

WORTHY OF THE KINGDOM

Thomas W. Finley

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by Thomas W. Finley

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

PREFACE	7
CHAPTER 1 - The Rich Young Ruler	1
The Coming Kingdom of God.....	1
The Overcoming Christian Life.....	1
Salvation by Grace and Reward According to Works	2
The Salvation of the Soul	2
The Judgment Seat of Christ.....	2
CHAPTER 2 - Eternal Life and the Coming Kingdom	5
CHAPTER 3 - “No One is Good Except God Alone”	11
CHAPTER 4 - The Kingdom of God	17
The Lifting of the Curse.....	18
Satan Will Be Bound	19
Sickness Eliminated	19
Peace	19
Righteousness	19
Joy	19
Comfort.....	19
Material Prosperity	19
Holiness	20
Fullness of The Holy Spirit	20
CHAPTER 5 - “Then Who Can Be Saved?”	23
A Gift.....	28
A Reward or Prize.....	28
By Grace through Faith	29
According to Works.....	29
Salvation from Eternal Death to Eternal Life with God.....	30
Salvation from Loss and Ruin	30
Salvation of the Spirit	33
Salvation of the Soul	34
Justification by Faith	34
Justification by Works	35
The Judgment upon Sin and Unbelief`	36
The Judgment upon the Believer’s Works.....	38
Becoming a Child of God (Sonship)	38
Growing (Maturing) as Sons of God (Discipleship)	38
Receiving Eternal Life	40
Eternal Life in the Coming Age.....	40
Election According to Grace.....	40
Choosing According to the Believer’s Preparation.....	40
Entry into the Present Kingdom of God	41
Entry into the Future Kingdom of God	41
Heirs as Children of God.....	41
Fellow Heirs with Christ in His Coming Kingdom.....	42
CHAPTER 6 - “Sell All That You Posses”	45

The World	46
Self-denial.....	46
The World's Influence	50
Preoccupation with Daily Affairs.....	53
Hints for Victory in Self-denial	54
CHAPTER 7 - The Judgment Seat of Christ - Part I	57
Some Categories of Judgment.....	59
Entry into the Kingdom.....	61
Confession and Denial at the Judgment Seat	74
Faithfulness Needed to Enter the Kingdom	76
CHAPTER 8 - The Judgment Seat of Christ - Part II	81
Sharing Authority with Christ.....	81
The Outer Darkness.....	84
The Judgment upon the Household Slaves.....	85
Gehenna.....	87
The Forgiveness of Sins	94
“Forgive and you will be forgiven.” (Lk. 6:37, NKJV).....	100
“And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matt. 6:12)	101
The Fear of the Lord	103
Mercy.....	109
God's Principle of Individual Judgment According to Works.....	109
Conclusion	111
CHAPTER 9 - “...And Come, Follow Me”	115
A Seeking Heart.....	116
CHAPTER 10 - “For My Sake”	121
Let us look at these four motivations that Jesus gave us.....	121
For My Sake	121
For My Name's Sake	121
For the Gospel's Sake.....	122
For the Sake of the Kingdom of God.....	122
Conclusion	122

PREFACE

Living by Christ and for His coming Kingdom has been a growing aspiration for me for years. As most of those who “desire to live godly in Christ Jesus” (2 Tim. 3:12), I am constantly aware of my shortcomings. Nevertheless, I am stirred and encouraged to “press on toward the goal for the prize.” (Phil. 3:14). Perhaps you can identify with these feelings, or, perhaps, you feel the need to be encouraged to “run the race.” For the purpose of stirring us all to “run with endurance the race that is set before us” (Heb. 12:1), I offer this writing.

Encouragement to run the race, in my experience, comes not only from the inward working of the Holy Spirit, but also very much from God’s Word. I have found that the Holy Spirit has especially used certain truths and principles from the Bible to not only encourage me, but also to remind me again and again with focused clarity what is the goal of the race and how to “run in such a way” that I “may win” (1 Cor. 9:24).

This writing is not designed to be an exhaustive treatise on truths of the coming Kingdom and lessons related to it. Some key truths and principles will be touched, however, and it is hoped that this will be an inspiration to the reader to search for more truth. For this reason, a list of suggested reading is also included. How grateful I am to those servants of God whose ministries have touched my life, helping me to know more of the depths of God’s Word.

In my effort to make this work readable for most Christians, I have tried not to make it too technical in tone. My burden is not to make an airtight legal case for theological points. However, some of the truths will probably be new to the reader, and I must, therefore, of necessity lay down some proof of these points from the Scriptures in sufficient detail to convince the objective reader. If further study or proof is required, the suggested reading listed at the end can, I assure you, do a thoroughly convincing theological job. My burden is not theological argumentation, but it is the conveying of much needed truth, along with practical exhortation, to help us all run the race in such a way as to be approved by Him.

Finally, I must tell you, dear reader, that it is my conviction that the hour of the Lord’s appearing and His Kingdom has drawn very near. Therefore, I feel compelled to take up Paul’s final charge to Timothy: “I solemnly charge you in the presence of God and of Christ Jesus, who is to judge the living and the dead, and by His appearing and His kingdom: preach the word, be ready in season and out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort, with great patience and instruction. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but wanting to have their ears tickled, they will accumulate for themselves teachers in accordance to their own desires; and will turn away their ears from the truth, and will turn aside to myths.” (2 Tim. 4:1-4)

CHAPTER 1 - THE RICH YOUNG RULER

Recently, while studying the story of the rich young ruler in the Gospels, this writer had an important realization. In that short narrative lay several of the key truths concerning the coming Kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ. Like tiny flower seeds that need only to be nurtured in order to produce mature plants with a variety of shapes, colors, textures and scents, these key truths are awaiting development in order to become clearly seen and appreciated for their richness. The desire to develop and share these truths with others has resulted in this writing. Although these truths, which are also contained in so many other passages of Scripture, could be presented in a topical, systematic way, I have felt to use this story in the Gospels as a means to introduce these significant truths.

Because much of this teaching will seem new to most readers, a word of caution is in order. Please resist the temptation to discard new ideas out of hand that do not seem to fit with previously learned theological perspectives. Admittedly, this is hard for all of us to do. However, if we are truly seeking the truth of the Scriptures, we will not be afraid of examining new ideas to see if they may be sound. This was the noble attitude of the Bereans (Acts 17:10-12). Further, if you will read the entire book with an open mind, leaving unanswered questions temporarily aside, you will begin to see a complete harmonious picture of the truth emerge as you near the end of the work. And, most importantly, the Biblical ideas covered will leave you with two important things. Firstly, you will have an understanding of the Bible that harmonizes many passages that were previously difficult to harmonize. Secondly, you should have a renewed desire to follow our Lord Jesus Christ in full obedience, along with a fresh hunger for His Word.

Here are some of the key truths we will be looking at in this book:

The Coming Kingdom of God

There will be a literal 1,000 year Kingdom where Christ openly reigns. We will see that this future form of God's Kingdom includes a renewed earth where righteousness dwells. It will be proven that it was this Kingdom, as a future life, that the Jews in Jesus' day sought to qualify for as a result of righteous living. Much of Jesus' teaching about the future must be understood with this background in mind. This future 1,000 year Kingdom, called the millennium, will precede the eternal state. It is here that the overcoming believer in Christ will receive positive rewards for obedience to Christ during the believer's lifetime. The foretaste of God's life that we enjoy now (Eph. 1:13-14) can be enjoyed in its rich fullness during that age, prior to eternity.

The Overcoming Christian Life

No Christian wants to live in recurring failure, lukewarmness or a backslidden state. Although the will of the believer is of great importance in the Christian life, this life is not lived by the effort of the believer's will. We will explore the practice of the genuine Christian life, which life is the experience of the Spirit of God being supplied to the believer by faith, thus enabling him to carry out all of the severe demands of discipleship.

We shall also see that the overcoming life is tied to the matter of future reward in the coming millennium.

Salvation by Grace and Reward According to Works

There are two great principles that govern our relationship with God and His righteous dealings with us. One principle is salvation by grace through faith, and the other principle is reward according to works. These principles are distinct and their respective elements should not be confused. Scores of Bible passages must be properly related to only one of these two principles or else theological confusion will result. (A comprehensive categorization of such passages will be included in this work.) The principle of salvation by grace through faith gives us the wonderful good news that God saves us from eternal perdition by His gift of grace in Christ, which we simply receive by faith (Jn. 3:16). Works are not involved. On the other hand, works are altogether integral to the other principle. All believers will be recompensed (rewarded) according to their works. This recompense, as we shall see from the Bible, can take on either a positive or a negative nature.

The Salvation of the Soul

All Christians have their human spirits saved for eternity at the moment of the new birth. The Bible, however, also speaks specifically of the salvation (preservation from loss) of a believer's soul, which is indicated in Scripture to be a future matter connected with Jesus' return. The future salvation of a believer's soul has to do with the enjoyment of positive reward in the millennial Kingdom. On the other hand, Scripture reveals the possibility of loss of enjoyment by the believer's soul during that coming age. The salvation of the soul is related to the principle of reward according to works.

The Judgment Seat of Christ

All believers will give an account to God of the lives they have lived as a Christian. We will explore in this book the many aspects and details of this judgment that will piece together the full picture of this future momentous event. Included in this examination is the complex issue of the forgiveness of sins. We will learn that all sins committed before we became Christians will not be dealt with at this judgment. Post conversion sins that have been confessed will also not be subject to Christ's judgment at His Judgment Seat. Unconfessed sins, however, will be subject to a certain temporal condemnation there. Christ's righteous judgment upon His believers will be according to our works and will impact us primarily during the coming millennium. Therefore, we can now see how all of these key truths are linked together. We Christians should be serious about living an overcoming life, because there will be a future judgment upon us according to the principle of reward (recompense) according to works (how we have lived our lives). This judgment will determine to what degree we will experience an enjoyment in our soul, or loss of enjoyment, during Jesus' future 1,000 year reign.

For ease of reference Matthew's account of the rich young ruler is presented below. Reference will be made to the other accounts in Mark and Luke at times because of variance in details. This story is recorded in Matthew 19:16-30, Mark 10:17-31 and Luke 18:18-30.

And behold, one came to Him and said, "Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may obtain eternal life?" And He said to him "Why are you

asking Me about what is good? There is only One who is good; but if you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments." He said to Him, "Which ones?" And Jesus said, "You shall not commit murder; You shall not commit adultery; You shall not steal; You shall not bear false witness; Honor your father and mother; and You shall love your neighbor as yourself." The young man said to Him, "All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" Jesus said to him, "If you wish to be complete, 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.

And Jesus said to His disciples, "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." And when the disciples heard this, they were very astonished and said, "Then who can be saved?" And looking upon them Jesus said to them, "With men this is impossible, but with God all things are possible."

Then Peter answered and said to Him, "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" And Jesus said to them, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, in the regeneration when the Son of Man will sit on His glorious throne, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life. But many who are first will be last, and the last, first." (Matt. 19:16-30).

CHAPTER 2 - ETERNAL LIFE AND THE COMING KINGDOM

The rich young ruler had surely heard the amazing reports of the miracles wrought by Jesus and of His selfless ministry to the common people. So he had determined to go to Him through whom God was working and ask Him the question that burned in his soul. He was so concerned about the matter that Mark records that he “. . . ran up to Him and knelt before Him, and began asking Him, ‘Good Teacher, what shall I do to inherit eternal life?’” (Mk. 10:17) To understand this question concerning “eternal life”, we must consider the background. Alfred Edersheim indicates that this was not an unusual question, but one that was commonly posed to rabbis by their disciples.¹

It is easy for us Christians to get confused by the young ruler’s inquiry, as this writer once was, because of our frame of reference. To informed Christians, the matter of having eternal life is primarily viewed as the present possession of God’s life through the new birth. *Eternal* indicates that the life described is inherently endless and this word “life” (*zoe* in Greek) is commonly used in the New Testament to denote “life as a principle, life in the absolute sense, life as God has it, . . . and of this life men become partakers through faith in the Lord Jesus Christ (John 3:15) who becomes its author to all such as trust in Him (Acts 3:15), and who is therefore said to be ‘the life’ of the believer (Col. 3:4) Eternal life is the present actual possession of the believer because of his relationship with Christ.”² However, as with all terms in any language there are multiple meanings. The real meaning in any given instance is dependent upon several factors, including the context and the historical background. Since the rich young ruler asked the question, we must consider what *he* meant by it, and then we need to consider how the Lord Jesus’ answer confirmed or modified the young ruler’s understanding of “eternal life”.

The Jews in Jesus’ day had no concept of possessing God’s eternal life (*zoe*) internally and thus “having eternal life”. When Jesus tried to explain to Nicodemus about the new birth by which God’s Spirit gives life (*zoe*) to our human spirit (Jn.3:6), it became obvious that Nicodemus, a “teacher of Israel” (Jn.3:10), did not know of these matters. Jesus then explained to him of His wonderful mission as the Redeemer sent into the world. He told Nicodemus that just as the cure for the snake-bitten, rebellious Israelites in the wilderness was accomplished by their looking upon a brass serpent lifted up on a pole by Moses, so the Son of Man would be lifted up (Jn.3:14) on the cross to bear man’s sin, in order that “WHOEVER BELIEVES may in Him HAVE ETERNAL LIFE” (Jn.3:15). So, *this* possession of *eternal life*, obtained through *believing* in the Redeemer, is a second birth wrought in man’s spirit by the Holy Spirit at the moment of *belief* (Jn.3:6; 5:24). Of such a potential possession of eternal life, the Jews who witnessed Christ’s ministry were totally ignorant. Indeed, this matter was a mystery hidden by God until the New Testament era (Col.1:26,27). Therefore, it was not this kind of “eternal life” about which the rich young ruler so anxiously inquired.

The concept of “eternal life” that was held by the rich young ruler had to do with the obtaining of the blessed condition in the “world to come”. *The New International*

Dictionary of New Testament Theology makes these comments concerning “eternal life” in relation to the age to come: “The expression ‘eternal life’ (*zoe aionios*), corresponding to the basic meaning of *aion*, lifetime, as defined by the OT, is to be understood primarily as life which belongs to God. From the Book of Daniel onwards ‘eternal life’ is an expression of the longed-for eschatological blessings of salvation, life in the coming age (cf. Dan.12:2).”³ The same reference work also comments: “Over against the present life there stands the life to come (Mk.10:30; 1 Tim.4:8, ‘Godliness is of value in every way, as it holds promise for the present life and also for the life to come [*zoes tes nyn kai tes mellouses*]). It is described as ‘eternal life’ (*zoe aionios*; Matt.19:16; par. Mk.10:17, Lk.18:18; Matt.25:46; cf. 2 Tim. 1:10, *zoe kai aphthersia*, life and immortality).”⁴ To further understand the rich young ruler’s idea of this future age characterized by eternal life, it will be helpful to look at remarks concerning this coming period from a book entitled *Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ*:

What we have learned about man’s fate after death helps us to see more clearly into the question of time and eternity. The ancient Semites had great difficulty in understanding this latter notion, to designate it, they had only the very imprecise term, *olam*. This word meant “time,” considered as the mysterious mass of the past or future. By extending the meaning of the word, it was possible to come to a wider conception of time. At the eve of the Christian era and under the influence of Greek thought, *olam* had come to be understood not only in a temporal sense but also in spatial terms, corresponding to the Greek term, *kosmos*. The possibility of distinguishing between two periods, two kinds of time, was then considered. There would be the time of unhappiness and corruption in which humanity was living, and the “new age,” a time in which unhappiness and corruption had been eliminated. This distinction appears first and above all in the Apocrypha; we find it mentioned by the rabbis from the first century on. The two ages succeed one another and prepare for one another; one is the vestibule, the other the main hall.

When will “the world to come” take place? If the time of reward is placed after the resurrection, in a renewed world, it means that happiness and the absence of corruption will only then make their appearance. But as belief in retribution and judgment after death becomes more accepted, the time of reward starts much earlier. The usual expression in referring to this time, *olam haba*, is commonly translated as “the world to come,” the world that has not yet begun and will be inaugurated by the resurrection. But several second-century texts expect it to start immediately after death.⁵

This excerpt tells us a few basic things we must keep in mind: (a) the Israelites of that day saw two different ages; (b) the duration of the future age was not clear to them; (c) the current world was one marred by corruption; (d) the world to come, however, was seen as a time when unhappiness and corruption were absent. The Jewish thought of the early first century viewed the coming age as one inaugurated at the future time of the resurrection (see Dan. 12:1,2). It was *entry into that future world*, or age, which the young ruler had in mind when using the term to obtain, or “inherit,” eternal life.

To further understand the young ruler’s seeking after the blessedness of such a coming age, we should note the *basis* upon which he hoped to gain entry to that blessed

world to come. The basis was altogether wrapped up with righteous living and works. "What good thing shall I do...All these things I have kept; what am I still lacking?" (Matt. 19:16,20). It was a common notion among the Israelites that the new age would be ushered in by the resurrection, but that only the righteous (those who have *lived* righteously) would participate in the blessed world to come. In speaking of common Hebrew thoughts of the time, the book last quoted notes:

This shows that the essential character of the resurrection is LIFE as a reward for the righteous. As a matter of fact, in many representations the resurrection is reserved exclusively for the righteous, and only they will ENTER ETERNAL LIFE. This is Josephus' feeling in the matter, and he attributes it to the Pharisees: "The Pharisees believe the soul to be immortal, and that rewards and punishments will be awarded to those who, while alive, had devoted themselves to vice or virtue. The soul will then be taken to eternal prison or it will receive the faculty to come back to life" (Antiquities of the Jews, XVIII, i,3, par. 14)...Nevertheless, the universalist concept [that all persons will be resurrected] was also maintained. It was the only logical position if resurrection was for the sake of judgment, as suggested by Daniel (12:2), "Many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake; some shall live forever, others shall be an everlasting horror and disgrace."⁶ (emphasis added)

Other sources confirm that the general understanding of the Jews during Christ's lifetime was that the individual's righteous or unrighteous living determined whether reward or punishment awaited him in a future age. In commenting on the intertestamental literature and its effect upon the evolution of Jewish theology, the *Encyclopedia Judaica* states the following:

THE WORLD TO COME. The apocalyptic writings after Daniel (though in this book the terms themselves are not used) divide the time after God's great eschatological interventions as "this (present) time" (*olam ha-zeh*) and "the time to come" (*olam ha-ba*, lit., "the coming time"; cf. I En.23:1; IV Ezra 7:30, 43; Test. Patr. Abraham 19, B 7). It is only in the latter period, the eschatological period in the strict sense, that full retribution, for good and evil, is meted out by God to every man.

Retribution: Israel always had firm faith in the Lord's justice, in His rewarding the good and punishing the wicked. However, in Israel there was a definite development of this concept in two important points: (1) from collective responsibility and retribution to individual responsibility and retribution, and (2) from full retribution in man's mortal life to full retribution only "in the world to come," i.e., after man's death.⁷

Was the rich young ruler's understanding of having eternal life, namely entry into the blessed age to come after the resurrection, and his understanding of how to obtain it, namely through righteous living, confirmed or denied by the Lord? I believe that the text will show that to a great degree, with careful modification, his notions were *confirmed* by the Lord Jesus. To aid in our interpretation, we need to keep in mind that after the young ruler left the Lord (Matt. 19:22), Jesus immediately used the encounter as a springboard to teach His disciples concerning the age to come (down through at least verse 30 in our present consideration).

The Lord's first direct answer to the ruler's question was ". . . if you wish TO ENTER INTO LIFE, keep the commandments" (Matt. 19:17). This shows that Jesus agreed with the ruler's concept of *entering into a realm* of blessing (i.e., a realm characterized by life--zoe). This realm was further defined by Christ in verse 23 when He laid down the lesson to be learned from the encounter: "Truly I say to you, it is hard for a rich man TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN." In the next verse Jesus substituted the phrase "TO ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD" (v.24). All three of these terms (life, Kingdom of Heaven, Kingdom of God) were used by Jesus to apply to a coming future realm. But to what realm specifically did Jesus refer? This question is answered when Jesus responded to Peter's query in verse 27: "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us?" Peter was essentially saying, "Look, Lord, the rich young ruler was unwilling to give up all to follow you in order to 'obtain eternal life'. Well, we have given up everything to follow you, so what is in it for us--what will our future be?" The Lord Jesus responded, "Truly I say to you, that you who have followed Me, IN THE REGENERATION WHEN THE SON OF MAN WILL SIT ON HIS GLORIOUS THRONE, you also shall sit upon twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. AND EVERYONE who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake, shall receive many times as much, and SHALL INHERIT ETERNAL LIFE" (v. 28,29). But, very importantly, notice how this last verse ends in the parallel gospel passages, "and *IN THE AGE TO COME*, ETERNAL LIFE" (Mk. 10:30; Lk.18:30). Jesus was confirming here that the "eternal life" sought by the young ruler was something to be experienced in "the age to come". The Lord had instructed the young ruler that if he wished to "enter into life" (Matt.19:17), he needed to keep the commandments, forsake the riches of this world and follow Him. Then Jesus went on to teach His disciples that *everyone* (which would include the young ruler!) who followed Him in such an absolute, all-forsaking way would receive eternal life *in the age to come* (Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30). We have already noted how entry into life was equated in the passage with entry into "the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 19:23) and entry into the "kingdom of God" (v. 24). Therefore, the particular Kingdom of Heaven and the particular Kingdom of God mentioned here refer to a *coming Kingdom* that is to be realized in the "age to come". That future Kingdom will be characterized by eternal life. There, all those disciples of Christ who leave earthly possessions and relationships for His sake shall "receive . . . eternal life" (Mk. 10:30).

It is imperative that we have a clear understanding of what the Lord Jesus Christ meant when He used the term "the age to come" (Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30).⁸ Otherwise, we will be confused in our theology concerning salvation. (Note that the King James Version uses the term "world to come" but the New King James Version uses the more accurate term "age to come"). The New Testament Greek word for age is *aion*. W. E. Vine defines *aion* as "an age, era . . . signifies a period of indefinite duration or time viewed in relation to what takes place in the period. The force attached to the word is not so much that of the actual length of a period, but that of a period marked by spiritual or moral characteristics".⁹ "Ages" in the Bible can come to a definite end (Matt. 13:39, 40; 28:20). It is significant to note that in speaking of the future, the Bible uses not only the term "the age to come" (Matt. 12:32; Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:30; Eph. 1:21; Heb. 6:5), but also the term "the *ages* to come" (Eph. 2:7). This shows us that there is more than one coming period in God's plan. Thus, the period called "the age to come" can not speak of eternity.

When Jesus used the term “the age to come”, He spoke of the age that immediately follows the close of the present age. This age ends with cataclysmic judgments connected with the time of the “harvest” (Matt. 13:39,40; Rev. 14:15). This world system is being ruled by Satan (Lk. 4:5,6; Jn. 12:31; 1 Jn. 5:19) during the present age (2 Cor. 4:4). At the end of this age, however, Satan will be overthrown and bound (Rev. 12:10; 20:1-3). Then the Lord Jesus Christ will return from heaven with authority to rule (Lk. 19:12, 15) and set up His Kingdom on the earth (Rev. 11:15), sitting on His glorious throne in Jerusalem (Matt. 25:31; Is. 2:1-3; 24:23; Mic. 4:7,8). As the Lord pointed out, the time of reward for His faithful followers will be realized “in the regeneration *when* the Son of Man will *sit on His glorious throne*” (Matt. 19:28). The regeneration is the time of restoration of the earth that has been under the curse.¹⁰ Another passage also shows us that the inauguration of this era begins with the return of Jesus Christ: “that He may *send* Jesus, the Christ appointed for you, whom *heaven* must receive *until* the period of *restoration* of all things about which God spoke by the mouth of His holy prophets from ancient time” (Acts 3:20-21). Therefore, “the age to come” is the age of restoration and begins with the second advent of Christ. We will look at the glory of this restoration later.

The “age to come” is also known as the “millennium” (1,000 years, Latin). This is because Christ’s reign upon the earth, inaugurated by His second advent, will last 1,000 years. Revelation 20:4, 6 both speak of overcoming believers *reigning WITH Christ* for this definite period: “and they came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years . . . but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with Him for a thousand years”. We get further understanding of this period of Christ’s earthly reign from another passage: “. . . then comes the end, when He (Christ) *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. The last enemy that will be abolished is death” (1 Cor. 15:24-26). These verses show us that Christ’s earthly, theocratic rule lasts *until* the last enemy, death, is abolished. Scripture tells us that death is abolished at the end of the 1,000 year period (Rev. 20:7-14; 21:4). In conclusion, therefore, we can identify with certainty the “age to come” of which Jesus spoke. It is an age that begins with the literal return of the Lord Jesus Christ to earth to set up His Kingdom. He reigns for a period of 1,000 years. The 1,000 years of His earthly rule from Jerusalem ends with the abolishing of the last enemy, death. Then, He delivers up the Kingdom to the God and Father. Thus, “*THE AGE TO COME*” IS *THE MILLENNIAL KINGDOM OF THE LORD JESUS CHRIST*. After the millennium, Christ continues to reign in the *New Jerusalem*, no longer on “*His glorious throne*” in Jerusalem (Matt. 19:28; 25:31), but on “the throne of God *and* of the Lamb” in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 22:3).¹¹

Having established that the Lord Jesus did confirm the young ruler’s idea of obtaining eternal life as involving entry into a future blessed age, we now return to the other side of the question. The rich young ruler assumed entry into that coming age of blessing was gained through one’s righteous living. Did Christ agree? He not only agreed, but He substantially raised the standard of obedience to God. The young ruler had an admirable record of obedience to the commandments, but still wondered if it was enough. It was then that the Lord caught him totally off guard by advising him, “One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me” (Lk. 18:22). The Lord raised the level of obedience beyond the morality of the law to include an abandonment of this world’s goods and a total denial of self-will to follow a person, the Lord Jesus. Notice that which

the Lord did not tell the ruler. He didn't tell him to *believe* in Him and thus have eternal life (Jn. 6:47). No. Rather, Jesus told him that he must do something very difficult for a rich man to do in order to obtain eternal life (Lk. 18:22-25, 29, 30). Thus, the Lord substantially confirmed the principle that the highest standard of practical righteousness (not *positional* righteousness) is required for entry into His coming millennial Kingdom. Let us keep in mind, however, that we are not speaking about the believer's *eternal* position with God, but only of the matters related to the millennium.

Relative to our understanding of Kingdom matters, this chapter has been a very important one. We have learned some fundamental things. Eternal life is the present possession of every born again believer by virtue of the new birth secured through faith in Christ. *This* eternal life is Christ *in* us as our life (Col. 1:27; 3:4). There is another meaning, however, to the term "eternal life" in Scripture. This meaning refers to the future magnified enjoyment of that life in the realm of the blessed age of restoration to come, Christ's millennial Kingdom. It is this eternal life which is at issue in the story of the rich young ruler. Jesus used that important encounter with the young ruler to give His disciples, and us, an important lesson concerning His coming Kingdom. Participation in the blessings of that "age to come" is dependent upon the highest standard of practical righteous *living* in the disciple's daily life. This is a different righteousness than imputed or positional righteousness, which is a gift (Rom. 5:17) received through simple faith in the Savior (Rom. 3:22). If these principles are correct, then they will be confirmed throughout the New Testament.

CHAPTER 3 - “NO ONE IS GOOD EXCEPT GOD ALONE”

The rich young ruler was advised by Jesus to sell all that he possessed, distribute it to the poor and to “come, follow Me” (Lk. 18:22). Upon hearing of this heightened requirement to inherit eternal life, the Bible records that the ruler became very sad and went away. He had been so eager to gain eternal life that initially he had run up to the Savior. Now, his countenance had fallen and he went away sorrowful, full of dejection and discouragement. He was discouraged because he saw the high price required for obtaining eternal life, and he realized he was unwilling and unable to pay such a price. This matter was particularly discouraging to him because in the past he had always been diligent to keep the known requirements of God, even from his youth. Because of his successful “track record”, he had eagerly inquired of Jesus, “Good teacher, *what shall I do* to inherit eternal life?” (Mk. 10:17). He was ready, as he always had been, to do whatever was required. We can understand, therefore, what a great effect Jesus’ answer had on him, for Jesus now presented him with a demand that for the first time in his life the young ruler was totally unable to carry out.

Perhaps you too, dear brother or sister, sometimes feel discouraged when you realize the high standards set forth in Scripture for our Christian living. Also, perhaps after reading the previous chapter, you may now be feeling anxious concerning the suggested demands outlined for entry into Christ’s coming millennial Kingdom. Take heart. Do not “go away sorrowful”. There are lessons here with the rich young ruler which should greatly relieve and encourage us.

Jesus truly *loved* the rich young ruler (Mk. 10:21) and He truly loves you and me. It was at the very time that Jesus “felt a love for him” that He laid before the young ruler the impossible demand (Mk. 10:21). Christ did it for the purpose of trying to help him to recognize something very basic, namely, that “No one is good except God alone” (Mk. 10:18). The young ruler had come to Jesus with confidence in *his* goodness. “What *good thing* shall *I do* that I may obtain eternal life?” (Matt. 19:16) Jesus immediately tried to help him come to some realizations. By advising the ruler that “there is only One who is good” (Matt. 19:17), He exposed the young man’s faulty self-righteousness and pointed him toward God as the only good One.

When the ruler addressed the Lord as “Good Teacher”, Jesus replied, “Why do you call Me good? No one is good except God alone” (Mk. 10:18). Regardless of the deserved respect the ruler had for Jesus, the Lord was trying to reshape the man’s thoughts to see that *no* natural man is good. This truth was clearly stated even in the Old Testament: “There is no one who does good” (Ps. 14:3). At the same time, the Lord Jesus was trying to cause the ruler to conclude (which he may have later) that if this man Jesus was good, then He was unlike the rest of mankind. If He was good, which His living and deeds proved (Jn. 8:46; 18:38; Acts 10:38), then He should be acknowledged as God. Indeed, He should be acknowledged as the prophesied Immanuel, “God with us” (Is. 7:14; Matt. 1:23). In conclusion, Christ’s loving and careful dealing with the young man was designed to make the man admit his lack of goodness and to cause him to recognize that Jesus, as the true Good One, was indeed God manifest in the flesh (1 Tim. 3:16). I believe we can have much hope that Christ’s words

to him, along with His probable loving intercession for him to the Father, later bore fruit in the ruler's conversion and discipleship.

These thoughts should bring us to some critical and fundamental conclusions concerning the Christian life. The Christian life begins with the confession that *we are not good*. In the parable of the Pharisee and the tax-gatherer (Lk. 18:9-14), Jesus pointed out that the tax-gatherer was justified because he came to God admitting his sinfulness: "God be merciful to me, the sinner" (v. 13). In contrast, the Pharisee approached God on the basis of his "track record" of good works. In other words, we begin our Christian life by abandoning any hope in who we are and what we have done and, instead, placing our trust in who the Lord Jesus is (God come in the flesh) and what He has done (accomplished our redemption through His death on the cross--Rom. 3:22-25). On such a *principle of faith in Christ*, God can justify us, declaring us righteous (Rom. 3:26; 4:5).

After beginning the Christian life by faith in Christ, we should continue our walk *by faith*. Our trust is not in ourselves, nor should the righteous life that God expects be one worked out by our effort. The principle of the law involves what *we can do* to meet the demands of God. The principle of faith involves what *Christ in us, as our new life, can do* to meet the demands of God (Gal. 2:15-5:14).¹²

The apostle Paul told us that the person that he formerly was, the old "I", was crucified with Christ (Gal. 2:20). Paul had been a zealous, religious person, capable of doing much that was right under the standard of the Old Testament Law (Phil. 3:6). However, he had learned to "put no confidence in the flesh" (Phil. 3:3). That is, Paul abandoned *all* confidence in *his* ability to meet the righteous standard of God. In Philippians Chapter Three Paul spoke firstly of counting all of his past efforts under Judaism "as loss for the sake of Christ" (v.7). Then, he went on to speak of his Christian walk:

More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus My Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, and be found in Him, *not having a righteousness of my own* derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness *which comes from God on the basis of faith* (Phil. 3:8,9).

The righteousness Paul spoke of here was not initial justification (imputed or positional righteousness). This is proven by the context. The sequence of experience that Paul describes in Philippians 3:8-12 is one portraying his pursuit of a more intimate knowledge of Christ. In other words, it describes his desire to *grow* in Christ, not to find Christ initially. The righteousness that Paul speaks of in this passage is not of Paul's own efforts to keep the law, rather it is a righteous living that comes *from God Himself* through Paul's exercise of faith (v.9).

Christ living in us to be our daily righteous living is a matter of *faith*. But what is faith and where does it come from? "Faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Christ" (Rom. 10:17). Faith is the exercise of our trust in what God says in His Word. Miles Stanford comments:

. . . true faith must be based solely on scriptural facts . . . Hebrews 11:1 leaves no question about this: "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen." Faith standing on the facts of the Word of God substantiates and gives evidence of things not seen. And everyone knows that evidence must be founded on facts. All of us started on this principle when we were born again--our belief stood directly on the eternal fact of the redeeming death and resurrection of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, as recorded in I Corinthians 15:1-4. This is the faith by which we began, and it is the same faith by which we are to "stand" (16:13), "walk" (2 Cor. 5:7) and "live" (Gal. 2:20). "As ye have therefore received Christ Jesus the Lord, so walk ye in him" (Col. 2:6).¹³

Faith trusts in what God says He has already done for us or given to us. Concerning the matter of living a dedicated righteous life, as Jesus required of the young ruler, nothing is more crucial than faith, especially our faith in our spiritual union with Christ. My union with Christ, shown in the Scriptures, tells me that the old man was crucified with Christ at the cross, and that I was raised with Him from the grave to live out a new life, which is Christ living in me (Rom. 6:3-7; Gal. 2:20; Col. 3:3,4a). These truths are precious. We should memorize such passages and meditate on them daily. As we use these verses in our communion with God, He will have a way to make them real to us. "And as we exercise faith in God's fact, we begin to receive the benefits of that finished work in experience."¹⁴

How often, dear Christian, do we hear a sermon or word of exhortation and immediately "set ourselves" to carry it out. All such efforts are doomed to failure and are portrayed by the pitiful struggle depicted in the seventh chapter of Romans. Our failure is because we tried! On the other hand, perhaps after some of these failures, we may sense God calling us to some new requirement, some new area of rightness in our lives, and we shrink from the call because we fear we just can not meet the demand. This failure, too, is based on the same faulty perspective. God wants us to live righteous lives, but not by our effort.

No, it is not I, my natural self with its resources, that must meet God's standard of righteousness. The righteousness He seeks must come from Christ, on the ground of faith. Such faith in Him and His Word results in Christ living in me.

The following comments on faith will also help us:

Faith is *dependence* upon God. And this God-dependence only begins when self-dependence ends. And self-dependence only comes to its end, with some of us, when sorrow, suffering, affliction, broken plans and hopes bring us to that place of self-helplessness and defeat. And only then do we find that we have learned the lesson of faith; to find our tiny craft of life rushing onward to a blessed victory of life and power and service undreamt of in the days of fleshly strength and self-reliance.¹⁵

The exercise of faith, however, does not mean we are passive. No, with a prayerful spirit we must constantly seek God (1 Thess. 5:17) and dwell in His Word often (Jn. 8:31). Charles Trumball remarked:

The effortless life is not the will-less life. We use our will to believe, to receive, but not to exert effort in trying to accomplish what only God can do. Our hope for victory over sin is not “Christ plus my efforts,” but “Christ plus my receiving.” To receive victory from Him is to believe His Word that solely by His grace He is, this moment, freeing us from the dominion of sin. And to believe on Him in this way is to recognize that He is doing for us what we cannot do for ourselves.¹⁶

Also, the great chapter in Hebrews on faith tells us of the *activity* of the life of faith: “And without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who *comes to* God must *believe* that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who *seek* Him” (Heb. 11:6).

Where the rich young ruler went astray is where we can also go astray. We are often presented with situations beyond our ability. This is the point of testing. If we are used to depending on ourselves, upon our resources, we may either try to overcome in the situation and fail, or, like the ruler, we may be so overwhelmed by the demand presented that we “go away sorrowful”. But God has brought us to that very situation of demand in order for us to realize His supply in Christ. This experience is pictured in that which He did to the children of Israel in the wilderness. He *led* them to places where there was no water or no food (Ex. 15:22; 16:1-3). Looking only at their own resources, they became embittered and discouraged. Had they trusted in God, however, they would have discovered that He had been ready all along to supply their needs. God also wanted to give them the good land of Canaan and promised to do so (Num.13:2). Twelve spies went into the land for forty days (a Biblical period of testing) and saw that it was a good land. However, only two of the spies believed that the land could be taken in spite of the giants that possessed it (Num. 13:28-33; 14:6-8). The other ten spies disbelieved God’s promise to give them the land and felt defeat was probable because they looked at their own abilities: “But the men who had gone up with him said, ‘We are not able to go up against the people, for they are too strong for us’” (Num. 13:31). Faith does not look at self or circumstances, but trusts in that which God says.

Only a few highlights have been given here of some of the keys to the victorious life in Christ. You will recall that the purpose of this writing was to touch on principles, but not to treat them exhaustively. If the reader is not thoroughly grounded in such truths, I strongly urge you to immerse yourself in the books noted in the suggested reading. We all daily need reminders on these matters because we easily fall back into old habits. A continual review of these principles is recommended.

“No one is good except God alone” (Mk. 10:18). What a refreshing realization this is! It relieves us. We do not have to depend on ourselves, our resources, to meet God’s high standards of righteous living. Instead, we should look to Christ and put our faith in Him. He can do in us what we can not do ourselves (Phil. 4:13). Of course, this matter is a learning process. We will learn this lesson over time through many experiences.

In the chapters ahead, we will see some very challenging requirements from the Scriptures. Remember this thought along the way: God never lowers His demands of righteousness to accommodate our weakness. But, *with* His demand, He grants us His supply in Christ to meet the demand.

Finally, as we continue to look at Kingdom truths and principles, please notice one very significant feature. Our preparation for the coming Kingdom is very much related to our experience of the indwelling Christ, or, if you will, to the sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. In this chapter we saw the necessity of appropriating the experiential righteousness of Christ by faith in order to have the manner of life that God requires. In future chapters we will again see the working of the Holy Spirit of God in the believer's life as the believer makes progress towards the Kingdom.

CHAPTER 4 - THE KINGDOM OF GOD

We now approach a most inspiring view of the future. We Christians need inspiration and vision in order to be steadfast in our race. How can we resist the pull of the world and inbred sin upon our souls? One very positive help in this regard is our vision of the future. Moses is our example. "By faith Moses, when he had grown up, refused to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter; choosing rather to endure ill-treatment with the people of God, than to enjoy the passing pleasures of sin; considering the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures of Egypt; for he was LOOKING TO THE REWARD" (Heb. 11:24-26). Here Moses represents the faithful Christian (Heb. 3:5). He refused to enjoy his earthly heritage and the pleasures of sin, because he saw something *more valuable* than all the treasures of the great Egyptian empire. He was "looking to the (future) reward." This reward, as we shall see, is something to be realized in the future millennial Kingdom of the Lord Jesus Christ. A day is coming, a time of 1,000 years, that will be more glorious and wonderful than anything we could possibly imagine (1 Cor. 2:9).

