

The
LANTERN



II Peter 1:19

OF THE SCATTERED FAITHFUL™

“So we regard the words of the prophets as confirmed beyond all doubt. You're doing well by paying attention to their words. Continue to pay attention as you would to a light that shines in a dark place as you wait for day to come and the morning star to rise in your hearts.”

(II Peter 1:19 - GW)

The Lantern

OF THE SCATTERED FAITHFUL



II Peter 1:19

MAY 2026

VOL. V - NO. 2

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**Fruit of the Spirit:
Patience**
(See page 32)

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PUBLISHED BY THE CHURCH OF GOD – SCATTERED FAITHFUL

All scriptures used in *The LANTERN* magazine are from the New King James version of the Bible, unless otherwise noted.

Pictures courtesy of: *iStock*
(Except for the *Personal*, and *Pages 20-21*)
Christian Banners (Page 20); *Bible History*
online (Page 21)

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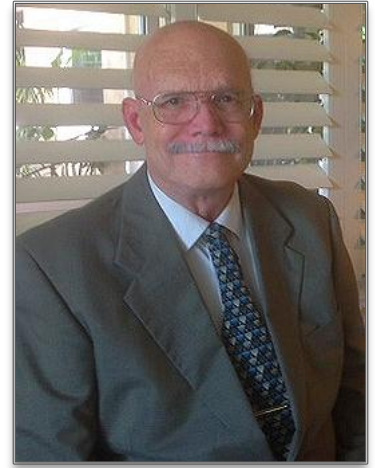
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Personal from the editor



THE WAVE-SHEAF OFFERING

We must understand what the biblical “Wave-Sheaf” offering pictures. On the day after the weekly Sabbath during the Days of Unleavened Bread, we begin counting fifty days forward to the Feast of Pentecost (**The Feast of Firstfruits, Exodus 23:16**).

Leviticus 23:10-11 shows us God’s instructions concerning the Wave-Sheaf offering. **“Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, “when you come into the land which I give to you, and reap its harvest, then you shall bring a sheaf of the firstfruits of your harvest to the priest. He shall wave the sheaf before the LORD, to be accepted on your behalf; on the day after the Sabbath [during the Days of Unleavened Bread] the priest shall wave it.”**” The waving of this handful of grain by the priest signified the beginning of the small spring harvest to ancient Israel. This offering was given with the expectation of being accepted by God as it was waved. Spiritually speaking, this “Wave-Sheaf” was pointing symbolically to Jesus Christ and the events which followed His crucifixion, burial, and resurrection.

After Christ’s resurrection, it was necessary that He be accepted by God. Through His shed blood, Jesus paid the death penalty for our sins. Here are some additional comments from the *Ambassador College Correspondence Course* on this subject... **“COMMENT: Because Christ was a holy sacrifice, and was the FIRST human being to be resurrected, He fulfilled the symbolism of the Wave-Sheaf Offering. The morning after He was resurrected, He had to go before God the Father to be accepted, just as the High Priest in the Old Testament had to wave the sheaf of barley to be accepted by God before the spring harvest could begin. When Mary met Christ in the garden, she couldn't touch Him because His sacrifice had not yet been accepted in Heaven.”** In the book of John, we can see the example of Mary not being able to touch Jesus, prior to His ascension to the Father. **“Jesus said to her, “Do not cling to me, for I have not yet ascended to My Father; but go to My brethren, and say to them, ‘I am ascending to My Father, and your Father, and to My God, and your God’” (John 20:17).**

After Christ was accepted by the Father, He could then be touched... **“And as they went to tell his disciples, behold, Jesus met them, saying, “Rejoice!” So they came and held Him by the feet and worshipped him. Then said Jesus unto them, “Do not be afraid. Go and tell My brethren to go to Galilee, and there they will see Me”” (Matthew 28:9-10).**

“Then, the same day at evening, being the first day of the week [Sunday], when the doors were shut where the disciples were assembled, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood in the midst, and said to them, “Peace be with you”” (John 20:19). After the Wave-Sheaf was offered, the small spring harvest began. It ended with the annual Sabbath of the Feast of Firstfruits (Pentecost). Spiritually, the small spring harvest began with Jesus Christ and will ultimately include us, as firstfruits. **“But now Christ is risen from the dead, and has become the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since by man *came* death, by Man also *came* the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ all shall be made alive” (I Corinthians 15:20-23).**

Gary R. Liebold

MYSTERY OF THE AGES

*Did you ever ask yourself: "Who am I?
What am I? Why am I?" You are a mystery.
The world about you is a mystery.
Now, you can understand!*

HERBERT W. ARMSTRONG

OVERVIEW SERIES: MYSTERY OF THE AGES



(PART SIX)

MYSTERY OF THE CHURCH

*Since **Mystery of the Ages** basically consists of 363 pages, it takes time and dedication to sit down and read in its entirety. So, to inspire all of us to read this book, if we haven't done so recently, **The Lantern** has been presenting a series of overview articles intended to cover all the main seven chapters, the seven mysteries of the Bible that Mr. Armstrong has written about. Please remember that these overview articles are simply meant to serve as a summary, or encouragement, to read the book and are not meant to take the place of reading it on our own. Now we will continue with the sixth main chapter in **Mystery of The Ages**: "The Mystery of The Church."*

Gary Liebold

To summarize the previous five articles from *The Lantern* magazine's "Mystery of the Ages" overview series, which began in February 2025: the first issue of 2025 provided an overview of the book's first chapter, focusing on the mystery of who and what God is. The next article of this series, found in the May 2025 *Lantern* magazine, discussed the subject of angels and evil spirits.

The third article, about the mystery of man, can be found in the August 2025 issue of *The Lantern* magazine, with the fourth chapter in the November 2025 *Lantern* magazine issue covering the mystery of civilization.

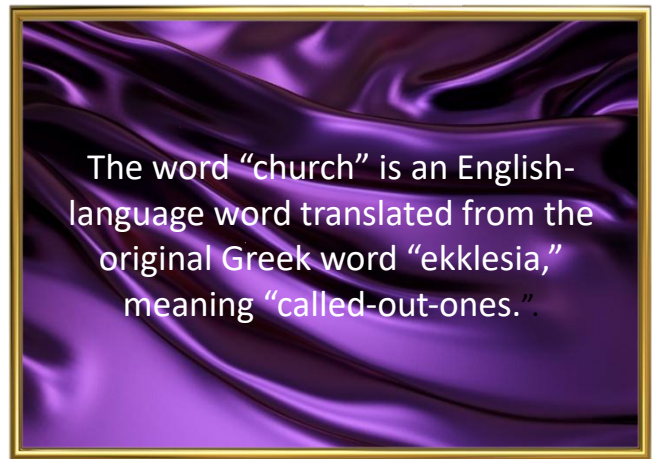
Starting this year, 2026, the fifth article in this overview series, is about the mystery of Israel, published in the February 2026 issue. Together,

these form a continuous thread of understanding the elements of God's Master Plan for mankind, and how they all weave together. In this article we shall view the Church in its true relationship to all the events described in the first five chapters of this book.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

The true purpose and meaning of the Church is as little understood as the Bible itself! The revelation of the mystery of the meaning of the Church must come as a shocking truth to most people once they start to understand about it, because its purpose has remained hidden from even the modern Christian world. The gospel of Jesus Christ was not proclaimed to the world from about A.D. 50 until the year 1953, and the apostle Paul foretold this when he said, **"But even if our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them" (II Corinthians 4:3-4).**

The true Church, founded by Jesus Christ, has an all-important meaning to every human life that ever lived, yet almost no one has ever known that meaning. The word "church" is an English-language word translated from the original Greek word "ekklesia," meaning "called-out-ones." In some respects, the word congregation is synonymous with the word

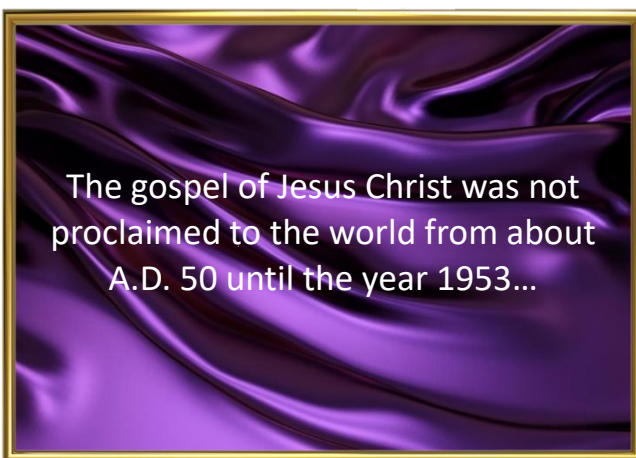


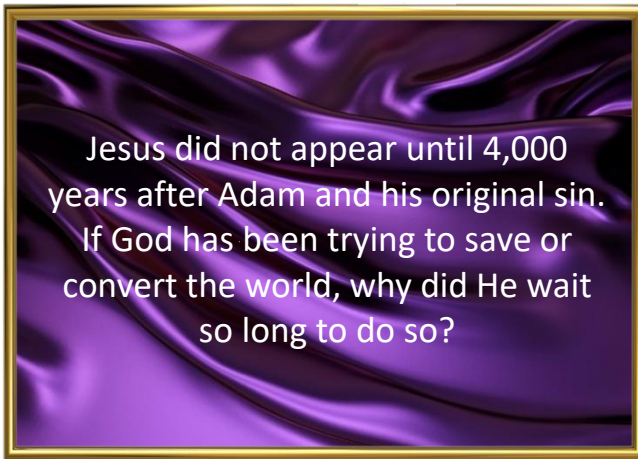
"church." For example, Old Testament Israel was usually called by the term "congregation." Yet there is a distinct difference between the terms "church" and "congregation." The congregation of Israel was a separate entity, as a separate nation, but they were not the called-out-ones spiritually in the same sense that characterizes the New Testament Church.

