure as His Son was being crucified and He declared, "Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do." This single act was a triumph over the rebellious and self-centered attitude of Satan. By the righteousness, humility, and love of the Son of God all sin was shown to be exceedingly sinful. The nature and character of God was revealed to be infinitely higher and worthy of praise than the fallen nature of man.

In order for you and I to be made ready to receive the glory, power and authority reserved for the glorified sons of God, we must first become mature sons in the image and likeness of our Father. This conformity is proven through many trials that seem grievous at the moment, but they yield the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Hebrews 12:3-12

For consider Him who has endured such hostility by sinners against Himself, so that you may not grow weary and lose heart. You have not yet resisted to the point of shedding blood in your striving against sin; and you have forgotten the exhortation which is addressed to you as sons, "My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor faint when you are reprov'd by Him; for those whom the Lord loves He disciplines, and He scourges every son whom He receives." It is for discipline that you endure; God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom his father does not discipline? But if you are without discipline, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Furthermore, we had earthly fathers to discipline us, and we respected them; shall we not much rather be subject to the Father of spirits, and live? For they disciplined us for a short time as seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. All discipline for the moment seems not to be joyful, but sorrowful; yet to those who have been trained by it, afterwards it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness.

Our Father will always subject us to the optimum circumstances to produce in us His righteous character. He rarely chooses to subject His sons in training to ease and comfort, riches or worldly acclaim. When life is comfortable, the sons of God tend to be at ease. When men and women have plenty, their tendency is toward pride and careless living. Yahweh knows our frame, and the waywardness of the flesh. He therefore chooses circumstances that are humble and which keep us focused on Him.

In 1999 I surrendered to the Lord to follow Him wherever He would lead me. This was a departure from the manner of my Christian walk prior to that time. I had previously lived according to the manner of all the other Christians with whom I was familiar. I remained in control of many of the decisions of my life, fearing that a total surrender to His will might lead me to experiences my flesh and soul dreaded.

When I crossed through the narrow gate of surrender to His will in all things, I found myself entering an afflicted path. I had known afflictions in earlier days, but they were much less, for I was still directing my way in many decisions. My growth in Christ was also much slower during those former days. When I entered into the path of affliction of God's

choosing, my spiritual growth entered into a greatly accelerated state.

Yahweh directed me to quit my job as a computer professional at a hospital and begin ministering full-time. I had no savings, and I had a wife and two children. I actually anticipated that the Lord would honor my faith and obedience by supplying me with an on-time abundance of provision and allowing me to maintain my former manner and standard of living. This was not to be the case.

Over the course of the next six years I lived day by day in dependence upon my heavenly Father. He supplied our every need, but our provision was very meager in comparison to what we had known when I was working as a computer professional. There were many days when there was no food in the house and we were dependent upon God sending provision that very day or we would not eat. He always sent a provision! We never went hungry, but we did not eat steak either. We were blessed to have a simple meal, a sandwich, or something very basic to fill our bellies. (In hindsight, we could have eaten a much better diet if we had educated ourselves in the preparation of inexpensive wholesome foods such as dried beans and whole grains and vegetables.)

We never suffered hunger, but I felt a kind of suffering in these experiences. I knew I could go out and get a job and buy whatever my heart desired to feed myself and my family. Yet the Spirit of Christ constrained me from doing so. He showed me that He wanted me to write books, minister to others, and trust Him for all things during these years. I knew that taking a job would be a violation of the Father's will for me, for He was testing me and seeking to teach me many things by keeping me dependent upon Him.

It was not the Father's will that I have an abundance of money at that time. He could easily have provided it had He chosen to do so. He can open up the windows of heaven and pour forth a blessing at any time. The best environment for my spiritual growth was not one of material prosperity. It was an environment of daily dependence for that day's need.

I learned something through this experience. I discovered that when I had been making decisions for myself that I was consistently choosing a path that was much more comfortable to the flesh. I didn't realize how much this was true until I gave the direction of my entire life into the hands of my Father. His choices for my family and I were not nearly as comfortable as what my own soul would have led us unto. This truth is certainly a major portion of what Yahshua was indicating in His words in Matthew chapter 7. Wide is the gate and broad is the way to destruction, and many are on that path. What path does the natural man choose for himself? With little exception, man chooses the easiest way. Few would choose to walk through a thorny hedge if there was a clear way around it. Yet God will lead His sons and daughters through the thorny hedge that rips and tears at their flesh.

This tendency to choose for ourselves a comfortable path, determining what sacrifices we will make, and which ones we will avoid, is a pathway to destruction. The Lord has given us clear examples of people whose lives were ones of ease and comfort, and rather than producing righteous men and women after His image and likeness, the abundance of their situation led them to careless living and sin.

Ezekiel 16:49-50

Behold, this was the guilt of your sister Sodom: ***she and her daughters had arrogance, abundant food, and careless ease***, but she did not help the poor and needy. Thus they were haughty and committed abominations before Me. Therefore I removed them when I saw it.

God knows that it requires a path of affliction to provide an environment for spiritual growth and righteousness. The majority of Christians, failing to allow God to choose their path and to lead them in all decisions, are also failing to gain in conformity to Christ. At best they have greatly slowed their growth to spiritual maturity.

The disciples of Christ were amazed when Yahshua spoke the following words:

Matthew 19:23-24

"Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. And again I say to you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle, than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God."

Many have misunderstood the message of Christ in these words, for they have mistakenly equated "the eye of a needle" with a sewing needle. Camels do not go through the eye of a sewing needle, so this makes little sense. In the days of Christ cities were surrounded by walls for protection against invading enemies. Gates were set in the walls to allow people and materials to come and go. These gates were closed at night and in times of danger, but it was still necessary to allow a limited flow of people in and out. Therefore, built into the large gates was a small door which could be opened to let a man in or out. This small door was called "the eye of the needle."

Camels at the time were used for transport of goods. They would be piled high with merchandise and goods to be traded. If a man came to the gates after they had been closed and needed to enter, it was possible to go through and take his camel along, but it was very difficult. The master of the camel would have to take all the merchandise off of the camel, and the camel would have to go through the gate on his knees.

This is a picture of how a rich man must enter the kingdom of heaven. Getting on one's knees speaks of humility, and removing all the goods from the camel's back speaks of the necessity of a rich man giving up all his possessions.

Matthew 19:21-22

Yahshua said to him, "***If you wish to be perfect***, go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me." But when the young man heard this statement, he went away grieved; for he was one who owned much property.

The word rendered as "perfect" in this Scripture is the Greek word *teleios*. This Greek word means "*perfect, mature, of full age*." What Yahshua was telling this rich young ruler of the Jews is that if he wanted to come to maturity as a son of God, then he needed to free himself from all his wealth which was making his life very comfortable and easy, and then come follow Christ. Christ would lead this young man down an afflicted path, but it would lead to spiritual maturity. Holding onto his possessions, and clinging to his comfortable lifestyle, would hinder this man from coming to a perfect conformity to the image of Christ.

Most Christians think that the Lord's words to this young ruler were exceptional. They have been convinced by preachers of prosperity that this young man had an inordinate affection for the world's goods and therefore he was required to give them up, but not all Christians need do so. What the saints have not understood is that the Lord is revealing a very general principle through these words, a principle with application to the lives of all Yahweh's sons and daughters. A life of material ease and comfort will hinder all men from

coming to maturity in Christ. "The way is afflicted" which leads to life. Comfort and affliction are opposites. We cannot choose to live comfortable lives and expect to find the mature image of Christ formed in us at the end of our journey. It will not happen.

I am convinced that a life of very humble circumstances provides the optimal environment for the maturing of almost all of the children of God. God wants us to be dependent upon Him. He will not lead all men to quit their jobs, as He instructed me to do. I was a minister of the gospel and the Scriptures declare:

I Corinthians 9:14

So also the Lord directed those who proclaim the gospel to get their living from the gospel.

Yet, God does have a specific plan for every son and daughter. He would have them submit their every decision to Him. Yahweh wants to be the One to choose where you work, where you live, and what you spend your money and time doing. If all saints submitted all these decisions to God I believe that most would find themselves living in daily dependence upon God. When the Lord taught His disciples to pray, He began this way:

Matthew 6:9-11

Our Father who art in heaven, Hallowed be Thy name. "Thy kingdom come. Thy will be done, on earth as it is in heaven. ***Give us this day our daily bread.***

When people came up to Yahshua saying they wanted to be His disciple, it was not unheard of for Him to counsel them to sell all they had, give it to the poor, and then come follow Him. To do so placed a person in a position of complete daily dependence upon the Father. Manifesting a willingness to dispose of one's possessions and live the life the Lord chose for them was not the requirement of a select few. A willingness to surrender all was required of all who would be Christ's disciple.

Luke 14:33

So therefore, ***no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions.***

Luke 5:11

And when they had brought their boats to land, ***they left everything and followed Him.***

Luke 18:29-30

And He said to them, "Truly I say to you, ***there is no one who has left house or wife or brothers or parents or children, for the sake of the kingdom of God, who shall not receive many times as much at this time and in the age to come, eternal life.*** "

In this last passage we see a parallel to the afflicted path that leads to life. Yahshua tells His disciples that all who have left the comforts of house and possessions and relatives behind will receive "eternal life." Because they accepted the afflicted path, these will receive life.