Before describing this glorious Kingdom in detail, it will be helpful to the reader to realize some key ideas concerning the use of the word "kingdom" in the New Testament. The Greek word used for kingdom is *basileia*. This word is used numerous times in the New Testament and one must carefully analyze its usage in any particular passage to determine its exact meaning and reference. George E. Ladd states: "The primary meaning of the New Testament word for kingdom, *basileia*, is 'reign' rather than 'realm' or 'people'. A great deal of attention in recent years has been devoted by critical scholars to this subject, and there is a practically unanimous agreement that 'regal power', 'authority' is more basic to *basileia* than 'realm' or 'people'."¹⁷ Theologian George Ladd goes on to tell us, however:

This definition of the word *basileia* must be taken as the point of departure for the meaning of the 'kingdom of God' in the Gospels; but it will become immediately clear that the abstract meaning by no means exhausts the content of the phrase. It is impossible to substitute 'reign' or 'royal power' or 'sovereignty' for *basileia* everywhere it occurs. The term often passes from the abstract sense to the concrete. Ordinarily, a regal authority would involve a people, and would find its expression in a certain realm or domain. This normal extension of the meaning of the word is to be discovered in the New Testament both in the secular and religious areas. Satan took Jesus up into a high mountain to tempt him and showed him all the kingdoms of the world and their glory (Matt. 4:8). The word here refers to distinct domains ruled by separate kings or rulers...If we may indicate our findings at the outset we may say that our study of the New Testament data has led to the conclusion that *the kingdom of God is the sovereign rule of God, manifested in the person and work of Christ, creating a people over whom he reigns, and issuing in a realm or realms in which the power of his reign is realized*. We must beware of over-simplification; but if this definition of the kingdom of God is taken as the key to the biblical teaching, it will be found that the diverse passages

on the kingdom can for the most part be satisfactorily and consistently exegeted.¹⁸

The Bible declares God's sovereign rulership in all generations: "Thy kingdom is an everlasting kingdom, and Thy dominion endures throughout all generations" (Ps. 145:13). The literal marginal reading of "an everlasting kingdom" in this verse is "a kingdom of all ages". God's everlasting Kingdom can take on different forms in different epochs. It is true that the matter of "the Kingdom of God" mentioned in the New Testament has been much debated among Bible teachers. Nevertheless, it seems apparent from the Scriptures that there is a *present* stage of God's Kingdom, which consists of a spiritual realization of the Kingdom among today's believers who have had God's Word sown in their hearts (Mk. 4:3-20), who *have been* transferred into the Kingdom of His beloved Son (Col. 1:13), and who currently enjoy the Kingdom of God in the Holy Spirit (Rom. 14:17). The Kingdom of God, however, is to be manifested in a much fuller way in its *future* stage. The coming Kingdom is realized only when Christ personally returns to earth to set up His 1,000-year Kingdom (Lk. 19:11-15). In this coming Kingdom, the scope of His direct rulership is the entire earth. As we study the Kingdom of God in future chapters of this book, it is important that we keep in mind these two stages of the Kingdom of God. Some verses in the New Testament that refer to "the Kingdom of God" speak of the present stage, whereas other verses may speak of the future stage. We must carefully examine each reference in order to accurately determine if it speaks of the current aspect of the Kingdom or if it may speak of the Kingdom to come. A few New Testament verses refer to aspects of the Kingdom of God other than these two aspects.

The coming millennial Kingdom is needed to outwardly, visibly reverse the universal rebellion of man, and to establish the righteous reign of God so that His will is done "on earth as it is in heaven" (Matt. 6:10). Presently, the world is riddled with sin and rebellion with all their sorrowful consequences. But there is a coming age of 1,000 years that will witness conditions that are in total contrast to this present age. Moreover, the fundamental reason for this contrast is that during that 1,000 years the Lord Jesus Christ will have undisputed, absolute rule over the earth (Rev. 11:15). All of the marvelous conditions and blessings manifested during that era are due solely to His rule.

Let us look now at some of the magnificent features of that future form of the Kingdom.

The Lifting of the Curse

The fall of Adam brought in a curse upon the earth (Gen. 3:17-19). Under the curse, man must labor among thorns and thistles to produce food. This means the cursed earth frustrates man's efforts to make a living. This will be changed during the millennium when all creation is released from its bondage to corruption (Rom. 8:21). At that time, "the desert shall rejoice, and blossom like the rose" (Is. 35:1, KJV). "Instead of the thorn bush, the cypress will come up and instead of the nettle the myrtle will come up; and it will be a memorial to the Lord" (Is. 55:13). Also, the aggressive, destructive nature of the animal kingdom will be undone and "the wolf will dwell with the lamb, and the leopard will lie down with the kid, and the calf and the young lion and the fatling together; and a little boy will lead them" (Is. 11:6). "And the lion will eat straw like the ox. And the nursing child will play by the hole of the cobra, and the weaned child will put his

hand on the viper's den. They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain" (Is. 11:76-9). This lifting of the curse may be gradual, occurring in significant stages during the millennium.¹⁹

Satan Will Be Bound

The devil, man's hateful enemy (1 Pet. 5:8), will be bound during the 1,000 years (Rev. 20:1-3) so that man will cease to be the victim of his machinations.

Sickness Eliminated

The healings Christ performed in His earthly ministry foreshadowed the Kingdom condition (Matt. 8:16-17; Heb. 6:5). In that future age the full realization of what He accomplished on the cross in respect to our bodily healing will be made evident (Is. 53:4-5). "And no resident will say 'I am sick'; the people who dwell there will be forgiven their iniquity" (Is. 33:24). "Then the eyes of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf will be unstopped. Then the lame will leap like a deer, and the tongue of the dumb will shout for joy" (Is. 35:5-6).

Peace

His reign will bring in peace. "And He will judge between the nations, and will render decisions for many peoples; and they will hammer their swords into plowshares, and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not lift up sword against nation, and never again will they learn war" (Is. 2:4).

Righteousness

"Behold a king will reign righteously, and princes will rule justly" (Is. 32:1). "But with righteousness He will judge the poor, and decide with fairness for the afflicted of the earth" (Is. 11:4a).

Joy

"The whole earth is at rest and is quiet. They break forth into shouts of joy" (Is. 14:7). "So the ransomed of the Lord will return; and come with joyful shouting to Zion; and everlasting joy will be on their heads. They will obtain gladness and joy, and sorrow and sighing will flee away" (Is. 51:11).

Comfort

"Shout for joy, O heavens! And rejoice, O earth! Break forth into joyful shouting, O mountains! For the Lord has comforted His people, and will have compassion on His afflicted" (Is. 49:13).

Material Prosperity

"And they shall come and shout for joy on the height of Zion, and they shall be radiant over the bounty of the Lord--over the grain, and the new wine, and the oil, and over the young of the flock and the herd; and their life shall be like a watered garden, and they shall never languish again" (Jer. 31:12).

Holiness

“They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord” (Is. 11:9a).

Fullness of The Holy Spirit

“I will pour out My Spirit on your offspring, and My blessing on your descendants” (Is. 44:3b).

This listing of Kingdom blessings is not all-inclusive. We can see from it, however, that the coming age will be more wonderful than man has ever dared dream. But there is more. Beyond the aspect of blessing lies the dimension of deeply significant purpose. All philosophers and psychologists would agree that man yearns for fulfillment, a fulfillment that is not realized through the mere satisfaction of the basic human physical and emotional needs. So man has tried to achieve fulfillment through accomplishment (i.e., work, sports, etc), service to fellow man in noble causes, or other means. Although these may add to man’s feelings of worth, something is yet missing. We must reach back to God’s original purpose for man in the activity of creation in order to understand man’s role in the coming Kingdom.

God’s last item of creation was man. Man is seen to hold a unique and preeminent place among God’s creatures. “Then God said, ‘Let us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the sky and over the cattle and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps on the earth’” (Gen. 1:26). Among God’s creation, man alone is created in God’s image, and man alone is designated to have the rulership over the earth. To be in God’s image simply means that man, in his living and character, is to express what God is like. Only man can fulfill this role among the creatures of Genesis Chapter One, since only man possesses characteristics that are found in God. Dr. Scofield points out that “While God is infinite and man is finite, nevertheless man possesses the elements of personality similar to those of the divine Person: thinking (Gen. 2:19-20;3:8); feeling (Gen. 3:6); willing (Gen. 3:6-7). That man has a moral nature is implicit in the record and is further attested by the N. T. usage (Eph. 4:23-24; Col. 3:10).”²⁰ Such a unique equipping also prepares man to be commissioned with the responsibilities of rulership over the other items of created earth.

It is in the coming Kingdom that all that was lost through the fall will be more than restored. The fellowship we have now with God will be intensified then as the New Covenant is realized in the fullest possible way (Jer. 31:33-34; Heb. 8:6-12), and our bodies will be redeemed, giving us freedom from the presence of sin (Rom. 8:23). As a result, we will spontaneously radiate the life of Christ, thus being “in His image”. Further, and most significantly, God will share His dominion over the earth with all overcoming believers (Matt. 25:21, 23; Lk. 19:17, 19; 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26-27; Rev. 3:21; Rev. 20:4,6).

As there was a Sabbath rest in which God enjoyed His completed creation, so there is a future Sabbath rest (Heb. 4:9). A number of Bible teachers, including notable early church fathers, have believed that God’s redemptive plan follows the pattern of His creative plan. There were six days of creative activity followed by the Sabbath day of rest wherein the completed work was enjoyed. In like manner, some writers feel that God restores the creation through “six days” (six days meaning 6,000 years per 2 Pet.

3:8) of redemptive activity and then has a Sabbath day rest of 1,000 years--the millennium. Scholars have determined that this concept of seven millenniums of God's earthly activity was the common belief among Jews at Christ's time and that this belief was widely held by the early church.²¹ It should be observed that God patterned Israel's calendar on a septenary (seven period) system (Lev. 23). Also, "seven is the number which in its full sense speaks of the perfect accomplishment of divine work".²² The word seven itself is derived from a root word that means full or satisfied, which meaning is fundamental to the closely related word for Sabbath.²³ Even if one had trouble agreeing with a 7,000-year plan, it is of interest to note that the Scofield Bible divides God's dealings with man into seven dispensations, with the seventh and final one being Christ's coming 1,000-year Kingdom.²⁴

The significance of Christ's coming Kingdom of 1,000 years is that it is a time when man's purpose will be finally realized. God can truly rest at that time because His intention in man's creation will at last be a reality. Thus, after prophesying of the sublime conditions of that future era in the first nine verses of Isaiah 11, Isaiah then concludes with the thought that there "his *rest* shall be glorious" (Is. 11:10, KJV). The future millennial Kingdom was foreshadowed by the type of the Sabbath in the Old Testament. (A Biblical "type" is some person, place or thing in the Scriptures that presents a picture of some future reality.) There, after completing His redemptive work with man, God will rest in satisfaction as He views man, in His image, ruling over the earth.

Before we conclude this chapter, we need to underscore something very notable about this coming Kingdom. A prominent characteristic of this Kingdom will be the pervasive element of eternal life, the life of God. God's purpose for man is that we might share His unique life. When Jesus came at the first advent, He announced that His intention in coming was "that they (His sheep) might have life and might have it abundantly" (Jn. 10:10)." In His prayer in the upper room on the night before His death, Jesus prayed for all those who would become believers in Him: ". . . that to all whom Thou hast given Him, He may give eternal life. And this is eternal life, that they may know Thee, the only true God, and Jesus Christ whom Thou hast sent" (Jn. 17:2-3). Although we have this life now (Jn. 3:16), the fullness of the experience of this life, which is the fullness of our knowledge of God, will be realized in the coming age. The following comments from George Ladd are helpful:

Jesus said to Nicodemus, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God," and "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (Jn. 3:3-5). These verses associate the Kingdom of God with eternal life. They indicate that one must enter into life in order to enter into the Kingdom of God; he must be born again. . . . God's word offers a life higher than the physical life which all men enjoy. It is the life of the Kingdom of God. We are all familiar with this text, "unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God." But frequently we dissociate eternal life from the truth of the Kingdom of God and do not usually think of eternal life as an aspect of God's Kingdom. However, these verses join together these two great Biblical realities. They are in fact inseparable. The life which Christ came to bring us is the life of God's Kingdom. . . . Eternal life belongs to the future Kingdom of glory and to The Age to Come; yet this eternal life has become available to man in the present evil Age. . . . In the Age to Come, the life of that glorious Kingdom means perfection of our fellowship with God and of our

knowledge of God. We shall see Him face to face. Life eternal means that we have already been brought into a personal relationship with God here and now. Life eternal means that God has become our God and we have become His people, and that we have begun to share a fellowship with Him; we have begun to share His life. This knowledge of God properly belongs to The Age to Come, to the day when the Kingdom will finally be established. . . . Here [in the coming Kingdom] is a picture of a consummated fellowship when men have entered into a personal, profound, perfect knowledge of God. . . . But the teaching of our Lord in the Gospel of John is that already we have entered into eternal life; already we have been introduced into this knowledge of God. Somehow, the future has become present. The blessing of the Age to Come has been made available to men now. Not in its fullness and perfection, to be sure: yet the knowledge of God in John 17:3 is not promise; it is realization, present experience, a present fellowship which will be wonderfully enlarged and perfected in The Age to Come.²⁵

The rich young ruler really did not know the true and rich meaning of the eternal life he asked of Jesus. He thought it simply involved resurrection from the dead with life in a future realm of blessings. However, when Jesus held out to him the prospect of entering “into life” (Matt. 19:17) in the next age, He was offering the highest possible experience for man. The millennial age will be saturated with God’s life. In speaking of the millennial earth, Isaiah prophesied: “They will not hurt or destroy in all My holy mountain, for the earth will be *full of the knowledge of the Lord* as the waters cover the sea” (Is. 11:9; compare Jn. 17:3).

In this chapter we have seen a rich, significant and beautiful vision of the coming age. We have glimpsed some of the glory of the coming Kingdom of Christ. What a contrast to “this present evil age” (Gal. 1:4). We must ever remember that the reason it will be so glorious is because Jesus will be the King; He will reign there. In that seventh and final dispensation man can realize the purpose of his creation. In the millennium, he can have the richest possible experience of the life of God, thus expressing Christ as his life in perfection (being *fully* in the image of God). Further, whether it is on the renewed earth or in the heavenly New Jerusalem (as some believe), men and women can realize their destiny to have dominion over the earth, reigning with Christ for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4). During that era, the Psalmist’s revelation of the high calling of man is finally fulfilled. “What is man, that Thou dost take thought of him? And the son of man, that Thou dost care for him? Yet Thou hast made him a little lower than God, and dost crown him with glory and majesty! Thou dost make him to rule over the works of Thy hands” (Ps. 8:4-6a).

Like Moses, may we set our eyes on that coming Kingdom reward, forsaking the pleasures of sin and the riches of this life. More than anything, we should desire to be there with Christ in His glorious Kingdom.

CHAPTER 5 - "THEN WHO CAN BE SAVED?"

This chapter contains a critically important Scriptural discussion. The reader is urged to "stick with it" throughout the chapter and to think and seek the Lord about it. Sometimes doctrinal concepts are hard to understand, but we must learn to seek the truth, if we are Christ's disciples, because He told us that "the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:32).

We return to the story of the rich young ruler. Jesus had told the ruler that if he wished to "enter life", that is, if he wished to experience the glorious realm of life in the next age, the ruler needed to do three things: keep the commandments, sell his possessions and give to the poor, and follow Christ. Upon learning of these requirements, the rich young ruler went away grieved, apparently unwilling to give up his possessions. Jesus then told His disciples, "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" (Matt. 19:23-24). After hearing of the Lord's assessment of the difficulty of entering the coming Kingdom, the disciples were astonished and inquired, "Then who can be saved?" (Matt. 19:25). Jesus replied that this salvation was impossible to be achieved by man alone, yet with God all things are indeed possible.

The disciples' question concerning "being saved", in its context of the coming Kingdom, opens the door for us to explore some very important Biblical truths and issues. And it is maintained, dear Christian reader, that these truths are not peripheral to the core of basic Christian doctrine. Rather, these truths are crucial to the Christian's understanding of his relationship with God and his responsibilities toward God. Further, these principles have the utmost bearing upon the believer's future for at least 1,000 years, which is surely a long time from the perspective of human experience. Therefore, I entreat you, in the name of Christ and for the sake of the truth, to be noble like the Bereans and examine the Scriptures to see whether these things be so (Acts 17:11).

Shortly, two great principles of the New Testament will be explained that govern many passages and teachings found there. If a Christian has a clear view of these two different and separate principles, much difficulty in understanding many passages in the Bible can be eliminated. A correct understanding of these two principles, and how certain Bible themes are related to them, will also help the Christian to resolve long-standing issues of Scriptural debate.

Before proceeding to the principles, let us say a word about the term "saved", since it has been introduced in the story of the rich young ruler and is so germane to the two principles. The verb "to save" in the Greek text is *sozo*. It means "to save, deliver, make whole, preserve from danger, loss, destruction."²⁶ We Christians tend to take a very narrow view of "being saved", thinking of it as being exclusively applicable to the spiritual salvation of man, whereby Christ "saves" the sinner from the penalty of hell to the promise of heaven. Of course, as we shall see, there is application of the term in that type of realm. However, we must remember that the verb itself is not a "theological verb" with an explicit theological meaning, such as just stated. Rather, *sozo* is just

another verb in the Greek language, and its meaning in any passage must be determined by the normal rules of interpretation, not by a preconceived notion. The verb is used in the New Testament for a variety of “savings” or “deliverances”. It is used of saving sick people from disease or death and restoring them to health (Matt. 9:21-22; Mk. 5:23), of delivering persons from demon possession (Lk. 8:36), and of delivering people from danger and death (Matt. 14:30; Acts 27:20). Therefore, the deliverance or “salvation” involved in any passage must be determined by looking at the context and comparing it to other Scriptures. Not every Biblical mention of salvation for man necessarily means a saving of the person from an eternity in the lake of fire to an eternity with God; only certain passages carry this meaning.

The two great principles will be called “SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH” and “REWARD ACCORDING TO WORKS”. Please take time now to briefly review the table on the following two pages that outlines these two principles. Under the heading of each principle on the table some “related matters” are listed. These “related matters” are Biblical topics or doctrines which must be seen as related to the general principle in order to be properly understood. As we examine these matters and review the verses noted, it will become apparent that these matters are indeed in harmony with the respective governing principle.

SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH	REWARD ACCORDING TO WORKS
<i>RELATED MATTERS</i>	<i>RELATED MATTERS</i>
<p>1. A gift. Eph. 2:8-9; Rom. 5:17.</p> <p>2. By grace through faith (unmerited; not conditioned by works on man's part). Eph. 2:8-9; 2 Tim. 1:9; Rom. 3:24-28; Rom. 4:1-16; 11:5,6; Tit. 3:5.</p> <p>3. Salvation from eternal death to eternal life with God. Jn. 5:24; Eph. 2:5; Tit. 3:7; Rev. 20:14,15; 21:6,7.</p> <p>4. Salvation of the spirit. Jn. 3:6; Rom. 8:10; 1 Cor. 5:5; Heb. 12:9.</p> <p>5. Justification by faith. Lk. 18:13,14; Rom. 3:24,26,28; 4:5; Gal. 2:16; 3:24.</p>	<p>1. A "reward" or "prize" (recompense). Matt. 5:12,46; 6:4,6,18; 10:41,42; 16:27; Lk. 6:35; 1 Cor. 3:8,14; 9:17,24; Phil. 3:14; Col. 2:18; 3:24; 2 Tim. 4:14; Heb. 2:2-3; 10:35; 11:26; 2 Pet. 2:13; 2 Jn. 8; Rev. 11:18; 22:12.</p> <p>2. According to works (man's cooperation with God; the reward is conditional upon man's works). Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; 1 Cor. 3:13-15; 2. Cor. 5:10; Eph. 6:8; Col. 3:24,25; Heb. 10:35,36; 1 Pet. 1:17; Rev. 2:23; 22:12.</p> <p>3. Salvation from loss and ruin during the millennium to the enjoyment of Christ's millennium Kingdom. Matt. 5:22-30; 7:21-23; 16:24-28; 18:8,9; 24:43-51; 25:14-30; Mk. 8:34-38; 10:28-30; Lk. 9:23-26; 12:41-48; 18:28-30; 19:11-27; Rom. 2:1-11; 1 Cor. 3:12-17; 6:8-10; 9:24-10:13; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-7; 2 Thess. 1:5; 2 Tim. 2:12; 4:18; Heb. 1:14-2:5; 3:1-4:11; 5:9; 6:1-8; 10:35-38; 12:16,17, 25-29; 2 Pet. 1:5-11; Rev. 2:10,11,25-27; 3:4,5,11,12,21; 20:4-6.</p> <p>4. Salvation of the soul. Matt. 16:25,26; Mk. 8:35-37; Lk. 9:23-25; 17:32,33; Jn. 12:25; Heb. 10:38,39; Jas. 1:21; 1 Pet. 1:9.</p> <p>5. Justification by works. Matt. 12:37; 1 Cor. 4:4; Jas. 2:21,24,25.</p>

SALVATION BY GRACE THROUGH FAITH	REWARD ACCORDING TO WORKS
<i>RELATED MATTERS</i>	<i>RELATED MATTERS</i>
<p>6. The judgment upon sin and unbelief. Mk. 16:16; Jn. 3:18; 5:24; 12:48; Rom. 5:15,16,18; 2 Thess. 2:12.</p> <p>7. Becoming a child of God (sonship). Jn. 1:12; Gal. 3:26.</p> <p>8. Receiving eternal life. Jn. 3:15,16,36; 5:24; 6:47; 10:28; 20:31; Rom. 6:23; 1 Jn. 5:11.</p> <p>9. Election according to grace. Eph. 1:4; Rom. 9:11; 11:5,6; 1 Pet. 1:1,2.</p> <p>10. Entry into the present Kingdom of God. Matt. 21:28-32; Mk. 10:13-16; Col. 1:13.</p> <p>11. Heirs as children of God. Rom. 8:17; Gal. 3:18,29; 4:6,7; Eph. 1:10,11; 1 Pet. 3:7.</p>	<p>6. The judgment upon the believer's works. Matt. 5:22-30; 12:36,37; 24:42-51; 25:14-30; Lk. 12:42-48; 19:12-27; Jn. 5:29; Rom. 2:1-11,16; 14:10-12; 1 Cor. 3:12-15; 4:5; 2 Cor. 5:10; Heb. 10:26,27,30; 13:4; Jas. 2:12,13; 5:9; 1 Pet. 1:17; 4:17.</p> <p>7. Growing (maturing) as sons of God (discipleship). Matt. 10:25a; 16:24-28; 19:27-29; Mk. 10:28-30; Lk. 6:40; 9:23-26,61,62; 14:26-35; Acts 14:22; Phil. 3:8-14; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:5; Heb. 10:35-39; 2 Pet. 1:4-11.</p> <p>8. Eternal life in the coming age. Matt. 18:8,9; Mk. 9:43-47; 10:28-30; Lk. 18:28-30; Jn. 4:36; 12:25; Rom. 2:6,7; Jude 20,21.</p> <p>9. Choosing according to the believer's preparation. Matt. 22:14; 2 Pet. 1:10; Rev. 17:14.</p> <p>10. Entry into the future Kingdom of God. Matt. 7:21; 18:1-4; [cf. Lk. 9:46-48]; 19:12; 22:1-14; Mk. 9:47; 10:23-25, 28-30; Lk. 9:62; 18:24-30; Acts 14:22; 1 Cor. 6:8-10; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5; 1 Thess. 2:12; 2 Thess. 1:4-5; Jas. 2:5; 2 Pet. 1:10,11.</p> <p>11. Fellow heirs with Christ in His coming Kingdom. Matt. 5:5; 19:29; Mk. 10:17,29,30; Rom. 8:17; 1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5; Col. 3:24; Heb. 1:14; 6:12; Jas. 2:5.</p>

It is obvious that two key words in these principles are “grace” and “works”. There is a danger in reducing these principles to simply “grace” or “works”, because of many past arguments concerning “salvation” in regard to these terms. But for the sake of simplicity of *reference only*, let’s term them the grace principle and the works principle, with the full realization that we are *not* talking just about “salvation” by grace or works.

The grace and the works principles contrast different items. In a particular Scriptural sense, the terms grace and works are actually mutually exclusive. In speaking of God’s election of grace in relation to the remnant of saved Israelites that had recognized Jesus as the Messiah, Paul wrote:

“In the same way then, there has also come to be at the present time a remnant according to God’s gracious choice. But if it is by grace, it is no longer on the basis of works, otherwise grace is no longer grace” (Rom. 11:5-6).

In this passage, grace means God’s unmerited favor, or gift, in choosing the Israelites to participate in the eternal salvation of God (from final condemnation and unto eternal life). The same principle applies to God’s choice of any Gentile in eternal salvation. In relation to this salvation, grace means that salvation is altogether a gift from God and is not in any way earned, merited or worked for by the recipient. As the epistle to the Ephesians tells us: “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the gift of God; not as a result of works, that no one should boast” (Eph. 2: 8-9).

In context, we can tell that the salvation spoken of above is one from spiritual death to an eternity with God, with the sinner being made alive in Christ. We see the antithesis between “grace” and “works”. However, it is very important to note that this antithesis is *within* the framework of our eternal salvation. In other words, it is *only* our final salvation for eternity future that is purely a matter of grace with nothing whatsoever to do with works. To become a Christian and to “be saved” from the final condemnation of an eternity in the lake of fire to the enjoyment of an eternity with God is a matter of *grace*, not of any works of ours.

After we have been born again into the family of God by His grace, however, our works are not disregarded by God. On the contrary, our works as a believer figure very directly into the equation of our relationship with God and His dealings with us. Our salvation for eternity is “*not* as a result of *works*, that no one should boast” (Eph. 2:9). However, in the very next verse, the Bible tells us that it is God’s intention that the saved person should have works: “for we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them” (Eph. 2:10). Thus, there is a matter of works related to our post-conversion experience. Based upon the works, or doings, of the believer, God will “reward” him. Actually, the word reward is misleading since we may think of a reward as only something positive. However, the Greek words used in the reward passages are neutral and carry the meaning of recompense, to pay *according to* the nature of the work or doing. When one studies the various verses where these words are used, one finds that the “pay back”, or recompense, can be positive or negative. As we shall see, the recompense that God renders to a believer for his doings, according to Scripture, can be “good” or “bad”.

As we go through the “related matters” listed on the table, remember that each one ties in to its respective governing principle. In that way, the interpretation of the cited passage becomes clear and comprehensible. Historically, much confusion in Christian doctrine has resulted from trying to relate a particular passage to the wrong principle! Also, since the time of the Protestant Reformation with its emphasis on salvation by grace, the grace principle has become so dominant that the “works” principle has either been unknown, heavily clouded and misunderstood, or even wrongly blended with the grace principle.

We will not cover all of the related matters in complete detail. This is an introduction that hopefully will encourage you to do more study on your own. Some of the matters will be looked at from one perspective or another in the chapters that follow. Please have your Bible handy in order to read some of the verses yourself as we approach each related matter shown on the table. Let’s begin.

A Gift

There is the matter of *pure gift* in the Bible. “For by grace you have been saved through faith; and that not of yourselves, it is the *gift* of God” (Eph. 2:8). How we all rejoice in this! We never need to strive or work to receive this gift! The gift is free; there is no cost to us. The gift is not earned or merited, but we must take notice that this gift applies only to a specific salvation.

A Reward or Prize

We must pay close attention to the Scriptural context of the reward or the prize. The context will always show us that the reward, or recompense, is connected with *works*, not a gift. The recompense is always *earned* by the recipient. Actually, some passages will show us that *every* man (believer and non-believer) will be recompensed according to his works. The recompense will, of course, differ between believer and non-believer. Now let’s look at one passage.

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. ²⁶ For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds” (Matt. 16:24-27).

Note that verse 27 starts with “for”, meaning it is an explanation or commentary on what was said in the previous verses. So verse 27 is telling us that the Son of Man will recompense men according to their deeds. In context, the deeds are the deeds of disciples mentioned in the previous verses, namely deeds of denying one’s self, taking up one’s cross, following Jesus Christ, and losing one’s life. The Greek word for both “soul” and “life” in the above verses is *psuche*. Self-denial means to deny one’s soul its gratification. The meaning of *psuche* will be explained in detail in the next chapter. These things are great *works* of an obedient disciple, not a *gift* simply received! These actions are not free; they are costly! Yet, a “saving” is mentioned here. How can salvation be here when works and recompense are mentioned? This “salvation” is not the same salvation that is mentioned in Ephesians 2:8! Also, the salvation in Ephesians

2:8 has already happened to us with lasting results. Here is a rendering of that verse by Greek scholar Kenneth Wuest in his expanded translation: "For by grace you have been saved in time past completely, through faith, with the result that your salvation persists through present time." The salvation of Matthew 16, however, is future and is based on the disciple's works during his lifetime. "For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose [future tense] it; but whoever loses his life for my sake shall find [future tense] it ... for the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will *then* recompense every man according to his deeds" (Matt. 16:25, 27). The future "shall find it" is rendered "shall save it" in the parallel passages of Mark 8:35 and Luke 9:24. This future salvation will be explained later.

Here are some brief comments on some other reward or prize verses. The "reward of the inheritance" (Col. 3:24), according to the context, is dependent on the rightness of our service. If we do not watch ourselves, we can lose what has been accomplished in us, and this will cost us some reward (2 Jn. 8). Even the great apostle Paul warns us to run the race (conduct our Christian lives) in a disciplined manner because only "one receives the prize" (1 Cor. 9:24). This implies that there will be those Christians in the race who will *not* receive the prize. Even Paul himself was careful to discipline his sinful body so that he might not be disqualified from the prize (1 Cor. 9:27; cf. Rom. 6:6; 7:17-18, 23). Although Paul was a great apostle, he tells us in Philippians that he needed to continue further in his experience of Christ (3:8-10) in order to attain to a special resurrection (vs. 11-12). Therefore, he needed yet to press on for the prize (v. 14).

By all these Scriptures we can see how the reward, or the prize, is *not a gift*. It is definitely something that *costs* the disciple much carefulness, effort, discipline, endurance, and suffering.

By Grace through Faith

(Unmerited; not conditioned by works on man's part)

The gift of eternal salvation is by grace through faith. Grace tells us that this salvation is freely given out of God's goodness, not because of our doing. Faith is simply the way we receive this gift of salvation.

"But to the one who does not work, but believes in Him who justifies the ungodly, his faith is reckoned as righteousness" (Rom. 4:5).

According to Works

(Man's cooperation with God. The reward is conditioned upon man's works.)

All men are responsible to God for their actions and will be judged and recompensed *according to* those actions. "Who will render to EVERY man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6). A believer's eternal salvation with God is not affected by his deeds, but a believer's deeds will affect him directly. The believer is responsible before God to live a righteous and holy life, producing proper works. If the believer does not fulfill this calling, he will suffer. Paul was a master builder laying a foundation of Jesus Christ among the Corinthian believers (1 Cor. 3:10). Yet he warned the Corinthians (and us) to be careful how we build upon this initial foundation.

But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed by fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall *receive a reward*. If any man's work is burned up, he shall *suffer loss*; but he himself shall be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:10-15).

Contrary to what many believe and teach, Christians do not automatically produce good works or fruit. Christians may or may not cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Those in Corinth were true believers (1 Cor. 1:2), yet they were fleshly, behaving as natural, unregenerated men (1 Cor. 3:1,3-4). There was immorality among the believers (1 Cor. 5:1), lawsuits (1 Cor. 6:7), and divisions (1 Cor. 1:12-13; 11:18). To these *believers* Paul wrote: "become sober-minded as you ought and *stop sinning*; for some have no knowledge of God. I speak this to your shame" (1 Cor. 15:34). We are now in a great period of testing. Christians can avail themselves of God's power and thus obey Him, but whether or not they actually do so is up to the individual (Phil. 2:12-14). We may fall from our steadfastness (2 Pet. 3:17), be sinful like the Corinthians, abandon God's call to work (2 Tim. 4:10), be a slothful servant (Matt. 25:26), or even leave the soundness of the faith (1 Tim. 1:19 cf. 2 Tim. 2:17-18). Be warned, dear Christian, and be sober. God is not mocked (Gal. 6:7). One day, God will render to you according to your works. The issue here is *not* eternal salvation, so please do not plead "grace". At the Judgment Seat, about which we will say more later, we will be faced with God's justice, not His grace. However, we can take comfort from the truth that when we do fail, God can cleanse us from our unrighteousness through confession (1 Jn. 1:9). Sins that have been confessed will not be judged at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Although God can and does chastise us during our lifetime (Heb. 12:4-14), the real recompense according to our deeds comes from the Lord Jesus at His return. "Behold, I am coming quickly, and My reward is with Me, to render to every man according to what he has done" (Rev. 22:12; see also Matt. 16:27).

Salvation from Eternal Death to Eternal Life with God

(The salvation that is by grace through faith)

"For God so loved the world that He gave us His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish [eternally], but have eternal life." (Jn. 3:16)

"Truly, truly, I say to you, he who hears My word, and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment [final condemnation], but has passed out of death into life" (Jn. 5:24).

Salvation from Loss and Ruin

(During the millennium to the enjoyment of Christ's millennial kingdom)

We have already discussed the Greek verb *sozo* (to save) from which the word salvation is derived. Salvation means deliverance from a negative state or peril, such as

disease or death, to a positive state, such as safety, health or prosperity. The salvation by grace we dealt with in the previous “related matter” is for the *unbeliever*. It is offered to the unbeliever so that by grace through faith he can escape God’s condemnation and be given eternal life. The salvation about to be discussed is for the *believer*. It deals with the believer’s state during the coming 1,000 year Kingdom age.

The New Testament contains many warnings to believers. Some indeed seem quite intense and frightening. Because these warnings seem so strong, many teachers feel they have to do with an eternal condemnation, or being lost. Thus, two main schools of thought have arisen to explain these verses. One school that we could generally call the Arminian school (from Jacobus Arminius, 1559-1609), feels that the serious warnings are indeed addressed to real believers and the issue at risk is eternal salvation. In other words, this school teaches that believers can lose their salvation. The other school, which we will call the Calvinist school (after John Calvin, 1509-64), contends that such a view would compromise a salvation by grace, not of works. Therefore, they explain these warnings by saying that the verses are not addressed to true believers, but to “professing”, nominal Christians only, religious people who are not genuine “possessors” of the new life in Christ. The problem of these warning passages is resolved by applying them to the right principle. Both schools wrongly tried to relate the passages to the matter of eternal salvation.

These warning sections in Scripture in fact deal with a recompense to the believer that can involve great loss and even punishment, but not the loss of the believer’s eternal salvation. The salvation cited in this related matter involves deliverance from negatives that do not equal eternal condemnation, and the ushering in of positives that are realized in the coming Kingdom age (1,000 years), not life in eternity.

As we begin to touch the future negative possibilities for Christians, some readers may react: “If He paid it all, then why should I have to ‘pay’ for my failure?” The matter of our sins before and after conversion will be touched upon more in a later chapter. However, please take note of a couple of Scriptural facts now. Since we have been redeemed, God rightly feels that we should be the most responsible persons, obedient to His will. “As obedient children, do not be conformed to the former lusts which were yours in your ignorance, but like the Holy One who called you, be holy yourselves also in all your behavior; because it is written, ‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’” (1 Pet. 1:14-16). God’s grace is never a license to sin (Rom. 6:1-2). God’s great principle of rendering to every man according to his deeds is not erased because we have been redeemed (Matt. 16:27; Rom. 2:6; Rev. 2:23; 22:12). In this judgment, there is no partiality with God; believers are not exempted (Rom. 2:11; 1 Pet. 1:17).

We will not now look at all the verses cited under this related matter, but let’s examine the parable of the talents of money in Matthew 25:14-30.

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 do 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.

Surely this parable speaks of the responsibility of Christian stewardship. The "man. . . called *his own* slaves, and entrusted his possessions to them" (v.14). The only difference in the slaves was their ability, which was reflected in the amount of money entrusted to them. There is no hint that they had different relationships to the master, such as two being real slaves and the third one a pretender. "Now after a long time the master of those slaves came and settled accounts with them" (v.19). This verse speaks of Christ's return and the Judgment Seat from where He evaluates the believer's deeds. The first two slaves were "good and faithful" in using what was entrusted to them by the master. Thus, the master (the Lord) rewarded them: "I will put you in charge of many things; enter into the joy of your master" (vs. 21,23). However, the slave who had the one talent of money did nothing to multiply it for the Lord. Consequently, "his master answered and said to him, 'You wicked, lazy slave'" (v.26). The way Jesus related the story makes it impossible to logically and honestly view this servant as anything other than what he is explicitly defined as being--a servant of the master. There is no latitude in the parable for a false servant or pretender. The rebuke was for slothfulness, which the master considered as wickedness. Beyond the rebuke, the master also took away the entrusted possession from that point on (v.28), and then he commanded, "and cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v.30). The slave was worthless; he gained nothing for the Lord.

Faithful service to Christ is the qualification for sharing authority in Christ's coming Kingdom. The parallel passage in Luke 19:12-27 portrays the faithful servant being given authority over ten cities or over five cities. (See also 2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21.) Also, it seems reasonable that the coming Kingdom in which Christ finally rules and where God's intention for man is realized (see Chapter Four), is the "joy" of the

master (Matt. 25:21,23). The faithful slaves receive an *entry* into this joyful realm as well as a *stewardship* to reign with Christ there.

Thus we see that both types of slaves (which represent believers), the good ones and the wicked ones, will be *recompensed according to their works*. This recompense takes place when the Lord returns and calls us to His Judgment Seat. There is a positive reward for the faithful Christian, which involves a real deliverance or *salvation* from potential loss into a very wonderful and joyful situation. On the other hand, there is a negative recompense to the “worthless” believer, an absence of deliverance or *salvation* from loss and ruin. The “worthless” believer experiences weeping and gnashing of teeth. Both the positive and negative recompenses relate to the coming Kingdom of Christ. The penalty of “outer darkness” is not “hell for eternity”. Escape from an eternity in the lake of fire is not based upon the works principle; escape from eternal damnation is by grace through faith.