What has been hidden from the world is the real purpose of the Church; the real reason why Jesus Christ, the second Adam, founded the Church. The Church is not the instrument by which God is trying to "save the world," or to invite people to "give their hearts to him," or to "accept him as their personal savior."

THE INSTITUTION OF THE CHURCH

The institution of the Church, at first glance, may not seem to be a mystery. The modern Western world takes the fact of the existence of churches for granted, as a part of everyday civilized life. If you ask people in the world about this subject, they will probably have few answers because they know little about the Church. Those with a more modern view of Christianity would probably say the Church exists merely as an emotional lift, or that the Church is God's instrument in his effort to "save" the world from an eternal "hell fire." However, if the Church came into existence for the purpose of "getting people saved," then by what means did God try to save people prior to





Christ's founding of the Church? Jesus did not appear until 4,000 years after Adam and his original sin. If God has been trying to save or convert the world, ask yourself, why did He wait so long to do so?

As we have seen in **Genesis 3:23**, God closed the tree of life at the foundation of the world. The Holy Spirit and salvation were shut off from the world during all these years. In view of the facts revealed by God in **Genesis 3**, all these worldly ideas about the meaning of the Church are wrong. They only underline the fact, as expressed in **Revelation 12:9**, that the whole world has been deceived by Satan the devil. Their minds have been blinded to the truth about God's purpose for humanity as stated in **II Corinthians 4:3-4**. The existence of the Church is indeed a mystery to nearly everyone on the face of this earth, but for those who look, the facts of the Church's origin and its purpose are revealed in the Holy Bible!

This very subject of the mystery of the church shows us the fact that not having lived through and seen events of the past 6,000 years that led up to the present, we do not grasp the real meaning or purpose of the Church. Most people think of the Church as a building with a peaked roof, a steeple pointing towards the sky and a cross on the front. Webster defines the word "church" as "a building," although it was something altogether different when originally

founded. Most people think a church is a building to which parishioners gather on a Sunday morning for "worship." As founded in the New Testament, the Church went to a building, mostly at first just a private home, and the Church assembled on the seventh day, not Sunday.

Some may know Christ started the Church, but He only founded one Church. Yet in the Western world today there are many different churches -- Catholic, Protestant, and innumerable more. Within each of them are many denominations, sects and congregations, each with its differing teachings, beliefs, and programs.

The Church started out as one Church, as is recorded in **I Corinthians 12**, composed of many members, but only the one body, the one true Church of which Jesus Christ was the Head. In **Matthew 16:18**, where Jesus was speaking to Simon Peter, He said, "**I will build my church.**" Furthermore, in **Ephesians 5:23** it is stated that Christ is the Head of the Church. The Church belongs to God, with Jesus Christ as its founder and living head, which is why the name of the true church is the Church of God (**John 17:11-17**).

Jesus said His true Church was to be kept in the name of the Father... God! In five passages where the true name of the Church appears (**Acts 20:28; I Corinthians 10:32; I Corinthians 11:22; I Corinthians 15:9; Galatians 1:13**), the entire body of Christ -- the Church as a whole -- is indicated. So, when speaking of the entire Church, including all its individual members on earth, the name is "**The Church of God.**"

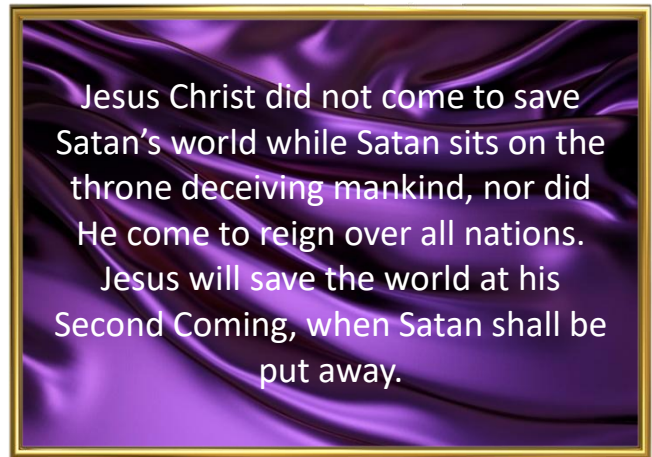
This church is important to God, and therefore it is vital that we come to understand the truth about it, to understand why the living Christ created it, what it is, and where it fits into the divine purpose being worked out here below.

CHURCH OF THE OLD AND NEW TESTAMENTS

The function of Old Testament Israel was to prepare for the ultimate establishment of the Kingdom of God. The first mention in the Bible of the existence of the Church is **Acts 7:38**, where it speaks of “**the church in the wilderness**” under Moses at Mt. Sinai. So Old Testament Israel was the “Church” and is most generally referred to as the “Congregation of Israel.”

However, the Church of the New Testament is entirely different, with a completely different purpose than the Old Testament “Congregation of Israel.” The gospel, meaning “**good news,**” could not be proclaimed to the world, nor could God’s called congregation of people have the Holy Spirit until Jesus had qualified to take His place as head of the Church by overcoming Satan, and had been glorified after ascension to heaven (**John 7:37-39**). This is something not even the theologians and church leaders of our day understand.

Jesus had to qualify to replace Satan on that throne ruling the earth and to start the government of God on the earth through those called out from Satan’s world. He came with the message from God called the gospel -- the message sent by him from God about the good news of the Kingdom of God. As we can see from the scriptures, the Kingdom of God is

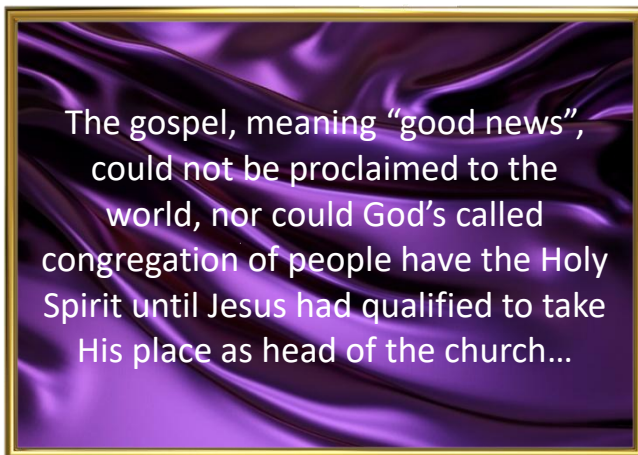


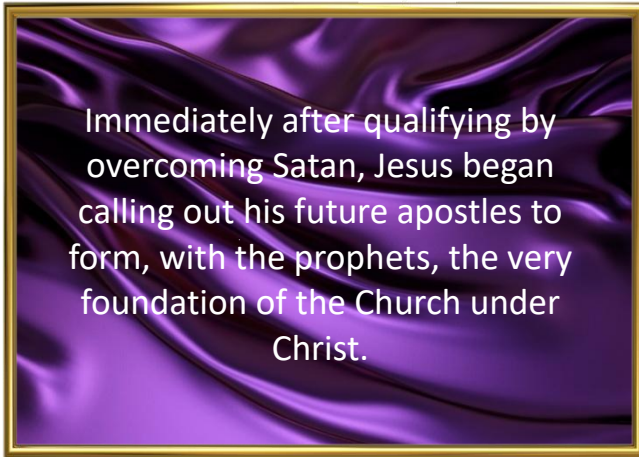
to be the restoration of the government of God over the earth and the removal of Satan from that throne. Jesus had to pay the price -- His death -- to pay the penalty incurred by all humans for their sins, but He also came to build the Church.