There are few Christians today who have given up all their possessions to God. I am convinced that God would have everyone who would be a disciple of Christ to surrender all things to Him that He might direct them in all their worldly possessions, the choice of where they live, and how they spend their time and money. He may not tell you to dispose of all things, yet if Scriptures provide any pattern at all in God's dealings with those who would be sons of God, He will require this of many. He laid this requirement on me. He reduced my worldly possessions down to nothing. For a time He led my family and I to live and travel in a 20 year old motorhome, and I am convinced that had the rest of my family stayed the course, this would be our manner of living in this hour.

If we make our life choices for ourselves, we will inevitably choose circumstances and conditions that are comfortable to our flesh. This comfort stands as a hindrance to spiritual growth. Having a home can afford so much comfort and insulation from the trials we need to mature that Yahshua will call us to surrender even this which many find to be an absolute requirement, and non-negotiable with the Lord. Yahshua spoke to a Scribe who wanted to follow Him as a disciple. Scribes in Israel had comfortable lives, and nice homes. He told the Scribe:

Matthew 8:20

"The foxes have holes, and the birds of the air have nests; but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay His head."

Yahshua, although being the Son of God, was content to live far below the standard of living of the people He dwelt among. Most Jews had a home of some kind, but Yahshua lived as a homeless man. God could have provided a house and a nice ministry center for His Son. Yet He chose that which was optimal to teach Him obedience, and to perfect Him.

Hebrews 5:8-9

Although He was a Son, ***He learned obedience from the things which He suffered.*** And ***having been made perfect,*** He became to all those who obey Him the source of eternal salvation...

In order to enter by the narrow gate, and to travel the afflicted way which leads to life, it is mandatory that we allow our Father in heaven to direct our steps. The vast majority of mankind seek to direct their own steps. They have certain desires and requirements that they feel this life should provide for them. Yahshua said that this path of self-direction is wide and it leads to destruction.

I know that to Western Christians, this message is very radical. It was radical in the day of Christ. The rich young ruler went away grieved, probably reasoning that what Christ demanded of him could not possibly be the will of God. Most Scribes in Christ's day would also have balked at giving up the requirement of having their own home, thinking such a sacrifice was totally unnecessary. The apostle Paul very plainly affirmed the words of Christ, revealing that he was not only willing to accept this afflicted path, but he instructed others that it was right and necessary.

I Timothy 6:6-11

But godliness actually is a means of great gain, when accompanied by ***contentment.*** For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take

anything out of it either. And ***if we have food and covering, with these we shall be content***. But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith, and pierced themselves with many a pang. But flee from these things, you man of God...

All the body needs to survive is food and covering. These are the necessities. All beyond this are comforts. A man doesn't need a house filled with furniture. He doesn't need televisions, stereos, game consoles, a swimming pool or jacuzzi, a pool table, or other forms of entertainment, two cars in the garage, or walls adorned with decorations, and closets filled with the merchandise of this world. I once had many of these things, back when I lived as most Christians do today, making my own choices concerning the path I would walk. I did not understand that choosing for myself a comfortable life was hindering the maturation of the spiritual man.

Yahweh may provide all of these things to you at some point in your path. At other times He may reduce you to nothing. The key to growth in Christ is being content with whatever Yahweh chooses for us. The apostle Paul did not always know lean times. There were seasons of plenty.

Philippians 4:11-13

I have learned to be content in whatever circumstances I am. I know how to get along with humble means, and I also know how to live in prosperity; in any and every circumstance I have learned the secret of being filled and going hungry, both of having abundance and suffering need. I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.

I have found that the Lord will lead us to experience seasons of material blessing and comfort. These often serve as intermissions in much longer seasons of leanness and difficulty. There are seasons where He places us in the fire of refining, and times when He takes us out of the fire for a period of refreshing. What is certain is that He will not choose for us the uninterrupted comfort and ease that the majority of Christians have chosen for themselves.

II Corinthians 11:27

I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure.

II Timothy 2:9

I suffer hardship even to imprisonment as a criminal...

II Timothy 2:3

Suffer hardship with me, as a good soldier of Christ Yahshua.

II Timothy 4:5

But you, be sober in all things, ***endure hardship***, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry.

Lest some should argue that the apostle Paul was giving these instructions to a fellow minister, and they don't apply to all Christians, I will provide a couple examples of similar instructions to the churches.

Philippians 1:29-30

For to you it has been granted for Christ's sake, not only to believe in Him, but also ***to suffer*** for His sake, ***experiencing the same conflict which you saw in me, and now hear to be in me.***

Romans 8:16-17

The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, heirs also, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, ***if indeed we suffer with Him in order that we may also be glorified with Him.***

The apostle makes it quite plain to the saints that being an heir with Christ is inextricably tied together with their willingness to suffer with Christ. There is an afflicted path that leads to life for all the sons of God. It is a sobering truth that the Lord declared when He uttered the words, "and few there are that find it."

If we fail in conformity to Christ, a conformity that only comes by walking an afflicted path, then we will not attain to the number of the firstborn sons of God. Consider again, the story of Joseph. When all of Joseph's brothers were living as free men, living as they pleased, Joseph was a slave and a prisoner. Joseph could not choose anything for himself, and he serves as a type of those who are overcomers in Christ.

For the past four years I have lived alone. My children are grown and my wife has chosen to not allow the Lord to order her steps, for there are certain things she desires, even requires in this life. I do not condemn her for this. I know, however, that I must not choose my lifestyle and activities for myself. I must surrender to the Father in all things. After my wife left me, Yahweh chose for me to live at a homeless shelter for a year, then to work as an employee of the homeless shelter for a further two years. I was not paid much, and though I have no debt and live a simple life, I found myself living constantly in dependence upon the Father to meet all of my needs.

Several months ago He directed me to leave the employment of the rescue mission, and to enter into full-time ministry again, trusting Him for every provision. He has been faithful to meet my every need. I am lacking for nothing, but by most American's standards my life would be appalling. I have no home. I live out of a small camper/van. I have very few possessions. And I am dependent upon the Father for all of my needs.

Though many would not choose to live as the Father has directed me, I am content with what He has chosen. I know it is the optimal environment for me. In times past I have wondered why the Father didn't pour out a great financial blessing upon me. I now know the answer. Financial wealth leads to independence. If I had much money in times past I would have made decisions that would have led me away from what was best for me. I would have sought to ease my way and make my flesh more comfortable. Comfort was not what I needed to grow, therefore God withheld His abundance.

Having an abundance tends to make men and women less sensitive to God's leading and direction. They begin to make decisions influenced by the desires of their soul, rather than seeking to know the mind of Yahweh in everything. Perhaps the day will come when I have matured enough spiritually so that the Father can trust me with an abundance,

knowing that I have learned the discipline of waiting on Him before I move in any direction. This maturity has to be gained by much discipline at the hands of our Father.

Let me end this chapter by inviting you to look at the Scripture which serves as its basis once more. Consider what the Spirit of Christ is speaking to you, through these words. Ask Him to reveal the application to your own walk.

A day is close at hand when judgment is coming to the church. Many who have had an abundance will be reduced to great poverty. Is it not much better to freely surrender to the Lord's direction in your life, than to have Him take what you have by force? There is great reward for those who release their possessions of a free will, for as the Lord told the rich young ruler, "and you will have treasure in heaven." There is no reward if you cling to that which your flesh cries out for until it is suddenly snatched out of your hands.

Matthew 7:13-14

"Enter by the narrow gate; for the gate is wide, and the way is broad that leads to destruction, and many are those who enter by it. ***For the gate is small, and the way is afflicted that leads to life, and few are those who find it.***"



Death of Initiative

The first chapter of this book declared the value of taking a wider view of the work of God, for as we observe the end Yahweh has in mind for His sons we can better comprehend those things which are to be our present experience. Yahweh is looking for sons to whom He can impart His own omnipotent power and authority. In order to entrust the powers of the age to come to sons, these sons must be fully formed in Yahweh's own image. To fall short in any measure in attaining to the character of God would result in incalculable harm to the creation.

Consider the message of the following passage from the gospels:

Luke 9:52-56

And they went, and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make arrangements for Him. And they did not receive Him, because He was journeying with His face toward Jerusalem. And when His disciples James and John saw this, they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "***You do not know what kind of spirit you are of***; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."

Suppose Yahweh had granted James and John the power and authority to do whatever came into their heart BEFORE they learned the nature of the Spirit of Christ. These "sons of thunder" would have left smoking ruins all around in their misguided zeal for their Lord. Yahweh will bequeath an even greater power to His sons in the age to come, and therefore it is an absolute necessity that they come into a strict conformity to the Spirit of Christ.

The sons of God must learn a deep humility. They must not consider that any thought or ambition arising from the soul of man is of value. Walking humbly before God requires that a man move only at the command of God, doing nothing that arises out from self. It is an acknowledgment that only Yahweh is the source of righteous judgment and all goodness. Man can only act in righteousness and goodness when he has perfectly comprehended the mind and will of the Father.

Isaiah 11:3-4

He will not judge by what His eyes see, nor make a decision by what His ears hear; but with righteousness He will judge...

Righteous judgment is not arrived at by a rational examination of the facts. Even if we have a moral code to guide us and we apply all diligence to understand all the facts of a matter, our rational mind will not lead us to righteous judgment. The prophet Isaiah testified that the coming Messiah would not judge after the manner of men. The Son of God would not evaluate situations as He received input through His natural senses and then weighed the matter in His soul. The Messiah would judge with righteousness.

The majority in Christendom today overwhelmingly form their judgments according to the report of their senses as they weigh the facts in their soul. Many know of no other way to judge a matter. Little do they realize that they are operating out of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and they have not begun to judge things in righteousness. How often have unrighteous actions been upheld by Christian men, and righteous actions

condemned? All the while those making the judgments think their thoughts are right and in keeping with the mind of Christ.