Dare we say that Christ has only faithful and profitable slaves and that the wicked, lazy slave represents a false believer, a mere “professor” but not a “possessor”? The words of the parable do not support such a notion. Also, if Jesus wanted us to recognize our falseness, our unreal profession, He would have designed the parable differently, so as to stimulate us to have genuine faith in Him, whereas the parable stimulates us to *diligence in works*. As it stands, the parable is a rebuke to the worthless slave because of his *laziness*, not because of his lack of genuine trust in the Lord. This portion of Scripture (as well as its parallel in Luke 19) is designed to deal with our lack of diligence in using our spiritual gifts to gain some profit for the Lord. Do we not all know genuine Christians, perhaps ourselves, who have buried their responsibilities in the ground?

Comments on other verses under this related matter will be held for later. The reader is encouraged, however, to eventually study the other verses, considering them in light of the governing principle.

Salvation of the Spirit

Man is a three-part being.²⁷ “Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you entirely; and may your spirit and soul and body be preserved complete, without blame at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ” (1 Thess. 5:23).

The spirit of man is the God-conscious part of him, and it is that part that God initially deals with in His salvation. It is man’s spirit that receives new life when man is born again. “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and *that which is born of the Spirit is spirit*. Do not marvel that I said to you, ‘You must be born again’” (Jn.3:6-7). Here we see God’s Spirit giving birth to the human spirit. The eighth chapter of Romans talks of our life in the Holy Spirit and declares: “and if Christ is in you, though the body is dead because of sin, yet the *spirit* is *alive* because of righteousness” (v.10). Because of the imputed righteousness of Christ received by faith (Rom. 3:28), God is able to give life to our human spirit. Being made alive in our spirits has to do with our salvation by grace through faith. “Even when we were dead in our transgressions, [God] made us alive together with Christ (by grace you have been saved)” (Eph. 2:5).

Salvation of the Soul

In addition to the salvation of the spirit, the Scripture also speaks of the salvation of the soul. These are two different matters. The soul has a close kinship to the spirit but is distinct (Heb. 4:12). The soul is where man's natural life really lies. The soul is the place of man's personality. The main faculties of man's soul are his mind, his emotion, and his will. The Greek word for soul is *psuche*, from which we get the term psychology. The word *psuche* takes on broad usage in Scripture, as explained by Watchman Nee:

Zoe (one Greek word for life) is the highest life, the life of the spirit. Whenever the Bible speaks of eternal life it uses this word. *Psuche* refers to the animated life of man, his natural life or life of the soul. The Bible employs this term when it describes the human life. . . . The New Testament consequently employs the Greek word *psuche* for both "soul" and "soul life". Hence we know "soul" not only is one of the three elements of man but also is man's life, his natural life. In many places in the Bible, "soul" is translated as "life". . . . "I do not account my life of any value" (Acts 20:24) . . . "The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep" (Jn. 10:11,15,17). The word "life" in these verses is "soul" in the original. It is so translated because it would be difficult to understand otherwise. The soul actually is the very life of man.

As we have mentioned, "soul" is one of the three elements of man. "Soul life" is man's natural life, that which makes him exist and animates him. It is the life whereby man today lives; it is the power whereby man becomes what he is.²⁸

The salvation, or preservation, of one's soul (or life) is a matter related to one's works or doings, not to grace. We have already discussed Matthew 16:24-27 under the related matter of "reward or prize". The word for "life" in that portion of the Bible is *psuche*.

If anyone wishes to come after Me; let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever wishes to save his life [*psuche*] shall lose it; but whoever loses his life [*psuche*] for My sake shall find it. For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will *then recompense* every man according to his deeds (Matt. 16:24-27).

The soul of the believer will be preserved from loss (and thus experience fulfillment) or suffer loss at Christ's return, depending upon the believer's following of Christ now in self-denial. This topic will be covered in more detail in the next chapter.

Justification by Faith

This was the great truth of the Reformation that was discovered by the seeking monk, Martin Luther. We are declared righteous by God through our faith in Christ.

"Being justified as a gift by His grace through the redemption which is in Christ Jesus" (Rom. 3:24). "For we maintain that a man is justified by faith apart from works of law" (Rom. 3:28).

This justification is based upon *the work of Christ*.

“ . . . through the one act of righteousness there resulted justification of life to all men. For as through the one man's disobedience the many were made sinners, even so through the obedience of the One the many will be made righteous” (Rom. 5:18-19).

Justification by Works

We have received an imputed righteousness by God through our faith in Christ and His work (Rom. 3:26,28). The principle of reward according to works, however, still remains for the believer, and there is a coming day in which Christ will judge *the righteousness of our actual living*. In other words, there is a *second, future* justification that is decided at the Judgment Seat of Christ based upon *our works*, not Christ's work. Paul spoke clearly of the justification by faith in Romans Chapters Three and Four. But God used James to unveil the second justification. I can do no better than to quote D. M. Panton concerning the second justification of the believer:

So the Holy Spirit has selected a second apostle through whom to reveal the second justification with startling emphasis. “Was not Abraham our father JUSTIFIED *by works*, in that he *offered up Isaac* upon the altar? . . . *by works* was faith made perfect: . . . *by works* a man is justified, and not only by faith” (Jas. 2:21). That Abraham's second justification was a justification before God, not men, is clear, because God alone--apart from Isaac--was present when he was so justified (Gen. 22:16). James is not speaking of works *before* faith, that is, works of law: for “*faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect*”: faith was already there. The justification of James, therefore, is not justification unto eternal life. *Scripture strenuously denies that works before faith can ever justify*: “by the works of the law shall no flesh be justified” (Rom. 3:20). But works done *after* faith, works done *in* faith, the ‘work of faith’ (1 Thess. 1:3) does justify *for reward*. “If any [disciple's] work shall abide, he shall receive a reward. “If any [disciple's] work shall be burned, he shall suffer loss: *but he himself shall be saved*” (1 Cor. 3:15)--as already possessed of the justification unto life. “I know nothing against myself; yet am I *not* hereby justified”--with the second justification: even a conscience void of offense in a regenerate apostle cannot ensure that: nothing can (apart from a special revelation) but the Judge upon the Bema--“but he that *udgeth* me is the Lord. Wherefore the Spirit bids us,--“So speak ye, and so do, as men *that are to be judged* by a law of liberty” (Jas. 2:12)--the law, not of Moses, but of Christ.

God called Abraham, and he believed; God proved Abraham, and he endured: *the two justifications were then complete*. For his justification by faith Paul points to the moment of his regeneration; for his justification by works James points to his final act of accomplished obedience. Both justifications are demanded from every human soul. First, justification by blood, then justification by obedience; first, justification by faith, then justification by works; first, justification for life, then justification for reward; first, the escape of Israel out of Egypt, then the escape of Caleb and Joshua out of the wilderness; the one is an adjudication on a transferred righteousness through the obedience of Another; the other is an

adjudication on an active righteousness through obedience of our own. For blessed is “the man unto whom God reckoneth righteousness *apart from works*” (Rom. 4:6): blessed also is “the man that endureth temptation [testing]; for *when he hath been approved*, he shall receive THE CROWN OF LIFE (Jas. 1:12).²⁹

If one looks carefully at the context of James Chapter Two, one will see that the justification that James speaks of is in connection with the future judgment.

“So speak and so act, as those who are *to be judged* by the law of liberty. For *judgment* will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment” (Jas. 2:12-13).

These verses regarding the coming judgment are then immediately followed by: “What use is it, my brethren, if a man says he has faith, but he has no works? Can that faith save him” (v.14)?

The Scriptural context of *this* salvation is the coming judgment upon works. This is a salvation that has its potential realization at Christ’s future judgment of believers! What is this salvation? It is a salvation from loss and ruin in the coming age to the enjoyment of Christ’s Kingdom. In fact, James has already mentioned the Kingdom in this chapter in verse five. “Listen, my beloved brethren; did not God choose the poor of this world to be rich in faith and heirs of the *kingdom* which He promised to those who love Him?” Those who *love* Him refuse to love the world (Jas. 4:4-10; 1 Jn. 2:15) and they *obey* Him (Jn. 14:15). The salvation that James is dealing with is the salvation of the *soul*, which he mentioned earlier (1:21-22), achieved through obedience (works), not faith. So we see that this justification is tied to the principle of reward according to works. This view solves the age-old problem of Bible students concerning the reconciliation of Ephesians 2:8-9 (salvation by grace, not of works) with James 2:14,24 (salvation by works). These two passages speak of *two different salvations*.

The Judgment upon Sin and Unbelief

God is the judge of all men (Heb. 12:23). He judges, decides judicially, concerning every man. Chapter Five of Romans tells us that sin entered the world through Adam’s disobedience (Rom. 5:12). The result of sin’s entry into the human race was death (Rom. 5:12; 6:23). This death was a spiritual death. W. E. Vine comments:

Death is the opposite of life; it never denotes nonexistence. As spiritual life is “conscious existence in communion with God”, so spiritual “death” is “conscious existence in separation from God.” “Death in whichever of the above mentioned senses it is used, is always, in Scripture, viewed as the penal consequences of sin, . . .”³⁰

God’s judgment, therefore, is death upon a sinful mankind. Note what Romans teaches us.

But the free gift is not like the transgression. For if by the transgression of the one the many died, much more did the grace of God and the gift by the grace of the one man, Jesus Christ, abound to the many. And the gift is not like that which came through the one who

sinned; for on the one hand the *judgment* arose from one transgression resulting in *condemnation*, but on the other hand the free gift arose from many transgressions resulting in justification. . . . So then as through one transgression there resulted condemnation to all men, even so through one act of righteousness there resulted *justification of life* to all men (Rom. 5:15-16,18).

These verses tell us that God has already had a judgment (a judicial decision) resulting in condemnation upon mankind (a judgment *against man*). Sinful man is under the condemnation of spiritual death. God, however, through Christ's substitutionary death, has made the way for us to be justified (acquitted and in right standing with God), so that we could have spiritual life. This "justification of life" (Rom. 5:18), bringing us out of spiritual death, is received by faith (it is not of works). It is received by trusting in Christ's work of redemption (Rom. 3:24-26).

With these thoughts in mind, we can see God's *judgment upon unbelief* in the following verses from the Gospel of John:

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; that whoever believes may in Him have eternal life. For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world should be saved through Him. He *who believes* in Him *is not judged*; he *who does not believe has been judged already*, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God (Jn. 3:14-18).

Also, we can now understand John 5:24 which says:

"Truly, truly I say to you, he who hears My word and believes Him who sent Me, has eternal life, and does not come into judgment, but has passed out of death into life."

Here we see that our faith in the gospel concerning Christ removes us from the realm of God's judgment of eternal spiritual death and passes us into the realm of eternal life with God. When this Scripture states that the believer does not come into judgment, it means, in context, the judgment concerning eternal death, the condemnation of God upon all men. Through our faith in Christ, this judgment is passed! We are forever out of the condemnation of eternal death, having trusted in Christ's redemption from it.

God's judgment is now upon man's unbelief in Christ. Why? Because God has done everything in Christ to bring man out from under God's condemnation of eternal death. Jesus said when the Holy Spirit came He would convict the world of sin--"concerning sin *because* they do *not believe* in Me" (Jn. 16:9). Christ also tells us that "he who has *disbelieved* shall be [future tense] condemned" (Mk. 16:16). Unbelieving man is *already* under God's condemnation (Jn. 3:18; Rom. 5:16), yet there will be a future judgment scene when dead unbelievers will be raised to appear before God's throne (Rev. 20:11-15). There each one will be judged according to his deeds (v. 13), *yet* they are finally cast into the lake of fire *because* their names were not found in the book of *life* (v. 15; note: a sinner receives life through belief in Jesus; Jn. 3:16). So,

although sinful man is under God's condemnation due to sin (Rom. 5:16), he remains under that condemnation due to unbelief (Jn. 3:18).

Perhaps an illustration will help. One time this writer heard a radio preacher telling a true story about a convicted criminal. He was in jail and under the sentence of death. While on death row the governor of the state issued a pardon for him. The condemned man refused the pardon! It is our belief that the matter went to a judge and the judge upheld the man's right to refuse the pardon. He was put to death as originally sentenced. Why did he die - because of the original death sentence? Yes, but one could also say it was because he refused the pardon! So sinful man is under judgment, not just because of God's condemnation upon his sin, but eventually because man refuses to accept the forgiveness that God has provided in Jesus Christ.

It should be very easy for us to see how this matter of judgment upon sin and unbelief is related to the principle of salvation by grace through faith. The deliverance, the salvation, is from death to life (Jn. 5:24), and it is achieved by grace (Rom. 5:15) through faith (Jn. 3:15-18).

The Judgment upon the Believer's Works

We have seen that the unbeliever can pass out of the judgment of eternal death through believing in Christ. Once the person becomes a believer in Christ, he is never again in that danger (Jn. 5:24; 6:40; 10:27-29). However, the Bible makes it very plain that a future judgment awaits every believer. Paul told the Corinthian assembly:

"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" (2 Cor. 5:10).

The issue at that judgment is not our faith in Christ, but our *deeds* after we have come to faith. The verdict upon us will not be in the realm of eternal death or life, but the verdicts will cover a range of other possibilities. We will study this matter in more detail in future chapters.

Becoming a Child of God (Sonship)

Starting the Christian life is simply a matter of being born again as a child of God. This is a matter absolutely related to the grace principle. One of the greatest chapters in the Scripture concerning our salvation by grace, apart from works, is Chapter Three of Galatians. There we find the simplest statement of a profound truth: "For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus" (Gal. 3:26).

Growing (Maturing) as Sons of God (Discipleship)

Becoming a member of God's household (Eph. 2:19) simply involves being born into it as a son (Gal. 3:26). Today, a couple may bring a new baby home from the hospital. The start of life was fairly simple for the child. The development of that child over the maturing years, however, will not be simple. Much feeding, nurturing, training, educating, discipline, and experience will go into that process. Who can tell ahead of time exactly how the child will develop? Some will be more responsive to the efforts of their parents than others. Some will give themselves diligently to their school work, while others will hardly study or maybe even drop out. Some will be respectful and

obedient to their parents and those in authority, but others will demonstrate a rebellious attitude. Some will be generous and others will be selfish.

So it is with the children of God. Each individual will respond to the maturing process differently. Our maturation is not automatic: It requires our cooperation with the Lord (2 Pet. 1:5-10). Yes, we are to “grow in grace” (2 Pet. 3:18, KJV), but this is not positional grace, it is experiential grace. It is the grace of God’s life supplied to us by our constant seeking, dependency in faith, and cooperation with God (1 Cor. 15:10; 2 Cor. 12:8-10; Gal. 3:5; 2 Tim. 2:1; Heb. 4:16; Jas. 4:6-10; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). Perhaps someone will quote Philippians 1:6 as a “promise” that God will automatically mature us in readiness for the future day of Christ. In this verse Paul declares to the Philippian believers: “For I am confident of this very thing, that He who began a good work in you will perfect it until the day of Christ Jesus.” Professor John Hart of Moody Bible Institute states that the “good work” in this verse has an accepted interpretation other than the sanctification of the believer. Professor Hart, along with a number of other Bible teachers, point out that, according to the context, this “good work” refers to the Philippians’ participation with Paul in the work of advancing the gospel.³¹

Although every believer is equipped with God’s life within, nothing could be clearer from the New Testament than that believers vary in their degree of cooperation with God and their subsequent maturity and actions. Many are seen as “*still* fleshly” (1 Cor. 3:1-3). Some that should have progressed have not (Heb. 5:12). Some have regressed to the law (Gal. 4:9-11,21). Instead of persevering, some fail miserably (1 Tim. 1:19; 2 Tim. 4:10; Rev. 2:4-5; 3:2-3; 3:15-19). In fact, much of the exhortation and admonition in the New Testament is given precisely because the saints were *not* progressing! If the saints’ continuance in holy living were automatic, then there would have been no need for the apostles to write many convicting and prodding words! The teaching that all true believers basically continue onward and upward with God, except for an occasional slip here or there, is not in accordance with the record of God’s truth or with our experience. We all know genuine Christians who are languishing or have given themselves over to the world or the flesh. We will not examine all of the applicable Scriptures on this subject, but there is a considerable amount of good reading available on the topic.³² The point is that the maturing of a believer requires the individual’s cooperation with God.

Maturing as a Christian may also be viewed as the process of discipleship. By following Christ in obedience, we grow into His likeness. As you read the verses listed for this related matter, this view becomes clear. Discipleship involves finishing what we have begun in our Christian life (Lk. 14:26-35). Yet, this concerns our works--our doings. We must be willing to “hate” our family and even our own life (v.26). The disciple must be willing to “give up all his own possessions” (v.33). Although the Lord wants us to realize the cost of discipleship ahead of time (Lk. 14:28-29), this matter is not settled once and for all. We can be in the process of discipleship, and yet “*become* tasteless” (Lk. 14:34). Following the Lord in discipleship is not an irrevocable decision. Rather, it is a thing that we Christians must come to grips with every day as the Lord tells us: “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross *daily*, and follow Me” (Lk. 9:23). Let us be reminded, however, that we must not try to follow Christ out of our own energy. This matter of following the Lord is achieved by grace supplied by God through our seeking after it. We should be encouraged that every day, and even every hour, we can “draw near with confidence to the throne of grace, that we may receive mercy [forgiveness for our failures] and may find grace

[spiritual supply and strength] to help in time of need.” (Heb. 4:16) Our cooperation with the Lord always begins with our seeking after Him and His supply of grace. This supply of spiritual life, the life of Christ, is one we appropriate through our contact with Him in prayer, meditation on His word, and worship to Him in praise and singing. Yes, God expects us to grow up, but He generously supplies the means for us to do it if we are willing to come to Him for this supply (Gal. 3:5; Heb. 4:16).

Receiving Eternal Life

“Whoever believes may in Him have eternal life” (Jn. 3:15). “And the witness is this, that God has *given* us eternal life and this life is in His Son. He who has the Son has the life; he who does not have the Son of God does not have the life” (1 Jn. 5:11-12). When we receive Christ by faith, we receive the eternal life of God and are thus born again (Jn. 1:12-13; Jn. 3:6-7).

Eternal Life in the Coming Age

All believers already possess the eternal life of God and shall not lose it (Jn. 10:28). This life is God’s life realized in the Holy Spirit (Jn 6:63). Today, our experience of the Holy Spirit is limited, and is likened to a down payment in Scripture. “That (Spirit) is the guarantee of our inheritance--the first fruit, the pledge, and foretaste, the down payment on our heritage--in anticipation of its full redemption and our acquiring (complete) possession of it, to the praise of His glory” (Eph. 1:14, AMP). What the verses cited in the table under this matter tell us is that there awaits a *greatly increased measure* of the experience of this eternal life in the coming 1,000 year Kingdom age as a reward to those who diligently follow Christ in this age. As previously discussed, the Kingdom of Christ is characterized by the presence of eternal life. To gain entry to His Kingdom ensures us of the experience of eternal life there. To miss participation in the coming Kingdom involves missing this magnified experience of eternal life.

Election According to Grace

The verses noted here on the table show us that God chose us to participate in His plan of redemption before we were even born. This choosing is clearly a matter of grace, a gift (not works), and pertains to our position in Christ. It is related to salvation by grace through faith.

Choosing According to the Believer’s Preparation

In contrast to our election by grace is our being chosen according to our preparation. Someday, Christ will make a judgment and choose those believers who will participate in His coming Kingdom. This is not a matter of grace, but of preparation on the believer’s part. The parable of the marriage feast in Matthew 22:1-14 addresses this matter. Space does not permit a full exposition of this parable here, but the reader can find this exposition elsewhere.³³ The Kingdom of Heaven is likened to a wedding feast in the parable (v.2). God’s chosen people, the Jews, rejected the call to the Kingdom for the most part (vs. 3-6), and consequently God destroyed their city, Jerusalem (v.7). The call then went out to all (the Gentiles--Matt. 22:8-9; Acts 10; 11:17-18). When Christ returns to set up His Kingdom, He will judge all the gathered believers (Matt. 22:10-11; Matt. 16:27; Lk. 19:15; Ps. 50:3-6). That future judgment will be based upon our *deeds*, not our positional righteousness. We are clothed, initially and positionally, through Christ’s redemption, based upon *His* work (Lk. 15:22; Gal. 3:27). But *our* deeds after

conversion will be the basis of the wedding garment (Matt. 22:12). This is seen in Chapter Nineteen of Revelation where “the marriage of the Lamb has come and His bride has *made herself* ready. And it was given to her to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean, for the fine linen is the *righteous acts* of the saints” (Rev. 19:7-8). Although all born again Christians receive a call to participate in the Kingdom, depicted by the wedding feast, only a few will be qualified by having the proper garment. The others will be cast into the “outer darkness”, a region outside of the joyful feast. Sadly, the Bible records that “*many are called* [to be in the feast], but *few are chosen*” (Matt. 22:14). More will be said about the “outer darkness” in a subsequent chapter.

Entry into the Present Kingdom of God

In the parable of the two sons in Matthew 21:28-32 the Lord Jesus rebuked the chief priests and the elders (Matt. 21:23). This parable compares the submissive son to the tax-gatherers and harlots, and the rebellious son to the leaders of Israel. Jesus commended the tax-gatherers and harlots as a son doing the will of the father (v.31). Jesus stated that, accordingly, “the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into [*are getting into*-present tense, Greek] the kingdom of God before you” (v.31). What was the “will of the Father” in application to that generation? “The will of the father” was to believe John the Baptist (vs. 31-32). Entry into the present Kingdom (Col. 1:13) comes through *faith*. Therefore, Jesus pointed out that one must be as a child, coming to Him in simplicity, to receive this Kingdom and enter it (Mk. 10:13-16). When Jesus chastised the scribes and Pharisees He condemned them for not allowing people to enter the Kingdom which was then available: “But woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you shut off the kingdom of heaven from men; for you do not enter in yourselves, nor do you allow those who are entering to go in” (Matt. 23:13; see also Lk. 11:52).

Entry into the Future Kingdom of God

Although the present Kingdom of God is entered by faith, entry into the coming Kingdom of the millennium is based upon works. Some Scriptures have already been developed to show that entry into the future Kingdom realm is dependent upon the believer’s doings. In a later chapter this matter will again be taken up in more detail.

God will render a righteous judgment as to which believers will be *worthy* of participation in the coming Kingdom and which will not. The Thessalonian believers are an example of worthy ones according to the Scripture:

“And this is a cause of our mentioning you with pride among the churches (assemblies) of God for your steadfastness--your unflinching endurance and patience--and your firm faith in the midst of all the persecutions and crushing distresses and afflictions under which you are holding up. This is positive proof of the just and right judgment of God to the end that you **may be deemed deserving of His kingdom**--a plain token of His fair verdict (which designs) that you should be made and counted worthy of the kingdom of God--for the sake of which you are also suffering” (2 Thess. 1:4-5, AMP).

Heirs as Children of God

The Greek word used for “to inherit” is *kleronomeo*. *Kleronomeo* “strictly means ‘to receive a lot’ (*kleros*, ‘a lot’, *nemonai*, ‘to possess’); then, in a more general sense, ‘to

possess oneself of, to receive as one's own, to obtain".³⁴ The verb and its derived noun (inheritance) do *not* often carry our English meaning wherein one becomes an heir upon the death of a relative. The verses noted here tell of the inheritance, the possession, that we receive as believers simply by virtue of our *being* children of God. No other conditions are attached.

Fellow Heirs with Christ in His Coming Kingdom

Christ has been made "heir of all things" (Heb. 1:2). When He returns, He will set up the Kingdom on the earth and inherit (possess) it (Lk. 19:11-12; Heb. 1:6-9). We have an opportunity to be fellow heirs, co-possessors of His coming Kingdom, but such a possession is *conditional* for us. Romans 8:18-20 speaks of the glory of that coming Kingdom. These verses are preceded by Romans 8:17, which speaks of the *condition* whereby we might inherit this Kingdom. The Greek text may be rendered as follows with only a slight, permissible change in the punctuation:

" . . . and if children, then heirs--heirs of God, and joint heirs with Christ if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified together".³⁵

This rendering is by Greek professor Zane Hodges who makes these pertinent comments: "Under this rendering of the text, there are two forms of heirship. One of these is based on being children of God. The other is based on suffering with Christ. This distinction is crucial for understanding the New Testament teaching on this subject".³⁶

Christ's enduring obedience included suffering (Phil. 2:8; Heb. 5:8; 12:3). As a result, He was given the highest position by God and will rule over all (Phil. 2:9-10; Heb. 1:9; 12:2). Our sharing of His rulership will also require obedience and suffering (2 Tim. 2:12; Rev. 2:26; 3:21).

Conversely, a disobedient life will cause us to forfeit the Kingdom inheritance (1 Cor. 6:9; Gal. 5:21; Eph. 5:5). According to the context, these *warnings of disinheritance* are addressed to *Christians*, as indicated in the passages cited below.

"On the contrary *you yourselves wrong* and defraud, and that your brethren. Or do *you* not know that the *unrighteous* shall not inherit the kingdom of God? *Do not be deceived*; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, shall inherit the kingdom of God" (1 Cor. 6:8-10).

In this passage, Paul was warning the believers who *were doing* unrighteous things. He was warning them, essentially saying, "You who are practicing sin (i.e. defrauding your brother--v. 8), don't you *know*, don't you realize that persons who practice sin shall not possess the Kingdom of God"? That the Kingdom of God referred to here is the coming millennial Kingdom of Christ is proven by a later reference to the Kingdom in First Corinthians. "Then comes the end [of the 1,000 years], when He [Christ] delivers up *the kingdom* to the God and Father" (1 Cor. 15:24) (see note 11 for Chapter Two). There is a parallel passage on disinheritance in Galatians:

Now the deeds of the flesh are evident, which are: immorality, impurity, sensuality, idolatry, sorcery, enmities, strife, jealousy, outburst of

anger, disputes, dissensions, factions, envying, drunkenness, carousing, and things like these, of which I *forewarn you* just as I have forewarned you that those who practice such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God (Gal. 5:19-21).

The church in Ephesus received a similar warning:

But do not let immorality or any impurity or greed even be named *among you*, as is proper among saints; and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God (Eph. 5:3-5).

This has been a long chapter, and yet only some of the verses related to the two principles have been highlighted. This is evidence of how pervasive these principles are in the New Testament. Perhaps an illustration of the two principles will help to clarify this crucial matter in the reader's mind. Have you ever been to a nice country club for an outing? If so, the club may have had a cloak room at which to check one's hat and coat. The attendant takes your garments, gives you a check stub, and then puts away the hat and the coat. Let's imagine that, for the sake of easy retrieval, the attendant puts all the ladies' hats on one shelf and all the men's hats on another shelf. A man's hat on a lady's shelf would be out of place! These two principles are like the two shelves. There are lots of passages in the New Testament that belong on these two "shelves", but each passage needs to be placed on the proper one! Otherwise, we will get confused, even about the principles themselves! If one were to look at a shelf with both men's and women's hats on it, one might say at one time it is a shelf for men's hats, and at another time that it is a shelf for lady's hats. This has happened in the field of Bible doctrine over the centuries. Most teachers have tried to tie everything to eternal salvation. Since they see only this one shelf, the reward verses are also placed there and grace is confused. On the other hand, some have seen the matter of reward (or recompense) for Christians, but have tried to transfer the term of "grace" from the other shelf to at least partially apply to the matter of reward. Some have not allowed "scary" recompense verses to enter the cloak room at all, thinking that surely these are not "hats" belonging to Christians, but only to false believers! All of this confusion is because neither believers nor teachers have a clear view of these two very different but very important principles. And *both* principles apply to every believer.

This chapter has probably been thought-provoking for the reader. These principles help us see how balanced and wise our God is. He knows that we were helpless to save ourselves (Rom. 5:6) from the condemnation of sin, so He accomplished this for us through Christ's redemption. This is His mercy and grace. Yet, He is still a God of justice and expects men to be responsible for their actions. Thus, every man is accountable to God, and the Lord, "the righteous Judge" (2 Tim. 4:8), "will render to EVERY man according to his deeds" (Rom. 2:6). JUSTICE, not grace, will be active in the coming judgment. The principle of grace does not do away with the principle of reward for the believer. Believers are not exempted from recompense. They have received a stewardship (Lk. 19:13) and are highly responsible as God's stewards (1 Cor. 4:2; 9:17). Our life in this age is thus a *test* of our faithful stewardship and our enduring obedience. A recompense that is commensurate with the deeds in this life awaits every believer (2 Cor. 5:10). This recompense has to do with the coming

millennial Kingdom of Christ, however, and not with our salvation in eternity with God, which is secured by grace.

It is hoped that by now our reader has a greater interest in cooperating with God in light of these things. The next chapter will highlight some very significant items related to the work of the Holy Spirit in our lives to prepare us for participation in the coming Kingdom. Before reading the next chapter, therefore, why don't you take some time now to pray, asking the Lord to enlighten you and grant you grace so that you may cooperate with the work of the Holy Spirit in your life.

CHAPTER 6 - "SELL ALL THAT YOU POSSES"

We now come to a great lesson in the story of the rich young ruler, a lesson which pertains to us all, not just the rich.

We have previously learned that the Lord Jesus was truly trying to show the young man how to have eternal life in the next age. In the case of the rich young ruler, the Lord was trying to point out a fundamental problem which was keeping him from gaining entry into the coming Kingdom. It is this fundamental problem that will now be dealt with in this chapter.

Most believers think that if we could just conquer sin we would be pleasing to God. Of course, sin is a detriment to our relationship with God and can cause us to miss the Kingdom enjoyment (1 Cor. 6:9-10; Gal 5:19-21; Eph. 5:5). As respects moral matters that we normally classify as sin, however, the rich young ruler had kept these commandments (Matt. 19:17-20)!³⁷

Jesus was desirous, however, of touching another matter with this young man, something apart from the issue of sin and morality. According to the Biblical revelation, he still lacked something beyond the realm of "sin". After the man said he had kept the commandments from his youth, Jesus said to him, "One thing you still lack; sell all that you possess, and distribute it to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven, and come, follow Me" (Lk. 18:22). After the young man went away grieved, the Lord stated this great lesson of discipleship: ". . . 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" (Matt. 19:23-24). Though you may not be "rich", please do not start feeling comfortable. You will see how the problem the Lord was addressing is *seen* clearly in the rich man, but it is a problem that grips us *all*.

We must try to explore the depth of meaning of this lesson in light of the whole record of Scripture. Was the Lord simply saying that only "rich" people will have a hard time getting into the coming Kingdom? What is the problem with "riches" anyway? Put simply, the riches here represent man's self-indulgent enjoyment and preoccupation with the things of this world. Such enjoyment so occupies and usurps man that man is unable to fully follow the Lord. The Lord Jesus' requirement for the young man (beyond the moral commandments), was stated in an exceedingly simple way--just dispose of your possessions and "come, follow Me."

As believers, don't we want to "follow the Lord"? If we do, then we must learn the lesson presented here. We must come to grips with the issue of "selling all that we possess." In application, the Lord is not just dealing with rich people. Based upon this encounter, the Lord spoke of "*everyone* who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms for My name's sake" (Matt. 19:29). Houses, family

and farms do not necessarily equate with being rich, so this means the Lord broadened the principle of the “rich man” to include us all.

From the world’s perspective, a rich man has certain advantages. He seems to have a great *security*. “A rich man’s wealth is his strong city. And like a high wall in his own imagination” (Prov. 18:11). He can have a life of *ease*, *comfort*, and *pleasure* (see Lk. 12:16-19). The rich man is also accorded special *recognition* by others (Jas. 2:2-3). However, these very items (security, ease, comfort, pleasure, and recognition) are the ones that we must be willing to give up if we are to be His disciples.

The World

Beyond sin, we believers face a problem that is related to what the Bible calls “the world”. The world (*kosmos*, Greek), in the sense we are speaking of here, means the entire ordered arrangement of things in human society. Of course, sin is included within the expansive realm of the world, but the world encompasses many things that are not strictly “sin” in the moral sense. Note these words from the apostle John:

Do not love the world, nor the things in the world. If anyone loves the world, the love of the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but is from the world. And the world is passing away, and also its lusts; but the one who does the will of God abides forever. (1 Jn. 2:15-17)

This passage from First John tells us that the world system has some built-in lusts, or strong desires, that are common to men within the system. The lust of the flesh refers to the passionate desires of our bodies, and the lust of the eyes refers to the longings of the soul of man to possess and experience things seen through the eyes. The boastful pride of life is that sense of pride that springs up within man and may stem from a myriad of sources: success, talent, looks, wealth, position, family, accomplishment, nationality, etc.

Now, imagine yourself as the rich, young ruler that came to the Lord. Jesus has just told you that you need to sell all that you have and give the proceeds to the poor. What “losses” will flash through your mind? All of the opportunities to pamper and please yourself are suddenly gone. Your menu of steaks and rich foods is now replaced by beans, and you don’t even know how you will get them. All the pleasures that you enjoyed--the outings, the banquets given for friends, the sporting activities, the travel, the splendid flocks, the fine clothes--all of these are gone forever.

Finally, the recognition and attention you were accustomed to as an important person of wealth are destined to end abruptly. “The poor is hated even by his neighbor, but those who love the rich are many” (Prov. 14:20). So, we can understand that this cost was considered too great by the rich young ruler. He had wanted to inherit eternal life, but the price was too high. He went away sorrowful.

Self-denial

A comparison of two verses will demonstrate that what the Lord required of the rich man was just a specific application of the general requirement for all disciples.

Matt. 16:24

Then Jesus said to His disciples,

“If anyone wishes to come after Me,

let him deny himself, and take up his cross

and follow Me.”

Matt. 19:21

Jesus said to him,

“If you wish to be complete,

go and sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you shall have treasure in heaven;

and come, follow Me.”

Jesus was calling the rich man to discipleship, to follow Him and learn of Him. To understand what this discipleship involves, we need to look carefully at Matthew 16:24-28 to see how relevant were Christ’s words to the rich man.

²⁴ Then Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. ²⁵ For whoever wishes to save his life shall lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake shall find it. ²⁶ For what will a man be profited, if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul? ²⁷ For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will then recompense every man according to his deeds. ²⁸ Truly, I say to you, there are some of those who are standing here who shall not taste death until they see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom. (Matt. 16:24-28)

Please notice several key words in this portion of God’s word. One key word is **soul** (*psuche*) in verse 26. In the Greek, this same word appears in verse 25 translated as “life”. So the life in verse 25 refers to the same thing as the soul in verse 26. Further, the term “himself” in verse 24, although not the word *psuche*, refers to the soul also. This is proven by the parallel passage in Luke, where Luke 9:25 speaks of forfeiting “himself” but Matthew 16:26 speaks of forfeiting his “soul”.

So the three terms “himself”, “life”, and “soul” all refer to the same thing here in Matthew 16. Remember that the soul is that part of man that contains the mind, the emotion and the will of man. Thus the soul is really the very life (the inner, non-physical life) of man. One writer has stated that “the word ‘soul’ signifies, as we have said, the natural or personal life of the individual man, in the broadest sense, including all the experiences, sensations, and emotions pertaining thereto.”³⁸

Further, this passage speaks of one denying himself and taking up his cross (v. 24). Then, since verse 25 starts with an explanatory “for”, we naturally must consider such self-denial as equivalent to “losing one’s soul.” The contrast to losing one’s soul is to save it. Remember that the word for “to save,” *sozo*, means “to save, make whole, preserve from danger, loss, destruction.”³⁹

Now, let’s put these thoughts together and begin to understand this passage. Jesus is teaching concerning saving one’s soul, that is, keeping it from loss or

destruction, versus losing one's soul, that is, allowing it to suffer loss. Look at the verses that just precede this section (read Matt. 16:21-23). Here Jesus was telling His disciples that "He must go to Jerusalem and suffer" (v. 21). Peter, inspired by Satan, immediately tried to stop this! He did not want Jesus to suffer! Jesus rebuked him, declaring that Peter's mind-set was completely wrong: "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (v. 23, NKJV).

Fallen man wishes only to please his soul, doing what keeps it whole and happy, preserving it from any suffering or loss. Jesus immediately gave the needed teaching after Peter expressed the natural thought of man. Jesus taught His disciples that if anyone wished to come after Him (to really follow Him), that person must be willing to *deny* himself and take up his cross. That person must be willing to *lose his soul*. This could mean to the point of physical death, martyrdom, if need be, although that is not the explicit point here. Jesus is not teaching that every disciple must so prove himself by being a martyr. Only God's sovereign will decides who will be martyred; it is not our decision. But God wants us to be *willing* to deny ourselves so completely.

In our experience, what does it really mean to "deny ourselves", "take up the cross", and "lose our soul"? A few quotes from some insightful teachers will help us here. Watchman Nee comments:

"Let him deny himself"--Denying the self means disregarding one's self or renouncing one's privileges. To deny oneself denotes a setting aside of the self in seeking the mind of God, so that in all things he may not follow his own mind nor be self-centered. . . . "And take up his cross, and follow Me"--this is even deeper than denying the self. For self-denying is only the disregarding of self whereas taking up the cross is obeying God. To take up the cross means to accept whatever God has decided for the person and to be willing to suffer according to the will of God. By denying the self and taking up the cross we may truly follow the Lord.⁴⁰

In commenting on a parallel passage in John 12:25, Philip Mauro observes:

Loving the soul signifies indulging it in the things it craves; and hating the soul signifies depriving it of those gratifications. . . . From the above passage (John 12:25) and from other Scriptures, it clearly appears, as we have already said, that the soul of man is that part of his being which is capable of experiencing sensations arising from relations with created things--"the world". The actual functions of seeing, hearing, tasting, etc., are performed by the organs of the body; but the experiences and emotions resulting therefrom are realized in the soul.⁴¹

Watchman Nee also comments that, "To save the soul denotes gaining for oneself happiness and joy to his heart's fullest satisfaction. To lose the soul, on the other hand, speaks of losing one's joy, desire and satisfaction."⁴² Additionally, he writes the following concerning the salvation of the soul:

"Whoever shall lose his life for My sake"--This is the self-denial and cross-bearing spoken of in the preceding verse. Losing the soul is the same as denying the self. The Lord concedes that if for His sake

anyone is willing to forsake all the pleasures of the soul and to suffer according to the will of God, he will find the soul. It simply means that whoever is willing for the sake of the Lord to deny his own thoughts and desires so as not to be satisfied with the things of the world but instead to undergo much suffering, he will at another time be given by the Lord his heart desire with full blessing and joy.⁴³

Finally, Philip Mauro states: "Manifestly, the expression 'losing one's soul' is a strong figure of speech for voluntary parting with those things which delight or gratify the soul."⁴⁴

Now we can return again for a moment to the rich ruler. What was the problem that Jesus was addressing? This rich man was not willing to "lose his soul" in order to follow the Lord. He enjoyed the pleasures of this world. The pleasures he indulged himself in were not immoral things, as has already been noted. The pleasures were just "the good things of life." His refusal to give up his riches simply unveils his refusal to give up the enjoyment of this world. He was unwilling to suffer such a loss to his soul.