WHY JESUS CAME

Jesus Christ did not come to save Satan’s world while Satan sits on the throne deceiving mankind, nor did He come to reign over all nations. Jesus will save the world at his Second Coming, when Satan shall be put away. As we read above, He came to qualify, where the first Adam failed, to replace the former archangel Lucifer on the throne of the earth, ruling with the government of God. He also came to announce the future establishment of the Kingdom of God and teach that prophetic gospel, the good news, to his chosen future apostles. He had come to take on himself, as our Creator, the penalty for our sins by his death, and then be resurrected from the dead by God, making possible eternal life for the people of God and, after his Second Coming, for those who are willing of all humanity who have ever lived on this earth. Finally, He came to establish God’s true Church, to be trained to rule under Him.

Jesus Christ, the second Adam, had qualified to re-establish God’s Government and set up the Kingdom of God on the earth! Never until that





moment could the good news of the coming Kingdom of God be announced to the world! This meant, therefore, that the Church must also qualify to rule with Him! Jesus came, among other purposes, to call His Church out of the world.

Those called out who had been in this world, each bringing on themselves by sin the supreme death penalty. Jesus' life was greater in value than that of all humanity collectively! He paid that supreme death penalty, not only for those called into His Church, but ultimately to free all humanity each in his due time! This enormous act gives us a grasp of how great Jesus is, who came to found the Church of God!

Although the Church could not be founded until Jesus had ascended and been glorified (**John 7:37-39**), God began calling out some to form the foundation of the Church; with Abraham and the prophets of the Old Testament, men such as Abel, Enoch and Noah (**Ephesians 2:20**). Immediately after qualifying by overcoming Satan, Jesus began calling out His future apostles to form, with the prophets, the very foundation of the Church under Christ. He is the real foundation and Head of the Church (**I Corinthians 3:11; Ephesians 5:23**).

WHAT AND WHY THE CHURCH?

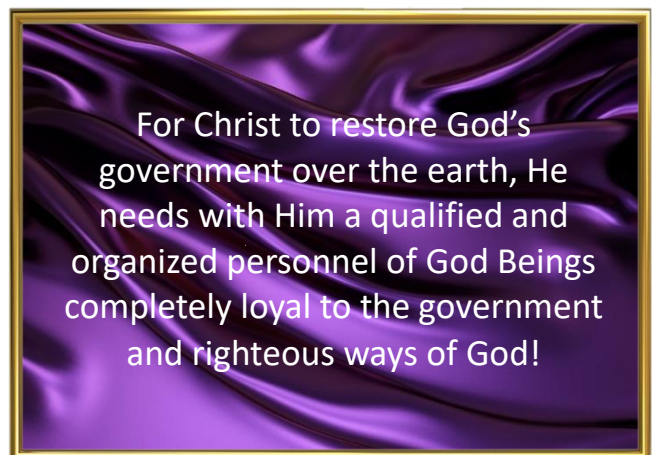
So why, then, should there be the Church of God? What is the Church? To many in this

world, the Church plays no part in their lives. God Himself plays no part in their lives, just people, material things and interests. God just does not seem real to them, and they have no conception of what He is, why He is, or of any purpose or meaning for His being. Yet God exists and so, too, does the Church.

We have seen that in the previous chapters that there is indeed a purpose being worked out here below. Winston Churchill stated that in a 1941 speech before the United States Congress. There is a purpose for the presence of humanity on the earth, and God has a Master Plan for that purpose, of which the Church is an important part.

We must never lose sight of the fact God is now reproducing himself in man. For Christ to restore God's government over the earth, He needs with Him a qualified and organized personnel of God Beings completely loyal to the government and righteous ways of God! God's Church was designed to prepare that dedicated and organized personnel of God beings comprising the Church to become God's instruments in bringing about the salvation to humanity.

God has set out this 7,000-year Master Plan for accomplishing His purpose. Reproducing himself means converting the world from sin into God's righteousness and instilling within God's potential children the perfect spiritual



character of God. They would become finally born sons in the God Family. Just as God has created everything in successive stages, so too He is bringing salvation to the world in such stages, and the Church is the necessary instrument to bring salvation to humanity. Clearly, the purpose of the Church is not just to give salvation to those called into the Church but to teach and train those called into the Church to work together to bring the world to salvation.

THE CHURCH IS A TEACHER'S COLLEGE

In times past, many states in America have "teachers' colleges," because the states could not start or conduct schools until they had first trained teachers for those schools. In like mind, the Church may be called God's teachers' college to prepare rulers and teachers for their work in the Kingdom of God. The Church was planned to be God's way of calling predestinated people out of this world to be trained for positions of leadership to teach and train others in the World Tomorrow.

That is the reason the Church in the New Testament is called the firstfruits of God's salvation. We must remember that the Holy Spirit was closed to humanity at the time of Adam's sin at the very foundation of the recreated world until Christ could unseat Satan from the throne of the earth and restore the government of God. That fact is made clear by Jesus' statement in **John 6:44**, that no person could come to Him except the Father that sent Him draws them. This is why those in the Church are referred to as having been called or chosen, and why the Church is called a chosen generation.

It is only through Christ that sinning humanity may be reconciled to God the Father -- they must first come to Christ. However, no person can come to Christ except God the Father selects and draws them. One cannot just "join"

the true Church of God: they must first be selected and drawn by God the Father through His Spirit, brought to a complete heartrending repentance, believing Jesus Christ and accepting Him as their personal Savior. Christ is the Word of God -- the Word of God in Person -- while the Bible is the same Word of God in writing. To believe Christ is to believe what He says in God's Word, the Holy Bible.

THE CHURCH - THE FIRST HARVEST

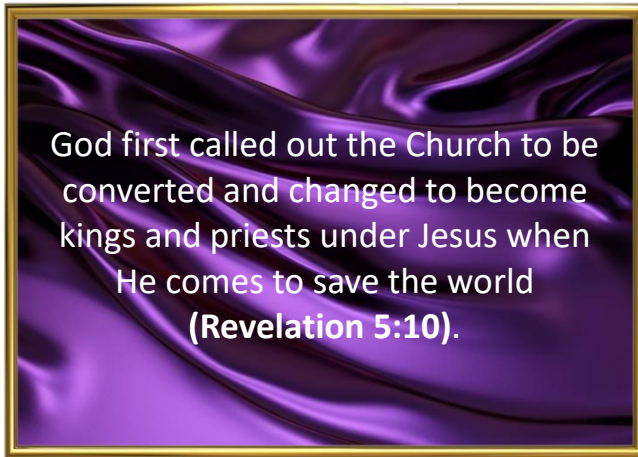
As pictured by Pentecost, the third of God's annual Holy Days, the Church was to provide the first actual harvest of mortal humans being



changed into Spirit-composed God beings, prepared to be used with and under Christ in completing God's wonderful purpose of saving humanity and reproducing Himself. The Church will be the firstborn harvest (**Hebrews 12:23**) at Christ's coming in power and glory!

All throughout the years from Abraham until Jesus Christ, God had called out specially prepared prophets from Satan's world as part of the foundation of God's Church. Jesus Himself is the main foundation, and during His earthly ministry, He called out, chose and trained an integral part of that foundation, His original twelve apostles.

During His ministry, Jesus publicly announced the future Kingdom of God, and He taught and



trained His apostles as he proceeded. However, although He spoke to them in parables, He did not call the public to whom He preached salvation. He deliberately spoke in parables to cloud or hide from them the meaning (**Matthew 13:10-16**) that was given to His chosen apostles to understand. God first called out the Church to be converted and changed to become kings and priests under Jesus when He comes to save the world (**Revelation 5:10**). Consequently, while much of the truth was revealed to the Church, which was being trained to assist Christ in saving the world, it was not time to reveal these truths to the world.

God's feast days picture God's spiritual harvest where the very first portion of God's spiritual harvest of humans will finally be born to be God like God Himself! God is the Church, which is why those who shall be born into the Kingdom of God at Christ's return will be part of the Church of God. All the prophets, apostles and Church brethren in whom resides the Holy Spirit shall be resurrected and changed to immortality at Christ's coming in glory and power! Thus, the whole Church constitutes the very first humans who shall be finally born again into the kingdom of God.