John 16:2-3

“They will make you outcasts from the synagogue, but an hour is coming for everyone who kills you to think that he is offering service to God. And these things they will do, because they have not known the Father, or Me.”

If we do not know Christ or the Father, even as James and John did not know the Spirit they were of, we will make judgments that are antagonistic to the judgments of God. You may believe you would never misjudge things so badly, yet if you judge any matter by the seeing of the eye or the hearing of the ear, you are already on the wrong track and operating contrary to the example of the firstborn Son of God.

Suppose you saw a man confessing the name of Christ and he was casting out a demon, speaking forth the word of God, or even performing a miracle. Would you not conclude that such an one must be walking in righteousness? Would you not judge that this person must certainly be one of God’s favorite sons, and walking in the pleasure of Yahweh? Yahshua did not judge in this way.

Matthew 7:21-23

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. Many will say to Me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?' And then I will declare to them, 'I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness.'"

I scarcely believe there is a Christian today who would judge things as Yahshua did in this Scripture. Most would stand up alongside these and say, “But Lord, they were confessing Your name and doing many good works. They were casting out Satan. How can you condemn these as lawless?” If we judge events by what our eyes see and ears hear we will stumble badly. We will end up approving that which Christ condemns and condemning that which He approves.

It is pride to think that we can judge matters ourselves and come to a righteous understanding of a matter. The soul of man, no matter how educated in the things of God, is inadequate for the task of making righteous judgments. There is one unfailing source of righteous judgment in all of creation, and that is Yahweh. We only know righteousness, and we only judge a matter fairly, as we receive His mind and thoughts. This is how Yahshua judged all things. He looked to the Father and received His judgment.

John 5:30

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. ***As I hear, I judge***; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

It was not the hearing of the ear that Yahshua referred to in these words. It was hearing by the Spirit. Yahshua never did anything of His own initiative. He did not even speak a word of His own initiative, but only spoke the words the Father commanded Him

to speak. Yahshua was at perfect rest in His soul. Yahshua did not allow His soul to direct His activities, or even to influence His actions. He stilled His soul and at every decision He looked to the mind of the Father and did only what He observed the Father doing.

John 4:34

Yahshua said to them, "***My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to accomplish His work.***"

With these words Yahshua was declaring that the very thing that sustained Him and gave Him life was knowing the Father's will and doing it. Anything less than this was a work of death. We ONLY know the will of the Father in any instance, we only comprehend His mind and thoughts, as they are imparted to us by the Holy Spirit.

I Corinthians 2:10-16

The Spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the thoughts of a man except the spirit of the man, which is in him? ***Even so the thoughts of God no one knows except the Spirit of God.*** Now ***we have received***, not the spirit of the world, but ***the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God***, which things we also speak, not in words taught by human wisdom, but in those taught by the Spirit, combining spiritual thoughts with spiritual words. But a natural man does not accept the things of the Spirit of God; for they are foolishness to him, and he cannot understand them, because they are spiritually appraised. But he who is spiritual appraises all things, yet he himself is appraised by no man. For who has known the mind of the Lord, that he should instruct Him? But ***we have the mind of Christ.***

The apostle Paul declares, "***we have received... the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things freely given to us by God.***" Many Christians will say, "Yes, this is true. Therefore my judgments are right." DO NOT BE DECEIVED! Do you not understand that the soul of man has received the ability to judge right and wrong, good and evil, by eating of the forbidden fruit in the garden? This soulish sense of judgment is ALWAYS with us, and it is distorted and twisted, arising from our fallen humanity. The vast majority of Christians examine the facts as they are apprehended by the seeing of the eye and the hearing of the ear, and they look inside to discern what is the good path and what is the evil path. They think they have arrived at the mind of God when they have only consulted with their own soul.

Are you able to discern between the voice of your soul and the voice of the Spirit of God? Most Christians are failing to divide between them.

Hebrews 4:10-12

For ***the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.*** Let us therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience. For the word of God is living and active and sharper than any two-edged sword, and ***piercing as far as the division of soul and spirit***, of both joints and marrow, and able to judge the thoughts and intentions of the heart.

The apostle is declaring that there is a Sabbath rest for all of God's sons to enter. Yet like the Israelites in the wilderness, the vast majority fail to enter in. The Sabbath rest before the sons of God today is defined as coming to an end of our own works; "**the one who has entered His rest has himself also rested from his works, as God did from His.**" Walking in Sabbath rest is manifested by doing nothing unless we have received it from the Father. This is what Christ was saying when He declared, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven; **but he who does the will of My Father** who is in heaven." You can call Christ "Lord" all day long, but if the works you are doing originated in your own soul then you have not begun to do the will of the Father.

Most Christians have almost no concept of the peril of being directed by their own soul. They consider that it is enough that they try to live a moral life, and that they devote some of their time to good works. Such a life is detestable to the Father. Yahweh does not want man to offer Him the fruit of his own soul. He wants man to die to self (soul) and begin to be directed and empowered in all things by the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

Luke 14:26

"If anyone comes to Me, and does not hate... **even his own life (psuche, soul)**, he cannot be My disciple."

If you still live the life of your soul, being led of your own natural mind, willing things from your Adamic soul, pursuing the pleasures and desires of the natural man, then you cannot be Christ's disciple. The reason one must hate their own soul is that they dare not be directed by it if they would follow Christ, for He never was directed by His soul. He did only those things the Father showed Him to do. The disciple of Christ must do the same.

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, **created** in Christ Yahshua **for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

This was Christ's meaning when He said many would come to Him on the day of judgment saying they did many good works in His name, but He would declare them lawless. These Christians were lawless because they did not submit to the leading of the Spirit in their works. They chose works according to the direction of their own soul. To do so is to be lawless, for a lawless man or woman has removed themselves out from under the rightful authority and have usurped this position. As disciples of Christ we must walk as Christ walked. He only did those things He saw the Father doing, and He was so perfect in this that He did not even speak a word of His own initiative. He only spoke that which the Father gave Him a command to speak.

John 12:49

"For **I did not speak on My own initiative, but the Father Himself who sent Me has given Me commandment, what to say, and what to speak.**"

John 14:10

"**The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but the Father abiding in Me does His works.**"

How was the Father abiding in Yahshua? It was by the indwelling Spirit. Yahshua yielded to the indwelling Spirit in all things, and so must all who would be a disciple of Christ. Many who confess Christ as Lord are in great peril of being cast away as lawless.

The Scriptures provide numerous types and shadows to teach us this vital truth, and to instruct us in the path that all the sons of God must take. As we have seen, the Israelites in the wilderness serve as one profound type that has been cited by the author of the book of Hebrews.

Hebrews 4:1

Therefore, let us fear lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to have come short of it.

How does one fall short of entering into His rest? By failing to cease from their own works, those works that their soul would declare to them as being worthy and honorable. We must die to the voice of the soul of man and be led by the by the indwelling Spirit after the pattern of the firstborn Son of God. We have also seen that Joseph serves as a type of those who attain to the number of the firstborn. Joseph's slavery in the house of one of Pharaoh's ministers, and his later imprisonment in Pharaoh's jail, is a type and shadow of those whose natural choices and activities are ended, and they now live to do the will of another. Only those who have been so trained to cease from their own works in order to do the works God has prepared for them will be qualified to rule and reign after the similitude of Joseph.

Another type and shadow of this same truth is observed in the words of Christ to Peter.

John 21:18-19

"Truly, truly, I say to you, ***when you were younger, you used to gird yourself, and walk wherever you wished;*** but ***when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you, and bring you where you do not wish to go...***" And when He had spoken this, He said to him, "Follow Me!"

Although Yahshua was prophesying of the type of death Peter would die, His words were also a spiritual parable. When a Christian is young and immature spiritually, they go wherever they wish and do as they please. They are led of their own soul. In order to become spiritually mature a believer must no longer do so. They must surrender to the will of God in all things. They must yield to the Spirit and go where their own soul would not choose to go.

Yahshua established the pattern. His soul did not choose the cross. God chose it for Him. In Gethsemane Christ's soul was brought to a place of death, and He fully surrendered to the will of the Father.

Matthew 26:38-39

Then He said to them, "***My soul is deeply grieved, to the point of death;*** remain here and keep watch with Me."

Christ accepted the cross before Him, and there is a cross appointed to every disciple.

It may not be a literal cross such as Yahshua and Peter faced, but there is a Gethsemane appointed to every disciple where the desire of their soul must die in order that we might live only for the will of the Father.

Matthew 26:39-40

"My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet ***not as I will, but as You will.***"

Gethsemane is where the initiative of man dies. It is where we trade our will, for the will of God. It is the place where every longing, desire, thought, ambition, and will arising from the soul of man is crucified until only the will of the Father remains.

This is an exceedingly difficult matter to bring the saints to understand. We will never be fitted to receive the power and authority of the ages to come until we humble ourselves and become as little children before our Father in heaven. Little children expect their father to instruct them in all things. Little children are taught to obey without argument, and we must become as little children before our Father. We must hear from Him and do as He instructs us in all things. As we grow older we must never abandon the attitude of seeking to do exactly those things that are pleasing to our Father. He has given to us His Spirit to indwell us that we might know His will in every instance.

How did Yahshua know what to do, and what not to do, in each circumstance? He was led of the Spirit in all things. He observed what His Father was doing, and He did precisely what He saw.

John 5:19-20

Yahshua therefore answered and was saying to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, ***the Son can do nothing of Himself, unless it is something He sees the Father doing; for whatever the Father does, these things the Son also does in like manner. For the Father loves the Son, and shows Him all things that He Himself is doing; and greater works than these will He show Him,*** that you may marvel."