Let us look again at Chapter Sixteen of Matthew. "For what will a man be profited if he *gains* the whole *world*" (v. 26). "Gaining the world" is linked to 'saving the life [soul]' (v. 25). The fallen soul of man seeks its gratification in the things of this world. In this world, the earthly realm of human society, there are many attractions for man's soul. Indeed, the Bible tells us that the world itself is "outfitted", in a sense, with man's desires for gratification; these desires are built into the world system and feed upon it for satisfaction. "For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the boastful pride of life, is not from the Father, but *is from the world*. And the world is passing away, and also *its lusts*" (1 Jn. 2:16-17).

Jesus has spoken here that a man will *not* "be *profited* if he gains the whole world, and forfeits his soul" (Matt. 16:26). In other words, even if a person could somehow gain all the benefit and pleasure that could be derived from the *entire world*, this "income" of pleasure could not produce a profit for him when it is offset by the forfeiture (or loss) of his soul! Dear Christian, here is a statement we must seriously think about. What does it mean? Consider that the next verse explains it, because the next verse again starts with a connective or explanatory "for". "For the Son of Man is going to come in the glory of His Father with His angels; and will THEN RECOMPENSE every man ACCORDING TO HIS DEEDS" (v. 27).

What the Lord Jesus is telling us here in these verses (Matt. 16:24-27) is that if a believer decides to save his soul now, in this life, "he shall [future tense] lose it" (v. 25), or forfeit it, when Christ returns and renders judgment upon us according to our deeds. To lose your soul, therefore, means that your soul will suffer loss at that time. And the loss to your soul at that time will be so great that it will more than offset the pleasure your soul could have gained during your lifetime if it had been possible for you to "gain the whole world"! We are talking about the potential here of a very significant *future loss* to the *believer*. Dear Christian, we must take this word of our Lord very seriously.

The future gain for the believer ("shall find it"--future tense, v. 25), or the future loss ("shall lose it"--future tense, v. 25), according to the context, involves the Lord's recompense at His return and the coming Kingdom. A believer who denies the self (loses the soul) in this age will be rewarded with "finding his soul", that is, having his soul

experience joy, pleasure and satisfaction in the coming Kingdom age. Conversely, a believer who does not allow his soul to suffer loss in this age, will receive a recompense from the Lord that will cause his soul to suffer loss in the Kingdom age.

The recompense in verse 27 is tied to the Kingdom in verse 28, and the glory of the Kingdom is depicted in the verses that follow. Matthew 17:1-8 (cf. 2 Pet. 1:16-18) is a preview of the coming Kingdom. Notice that only the closest disciples were chosen to go with the Lord onto the Mount of Transfiguration. The transfiguration is a foreshadow of Christ in His glory during the coming age. Participation in the glories of that age is a reward, dependent upon self-denial. This is also in view in the story of the rich young ruler (see Lk. 18:24-30).

The World's Influence

We need to look further at the topic of the world and its effect upon the believer so that we can see how the Holy Spirit is trying to work in our lives. We are in the world system. If we could have God's unhindered spiritual sight, we would most certainly be amazed at how much we are unconsciously and adversely influenced by the world system around us. It is needful for us to recall that we are in a spiritual battle. Our adversary, the Devil, is "the ruler of this world [*kosmos*]" (Jn. 12:31). Further, "the whole world lies in the power of the evil one [Satan]" (1 Jn. 5:19). He is not only the ruler of the *kosmos*, but he is also termed "the god of this age [*aion*]" (2 Cor. 4:4, NKJV). The current age (*aion*) is nothing more than the present form of the *kosmos*, or world system, which takes on different forms throughout history. Satan is a terribly powerful being and the Bible depicts him as very subtle (working insidiously, secretly, or imperceptibly) (Gen. 3:1), and extremely deceitful (2 Cor. 11:3; Rev. 12:9). The Second Chapter of Ephesians shows us how, through the *kosmos*, he works in man to place man essentially under his control.

...you formerly walked according to the course [*aion*] of this world [*kosmos*], according to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that is now working in the sons of disobedience. Among them we too all formerly lived in the lusts of our flesh, indulging the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature children of wrath, even as the rest. (Eph. 2:2-3).

Although these verses speak of how all believers once lived in such a condition, as is the common lot of all unbelievers, they do not indicate that we are no longer subject to being deceived by Satan's world after conversion. The world is still an active enemy of the Christian after conversion (Jas. 4:1-10; 1 Jn. 2:15). The interesting thing in the verses cited above from Ephesians is that they show how Satan (the prince of the power of the air) exercises control over people by getting them to follow, to go along with, "the course and fashion of this world . . . under the sway of the tendency of this present age" (Eph. 2:2, AMP).

How can this be? Simply put, it is because the course of this world is designed, by Satanic forces, to appeal to the cravings within man. "Among these we as well as you once lived and conducted ourselves in the passions of the flesh--our behavior governed by our corrupted and sensual nature; obeying the impulses of the flesh and the thoughts of the mind" (Eph. 2:3, AMP). Notice that not only the lusts of the flesh are involved, but also the "thoughts of the mind". Remember how Satan worked within

Peter's mind to object to the Lord's suffering (Matt. 16:21-23). Also, Romans 12:2 admonishes us: "And do not be conformed to this world [*aion*, age], but be transformed by the renewing of your mind." Any conformity we have to the world's ways is due to our mind not having been renewed in particular matters.

Satan's goal in so using the world (*kosmos*), which is under his control, is simple. It is to keep people from knowing God, loving God, serving God, obeying God and growing in God. He uses the world to attract, distract and preoccupy people, whether believers or unbelievers, so that they will not know God or progress with God.

The Greek word for "world" is *kosmos*, which means system or organization. Satan not only employs the necessities of life, such as people, activities and things, to preoccupy man, he furthermore organizes them into numerous individual systems in order to intensify his grip upon man. The world today resembles a university, in which are many different departments, such as eating, drinking, clothing, marriage, funerals, literature, music, money and fame--more than we can enumerate. The aggregate result is a world university, occupying man with many courses. One by one, these courses enslave and possess man, causing him to completely forsake and forget God and go along with the current of the world. Man believes that he is handling and enjoying all these, but actually, without realizing Satan's deception, he has fallen into the hands of the evil one and is controlled and tricked by him. Therefore, the world denotes the enemy's scheme, system, and organization to usurp the place of God in man and finally to gain full possession of man.⁴⁵

This quote shows us that the world has many departments, much like a university. Some of the departments will fit the "taste" of some people more than others. One person may be attracted by sports while another might enjoy recreational reading. This world offers attractions and activities that suit every kind of personality.

Satan's world also contains a huge religion department, with one section carrying a Christian label. Remember that he "disguises himself as an angel of light" (2 Cor. 11:14), meaning that he can disguise his activities as "Christian."

All Christian activities must be put to the test. What is their source? Do they glorify Christ *exclusively*? Are they thoroughly Biblical? Does the Spirit bear witness? Are the activities so designed to strictly build up and nourish the spirit? I regret to tell you that my spiritual discernment convinces me that many of today's Christian activities and projects are not of the Lord. And, in respect to the point here, many "Christian" activities today, I strongly fear, are designed to appeal to the *soul* of man. These activities simply gratify the soul's natural likes and longings. In other words, these activities are helping Christians "save" (preserve) their souls today. Any such activity would be inspired by *subtle* demonic forces, working through the souls of seemingly well-meaning believers. Was not Peter, the great apostle, himself deceived (Matt. 16:23)?

The world is designed to rob God of our love. The apostle John wrote to Christians, "Stop loving the world, or the things that are in the world. If anyone persists in loving the world, there is no love of the Father in his heart" (1 Jn. 2:15, Williams). Do you feel that your love of God and Christ has waned? If so, it is probably because your

affections are on the things of this world. Our love for God is to be supreme (Lk. 10:27). We should love our families, but we must be careful that our heart loves Christ foremost. This is also a matter related to the salvation of our souls:

He who loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me; and he who loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it (Matt. 10:37-39; see also Lk. 14:26-27).

In the materialistic society of the western world, possessions and the enjoyment of amusements and recreation have become a great snare to the people of God. The majority of believers have been influenced by the "course of this world". The mind-set here is that of a "consumer" society: Get a good job so you can make lots of money. Use *your* money to buy *whatever you want* (in other words, *please your soul* --save it!). When you think of a car, don't think "transportation". Instead, think status, think power, think leather seats. *Think what will make you feel good!* Always think in terms of "moving up" to a better neighborhood and a bigger house with more amenities. Be sure to get the latest fashion, and don't neglect getting the proper name brand, especially one that can be "recognized", maybe by a distinctive logo. Now is the time to have more hobbies; this is the leisure life! Since you like sports, why not a season ticket? You can afford filet mignon now; it's your money, so forget the hamburger! **ENJOY YOURSELF!**

Dear brother or sister, is not God disgusted with this attitude? If you believe the money you earn is your money--which you can spend however you like in order to enjoy yourself--then based upon the authority of the Word of God you need to repent. The attitude of the materialistic consumer society in the western world is utterly against God's Word:

He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous *mammon*, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of *that which is another's* [namely God's], who will give you that which is your own? (Lk. 16:10-12).

"So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions" (Lk. 14:33). (Here Christ speaks of our willingness to let go of all of our possessions. This is the opposite of the attitude that wants to increase and enjoy possessions.)

Besides robbing God of our love and affection, preoccupation with the things of this world prevents us from serving God and from doing His will. This truth was taught by Jesus Himself: "No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will hold to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon" (Matt. 6:24).

God wants to meet our legitimate needs. If we, however, attempt to fulfill our lusts, seeking satisfaction in possessions and pleasures beyond our legitimate human needs, then we have been caught by Satan's world and are guilty of saving our soul. We have been deceived by the mind-set of the world. "What God allows is restricted to

natural requirement; and hence we should only seek for the supply of needs and not the gratification of lusts!"⁴⁶

Dear Christian, may I ask you to think about some questions? Why did you buy the car you now have? What influenced your decision on where to live? Do you need all the clothes that you buy? Or, did it just make you "feel good" to buy special things that just please your soul? What about your hobbies and leisure time activities? How much attention do you pay to them? How much entertainment and television do you indulge in for pleasure? Are you a great sports fan? Do you crave good novels? How much affection do you have toward the things you do in your "free time"? Are you a music lover that frequently goes to concerts? (I fear that even many "Christian" concerts may cater to the love of music rather than to the glory of God.) Do you welcome and cherish opportunities to be recognized and praised by others, thus feeding your inward pride? May God open our eyes to see how much we may be captured by the things of this world, robbing God of our love and service.

Preoccupation with Daily Affairs

Apart from the issue of pursuing the gratification of our lusts, the Bible indicates that even our involvement with things necessary to our human existence can become an entanglement to us. We all need clothes, food, houses, and jobs. Our families are also part of our fundamental human existence. Yet, these are things in the world and they can be sources of anxiety and preoccupation. To be overly involved in them is to be entangled in the world and usurped by it. Thus, we may not be able to fully love God, know God and His will, and serve God. Note the following observation:

Actually, when a believer pursues the Lord, he is seldom usurped and entangled by things beyond his living necessities. On the contrary, he is usually usurped and entangled by things that are needed for living. Therefore, when the Lord on earth called people to follow Him, He did not ask man to forsake that which exceeded his daily needs, but stressed that he should forsake the involvements of his daily life, such as parents, wives, children, lands, houses, etc. If these necessities usurp man, they seize the Lord's place in man. Of course, the Lord Jesus did not ask us to forsake our responsibility, but He desired us to relinquish the entanglements of people, activities and things. For this reason, in the Epistles, the Lord teaches us again through the Apostles that we should honor our parents, treat our wives fittingly and care for our relations, etc."⁴⁷

Therefore, we see that although the Lord warned that the rich would have difficulty in entering the Kingdom, his application of that teaching to the disciples made it clear that one must leave not only the excess riches, but even the necessities of life. Luke's gospel tells us:

And Jesus looked at him and said, "How hard it is for those who are wealthy to *enter the kingdom of God!* . . . 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 (Lk. 18:24, 29-30).

Hints for Victory in Self-denial

How do we get released from the entanglements of the world? Do we literally sell all of our possessions? Do we move away from civilization to a kind of monastic environment? Let us first be very clear concerning one thing: the biblical answer is *not* asceticism. Asceticism involves the religious self-discipline of depriving one's self of things good in themselves (food, warmth, comfort, etc.) for the sake of spiritual attainment. Paul condemned this practice as one that itself involves worldly principles!

If you died with Christ to the elementary principles of the world, why, as if you were living in the world, do you submit yourself to decrees, such as, "Do not handle, do not taste, do not touch!" (which all refer to things destined to perish with the using)--in accordance with the commandments and teachings of men? These are matters which have, to be sure, the appearance of wisdom in self-made religion and self-abasement and severe treatment of the body, but are of no value against fleshly indulgence (Col. 2:20-23).

Space does not permit us to detail here all of the spiritual helps related to disengaging the believer from the world. For this, the reader needs to consult the suggested reading list for help in Christian growth (especially *Love Not the World* by Watchman Nee). However, some observations now follow in overview.

First, we need to be continually conscious of the "world" and the "saving of the soul" as issues for us, not thinking of immorality or "sin" as the sole issue. To this end, we should study the Scriptures on this subject and pray for God to enlighten us and sensitize us. In conjunction with this, it would probably be very helpful for us to read the writings of men of God who have seen these things clearly from God's Word and from experience.

Secondly, we need to go to the Lord in prayer and deal with Him over the issue of "selling all". Jesus told us, "So therefore, no one of you can be My disciple who does not give up *all* his own possessions" (Lk. 14:33). Here, He is talking about having an attitude of releasing--inwardly letting go of--all of our possessions and relationships in order to follow Christ.

This self-denial is primarily a heart matter, a matter of willingness. He is not saying that every believer needs to literally get rid of all he owns (this would be against the record of the New Testament). However, our heart should be so willing to relinquish these things, that if the Lord speaks to us to actually dispose of some possession, we would be ready to do it. In our heart, we need to "leave" (let go of in terms of primary affection and involvement) job, house, family and material possessions in order to follow Him (Matt. 19:29). He wants our heart to be free from the entanglement of these things (2 Tim. 2:4).

We need to tell the Lord that we are willing, by His grace, to suffer loss to our soul in this age; that is, we are willing to give up the enjoyments that please our soul. We need a caution here. We must be very genuine with God and sincerely ask for His enlightenment in our life as to what needs to be dealt with. Watchman Nee comments: "But the things in which we usually take great delight are things about which we are insensitive as to our being entangled."⁴⁸

Thank God that His Word tells us that He has already dealt with the problem of the world *at the cross*. “But may it never be that I should boast, except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world” (Gal. 6:14). We need to take this word, meditate on it, and claim it every day, preferably praying it to the Lord. This truth is our release from the grip of the world and the attractions within us to it. We need to exercise our faith in the accomplished fact of what Christ did to us and the world on the cross. Remember that Luke 9:23 tells us that self-denial and bearing our cross is a *daily* matter. I believe that specific prayer is needed every day, mainly because the world is so deceptive and so easily entraps us subconsciously.

How do we know when we are being “of the world” instead of just “in the world” (Jn. 17:14-18)? There is no set of rules in the Bible as to what is “worldly” behavior or indulgence. The following comments on this subject are important:

So a serious problem faces us here. As we have said, presumably there must be a limit. Presumably God has drawn somewhere a line of demarcation. Stay within the bounds of that line and we will be safe; cross it and grave danger threatens. But where does it lie? We have to eat and drink, to marry and bring up children, to trade and to toil. How do we do so and yet remain uncontaminated? How do we mingle freely with the men and women whom God so loved as to give His Son for them, and still keep ourselves unspotted from the world?

If our Lord had limited our buying and selling to so much a month, how simple that would be! The rules would be plain for any to follow. All who spent more than a certain amount per month would be worldly Christians, and all who spent less than that amount would be unworldly.

But since our Lord has stipulated no figure, we are cast on him unceasingly. For what? I think the answer is very wonderful. Not to be tied by the rules, but that we may remain all the time within bounds of another kind: the bounds of His life. If our Lord had given us a set of rules and regulations to observe, then we could take great care to abide by these. In fact, however, our task is something far more simple and straightforward, namely, to abide in the Lord Himself. Then we could keep the law. Now we need only keep in fellowship with Him. And the joy of it is that, provided we live in close touch with God, His Holy Spirit within our hearts will always tell us when we reach the limit!⁴⁹

As we walk closely with God, we will begin to realize the Holy Spirit's subtle promptings and movings. When we start to engage in some worldly activity, begin to let pride swell up, or crave some possession that God has not desired us to have, there will arise within us an uneasiness, a certain repulsion deep within our spirit reacting against the longing of our fallen soul. It is then that we must yield to the Lord, agreeing with Him that our self must be denied and put to death. With full dependence upon Him, and not using our energies to fight the cravings, we must allow the Holy Spirit to crucify, to cut off, that longing within our soul that wants to be gratified at that moment. As we grow in Christ, we will also discover that some things of the world that used to have a strong hold on us no longer even present an inward struggle. Further, our sensitivity to the world and its entanglements is also a progressive matter:

Also, by God's sovereign arrangement, we should realize that each one of us has a different place in society. Some are well educated and may have professional jobs with good salaries, whereas others may be impoverished. God does not expect that all persons in the church should have the same standard of living. The Bible shows that believers may be rich, yet they must handle riches properly (1 Tim. 6:17-19). Each believer must learn how God wants him to live, how he should use his money, when he is being entangled by the world, and when he is being tested by God in the matter of self-denial.

One more help: God has given us His Word in order to effect a separation from the world (sanctification) within us.

I have given them Thy word; and the world has hated them, because they are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. I do not ask Thee to take them out of the world, but to keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. Sanctify them in the truth; Thy word is truth. As Thou didst send Me into the world, I also have sent them into the world. And for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they themselves also may be sanctified in truth." (Jn. 17:14-19)

We should read and meditate upon His Word every day (Matt. 4:4). The more time we prayerfully spend in the Word of God, the more opportunity God has to sanctify us from the world.

The lesson of the rich young ruler is this. He loved this world. He loved the pleasures his money afforded him; they were a delight to his soul. He made a very bad and costly decision. He decided to trade the pleasures of this world for the eternal life to be experienced in the next age. He gave up a thousand years in the glory of the coming Kingdom, even forfeiting ruling with Christ, in order to hold onto his worldly enjoyment. Dear Christian, are you making such a tragic trade? May we learn from his negative example.

Finally, I conclude with an amazing thought. As we let go of the world in our hearts and allow our souls to suffer the loss of earthly pleasures, we find, even now, that our soul has a new enjoyment! The enjoyment of the worldly things is replaced by the enjoyment of Christ! This enjoyment is the increasing experience of eternal life, in which God becomes more precious and real to us (Jn. 17:3). As a result, we feel more detached from the world, but more attached to Christ. What a glorious thing! Our foretaste of eternal life in the coming Kingdom is being deepened and expanded. Praise be to His Name!

CHAPTER 7 - THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST - PART I

The desire to obtain eternal life in the next age is what brought the rich young ruler to Jesus. You will recall that Christ identified that desire as being one to “enter into life” (Matt. 19:17), or “to enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:23). These terms were used concerning entry into the realm of the blessed Kingdom in the coming age. When and where will it be decided who will enter the Kingdom? This matter, and others, will be decided at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Our appearance at the Judgment Seat of Christ will be the most awesome event of our lives. Let us try to picture the scene from Scripture.

I kept looking until thrones were set up, and the Ancient of Days took His seat; His vesture was like white snow, and the hair of His head like pure wool. His throne was ablaze with flames, its wheels were a burning fire. A river of fire was flowing and coming out from before Him; thousands upon thousands were attending Him; and myriads upon myriads were standing before Him; the court sat, and the books were opened (Dan. 7:9-10).

This scene in Daniel Chapter Seven is connected with the end time judgments of God since the destruction of the Antichrist is mentioned in verse eleven, and since Christ, the Son of Man, is presented before the Ancient of Days to receive His Kingdom in verses 13 and 14. The same scene is presented in Chapters Four and Five of the book of Revelation. The duration of this court session may last several years as judgments are meted out upon an unrepentant earth. It is in this scene that the seventh trumpet is sounded, heralding the announcement that “The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord, and of His Christ; and He will reign forever and ever” (Rev. 11:15; compare Dan. 7:14). Immediately after this announcement the twenty-four elders who were seated on their thrones before God fall on their faces and worship God. They declare that God’s reign has begun, and then they recount the events of that general time period: “And the nations were enraged, and Thy wrath came, and the *time* came for the dead to be *judged* and the time to give their *reward* to Thy bond-servants the prophets and *to the saints* and to those who fear Thy name, the small and the great, and to destroy those who destroy the earth” (Rev. 11:18).

Chapter Seven of Daniel reveals at least two specific judgments that emanate from the court session. One is the judgment upon the “little horn” (the Antichrist). This judgment is seen in verses 11 and 26. The other judgment is that which is in favor of the saints so that they may possess the Kingdom (vs. 18, 22, 27).

It is not my desire here to try to determine precisely when and where the Judgment Seat of Christ takes place. However, I believe it does take place when He returns (Matt. 16:27; Rev. 22:12), and in the presence of the Father and His angels (Rev. 3:5). Revelation 11:18 cited above seems to confirm that the scene presented in the Seventh Chapter of Daniel and the Fourth and Fifth chapters of Revelation would include the judgment and reward of the saints. What an awesome and fearful scene we

see here! One day we will appear there. We will see God's throne as flames of fire, and a stream of fire will be flowing out from before Him. Around His throne will be other thrones (probably angelic rulers) and a myriad of angels. It is in this setting that the Scripture records, "The court sat, and the books were opened" (Dan. 7:10). The books are a record of the doings of those to be judged (compare Rev. 20:12, which is a later judgment that includes dead unbelievers). Into this courtroom comes One called the Son of Man. Unto Him all judgmental authority is given. "For not even the Father judges anyone, but He has given all judgment to the Son" (Jn. 5:22,; see also Acts 10:42; 17:31; 2 Tim 4:1). This scene, it seems, pictures the court in which we believers are to be judged one day.

The Greek word *bema* is used of Christ's Judgment Seat in Second Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10. Some teachers have argued that this word, *bema*, was used in Greek literature as a reward seat for the judge viewing contestants in the Grecian athletic games. Therefore, they say this word carries the notion of honor and reward rather than justice or judgment.⁵⁰ Thus, they conclude that at Christ's *Bema*, He will simply reward and honor the victorious runners in the Christian race. Those who do not run so well will just not receive a (positive) reward according to this view.

However, the Scripture never once uses *bema* in the setting of an athletic contest with rewards. In Matthew 27:19 Pilate sat at the judgment seat. From there he decided the life or death fates of two men, Jesus and Barabbas. In Acts 18, Gallio heard charges of wrong against Paul while seated upon the *bema* (v. 12), and Sosthenes received a beating in front of it. In Acts 12:21, Herod delivered an address to the people from the judgment seat, but since he did not give God the glory, an angel of the Lord struck him at the *bema* so that he died. In Acts 25, Paul was brought before the *bema* (vs. 6, 10, 17) for judgment, with accusers bringing charges against him, trying to get him punished. Overall, Scripture references portray the *bema* as a place of examination and true judgment. This is in agreement with the two uses of the word *bema* in connection with Christ's Judgment Seat:

But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you show contempt for your brother? For we shall all stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it is written: 'As I live, says the Lord, every knee shall bow to Me, and every tongue shall confess to God.' So then each one of us shall give account of himself to God (Rom. 14:10-12, NKJV).

"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" (2 Cor. 5:10).

There are a large number of New Testament verses related to the coming judgment of believers. Because it is our desire to avoid making this book lengthy, not all the verses will be covered nor will a detailed exposition be given. It is hoped that the reader may be stimulated into studying this subject more as he or she reads the Scriptures. Let us begin, however, to look at some of the aspects of the Judgment Seat in the light of God's Word.

At the Judgment Seat, the lives we lived as believers will be revealed for what they really were. "For we must all appear and be revealed as we are before the judgment seat of Christ" (2 Cor. 5:10, AMP). The Greek word for "appear" in this verse

carries the idea of being made manifest, open, fully revealed. This verse then continues: "that each one may be recompensed for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad." This is a summary verse concerning the Judgment Seat, indicating all that we have done will be judged. It will be helpful for us, however, to see some of the categories this judgment will include. The list below may not be inclusive.

Some Categories of Judgment

1) Our words. "But I say to you that every careless word that men shall speak, they shall render account for it in the day of judgment. For by your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned" (Matt. 12:36-37).

2) Our motives. "Therefore do not go on passing judgment before the time, but wait until the Lord comes who will both bring to light the things hidden in the darkness and disclose the motives of men's hearts; and then each one's praise will come to him from God" (1 Cor. 4:5).

3) Our stewardship of money and possessions. "He who is faithful in a very little thing is faithful also in much; and he who is unrighteous in a very little thing is unrighteous also in much. If therefore you have not been faithful in the use of unrighteous mammon, who will entrust the true riches to you? And if you have not been faithful in the use of that which is another's, who will give you that which is your own?" (Lk. 16:10-12)

4) Our stewardship of our spiritual gifts and responsibilities. (Matt. 25:14-30; Lk. 19:12-27; see comments in Chapter Five on these passages.)

5) The nature of our service. (1 Cor. 3:11-15; this matter will be addressed below.)

6) Our relationships with others. (Matt. 5:22-26; 6:14-15; 7:1-2; 18:23-35; Rom. 14:10; Jas. 5:9; more will be said about this topic in Chapter 8.)

7) Our conformity to God's holy standards. (1 Cor. 6:9-11; Gal. 5:19-21; Eph. 5:3-5)

Judgment upon the nature of our service

Item five above, the nature of our service, deserves particular comment at this juncture. The Bible records that the work Christians do to build up the body of Christ will be tested at the *Bema*. In the third chapter of First Corinthians Paul addressed this matter. He declared that he had laid the foundation of God's building in Corinth, which is Christ (1 Cor. 3:9-10). Others were then building upon that foundation. Because the Corinthian believers were exhibiting envy, strife and divisions (v. 3-4), Paul warned them to be careful in light of the coming judgment:

But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if any man builds upon the foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, each man's work will become evident; for the day will show it, because it is to be revealed with fire; and the fire itself will test the quality of each man's work. If any man's work which he has built upon it remains, he shall receive a reward. If any man's work is burned up, he shall suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire (1 Cor. 3:10b-15).

The judgment will be a testing time. The purging fires of God's judgment will test each believer's work to see of "what sort it is" (v. 13). One sort is depicted by gold, silver and precious stones, signifying that work produced by God's working in and through the believer. These materials stand the test. The other materials (wood, hay and straw) are consumed by the fire. These materials signify the fleshly, natural works of man which do not build up, such as the fleshly works of envy, strife and division noted in verses three and four.

In principle, all work done by man in the energy of the natural life, without God as its source, is fleshly and unacceptable to God, no matter how good it may appear. That was the lesson of Saul in his attack on Amalek (1 Samuel 15). Amalek represents the flesh of man impeding his progress toward the good land. God wanted the Amalekites totally destroyed, but Saul kept the best of the spoil, that which was "good", to offer to God. God utterly rejected this. God wants the totality of the old man crucified no matter how good or capable he may be (Gal. 2:20; Phil. 3:3-9). The one whose work stands the test receives a positive reward. However, "if any man's work is burned up, he shall *suffer loss*" (v.15). The exact nature of this suffering of loss is not fully defined here, so it is presumptuous of Bible teachers to say it simply means that the believer will lose all positive reward. Actually, the context contains a strong indication that the suffering of loss may involve definite punishment, since Paul continues his warning to the Corinthians in the next two verses as follows:

"Do you not know that you are a temple of God, and that the Spirit of God dwells in you? If any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him, for the temple of God is holy, and that is what you are" (1 Cor. 3:16-17).

Here Paul must still be talking about how the local church at Corinth is being built up. When Paul states that "you are a temple of God", he is speaking of the church in Corinth--all of the believers there collectively, not individually. All of the pronouns "you" in verses 16 and 17 are plural, not singular in the Greek. In verse 17, Paul goes on to warn that "if any man destroys the temple of God, God will destroy him". The word for destroy here is *phtheiro*, which means to corrupt or destroy.

Paul is warning the Corinthians that if any one of them is destroying the local church there through fleshly work, that, in turn, "God will destroy him"! W. E. Vine comments on the use of this verb in this verse as follows: "With the significance of destroying, it is used of marring a local church by leading it away from that condition of holiness of life and purity of doctrine in which it should abide, 1 Cor. 3:17 (KJV, 'defile'), and of God's retributive destruction of the offender who is guilty of this sin".⁵¹

God's destruction of the believer here may well speak of ruin to the failed disciple during the coming 1,000 year age, since in context the warning is closely connected to the matter of the Judgment Seat. It cannot speak of eternal destruction, escape from which is secured by grace. Even the Holy Scripture here gives that assurance when it declares, "he shall suffer loss, but *he himself* shall be [finally, eternally] *saved*, yet so as through fire" (1 Cor. 3:15).

We have seen by the foregoing categories of judgment that Christ's future examination of believers is very thorough. It touches our words, our motives, our stewardship of material possessions, our faithfulness in the use of our spiritual gifts, the nature of our service to God (fleshly or spiritual), our relationships with others, our

conformity to God's holy standards and, in summary, all of the deeds done in the body (2 Cor. 5:10).

Entry into the Kingdom

Next, we need to look at the most crucial determination that will be made at the *Bema*. After a believer is examined there, Christ will decide if that believer will enter the blessed, glorious realm of His 1,000 year Kingdom, or if the believer will be denied entry. Entry or exclusion to the coming Kingdom has been a dominant theme of this book. It was noted earlier that entry to that realm is the main subject matter in the story of the rich young ruler.

Let us now examine the eight portions of God's Word (not counting duplicate Gospel narratives) where the phrase "enter the kingdom" is mentioned in the New Testament. We shall see that seven of the eight portions have to do with works for entry into the Kingdom of God. These seven passages speak of entry into the future stage of the Kingdom, the millennium Kingdom. One passage only speaks of entry into the present spiritual phase of the Kingdom.

Sermon on the mount applicable to believers

The first two mentions of entry into the coming Kingdom are found in the Sermon on the Mount in Matthew. Already, a few readers may be feeling uncomfortable because you have been taught that the Sermon on the Mount is for the Jew, not the believer. Therefore, this matter must first be dealt with, or some of you will not be able to receive the lessons presented to us in this passage of Scripture. The view that claims that the Sermon on the Mount does not apply directly to believers is one that endorses an extremely rigid dispensationalist perspective. This school declares that everything before the cross was "legal" and addressed to the Jew.

Lewis Sperry Chafer, a proponent of this view, says this concerning the Sermon on the Mount: "As a rule of life, it is addressed to the Jew before the cross and to the Jew in the coming Kingdom, and is therefore not now in effect".⁵² One significant reason why Chafer and others were afraid to assign direct application of the Sermon on the Mount to the believer involves the matter of "works". They feared that grace would be mixed with law. However, as we have seen, it is necessary to separate these two principles and apply them rightly. Because these teachers did not see this distinction, and only had the believer under the grace principle, they had no way of applying the Sermon on the Mount to believers. They were honest with the context of the Sermon on the Mount and saw that the righteousness required for entry into the Kingdom (Matt. 5:20) was not imputed righteousness, but practical righteousness. Chafer commented on this works aspect of the Sermon on the Mount as follows:

All the kingdom promises to the individual are based on human merit. . . . It is a covenant of works only and the emphatic word is *do*. . . . as the individual forgives, so will he be forgiven. And except personal righteousness shall exceed the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, there shall be no entrance into the kingdom of heaven. To interpret the righteousness which is required to be the imputed righteousness of God, is to disregard the teaching of the context, . . .⁵³

To thus discount the Sermon on the Mount as not applicable to believers is itself, however, a significant problem. As theologian George Ladd has stated: "It is immediately obvious that a system which takes this greatest portion of Jesus' teaching [The Sermon on the Mount] from the Christian in direct application must receive a penetrating scrutiny".⁵⁴

The reasons why we must believe that the Sermon on the Mount is meant for Christians are as follows:

- 1) It was addressed to disciples (Matt. 5:1), learners and followers of Christ.
- 2) Jesus' teaching before the cross was not all "legal" or "law". Although the Lord was certainly teaching righteous requirements, it was not the Old Testament Law; neither was it taught to the exclusion of grace. "The law and the prophets were proclaimed *until* John; since then the gospel of the kingdom of God is preached" (Lk. 16:16). "And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence and violent men take it by force. For all the prophets and the Law prophesied *until* John" (Matt. 11:12-13). "For the Law was given through Moses; grace and truth were realized through Jesus Christ" (Jn. 1:17).
- 3) The claim that the Sermon on the Mount was for the unregenerate Jews before the cross and also for them in the Kingdom is untenable. The demand for practical righteousness in the Sermon on the Mount is higher than that presented under the Old Testament Law (Matt. 5:20-48). How could unregenerate Jews be expected to keep Jesus' elevated standards when just the Law itself was a yoke they were unable to bear (Acts 15:10)? No unregenerate person could be expected to obey the commands of the Sermon, for its requirements exceed the Law, which God had given to prove to man his inability to keep God's standard, thus revealing to man his sinfulness (Rom. 3:19-20).

L. S. Chafer says that the other application of the Sermon on the Mount, indeed the main one for him, is to show the conditions of life IN the coming millennial Kingdom among the Jews. This contention simply cannot be supported by the language in the Sermon. There is no hint that the Sermon on the Mount is a prophecy depicting life IN the coming Kingdom. To the contrary, it is clearly seen, by normal understanding, to be an admonition to live a righteous life *in order to ENTER* the coming Kingdom (Matt. 5:20; 7:21).

The verb in Matthew 5:20 is in the emphatic future negative: "For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you *shall not enter* the kingdom of heaven". Here, the living of a righteous life is seen as a condition precedent to one's entrance into the Kingdom, not as a depiction of one's living within the Kingdom.

- 4) Jesus surely anticipated that the disciples He taught and trained for the three and one-half years before the cross were going to be the very ones who would found and instruct the church. In fact, He labored all night in prayer concerning the choice of His apostles for the church (Lk. 6:12-13). That three and one-half years of teaching was not to be wasted by being only marginally applicable to the church.

Jesus did present things to His people the Jews first (Acts 3:25-26), but upon their rejection of Him, the door was then open to the Gentiles to participate with the believing Jews in the blessings of God (Rom. 11:15-17). Before the cross, and before His final rejection by the Jewish leaders, Jesus anticipated Gentile participation in the coming Kingdom (Matt. 8:10-13). The final and conclusive proof that Jesus intended the Sermon on the Mount for the church is found in the great commission at the end of Matthew's gospel (the book which contains the Sermon on the Mount):

And Jesus came up and spoke to them, saying, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of *all the nations*, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and Holy Spirit, *teaching them to observe all that I commanded you*; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt. 28:18-20). (The emphasized words show that Christ's teaching in the Sermon on the Mount is to be taught to the church, not just to Jews, and obeyed.)

Enter the Kingdom in Matt. 5:20

Now let us return to the task of looking at the eight passages explicitly using the term "enter the kingdom". The first passage is Matthew 5:20, which has already been cited. Entry into the coming Kingdom is a major theme of the Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5:20; 6:33; 7:21). A reading of the Sermon on the Mount reveals that the entire discourse entails Christ's demands of practical righteousness upon the disciple. Faith and free gift are not seen. That is because the millennial Kingdom is in view rather than eternal salvation by grace.

Much of the Sermon on the Mount deals with Christ's raising of the standard of righteousness beyond the Mosaic Law. The beatitudes touch matters of the heart that were never mentioned in the do's and don'ts of the Law (Matt. 5:3-12). It is with such qualities of character that we are to shine out our "good works" to the Father's glory (Matt. 5:16). Jesus also deals not just with the outward act of murder, but with the inner attitude of anger (Matt. 5:21-26). Additionally, the righteousness that Christ teaches goes beyond the Law's prohibition of adultery and touches the root problem of lust (Matt. 5:27-30). He uses the Old Testament standard of God relating to lawful retribution as a springboard to deal with man's inner problem of retaliation and unforgiveness (Matt. 5:38-48).

Jesus' teaching continues as He exposes man's outward piety for selfish purposes of recognition, and advises that God only rewards worship and good deeds done in secret solely for the Father's glory (Matt. 6:1-18). He warns against greed and living for the enjoyment of self in this life (Matt. 6:19-24). He deals with our anxious preoccupation with our needs at the expense of seeking God's Kingdom and His righteousness (Matt. 6:25-34). In Chapter Seven, He exposes our self-righteous and judgmental attitudes (Matt. 7:1-5). He deals with our selfish mind-set, teaching us to focus on meeting the needs of others (Matt. 7:12).

These requirements of the Sermon on the Mount are all exceedingly high. Thus, the path of discipleship that ultimately "leads to life" is narrow and constricted, and "few are those who find it." (Matt 7:14) Taking the narrow way that leads "to life" is just another way Jesus portrayed qualifications for entry into the coming Kingdom (see Matt. 19:17,23,24).

It is therefore obvious that the Sermon on the Mount focuses on a practical righteousness that exceeded the Mosaic standard. Thus, the first of our eight “entry” passages reads: “For I say to you that unless your righteousness surpasses that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall not enter the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 5:20).

Enter the Kingdom in Matt. 7:21

The second “enter the kingdom” verse is Matthew 7:21. “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.” How shall we understand this verse? According to the context, the doing of the will of the Father must include the keeping of the righteous standards set forth in the Sermon on the Mount; it must involve the walk along the narrow way that leads to life. Jesus confirms this when He states in conclusion just three verses later: “*Therefore*, everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock” (Matt. 7:24).

To do the will of the Father is to keep His commandments, especially the teachings of Jesus in the Sermon on the Mount. Again, we must note that the whole surrounding context of Matthew 7:21 is the doing of practical righteousness. Some in that day will address Christ, “Lord, Lord”. Are these false believers? “Lord” was the way Christ was addressed by His chosen apostles (Jn. 13:9, 13), and Scripture tells us that “no one can say ‘Jesus is Lord’ except by the Holy Spirit” [Of course, I am speaking of a sincere confession] (1 Cor. 12:3).

Returning to the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus highlights the possibility that the believer is genuine, but his doing of God’s will is absent. To interpret doing “the will of My Father” here as simply believing in Christ violates the principle of interpretation according to the context. Nothing in the context of the Sermon on the Mount remotely stresses trusting in Christ or the gospel. Rather, its conclusion is in hearing the words of Jesus and doing them; this is doing God the Father’s will.

Some interpreters may argue, however, that the context shows those denied entry to the Kingdom in verse 21 are false believers (professors of Christ but not possessors of the Spirit), since some are rejected by the Lord in verse 23 with the declaration, “I never knew you.” To understand this verse, let’s look carefully at verses 21-23.

²¹ 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. ²² 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?” ²³ And then I will declare to them, “I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness” (Matt. 7:21-23).