HOW THE CHURCH IS ORGANIZED

Although the churches of this world are organized according to humanly devised rituals

and traditions, the Bible gives clear directions regarding His Church government. God's form of government is hierarchical, from the top down, so to speak. Jesus Christ is the Head of the Church, and God the Father is head over Christ -- the sole Lawgiver and supreme authority. In **I Corinthians 12:1-13**, God explains about the functions, offices, and administrations as God set them in His Church. He emphasized that there are differences among all the components of the members of the Church -- after all, we are not all "yellow pencils" -- but that **"It is the same God which worketh all in all."** God wants us to understand that once we are members in His Church, we are all **"ONE BODY."**

We need to understand that there is only one true Church! The Church is not divided into a parent church and many little daughter churches that have split off in disagreement throughout the years. We can also see that the Church conducts various operations.

Administrators are set in the Church merely to supervise, direct, execute the policies, procedures, and doctrines assigned to them from God's Word, the Bible. For example, in the United States the President does not make the laws -- he administers the policies as functions authorized by Congress, enforcing the laws made by Congress.

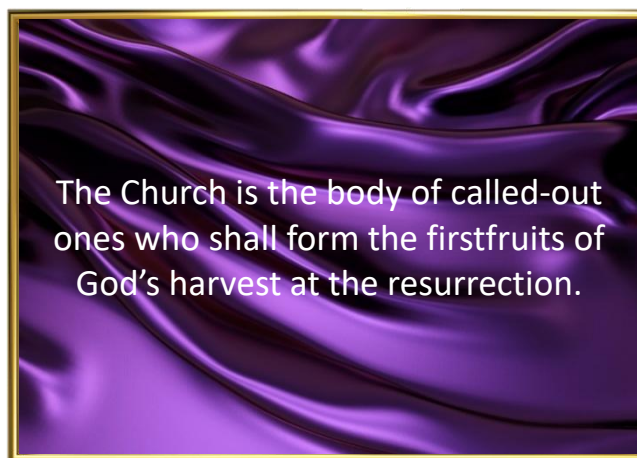
To administer these many operations within God's Church, God, **"...gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ"** (**Ephesians 4:11-12**). The Church is the spiritual Body of Christ, highly and divinely organized, not a secular or worldly organization, club or institution.

The Church is organized under theocratic government, hierarchical in form. God sets

every member in a specific place in the Church, even the lay members (**I Corinthians 12:18**). Jesus said explicitly, **“No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him” (John 6:44)**. The world, except for the specially called, is cut off from God! God himself sets officials to serve on the human level under Christ, in the Church. The members do not set officials in the Church, nor do they elect them. The Church is the body of called-out ones who shall form the firstfruits of God’s harvest at the resurrection. That harvest is the reaping of physical human beings who shall be born again into divine immortal God beings in whom God is reproducing Himself. **Ephesians 4:13** states, **“Till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ.”**

This is not a matter of having “made it into the kingdom” upon being baptized, but a matter of spiritual growth and development in knowledge and in righteous character! This is why God has placed the hierarchical form of government in His Church. He wants it to be established as God at the top, going down to others from Him, not from the bottom up. It is the same government by which Christ shall rule all nations beginning with the Millennium! God’s Church, then, is that body called out from Satan’s world prepared to restore, with and under Christ, the Government of God. That shall be the time when Satan shall have been removed and all men living shall be called to repentance and salvation with eternal life through the Holy Spirit of God!

The Church shall be ruling with Christ and finally replacing the present rule of Satan! **“Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the**



whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Ephesians 2:19-22). This shows organized unity and harmony! It is commanded that those in the Church be so united that they **“all speak the same thing” (I Corinthians 1:10).**

BASIS FOR BELIEFS

Doctrinally, the Church is called to help restore the kingdom, government, and character of God, including God’s law, the foundation of His Government! The teaching and beliefs of God’s true Church are related directly to the purpose of the Church now, to call out of the present world disciples to be trained to become kings and priests, teachers in God’s World Tomorrow when God will open the Tree of Life, which is salvation and immortality, to all flesh.

Satan has deceived this world’s churches into the belief that God’s law was done away and that Jesus, rather than paying the price for all humanity for transgressing the law, “did away with it by nailing it to the cross.” What was nailed to that stake so long ago was Christ our sin bearer, who took on Himself our sins, paying the death penalty in our stead, so that we are freed from the ultimate penalty of sinning, not made free to sin with impunity.

(Continued on page 35)

THE BEATITUDES

FROM THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

What do we think of when we hear the words, “Sermon on the Mount?” Most likely, we visualize Jesus speaking to His disciples as well as the multitudes. Perhaps we



Mount near Capernaum
and the Sea of Galilee

think of Jesus describing the salt of the earth and being the light of the world (Matthew 5:13-16). Or perhaps Christ’s revelation of the full and true spiritual intent of God’s law (Matthew 5:21-28). Well, the above are points found in what is called the “Sermon on the Mount,” but the beginning of this sermon contains some very wise teachings that many often overlook -- “The Beatitudes,” or we could say, “the beautiful attitudes.”

Gary Liebold

In Matthew’s account of the Sermon on the Mount (**Matthew 5:1-11**), Jesus delivers eight specific Beatitudes. However, Luke’s account not only includes the eight Beatitudes but also includes corresponding “woes” (**Luke 6:24-26**). These woes are “**woe to those who are rich**”, those “**who are full**,” those “**who laugh now**,” and woes “**when all men speak well of you**.” This is not a contradiction between the accounts listed in Matthew and Luke. Luke just adds more detail of what Jesus spoke of.

Matthew 5 and **Luke 6** both provide parallel accounts of Jesus Christ’s teachings on the Beatitudes. The message of Christ in **Matthew 5** is commonly known as the “Sermon on the

Mount,” whereas Luke’s version is often called the “sermon on the plain.” These two descriptions of the delivery of Christ’s message are not contradictions, although minor parts of the descriptive nature of this event are different. **Matthew 5:1** speaks of Christ going up on a mountain (likely a hill), and His disciples coming up to Him, while **Luke 6:17** speaks of Him coming down with them to stand in the plain (or according to the Greek word, a “level spot”).

These two accounts are parts of the same event, recording different moments within the same time frame, like modern times when a minister would conduct a Bible Study while first standing and opening with prayer, but being

seated just prior to the study. Before we look more specifically at each of the Beatitudes, we need to understand the depth of the meaning of what a Beatitude means. First, the definition of the word "Beatitude" means "blessed or having complete happiness." Next, it is important to realize that the Beatitudes are comprised of three key elements. These are...

1. Each Beatitude gives a pronouncement of blessings.
2. Each Beatitude provides an illustration of who will inherit God's Kingdom.
3. Each Beatitude describes an aspect of the coming Kingdom of God.

Understanding this information on what, exactly, the Beatitudes are, let's look specifically at each of them with an eye to applying them in our lives.

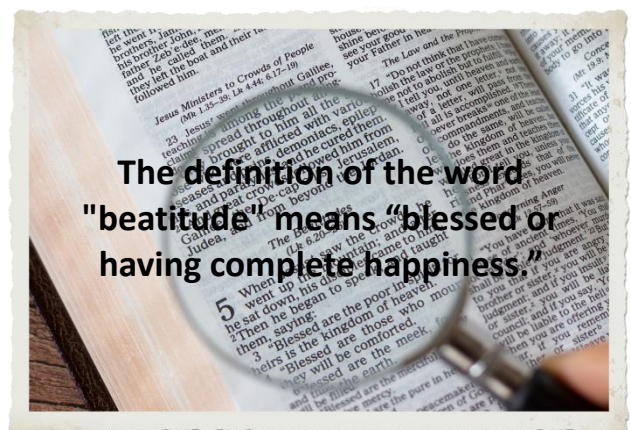
BLESSED ARE THE POOR IN SPIRIT

The FIRST Beatitude, found in **Matthew 5:3**, states: "**Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**" Dissecting the actual meaning of this Beatitude, the first element is distinctly present with the very first word, "blessed." Here we see Christ's pronouncement of lasting happiness for this person, because to be "**poor in spirit**" means that we don't have any spiritual resources within our human selves apart from God, and therefore we must look to Him for His help, depending FULLY upon Him. We then become truly humble, and once we do, we learn to depend on God, to lean on Him for direction and guidance in our lives. Then we develop true happiness and inner peace.