My heart is grieved as I observe among Christians an independence from the Spirit of God. I deplore the church's doctrines which suggest the saints need not be led of the Spirit in the particular circumstances of their lives. Our training as sons after the image of Christ mandates that it is the Spirit that lead us in all things.

Romans 8:14

For all who are being led by the Spirit of God, these are sons of God.

Yahweh has not called His sons in training to be led of their own intellect. He has not told them to develop a code of Scriptural precepts and principles which they can use to evaluate all of life's decisions. He wants His sons to be children of the Spirit.

II Corinthians 3:6

It is He Who has qualified us, making us to be fit and worthy and sufficient as ministers and dispensers of a new covenant of salvation through Christ, ***not ministers of the letter (of legally written code) but of the Spirit; for the***

code of the Law kills, but the Holy Spirit makes alive.

[Amplified Bible]

This present life serves as a training ground for the sons of God. Yahweh must bring His sons to an end of independent living. He must break them of making decisions that arise from the soul. He seeks sons who are intent upon His will and desire only. He does not want any man to presume that he knows what God would do in a particular situation. Yahweh wants all His sons to look to Him in all things. We are to see what works He is doing, and we are to do them in like manner. We are to hear His judgment in every matter, and then judge the same. We must not seek our will, but live for our Father's will and pleasure.

A large part of our problem in arriving at God's mind is that our priorities and goals are not the same as His. When we encounter great trials our immediate thought is to be delivered from the distress, sorrow, or injury. When we are brought to a Gethsemane, our soul will say, "Father, let this cup of suffering pass from me." It is at this point that we must yield to the Spirit and declare, "Yet not my will, but Your will be done." Yahweh is looking to what we will one day be, and He chooses our circumstances, trials and cross to best promote our growth as sons.

Isaiah 55:8-9

"For My thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways My ways," declares Yahweh. "For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts."

Some have adopted a mindset where they believe they are to study the Scriptures that they might become adequate in themselves to make life decisions. Some have become so arrogant in this that they begin to demand of God that He do their bidding. They think this attitude is pleasing to the Father, yet such an attitude is foreign to the life of Christ. Yahshua was meek and humble, and He only did those things the Father commanded Him to do. He made no demands Himself.

We are not to do any works arising out from self. We are to allow the indwelling Spirit of Christ to reveal to us God's will, and provide the power to do that will.

John 14:10

The words that I say to you I do not speak on My own initiative, but ***the Father abiding in Me does His works.***

As sons of God in training to share the glory, power and authority of our Father in heaven, we must die to our own soul's leadership and direction. We must become sons in whom the Father abides and performs His works. This He seeks to do through the indwelling Spirit of Christ.

Galatians 2:20

"I have been crucified with Christ; and ***it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me...***"

This verse has been quoted often in Christendom, but it is rarely experienced. At the

end of this age there must come forth a firstfruits group of sons who make it a living reality. Their declaration and experience must become “it is no longer I who live.” The Spirit of Christ within must guide in all their works and activities, and it must be the strength which God supplies that accomplishes all things. The sons of God must no longer be directed by their soul. They must live for the pleasure of the Father.



Heart of a Son

I want to draw your attention to the last two verses of Malachi. They are the final verses of the Old Testament. Placement is significant in Scriptures. First occurrences and last occurrences alike hold a particular meaning. That which is last speaks of the goal, or the end result of a matter. So it is with these words. The Old Testament concludes with that which is most upon the heart of God, Who is the Father of mankind. His heart is turned toward His sons, and He wants His sons hearts to be turned toward Him.

Malachi 4:5-6

Behold, I will send you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of Yahweh. And **he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons, and the hearts of the sons to their fathers**, lest I come and strike the earth with a curse.

Malachi prophesied that Elijah the prophet would come prior to the great and terrible day of Yahweh. Elijah's entire ministry would be focused upon restoring fathers and sons. Although there is certainly an earthly application of this verse, it also stands as a parable of the ultimate relationship between Father and sons, between Yahweh and His offspring.

For too long the hearts of Yahweh's children have been turned away from Him. Mankind has occupied himself with many vain pursuits. Even in his religious pursuits man has seldom manifested a heart after God's own. The Davids have been far outnumbered by the Sauls.

The Old Testament opens with God creating man with the express intent of providing God with sons in His own image and likeness. The Old Testament ends with the thought uppermost on Yahweh's mind. He wants His sons' hearts to be turned toward Him.

Next we find the New Testament opening with the story of Yahshua, the firstborn Son of God. He was the first son born of woman and born of God. He set the pattern for the sons who would follow, for His heart was always set upon His Father. He lived to do the Father's pleasure. His very meat, that which sustained Him and gave Him life, was the opportunity to do His Father's will.

John 4:34

"My food is to do the pleasure of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work."

Hebrews 10:7

"Then I said, 'Behold, I have come - in the volume of the book it is written of Me - to do Your pleasure, O God.'"

Yahshua revealed the kind of heart that endears a son to the Father. Of this firstborn Son, the Father declared:

Matthew 3:17

This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.

This relationship of the Father's heart turned to the Son, and the Son's heart turned

to the Father, both in perfect devotion to one another, is a pattern for that which Yahweh desires with all of His sons. He wants sons who live for one purpose alone: to do the pleasure of the Father who created them.

Revelation 4:11

Thou art worthy, O Lord, to receive glory and honour and power: for thou hast created all things, **and for thy pleasure they are and were created.**

Consider the implications of the following words of the apostle Paul:

I Corinthians 7:32-35

But I want you to be free from concern. One who is unmarried is concerned about the things of the Lord, **how he may please the Lord**; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how he may please his wife, and his interests are divided. And the woman who is unmarried, and the virgin, is concerned about the things of the Lord, that she may be holy both in body and spirit; but one who is married is concerned about the things of the world, how she may please her husband. And this I say for your own benefit; not to put a restraint upon you, but **to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.**

Forget for a moment that Paul is speaking of whether one should marry or not marry. The underlying theme of his words is “to promote what is seemly, and to secure undistracted devotion to the Lord.” The word seemly in the Greek means “well formed, attractive.” Who is the judge of what is attractive? God is the judge. What does He esteem to be attractive in His sight? It is to have sons who have an undivided devotion to their Father in heaven.

Yahweh’s sons, even in this late hour, are not undivided in their devotion. They have many other concerns in this world. This is not His desire and will. The harvest is at hand. It is time to loose oneself from all entanglements; to be free from all that competes for our devotion to Christ.

II Timothy 2:4

No soldier in active service entangles himself in the affairs of everyday life, so that he may please the one who enlisted him as a soldier.

II Corinthians 11:2-3

For I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy; for **I betrothed you to one husband, that to Christ I might present you as a pure virgin.** But I am afraid, lest as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, your minds should be led astray from **the simplicity and purity of devotion to Christ.**

The apostle evokes an image of the saints being espoused to Christ as a pure virgin. The church is to have eyes for no other loves or lovers. Her heart should be manifesting a singleness of devotion for the One who gave all to purchase her.

This message of Yahweh desiring sons whose hearts are totally devoted to His will and pleasure is everywhere throughout Scriptures. Yet how divided have been the hearts of

God's sons. If things remain as they are Yahweh will have to come and strike the earth with a curse. To prevent this, Yahweh will send Elijah before the great and terrible day of His judgment. Elijah will turn the hearts of God's sons back to Him. Elijah came before the firstborn Son of God was revealed to the world, and Elijah will come again before the end when the full number of the firstborn sons of God are revealed.

The Elijah ministry will be one of casting down all idolatry in the hearts of God's saints. Even as Elijah confronted the children of God at Mount Carmel, telling them to choose who they would be devoted unto, Yahweh or Baal, he will come again and demand that the people of God choose. It is unacceptable unto Yahweh that His sons should have divided hearts. He will not allow any son to enter into the glory of the firstborn who has a divided heart.

I Kings 18:21

And Elijah came near to all the people and said, "***How long will you hesitate between two opinions? If Yahweh is God, follow Him; but if Baal, follow him.***"

Today the Holy Spirit would declare, "If Yahweh is truly your Father, then present to Him an undivided heart. Have no other ambition than to do Yahweh's pleasure."

Matthew 22:37-38

"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind.' This is the great and foremost commandment."

Yahweh is seeking sons with fiery hearts that yearn to do His will and bring Him pleasure. He wants sons who esteem all the allure of the world as refuse; its possessions, its pastimes, its entertainment, its idols. He wants sons who will not be sucked into the pursuit of things which will perish, but who will jealously guard against any thing that would distract them from a pure devotion to their Father.

The churches are filled today with Christians who call God "Father." Yet these ones do not have undivided hearts of devotion toward Him. They give themselves to a life chasing after houses and lands and cars and entertainment. They spend their hours in front of the television. They go to ball games and car races and spend endless time and money shopping for things they think will bring them happiness. All the while the Father waits for them to turn their hearts toward Him.

If you would attain to the first resurrection and the glory of the firstborn sons of God, then you must have a single eye, a focus upon satisfying the heart of the Father who created you. The Spirit is present within the sons of God, crying out "Abba, Father," yet the voice of the Spirit has been quenched and grieved as God's children have been turned aside to other pursuits.

Yahshua is the model, the standard, and pattern for all other sons to emulate. Observe the depth of devotion to the Father in His words:

John 5:30

"I can do nothing on My own initiative. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is just, because I do not seek My own will, but the will of Him who sent

Me.”