We can see in these verses a picture of the Judgment Seat of Christ. “On that day” (v.21) is the day of judgment. I believe it is clear that verse 21 and verse 22 both speak of the same scene since both verses depict people before the Lord confessing “Lord, Lord”, with Christ in turn making a judgment upon them. It is significant to note

that almost all interpreters agree that *only believers* will appear at Christ's Judgment Seat.

Verse 21 is a general statement by Jesus made as part of the conclusion of the Sermon on the Mount. Let us review the Sermon in order to see Jesus' conclusion. After so much admonition concerning doing righteousness (Matt. 5:1 through 7:12), the Lord then concludes that there are two ways for the disciple: the narrow way and the broad way. He then warns the disciple that in his search to find the narrow way there will be false prophets who will try to mislead the disciple (Matt. 7:15-20). After this warning, Jesus speaks of the coming judgment. It is at the coming judgment that the fate of those who appear before Him will be decided relative to entry into the Kingdom.

On that judgment day, people will appear before Christ and confess Him as "Lord". Christ makes a general statement in verse 21 about the judgment. He says that not everyone who confesses Him as Lord will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but he who does the will of the God the Father. This shows us that there will be two classes of those who address Him "Lord, Lord". One class will be those who do the will of God, and they will enter the Kingdom. The other class will be those who do not do the will of God, and they will not enter the Kingdom. Again, according to the context, "doing the will" must mean the carrying out of the righteous demands of God, especially as seen in the Sermon on the Mount.

This interpretation is marvelously confirmed when we study a parallel passage. Luke 6:20-49 contains Christ's discourse on the plain (Lk. 6:17). This message by Jesus mostly contains statements that are also found in the Sermon on the Mount. If you read verses 46-49 in Luke 6, you will see these as a parallel to Matthew 7:21-27. First there is the confession "Lord, Lord", and then there is Christ's teaching concerning the wise man building upon the foundation of the rock by hearing and doing Christ's words. Note how Luke 6:46 reads: "And why do you call Me, Lord, Lord, and do not do what I say" ? Therefore, "doing the will of My Father" is hearing and obeying Christ's words. In Luke 6:46 Christ reveals that some may *call* Him Lord, but not actually obey His words, *thus denying His Lordship in practice, in their living and conduct.*

"I never knew you"

Let us continue now with Matthew 7:22-23. After portraying the general judgment scene with two classes of persons saying "Lord, Lord" in verse 21, Christ reveals a more specific case in the next two verses. He states that many will confess "Lord, Lord" in that day and present to Him their *works*. Jesus rejects these persons by not only saying "I never knew you", but also by giving His criticism of their doings, characterizing them as lawlessness.

It is crucial that we really think about and come to a correct understanding of Jesus' words "I never knew you." Please take careful note of what He does not say. He does not say to them, "*You* never knew *Me*". If this faulty one appeared before Christ in the day of judgment as merely a "professor" (a person professing Christ, but with no genuine relationship with Him), it would seem the Lord would judge him by saying something like, "you claim to know Me by calling Me 'Lord, Lord', but you never really knew Me. You never had a genuine relationship with Me. Depart from Me, you unbeliever." But the Lord did not say this. Instead, He said "*I* never knew *you*". The Lord spoke from His perspective, His "knowing" of the person, rather than the person's

knowing of the Lord. Yet, actually speaking, doesn't the Lord know everyone thoroughly? Of course, He does know everyone, even the secrets of their hearts (Jn. 2:24; 1 Cor. 4:5), but He doesn't have a vital spiritual union with all people.

The answer to the puzzle lies in our understanding of the word "know" in this passage. Every sound Bible interpreter knows that a word must be interpreted according to its context. If you look up a word in the dictionary, it will usually have from two to five meanings. How does one know which meaning is intended in any instance? One must look at the context where the word is used.

The word for know in this verse is the Greek word *ginosko*. Of course, it can carry the usual meaning of "know", meaning to have knowledge of or to be acquainted with. However, this word can also mean to acknowledge or recognize in a certain sense. A standard Greek lexicon comments on the use of this word in Matthew 7:23 as follows: "*acknowledge, recognize* as that which one is or claims to be . . . *I have never recognized you* Mt. 7:23."⁵⁵

Thinking of the word in this way we can easily understand the passage. The Lord has told us in verse 21 that many will come to Him calling Him Lord, but He will deny them entry to the Kingdom because they are not those who do the will of the Father. So we see the scene again in verse 22 as those coming to Jesus, calling Him Lord and presenting their works as evidence of doing the Father's will. At that point, Christ will respond to them something like this: "You come to Me calling Me 'Lord' and claiming to be persons doing the will of the Father. I have never acknowledged you as such persons. Depart from Me; you are those who practice lawlessness."

Jesus disapproves them because He does not *recognize* them as *doers* of the Father's will. Rather, He calls them doers of "lawlessness". Then, based upon this forecast of future judgment, He tells His disciples in the next verse, "*Therefore, everyone who hears these words of Mine and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man . . .*" (Matt. 7:24).

The problem with the disapproved ones was that their works were not in accordance with the righteous principles of God, as expressed in the words of Christ. Yes, they may have prophesied, they may have cast out demons and even did some works of power. But they did these things in a way disregarding the words of Christ (or the will of God).

Perhaps they did these things to be noticed by men in violation of Matthew 6:1. Maybe they were greedy and did them for financial gain contrary to the teaching in Matthew 6:24. Some ministers love the "wages of unrighteousness" (2 Pet. 2:15) and some suppose that "godliness is a means of gain" (1 Tim. 6:5). Perhaps some did their works for the Lord Jesus with an attitude of pride ("I'm God's man"), rather than being poor in spirit (Matt. 5:3). Perhaps they simply did things for the Lord, using His name, but what they did was just according to their natural energy and talent ("wood, hay and straw"; 1 Cor. 3:12). It is possible for those who supposedly serve God to be deceived into thinking that they are doing God's will (Jas. 1:22). It is even possible for believers to be genuinely endowed with the gifts of the Holy Spirit, yet they themselves may be fleshly in their walk and use the gifts in a fleshly way. The church in Corinth is a proof of this (1 Cor. 1:7; 3:1-3; 6:7-8; 11:17-22; 13:1-3; 14:9-16; 20-28).

Watchman Nee comments on these crucial verses in Matthew 7:21-23:

Why did the Lord say, “I never knew you”? The next sentence explains: “Depart from Me, you workers of lawlessness.” Please remember that the Lord did not tell them to depart from eternal life. In the original Greek the meaning of workers of lawlessness is people who do not follow the rules, keep the law, or abide by the regulations. In the eyes of God, to do evil does not mean only to do bad things. It does not matter how much one has done; as long as he has not hearkened to God’s demand, His judgment, and His sovereign arrangements, it is evil in God’s eyes. If this word “lawlessness” were translated as “evil”, as some versions have done, many would have the ground to argue. The problem here is not a matter of doing evil, but a matter of being unprincipled. What are the principles? The principles are God’s word. But what is God’s word? God’s word is God’s will. If you are not doing the will of God, no matter what you do, the Lord Jesus would say that you are lawless. Those who do things according to their own self will have no part in the kingdom of the heavens.⁵⁶

The reward of the kingdom of the heavens is based on the obedience of man. If one is not faithful while living on the earth, though he will not lose eternal life, he will lose the kingdom of the heavens. . . . First the Lord mentioned this matter in verse 21. Following this, in verses 22 and 23, He explained the matter to us in the way of a prophesy. There will be many, not only one or two, who will not do the will of God. . . . Here the Lord Jesus tells us what will happen before the judgment seat. He says, ‘In that day.’ Hence, this does not refer to today, but to the future. There are many who work hard but do not see the light of God in their lives. When the time of judgment comes, and when Christ begins to judge from the house of God, those Christians will have light for the first time. They will see that they are off in their standing and in their living.⁵⁷

Verse 23: The Greek word for *knew* is the same as the word for *acknowledge* in Romans 7:15. There, in Romans 7:15, *I do not acknowledge* means “I do not consider [it] right.” Here, *I never knew you* may be translated “I never approved of you”; that is, “I never considered what you are doing as right.”⁵⁸

A great deal of space has been devoted to this “enter the kingdom” portion in the seventh chapter of Matthew because it is possibly the most commonly misunderstood portion in the Gospels. As a final confirmation as to the real truth presented here, here is one more lexicon’s definition of *ginosko* and two translations of Christ’s word “I never knew you”. *Ginosko*: “In the sense of to know, as being what one is or professes to be, to acknowledge, with the acc. (Matt. 7:23).”⁵⁹ “Never have I acknowledged you” (Matt. 7:23, The Emphasized New Testament: A New Translation, J. B. Rotherham). “At no time did I recognize you” (Matt. 7:23, The Four Gospels, E. V. Rieu).

Enter the Kingdom in Matt. 18:3

The third New Testament mention of “enter the kingdom” occurs in Matthew 18:3.

At that time the disciples came to Jesus and asked, "Who is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" He called a little child and had him stand among them. And He said, "I tell you the truth, unless you change and become like little children, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, whoever humbles himself like this child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 18:1-4, NIV).

There is an interesting relevant background to the disciples' question to Jesus. If one reads the parallel passages in Mark 9:33-37 and Luke 9:46-48, it will be seen that the disciples had just been having an argument among themselves concerning which one of them was the greatest! In light of this, Jesus used the opportunity to show them the character and holiness issues related to entering the future Kingdom. Robert Govett, the great teacher of the Kingdom truths in the nineteenth century, comments as follows:

The apostles inquire of Jesus, "Who then is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" There had been a strife among them which of them should be the greatest. Jesus replies, "Except ye *turn (Greek) and become as little children, ye shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven.*" xviii, 3. Is not that clear and startling? *That* to apostles! "You are inquiring which of you will get the chief place in the kingdom? I tell you, *you will not enter it at all*, unless you put away from you these ambitious jostlings, these bitter strifes with one another!" Here, methinks, is the exclusion which I teach.⁶⁰

Govett's comment on exclusion is in respect to a believer's exclusion from participation in the blessed realm of Christ's 1,000 year Kingdom. All of us who do not let the Holy Spirit put to death the prideful and ambitious contentions within will find ourselves rejected by the Lord Jesus Christ for entry into His Kingdom on the day of judgment.

Enter the Kingdom in Matt. 19:23, 24

The fourth and fifth instances of the phrase "enter the kingdom" are found in the story of the rich young ruler (Matt. 19:23-24; parallels: Mk. 10:23-25; Lk. 18:24-25). Of course, the reader is now thoroughly familiar with the emphasis of this story. The entire context of the story concerns the call to absolute discipleship. The lesson Jesus presented to His followers was that unless one is willing to sell all (give up the enjoyment of the self in this age) and follow Him, there would be no entry into the coming Kingdom. The coming Kingdom was presented as a conditional reward for those who would leave all to follow Him.

Enter the Kingdom in Mark 9:47

The sixth mention of "enter the kingdom" is found in Mark 9:47.

"If your hand causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to ENTER INTO LIFE maimed, rather than having two hands, to go to hell [literally, Gehenna], into the fire that shall never be quenched--where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off. It is better for you to ENTER LIFE lame, rather than having two feet, to be cast into hell [literally, Gehenna], into the fire that shall never be quenched--where 'their worm does not die, and

the fire is not quenched.’ And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to ENTER THE KINGDOM OF GOD with one eye, rather than having two eyes, to be cast into hell fire--where ‘their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.’ For everyone will be seasoned with fire, and every sacrifice will be seasoned with salt. Salt is good, but if the salt loses its flavor how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and have peace with one another” (Mk. 9:43-50, NKJV, emphasis added).

This fearful and amazing passage is one that I suspect most teachers of eternal security prefer to avoid! Why? Because escape from the fire is linked to dealing with sin (works), not faith in Christ. And how can *unbelievers* be expected to deal with sin in their lives? They can not be expected to since they are slaves of sin (Jn. 8:34; Rom. 6:16-20). So, this is a word to disciples, not unbelievers (Mk. 9:31,33,38). It is a word to those who already have a relationship with Christ and have the potential power to deal with sin.

This portion of God’s Word warns us that believers who are unrepentant and do not deal with sin in this life will not enter the future Kingdom of God (Mk. 9:47). This is in perfect accord with 1 Corinthians 6:9-10, Galatians 5:19-21, and Ephesians 5:5. The fire that these unrepentant believers undergo is not “hell”, which is a mistranslation. It is Gehenna, which will be discussed in the next chapter. Again we see that obedience, not grace, is the condition laid down for entry into the coming Kingdom. Dealing with sin is a serious matter with God. Where are you with the Lord on this issue?

Enter the Kingdom in John 3:5

The seventh verse to use the term “enter the kingdom” (or here, “enter into the kingdom”) is John 3:5.

Jesus answered and said to him, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” Nicodemus said to Him, “How can a man be born when he is old? He cannot enter a second time into his mother’s womb and be born, can he?” Jesus answered, “Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God” (Jn. 3:3-5).

This passage has caused difficulties for many expositors because it seems that baptism is here linked with entry into the Kingdom of God. We will not here go into the many various explanations of this passage, but just lay out a simple case for our understanding of the passage. The context is that of a ruler of the Jews, Nicodemus the Pharisee, coming to Jesus in order to learn from Him. Nicodemus believed that Jesus was a teacher from God, but came seeking to learn more. Jesus’ immediate response to his inquiry was: “Truly, truly I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.” (Jn. 3:3). Jesus was telling Nicodemus that a new birth was needed for him to perceive anything about the Kingdom of God. Jesus was here telling Nicodemus of his real need: the spiritual birth, whereby the life of God is imparted to man. It was after Nicodemus manifested perplexity at another birth that Jesus told him that he must be born of water and the Spirit. Then, Jesus went on to explain: “That which is born of the flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit.” (Jn. 3:6).

The stress in Jesus' response to Nicodemus was the matter of a spiritual birth (in the human spirit) by the Spirit of God. Jesus mentioned the matter of being born five times in verses 3-8. We interpret this birth to mean an entry into the present stage of the Kingdom of God, the invisible spiritual Kingdom (Rom. 14:17; Acts 26:18; Col. 1:13). Every Christian knows that a spiritual rebirth is needed in order to be in the Kingdom presently, and in order to "see" (perceive) the spiritual reality of such a Kingdom. A life of religious rules, such as Nicodemus kept as a Pharisee, is insufficient. There must be a new birth deep within man, in his human spirit.

The complication of this passage comes in verse five when Jesus speaks of "born of water and the Spirit." But, please note that Jesus mentions the water only once in the five references to being born in this passage. He mentions "born of the Spirit" three times. And, He seems to shorten His reference to being "born of water and the Spirit" (v. 5) to just "born of the Spirit" in verses six and eight.

It seems most natural, considering that Jesus' audience was only Nicodemus, that "water" refers to John's baptism. John had been baptizing for some time and Nicodemus was surely aware of it. It is doubtful at that point that Nicodemus had undergone John's baptism, because the Pharisees later claimed that (to their knowledge) "no one of the rulers or Pharisees has believed in Him." (Jn. 7:48) So, in Jesus' counsel to Nicodemus, He stated that John's baptism was needed for this new birth. What is John's baptism? The Scripture terms it as a "baptism of repentance" (Acts 19:4). Further, Luke tells us that John the Baptist came "preaching a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins." (Lk. 3:3). This certainly does not mean that those who were simply water baptized by John were forgiven. Only the blood of Christ can obtain forgiveness (Rom. 3:25; Eph. 1:7; Heb. 9:12-11-14, 22). No baptism can cleanse us (1 Pet. 3:21). But, John's ministry did introduce Jesus as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (Jn.1:29).

John's ministry was to "make ready the way of the Lord" (Lk. 3:4), to introduce the One who would baptize with the Holy Spirit (Lk. 3:16). "I baptized you with water for repentance, but He who is coming after me . . . He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire." (Matt. 3:11) John's ministry announced the Kingdom and told of the coming King of Israel (Matt. 3:2-3). John stated: "And I did not recognize Him, but in order that He might be manifested to Israel, I came baptizing in water." (Jn. 1:31) So, John's baptism was to produce recognition that Jesus was the promised Messiah. The Scripture records this thought again in Acts, where Paul is quoted: "And Paul said, 'John baptized with a baptism of repentance, telling the people to believe in Him, who was coming after him, that is, in Jesus.'" (Acts 19:4) So, the ministry of John's baptism was repentance – a "change of mind" – concerning Jesus. The leaders of the Jews did not accept the witness of John's ministry. "But the Pharisees and the lawyers rejected God's purpose for themselves, not having been baptized by John." (Lk. 7:30). They rejected Jesus as the Messiah, but those who received Him were given the authority to be born again. "He came unto His own and those who were His own did not receive Him. But, as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, even to **those who believe** in His name." (Jn. 1:11-12)

The conclusion is that "water" in John 3:5 really meant, to Nicodemus, that repentance was needed on his part to recognize the Messiah and his need of Messiah's salvation. Nicodemus needed to accept John's baptism, which meant he would accept Jesus as the Messiah and as the One who could take away his sins as the Lamb of God.

If he would do so, that would make the way for him to be born of the Spirit of God. Repentance in salvation is just the other side of the coin of faith. It means to have a change of mind about Jesus and our need to trust in Him alone for salvation. It means turning from every other confidence (such as the Pharisee's confidence in their keeping of the works of the Law) to trust (believe) solely in Jesus. The new spiritual birth still requires this repentance, but to believe in Jesus really includes this change of mind. In the context of salvation, repentance includes faith and faith includes repentance (Lk. 24:47; Acts 10:43; 11:17-18). The two go together not as two separate items, but as two aspects of one action.

It is at the moment of belief that we pass from death to life (Jn. 5:24; Rom. 3:26, 5:1-2). This means that we are transferred into a new realm (the Kingdom of God) by the new birth at the moment of belief. Jesus was calling Nicodemus to believe in Him as the Messiah, and Jesus stressed the matter of belief in the conversation with Nicodemus (see John 3:14-18). Therefore, the matter of "water", being baptized by John, was simply an expression of belief. "Truly I say to you that the tax-gatherers and harlots will get into [lit., are getting into] the kingdom of God before you [the chief priests and elders who rejected the baptism of John]. For John came to you in the way of righteousness and you did not believe him; but the tax-gatherers and harlots did believe him; and you, seeing this did not even feel remorse afterward so as to believe him." (Matt. 21:31b-32).

Believer's baptism follows actual belief in Christ, so **water baptism is simply an outward testimony of the inner faith and life we already possess** (1 Pet. 3:21). It is normative for baptism to immediately follow belief, and they are viewed together in the New Testament in the conversion process (Acts 8:12; 16:14-15,31-34). Entry into the spiritual Kingdom of God is gained by belief in Christ, which is accompanied by regeneration (the new birth wrought by the Spirit of God), and our belief in Christ and our new life in Christ are testified in baptism.

Enter the Kingdom in Acts 14:22

The final verse using the term "enter the kingdom" is Acts 14:22: ". . . strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, 'Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God'" (Acts 14:22).

"Through many tribulations" strongly implies faithful endurance through trials, without succumbing to the temptation to quit or turn back (see 1 Thess. 3:3). This thought is linked with the apostles' exhortation to "continue in the faith" in the same verse. Faithful endurance under hardship is a great theme in the Bible and has much to do with the reward of the coming Kingdom.

The writer to the Hebrews exhorted the wavering Hebrews to "remember the former days, when, after being enlightened you *endured* a great conflict of suffering, partly, by being made a public spectacle through reproaches and *tribulations*, . . . Therefore, do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. For you have need of *endurance*, so that when you have done the will of God, you may receive what was promised" (Heb. 10:32,33,35-36). This passage in Hebrews connects faithful endurance through tribulations to the coming reward in the Kingdom.

Also, Jesus Himself said, "No one, after putting his hand to the plow and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God" (Lk. 9:62). In summary, Acts 14:22 views entry into

the coming Kingdom as being at the end of the long path of faithful endurance through tribulations.

These eight New Testament passages using the term “enter the kingdom” do not imply simple faith. No, rather we see that they entail the following elements: practicing righteousness (Matt 5:20), doing the will of God (Matt. 7:21), dealing with pride and ambition (Matt 18:3), letting go of riches (used for self indulgence) (Matt. 19:23,24), dealing with sin in the disciple’s life (Mk. 9:47), following Christ in baptism (Jn. 3:5), and enduring faithfully through tribulations (Acts 14:22).

Therefore, entrance into the coming Kingdom is a matter of *works*, not of grace (gift). There are some teachers who feel that overcoming (victorious) Christians will rule and reign with Christ in the Kingdom, while defeated Christians will simply lose their reign, but still be in the Kingdom realm with Christ. Apparently, these teachers do not see the full extent of the coming judgment upon believers. Subconsciously, they may still be affected by the grace concept in relation to the Kingdom, thinking God will be gracious to His children so as to at least allow them to be in the blessed Kingdom realm. I truly wish they were correct, but Scripture will not allow me to agree with them. God’s justice will be exercised at Christ’s Judgment Seat and every person will be recompensed for their deeds. Christ would not be just if He gave a positive reward (participation in the glory and blessing of His Kingdom) to a believer who lived a defeated life.

After reviewing all of these requirements of obedience and endurance for Kingdom entry, the reader may be overwhelmed by the demands presented. Once again we need to be reminded that what is impossible with man is possible with God (Matt. 19:26). All of these demands reveal our need to come to Him for His supply of grace and strength. Paul stated, “I can do all things through Him who strengthens me.” (Phil. 4:13) Our source of the Christian life must be Christ Himself. In union with Him, we can overcome every obstacle, whether internal or external.

To be vitally “in Christ”, we need to daily draw near to Him with a true heart in the Word and in prayer; furthermore, we need to have “our hearts sprinkled clean from an evil conscience” (Heb. 10:22) , by sincerely confessing all of our failures. Through such daily practices we will find that we can indeed be in union with Christ and learn from Him, growing in grace. The overcoming Christian life is not that complicated or difficult if we can learn to contact Him as our source. It is exceedingly difficult, however, when we attempt to carry it out with our own energy.

Another entry into the Kingdom

Before we leave the matter of entry to the Kingdom, we should note that there is another portion in the Gospels where Jesus speaks explicitly of entry without using the exact wording “enter the kingdom”.

Then they brought little children to Him, that He might touch them, but the disciples rebuked those who brought them. But when Jesus saw it, He was greatly displeased and said to them, “Let the little children come to Me, and do not forbid them; for of such is the kingdom of God. Assuredly, I say to you, whoever does not receive the kingdom of God as a little child will by no means enter it.” He took them up in His arms, laid

His hands on them, and blessed them (Mk. 10:13-16, NKJV, see also Matt. 19:13-15 and Lk. 18:15-17).

This is an intriguing passage. It does not seem coincidental that this story of Jesus' encounter with the little children is recorded just before the story of the rich young ruler in all three of the synoptic Gospels. In both encounters (with the children and with the rich ruler), Jesus spoke of entering the Kingdom of God. However, the contrasts between the two incidents are many and instructive.

In one encounter the little children were brought to Jesus; in the other, a young man came seeking Him. In the first scene, very small children with no capability came to Him and He received them. In the second scene, a very capable, vigorous young man approaches Him. Jesus puts no demand upon the children and rebukes those who hinder them. He makes it so easy for them to come to Him and He receives them in His arms, blessing them. In contrast, to the rich young ruler, Jesus makes the encounter difficult, raising the stakes beyond the man's capability. As respects the children, the Kingdom is simply *received* at a point in time. To the rich ruler, the Kingdom will cost all that he has and includes the demand to follow Christ for a life time. In the first scene, the Lord declares that the Kingdom of God is composed of such as these simple little children. In the second scene, the Lord indicates that the Kingdom is shared only by those who have left all and followed Him.

I believe the lesson is this: The Kingdom which the "children" receive (and thus enter) is the present Kingdom (the *present stage* of the Kingdom of God). Jesus pointed out that the quality of childlikeness is needed to *receive* the Kingdom. Everyone can be like a child: simple, trusting, unconfident, even timid. Any such person, whether an actual little child or not, can simply *come to Jesus, receive* the Kingdom (as a gift), and be taken in by Him, being blessed. This is the Kingdom according to grace. Reception of this Kingdom now also guarantees us a place in the eternal Kingdom of God (Jn. 6:37-40). The children were blessed by Jesus not because of their merit; He just wanted to bless them! (Also, Jesus wanted no one to hinder such as these children from receiving the Kingdom. I fear that today some "children", literal and figurative, may be being hindered by gospel preachers who place upon the "children" requirements designed for the young ruler.)

To the ruler, on the other hand, Jesus required the highest price to be paid for the blessing of inheriting eternal life (in the age to come). This is the coming stage of the Kingdom, manifested in the millennium, granted according to works. It is not a Kingdom received, but one "purchased" at a great price. This is the Kingdom bestowed as a reward.

In these consecutive accounts of the little children and the rich young ruler, God presents to us a beautiful picture of the successive stages of the Christian life. The first stage is portrayed by the young children. Here the new birth of the believer is pictured, where one simply comes to Jesus and receives the Kingdom by receiving Jesus (Jn. 1:12; Col. 1:13). Following that, there is the call to discipleship in the believer's life. This call is pictured by the young ruler, showing a maturing one. This call to discipleship demands that the maturing one give up all to follow Christ in order to enter the future manifestation of the Kingdom. All believers are indeed children of God. But only some believers will meet the demands of total discipleship and thus be rewarded with eternal life in the millennial Kingdom.

Confession and Denial at the Judgment Seat

The Bible reveals a distinctive feature of the Judgment Seat of Christ in regard to the believer's entry or non-entry into Christ's coming Kingdom. It involves our name being confessed by Christ in approval, or us being denied by Christ in disapproval. Let's look at several New Testament passages in order to develop this concept.

Matthew 10:32-33 and Luke 12:8-9 are sister passages concerning confession and denial. These verses occur in similar contexts. Matthew 10:16-39 and Luke 12:1-12 are displayed below as the contexts of these verses.

¹⁶ "Behold, I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves; therefore be shrewd as serpents, and innocent as doves. ¹⁷ But beware of men; for they will deliver you up to the courts, and scourge you in their synagogues; ¹⁸ and you shall be brought before governors and kings for My sake, as a testimony to them and to the Gentiles. ¹⁹ But when they deliver you up, do not become anxious about how or what you will speak; for it shall be given you in that hour what you are to speak. ²⁰ For it is not you who speak, but it is the Spirit of your Father who speaks in you. ²¹ And brother will deliver up brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents, and cause them to be put to death. ²² And you will be hated by all on account of My name, but it is the one who has endured to the end who will be saved. ²³ But whenever they persecute you in this city, flee to the next; for truly I say to you, you shall not finish going through the cities of Israel, until the Son of Man comes.

²⁴ "A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a slave above his master. ²⁵ It is enough for the disciple that he become as his teacher, and the slave as his master. If they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household! ²⁶ Therefore do not fear them, for there is nothing covered that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. ²⁷ What I tell you in the darkness, speak in the light; and what you hear whispered in your ear, proclaim upon the housetops. ²⁸ And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell. ²⁹ Are not two sparrows sold for a cent? And yet not one of them will fall to the ground apart from your Father. ³⁰ But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. ³¹ Therefore do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows. ³² Everyone therefore who shall confess Me before men, I will also confess him before My Father who is in heaven. ³³ But whoever shall deny Me before men, I will also deny him before My Father who is in heaven.

³⁴ "Do not think that I came to bring peace on the earth; I did not come to bring peace, but a sword. ³⁵ For I came to set a man against his father and a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; ³⁶ and a man's enemies will be the members of his household. ³⁷ He who loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of Me. ³⁸ And he who does not take up his cross and follow after Me is not worthy of Me. ³⁹ He who has found his life shall lose it, and he who has lost his life for My sake shall find it." (Matt. 10:16-39)

¹ Under these circumstances, after so many thousands of the multitude had gathered together that they were stepping on one another, He began saying to His disciples first of all, "Beware of the leaven of the Pharisees, which is hypocrisy. ² But there is nothing covered up that will not be revealed, and hidden that will not be known. ³ Accordingly, whatever you have said in the dark shall be heard in the light, and what you have whispered in the inner rooms shall be proclaimed upon the housetops. ⁴ And I say to you, My friends, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. ⁵ But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell; yes, I tell you, fear Him! ⁶ Are not five sparrows sold for two cents? And yet not one of them is forgotten before God. ⁷ Indeed, the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Do not fear; you are of more value than many sparrows. ⁸ And I say to you, everyone who confesses Me before men, the Son of Man shall confess him also before the angels of God; ⁹ but he who denies Me before men shall be denied before the angels of God. ¹⁰ And everyone who will speak a word against the Son of Man, it shall be forgiven him; but he who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit, it shall not be forgiven him. ¹¹ And when they bring you before the synagogues and the rulers and the authorities, do not become anxious about how or what you should speak in your defense, or what you should say; ¹² for the Holy Spirit will teach you in that very hour what you ought to say." (Lk. 12:1-12)

If you read the entire Matthew passage carefully, you will see that the context reveals several things. Please note that Jesus was talking to His disciples in preparation for sending them out for ministry (Matt. 10:5). However, Christ's instructions eventually blend into a prophetic forecast for the end time (Matt. 10:17-23). That Matthew 10:17-23 is a prophecy of the end time given by Jesus is proven by the fact that the events of that passage did not take place at the time the twelve disciples went out. Also, most of the same forecast events are mentioned in Jesus' prophecy of the end time in Mark 13:9-13. In this way, Christ in His office of prophet (Deut. 18:18) followed the pattern of the Old Testament prophets. They would often speak of one event and in the same speaking foretell another event that would occur centuries later. There would be no hint, however, in their prophesying of the huge time gap between the two events (example: Isaiah prophesied of events related to Christ's first and second coming in one verse without a hint of a huge time gap: Is. 61:2).

Christ's prophecy here concerns the end time trauma of the believers. (Believers will be here during the great tribulation and during the troublesome time of birth pangs preceding it. The "rapture" debate will not be engaged here. Please note, however, that even the pre-tribulation rapturists hold that many people will become believers after the rapture event and will live on the earth during the turbulent times just before Christ's open appearing).

During the difficult end time days, believers will be delivered up to courts (Matt. 10:17), being betrayed even by their families (Matt. 10:21). At that time, they should not fear the officials of the tribunals that may kill them; rather, they should fear disobeying God (Matt. 10:28). These persecuted disciples (Matt. 10:24-25) should be faithful to take up the cross and follow Jesus (10:38), thus losing the soul (10:39). They may have

to follow Christ all the way to physical death (Matt 10:21, 28), just as Christ obeyed the Father by going to the cross.

When these disciples are before the courts (Matt. 10:17, 19), they should not fear their inquisitors (10:28, 31), because God is watching over them, acknowledging their sacrifice, even as He watches a sparrow fall to its death (10:29). Before the court they should speak by the Spirit of God (Matt. 10:20) and not fear to *confess Christ* (10:32). To confess Christ then will probably mean death, but, as a result, Christ will confess the name of such a disciple before the Father (Matt. 10:32). The disciple who endures in following Christ in this way to the end shall be saved (Matt. 10: 22), which would be the salvation of his soul (10:39) in the Kingdom, granted at the Judgment Seat.

The confession of Christ here, which is the acknowledgment by the believer that he is a follower of Christ, is just the final test of the believer's faithful endurance in obedience to Christ. The disciple will have followed Christ before that time. His testimony will eventually lead to his betrayal, and he will be brought before the court. As he stands there in that final climactic moment, he can decide to deny Christ and be spared the sentence of death, or to confess Christ and accept death.

We see, therefore, that this confession is just the final link in the chain of obedience that the disciple has forged through the days and years gone by. It signifies his utmost willingness to obey, and it testifies to his prior endurance in discipleship. If the disciple denies Christ then, however, Christ will deny him before the Father (Matt. 10:33).

The passage in Luke is generally the same. Please note, however, that the confession or denial by Christ in these verses is not "before the Father" (Matt. 10:32-33), but "before the angels of God" (Lk. 12:8-9). This change leads us to yet another passage, Revelation 3:5, where the resolution is presented, when Christ says of the overcomer in Sardis: "I will confess his name before My Father *and* before His angels." Yet, in the portion concerning the church in Sardis (Rev. 3:1-6), there is no mention of the disciple confessing Christ. What do we make of this? I believe the answer is this: The cases in Matthew 10 and Luke 12 are specific cases where disciples will be tested concerning their costly confession of Christ. If a disciple does confess Christ before such a tribunal, he will be an "overcomer", a Christian that is faithful and obedient to the end, following Christ's will for him. In Sardis, there is no specific confession by the overcoming disciple, but this Christian is one who is obedient, walking in a pure way with the Lord and thus judged worthy (Rev. 3:4). All such ones are those who heed the speaking of the Spirit (Rev. 3:6). So it seems that *obedience* is the real key to having Christ confess one's name before the Father and His angels.

Faithfulness Needed to Enter the Kingdom

With these two different cases (the singular case presented in the two Gospels and the case in Revelation) resulting in Christ's confession, it seems that we are moving toward a general principle. Such a principle was apparently formulated into a saying in the early church as recorded in Second Timothy:

It is a trustworthy statement: For if we died with Him; we shall also live with Him; *if* we endure, we shall also reign with Him; *if* we deny

Him, He also will deny us; if we are faithless, He remains faithful, for He cannot deny Himself (2 Tim. 2:11-13).

In introducing this statement in verse 10, Paul was indicating that he was enduring “all things for the sake of those who are chosen, that they also may obtain the salvation which is in Christ Jesus and with it eternal glory.” I believe the salvation referred to here is the full scope of salvation available to the believer, including the salvation of the soul to be experienced by the overcoming believer during the millennium. This interpretation is confirmed by the trustworthy statement (vs. 11-13).

The glory here (v. 10) is modified by the adjective *aionios*. To always translate this word as “eternal” is a great mistake. The word is derived from *aion* (age). Thus, it can mean “belonging to the *aion*”.⁶¹ In some cases it can mean eternity (referring to the “age” of eternity), but in many cases it means “age lasting,” in reference to the millennial age.⁶² The glory in this verse is the glory of the coming 1,000 year Kingdom age. The “trustworthy statement” (v.11) contains conditional promises. Reigning with Christ is shown to be conditional. “If we endure (following Christ in obedience), we shall also reign with Him (in His 1,000 year Kingdom)” (v.12). However, “if we deny Him (deny His ruling in our lives or refuse to confess Him), He also will deny us” (that is, not acknowledge us before the Father and His angels) (v.12).

The scene with God the Father and His angels is the scene of the Judgment Seat (Dan. 7:9-10; Rev. 4:3-5; 5:11). The Son of Man is there (Dan 7:13; Rev. 5:6-7). We will appear before Christ to be judged according to our deeds (2 Cor. 5:10), and will have to give an account (Lk. 19:15; Rom. 14:10-12). At that time, it seems, Christ will either confess our name or deny us. If He confesses our name, that means He has accounted us worthy of the Kingdom and we may enter it (Matt. 25:21; Lk. 19:17; 2 Tim. 2:12a). On the other hand, if we have not been faithful, He will deny us. That is, He will not acknowledge us as being worthy of the Kingdom. We will be denied entry into the Kingdom.

This denial is seen in Christ’s reply to those who claimed they did many things in His name: “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness’” (Matt. 7:23). In context, this scene concerns Kingdom entry (Matt. 7:21).

The denial is also seen in the case of the foolish virgins who did not gain the extra measure of oil.⁶³ “And while they were going away to make the purchase, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the wedding feast; and the door was shut. And later the other virgins also came saying, ‘Lord, Lord open up for us.’ But he answered and said, ‘Truly, I say to you, I do not know you’” (Matt. 25:10-12).

This denial is also manifested toward those who did not strive to enter by the narrow door (signifying diligent preparation for entry into the coming Kingdom): “He will say, ‘I tell you, I do not know where you are from; depart from Me, all you evildoers’” (Lk. 13:27). These rejected ones are “cast out” of the Kingdom (Lk. 13:28). These three instances give actual *words* of denial, but there are other cases in Scripture that show the *fact* of denial (i.e., Matt. 22:11-14; 25:30; Lk. 19:26).

The matter of the Judgment Seat is definitely implied in the story of the rich young ruler. Jesus’ call to the young ruler to forsake all and follow Him deals with the

issue of entering the Kingdom. It is this entry into the coming Kingdom that is of the greatest importance at the Judgment Seat of Christ.

Many may be curious to know more details. Will those believers who enter the Kingdom reign in heaven over the earth or upon the earth? Some teachers believe that the overcoming saints will reign over the earth from the New Jerusalem (termed the "Kingdom of the Heavens"), while the saved remnant of Israel and the approved surviving Gentiles (not actually "born again") will be on the earth (Matt. 25: 32-34). Other teachers see it differently.

I am not sure of these details and I will leave them for others to explore. My burden is simply to show that there is a participation in the coming glorious Kingdom that can be gained or lost by the believer. And, regardless of whether the overcoming saints are in an earthly or a heavenly part of the Kingdom, the primary aspect of this rewarding experience will be the same. **The chief characteristic of the Kingdom reward for the overcomers will be the experience of the fullness of God's life** (see Chapter Four).

Therefore, this Kingdom holds immense value and purpose for every child of God. It is the prize for which Paul ran with self-control (1 Cor. 9:24-27). It is the prize toward which he pressed (Phil. 3:14). It is also the great Sabbath rest which we must enter through diligence (Heb. 4:9,11). The great prospect of entering the Kingdom, then, should capture the attention of every believer. Our eyes should be fixed on this goal. Our daily living and our service to God should all be directed and restricted by our view of the coming judgment and the coming Kingdom. Indeed, it was these very matters that governed Paul's final charge to Timothy in the last chapter of his inspired writings (2 Tim. 4:1). May we take heed and watch ourselves, so that we may be counted "worthy of the kingdom" (2 Thess. 1:5).

CHAPTER 8 - THE JUDGMENT SEAT OF CHRIST - PART II

After His encounter with the young ruler, Jesus told His disciples about the Kingdom reward that awaits everyone who leaves houses, farms and family for His sake. But what about those believers who do not give up all to follow our Lord? What awaits them at Christ's *Bema*? We saw that they forfeit the blessing and glory of the Kingdom. However, there are some further details yet to be seen concerning this.

The Scripture also tells us of other issues, besides Kingdom exclusion, that come out of Christ's judgment of believers. We need to look at these other issues. Why? Because they are rarely ever taught, and yet they relate directly to our future welfare. Surely, we should have a desire to know the truth about our future, especially if it is significant truth. Our actions today will influence our welfare tomorrow. So please approach this chapter with prayer, an open mind, and a willingness to see what the Bible really says. "If you abide in My word, then you are truly disciples of Mine; and you shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free" (Jn. 8:31-32).