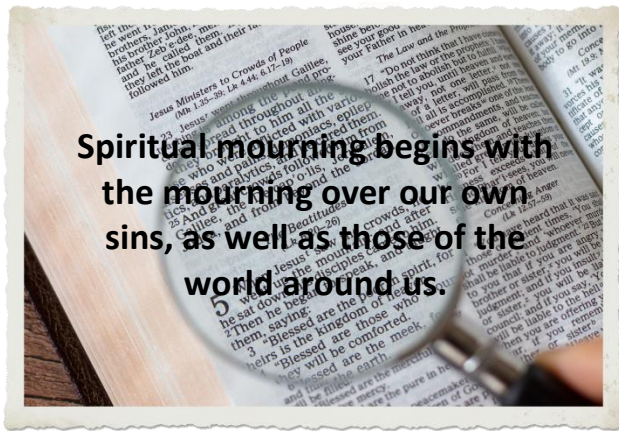
The second element, or component, of this beatitude is that the "**poor in spirit**" inherit the Kingdom of God. The statement "**poor in spirit**" is really a frame of mind. While alive on this earth in human form, we need to recognize our own spiritual poverty apart from God and our total dependence on Him. We need to be

seeking, in every aspect of our life, to do God's will as it is revealed in the Bible. Those of us who do so, who are truly humble and esteem others better than themselves (**Philippians 2:3**), will be blessed beyond all earthly riches to be in God's Kingdom. So, then, the third element of the first Beatitude here describes this special aspect of God's Kingdom. Those who are poor in spirit, who are filled with humility while depending upon God for guidance and assistance in their daily lives, will be personally blessed. This very attitude is demonstrated most poignantly in the story of Hannah, as found in **I Samuel 1**.

Hannah was one of two wives of a man named Elkanah, and although she was loved by Elkanah, she was anguished because she was unable to conceive a child. In her sorrow, she prayed humbly, tearfully, before God at the temple, asking for a child, whom she promised to give back to God for His service. When Eli, the priest in the temple, inquired of her, she told him, "**I am a woman of sorrowful spirit. I have drunk neither wine nor intoxicating drink, but have poured out my soul before the LORD**" (**I Samuel 1:15**).



Continuing the story, we see in **I Samuel 1:20** that "**It came to pass in the process of time that Hannah conceived and bore a son, and called his name Samuel, saying, 'Because I have asked for him from the LORD.'**" Hannah looked to God entirely! Again, we know that we



Spiritual mourning begins with the mourning over our own sins, as well as those of the world around us.

don't have any spiritual resources within our human selves apart from God. Hannah looked to God for His help and He gave it. **"The righteous cry out, and the LORD hears, And delivers them out of all their troubles. The LORD is near to those who have a broken heart, And saves such as have a contrite spirit. Many are the afflictions of the righteous, But the LORD delivers him out of them all"** (Psalm 34:17-19).

Being **"poor in spirit"** means that we know we don't have any spiritual resources within our human selves apart from God. Therefore, like Hannah, we must look to Him for His help and depend fully upon Him. **"Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 5:3).

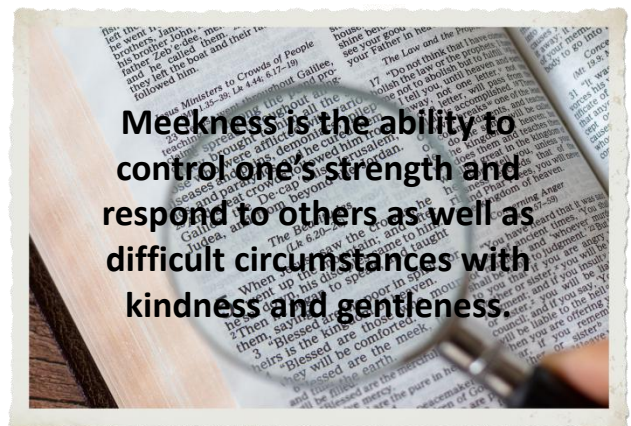
BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO MOURN

In **Matthew 5:4**, we can read the **SECOND** of the eight Beatitudes given by Jesus Christ in the Sermon on the Mount. **"Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted."** Does this refer to those who are depressed and in a perpetual state of crying? Of course not! This scripture speaks of a state of spiritual mourning. Spiritual mourning is not a matter of pouting and going around with a long, sad face. Spiritual mourning begins with mourning over our own sins, as well as those of the world around us. When we look at the Beatitude of **Matthew 5:4**, we see again those three elements of every Beatitude. As it is with all the

Beatitudes, the first component of the scripture pronounces Christ's blessing of lasting happiness. The second component of the Beatitude here tells that those who mourn will receive the gift of comfort, which leads to the third element, an aspect of the coming Kingdom of God, a time of enduring comfort. David quite often mourned over his own sins. **Psalms 51:2-4** is just one example. **"Wash me thoroughly from my iniquity, and cleanse me from my sin. For I acknowledge my transgressions, and my sin is always before me. Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight -- that You may be found just when You speak, and blameless when You judge."**

David continued in verses **9-13**, **"Hide Your face from my sins, and blot out all my iniquities. Create in me a clean heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me. Do not cast me away from Your presence, and do not take Your Holy Spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of Your salvation, And uphold me by Your generous Spirit. Then I will teach transgressors your ways, and sinners shall be converted to You."**

David acknowledged his sins to God instead of trying to hide them away, and he repented deeply, mournfully, of them, knowing that God is merciful and would forgive him, as He does us. God provides comfort for a repentant sinner. **"Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted"** (Matthew 5:4).



Meekness is the ability to control one's strength and respond to others as well as difficult circumstances with kindness and gentleness.

BLESSED ARE THE MEEK

One of the most beautiful of the Beatitudes begins with this simple message: **“Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth” (Matthew 5:5).** This THIRD beatitude emphasizes a humble and gentle attitude towards others, a critical key component that every true Christian must have. Meekness is not weakness. It is the ability to control one’s strength and respond to others as well as difficult circumstances with kindness and gentleness. The Christian who is meek will exhibit this characteristic in the way they conduct their daily lives.

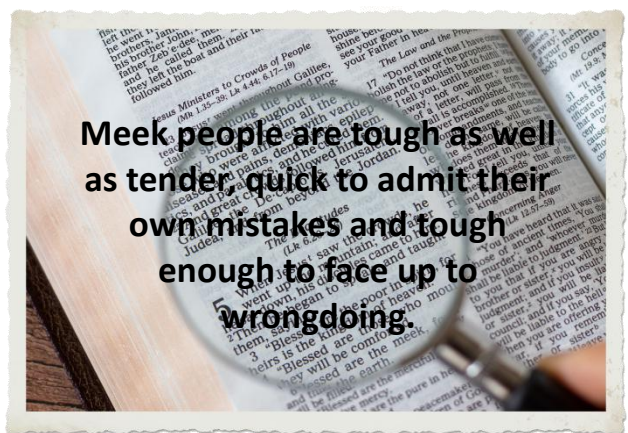
As with the other Beatitudes listed before it, the Beatitude of **Matthew 5:5** contains three components that meld together to deliver a beautiful promise to those who exhibit meekness and humility. The first part of these components is Christ’s proclamation of lasting happiness, as found in the definition of the word “blessed.” Meekness is part of the equation that will bring complete happiness and peace to God’s chosen people.

The second element of this Beatitude is the promise to the meek of a special inheritance: they shall inherit the earth. **“But the meek shall inherit the earth, And shall delight themselves in the abundance of peace” (Psalm 37:11),** which leads us to the third part of the promise of this Beatitude, which describes another aspect of the coming Kingdom of God. We are to be part of the administration of God’s government here on earth. We shall inherit, or take part in, the governance of the earth in addition to being born into God’s Kingdom.

In the account of **I Samuel 24:1-20**, David displayed meekness in his attitude and interaction with Saul at a time when Saul was actively hunting him down to kill him. David had undetected access to Saul at a time when he was vulnerable, yet he did not choose to strike Saul down in retribution for all Saul had put him

through. In **verses 10-11**, David said, **“Look, this day your eyes have seen that the LORD delivered you today into my hand in the cave, and someone urged me to kill you. But my eye spared you, and I said, “I will not stretch out my hand against my lord, for he is the LORD’S anointed.” Moreover, my father, see... know and see that there is neither evil nor rebellion in my hand, and I have not sinned against you.”**

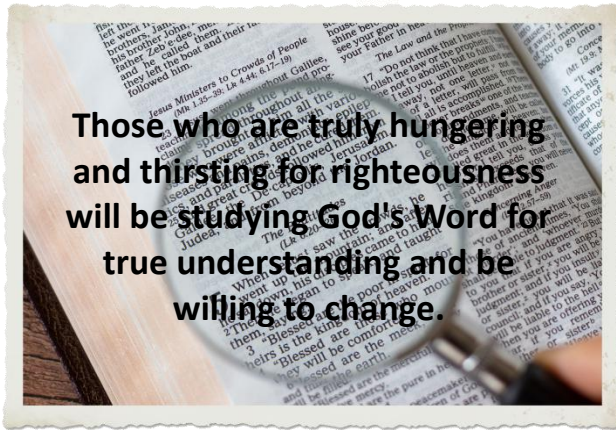
David had the power over Saul but due to his meek attitude and the ability to control his strength and power at the time, he chose to be merciful to Saul. David showed meekness towards Saul, not weakness. Just like David’s example, as true Christians, we will exhibit this



characteristic in the way we conduct our daily lives. Humility does not mean weakness! There is the difference between being meek and being weak. Jesus was meek, but never weak! Meek people are tough as well as tender, quick to admit their own mistakes and tough enough to face up to wrongdoing. We should study and take note of these scriptures and the message of this Beatitude for it is so important to our future lives. **“Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.”**

BLESSED TO HUNGER AND THIRST AFTER RIGHTEOUSNESS

A true follower of Jesus Christ, a real Christian, will be **“hungry and thirsting”** for



Those who are truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be studying God's Word for true understanding and be willing to change.

righteousness, the FOURTH Beatitude. **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled” (Matthew 5:6).** To **“hunger and thirst”** for righteousness is to be deeply motivated to obey God and to keep His laws. Those who are truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be studying God's Word for true understanding and be willing to change when they've been wrong, admitting their mistakes and their sins.