John 8:28-29

"When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I am He, and I do nothing on My own initiative, but I speak these things as the Father taught Me. And He who sent Me is with Me; He has not left Me alone, for ***I always do the things that are pleasing to Him.***"

John 14:31

"But so that the world may know that I love the Father, ***I do exactly as the Father commanded Me.***"

John 17:4

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do."

Yahshua did not come to earth to serve himself or to pander to the desires of men. He came to fully satisfy the desire of the Father. As much as Yahshua loves mankind, He does not have a man-centric viewpoint. Yahshua lives to do the will of the Father. In another place He said, "I was always beholding the Father." In declaring this, Yahshua was letting His disciples know where He placed His focus. He was not living for man. He was not living for self. He was living for the Father.

If we would be conformed to the image of Christ then we must also adopt such a view. This is not usually how the saints are presented with the gospel. The gospel presentation today is predominantly man-centered, and in order to grow to maturity the saint must lay aside this selfish perspective and begin to seek the will of the Father above all other things.

To become God-centered in our thinking we must have our minds completely overturned. No longer can we judge all matters by what is in it for us. We must discern what Yahweh's desire is concerning every event. This is true of salvation and the gospel of Christ as well. Salvation is almost always viewed from a man-centered perspective, but we must realize that Yahshua went to the cross out of obedience to the Father. Although Yahshua loved mankind, He loved His Father more. The Father had a desire that He longed to see fulfilled. He had a work for His Son to accomplish, and out of love for the Father, Yahshua went to the cross. Though salvation touches man deeply, it primarily exists to fulfill a desire of the Father. Yahweh wanted sons after His own image and likeness.

If we are to "put on Christ," then we must have the same attitude that was in Christ. We must seek the pleasure of the Father above all else. As we already read in Scripture, all things were created for Yahweh's pleasure, man included. The New Testament is filled with verses that reveal the call to bring pleasure to God as the chief duty of man. This message of the sons of God having a focus on the pleasure of their Father is everywhere, but it has been obscured by poor translation of certain Greek words.

The word for pleasure in the Greek is 'thelema.' The King James Version of the Bible has translated this Greek word three different ways, as 'desire,' 'pleasure,' and 'will.' 'Pleasure' is the most appropriate rendering in the majority of occurrences. Sadly, the popular English translations have most often chosen to translate this word as 'will.' Doing so changes the entire complexion of what is being spoken. It is one thing to say man is called to do God's will. It is quite another to say He is created to do God's pleasure.

Consider the following verses and how the entire complexion of the verse is changed by translating this word correctly.

Matthew 6:9-10

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy **will** be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Now let's substitute the word pleasure:

Matthew 6:9-10

After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come. Thy **pleasure** be done in earth, as it is in heaven.

Is it not accurate to say that Yahweh's pleasure is done in heaven? The Son does not simply live to do the **will** of the Father, but He lives to do the **pleasure** of the Father. He is now seated at the right hand of the Father, and He ever seeks the Father's pleasure. We read where Christ said, "I always do those things that are **pleasing** to Him" (John 8:29). Yahshua was not merely a dutiful servant of the Father. He was a loving Son who longed to bring pleasure to His Father.

Let us look at another verse:

Matthew 12:50

For whosoever shall do the **will** of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

By using the word "will" in many of these Scriptures, we often form an image of something that is done as an act of the will alone. It is easy to form a picture of some slavish subservience that is done merely as an act of obedience. But let us view this same Scripture using the word "pleasure."

Matthew 12:50

For whosoever shall do the **pleasure** of my Father which is in heaven, the same is my brother, and sister, and mother.

When we use the word pleasure, this verse now takes on a more emotional meaning. No longer do we picture something that is simply an act of the will, but now it is a matter of delight and privilege. When we consistently render this word "thelema" as pleasure throughout the New Testament, many Scriptures take on a new vitality. Now we are able to see the satisfaction of the Father in the word of God, and it becomes more apparent that man has been called to not merely bring a dutiful obedience to God, but to provide Him great pleasure. This is the role of sons, to bring pleasure to their Father.

I am going to list more Scriptures that contain this Greek word for pleasure. As you read them consider the desire the Father has toward you as His Son. We are to live for His pleasure, for our love for Him is to be undivided.

Matthew 7:21

"Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but

he who does the **pleasure** of My Father in heaven.”

John 4:34-35

Yahshua said to them, "My food is to do the **pleasure** of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work.”

John 5:30

I can of Myself do nothing. As I hear, I judge; and My judgment is righteous, because I do not seek My own **pleasure** but the **pleasure** of the Father who sent Me.

John 9:30-31

Now we know that God does not hear sinners; but if anyone is a worshiper of God and does His **pleasure**, He hears him.

Acts 13:22-23

He raised up for them David as king, to whom also He gave testimony and said, 'I have found David the son of Jesse, a man after My own heart, who will do all My **pleasure**.'

Romans 12:2

And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect **pleasure** of God.

I Corinthians 1:1

Paul, called to be an apostle of Yahshua the Messiah through the **pleasure** of God...

Ephesians 1:5

Having predestined us to adoption as sons by Yahshua the Messiah to Himself, according to the delight of His **pleasure**...

Ephesians 5:17-18

Therefore do not be unwise, but understand what the **pleasure** of the Lord is.

Ephesians 6:5-6

Bondservants, be obedient to those who are your masters..., not with eyeservice, as men-pleasers, but as bondservants of Christ, doing the **pleasure** of God from the heart...

I Thessaalonians 4:3

For this is the **pleasure** of God, your sanctification...

Hebrews 13:21-22

Now may the God of peace... make you complete in every good work to do His **pleasure**, working in you what is **wellpleasing** in His sight, through Yahshua the Messiah, to whom be glory forever and ever. Amen.

I Peter 4:1-2

Therefore, since Christ suffered for us in the flesh, arm yourselves also with the same mind, for he who has suffered in the flesh has ceased from sin, that he no longer should live the rest of his time in the flesh for the lusts of men, but for the **pleasure** of God.

I John 2:17

And the world is passing away, and the lust of it; but he who does the **pleasure** of God abides forever.

The witness of the Scriptures are clear. As sons, we are called to seek the pleasure of our Father. What are you seeking in your life. Are you living for the pursuit of your own happiness, satisfaction and pleasure?

I Timothy 5:6

She who lives in pleasure is dead while she lives.

Have you become entangled in the affairs of this life? Are you spending time, energy and money on things which have no bearing on your relationship to the Father and your call to accomplish the work He has appointed unto you? If so, then now is the time to disentangle yourself. Now is the time to wrest yourself free from all that has divided you from a pure devotion to your heavenly Father.

James 4:8

Draw near to God and He will draw near to you. Cleanse your hands, you sinners; and purify your hearts, you double-minded.

As the offspring of Yahshua, we have the opportunity to be like Him, a son devoted to the pleasure of the Father. What an awesome thought! Consider how men love to bring delight to some honored person, an employer or supervisor, some wealthy acquaintance, someone who is famous or admired. Men and women are often beside themselves with a sense of their accomplishment when they have brought delight to such a one. Some person may spend the rest of their life re-telling a story of how they were of service to the Queen of England, or how they once impressed some admired individual. But we have an opportunity to bring delight to the God of the Universe. We can bring joy to the heart of the One who spoke and the worlds were framed. Before us is set the possibility of satisfying the inner longing of the One who is the great I AM.

This is the magnificent opportunity set before the sons of God. We have been created for God's pleasure!



The Father's Work

Yahweh has designed this present world in such a way that His sons might know His ways, and walk in an understanding manner before Him. One thing that has been common to all men is having a vocation or occupation. Although there have been some very affluent and decadent societies where men have received entitlements and given themselves to a pursuit of leisure activity, such has been an exception and not the norm.

Throughout the Scriptures, and particularly in the Old Testament, we find that almost without deviation sons were trained in the same vocation as their father. This was necessary in many instances, for the sons stood to inherit all that their father possessed. If a man was the owner of flocks and herds, then it was necessary that his sons be trained in animal husbandry. This pattern is readily seen in the life of Jacob (Israel) and his sons.

Genesis 37:2

Joseph, when seventeen years of age, was pasturing the flock with his brothers while he was still a youth, along with the sons of Bilhah and the sons of Zilpah, his father's wives. And Joseph brought back a bad report about them to their father.

Genesis 37:12-14

Then his brothers went to pasture their father's flock in Shechem. And Israel said to Joseph, "Are not your brothers pasturing the flock in Shechem? Come, and I will send you to them." And he said to him, "I will go." Then he said to him, "Go now and see about the welfare of your brothers and the welfare of the flock; and bring word back to me."

We see in these verses that not only were Jacob's sons trained to perform the work that Jacob formerly did in his youth, but they were called to give an accounting of their performance. Jacob's sons were not faithful in their duties, and Joseph brought back an evil report of their conduct. This caused Joseph to be hated of his brothers.

As sons of God, we are similarly called to share in our Father's work. We will also have to give an account of our performance.

II Corinthians 5:10

For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

Much will be required of those who have been made partakers of the Spirit of Christ and who have received the word of God.

Luke 12:48

And from everyone who has been given much shall much be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.

The message of having to give an account of the stewardship of the things entrusted to the sons of God is found profusely throughout the Bible. Many Christians are deceived in thinking that they are not called as ministers of the Gospel of Christ. They have been

deluded by the lie of the clergy/laity doctrine. The Scriptures plainly reveal that the work of ministers is to prepare the body of Christ to do the work of God.