It is at the Judgment Seat where the consequences of the life we have lived as believers is decided. "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" (2 Cor. 5:10). If the deeds done were good or bad, then the appropriate recompense can be good or bad. To argue otherwise is illogical and defeats any true judgment according to works. "Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly" (Gen. 18:25)? All of the many passages in the New Testament that deal with the potential future rewards, positive and negative, can not be covered here in detail. I can introduce the reader, however, to many of these verses in this chapter in the hope that it will stimulate you to search further. It is your future.

Sharing Authority with Christ

As previously stated, the important most important characteristic of the future Kingdom for the overcoming believer will be his experience of the fullness of the life of God. A second outstanding feature for these blessed believers will be the investiture of responsibility by Christ to reign as his fellow rulers during that age. Human beings were created to be productive and to rule over God's creation (Gen. 1:26).

Those believers who have proven faithful to Christ in this age in various ways will be rewarded with rulership in the next age. We see this truth in a number of Scriptures. In Matt. 25: 21, 23 (as well as in Lk.19: 17,19) the good and faithful slaves are given authority over many things (in Luke, authority over cities). The faithful slave in Matt. 24:47 was put "in charge of all his [the master's] possessions." The martyred overcomers who refuse to worship the beast or to receive his mark also reign with Christ for 1,000 years (Rev. 20:4).

To the overcoming saints in Thyatira, the Lord Jesus promises: “And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, to him I will give authority over the nations.” (Rev. 2:26) This promise finds its fulfillment in the millennium, as do all the promises to the overcomers in the seven churches of Revelation 2 and 3. The overcomer in the church of Laodicea, who responds to the Lord’s call to abandon lukewarmness and “buy” (pay a price for) genuine spiritual experience, is similarly promised future authority: “He who overcomes, I will grant to him to sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.” (Rev. 3:21) In summary, “*If we endure, we shall also reign with Him.*” (2 Tim. 2:12)

Particularly worthy of comment under this heading are the five crowns that can potentially be awarded to believers. A crown is a symbol of one having authority, ruling over a certain kingdom. Watchman Nee comments that “a crown represents a position in the Kingdom.”⁶⁴ Each of these five crowns is awarded to a believer based upon some aspect of the believer’s faithfulness in the Christian life.

The imperishable crown

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 (1 Cor. 9:24-27).

Paul presented this crown as one to be gained only by the successful runner, not by all in the race. It is awarded on the basis of self-control, especially the keeping in control the body from which sin so easily emanates (Rom. 6:6). When Paul wrote First Corinthians, he had still not finished his “race”, which lasts our lifetime. Thus, his gaining of the crown was still uncertain; he still risked being disqualified. It was only shortly before his martyrdom that he could declare: “I have finished the course” (2 Tim. 4:7).

To live one’s life in self-control, with victory over the sinful passions of the flesh, is surely a great accomplishment worthy of a certain honor being bestowed by God. Let us be spurred by this prospect and not give in to our passions, but instead put to death the deeds of the body by the Spirit (Rom. 8:13). Of course, even as we learn the way of victory by the Spirit we will have some failures. These failures can be erased from our record through confession and the cleansing blood of the Lord Jesus. (1 Jn. 1:9)

The crown of rejoicing

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (1 Thess. 2:19, NKJV)

This crown is awarded on the basis of fruitful labor for the Lord in the lives of others. According to the context of First Thessalonians Chapter Two, this labor includes the sharing of the gospel (vs. 2,4), as well as the shepherding of others in order to prepare them for the coming Kingdom (2:7-12). Our joy in the next age will be

especially magnified if we are those who help others to know the Lord and to grow in Him.

The crown of righteousness

"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" (2 Tim. 4:8).

This crown is given to those who love His appearing. Do you yearn for the Lord's appearing, or are you indifferent? Do you watch for the Lord's appearing or is His coming just a doctrinal matter to you? Also, in context, I believe that the matter of the Lord's appearing was an incentive to Paul for righteous living and proper service (2 Tim. 4:1), and, therefore, he fought the good fight, finished the course and kept the faith (4:7). Based upon Paul's righteous living, motivated by his love of the Lord's appearing, he was assured of being awarded a crown of *righteousness* by a *righteous* Judge. What a marvelous recognition by the Lord in that Day! All who are living righteously in anticipation of His return will be awarded special position and responsibility in Jesus' Kingdom.

The crown of life

"Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, he will receive the crown of life, which the Lord promised to those who love Him" (Jas. 1:12). "Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, that you may be tested, and you will have tribulation ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life." (Rev. 2:10)

This age is an age filled with trials and tribulations (Jn. 16:33). All kinds of troubles can afflict us: sickness, the death of loved ones, poverty, dealings with difficult people and situations of all types, and even persecution for our faith. The experience of these trials could cause us to lose heart and wane in our love for the Lord and our service to Him. But, amazingly, some believers grow in their love and single-minded devotion to Him in spite of all these things. There is a coming day of reward when Christ will reward all these suffering ones who have remained steadfast. What an encouragement and incentive this should be for believers undergoing tribulation!

This crown is promised to the believer who remains faithful under trial and does not succumb to it. He loves the Lord in spite of his trial and does not become bitter. And it is his love for his Lord that keeps him faithful.

The crown of glory

Shepherd the flock of God among you, exercising oversight not under compulsion, but voluntarily, according to the will of God; and not for sordid gain, but with eagerness; nor yet as lording it over those allotted to your charge, but proving to be examples to the flock. And when the Chief Shepherd appears, you will receive the unfading crown of glory. (1 Pet. 5:2-4).

The crown of glory is a reward presented to the genuine, faithful, godly and pure shepherds of the flock. They have a pure desire to see others grow in the Lord. They

sacrifice their time, their money (Acts 20:33-35), their energy and even their lives to see believers progress with Christ. They do this out of love, and out of the Lord's will, not out of selfish desires. A special reward of glory awaits them for such a caring life. But, all of those who have claimed to be shepherds, yet do not meet these exacting requirements, will be disqualified.

D. M. Panton comments on the conditional nature of any crown's award:

That a crown may be lost to a believer is as certain as any truth in the Holy Scripture. "hold fast that which thou hast, *that no one take thy crown*" (Rev. 3:11). For crowns are rewards, not given unless the conditions are fulfilled. "If also a man contend in the games, he is NOT CROWNED, *except* he have contended lawfully" (2 Tim. 2:5). As God has made holiness the passport to the crown, so the crown is only the manifestation of the holiness. A crown is given, not at the beginning of a race, but at the end; it is the circlet of glory granted only to the successful runner; and a successful runner is an athlete who has carefully observed the regulations of the race.⁶⁵

Degree of reward in the coming Kingdom can vary. As respects crowns, some believers may be awarded one crown and others may receive several. From the parable of the minas (Lk. 19:11-27), we see that one faithful believer gained ten minas from one mina and was given authority over ten cities. Another faithful believer gained only five minas and was given authority over five cities. Also, those who are persecuted and falsely accused on account of Jesus will receive a *great* reward in the Kingdom (Matt. 5:11-12), as will those who love their enemies and do good to them (Lk. 6:35). The *great* reward is in distinction from a more common reward (Matt. 6:1-6).

The Outer Darkness

In the last chapter we saw that some believers will be denied entry to Christ's coming Kingdom. We also discussed this matter somewhat in Chapter Five under the heading, "Salvation from loss and ruin during the millennium to the enjoyment of Christ's millennial Kingdom". There, we looked at the parable of the talents (Matt. 25:14-30). In that parable we see that the lazy slave does not enter the joy of His master (i.e., the Kingdom) like the faithful slaves did (Matt. 25:21,23). Rather, the master (the Lord) judges the slothful slave by taking away his stewardship (vs. 28-30), and having him "cast out". "And cast out the worthless slave into the outer darkness, in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (v. 30).

The phrase "the outer darkness" is used three times in Scripture (Matt. 8:12; 22:13; 25:30). It seems to be implied also in Luke 13:28 where the rejected ones are "cast out" of the Kingdom. All of the four references cited depict the place of outer darkness as one where the inhabitants experience "weeping and gnashing of teeth." The Lord Jesus used this picture of being cast out into the outer darkness as an illustration of exclusion from His millennial Kingdom. G. H. Lang, one of the great expositors of the twentieth century, explains the use of this illustration and its impact on the excluded one:

A too little considered feature of the three references to "outer darkness" is that each pictures a house of feasting. . . . In Matthew 25

the lord of the house has returned thither from his journey, which is to be celebrated as a time of joy, implying a feast; it is to share this joy of their lord that the faithful servants are welcomed, whereas the unfaithful man is cast into outer darkness. In the second instance the man is bound hand and foot.

This element of the one picture really gives the clue to the interpretation, when it is remembered that in the East such a festivity usually took place at night. Staying in a native quarter in Alexandria I was on the other side of the road from a large Oriental mansion. One night the whole house was brilliantly lit, a blaze of light from every room, evidently for some special affair. By contrast the street outside and garden around were in black darkness, and nothing further was required to correspond to the term “the darkness the outer”, which term equals the darkness which is without, outside the house.

It were but an event to be expected that an Oriental despot, of royal or lesser rank, if offended with one of the slaves, should order that he be bound and thrown into the garden. There the unfortunate man, with common Eastern emotionalism, would bewail the dark and the cold, and the danger from hungry dogs and jackals, and would gnash his teeth at being deprived of the pleasures forfeited...

It is outside the kingdom of heaven when pictured as the temporary festivity at the return of the Lord of the house or as the wedding feast of the son of the house. It is marked by loss of liberty (bound hand and foot), by forfeiture of privilege (the “joy of the lord”), by decrease of knowledge (the pound withdrawn), by deprivation of service and reward (“have thou authority”). It will be healthful that these solemn elements weigh upon our minds and warn and stimulate, though where and how the realities they picture will be experienced may not be known.⁶⁶

The Judgment upon the Household Slaves

Now we come to the matter of specific negative judgments rendered to the believer at the *Bema*. I have already mentioned Kingdom exclusion and its correlative term, “outer darkness”. Beyond Kingdom exclusion, certain varying chastisements are possible for the disobedient believer. One of the clearest and most forthright passages concerning these chastisements is in Luke Chapter Twelve.

³⁵ “Be dressed in readiness, and keep your lamps alight. ³⁶ And be like men who are waiting for their master when he returns from the wedding feast, so that they may immediately open the door to him when he comes and knocks. ³⁷ Blessed are those slaves whom the master shall find on the alert when he comes; truly I say to you, that he will gird himself to serve, and have them recline at the table, and will come up and wait on them. ³⁸ Whether he comes in the second watch, or even in the third, and finds them so, blessed are those slaves. ³⁹ And be sure of this, that if the head of the house had known at what hour the thief was coming, he

would not have allowed his house to be broken into. ⁴⁰ You too, be ready; for the Son of Man is coming at an hour that you do not expect.”

⁴¹ And Peter said, “Lord, are You addressing this parable to us, or to everyone else as well?” ⁴² And the Lord said, “Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants, to give them their rations at the proper time? ⁴³ Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes. ⁴⁴ Truly I say to you, that he will put him in charge of all his possessions. ⁴⁵ But if that slave says in his heart, ‘My master will be a long time in coming,’ and begins to beat the slaves, both men and women, and to eat and drink and get drunk; ⁴⁶ the master of that slave will come on a day when he does not expect him, and at an hour he does not know, and will cut him in pieces, and assign him a place with the unbelievers. ⁴⁷ And that slave who knew his master’s will and did not get ready or act in accord with his will, shall receive many lashes, ⁴⁸ but the one who did not know it, and committed deeds worthy of a flogging will receive but few. 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” (Lk. 12:35-48).

In verse 41 Peter had inquired to whom the Lord intended to apply His parable concerning being “dressed in readiness” (Lk. 12:35-40). This parable speaks of the disciple’s need to be prepared for the Lord’s sudden return. It is important to note the story that Jesus used for the lesson. The parable involves slaves who are waiting for their master’s return. The Lord said that those slaves who were on the alert and ready for the master’s return would be blessed.

To whom, then, Peter asked in verse 41, is this matter of readiness for the master’s return addressed? In His answer, Jesus spoke of the “faithful and sensible steward” whom the master has put in charge of “his servants”. Jesus is talking about the servants of His household. We see, therefore, that Jesus’ answer to Peter’s question (v.41) picks up the same theme as the parable Jesus had just spoken: the readiness of the household slaves for their master’s return.

In verses 42-46, Jesus is addressing those in charge of the household service, that is, the leaders among the servants. So, Jesus intended this portion of His answer to apply to Peter and other leaders. After dealing with the leaders, I believe verses 47 and 48 (beginning with “And that slave . . .”) declare a general principle applying to all the servants of the household. Surely Christ’s word to be ready for His return is intended for every believer, for every “slave” in His service. So Jesus, in His reply to Peter, indicates that His word concerning readiness applies to all of the slaves of His household, but He has a particular word to the leaders concerning this matter. This is because leadership always carries a unique responsibility (Heb. 13:17).

In studying this portion of God’s Word, we should first recognize that in the New Testament God only considers believers as His slaves. Only those who belong to Him does He entrust with service to Him. Some stewards He puts “in charge” of His household service. If these leaders faithfully feed the flock (Lk. 12:42), then they will be blessed when the Lord comes and will be given great responsibility (vs. 43-44). Note, however, that verse 45 begins “but if *that* slave”. This indicates that the same slave (a leader) can either faithfully feed the flock or mistreat the flock. A second slave, a “false”

slave, is not introduced. It is the same slave, but with a different attitude. This slave is now seen as thinking his master's return is delayed (Jesus' coming again) and begins to mistreat his "fellow slaves" (Matt. 24:49). Also, he starts to eat and get drunk. This signifies his indulgence in the pleasures of this world.

Luke 12:46 graphically tells what will happen to such a leader. The Lord's return will catch him by surprise, and Christ's judgment upon him will be to "cut him in pieces and assign him a place with the unbelievers." I cannot explain to you what all of this means specifically. Please note that the word translated "unbelievers" very possibly instead means "unfaithful" here (see RV and AMP). It seems a mistake to reduce the obvious severity of the Lord's language ("cut him in pieces"--literally, cut in two) to something like a strong rebuke. I do believe the Lord's words indicate severe chastisement. If God inflicts judgmental sickness and death in this age (1 Cor. 11:28-32), then He can inflict genuine and significant chastisement upon His return. Some have attempted to explore the exact meaning and details of the Lord's judgments here, but I will not attempt to do so. The "cutting in two" may indeed be literal, but it does not have to be since the beating in verse 45 is most probably not literal.⁶⁷

Continuing on to verses 47 and 48, we see the Lord's pronouncements upon any slaves in His service, which are in relation to knowing and doing His will. The slave who knows the Lord's will and is disobedient receives "many lashes". It seems doubtful that these "lashes" are literal, but since a whipping is the illustration of the story, then the reality must also be "painful".

Also, just as "ignorance of the law" is no excuse in the human court, so ignorance of God's will is no reason for escape from chastisement in the heavenly court. The slave who is disobedient due to ignorance receives a few lashes. Why will Christ discipline the disobedient? He tells us at the end of verse 48: it is a matter of stewardship and responsibility. Slaves are responsible to their master to carry out their duties. At the *Bema*, Christ's believers are judged under the status of "slaves" (servants), not "sons".

Once again we see that preparation for the Lord's coming judgment is related to obedience to His will. Leaders must be obedient in their calling. Additionally, every Christian is responsible to know and do God's will. This word should be a real warning to us. We should be those slaves of our Lord who study God's Word and listen for His voice so that we may know His will. Then, by His grace, we should live by faith and be a doer of the Word, not a hearer only.

Gehenna

There is another series of verses that also constitutes a serious warning of possible future judgment upon disobedient believers. These we may call "Gehenna truths", because of their reference to a place termed Gehenna. I expect that almost every reader will be shocked at the idea that a judgment involving Gehenna could apply to a believer. This is not a novel interpretation, however, originated by this writer. There are several other Christian teachers that I know of who have endorsed this truth (see the endnote).⁶⁸ Gehenna is a valley situated outside of Jerusalem. G. H. Pember describes this place in his commentary on the penalties outlined in Matthew 5:22, where Gehenna is referenced:

Again, in regard to the penalties--in ordinary language, "the Judgment" and "the Council" were names given to the local Jewish Courts, which had cognizance of minor offenses, and to the Supreme Court, or Sanhedrim, at Jerusalem, respectively; while the Hell of Fire--literally, the Fiery Valley of Hinnom--indicated a prerogative of the Sanhedrim, by which they were able to order that the body of an executed criminal should be conveyed to the Valley of Hinnom, and there be cast, amid the sewage of the city and every kind of offal and corruption, into one of the numerous fires which were kept ceaselessly burning for the purpose of consuming the filth.⁶⁹

Gehenna, a fiery valley, **is a picture (an illustration) of a future severe judgment.** It seems unlikely to me that this judgment is literally carried out in the Valley of Hinnom, but only God knows for certain the actual circumstances of this judgment. We must take the picture with gravity and fear of God.

The Greek word Gehenna has its derivation from the Hebrew term Ge-Hinnom, which literally means the "valley of Hinnom." The term is derived from the Hebrew words *gay* (Strong's #1516) and *Hinnom* (Strong's #2011). Unfortunately, many English versions, but not all, translate this term into the English word "hell." This is a grave mistake in translation, since the average English reader understands hell as a place of eternal punishment for the lost. This mistranslation can easily lead the reader to a wrong exegesis of the passages containing this word.

The translators should have simply translated the word as Gehenna, or the "valley of Hinnom", since it is a geographical place. While it is true that the Jews of Jesus' time understood Gehenna to be a place of future punishment for certain persons, it is not true that this judgment was necessarily understood by them to apply strictly to the "lost" (as opposed to God's people), or that it would be eternal in duration. In the Old Testament, God used this place as a judgment only upon His people, not the nations (Jer. 7:30-33). The Biblical identity of "hell", the place which the Bible definitely describes as the final, eternal destiny of the lost, would be the "lake of fire." (Rev. 20:15)

The question arises, however: Is Gehenna equivalent to the "lake of fire" (Rev. 19:20; 20:10,14,15; 21:8)? In answering this question, the first obvious observation is: If these places are identical why would the New Testament use two different terms? We should also note that all of the New Testament Gehenna verses are directed toward God's people, either toward the disciples (believers), or toward the Jews. The "lake of fire" verses are directed toward unbelievers. Believers can be "cast into" Gehenna (Mk. 9:47). However, the Bible never explicitly says believers can be "cast into" the lake of fire. The Scripture does definitely indicate that unbelievers will be cast into the lake of fire (Matt. 25:41--cf. Rev. 20:10; 12-15).

It is important to note that rabbinical thought at Christ's time identified the judgment of Gehenna with a punishment upon sinners. In his classic work *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*, Alfred Edersheim describes for us the teachings on Gehenna in the two schools of Jewish theology that were existent in Christ's day.⁷⁰ Both schools considered Gehenna as a place of punishment. This thought was probably derived from an eschatological (end-time) extension of Jeremiah's prophecy on Gehenna (Jer. 7:30-31), or from the judgments of Gehenna that were placed upon

certain dead criminals by the Sanhedrin. Both schools viewed Gehenna as a place for certain classes of sinners (including the Jews), with one class suffering temporal punishment there and another class suffering eternal punishment.

Therefore, when Jesus spoke of the future punishment of Gehenna, this would not have been a new theological thought to His audience. Also, the minds of the hearers were conditioned to consider that such a punishment could be temporary or eternal in nature. With such a range of possibilities presented for Gehenna by the Rabbis, we must look to Jesus' usage of the term and to Scripture to truly understand the term.

New Testament references to Gehenna

The first Gehenna verse to consider is Matthew 5:22: "But I say to you that everyone who is angry with his brother shall be guilty before the court; and whoever shall say 'Raca,' shall be guilty before the supreme court [literally, the Sanhedrin]; and whoever shall say, 'You fool,;' shall be guilty enough to go into the fiery hell [literally, Gehenna]." This warning word is addressed to disciples (Matt. 5:1) in the Sermon on the Mount. Jesus was dealing with the sin of anger within us.

As a picture of governmental judgment upon such sin, Jesus used the Jewish justice system of that day. The first judgment is at the gate and is a local jurisdiction. The second judgment concerns a more serious offense, and is one handled by the Sanhedrin, the highest tribunal among the Jews. The third and gravest offense was calling someone "stupid" or a "fool", which is a more serious term of contempt than "Raca". According to the verse, this offense deserves a sentence of Gehenna, which could be passed upon a dead person's body by the Sanhedrin.

After the threats of judgment in verse 22, Jesus immediately gave the lesson of application for the disciples in verses 23 through 26. That these verses constitute the lesson is seen by the use of the word "therefore" in verse 23.

²³ If therefore you are presenting your offering at the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, ²⁴ leave your offering there before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and present your offering. ²⁵ Make friends quickly with your opponent at law while you are with him on the way, in order that your opponent may not deliver you to the judge, and the judge to the officer, and you be thrown into prison. ²⁶ Truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent. (Matt. 5:23-26)

For His Jewish audience, Jesus used the picture of presenting the offering at the altar in verse 23. This picture has its realization in the New Testament believer's experience when he comes forward to God in prayer at the throne of grace. If there the believer realizes his brother is offended with him (due to him calling him "Raca", or a "fool"), he needs to immediately leave his prayer closet and seek out his brother in order to be reconciled. Then he can return to his prayer time with God.

The lesson continues in verse 25. The "opponent" is the offended brother. The figure of being with your opponent on the way to the judge is explained by Pember:

What follows is, apparently, taken from the usual mode of procedure in Roman Law, which was, of course, supreme in Palestine in the days of our Lord. According to its provisions, a creditor might, at any time, summon his debtor to accompany him to the Magistrate's Court. While they were on their way thither, they were at liberty to come to an amicable agreement, if they could, and so to settle the business between themselves without the interference of the Law. But, as soon as they had appeared before the Judge, the matter passed out of their hands, and thenceforth both of them were subject to the decision of the Court.⁷¹

The application is simply this: We need to be reconciled with our offended brothers while we are still in this life. After death, the judgment comes (Heb. 9:27), and Christ our judge can then order us thrown "into prison" (v. 25). This casting "into prison" in verse 25 in the lesson refers back to the judgment of Gehenna in verse 22. Christ then solemnly confirms the warning: "truly I say to you, you shall not come out of there, until you have paid up the last cent" (v. 26). This verse implies that the penalty is only temporary, and the temporality of it will be confirmed by other related passages.

Brothers and sisters, this is an exceedingly serious word to us from the Lord's Sermon on the Mount. It shows that we must be very careful to clear up all offenses we have wrongly caused toward our brothers and sisters in Christ. According to this passage in Matthew Five, certain offenses will place us in danger of the Gehenna judgment, a picture of a very severe dealing by God.

Besides the sins related to anger and its ugly vented words, Christ also dealt with other sins that could cause us to be cast into Gehenna. Continuing on in Matthew Chapter Five, Jesus mentioned the sin of adultery in verse 27 and then taught that lust in the heart is its equivalent (v. 28). This sin is committed by looking upon a woman with the intention to lust for her ("looking at" differs from just "seeing"). Then Jesus declares that if this action of the eye is not severely dealt with, the penalty of Gehenna will ensue. "And if your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell [lit., Gehenna]" (Matt. 5:29, NKJV).

Jesus then continued: "And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell [lit. Gehenna]" (Matt. 5:30, NKJV). So, the lesson is the same for the sinning hand.

The portions on the sinning eye and the hand have a parallel in Matthew 18:8-9, which deals with the eye, the hand and the foot. The other parallel passage is in Mark 9:43-49. Both of these portions of Christ's teaching are addressed to disciples. Therefore, these warnings are meant for disciples of Christ ("if *your* hand"). As indicated in the last chapter, these warnings could not be to unbelieving sinners. They would have no capacity to deal with their sin. Further, a sinner is not kept out of "hell" by the *work* of putting away sin. He needs the Savior with His redeeming blood to be kept out of "hell" (meaning eternal torment).

Although the Gehenna fire cannot be quenched (Mk. 9:43), this does not mean that the sinning disciple will remain in this fiery place forever. This verse signifies that

while one is in Gehenna the fire will be unrelenting. Our destiny in eternity is a matter of grace by faith, not our dealing with sin in our lives.

The Gehenna judgment upon believers takes place during the coming millennium. This is shown by the casting into Gehenna (marginal reading, Mk. 9:43,47) being contrasted with the terms “to enter life” (Mk. 9:43) and “to enter the kingdom of God” (Mk. 9:47). We have already seen that these two latter terms speak specifically of the coming 1,000 year Kingdom of Christ (see Mk. 10:30; Lk. 18:25,29-30).

You may now be worried about how we “pluck out the eye” and “cut off” the hand. These terms signify getting rid of sin. We can deal with the root of sin before it bears fruit (an act of sin) if we, by the Spirit, are putting to death the deeds of the body (Rom. 8:13). We believe it is this experience that the Lord is primarily dealing with here. He wants us to grow in this experience. However, as long as we are in this body, we will end up sinning sometime. If we do sin, we can erase its record against us through confession and the cleansing of Jesus’ blood (1 Jn. 1:9). To repent from sinful activity and confess it is also a dealing with sin (Prov. 28:13).

The other primary Gehenna passages for believers are Matthew 10:28 and its parallel in Luke 12:5. These portions were discussed in Chapter Seven, but a few comments are made here. (If you wish to refresh your memory, read Matthew 10:16-33 and Luke 12:1-12.) Both of these passages are addressed to disciples. They involve disciples being hated by men and delivered up before courts. The Lord warns us that in such cases “a disciple is not above his teacher . . . if they have called the head of the house Beelzebul, how much more the members of his household” (Matt. 10:24-25). In other words, false accusations will be brought against the disciples at these tribunals. Although we realize these opposers will desire to put us to death (Matt. 10:21), the Lord Jesus tells us not to fear them. Rather, He explicitly warns us to *fear God* instead:

“And do not fear those who kill the body, but are unable to kill the soul; but rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell [literally, Gehenna]” (Matt. 10:28).

“And I say to you, *My friends*, do not be afraid of those who kill the body, and after that have no more that they can do. But I will warn you whom to fear: fear the One who after He has killed has authority to cast into hell [literally, Gehenna]; yes, I tell you fear Him!” (Lk. 12:4-5).

What amazing portions of the Bible these passages are. Jesus is clearly warning His followers, even His *friends*, that when they stand before the courts they should not fear those who can inflict the penalty of physical death upon them. Rather, they should have a greater fear of God, because He can “destroy” (cause to suffer ruin or loss of well-being) *both* the soul and body in Gehenna. In context, it is the specific disobedience of the disciple in denying Jesus before the men of the tribunal that apparently leads to such a judgment. How costly it will be to refuse to confess Christ before such a court! I believe the time is rapidly approaching when disciples of Christ will be so tested. May we take His grace to be faithful to Him even unto death (Rev. 2:10).

The only other verses in the New Testament using the term Gehenna are James 3:6 and Matthew 23:15,33. James 3:6 talks about the tongue set on fire by Gehenna. This verse uses Gehenna to illustrate God’s view of the damaging potential of the

tongue. It is not speaking here of a judgment for the use of the tongue, but simply using the known fiery filth of Gehenna for the purpose of an illustration.

The verses in Matthew 23 call for a more detailed explanation in order to be properly understood. These verses open a door of insight into God's judgment upon His people that probably only a few have fully understood. Therefore, it is worthwhile for us to spend some time on this matter in order to put Gehenna into complete Biblical perspective.

The primary content of Matthew 23 is Christ's strong condemnation of the Jewish leaders of His day for their personal lives and for their faulty leadership of God's people. In this context, the two verses on Gehenna appear. "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites, because you travel about on sea and land to make a proselyte; and when he becomes one, you make him twice as much a son of hell [Gehenna, marginal reading] as yourselves." (v. 23) (In other words, those who follow the practices of these leaders will also merit a Gehenna judgment.) "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell [Gehenna]?" (v. 33)

Here, the judgment of Gehenna is not addressed to believers in Christ, but to unbelieving Jews. In considering this matter, we should keep in mind that God views all persons upon this earth as belonging to one of three groups, either to the Jews, the gentiles, or the church of God (1 Cor. 10:32). Once a Jew is saved in the New Testament sense (through faith in Christ and the new birth), that person becomes part of the church of God and no longer carries the status of a Jew (Col. 3:10-11).

Judgment upon the Jews considered

Just as Christ deals with Christians at His Judgment Seat in order to determine which believers will enter His 1,000 year Kingdom, so He must also deal with the Jews. After all, it was to the Jews first that the promises of the Messianic Kingdom were made, and it was the Jews who were looking for this hope (Lk. 17:20; Acts 1:6). Recall from the discussion of the rich young ruler in Chapter Two that his hope was to have "eternal life" in the "world to come", which the exegesis in that chapter identified as the 1,000 year Kingdom of Christ. It is only logical, therefore, that Christ must render a judgment concerning which Jews will qualify to possess this Kingdom. In searching the Scriptures we will see that a number of passages bear out that such a judgment is made upon the Jews prior to the millennium.

Revelation 11:18 tells us that during the season when God's wrath falls upon the earth at the end of this age, that ". . . the time came for the dead to be judged, and the time to give their reward to Thy bond-servants the prophets and to the saints . . ." This judgment includes the Jews, as well as the New Testament saints, as we shall soon see. This verse in Revelation 11 is placed in the time frame when Christ possesses His Kingdom at the close of the age (Rev. 11:15-17).

The parallel passage in Daniel also reveals the Son of Man taking His dominion (Dan. 7:13-14). It is in the judgment scene of Daniel 7 (vs. 9-10; 13-14) that the following declaration is made: "until the Ancient of Days came, and judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom." (v.22) Also note other verses later in Daniel 7: "But the court will sit for judgment, and his [the Antichrist's] dominion will be taken away, annihilated and

destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One.” (vs. 26-27) The references to saints here must, at a minimum, include the Jews, since Daniel’s visions concern his people (Dan. 9:24; 10:14).

One of the clearest Old Testament verses concerning God’s judgment upon the Jews occurs in Daniel 12:2. Immediately before this verse, in Daniel 12:1, we are told of the end time tribulation of the Jews and the marvelous deliverance of some of them alive out of this trial. Then, the angelic messenger to Daniel foretold the judgment upon all of the dead Jews: “And many of those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting [*olam*] life, some to shame and everlasting [*olam*] contempt.” (Dan. 12:2, NKJV)

According to Daniel 12:2, then, this judgment upon the dead Jews shows a positive possibility and a negative possibility. On the positive side, this judgment upon resurrection will result in a sharing of life in the 1,000 year Kingdom age (just as New Testament believers, in possessing the Kingdom, share in eternal life in that age - Lk. 18:29,30). The word misleadingly translated “everlasting” is *olam* (which was defined somewhat in Chapter Two). The Hebrew word *olam* has a range of meanings in relation to time. The *Theological Word Book of the Old Testament* points out that *olam* is usually translated by the Greek word *aion* (age) in the Septuagint (the Greek translation of the Old Testament), and that “neither the Hebrew nor the Greek word in itself contains the idea of endlessness . . .”⁷² This work further states that, “Both words came to be used to refer to a long age or period . . .”⁷³

The New Testament also shows that only some Jews will be approved for participation in the coming Messianic Kingdom. After the Roman centurion acknowledged Christ’s divine authority, Jesus commented, “Truly I say to you, I have not found such great faith with anyone in Israel. And I say to you, that many shall come from east and west [indicating Gentiles], and recline at the table with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven; but the sons of the kingdom shall be cast out into the outer darkness; in that place there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth.” (Matt. 8:10-12) Taking into consideration that Jesus was contrasting the faith of the Gentile centurion with that of the Israelites, we must consider that the “sons of the kingdom” in this passage would refer to the Jews.

It was to the Jews that the Kingdom should belong, as promised by the prophets. However, even though certain Jews of the Old Testament era (such as Abraham, Isaac and Jacob who are mentioned in the verse above) would be in the Kingdom according to Jesus, there will be some Jews that will be cast out into the outer darkness (outside the glory of the Kingdom). So just as we see a parallel to the New Testament saints in Daniel, which shows that approved Jews possess the Kingdom, so we also see a parallel of disapproved Jews being cast into the “outer darkness”, as are some disapproved Christians (Matt. 22:12-13; 25:26-30).

With the groundwork laid above, we can now explain the matter of the Gehenna judgment upon certain Jews in Matthew 23:33. This judgment is a further Jewish parallel to a Gehenna judgment upon believers. You will recall that believers can be cast into Gehenna for certain sins, and this judgment should be viewed as a more severe judgment than “outer darkness.” The sins of the Jewish leaders in Matthew 23 were so offensive to Jesus that He indicated that they were worthy of the severe

judgment of Gehenna. In Matthew 23:14 the Lord Jesus warned that these scribes and Pharisees would receive "greater condemnation."

Let us summarize these thoughts on the Gehenna judgment. The Old Testament mention of the valley of Hinnom shows that it was a place of judgment upon God's people, not the nations, who rebelled against Him (Jer. 7:30-34). Also, the Sanhedrin used this valley in Jesus' day to carry out a punishment upon the worst criminals of Jewish society. Jesus used this very term to point to a future judgment upon Jewish leaders who lived hypocritical lives and misled others (Matt. 23:13-36). For such condemnable actions, Jesus declared to them: "You serpents, you brood of vipers, how shall you escape the sentence of hell [literally, Gehenna]?" (Matt. 23:33) This judgment will be given when the Lord Jesus judges His people in order to decide which ones are worthy of possessing His future earthly Kingdom (Dan. 7:18, 22) and inheriting age-lasting life therein (Dan. 12:2).

Similarly, Jesus used this term to warn His New Testament believers concerning dealing with certain flagrant sins in their lives, and contrasted this judgment with "entering life" (Mk. 9:43) and entering "the kingdom of God." (Mk. 9:47) It seems, therefore, that this judgment is a most serious judgment of Christ upon His disobedient people and involves a chastisement during the millennial age. This may be the most negative judgment Scripture reveals for believers under the principle of reward according to works. However, another judgment, "the blackness of darkness" [literal translation for 2 Pet. 2:17 and Jude 13], appears to be a very severe judgment for apostate Christian teachers. This "blackness of darkness" judgment may be even worse than the Gehenna judgment. This severe judgment is discussed by Gary Whipple in his book, *Shock and Surprise Beyond the Rapture*.

God wants us to have pure lives, which requires dealing with all sin. If we refuse to repent, confess and deal with sin, we may face Gehenna in the next age. If we deny Christ before men, particularly at the public tribunals where we may be summoned to suffer death for His Name, we may also be denied by Him and judged with Gehenna.

The Forgiveness of Sins

Christ's judgment of the saints at His *Bema* will be according to their works. Good deeds will receive a positive reward, whereas bad deeds will receive a negative reward. Some may perhaps object to the possibility of negative reward on the ground that Christ's death on the cross was the place where all sins were judged by God.

Once a person accepts Christ as his Savior, his substitute to die in his stead for sin (Rom. 5:8; 1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18), should that person then have to suffer in any way for his sin? To answer questions of this type requires us to be balanced and to accept all of the Biblical truth. One of the important subjects in the Scripture that will help us balance out our views concerning God's dealing with the sins of the believer is the matter of forgiveness.

Two Greek words are predominately used in the New Testament both for God's forgiveness of man and for man's forgiveness of man. One verb is *aphiemi* and the other verb is *charizomai*. *Aphiemi* fundamentally means "to send forth, send away" and is used in the New Testament of remitting or forgiving debts or sins.⁷⁴ *Charizomai* most

commonly in the New Testament means “to pardon, to graciously remit a person’s sin.”⁷⁵ Some preachers like to use the term “to release” as an equivalent.

As believers in Christ, God has forgiven us, released us from the just penalty due for our sins. What is that penalty? The penalty for man’s sins is spiritual death, eternal separation from God (“the wages of sin is death”; Rom.6:23). The Bible assures us that those who believe in Christ will not suffer the judgment of eternal death, but through Christ have passed out of death into life (Jn. 5:24; 3:16). We shall never come under this penalty of eternal spiritual death because Christ suffered death in our stead (1 Pet. 2:24; 3:18). This forgiveness has its basis in the blood of Christ (His death on the cross). “In Him we have redemption, through His blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses, according to the riches of His grace” (Eph. 1:7).

We should rightly stress that there is an “eternal forgiveness” that all believers in Christ possess. Such eternal forgiveness is ours by virtue of our union with Christ. This is “positional truth”, as it shows what we possess due to our position in Christ. This truth assures us that **all** of our sins **have already been forgiven** in Christ (Eph. 1:7; Col. 2:13). We are never in danger of losing this eternal forgiveness.

However, there is more than one type of forgiveness in the New Testament. Watchman Nee describes four types of forgiveness in *Love One Another*. He calls them eternal forgiveness, borrowed forgiveness, communional (fellowship) forgiveness and governmental forgiveness⁷⁶. Nee defines “borrowed forgiveness” as the forgiveness that the church acknowledges and grants in accordance with the Holy Spirit (Jn. 20:22-23). The term fellowship forgiveness will be covered below. Governmental forgiveness deals with God’s administration upon our lives and circumstances, and may include His chastening of us after we have confessed our sin. We will discuss this forgiveness more below.

The Bible clearly shows us that even though the forgiven sinner is released from the *eternal penalty* for sin, this does not mean that he cannot suffer some temporal, lesser penalties for sins he commits after being born again. Let’s look at some examples from Scripture.

Ananias and Sapphira were part of the community of faith. When they lied about the sale price of their land, God killed them for this sin, and, as a result, “great fear came upon the whole church” (Acts 5:11). In Corinth, believers were judged by God with sickness and death because they were improperly relating to the body of Christ and the Lord’s Supper (1 Cor. 11:18-32). The Bible warns us that God disciplines us and scourges His wayward sons (Heb. 12:5-11). We have also seen from many Scriptures how, at Christ’s Judgment Seat, believers will suffer in the next age due to disobedience and unfaithfulness in this lifetime. Thus, we can conclude that God’s forgiveness in redemption (our eternal forgiveness) does *not* preclude Him from inflicting temporal penalties (prior to the arrival of eternity after the millennium) upon believers for disobedience. In eternity, there will be no more discipline upon believers.

One must see the distinction between those truths that speak of our position in Christ and those that speak of our experience under God’s government. Otherwise, we will be confused about forgiveness. A great Plymouth Brethren writer, C. H. Mackintosh, had this to say to someone who wrote to him about passages that dealt with God’s governmental hand:

These, and numberless other Scriptures in the Old Testament, as well as many similar passages in the New Testament, unfold to us the deeply important subject of God's moral government. Now, to be merely a subject of God's government is one thing; to be a subject of His unchangeable grace is another. We should never confound them. To elaborate this point, and to refer to the various passages which illustrate and enforce it, would demand a volume: we would here only add our full persuasion that no one can understand the Word of God who does not accurately distinguish between man under government and man under grace. In the one case he is looked at as walking down here, in the place of responsibility and danger; in the other, he is looked at as associated with Christ above, in the place of inalienable privilege and eternal security.⁷⁷

The verses below demonstrate that there is a type of post-regenerational forgiveness that is *conditional* (if the believer confesses, or if the believer forgives those who offend him, then forgiveness is granted to him by God).