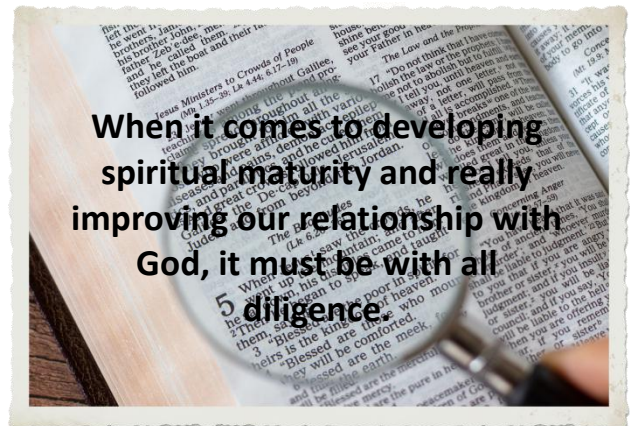
Once again, we can look at the three key elements contained in every one of the Beatitudes. The scripture begins with the word, “blessed,” which we now know pronounces lasting happiness on the individuals possessing the qualities described in this Beatitude. The second part of the scripture tells that those who hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness have the promise of being spiritually filled, for they hunger and thirst for that which only God can give them. The third element here describes an aspect of the coming Kingdom, that spiritual food and living water will be available readily forever.

Revelation 2:17 shows us, **“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except him who receives it.”** Isaiah 12:2-3 also says, “

Behold, God is my salvation; I will trust, and will not be afraid; for the LORD GOD is my strength and my song, and he has become my salvation. With joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (RSV). We know that physically speaking, the deprivation of food and water, hungering and thirsting so to speak, causes severe afflictions upon the human body. Starvation can lead to muscle loss, weakness, and eventually, organ failure and death, while dehydration can cause kidney dysfunction, low blood pressure, and cardiovascular issues, again, all of which lead to death. Spiritual starvation and dehydration can also lead to serious consequences. These include...

- A lack of spiritual vitality
- Spiritual weakness
- Spiritual confusion
- A hardened heart
- A sense of distance away from God
- Spiritual death

Those who hunger and thirst for God’s righteousness realize that the more we grow in righteousness through His Spirit, the more we become aware of our thoughts, ideas, and attitudes that are not yet under God’s rule. We will realize that we need to have a deep, urgent desire to have a right relationship with God and live according to His standards. When it comes to developing spiritual maturity and really improving our relationship with God, it must be with all diligence. We must really want and desire it.



When it comes to developing spiritual maturity and really improving our relationship with God, it must be with all diligence.

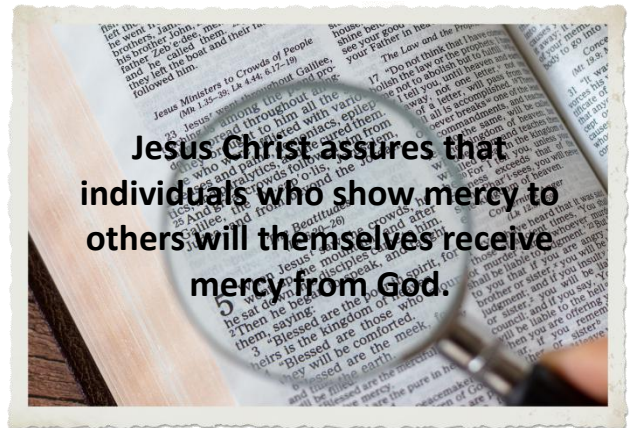
In **John 4:7-15**, we can see the story of a woman from Samaria who Jesus encountered at a local well. Jesus said to her, **“Whoever drinks of this water will thirst again, but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him will never thirst. But the water that I shall give him will become in him a fountain of water springing up into everlasting life.”** The woman said to Him, **“Sir, give me this water, that I may not thirst, nor come here to draw.”** This is but one of many biblical examples of how to recognize the need for spiritual nourishment and to ask directly for it and to be satisfied! **“Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.”**

BLESSED ARE THE MERCIFUL

Mercy! It’s such a small word but has such a tremendous meaning. The **FIFTH** Beatitude in **Matthew 5** addresses those among us who are merciful, who display an attitude of mercy as God would have us do. **“Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy” (Matthew 5:7)**. The brief biblical definition of mercy is **“the gift of God’s undeserved kindness and compassion.”** On a physical level, this attitude of mercy includes having a forgiving, non-retaliating spirit, one that does not return an injury for an injury nor attempt their own self-validation.

The first element of this Beatitude, as with all those before it, is again Christ’s declaration of happiness, true and lasting happiness, for the merciful as depicted in the word “blessed.” Jesus Christ assures that individuals who show mercy to others will themselves receive mercy from God. **“And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you” (Ephesians 4:32)**. God’s forgiveness of our sins is a tremendous part of that promise.

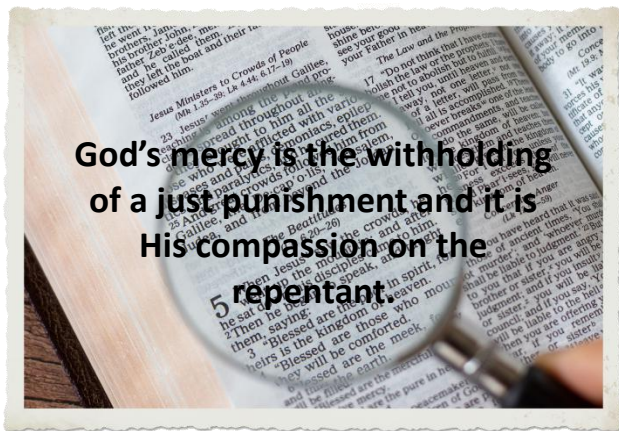
Finally, the third aspect, or element, included in the fifth Beatitude describes that the access



and honor of being part of God’s soon coming kingdom is given to the merciful due to His mercy. On a human level, mercy is the benevolent or compassionate treatment of someone suffering or in need, an attitude that moves us to act on behalf of the unfortunate. It is a gracious disposition toward others. It was mercy on the part of Joseph when he freely forgave his brothers as they stood before him in Egypt, after they had sold him into slavery and left him for dead years earlier.

Genesis 50:18-21 tells the story of Joseph and his brothers, **“Then his brothers also went and fell down before his face, and they said, “Behold, we are your servants.” Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in the place of God? But as for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive. Now therefore, do not be afraid; I will provide for you and your little ones.” And he comforted them and spoke kindly to them.”**

Later, God showed His mercy on the people of Ninevah for their many sins. Even though they didn’t fully know how to repent, their hearts were right. The account of the deliverance of God’s message by Jonah to Ninevah is found in **Jonah 3:1-10**. **“Now the word of the LORD came to Jonah the second time, saying, “Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and preach to it the message that I tell you.” So Jonah arose and went to Nineveh, according to the word of**



the LORD... Then he cried out and said, "Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown!" So the people of Nineveh believed God proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest to the least of them ... Then God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God relented from the disaster that He had said He would bring upon them, and He did not do it."

As the people of Nineveh centuries ago experienced, we, too, have received God's mercy. **Romans 11:30** notes, "For as you were once disobedient to God, yet have now obtained mercy..." God's mercy is the withholding of a just punishment and it is His compassion on the repentant. He expects those who have received His mercy to reflect His mercy and be merciful themselves. **"Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors."** (**Matthew 6:12**). We are blessed if we are merciful because mercy is something God Himself displays. The person who is merciful will be eternally happy because he has God's mercy. **"Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy"** (**Matthew 5:7**).