Ephesians 4:11-12

And He gave some as apostles, and some as prophets, and some as evangelists, and some as pastors and teachers, ***for the equipping of the saints for the work of service...***

If you are not called to function in one of the ministries named above, then you are called to perform “the work of service.” What is the work of service? It is doing whatever God has appointed as your particular work, for He has formed all of His children to fit into the body of Christ as a functioning part of the whole, each one providing what is lacking in the other members of the body.

Ephesians 4:15-16

Speaking the truth in love, we are to grow up in all aspects into Him, who is the head, even Christ, from whom ***the whole body, being fitted and held together by that which every joint supplies, according to the proper working of each individual part, causes the growth of the body for the building up of itself in love.***

God did not place any of His children in the body to simply consume those things that others supply. There is a job assignment, a proper functioning of each individual member. Will not God be right to judge severely the vast number of idle members of the body who are paying no regard to that which they have been called to supply to the rest of the body? Please read the following parable of Yahshua carefully. He is speaking of the day of His return, and the recompense of all those who are in His household. If you are a child of God, then you are pictured somewhere in this story.

Matthew 25:13-30

“Be on the alert then, for you do not know the day nor the hour [of the Lord’s return]. For it is just like a man about to go on a journey, who called his own slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them. And to one he gave five talents, to another, two, and to another, one, each according to his own ability; and he went on his journey. Immediately the one who had received the five talents went and traded with them, and gained five more talents. In the same manner the one who had received the two talents gained two more. But he who received the one talent went away and dug in the ground, and hid his master’s money. Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them. And the one who had received the five talents came up and brought five more talents, saying, ‘Master, you entrusted five talents to me; see, I have gained five more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things, enter into the joy of your master.’ The one also who had received the two talents came up and said, ‘Master, you entrusted to me two talents; see, I have gained two more talents.’ His master said to him, ‘Well done, good and faithful slave; you were faithful with a few things, I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master.’ And the one also who had received the one

talent came up and said, '**Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you scattered no seed. And I was afraid, and went away and hid your talent in the ground; see, you have what is yours.**' But his master answered and said to him, '**You wicked, lazy slave, you knew that I reap where I did not sow, and gather where I scattered no seed. Then you ought to have put my money in the bank, and on my arrival I would have received my money back with interest.** Therefore take away the talent from him, and give it to the one who has the ten talents.' For to everyone who has shall more be given, and he shall have an abundance; but from the one who does not have, even what he does have shall be taken away. **And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.**"

There are no members of God's household who have not been entrusted with a deposit by which they can bring increase to the kingdom of God. All who have been born of the Spirit of Christ have received the Spirit of God to indwell them. They have each been allotted a measure of faith.

Romans 12:3-8

God has allotted to each a measure of faith. For just as we have many members in one body and all the members do not have the same function, so we, who are many, are one body in Christ, and individually members one of another. And since **we have gifts that differ according to the grace given to us**, let each exercise them accordingly: if prophecy, according to the proportion of his faith; if service, in his serving; or he who teaches, in his teaching; or he who exhorts, in his exhortation; he who gives, with liberality; he who leads, with diligence; he who shows mercy, with cheerfulness.

You may discern that you are not gifted to the same degree as another. This may be true enough, for each is granted a measure of faith and grace. You may have the equivalent of one talent of gold, while another has five talents. You as surely have the Spirit of Christ indwelling you as every other member of the body of Christ. Will you be as the wicked servant and take this treasure and bury it in the earth of your flesh, bringing forth no return for the King? You should tremble at Christ's parable. He calls such members of His household "wicked" and "lazy." Heed the advice that Paul gave to Timothy.

I Timothy 4:14

Do not neglect the spiritual gift within you...

II Timothy 1:6

For this reason I remind you to kindle afresh the gift of God which is in you...

In other words, employ that which God has given you. Stir yourself up. Arouse yourself from slumber. Do you not know that you will give an account of your stewardship of the gift of God? Do not allow yourself to be lulled to lethargy by the dullness of others. God will bring you to account for that which has been entrusted to you. Do not allow yourself to be cast into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of

teeth.

Your Father in heaven is set about a work at this time. He is seeking to bring His sons and daughters to maturity, to the perfect image of His firstborn Son. He has called all in His family to enter into this work. Perhaps your part in this work is not a front line ministry. Will you say because you are not an eye that you are not a part of the body? All parts of the body are vital, and the body suffers when a part does not perform its allotted task.

One of the biggest killers among mankind is cancer. There are a wide variety of cancers. There is breast cancer, lung cancer, pancreatic cancer, cancer of the brain, of the lymph nodes of the prostate. There are so many types of cancer that I would weary you naming them all. Do you know what causes cancer? Cancer occurs when a cell ceases to perform the function it was intended for, and it begins to draw away the body's resources for other purposes. One cancer cell begins to replicate other cancer cells just like it. They are not performing any helpful bodily function, but begin to disrupt the bodies proper functioning. These independent cells continue to replicate until they spread so far throughout the body that sickness and death occurs.

Cancer is a spiritual parable of what is occurring in the body of Christ. There are multitudes of God's children who are living independent of the purpose for which God created them. They demonstrate no concern for the rest of the body. They are focused only upon self. They are not submitted to the design of the One who created them. Each day they arise and go about whatever activities they have chosen for themselves. They are without concern that their independent actions are acting as a drag on the rest of the body of Christ. Perhaps they are surrounded by other Christians who are living identically, and like a cancer cell in the midst of many others, they compare themselves among themselves and judge that they must be alright for all others appear just as they do.

What will the Great Physician do when He comes and finds this sickness in the body of Christ? He will cast out these worthless members of His body into outer darkness.

As a Christian there is a specific work appointed to you. You have been given a deposit of the Spirit of Christ, a measure of faith and grace. You have been entrusted with some gift whereby you can supply what is lacking in another part. Yahshua understood from a very young age that as a son He was called to be about His Father's business.

Luke 2:49

And He said to them, How is it that you had to look for Me? ***Did you not see and know that it is necessary as a duty for Me to be in My Father's house and occupied about My Father's business?***

[Amplified Bible]

Yahshua revealed through His words that He recognized that it was His duty to be doing the work of His Father.

John 4:34

"My food is to do the pleasure of Him who sent Me and ***to accomplish His work.***"

John 5:17-18

But He answered them, "***My Father is working until now, and I Myself am working.***"

John 6:38-39

"For I have come down from heaven, not to do My own will, but the will of Him who sent Me."

John 17:4

"I glorified You on the earth, having accomplished the work which You have given Me to do."

John 5:36

"But the witness which I have is greater than that of John; for **the works which the Father has given Me to accomplish**, the very works that I do, bear witness of Me, that the Father has sent Me.

John 9:4-5

"We must work the works of Him who sent Me, as long as it is day; night is coming, when no man can work."

It is certain that our heavenly Father has a specific work for each of His sons. As disciples of Yahshua we are to be as focused upon apprehending exactly what that work is, and accomplishing that work, as was He. The Scriptures reveal that Yahweh has a very specific work for each son. None are to decide for themselves what this work will be. The Spirit of God will reveal it.

Acts 13:2

And while they were ministering to the Lord and fasting, **the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them."**

Ephesians 2:10

For we are His workmanship, **created in Christ Yahshua for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them.**

Consider the natural example of a son who is being trained by his father to perform a job with skill, integrity and mature responsibility. A young boy may enter into his father's workshop to learn the trade of cabinet making. At first he is enthused by all the equipment and the thought of creating a masterful work that others will admire. He may want to jump right in and get to work, but there is much he must learn first. There are foundational principles to be learned, such as understanding the mathematics of cabinet work. He must learn how to measure all things precisely, and to calculate angles and understand basic geometry. He must learn the proper operation of all the tools in the cabinet maker's workshop. He must understand proper safety procedures, and know how to cut and sand and shape wood without damaging it, or creating unnecessary waste.

The young man must also learn the discipline of patience, for a professional job cannot be rushed. A piece of wood must be sanded and stained. It must be varnished and sanded again, and then more varnish applied. All things must be done at a proper time, in the right sequence, or the work will be marred. If the second coat of varnish is applied before the first

has had time to dry, the finish will suffer in quality and appearance.

A young boy will not naturally be willing to exercise the patience necessary to do a job correctly, nor does he yet have the skill which comes only from experience. Should his father let him enter the work too soon, he will produce a flawed piece of work, and will inevitably meet with disappointment. If the son doesn't share the same spirit as his father who is a master craftsman valuing quality, beauty and integrity, he will not be willing to submit to the discipline required to acquire the skill manifested by the father.

Many of God's sons today do not value things as He does. Their hearts are filled with another spirit. They are seeking pleasure and ease and comfort and things for self. Accomplishing the work of the Father is not something that grips their heart. Due to this, they are unwilling to submit to the preparation which is necessary for their equipping. There is much that seems tedious, difficult, and dreary to them. They reason, why should I make my life a drudgery when others are enjoying many pleasant pursuits?

Whatever the Spirit would direct us to do now in this age is merely preparatory for the greater works to come. Do you think any who walk in careless disregard for the Father's will in this age will be automatically transformed by the process of death and resurrection and be counted among the faithful in the ages to come. I tell you they will not. Those who resist the discipline of sons now in this age, will disqualify themselves for the crown that could have been their in the age to come.

Revelation 3:11

"I am coming quickly; ***hold fast what you have, in order that no one take your crown.***"

Several decades ago Bill Britton related a vision he had that brings forth the truths in focus here, making them easily understood.