"And forgive us our debts, as we also forgive our debtors" (Matt. 6:12, part of the "Lord's prayer" taught to the disciples).

"And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions." (Mk. 11:25)

"If we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn. 1:9)

Do these verses mean that if the believer does not fulfill these conditions he then stands under God's eternal condemnation? No, because these verses are not dealing with our eternal forgiveness, but with other aspects of forgiveness.

Aspects of forgiveness

To understand this conditional forgiveness, we must learn more about forgiveness. A contemporary author, Wendell E. Miller, sees forgiveness somewhat differently than Watchman Nee. Miller views forgiveness only as "judicial" or "fellowship" forgiveness. His insights are helpful, although I believe his thoughts should be complemented by the views of forgiveness outlined by Watchman Nee. In his book entitled, *Forgiveness: The Power and the Puzzles*, Miller categorizes man's forgiveness by God into four kinds:

Initial judicial forgiveness -- release from the penalty of sins committed **before** saving faith and justification -- dependent upon saving faith

Initial fellowship forgiveness -- release from alienation of fellowship caused by sins committed **before** saving faith and justification -- also dependent upon saving faith

Repetitive judicial forgiveness -- release from the penalty of sins committed **after** saving faith and justification -- unconditional (*dependent only upon the faithfulness of our Advocate, Jesus Christ*)

Repetitive fellowship forgiveness -- release from alienation of fellowship by sins committed **after** justification -- dependent upon our confession of our sins⁷⁸

Admittedly, Scripture does not describe forgiveness with labels such as “judicial” and “fellowship”. Yet, the conclusion of many Bible students is that there seems to be one aspect (or category) of forgiveness that deals with the believer’s eternal and positional standing before God and another aspect that seems related to our experience of temporal fellowship with Him.

Wendell Miller sees God’s “judicial forgiveness” of sins as a release from the penalty of sin. This judicial forgiveness is initially granted to the unsaved sinner at the moment of belief. According to Miller, judicial forgiveness is thereafter kept vitally effective for us on a repetitive basis by Jesus Christ as our Advocate and High Priest. Some may disagree with Miller on the repetitive nature of judicial forgiveness, seeing it more as a matter accomplished once for all by the work of the cross, and completely applied to the believer at the moment of initial faith. In any case, I believe Miller sees the eternal aspect, and only views the repetitive nature of judicial forgiveness as the *application in time* of an eternal reality.

Christ is seen as our Advocate (*parakletos*, Greek) in First John 2:1: “My little children, I am writing these things to you that you may not sin. And if anyone sins, we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous.” Miller points out that the only condition here for Christ’s work of advocacy is our sin. As our Advocate, Christ is our legal representative presenting our case before the Father. Whenever we sin, He applies continuing judicial forgiveness for us based upon His work on the cross.

Christ’s function of advocacy for forgiveness in First John is essentially the same as His priestly work in Hebrews where He is the mediator of the New Covenant (Heb. 8:6), which guarantees God’s forgiveness of our sins (Heb. 8:12). In Romans, Christ is also portrayed as the One who maintains our eternal, positional justification by His action of intercession at the right hand of God (Rom. 8:33-34).

How grateful and full of praise we should be to our Lord Jesus for His ministry of intercession on our behalf, keeping our eternal relationship with God the Father secure! Yet, when we sin we do realize that there is a genuine problem in our fellowship with God. In the first chapter of First John, the apostle John emphasizes this experience of fellowship and tells us how sin breaks it: “If we say we have fellowship with Him and yet walk in the darkness [sin], we lie and do not practice the truth” (1 Jn. 1:6). Importantly, John goes on to tell us how to restore this broken fellowship: “If we *confess* our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness” (1 Jn. 1:9).

God’s forgiveness in 1John 1:9 is termed by Miller as “repetitive fellowship forgiveness.” This forgiveness by God is described by Miller as God’s release from “alienation of fellowship.” We see, therefore, the importance of a believer’s confession

of his sins. The Greek word for confess is *homologeō* which literally means “to speak the same thing.”⁷⁹ When God says something we have done is sin, then we need to agree with Him, to speak the same thing. In other words, what God judges as sin in our life, we must agree by also judging it as sin. This certainly means that we are repentant concerning that particular sin. Once we confess, God is faithful to forgive us. Although God’s forgiveness is based solely upon the blood of Christ, this fellowship forgiveness is obtained through our confession.

Since this matter of confessing our sins is so important, we need to learn more concerning God’s speaking to us about our sins. Firstly, we should recognize that God’s speaking to us about our sins is based upon His Word. The Bible is the “language” God uses to speak to us. This is why First John 1:10 says: “If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar, and His word is not in us.” This verse means that we may reject the truth of God’s Word as respects our sin. If we do this, we can enter a stage of self-deception (1 Jn. 1:8). Therefore, our real need is to spend time in God’s Word so that we can know the Lord and His truth. Then we will be able to understand His speaking to us in the conviction of sin. Biblical knowledge helps make our conscience properly sensitive to sin (1 Cor. 8:7; Heb. 4:12-13).

God’s conviction of sin is always specific. God speaks to us about a particular sin, and it is that sin that we must confess in order to receive forgiveness and cleansing. Blanket prayers such as “Lord, pardon and forgive us our sins” are of no avail and are unscriptural. We need to be persons in the Word of God and persons truly seeking God’s conviction. Then we will know when we have sinned.

Sometimes our conscience may feel uneasy and yet we simply cannot put our finger on any specific sin. Even when we ask God, we do not get a revelation of the problem. This may be the accusation of Satan, to which we can reply, “Who will bring a charge against God’s elect? God is the one who justifies” (Rom. 8:33). We can stand on the justification provided by Christ’s blood. Another remedy in such a situation may be to pray as David did, when he prayed: “Who can understand his errors? Cleanse me from secret faults” (Ps. 19:12, NKJV). Such a sincere prayer can help restore our sense of peace with God.

It is important that we understand what is accomplished through confession and what is not. First John 1:9 says that “if we confess our sins, He is faithful and righteous to forgive us our sins *and* to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” Firstly, due to our confession God can release us from the alienation that our sin causes in our fellowship with a holy God. Confession restores the fellowship. Secondly, He cleanses away the stain caused by the defilement of our sin.

Although we may subjectively feel the “stain” of our unrighteous actions, it is God’s view of this stain upon the “garment” (Jude 1:23; Rev. 3:4) of our conduct that is the real concern here. The stain of sin upon us is seen by a holy God and hinders our fellowship with Him. Our action of repentance and confession is our part of the cleansing process, and, once cleansed by God, we can again have true fellowship with Him (2 Cor. 6:16-7:1; Heb. 9:22; 10:22; Jas. 4:8).

There is another benefit of this cleansing, however, that appears to point to Christ’s evaluation of us at His Judgment Seat. When speaking of the coming day of the Lord, Peter admonished the recipients of his letter: “Since all these things are to be

destroyed in this way, what sort of people ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the day of God . . . Therefore, beloved, since you look for these things, be *diligent to be found by Him* in peace, *spotless*, and blameless . . .”(2 Pet. 3:11, 14). The Greek word here for spotless is *aspilos*, which is used figuratively in these verses for moral conduct.

When Christ returns and we are summoned to His Bema, how can we be found by Him spotless? Surely, throughout our earthly experience as a believer we have many times had our “garment *spotted* by the flesh” (Jude 1:23, KJV), when we yielded to the lusts of our flesh. Also, there have been times when we loved the world and indulged ourselves in its pleasures, rather than obeying God’s command “to keep oneself *unstained* by the world.” (Jas. 1:27) How can these spots and stains be washed away? The way to be found spotless by Christ at His coming is to confess our sins now. If we confess our sins, agreeing with God’s condemnation of them, then He will “*cleanse* us from all unrighteousness.”(1 Jn. 1:9)

Later in his first epistle, the apostle John specifically urges us to be cleansed in preparation for the Lord’s appearing: “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. And everyone who has this hope fixed on Him purifies [cleanses] himself, just as He is pure.”(1 Jn. 3:2,3) We believe, therefore, that sins which are repented of and confessed now will not be judged with a specific negative judgment at Christ’s Judgment Seat.⁸⁰ Conversely, if we do not confess our sins now, these sins will be manifested at the Bema and recompensed (1 Tim. 5:24; 2 Cor. 5:10). These ideas will be confirmed when we review some principles from Ezekiel later in this chapter.

From the comments above, we can realize that there is much benefit for us in the confession of our sins. Yet, we must understand that such confession does not resolve all the problems that our sins create for us. God’s governmental action may fall upon us.

Governmental forgiveness

In *Love One Another*, Watchman Nee gives an illustration of God’s governmental dealing with us. He tells a parable of a young girl who stole food from a kitchen cabinet while her mother was away. When confronted by her mother, the girl confessed her disobedience and asked for forgiveness. The mother grants the forgiveness and kisses the girl. Fellowship is restored. However, due to the disobedience the mother changes her way of doing things. The next time she leaves the house she locks the cabinet. This action on the mother’s part constitutes a change in her way with the girl. Nee explains further:

What is government? Government is a way. God’s government is God’s way, God’s administration. The mother may forgive the girl’s sin and restore their fellowship, but next time she will lock both the cupboard and the kitchen doors when she goes out. In other words, she has changed her way. To restore fellowship is easy, but to restore the way is not so easy. The mother is afraid that her daughter may do it again. She cannot give the daughter full liberty but has to put on some restraints. Her way has changed. Remember, God treats us a similar manner. Communion

forgiveness is relatively easy to get. He who sincerely confesses his sin will have his fellowship restored. At the moment he confesses his sin, God restores fellowship with him. It may be that God's discipline will immediately come upon him; God may not give him as much liberty as he enjoyed before.

Again, another day may come when God removes His disciplinary hand – and this we call governmental forgiveness. In the case of the mother, this would mean that the day comes when she feels her daughter is now dependable, so she leaves the doors unlocked. This is governmental forgiveness.⁸¹

Confession does not necessarily remove from us the consequences of our sins. For example, if a Christian commits a crime he may be imprisoned. God is not obligated to miraculously release such a believer from prison just because he confesses his sin. God's governmental hand will most likely allow such a one to reap what he has sowed (Gal. 6:7) In *Love One Another*, Watchman Nee describes certain verses as expressly dealing with God's governmental forgiveness: Matt. 9:2, 5-6; Jas. 5:15 and Matt. 6:14-15; 18:21-35.⁸² He indicates that other passages also, however, are related to the matter of God's governmental dealing (such as the passage in Galatians chapter six noted above).

Consider David's sin with Bathsheeba. When Nathan the prophet confronted David regarding his sins in this matter (2 Sam. 12:1-13), David was truly repentant and his confession recorded in Psalm 51 is one of the great Bible passages on confession and repentance. Yet, even *after* David's confession the Lord spoke through Nathan of a negative penalty that God had determined appropriate for that situation: "Then David said to Nathan, 'I have sinned against the Lord.' And Nathan said to David, 'The Lord also has taken away your sin; you shall not die. However, because by this deed you have given occasion to the enemies of the Lord to blaspheme, the child also that is born to you shall surely die'" (2 Sam. 12:13-14). Notice that Nathan assured David that there was forgiveness from God, and, hence, David would not die.

God's governmental action upon David also included a declaration from God that "the sword shall never depart from your house, because you have despised Me and have taken the wife of Uriah the Hittite to be your wife." (2 Sam. 12:10). Additionally, the Lord said that evil would arise from David's own household and shame him in the sight of all (v. 11-12). This was fulfilled by his son, Absalom. All of these disciplinary actions were God's governmental hand upon David for his sin, in spite of David's confession and restoration of fellowship with God.

Finally, it should be noted that although no specific negative judgment should befall us at Christ's Judgment Seat for confessed sins, we could still experience a loss of positive rewards that potentially could have been gained if we had proven faithful.

Aside from the need of confession in order to receive forgiveness, it is very interesting that God has another requirement in order for us to receive His forgiveness. We must forgive others before God can forgive us. The forgiveness God grants upon our forgiveness of others may be fellowship forgiveness, and also may include governmental forgiveness. Note the following Scriptures:

"Forgive and you will be forgiven." (Lk. 6:37, NKJV)

“And forgive us our debts as we also have forgiven our debtors.” (Matt. 6:12)

“And whenever you stand praying, forgive, if you have anything against anyone; so that your Father also who is in heaven may forgive you your transgressions. But if you do not forgive; neither will your Father who is in heaven forgive your transgressions.” (Mk. 11:25,26)

In his book, *Forgiveness: The Power and the Puzzles*, Wendell Miller describes two types of forgiveness that relate to the believer's forgiveness of others. Here are his summary comments:

Vertical forgiveness -- unconditional release to God through prayer of the offended believer's supposed right to get even -- release of the penalty that he might want to inflict on the offender

Horizontal forgiveness -- conditional (*dependent upon repentance of the offender*) release from alienation caused by the offender's offense

Vertical forgiveness is upward in direction -- man unconditionally (*without the necessity of the offender's repentance*) releases to God whatever penalty he might want to inflict, or might erroneously think that he has a right to inflict, on the offender.

Horizontal forgiveness is horizontal in direction -- in response to the offender's repentance, the offended person grants forgiveness to the offender - releasing him from the alienation caused by his offense. . . .

Fellowship with God is dependent upon the faithful obedience to God's commands -- practicing both vertical forgiveness and horizontal forgiveness.⁸³

The importance of our willingness to forgive others

Vertical forgiveness is seen in Mark 11:25 and horizontal forgiveness is seen in Luke 17:3. Our concern here, however, is not the study of these two types of forgiveness, but rather how God's forgiveness is predicated upon our willingness to forgive others. In this regard, let us look at the parable on forgiveness in Matthew 18:21-35:

²¹ Then Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” ²² Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven. ²³ For this reason the kingdom of heaven may be compared to a certain king who wished to settle accounts with his slaves. ²⁴ And when he had begun to settle them, there was brought to him one who owed him ten thousand talents. ²⁵ But since he did not have the means to repay, his lord commanded him to be sold, along with his wife and children and all that he had, and repayment to be made. ²⁶ The slave therefore falling down, prostrated himself before him, saying ‘Have patience with me, and I will repay you everything.’ ²⁷ And the lord of that

slave felt compassion and released him and forgave him the debt.²⁸ But that slave went out and found one of his fellow slaves who owed him a hundred denarii; and he seized him and began to choke him, saying, 'Pay back what you owe.'²⁹ So his fellow slave fell down and began to entreat him, saying, 'Have patience with me and I will repay you.'³⁰ He was unwilling however, but went and threw him in prison until he should pay back what was owed.³¹ So when his fellow slaves saw what had happened, they were deeply grieved and came and reported to their lord all that had happened.³² Then summoning him, his lord said to him, 'You wicked slave, I forgave you all that debt because you entreated me.'³³ Should you not also have had mercy on your fellow slave, even as I had mercy on you?'³⁴ And his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him.³⁵ So shall My heavenly Father also do to you, if each of you does not forgive his brother from your heart."

Here Jesus was plainly teaching Peter that forgiven sinners should forgive their offending brothers. In verses 32 and 33, the lord (Christ) of the slave (the believer) called the slave to account as respects his unforgiveness. This may picture Christ calling us to account at the *Bema*. The temporal judgment that follows may be represent Christ's judgment at the Judgment Seat. On the other hand, if certain details of the parable are not pressed, the judgment may apply during this life. Since the slave had no mercy on the fellow slave, "his lord, moved with anger, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him" (v. 34). The unforgiving slave had *already* been *released* from his debt (v. 27), yet now the lord handed him over to the torturers *until repayment* was made.

This parable is an illustration of the truth concerning forgiveness of the believer. On the one hand, our judicial forgiveness has been accomplished for us eternally by Christ's redemption (Matt. 18:27; Eph. 1:7), and it is kept effective by Christ's advocacy. On the other hand, our fellowship with God is disrupted by sin (the sin of unforgiveness of others in the parable, verse 30), and we may also fall under God's discipline, which we will have to endure until God grants governmental forgiveness. Such forgiveness during the next age may be a possibility (Matt. 12:32).

Notice that the judgment of the torturers is implied as being temporary ("until he should repay", v. 34). The temporal penalty here is graphically portrayed as torture. Although this is a parable and the term "torturer" is not strictly literal, this picture was chosen by the Lord to convey a grave reality. This parable should make us very sober and concerned about the matter of forgiving others. We are warned that this consequence may befall us (verse 35). Therefore, we should have *mercy* towards others (v. 33) since an action of mercy now will affect Christ's judgment upon us at His Judgment Seat. "For judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy; mercy triumphs over judgment" (Jas. 2:13).

We have seen that the forgiveness of sins is a somewhat complex matter, but a serious one. Even though Christ has paid the eternal penalty for our sins, the Christian must be very concerned about sin in his life. Sin may bring in grave consequences. However, through our forgiveness of others and the confession of our sins, fellowship with God can be restored and we can be cleansed. May the Lord give us all a heart to practice these things in sincerity.

Finally, please note that none of the severe judgments we have discussed in this chapter should be confused with the erroneous Roman Catholic doctrine of "Purgatory." The reward passages clearly teach that the believer's bad works can be subject to recompense by the righteous Judge. However, through confession to God, the disciple can be cleansed by Jesus' blood and any specific negative recompense avoided. The Catholic doctrine severely perverts this truth by claiming that the Christian himself must "atone" for his sins in order to effect his cleansing. Further, the doctrine of Purgatory claims that good deeds can be done, or money given, to the Roman Catholic church by the still living "faithful" in order to lessen the intensity or duration of punishment upon souls suffering in Purgatory. This proposition is patently unscriptural. For further commentary on this matter, the reader may consult the "Note on Purgatory" in D. M. Panton's book, *The Judgment Seat of Christ*, beginning on page 67.

The Fear of the Lord

There are other verses showing both positive and negative recompense in the future for believers (see the table containing the two principles in Chapter Five). However, we will not explore all of these verses; the reader has been presented a good overview of some of the major possibilities already. With this background we can now understand one of the most fundamental, yet often overlooked or misunderstood passages concerning the principle of reward according to works. This passage of Scripture in Romans Chapter Two was written to the Christians in Rome.

Therefore you are without excuse, every man of you who passes judgment, for in that you judge another, you condemn yourself; for you who judge practice the same things. And we know that the judgment of God rightly falls upon those who practice such things. And do you suppose this, O man, when you pass judgment upon those who practice such things and do the same yourself, that you will escape the judgment of God? Or do you think lightly of the riches of His kindness and forbearance and patience, not knowing that the kindness of God leads you to repentance? But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up wrath for yourself in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, who will render to every man according to his deeds: to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, wrath and indignation. There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, but glory and honor and peace to every man who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. For there is no partiality with God. For all who have sinned without the Law will also perish without the Law; and all who have sinned under the Law will be judged by the Law; for not the hearers of the Law are just before God, but the doers of the Law will be justified. For when Gentiles who do not have the Law do instinctively the things of the Law, these, not having the Law, are a law to themselves, in that they show the work of the Law written in their hearts, their conscience bearing witness, and their thoughts alternately accusing or else defending them, on the day when, according to my gospel, God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus. (Rom. 2:1-16)

This passage shows us the future day of judgment according to works. The opening verses begin by addressing the self-righteous person, whoever he may be. The application of the passage is clearly intended, however, for *every* person since we read that “the righteous judgment of God” will be rendered “to EVERY MAN according to his deeds.”

These Scriptures tell us that there is no partiality with God in judgment, and that all mankind will fall into two categories: the ones who persevere in doing good and the ones who obey unrighteousness. The judgment is based upon *deeds* and takes place in the future day of judgment when “God will judge the secrets of men through Christ Jesus.”

Those “who by *perseverance* in *doing good* seek for glory and honor and immortality” will receive “eternal life” as a reward from this future judgment. Since this “eternal life” is based upon works, not grace, and since it is received in the *future* through Christ’s judgment, not *now* through faith, it must be the reward of eternal life granted to the overcoming Christians in the coming Kingdom age (Mk. 10:30). No unbeliever could ever receive this reward because no unregenerate person can persevere in doing good (Rom. 3:12).

The balance of mankind will fall into the other category: “those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness.” This category obviously includes unbelievers, but it also includes Christians who have lived failed and unrepentant lives, since every man must fall into one of the two categories. Not all Christians persevere in doing good. A number of passages have already been mentioned that show that genuine Christians can live failed lives. We must be honest with the Scriptures and with experience. Many believers practice unrighteous things (1 Cor. 6:8-10; 2 Cor. 12:21; 13:2). Those who persist in these things and are unrepentant (Rom. 2:4-5), will fall into this category of judgment.

The fate of those who “obey unrighteousness” should make us properly fearful of God. These persons will be subjected to God’s “wrath and indignation.” What is God’s wrath? *The New Bible Dictionary* defines it as follows:

The permanent attitude of the holy and just God when confronted by sin and evil is designated His “wrath”. It is inadequate to regard this term merely as a description of “the inevitable process of cause and effect in a moral universe” or as another way of speaking of the results of sin. It is rather a personal quality, without which God would cease to be fully righteous and His love would degenerate into sentimentality. His wrath, however, even though like His love it has to be described in human language, is not wayward, fitful, or spasmodic, as human anger always is. It is as permanent and as consistent an element in His nature as is His love. This is well brought out in the treatise of Lactantius, *De ira Dei*.⁸⁴

God’s Word clearly tells us that unbelievers will experience God’s wrath. His wrath “abides” upon the unredeemed (Jn. 3:36). The unregenerate are viewed as being “by nature children of wrath” (Eph. 2:3) and “vessels of wrath” (Rom. 9:22). As persons who are not children of God, the unredeemed will face the awesomeness of God’s unmitigated wrath in the future day of judgment.

Now let us turn to the believer who “obeys unrighteousness” and is not repentant. I believe that he, too, will experience some measure of God’s wrath and will suffer “tribulation and distress” upon his soul. He will not receive the same measure of judgment as the unbeliever, however, who will undergo the everlasting judgment of God.

The wrath of God considered

Although many may feel that Scripture portrays believers as delivered from *any* wrath of God, I believe that a careful examination of the New Testament will show that this is not the case. [Also, it should be noted that the Old Testament clearly revealed that the people of God were subject to His wrath due to their disobedience (i.e., 2 Chron. 29:8; 34:21-25; Jer. 6:8-11; 21:4-6)].

To support their contention that believers are exempt from wrath some may quote Romans 5:9-10: “Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from the wrath of God through Him. For if while we were enemies, we were reconciled to God through the death of His son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by [literally, in] His life.” These verses actually show us two aspects of the Christian life. Justification and reconciliation are seen here as having to do with Christ’s *death*. It is by our faith in the redemptive act of Christ on the cross that we are justified initially (Rom. 3:24-26). Salvation, or deliverance, from the wrath of God in these verses, however, is not dependent on Christ’s death. These verses reveal that a second step is needed.

The salvation “from the wrath of God *through Him*” in the first verse is explained in the second verse. “Much more, having been reconciled [the completion of the first step], we shall be saved *by His life*. [the second step]” After the initial step of reconciliation there is the need for the disciple to learn to live by (or “in”) Christ’s life. Justification is by our objective belief in Christ’s death on the cross. Living by His life, however, deals with our subjective experience after initial faith.

Only through our living by His life can we overcome indwelling sin and live victoriously. However, such victorious living is not automatic for the Christian. Not all believers will pursue and gain this experience. This theme of living by His life is the content of the following three chapters in Romans. God’s wrath is His holy attitude in opposition to sin. *If* we live by Christ’s life (and if we confess our sins when we do not), then we shall be saved from God’s wrath at the Judgment Seat. This is the meaning of these verses.

There are two passages in First Thessalonians that some claim show that Christians will not be subject to God’s wrath. The first passage reads:

For they themselves report about us what kind of a reception we had with you, and how you turned to God from idols to serve a living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, that is Jesus, who delivers us from the wrath to come (1 Thess. 1:9-10).

This epistle has a strong eschatological (end-time) tone to it. Verse ten above speaks of the Thessalonian believers waiting for Jesus from heaven “who delivers us from the wrath to come.”

The deliverance from wrath here is linked with Christ’s descent from heaven. Also, note that the wrath here is specific (“*the wrath to come*”). The verse does not say that Jesus delivers us from “all wrath”. I believe that there is some ground in the Scripture to consider that “the wrath to come” is very probably that particular wrath which God pours out *upon the earth* at the end of this age. The Book of Revelation portrays God as pouring out physical judgments upon the earth and unrepentant mankind. As He begins some of His more severe judgments with the sixth seal, men of the earth cry out to the mountains and to the rocks: “Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb; for the great day of their *wrath has come*; and who is able to stand?” (Rev. 6:16 -17) Later in the book the twenty-four elders before the throne review the cataclysmic events of that period and declare: “And the nations were enraged, and *Thy wrath came*” (Rev. 11:18).

In Revelation Chapter Fourteen there are two reapings directed from the heavens. Firstly, Christ reaps the “Harvest of the earth” with His sickle (Rev. 14:15). After this, an angel with another sickle reaps “the vine of the earth” and throws its clusters of grapes “into the great wine press of *the wrath of God*” (Rev. 14:19). The first reaping by Christ pictures a rapture or removal of believers from the earth in all probability. That occurs before the second reaping which pictures the wrath of God descending upon unbelievers *upon the earth*.

Further on in Revelation the apostle John records: “And I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them *the wrath of God* is finished” (Rev. 15:1). These fearsome plagues are poured out as physical judgments upon rebellious mankind living *on the earth* at that time. “And I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, ‘Go and pour out the seven bowls of *the wrath of God* into the earth’” (Rev. 16:1).

Finally, the nineteenth chapter of Revelation pictures Christ on a white horse, with heavenly armies following Him, descending to do battle with “the kings of the earth and their armies, assembled to make war against Him who sat upon the horse, and against His army” (Rev. 19:19). The Scripture says of this warring Christ: “And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of *the fierce wrath of God*, the Almighty” (Rev. 19:15).

All of the verses noted above in Revelation point to a specific wrath that God will mete out to rebellious sinners living upon the earth at the very end of this age. It would seem that when Jesus comes back to earth from heaven, it is this wrath (“*the wrath to come*”) from which believers may be delivered (1 Thess. 1:10). This wrath is connected with God’s judgment *upon the earth*. The wrath mentioned in Romans 2:5, however, is more specifically connected to the judgments rendered to individuals before Christ’s *Bema* and at the great white throne (Rev. 20:12), since it is in context with the principle of future judgment in Romans 2:6.

The other verse in First Thessalonians pertaining to wrath is: “For God has not destined us for wrath, but for obtaining salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ” (1

Thess. 5:9). In context, this verse is talking about the sudden destruction that will come upon earth dwellers when the day of the Lord comes like a thief in the night (1 Thess. 5:2-3). The verses preceding verse nine (the “wrath” verse) speak of our need to be sober and to live as sons of the light, in contrast to those of darkness who will be overtaken by the destruction of the day of the Lord. Those of darkness “shall not escape” that destruction (1 Thess. 5:3). It seems likely that the deliverance from wrath that is the believer’s portion through Christ in verse nine is, in context, a deliverance from the wrath to be poured out upon the earth during the day of the Lord. This “salvation” from wrath here matches the one that is portrayed in the first chapter of First Thessalonians. It is not the wrath that may be experienced through Christ’s adjudication at the Judgment Seat.

Besides the verses in Romans Chapter Two, which indicate God’s wrath may be experienced by a Christian, there are some other Scriptures which should be noted. In Christ’s parable concerning forgiveness (Matt. 18:23-35), the unmerciful slave (the believer who would not forgive his brother’s debt) was summoned to appear before his lord (picturing an appearance by the believer at the Judgment Seat). After the lord verbally chastised the wicked slave, the Bible records: “And his lord, *moved with anger*, handed him over to the torturers until he should repay all that was owed him” (Matt. 18:34). Although not every detail in a parable can be pressed for explicit meaning, this matter of being “moved with anger” seems significant here, and it pictures Christ’s wrath at His *Bema* toward believers who would not forgive fellow believers. The Greek word here for anger is the verbal form of *orge*, the Greek word for wrath.

The last portion of Scripture we will examine concerning the potential for a believer to experience God’s wrath is Hebrews 3:1-4:11. This lengthy passage is not quoted here, but if the reader will refer to it, it will be seen that the writer to the Hebrews is using the wilderness experience of the Israelites as the basis for admonition to the Hebrew believers.

The recipients of the Epistle to the Hebrews were genuine believers (Heb. 3:1) who were in danger of slipping backwards into Judaism. Hebrews is very much a book concerning the coming Kingdom of Christ, and the great warning passages in Hebrews focus on the danger to the disciple of losing his portion in that coming Kingdom (see end note number one in Chapter Nine). The future 1,000-year kingdom of Christ is the great Sabbath rest that lies ahead for the people of God (Heb. 4:9). The passage under consideration is a warning to the believer. The believer should not harden his heart against the speaking of God (Heb. 3:7-8, 15; 4:7). Believers are warned: “Take care, brethren, lest there should be in any one of you an evil, unbelieving heart, in falling away from the living God” (Heb. 3:12).

The possibility of any believer falling away in this manner is highlighted in the next verse: “But encourage one another day after day, as long as it is still called ‘Today’, lest any one of you be hardened by the deceitfulness of sin: (Heb. 3:13). This passage points out how the Israelites failed to believe and obey God while in the wilderness. Therefore, the entire generation that came out of Egypt, except Caleb and Joshua, failed to enter the good land. Instead, they died in the

wilderness during that forty-year period (“forty” means a Biblical period of testing).

The Scripture records that because of their unbelief and subsequent disobedience, God became *angry* with these Israelites (Heb. 3:10,17). Therefore, God’s judgment fell upon them: “I swore in My *wrath*, they shall not enter My rest” (Heb. 3:11; 4:3). Based upon this wrath and its consequent judgment of God upon the children of Israel, the writer to the Hebrew believers warned his readers: “Therefore, *let us FEAR* lest, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you should seem to come short of it” (Heb. 4:1). Also, the writer concluded: “Let *us* therefore be diligent to enter that rest, lest anyone fall through following the same example of disobedience” (Heb. 4:11).

The author was warning those believers that if they were not diligent in obeying God’s word to them, then God, in His righteous *wrath*, would pronounce judgment upon them as He did upon the Israelites in the wilderness. The result of that judgment would be that they would *not enter* “His rest”, which is the Sabbath rest for the people of God--the future 1,000-year Kingdom. A more detailed exposition of this Scriptural type can be found in the works listed in the recommended reading section on the Kingdom at the end of this book.

Now let us return for a moment to the passage we read in Romans Chapter Two. Besides “wrath and indignation” toward those who disobey the truth, the Bible states that “There will be tribulation and distress for [literally, upon] every soul of man who does evil” (Rom. 2:9). This governmental judgment will be experienced in varying degrees and duration, dependent upon one’s status (believer vs. unbeliever), but all who do evil will experience this very real judgment.

It is interesting to note that the *soul* of man is emphasized as the particular part upon which such judgment falls. For the believer, the judgment described here in Romans matches the concept of “losing the soul” in the Gospels. The loss of well-being to the soul of the believer takes place during the coming Kingdom age, as we have already seen. Thus, even we believers should have a proper fear of God’s wrath. Let us recall some other severe words that the writer to the Hebrews wrote to those Jewish believers who were in danger of backsliding into Judaism: “For we know Him who said ‘Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.’ And again, ‘The Lord will judge His people.’ It is a terrifying thing to fall into the hands of the living God” (Heb. 10:30-31).

Today the “fear of God” is a lost virtue. Most Christians have reduced the thought to one of worshipful reverence. We do need to revere God, but if one reviews the words and language of the Bible objectively, he will see that we also need a certain true “fear” of God.⁸⁵ We must carry within us a knowledge that we are beings responsible to God, and that if we turn away from Him in disobedience, He will visit judgment and chastisement upon us.

According to the verses we have seen, this judgment can be severe. The picture of a fiery valley (Gehenna) is awesome and fearful, whatever the reality. “Many lashes” and “few lashes”, “cutting in pieces” (Lk. 12:46-48) and other judgments should truly sober us. When Paul wrote of the anticipated Judgment Seat of Christ where we would be recompensed (2 Cor. 5:10), he immediately followed the thought with: “Knowing therefore the terror of the Lord, we persuade men; . . .” (2 Cor. 5:11, KJV).

We need a healthy, balanced view of God. We should trust Him and open our heart to Him. We know that He loves us and is “for us” (Rom. 8:31). Yet, we must balance this view with a knowledge that God is an impartial Judge. If we are not obedient to Him and remain unrepentant, then we will experience His wrath at the Judgment Seat. Peter wrote to believers: “And if you address as Father the One who impartially judges according to each man’s work, conduct yourselves *in fear* during the time of your stay upon earth” (1 Pet. 1:17). Robert Govett rightly stated: “The fear of God is as much a principle needing to be impressed upon the believer’s mind as the love of God.”⁸⁶ Also, Solomon wrote: “The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.” (Prov. 9:10a)

Mercy

Today is the “day of salvation” (2 Cor. 6:2) in which grace is received (2 Cor. 6:1). The coming day, however, is a day of justice, when God in righteous judgment will recompense *every* man according to his *deeds* (Rom. 2:5-6). Although the Bible describes the coming day as one of justice, there are Scriptures that disclose the possibility of some believers also receiving mercy from Christ at His *Bema*.

Paul expressed a prayerful hope that Onesiphorus might “find mercy from the Lord on that day” (the day of judgment) (2 Tim. 1:18). Paul was hopeful of this mercy because of Onesiphorus’ faithful service to the apostle. Jesus also told us in the beatitudes: “Blessed are the merciful, for they shall receive mercy” (Matt. 5:7). If we are merciful in our dealings with others now, not requiring strict justice, but overlooking and forgiving the offenses of others, then there may be mercy for us at the coming Judgment Seat. James tells us that mercy can triumph over Judgment (Jas. 2:13). On the other hand, James tells us that “judgment will be merciless to one who has shown no mercy” (Jas. 2:13). Christ gives us the same lesson in the parable on forgiveness (Matt. 18:23-35).

God’s Principle of Individual Judgment According to Works

In concert with the idea of believers experiencing forgiveness along the path of our lifetime, there is a very interesting principle revealed in Ezekiel. In two sections of Scripture there, God declared His principle of judgment with which He would judge each individual Israelite according to his ways. Since these passages are very similar, only the one in Ezekiel Chapter Eighteen will be quoted. The reader may also wish to refer to the parallel passage (Ez. 33:11-20).

²⁰ “The person who sins will die. The son will not bear the punishment for the father’s iniquity, nor will the father bear the punishment for the son’s iniquity; the righteousness of the righteous will be upon himself, and the wickedness of the wicked will be upon himself.

²¹ But if the wicked man turns from all his sins which he has committed and observes all My statutes and practices justice and righteousness, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²² All his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him; because of his righteousness which he has practiced, he will live. ²³ Do I have any pleasure in the death of the wicked,” declares the Lord God, “rather than that he should turn from his ways and live? ²⁴ But when a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and does according

to all the abominations that a wicked man does, will he live? All his righteous deeds which he has done will not be remembered for his treachery which he has committed and his sin which he has committed; for them he will die. ²⁵ Yet you say, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Hear now, O house of Israel! Is My way not right? Is it not your ways that are not right? ²⁶ When a righteous man turns away from his righteousness, commits iniquity, and dies because of it, for his iniquity which he has committed he will die. ²⁷ Again, when a wicked man turns away from his wickedness which he has committed and practices justice and righteousness, he will save his life. ²⁸ Because he considered and turned away from all his transgressions which he had committed, he shall surely live; he shall not die. ²⁹ But the house of Israel says, 'The way of the Lord is not right.' Are My ways not right, O house of Israel? Is it not your ways that are not right? ³⁰ **Therefore, I will judge you, O house of Israel, each according to his conduct,** declares the Lord God. "Repent and turn away from all your transgressions, so that iniquity may not become a stumbling block to you. ³¹ Cast away from you all your transgressions which you have committed, and make yourselves a new heart and a new spirit! ³² For why will you die, O house of Israel? For I have no pleasure in the death of anyone who dies." declares the Lord God. "Therefore, repent and live" (Ez. 18:20-32).

These Old Testament Scriptures seem to provide a biblical "type" which foreshadows God's dealings with New Testament believers according to the principle of reward according to works. In the Old Testament type, or picture, obedience or disobedience of the individual Israelite resulted in physical death or life in accordance with the highlighted principle of judgment according to one's doings (Ez. 18:30;33:20).

The application to the New Testament believer (the fulfillment of the type), however, does not involve physical life or death. Although a New Testament believer can suffer physical death for disobedience (1 Cor. 11:29-30; 1 Jn. 5:16), the application of this passage does not focus on such a judgment. Rather, these Scriptures find their New Testament counterpart in the gaining of eternal life in the coming Kingdom age, or in the suffering of loss to the soul of the believer during that age. This conclusion is based upon the fact that these passages in Ezekiel are specifically addressing God's dealing with the individual child of God in relation to the principle of reward (or judgment) according to the individual's deeds. In the New Testament, this judgment is revealed as not occurring *until* the *lifetime* of the believer is *over* (unless he is raptured), and he appears at the Judgment Seat of Christ *upon Christ's return* (2 Cor. 5:10; Matt. 16:27).

An examination of the details of these verses in Ezekiel unfolds some interesting parallels to New Testament truth. God's principle of judgment here in Ezekiel tells us that if a wicked Israelite turns from his ways and practices doing good, he will save his life and not die. Further, the passage states that "all his transgressions which he has committed will not be remembered against him" (Ez. 18:22).

Does this description not portray the repentance and confession of sins by the believer? Also, does not the practicing of righteousness which brings life that is mentioned in Ezekiel parallel the perseverance in doing good that is noted in Romans 2:7 as the basis of the reward of eternal life in the coming age?

Conversely, “When the righteous turns from his righteousness and commits iniquity, then he shall surely die in it” (Ez. 33:18). The New Testament states, similarly, that those who do not endure to the end in obedience shall not receive the salvation of their souls (Matt. 10:22; Heb. 10:35-39), but will be denied by the Lord (2 Tim. 2:12) and suffer tribulation and distress upon their souls (Rom. 2:9). This judgment is the same as “losing the soul” or the “life” (Matt. 10:39).

This great principle of judgment is both encouraging and motivating. It is encouraging because if we have left the pathway of the Christian race and stopped fully following our Lord Jesus, we can repent and confess and He will forgive us. Our sins will not be remembered against us at the Judgment Seat (Ez. 18:22; 1 Jn. 1:9). Thus, we can be encouraged to begin again.