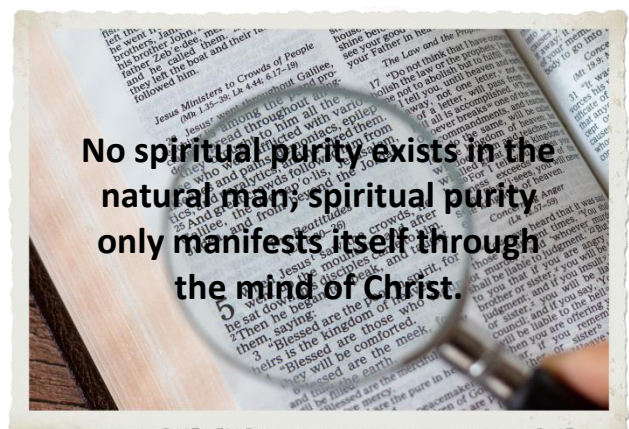
BLESSED ARE THE PURE IN HEART

The **SIXTH** Beatitude, found in **Matthew 5:8**, states, **"Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God."** The pure in heart will possess spiritual sincerity, with a spiritual genuineness and singleness of heart that transforms the Christian character. No spiritual purity exists in

the natural man; spiritual purity only manifests itself through the mind of Christ. As we have rehearsed before, there are three elements in this Beatitude, just like there are in all the previous ones. We need to remember that the very word, "blessed" contains the first key component of the Beatitude -- that of complete and lasting happiness. Next, Christ promises that the pure in heart will see God, expounding on that with the final element, that of the special aspect of the Kingdom of God that applies to those having a pure heart -- that as spirit beings they will see God forever!

God looks on the heart, the whole inner being, including our understanding, affections and will. **"...The LORD looks at the heart" (I Samuel 16:7)**. God is looking for purity in us. Purity of desires, motives and even intentions. We need to make sure that we set our thoughts and attentions on the things of God, the things above. In **Matthew 5:20**, Jesus Christ told His disciples: **"...that unless your righteousness exceeds the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven."**

If we examine our hearts, we, too, may find that our "righteousness thermometer" shifts upward when people are watching. If so, we are no better than the Pharisees, who often behaved strictly with an eye to the crowd. When they gave to the needy, it was to the accompaniment of trumpets (**Matthew 6:1-4**). When they prayed, they did so on the street



corners (**Matthew 6:16-18**), and when they fasted, they made sure it showed on their faces (**verses 16-18**). If we, too, act better, more righteous, so to speak, when others are around, then we're no better than the Pharisees. Without doing the right thing for the right reason, we can never please God.

The Greek definition for **“pure”** means to be, innocent, modest, perfect, chaste, clean and pure. These are characteristics of God himself, and the more we adopt these qualities within us, the more we can “see” Him, and become more like Him. **“Behold what manner of love the Father has bestowed on us, that we should be called children of God! Therefore the world does not know us, because it did not know Him. Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure”** (1 John 3:1-3). **“Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God”** (Matthew 5:8).

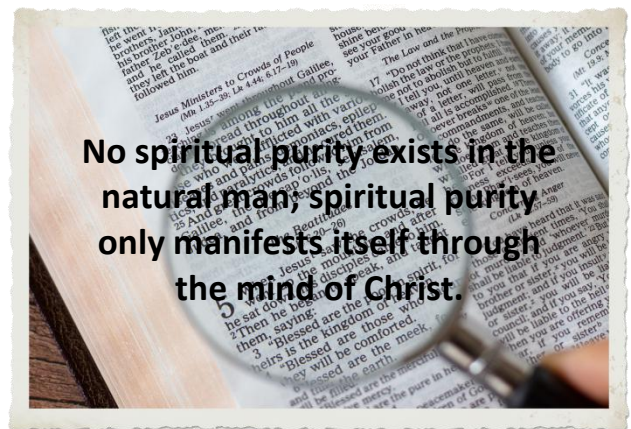
BLESSED ARE THE PEACEMAKERS

Most of the people in the world want to live at peace, to have peace in our time on the world stage. From time to time, we have seen some global wars solved, but there are still people being killed around the world due to armed conflicts between neighboring nations and even tribes of peoples. Most people want to have an absence of conflict in their personal lives as well. Just about everyone living desires peace. **Matthew 5:9** describes the **SEVENTH** Beatitude clearly, **“Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called the sons of God.”**

Real peace involves right relationships with God and our fellow man, with God's people living in total harmony with God's laws. Each of us can start by incorporating peace into our everyday lives, our interactions with our families, friends, and neighbors. After all, as Christians, we

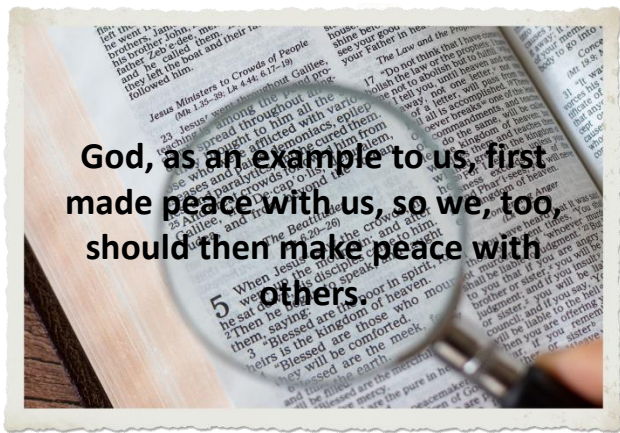
should be striving to produce the fruit of God's Holy Spirit as described in **Galatians 5:22**, **“...the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace...”** Yes... PEACE!

The seventh Beatitude is perhaps a bit special in one way from the others in that the first of the three elements commonly found in each Beatitude, containing Christ's promise of lasting happiness derived from the word “blessed”, also infers peace, for true happiness can only be had from real peace. The second component of this Beatitude includes a special promise for peacemakers, which is to be called sons of God,



with the third aspect of the coming Kingdom of God meaning to become **LITERAL** sons of God in His Kingdom! This is such a special calling and promise that it should inspire us to strive more every day to incorporate peace in our lives. We should remember, however, that this motivation towards making peace shouldn't spring from self-interest. God, as an example to us, first made peace with us, so we, too, should then make peace with others.

In **Ephesians 2:13-14**, we read, **“But now in Christ Jesus you who once were far off have been brought near by the blood of Christ. For He Himself is our peace...”** The word “peace” here in Ephesians is the Greek word, “Eirene,” meaning, “to join; peace (literal or figurative), quietness, rest, set at one again.” Continuing in verses **17-22**, **“And He came and preached peace to you who were afar off and to those**



God, as an example to us, first made peace with us, so we, too, should then make peace with others.

who were near. For through Him we both have access by one Spirit to the Father. Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God, having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner stone, in whom the whole building, being joined together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit.” What a beautiful message!

Romans 14:17-19 also expands our understanding of just how important it is for us to each make and pursue peace in our lives. **“For the kingdom of God is not eating and drinking, but righteousness and peace and joy in the Holy Spirit. For he who serves Christ in these things is acceptable to God and approved by men. Therefore let us pursue the things which make for peace and the things by which one may edify another.”** No wonder that Matthew 5:9 says, **“Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.”**

BLESSED FOR PERSECUTION

The EIGHTH and final Beatitude given by God is found in Matthew 5:10-12. **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for**

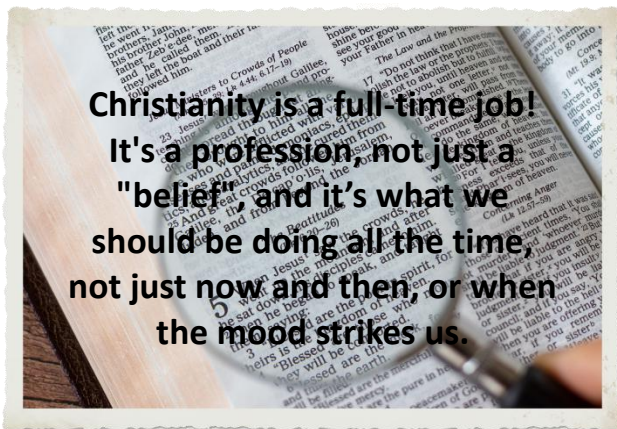
My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.” This Beatitude has a great deal of meaning for us in these turbulent times. Christians around the world are being persecuted, sometimes even to death, for their beliefs. Being **“persecuted for righteousness' sake”** means being opposed because of right living and our Christian beliefs and faith in God.

The three elements that are found in every one of the preceding Beatitudes are also present here in the final one. Once again, we see Christ's pronouncement of lasting happiness in the word “blessed.” That is the first part of the meaning of these scriptures. Next, we see the promise to those who are persecuted for their beliefs of a place in God's Kingdom. The third element, an aspect of God's coming Kingdom, will be a reward that lasts forever.