The Harness of the Lord (Bill Britton)

There is a terrific operation of the Spirit going on today to bring the Sons of God into an absolute confinement to the perfect will of God. This is the Day of His Preparation, the day in which He is preparing the channel through which He shall pour forth His Glory for all the world to see. This channel is His Body in the earth, that glorious company of people who are being conformed through much tribulation and fiery tests to the Image of the Son of God. This is His "battle axe and weapons of war" with which He shall subdue kingdoms and overcome all His enemies. This is His "mighty and strong One" to whom He shall commit the work of judging this world. This is His Overcomer, His "great army" with which He shall bring the nations into submission. The weapons of their warfare are not carnal, natural weapons, but they are mighty weapons, mighty through God to the pulling down of strongholds. These are those who shall "be strong and do exploits."

But before God can commit this great and tremendous ministry into their hands, they must submit themselves to the discipline of the Lord, letting Him truly be the Lord of their entire lives. We have long since dealt with the question of open sin, but now God is dealing with the inward rebellion of our own wills. Some good Christians are not now being so dealt with, for they are not in this Firstfruits Company, but nevertheless there is a real dealing of God going on within those who are called into the High Calling of God. This is a very real thing, and is the work of the Refiner's Fire. To those who are going through it, some of its

aspects are horrible, but very necessary, and the end result thereof is glorious as we are brought into absolute and complete submission to the will of our Lord.

It was in a minister's conference and convention in Tulsa, Oklahoma that God gave me a vision which I want to share with you concerning this harnessing of our own wills. There were more than 30 ministers present in this particular Thursday morning service, and God, the Father of spirits, was present to deal with His sons, to correct them and discipline them to absolute obedience to His will. There was such a stern dealing in the Spirit that no one could go to the pulpit and minister, there was a reluctance among the ministers to say anything except that which was directly ordered by the Spirit. And as those men of God sat there in the awesome presence of Almighty God, some of them having many years of ministry, some missionaries, all of them capable of getting up and preaching a powerful sermon, I was impressed by the way they responded to the discipline of the Spirit. And in the midst of this terrific dealing of God with our spirits, the Holy Ghost gave me a vision.....

I Saw the King's Carriage

On a dirt road in the middle of a wide field stood a beautiful carriage, something on the order of a stagecoach, but all edged in gold, and with beautiful carvings. It was pulled by six large chestnut horses, two in the lead, two in the middle and two in the rear. But they were not moving, they were not pulling the carriage, and I wondered why. Then I saw the driver underneath the carriage, on the ground on his back, just behind the last two horses' heels, working on something between the front wheels of the carriage. I thought, "My, he is in a dangerous place; for if one of those horses kicked or stepped back, they could kill him, or if they decided to go forward, or got frightened somehow, they would pull the carriage right over him." But he didn't seem afraid, for he knew that those horses were disciplined and would not move till he told them to move. The horses were not stamping their feet nor acting restless, and though there were bells on their feet, the bells were not tinkling. There were pom-poms on their harness over their heads, but the pom-poms were not moving. They were simply standing still and quiet, waiting for the voice of the Master.

There were Two Young Colts in the Field

As I watched the harnessed horses, I noticed two young colts coming out of the open field, and they approached the carriage and seemed to say to the horses: "Come and play with us, we have many fine games, we will race with you, come catch us....." And with that the colts kicked up their heels, flicked their tails and raced across the open field. But when they looked back and saw the horses were not following, they were puzzled. They knew nothing of harnesses, and could not understand why the horses did not want to play. So they called to them: "Why do you not race with us? Are you tired? Are you too weak? Do you not have strength to run? You are much too solemn, you need more joy in life." But the horses answered not a word, nor did they stamp their feet or toss their heads. But they stood, quiet and still, waiting for the voice of the Master.

Again the colts called to them: "Why do you stand so in the hot sun? Come over here in the shade of this nice tree. See how green the grass is? You must be hungry, come and feed with us, it is so green and so good. You look thirsty, come drink of one of our many streams of cool clear water." But the horses answered them with not so much as a glance,

but stood still, waiting for the command to go forward with the King.

Colts in the Master's Corral

And then the scene changed, and I saw lariat nooses fall around the necks of the two colts, and they were led off to the Master's corral for training and discipline. How sad they were as the lovely green fields disappeared, and they were put into the confinement of the Corral with its brown dirt and high fence. The colts ran from fence to fence, seeking freedom, but found that they were confined to this place of training. And then the Trainer began to work on them, with his Whip and His Bridle. What a death for those who had been all their lives accustomed to such a freedom! They could not understand the reason for this torture, this terrible discipline. What great crime had they done to deserve this? Little did they know of the responsibility that was to be theirs when they had submitted to the discipline, learned to perfectly obey the Master, and finished their training. All they knew was that this processing was the most horrible thing they had ever known.

Submission and Rebellion

One of the colts rebelled under the training, and said, "This is not for me. I like my freedom, my green hills, my flowing streams of fresh water. I will not take any more of this confinement, this terrible training." So he found a way out, jumped the fence and ran happily back to the meadows of grass. And I was astonished that the Master let him go, and went not after him. But He devoted His attention to the remaining colt. This colt, though he had the same opportunity to escape, decided to submit his own will, and learn the ways of the Master. And the training got harder than ever, but he was rapidly learning more and more how to obey the slightest wish of the Master, and to respond to even the quietness of His voice. And I saw that had there been no training, no testing, there would have been neither submission nor rebellion from either of the colts. For in the field they did not have the choice to rebel or submit, they were sinless in their innocence. But when brought to the place of testing and training and discipline, then was made manifest the obedience of one and the rebellion that lay hidden in the heart of the other. And though it seemed safer not to come to the place of discipline because of the risk of being found rebellious, yet I saw that without this there could be no sharing of His glory, no Sonship.

Into the Harness

Finally this period of training was over. Was he now rewarded with his freedom, and sent back to the fields? Oh no. But a greater confinement than ever now took place, as a harness dropped about his shoulders. Now he found there was not even the freedom to run about the small corral, for in the harness he could only move where and when his Master spoke. And unless the Master spoke, he stood still.

The scene changed, and I saw the other colt standing on the side of a hill, nibbling at some grass. Then across the fields, down the road came the King's carriage, drawn by six horses. With amazement he saw that in the lead, on the right side, was his brother colt, now made strong and mature on the good corn in the Master's stable. He saw the lovely pom-poms shaking in the wind, noticed the glittering gold bordered harness about his brother, heard the beautiful tinkling of the bells on his feet..... and envy came into his heart.

Thus he complained to himself: "Why has my brother been so honored, and I am neglected? They have not put bells on my feet, nor pom-poms on my head. The Master has not given me the wonderful responsibility of pulling His carriage, nor put about me the golden harness. Why have they chosen my brother instead of me?" And by the Spirit the answer came back to me as I watched. "Because one submitted to the will and discipline of the Master, and one rebelled, thus has one been chosen and the other set aside."

A Famine in the Land

Then I saw a great drought sweep across the countryside, and the green grass became dead, dry, brown and brittle. The little streams of water dried up, stopped flowing, and there was only a small muddy puddle here and there. I saw the little colt (I was amazed that it never seemed to grow or mature) as he ran here and there, across the fields looking for fresh streams and green pastures, finding none. Still he ran, seemingly in circles, always looking for something to feed his famished spirit. But there was a famine in the land, and the rich green pastures and flowing streams of yesterday were not to be had. And one day the colt stood on the hillside on weak and wobbly legs, wondering where to go next to find food, and how to get strength to go. It seemed like there was no use, for good food and flowing streams were a thing of the past, and all the efforts to find more only taxed his waning strength. Suddenly he saw the King's carriage coming down the road, pulled by six great horses. And he saw his brother, fat and strong, muscles rippling, sleek and beautiful with much grooming. His heart was amazed and perplexed, and he cried out: "My brother, where do you find the food to keep you strong and fat in these days of famine? I have run everywhere in my freedom, searching for food, and I find none. Where do you, in your awful confinement, find food in this time of drought? Tell me, please, for I must know!" And then the answer came back from a voice filled with victory and praise: "In my Master's House, there is a secret place in the confining limitations of His stables where He feeds me by His own hand, and His granaries never run empty, and His well never runs dry." And with this the Lord made me to know that in the day when people are weak and famished in their spirits in the time of spiritual famine, that those who have lost their own wills, and have come into the secret place of the most High, into the utter confinement of His perfect will, shall have plenty of the corn of Heaven, and a never ending flow of fresh streams of revelation by His Spirit. Thus the vision ended.

Interpretation of the Vision

"Write the vision, and make it plain upon tables, that he may run that readeth it." (Habakkuk 2:2) "Harness the horses: and get up, ye horsemen" (Jeremiah 46:4). I'm sure that many of you who can hear what the Spirit saith to the Church, have already seen what God was showing in the vision. But let me make it plain. Being born into the Family of God, feeding in the green pastures and drinking of the many streams of the unfolding revelation of His purposes is fine and wonderful. But it is not enough. While we were children, young, undisciplined, limited only by the outer fence of the Law that ran around the limits of the pastures, (that kept us from getting into the dark pastures of poison weeds), He was content to watch us develop and grow into young manhood, spiritually speaking. But the time came to those who fed in His pastures, and drank at His streams, when they were to be brought into discipline or "child-training" for the purpose of making them mature Sons.