This principle also motivates us to endure, to not stop following our Lord Jesus. We have this motivation because we realize that if we decide to deny Him at any point and begin to walk in disobedience, our prior obedience will not avail for us. We can be sure that He will deny us in turn (2 Tim. 2:12). The danger of His judgment then becomes very real. If anyone thinks that this principle of judgment as explained here is not right (not just), then he needs to read Ezekiel 18:25, 29 and 33:17, 20 and take up his argument with God. The New Testament revelation portrays realities that parallel the Ezekiel principle.

Conclusion

This chapter and the previous one have discussed the Judgment Seat of Christ in some detail. If we are honest concerning the revelation of God’s Word, we will have to admit that at the Judgment Seat a believer in Christ can receive either positive rewards or fearful negative consequences. God is a wise and just Father. He holds out these positive and negative recompenses as great incentives for obedience from His children, just as He did in the Old Testament in Deuteronomy Chapters 27-30. Unfortunately, these incentives have not been properly taught to believers. Who can tell how much damage to the cause and testimony of Christ has been done by the lack of teaching on these truths?

Our Christian life time is a time of testing. At the *Bema*, Christ will decide who will be worthy of the Kingdom according to His principles of judgment. D. M. Panton describes the current time of testing well:

Officers are required for the administration of a kingdom: so God has deliberately interposed a prolonged period between the two advents, that our Lord might be enabled to so test His servants, in His absence, as to discover which are fitted for positions of responsibility and trust at His return. The Nobleman, before He departed laid plans for the selection of officers to aid Him in the administration of the Kingdom; He devised a plan for bringing to light who those officers are on His return; this plan is in operation at the present moment, purposely so contrived as to reveal individual capacity for office, and personal fitness for trust; and--most impressive of all--the Long Journey is now nearly over, and at any moment the investigation may begin.⁸⁷

Dear brother or sister, don't you want to be one approved at Christ's Judgment Seat? Do you feel that you may have unconfessed sins? Is it possible that you are still harboring bitterness and resentment toward others, instead of forgiving them? Have you been earnestly seeking to know and serve Him, or have you been off the pathway of the Christian race? If God is touching you on any of these matters, why not spend some time on your knees before Him right now? He has been waiting for you to do just that.

CHAPTER 9 - "...AND COME, FOLLOW ME"

We have seen a preview of the next age and the possibilities it holds for the believer. But how can we attain the positive things God would bless us with in the coming Kingdom? And how can we avoid the negative possibilities? For a fresh answer, let us return again to the narrative of the rich young ruler.

We have already learned much from Christ's dealing with the rich young ruler. Jesus confirmed that in the Kingdom age the reward of eternal life and the sharing of authority will be given to those who have left all to follow Him. We have also learned that the rich ruler needed to lose his soul by selling all of his possessions and giving them to the poor. Likewise, we also need to lose our souls, denying them satisfaction in this age, in order to gain our souls in the coming Kingdom age. Beyond this requirement, however, the Lord also said something very simple, yet very profound, to the young ruler: "... and come, follow Me." (Matt. 19:21)."

The way to the Kingdom is to follow Christ. Previously, the matter of obedience was stressed as the key to entering the Kingdom (i.e., Matt. 7:21). Obedience is just another perspective on the matter of following Christ. I want to underscore the term "follow Me", however, for significant reasons.

Firstly, this term "follow" tells us that Christ is leading every disciple in a particular way. Christ's leadership, experienced through the Holy Spirit's work in our lives, is leading us every day, onward toward the Kingdom. In typology, the Old Testament saints of Israel were led out of Egypt and through the wilderness by Moses (typifying Christ) and the pillar of cloud (typifying the Holy Spirit) (1 Cor. 10:2). This leading of God was to take them onward to enter the good land (Ex. 3:8), which typifies the believer's entry into the coming Kingdom (Heb. 3:1-4:11).⁸⁸ Of the entire generation that left Egypt, only Caleb and Joshua entered the good land, because only they followed the Lord fully (Num. 32:8-13). The rest of that generation died in the wilderness (Heb. 3:16-19). To "follow Me", then, means to respond to His daily working in our lives. As we cooperate with that which the Holy Spirit is seeking to do in us, we are progressing toward an entrance into the coming Kingdom (2 Pet. 1:10-11).

So far, the matter of "follow" has been stressed. The second significance of the phrase "follow Me" lies in the word "Me". The development of the Christian life, which is the way to the Kingdom, must be a matter exclusively between the believer and the living, indwelling Christ Himself. We Christians are so prone to substitute and rely on many things other than Christ Himself for our spiritual progress! Please hear me carefully: we may receive some help and guidance from servants of God, churches, programs, conferences, ministries, and the like, BUT THESE CAN NOT MATURE US, nor can they bring us ultimately to the Kingdom. It is Christ alone whom we must learn to know most intimately, for it is Christ alone who sanctifies (Heb. 2:11).

In order to follow Him, we must get to know Him. We must be able to recognize His leading. It is the Lord's voice we must learn to know and heed, not the preacher's. It is the Holy Spirit's conviction we must recognize, not the demand of the law or

“principles”, however well taught. It is the Holy Spirit’s intuitive leading we must know and follow, not just a Scriptural formula, or the advice or counsel of a trusted elder, preacher, or Christian brother. It is Christ alone we must follow, not an apostle, a godly pastor, or a gifted teacher. It is Christ we must trust, not a leader or ministry. It is the living Christ alone we must obey and serve. “It is the Lord Christ whom you serve” (Col. 3:24). Of course, it should also be obvious that all leading of God’s Spirit must be compatible with His word. It is for this reason that in order to know Christ we must also get to know Him through His word. The Bible is the “language” the Holy Spirit uses to speak to us.

Our God is a jealous God. We may labor within a church or ministry, but we must be very careful not to let that entity, or persons within it, usurp the headship and leadership of the living Christ Himself. Moses went up on the mountain to receive instructions and the two tablets of stone from God (Ex. 24:15-18). While he was on the mountain, the people made a golden calf to go before them, thus replacing Moses’ leadership, because they did not know what had become of Moses (Ex. 32). This incident provides a picture of Christ’s ascension and His time of absence between the two advents.

Moses went up to meet God on the mountain for forty days (Ex. 24:18), which is a Biblical period of testing (Matt. 4:1-2). Likewise, Christ ascended to God’s presence, and during His absence there is a time of testing for the disciples. Will we make something like a golden calf to go before us as our leader while He is away? The calf was worshipped in Egyptian religion, and the calf the Israelites made was proclaimed to be their deliverer (Ex. 32:4). Will we substitute something religious for the living Christ? Will a religious routine, or church attendance and activity, or good things done “for the Lord” (instead of from the Lord), or a specific doctrinal position, or a certain ministry or church become a “golden calf” for us?

It is also interesting to note that the worship of the calf was associated with feasting and dancing (Ex. 32:6, 17-19; 1 Cor. 10:7). This signifies that the people’s worship activity was designed to satisfy their lust for fleshly enjoyment; it was not purely for the glory of God. Further, the calf was made from the people’s earrings, ornaments for self glory (Ex. 32:2). What warning and instruction there is for us in this example. When Jesus says, “and come, follow Me”, the summation of it is this: we must seek to really know Him quite intimately in order to recognize His leading, and then we must follow Him alone. We have a living Christ. “So let us know, let us press on to know the Lord” (Hos. 6:3).

A Seeking Heart

There are many things to help us know the Lord. We can learn from others who have more experience and for this reason I urge you to read some of the books which pertain to Christian growth that are listed in the recommended reading section at the back of this book. They will help you to learn more concerning the work of the Holy Spirit in your life. But there is one indispensable, fundamental thing we need above all else in order to know Him: **we need a seeking heart**. If we stir up our hearts to seek the Lord, He will bring all the right helps along in their proper time for us. On the other hand, we may have much Bible knowledge, read many spiritual books, and attend many

conferences and meetings, but if we do not have a seeking heart to know and follow Him alone, we will miss Him. We will end up with religion, maybe even proper (Christian) religion, but we will not know Christ intimately.

The Christian life is not a round of activities: Bible study, prayer, church attendance, witnessing. It is not doing good or standing up for righteousness. The Christian life is Christ Himself. And the development of this life, His life in us, is the way to the coming Kingdom. How can we follow Christ? How can we gain the coming Kingdom? **The key to being a follower of Christ is to be a seeker of Christ.** To follow Christ, we must know Him. To know Christ, we must seek Him. The key does not lie in being a busy doer. The secret is found in being a diligent seeker, a seeker of Him. **“He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him”** (Heb. 11:6, NKJV).

In Philippians 3:7-14 we can really sense Paul’s seeking to know Christ:

⁷ But whatever things were gain to me, those things I have counted as loss for the sake of Christ. ⁸ More than that, I count all things to be loss in view of the surpassing value of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them but rubbish in order that I may gain Christ, ⁹ and may be found in Him, not having a righteousness of my own derived from the Law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which comes from God on the basis of faith, ¹⁰ that I may know Him, and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death; ¹¹ in order that I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. ¹² Not that I have already obtained it, or have already become perfect, but I press on in order that I may lay hold of that for which I was laid hold of by Christ Jesus. ¹³ Brethren, I do not regard myself as having laid hold of it yet; but one thing I do: forgetting what lies behind and reaching forward to what lies ahead, ¹⁴ I press on toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.

In verses eight and ten, Paul speaks with great fervency of his desire to know Christ. Paul’s experiential knowledge of Christ’s resurrection power, and his fellowship of Christ’s sufferings, conforming him to his Lord’s death, all lead on to Paul’s hope that “. . . if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection [out-resurrection] from the dead” (v. 11, NKJV). This special word for resurrection (*exanastasis*) appears only here in the Greek New Testament. It is best translated “out-resurrection”, and it pertains to the special state of resurrection in the coming age for all overcoming believers who attain to that state. It is related to the “prize” Paul pressed on for in verse fourteen. Since the prize is obtained only by “*pressing on*”, and since the out-resurrection must be *attained* by believers, these things point to reward in the coming Kingdom.⁸⁹ So we see that in this passage the reward is a result of earnestly seeking Christ.

Many principles could be presented on the Christian life, but if we miss the most crucial spring from which all else flows, we will get nowhere. All progress begins and continues through our earnestly “seeking the Lord”. Admittedly, there are times when we may drift from such seeking, and the Lord, in His mercy, seeks us in order to draw us after Him again. His intention, as it was with Peter after he returned to fishing in John 21, is to stir our love for Him that we might again seek Him.

It would be very encouraging and enlightening for you to research all of the passages concerning “seeking” the Lord in an exhaustive concordance. It is so interesting that in these passages God does not give much detail on how to seek the Lord. Rather, He simply unveils the picture of earnest seeking. If we earnestly *seek*, we shall *find*. How we will *find* will vary. As an encouragement for you to seek Him, some of the Bible passages on “seeking the Lord” are detailed below.

“But from there you will seek the Lord your God, and you will find Him if you search for Him with all your heart and all your soul” (Deut. 4:29).

The above verse is so encouraging. It follows several verses wherein God promised to judge Israel for unfaithfulness by taking them from the good land and scattering them among the nations, where they would end up worshipping idols. But, it is “from *there*”, from that pitiful situation, that the Israelites could wholeheartedly seek the Lord and find Him. In application, we Christians could take encouragement from this verse in that no matter how far we have drifted from the living God, “from there” we can seek Him and find Him.

“And after the Levites left, those from all the tribes of Israel, such as set their heart to seek the Lord God of Israel, came to Jerusalem to sacrifice to the Lord God of their fathers” (2 Chron. 11:16, NKJV).

This is another encouraging verse. Jeroboam took the ten tribes of Israel in the northern kingdom away from the worship of Jehovah at Jerusalem. He rejected the chosen Levites as priests, and instead, appointed others as priests for his “high places, for the demons, and the calf idols which he had made” (2 Chron. 11:15, NKJV). The Levites left this idolatrous situation and returned to Judah and Jerusalem. Then, as verse sixteen above tells us, others who “set their heart to seek the Lord God”, followed the Levites in returning from idolatry in the northern kingdom to worship at God’s true altar. Even if we have found ourselves in a situation far away from God, we can set our hearts to seek the Lord.

On my bed night after night I sought him whom my soul loves; I sought him but did not find him. “I must arise now and go about the city; in the streets and in the squares I must seek him whom my soul loves.” I sought him but did not find him. The watchmen who make the rounds in the city found me, and I said, “Have you seen him whom my soul loves?” Scarcely had I left them when I found him whom my soul loves; I held onto him and would not let him go (S. of S. 3:1-4a).

The seeker here in the Song of Songs typifies the believer, and the one who is sought is Christ as the bridegroom (2 Cor. 11:2).

“And you will seek Me and find Me, when you search for Me with all your heart” (Jer. 29:13).

“Seek the Lord, all you humble of the earth who have carried out His ordinances; Seek righteousness, seek humility. Perhaps you will be hidden in the day of the Lord’s anger” (Zeph. 2:3).

But without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that *He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him*" (Heb. 11:6, NKJV).

"And come, follow Me" speaks of our simple and pure devotion to Christ Himself (2 Cor. 11:2-3). Above all, we need to be zealous concerning this. The best way to preserve the purity of our relationship to Jesus Christ is to be an earnest seeker of Him. Let us not be satisfied with religion, or any religious substitute for Him, but "let us go out to Him outside the camp" (Heb. 13:13).

CHAPTER 10 - "FOR MY SAKE"

Our final look at the story of the rich young ruler concerns Jesus' words to His disciples about leaving all to follow Him. After the young ruler went away sorrowful and Jesus spoke of the difficulty of entering the Kingdom of God, Peter queried: "Behold, we have left everything and followed You; what then will there be for us" (Matt. 19:27)? Jesus answered his question, telling him about sitting on the twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. Then, as we have already studied and seen, Jesus expanded His answer to address all disciples who would follow Him, explaining that they would receive multiplied houses, brothers, sisters, etc., in this age and, in the coming age, eternal life. In His response to His disciples, Jesus gave some definite reasons, the real motivations, that should spur us to leave all in order to follow Him. The four motivations that He gave can be seen in italics in these quotes from the synoptic Gospels:

"And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or children or farms *for My name's sake*, shall receive many times as much, and shall inherit eternal life" (Matt. 19:29).

Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, *for My sake and for the gospel's sake*, but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mk. 10:29-30).

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" (Lk. 18:29-30).

Let us look at these four motivations that Jesus gave us.

For My Sake

I feel this is the most precious of the four motivations. Why should we "leave" all the comforts and enjoyments of this age in order to follow Him? Simply for His sake. We would do it simply because we love Him and want to please Him. If we have a heart loving Him above all else, we will want to make Him happy. Our faithfulness to Him will be more important to us than any earthly love or allegiance. This motivation is very personal. It involves our personal relationship with Christ. What we do, we are doing to Him and for Him alone. The real seekers of the Lord will be willing to leave all simply for His sake.

For My Name's Sake

This motivation concerns the testimony of Christ to others. We leave all to follow Him so that His Name, the Name of Jesus, might be declared to others.

In His prayer to the Father, the Lord Jesus stated, “I manifested Thy name to the men whom Thou gavest Me out of the world” (Jn. 17:6). We also should glorify and exalt that Name in our living. Paul prayed for the believers in Thessalonica that “the name of our Lord Jesus may be glorified in you” (2 Thess. 1:12). The thought here seems to be that the Name has something to do with the expression of the character and virtue of Christ being manifested through the life of the believer. How we live reflects upon the Name of our Lord Jesus with whom we are identified.

The Name of Jesus is above every name (Phil. 2:9). Therefore, that Name should be magnified (Acts 19:17), as a testimony to all men. We should walk in the way of righteousness for His Name’s sake (Ps. 23:3). We should be willing to leave all, going out to labor for Him for the sake of His Name being declared and known (3 Jn. 7). Finally, we should even be willing to die for that Name (Matt. 10:21-22, 32; Acts 21:13).

If we are not willing to forsake pleasing ourselves in this age in order to follow Him, then how will His Name be known?

For the Gospel’s Sake

We should “leave all” to follow Him so that the gospel may be brought to others. The apostle Paul was so burdened for men to be saved that he became “all things to all men, that I may by all means save some” (1 Cor. 9:22). Further, he then declared, “and I do all things for the sake of the gospel” (1 Cor. 9:23). It is the gospel that “is the power of God unto salvation” (Rom. 1:16, KJV). Therefore, men are saved through the declaration of the gospel.

For whoever will call upon the name of the Lord will be saved. How then shall they call upon Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? Just as it is written, “How beautiful are the feet of those who bring glad tidings of good things” (Rom. 10:13-15).

Do not think that these verses apply just to evangelists. All of Christ’s disciples are to go forth with His gospel (Matt. 28:18-20; Lk. 24:46-49; Acts 1:8; 8:4).

For the Sake of the Kingdom of God

Although this reason for leaving all might mean that we do so in order to gain participation in the coming Kingdom, I am inclined to take a different interpretation. All three of the other reasons for leaving all to follow Jesus involve something done for His sake alone, not for our sake. In this fourth case, a believer is motivated to leave everything in order to benefit the Lord’s Kingdom on the earth. Like the other three cases, the life of the Lord has so infused the believer’s life that he or she is motivated to sacrifice much, even all, in order to benefit Him and His plan for mankind.

Conclusion

We need to see the value of the four things that are the essence of the motivations. These four things are Christ Himself, His Name, His gospel, and His Kingdom. How precious these four things are! The problem with the rich young ruler

was that he did not see the value of these things. Thus, he preferred to keep his material possessions instead. The Lord also promised to reward him with eternal life in the Kingdom if he would leave all, but this too seemed less valuable to him than the enjoyment of the things of this life.

Thank God that some dear saints over the centuries have left all to follow Him. They did this for the benefit of God. Some may have also seen something concerning reward for faithfulness. Yet, I do believe that there will be saints in the Kingdom who had very little, if any, knowledge of conditional participation in the coming Kingdom. They will be there not because of their knowledge of the Kingdom or lack of it. They will be there because of their devotion to Christ: they will have followed Him for His sake, for His Name's sake, for the gospel's sake, or for the sake of the Kingdom of God.

God has written much in His Word concerning the coming Kingdom. He also wants the reward of the Kingdom to motivate us. It is for this reason that this book has been written, dear brother or sister--that you may see the Kingdom, pursue the Kingdom, and be counted ***"worthy of the kingdom"*** (2 Thess. 1:5)

ENDNOTES

CHAPTER TWO

- ¹ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 1883. (Reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), Vol. II, Book IV, p. 379.
- ² W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. 1939. (Reprint ed., Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1968), p. 367, quoting from *Notes on Galatians*, by Hogg and Vine, pp. 324-325. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.
- ³ Colin Brown, ed., *The New International Dictionary of New Testament Theology* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1975), Vol. III, p.832. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.
- ⁴ Ibid., Vol. II, p. 480. Used by permission of Zondervan Publishing House.
- ⁵ Joseph Bonsirven, *Palestinian Judaism in the Time of Jesus Christ*, translated from the French by William Wolf. (New York: Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1964), p. 169.
- ⁶ Ibid., pp. 229-230.
- ⁷ *Encyclopedia Judaica* (Jerusalem: Keter Publishing House Ltd., 1971), Vol. VI, p. 874.
- ⁸ It should be noted that in ancient Judaism the term “the world to come” (olam ha-ba) did not always have a fixed meaning and underwent transition over time. One encyclopedia reference shows that period’s identity with the millennium:

The Perso-Babylonian world-year of twelve millenniums, however, was transformed in Jewish eschatology into a world-week of seven millenniums corresponding with the week of Creation, the verse “a thousand years in thy sight are but as yesterday” (Ps. xc5[A.V.4]) having suggested the idea that the present world of toil (“olam ha-zeh”) is to be followed by a Sabbatical millennium, “the world to come” (“olam ha-ba”): Tamid v11.4 . . . [The Jewish Encyclopedia (New York and London: Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1907), Vol. V, pp. 210-211.]

Other encyclopedia references show how the term evolved:

Owing to the gradual evolution of eschatological conceptions, the Rabbis used the terms “olam ha-ba” (the world to come), “le-atid la-bo” (in the coming time). and “yemot ha-Mashiah” (the Messianic days) promiscuously or often without clear distinction (see Geiger . . .) . . . R. Eleazar of Modi'im of the second century (Mek., Beshallah, Wayassa, ed. Weiss, p.59, note) distinguishes between the Messianic time (“malkut bet Dawid”), the “olam ha-ba” (the future world), which is that of the souls,

and the time of the Resurrection, which he calls “olam hadash” (the new world, or world of regeneration). [Ibid., p.216]

It was Jesus’ response to the rich ruler, however, in which he defined the future age of reward and blessing, from which we must derive our theology concerning reward according to works.

⁹ W. E. Vine, p. 19. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

¹⁰ See Ray E. Baughman, *The Kingdom of God Visualized* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), pp. 190-191.

¹¹ The eternal Kingdom of Christ begins with Christ’s return to earth to rule (Dan. 2:44-45; 7:13,14; Matt. 25:31-34; Lk. 1:31-33). The first stage of His eternal rule begins when He sets up His earthly rule and sits upon “His glorious throne” (Matt. 19:28; 25:31) located in Jerusalem (Is. 2:1-3; 24:23; Mic. 4:7,8). From this throne He rules the nations with “a rod of iron” (Ps. 2:8,9; Rev. 2:27; 19:15). His kingship brings in the great regeneration (Matt. 19:28; Acts 3:19-21). This particular earthly reign ends after 1,000 years, the point at which death is abolished (1 Cor. 15:24-26; Rev. 20:4,6; 21:4). However, even though Christ “delivers up the kingdom to the God and Father” at the end of the 1,000 years (1 Cor. 15:24), He does not cease to reign. From then on, He reigns not upon “His glorious throne” in *Jerusalem*, but, in continued subjection to the Father (1 Cor. 15:28), His eternal reign continues in the *New Jerusalem* on “the throne of God and of the Lamb” (Rev. 22:3).

In commenting on First Corinthians 15:27-28, Dwight Pentecost says, “The means by which all things are brought under subjection to God, so that He becomes all in all, is that Christ unites the authority that is His as King with the Father’s after He has ‘put down all rule and all authority and power’ (1 Cor. 15:24). God’s original purpose was to manifest His absolute authority and this purpose is realized when Christ unites the earthly theocracy with the eternal Kingdom of God. Thus, while Christ’s earthly theocratic rule is limited to one thousand years, which is sufficient time to manifest God’s perfect theocracy on the earth, His reign is eternal”. J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Dunham Publishing Co., 1958. Reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Academie Books, Zondervan Publishing House, 1964), pp. 492-493.

CHAPTER THREE

¹² For illumination on this point, the reader should study Chapter Nine in Watchman Nee, *The Normal Christian Life*. 1957. (American edition, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977), pp. 151-173.

¹³ Miles J. Stanford, *Principles of Spiritual Growth*. (Lincoln: Back to the Bible), p. 7-8.

¹⁴ Ibid., p. 69.

¹⁵ Ibid., p. 9, quoting James McConkey, no reference cited.

¹⁶ Charles G. Trumbull, *Victory in Christ* (Ft. Washington, Pa: Christian Literature Crusade, 1992) p.51. Used by permission.

CHAPTER FOUR

¹⁷ George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God*, (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 78.

¹⁸ Ibid., pp. 80-81.

¹⁹ Ray E. Baughman, *The Kingdom of God Visualized*, (Chicago: Moody Press, 1972), p. 191.

²⁰ C. I. Scofield, *The New Scofield Reference Bible*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1967), p. 3.

²¹ One of the most thorough documentations of this view being held by the ancient Jews and the early church is found in George N. H. Peters' work, *The Theocratic Kingdom*, Proposition 143, Vol. II, pp. 448-460. He cites the following church fathers as proponents of this sabbatical plan: Papias, Barnabus, Irenaeus, Justin Martyr, Polycarp, Tertullian, Lactantius, Cyprian, Ambrose, Origen, Jerome, and, surprisingly, even Augustine. Since the early church, some of the teachers who have endorsed this view are Bishop Latimer (1552 A. D.), Archbishop Usher (who compiled his famous Bible chronology in 1650 A. D.), Martin Luther, Phillip Melancthon, Joseph A Seiss, Robert Govett, Clarence Larkin, D. M. Panton, Arthur W. Pink, and R. E. Neighbor.

²² F. W. Grant, *The Numerical Structure of Scripture*, (Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1887), p. 52.

²³ See E. W. Bullinger, *Number in Scripture*, (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, 1894) pp. 167-168.

²⁴ Scofield, pp. 3-4.

²⁵ George Eldon Ladd, *The Gospel of the Kingdom*, (Reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1992), pp. 66-67, 72-73.

CHAPTER FIVE

²⁶ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary--New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1992), p. 1353.

²⁷ For a deeper analysis of man's three parts, see Chapters One and Two of Volume I, Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1968).

²⁸ Watchman Nee, *The Spiritual Man* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, 1968), Vol. I, p. 39.

²⁹ D. M. Panton, *The Judgment Seat of Christ* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1984), pp. 54-55.

³⁰ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*. 1939. (Reprint ed., Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1968), p. 149, partially quoting from *Notes on Thessalonians* by Hogg and Vine, p. 134. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

³¹ John F. Hart, "Does Philippians 1:6 Guarantee Progressive Sanctification?" *Journal of the Grace Evangelical Society* (Spring, 1996): 37-58; (Autumn, 1996): 33-60.

³² See especially Chapters Ten, Fourteen, and Fifteen of Joseph C. Dillow, *The Reign of the Servant Kings* (Miami Springs: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1992).

³³ G. H. Lang, *Pictures and Parables* (Miami Springs: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1985), pp. 301-310.

³⁴ W. E. Vine, p. 325. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

³⁵ Zane C. Hodges, *The Gospel Under Siege* (Dallas: Redencion Viva, 1981), p. 127.

³⁶ Ibid.

CHAPTER SIX

³⁷ The Old Testament commandments take on a higher meaning and requirement than the scribes and the Pharisees taught (Matt. 5:20-48), but Jesus is not addressing that issue here with the rich young ruler.

³⁸ Philip Mauro, *God's Pilgrims* (Reprinted ed., Harrisburg: Christian Publishers, Inc., 1969), p. 176.

³⁹ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary--New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1992), p. 1353.

⁴⁰ Watchman Nee, *The Salvation of the Soul* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1978), p.5.

⁴¹ Mauro, pp. 177-178.

⁴² Nee, p. 7.

⁴³ Nee, pp. 6-7.

⁴⁴ Mauro, p. 175.

⁴⁵ Witness Lee, *The Experience of Life* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1973), p. 72.

⁴⁶ Nee, p. 24.

47 Lee, pp. 86-87.

48 Nee, p. 38.

49 Watchman Nee, *Love Not the World*, 1968. (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, Inc., 1978), pp. 99-100. Used by permission of current publishers: Kingsway Publications, Lottbridge Drove, Eastbourne, England (copyright 1997).

CHAPTER SEVEN

50 See J. Dwight Pentecost, *Things to Come* (Grand Rapids: Academic Books, 1964), pp. 220-226.

51 W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 1939. (Reprint ed., Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1968), p.131. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

52 Lewis Sperry Chafer, *Systematic Theology* (Grand Rapids: Kregel Publications, ©1993 by Dallas Theological Seminary), Vol. V, p. 97. Used by permission of the publisher.

53 Ibid., Vol. IV, pp. 211-212. Used by permission of the publisher.

54 George Eldon Ladd, *Crucial Questions About the Kingdom of God* (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1952), p. 106.

55 William F. Arndt and F. Wilbur Gingrich, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Christian Literature* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1957), p.160.

56 Watchman Nee, *The Gospel of God* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1990), Vol. iii, p.408.

57 Watchman Nee, *The Gospel of God* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1990), Vol. III, p. 405.

58 Watchman Nee, *Study on Matthew* (from *The Collected Works of Watchman Nee*) (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1992), p. 63.

59 Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary - New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1992), p. 373.

60 Robert Govett, *Reward According to Works* (Hayesville, N. C.: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1989), article entitled "Entrance Into the Millennial Kingdom", p. 35.

61 Spiros Zodhiates, p. 107.

⁶² G. H. Pember was one of the giants of prophetic teaching in the nineteenth century. He translated Jude 7 as “. . . suffering the punishment of an age-long fire.” He then commented on this translation as follows:

Now, it may be asked, Why change the usual translation, “eternal” or “everlasting”, into “age-long”? And the answer is, We do so for three reasons:--First, because the Greek word *aionios* admits the latter rendering quite as readily as the former . . . For the word *aionios* is an adjective formed from *aion*, which last, being derived from the Greek for “always”, signifies the whole time during which a person, thing, or state, exists. Hence, if it be used of a person, it expressed his whole life, or life-time; if of a succession of generations, of history, or of the state of a people or the world, an age; if of the universe, or of anything that lasts for ever, eternity. The adjective, of course, follows the meanings of its noun; and may, therefore, be rendered either by “age-long”, or by “everlasting”, according to the indication of the context.

G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning the Church*, (Miami Springs: Conley and Schoettle Publishing Co., 1984), pp. 122-123.

⁶³ The parable of the ten virgins (Matt. 25:1-13) has been interpreted in a variety of ways. However, I believe the interpretation that is most in harmony with the rest of Scripture is generally as follows. The parable concerns watchfulness (v.13). Only believers are told to “watch” in Scripture; unbelievers do not have the spiritual awareness or capacity to do so. All ten were genuine virgins, which signifies believers in respect to their relationship to Christ (2 Cor. 11:2). All of the virgins had their lamps lit (vs. 7-8), which means they were regenerated and indwelt in their spirits by the Holy Spirit (Pr. 20:27; Jn. 3:6; Rom. 8:16). In ancient times, vessels were separate containers for oil, apart from the lamp itself (v.4). The wise believers were pictured as prepared because they had the extra measure of oil in their vessels (vs. 3-4). This pictures the gaining of the Holy Spirit by the believer in his soul, his “vessel”. This concept matches the saving of the soul at Christ’s return through the losing of our soul now (Matt. 16:24-27). By paying the price of self-denial and taking up the cross now, our soul is filled with the Holy Spirit (the oil in the vessel). Verse 9 indicates that this portion of the oil (the Holy Spirit) is not a gift, but must be “bought” by the believer. The foolish virgins are those believers who do not deny themselves now and take up the cross and follow Christ. These unprepared ones will not enter the Kingdom. This parable may indicate God’s dealing with dead believers, since these virgins slept (died) due to Christ’s delay in returning (v. 5). A thorough exposition of this parable can be found in the following work: Witness Lee, *The Kingdom* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1980), pp. 162-174.

CHAPTER EIGHT

⁶⁴ Watchman Nee, *The Gospel of God* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1990), Vol. III, p. 401.

⁶⁵ D. M. Panton, *The Judgment Seat of Christ* (Hayesville, N. C.: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1993), p. 26.

⁶⁶ G. H. Lang, *Pictures and Parables* (Miami Springs: Conley and Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 306-307.

⁶⁷ For one view of the literalness of such judgments, see:
Gary T. Whipple, *Shock and Surprise Beyond the Rapture* (Hayesville, N. C.: Schoettle Publishing Co. Inc., 1992), pp. 176-177.

⁶⁸ Noted below are seven Christian teachers who endorse this truth:

Robert Govett, *Reward According to Works* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1984), article entitled "Will All Believers Enter the Millennial Kingdom?", pp. 20-21.

G. H. Lang, *The Epistle to the Hebrews* (Miami Springs: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 180-186.

Witness Lee, *Life-Study of Matthew* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1985), pp. 230-232.

Watchman Nee, *The Gospel of God* (Anaheim: Living Stream Ministry, 1990), Vol. III, pp. 441-462.

D. M. Panton, *The Judgment Seat of Christ* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1993), pp. 76-77.

G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning the Church* (Miami Springs: Conley and Schoettle Publishing Co. Inc., 1984), pp. 105-116.

Gary T. Whipple, *Shock and Surprise Beyond the Rapture* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co. Inc., 1992), pp. 145-161, 171-175.

⁶⁹ G. H. Pember, *The Great Prophecies of the Centuries Concerning the Church* (Miami Springs: Conley and Schoettle Publishing Co. Inc., 1984), p. 93.

⁷⁰ Alfred Edersheim, *The Life and Times of Jesus the Messiah*. 1883. (Reprint ed., Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1971), Vol. II, pp. 440; 792-793.

⁷¹ Pember, pp. 97-98.

⁷² *Theological Wordbook of the Old Testament* (Chicago: Moody Press, 1980), Vol. 2, p.672. Used by permission.

⁷³ Ibid., p.673. Used by permission.

⁷⁴ W. E. Vine, *An Expository Dictionary of New Testament Words*, 1939. (Reprint ed., Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1968), p. 250. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

⁷⁵ Spiros Zodhiates, ed., *The Complete Word Study Dictionary--New Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 1992), p.1468.

⁷⁶ Watchman Nee, *Love One Another* (New York: Christian Fellowship

Publishers, Inc., 1975), pp. 1-23.

⁷⁷ C. H. Mackintosh, *The Mackintosh Treasury – Miscellaneous Writings by C. H. Mackintosh* (Neptune, N. J.: Loizeaux Brothers, 1976), p. 650.

⁷⁸ Wendell E. Miller, *Forgiveness: The Power and The Puzzles* (Warsaw, In.: ClearBrook Publishers, 1994), p.31.

⁷⁹ W. E. Vine, p. 120. Used by permission of Thomas Nelson, Inc.

⁸⁰ A most enlightening discussion of confession and cleansing can be found in Watchman Nee's work *The Gospel of God*, Volume III, pp. 463-485. His discussion here of the Old Testament type of the water of purification made from the ashes of the red heifer is very thought provoking and deep.

⁸¹ Watchman Nee, *Love One Another* (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1975), pp. 7-8.

⁸² Ibid., p. 6.

⁸³ Miller, pp. 53-54.

⁸⁴ J. D. Douglas, ed., *The New Bible Dictionary* (Grand Rapids: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Co., 1962), p.1341.

⁸⁵ For a short study on the meaning of "the fear of the Lord" see: Bill Gothard, *The Overlooked Requirements for Riches, Honor and Life* (Oak Brook, IL: Institute in Basic Life Principles).

⁸⁶ Robert Govett, *Reward According to Works* (Miami Springs: Schoettle Publishing Co. Inc., 1989), article entitled "Will all Believers Enter the Millennial Kingdom?", p. 53.

⁸⁷ D. M. Panton, *The Judgment Seat of Christ* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., 1984), p. 35.

CHAPTER NINE

⁸⁸ Hebrews is a book altogether dominated by the theme of the coming Kingdom. The great warning passages of Hebrews (Heb. 2:1-3; 4:1,9,11; 6:4-8; 10:26-31, 35-39; 12:16-17, 28-29) all have to do with the potential loss of the Kingdom for the believer and attendant chastisement from God. For the sake of making this book as brief as possible, I have not gone into the details of Hebrews, which is the foremost book on the Kingdom in the Epistles. For an introduction to the Kingdom theme in Hebrews, it is suggested that the reader review: R. E. Neighbor, *If By Any Means* (Miami Springs: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 84-127. Other works listed under the recommended reading section on Kingdom matters would also address passages in Hebrews (particularly works by Govett, Lang and Chitwood).

⁸⁹ For reading on the “out-resurrection”, please consult the following works: (1) R. E. Neighbor, *If By Any Means* (Miami Springs: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., 1985), pp. 40-62, and (2) D. M. Panton, *The Judgment Seat of Christ* (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc.), pp. 48-53.

RECOMMENDED READING

Concerning the Christian life:

Bill Freeman, The Cross and the Self. (Scottsdale: Ministry Publications, 1994). A detailed look at this subject. Order from Ministry Publications, P. O. Box 12222, Scottsdale, AZ 85267. Phone: 1-800-573-4105. Web site: www.thechristian.org

Watchman Nee, The Normal Christian Life. 1957 (American Edition, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1977). An excellent overview, both doctrinally and experientially.

Watchman Nee, Love Not the World. 1968 (American Edition, Wheaton: Tyndale House Publishers, 1978). Helpful for understanding the “world” and the believer’s separation from it.

Watchman Nee, The Life That Wins. (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1986) Beneficial insights into the victorious Christian life.

Witness Lee, The Experience of Life. (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1973). A detailed and deep analysis of the development of the believer’s spiritual life. Available from Living Stream Ministry, P. O. Box 2121, Anaheim, CA 92814.

Miles J. Stanford, Principles of Spritual Growth. (Lincoln: Back to the Bible, 1991). An excellent work drawing on the words of outstanding teachers. Order from Back to the Bible at 1-800-759-2425.

Charles Stanley, The Wonderful Spirit-Filled Life. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publishers, 1992). A basic and introductory word on the Holy Spirit’s activity in the believer’s life.

Charles G. Trumball, Victory in Christ. (Fort Washington, PA: Christian Literature Crusade, 1992). Inspiring, enlightening and helpful.

Concerning the Salvation of the Soul:

Watchman Nee, The Salvation of the Soul. (New York: Christian Fellowship Publishers, Inc., 1978).

Concerning the Judgment Seat of Christ:

D. M. Panton, The Judgment Seat of Christ (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1984). * This work is a masterpiece. It is jam-packed with Scriptural truth.

Concerning Kingdom Matters:

Arlen L. Chitwood, From Egypt to Cannan. (Norman, OK: The Lamp Broadcast, Inc., 1992). Order directly from The Lamp Broadcast, 2629 Wyandotte Way, Norman, OK 73071

Robert Govett, Reward According to Works. (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1989) *

Robert Govett, Kingdom Studies. (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1989)*

Robert Govett, The Kingdom of God Future. (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1985) *

G. H. Lang, Ideals and Realities. (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1988)*

G. H. Lang, Firstborn Sons, Their Rights and Risks. (Hayesville, NC: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1984) *

Watchman Nee, The Gospel of God, Volume III. (Anaheim, CA: Living Stream Ministry, 1990). Available from Living Stream Ministry, P. O. Box 2121, Anaheim, CA 92814.

R. E. Neighbor, D. D., If By Any Means. (Hayesville, NC: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1985). *

R. E. Neighbor, D. D., If They Shall Fall Away. (Hayesville, NC: Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1984). *

D. M. Panton, The Judgment Seat of Christ. (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1984). *

Gary T. Whipple, Shock and Surprise Beyond the Rapture! (Hayesville, NC: Schoettle Publishing Co., Inc., 1992) * Many details of the Christian's future life are explored here. Because of the minuteness of the details, the reader should be cautioned that some of the author's conclusions should be viewed as possibilities only and should be weighed in light of actual Scriptural statements and principles of exegesis.

*Note: All works by Conley & Schoettle Publishing Co. or by Schoettle Publishing Co. may be ordered from Schoettle Publishing Co., P. O. Box 1246, Hayesville, NC 28904 [Phone: 706-896-3333. Fax: 706-896-3311] Some books published by Schoettle are out of print now. It is possible, however, that some stock still exists at the retail level. Try Home Life Ministries at <http://gracenet.com/HLMIn/HTML/OLCMenu.htm> (Worldside Web address); or P. O. Box 77, St. Neots, Huntingdon, Cambs., PE19 4JN England. International phone -44 1480 21988.