Many of the children today cannot understand why some of those who have put on the harness of God cannot get excited by the many religious games and the playful antics of the immature. They wonder why the disciplined ones run not after every new revelation or feed on every opportunity to engage in seemingly "good and profitable" religious activities. They wonder why some will not race with them in their frantic efforts to build great works and great and notable ministries. They cannot understand the simple fact that this Company of saints is waiting for the voice of the Master, and they do not hear God in all this outward activity. They will move in their time, when the Master speaks. But not before, though many temptations come from the playful colts. And the colts cannot understand why those who seemingly appear to have great abilities and strength are not putting it to good use. "Get the carriage on the road," they say, but the disciplined ones, those in God's harness, know better than to move before they hear the voice of the Master. They will move in their time, with great purpose, and great responsibility.

And the Lord made me to know that there were many whom He had brought into training who had rebelled against the discipline, the chastising of the Father. And they could not be trusted with the great responsibility of mature Sonship, so he let them go back to their freedom, back to their religious activities and revelations and gifts. They are still His people, still feeding in His pastures, but He has set them aside from the great purposes for the end of the age. So they revel in their freedom, feeling that they are the Chosen ones with the many streams of living water, not knowing that they have been set aside as unfit for His great work in this end of the Age.

And He showed me that though the chastising seemeth grievous for the time, and the discipline hard to endure, yet the result with all the glory of Sonship is worth it all, and the glory to follow far exceeds the suffering we endure. And though some lose even their lives in this training, yet they will share alike in the glory of His eternal purposes. So faint not, saints of God, for it is the Lord that doth bring thee into confinement, and not thine enemy. It is for thy good, and for His glory, so endure all things with praises and thanksgiving that He hath counted thee worthy to share His glory! Fear thou not the whip in His hand, for it is not to punish thee, but to correct and train thee, that thou mightest come into submission to His will, and be found in His likeness in that Hour. Rejoice thou in thy trials, in all thy tribulations, and glory thou in His cross, and in the confining limitations of His harness, for He hath chosen thee, and He hath taken upon Himself the responsibility of keeping thee strong and well fed, so lean thou upon Him, and trust not in thine own ability and thine own understanding. So shalt thou be fed, and His hand shall be upon thee, and His glory shall overshadow thee and shall flow through thee as it goes forth to cover the earth. Glory to God! Bless the Lord, He's wonderful! Let Him be Lord of your life, friends, and complain not at that which He bringeth to pass in your life.

Plenty in the Time of Famine

For in the hour when famine sweeps the land, He shall feed by His own hand those who are submitted to His perfect will, and who dwell in the secret place of the Most High. When terror stalks the land, those in His harness shall not be afraid, for they shall feel His bit and bridle and know the guidance of His Spirit. When others are weak and frail and fearful, there shall be those who shall be strong in the power of His might, and shall lack for no good thing. In the hour when the traditions of the religious systems have proven false, and their streams have dried up, then His Chosen ones shall speak forth with the true Word

of the Lord. So rejoice, Sons of God, that you have been chosen by His grace for this great work in this last hour.

The fence which kept the colts in their own meadows and their own pastures mean nothing to the team in the harness, for the gates open to them, and they go forth pulling the king's carriage into many strange and wonderful places. They do not stop to eat the poison weeds of sin, for they feed only in the Master's stable. These fields they trample under their feet as they go forth on the King's business. And so to those who are brought into absolute subjection to His will, there is no Law. For they move in the Grace of God, led only by His Spirit where all things are lawful but not all things are expedient. This is a dangerous realm for the undisciplined, and many have perished in sin as they leaped over the fence without His harness and His bridle. Some have thought of themselves as being completely harnessed and submissive to Him, only to find that in some avenue of their life there dwelled rebellion and self-will. Let us wait before Him until He puts His noose around us and draws us to His place of training. And let us learn of the dealings of God and the movings of His Spirit until at last we feel His harness drop about us, and hear His voice guiding us. Then there is safety from the traps and pitfalls of sin, and then shall we abide in His house forever!

[End of Vision by Bill Britton]

Our Father has a work for each one of His sons in the age to come. We are prepared for this work as we submit that work He has entrusted to us in this present age. We must submit to the discipline necessary to perform our assigned task with a spirit of excellence and maturity. Those who choose personal liberty over the confinement of a Spirit led life will find themselves disqualified and shut out of the mighty works of God which He has prepared beforehand for His sons. Let us apply all diligence to follow hard on the heels of our Savior, not turning aside to the left or to the right. Let us heed the voice of the Spirit who declares, "This is the way. Walk in it." Then at the end of this journey we can declare with the apostle Paul:

II Timothy 4:7

I have fought the good fight, ***I have finished the course***, I have kept the faith...



Everyone Who Has This Hope

The world did not recognize that Yahshua was the Son of God. In the same way the world does not recognize that there are sons of God walking around among mortal men in this hour. There are those who have been born of holy seed dwelling among those who have known only the birth of the corrupt seed of the first Adam. Consider the magnificent message in the following words of the apostle John.

I John 3:1

Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that ***we should be called sons of God!*** Therefore ***the world does not know us, because it did not know Him.***

The Scriptures relate the story of Yahshua being born of a virgin as the Holy Spirit overshadowed her. Mary conceived a son of holy seed.

Luke 1:35

“The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Most High will overshadow you; and for that reason ***the holy offspring shall be called the Son of God.***”

The same Holy Spirit now moves upon Adamic men and causes offspring to come forth in the likeness of God. The Holy Spirit moves upon mankind and a holy seed immediately begins to grow into the same image as the firstborn Son of God.

I Peter 1:23

For you have been born again not of seed which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.

I John 3:9

No one who is born of God practices sin, because ***His seed abides in him;*** and he cannot sin, ***because he is born of God.***

The same holy seed has been placed in those born again of the Spirit that was placed in Mary. It is the seed of God. God does not have many kinds of seed. He has only one type of seed, and that is seed that contains all the genetic information to form a being fully and completely after His own image and likeness. Yahshua became the full expression of God in man. This same seed has been placed in you (if you have been born again) that you too might become the full and complete expression of God.

Ephesians 4:13

Until we all attain to the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, ***to a mature man, to the measure of the stature which belongs to the fulness of Christ.***

Yahweh has the heart of a father, and as a father He longs to have many sons after His own image. The destiny of these sons in the ages to come is glorious. What Yahweh has

prepared for His sons is beyond our present capacity to comprehend. We shall be like the firstborn Son of God in His glory. After stating these awesome truths, John declares:

I John 3:3

And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure.

If you truly have a vision of all that the Father has determined for His sons in the ages to come, then you will purify yourself. Does not the current impure condition of the church reveal that there is no such vision? Many are living as beasts, focused on consumption, living to satisfy their bellies. Christians are seeking things of a fallen world, a world that is passing away and whose glory is fading. They do not discern the high calling of God in Christ Yahshua. They do not see that they have an inheritance which is “imperishable and undefiled and will not fade away” (I Peter 1:4).

Certainly a lack of vision impacts Christian’s lives negatively today. Low living is the fruit of low thinking. King Solomon understood the relationship between vision and actions.

Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision [no redemptive revelation of God], the people perish...
Amplified Bible

The word for perish is the Hebrew ‘para’ and it comes from a root word meaning ‘to loosen.’ It is often translated as ‘uncovered,’ or ‘naked.’ Solomon understood that when the people have no mental sight, dream, or revelation, they begin to act in a loose manner that is akin to being naked. Such imagery is repeated in the New Testament.

Revelation 3:17

"Because you say, "I am rich, and have become wealthy, and have need of nothing," and you do not know that ***you are wretched and miserable and poor and blind and naked...***"

Revelation 16:15

"Behold, I am coming like a thief. ***Blessed is the one who stays awake and keeps his clothes, so that he will not walk about naked and men will not see his shame.***"

When men and women do not have a vision of the hope that is set before them, when they become focused on this present world and the pursuit of it, then they begin to uncover themselves. They expose their flesh rather than putting it to death. Because they have no vision of the glory before them, and they do not see that they risk forfeiting an inheritance of surpassing value, they walk carelessly and are led into many sins and numerous transgressions of the will of God.

The overcomers in Christ demonstrate a different attitude. Paul spoke to the saints in this way:

II Corinthians 7:1

Therefore, since these great promises are ours, beloved, let us cleanse

ourselves from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit, and bring our consecration to completeness in the reverential fear of God.

Amplified Bible

What are the great promises to which Paul is referring? The previous verse tells us.

II Corinthians 6:18

And I will be a Father to you, and you shall be My sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty.

Yes, we have a future before us to walk as the sons and daughters of the almighty God! We will share His glory! We will walk in great authority! We will be as gods, being the sons and daughters of Yahweh! We will have access into His presence, and we will be partakers of His most holy things! If we have a vision of what awaits us then we will “cleanse ourselves from everything that contaminates and defiles body and spirit.” We will seek to be completely consecrated to God.

During this brief period of our life on earth, it is not readily apparent what we shall be. Yet all throughout the Scriptures our Father has given us indications of the glorious future that lies ahead for the sons of God. We are told that “for a little while” it is man’s lot to be lower than the angels.

Hebrews 2:6-7

But one has testified somewhere, saying, "What is man, that Thou rememberest him? Or the son of man, that Thou art concerned about him? ***Thou hast made him for a little while lower than the angels...***"

The day is coming, however, when men will judge angels.

I Corinthians 6:3

Do you not know that we shall judge angels?

What kind of people should we now be? Should we walk as beasts; coveting, lusting, fighting, seeking temporal pleasures and possessions? If your life is focused upon the temporal pursuits of this life, then you have far too narrow a view of your life and future destiny. Look up! Raise your eyes! Observe what great things the Father has planned for His sons! And seeing all these things, purify yourself! Walk as one who is called to the image and likeness of God with a destiny to share His glory.

May you be blessed with peace and understanding in these days.