Persecution can come in many forms, including sarcasm over your beliefs all the way to taunting, oppression and torment. Perhaps even death. Persecution can also come from various sources, some of which may seem incredible to consider. These might be from the government, neighbors, or even our own families. In the most radical form, persecution can come from religious fanatics. What do we think the Mullahs of Iran and other radical Islamic groups, perhaps even those here unknowingly in the U.S., would do to us if they could, over our Christian beliefs?

There are three types of persecution spoken of in Matthew 5:11. The first of these concerns reviling, which is verbal abuse or castigation. The Greek definition of the word “persecution” comprises the second type of trouble we may experience. This Greek word means “to pursue”, “to harass”, or “to cause trouble”, and can be applied either physically or verbally. The third type of persecution commonly found is defamation of character. **“Blessed are you**

when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.” We must be ready for this and look to God for His protection. If we come face to face with persecution, then people will come to know, and we ourselves will know that we have a faith genuine enough to stand fast. **“Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven. Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you” (Matthew 5:10-12).**



GREAT IS YOUR REWARD AHEAD

Millions of professing Christians hear sermons preached from the famous “Beatitudes” of **Matthew 5**. They might be inspired and encouraged as they listen to beautifully delivered and carefully phrased dissertations about the **“poor in spirit,”** or **“the merciful,”** or the **“pure in heart.”** but how many of these millions truly understand the depth of meaning contained in these scriptures?

How many take the message to heart and try to incorporate these beautiful attitudes, these Beatitudes, into their lives? We should! Believe it or not, Christianity is a full-time job! It's a profession, not just a "belief," and it's what we should be doing all the time, not just now and then, or when the mood strikes us. Jesus

Christ's simple teachings of the Beatitudes are spiritual blockbusters far too revolutionary for those practicing other religions in this world. His message of the Beatitudes in the Sermon on the Mount was not intended to be platitudes or prettily spoken poetry.

Notice the reaction of the people present at the end of His sermon. **“And so it was, when Jesus had ended these sayings, that the people were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.” (Matthew 7:28, 29).** He taught them with the authority of God!

Finally, to summarize once again, here are the eight Beatitudes Christ spoke and taught in **Matthew 5:1-10...**

- **Blessed are the poor in spirit, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**
- **Blessed are those who mourn, For they shall be comforted.**
- **Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth.**
- **Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled.**
- **Blessed are the merciful, For they shall obtain mercy.**
- **Blessed are the pure in heart, For they shall see God.**
- **Blessed are the peacemakers, For they shall be called sons of God.**
- **Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake, For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.**

These beautiful attitudes describe the character and conduct of a converted Christian. If these attributes define who we are, who we become, and the future ahead for us is glorious. It is these qualities that are required as literal Sons of God in His Kingdom! ♦



REFLECTING ON THE TRIBE OF DAN

The Tribe of Dan, descendants from one of Jacob's twelve sons recorded in the Bible, is one of the most mysterious and puzzling tribes of Israel. This tribe went all the way from receiving a divine inheritance from God to being completely omitted from the list of tribes sealed by God in Revelation. The history and journey of the Tribe of Dan is unlike any other of his brothers. This tribe, once so full of promise, was later associated with betrayal and idolatry, and is not mentioned in Revelation 7 among the 144,000.

Don Metzler

This article reflects the lessons we can learn from the Tribe of Dan. The history of the tribe of Dan is very instructive to us in that it contains multiple examples of the tendency of mankind to follow their own, self-made religion over God's true faith. This is totally contrary to the scriptures in the Bible that teach us that, **"...without faith it is impossible to please Him, for he who comes to God must believe that He is, and that He is a rewarder of those who diligently seek Him (Hebrews 11:6).** Let's look at the Tribe of Dan and what lessons we as modern day Christians can learn from this ancient tribe's rise and fall.

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

Dan was the fifth son of Jacob from Bilhah, who was Rachel's handmaid. The name Dan, meaning **"he judged"** or **"judgment,"** was given

by Rachel, who saw his birth as God vindicating her barrenness. Jacob had twelve sons who became the patriarchs of the twelve tribes of Israel, and Dan was the ancestor of the Tribe of Dan and a significant figure in the Book of Genesis. Dan was born in 1566 B.C. and lived to the age of 125. He was the father of Hushim (**Genesis 46:23**), his wife was Aphlaeth, and he also had a full brother, Naphtali.

In **Genesis 49**, a dying Jacob pronounced blessings on all his sons, blessings that described the futures of their individual descendants, or tribes. Jacob's blessing to Dan is recorded in **Genesis 49:16-17** and reads: **"Dan shall judge his people as one of the tribes of Israel. Dan shall be a serpent by the way, a viper by the path, that bites the horse's heels so that its rider shall fall backward."** These verses describe Dan as a judge and vindicator of

his people, but also as a “serpent by the way” or a “viper by the path” (**Genesis 49:16-17**). We can easily understand the first part of the blessing, since the very meaning of the name Dan involves judgment, but the second part of the blessing could leave us scratching our heads in wonder until we understand his future actions, as we will investigate further into this article.

One of the twelve tribes that left Egyptian slavery under Moses, Dan, among the others, entered the promised land forty years later and amassed 64,000 men, aged twenty and above, who could go to war (**Numbers 26:43**). As the Israelites came into the land of Canaan, certain areas of territory were assigned by lot to each tribe. The tribe of Dan was the seventh tribe allowed to draw lots to designate their territory (**Joshua 19:40**), and they were given a tract of land that was smaller than the other land grants but was fertile and also had a boundary along the Mediterranean Sea where there was fishing and commerce available to them once they could take possession of it.

This territory designated for Dan was west of Jerusalem and extended to the Mediterranean Sea, extending north of the territory assigned to Judah and south of the territory given to Ephraim. This land was occupied by both the Amorites and Philistines, and they had much difficulty driving them out. Since the tribe of Dan could not fully occupy their allotted territory, due to lack of faith, they looked for new territory. They felt desperate and in need of more territory, and so they began to spy out the land north around the tribe of Naphtali, Dan’s brother. However, their desire to move revealed a lack of faith in the Lord, who had given them their original territory.

THE DOWNFALL AND DISPERSEMENT OF DAN

Judges 18:1-31 records the account of movements and actions of the Tribe of Dan as

they moved and searched for new land to occupy. The sons of Dan sent five men out to spy out the land and explore it, especially the city of Leshem, which was called Laish (**Joshua 19:47-48**). They came to the hill country of Ephraim, near the house of Micah, where they recognized the voice of a young man, a Levite who was Micah’s priest.

These five men took Micah’s idols and the priest and departed with the 600 men of war, continuing to Laish. The land was very good there, the people were peaceful with no army to defend themselves, so the Danites and their army struck them down and burned the city to ruins. The Danites then rebuilt the city and lived in it, renaming it Dan after their father Dan, and then set up for themselves the idols they took from Micah, including a carved image. They appointed their own priest to the tribe of Dan until the day of captivity of the land, and in doing so, they established an idolatrous shrine and became a symbol of self-made religion, rather than faithfulness to God. Instead of worshipping where God had appointed, they



built their own center of worship and, according to **Judges 21:25**, “...everyone did what was right in his own eyes.” This was true of the other tribes as well, as the early chapters of the book of Judges clearly teach. Later in the history of the Hebrews, after the death of Solomon, the kingdom was split into two kingdoms, with Israel’s ten tribes in the north and Judah’s two tribes in the south. The tribe of Dan became part of the northern kingdom of Israel. King Jeroboam, of the northern kingdom, was afraid that those who lived in his territory would still go down to the southern kingdom, under the reign of King Rehoboam, to worship at Jerusalem (**I Kings 12:25–33**), since the true temple of God was located there. So, Jeroboam built two additional altars for the people of his nation to worship, one in the south at Bethel and one in the north -- at Dan. He built a golden calf at each location and instituted special days and feasts when people would meet.

Due to the sin of idiotry and lack of faith and holiness, the Philistines rose up and fought against the Danites (**Judges 13:1**), and God “...delivered them into the hands of the Philistines forty years.” During this time, Samson, the most celebrated Danite, was born. His story in **Judges 13–16** is both heartbreaking and yet inspiring. Samson was a judge of Israel, chosen from birth, filled with God’s Spirit, and endowed with incredible, almost supernatural strength. Yet he was also a deeply flawed individual; rash, impulsive, and easily enticed by foreign women. He reflects the tendency within the Tribe of Dan: chosen for greatness but prone to stumbling. And yet, through his final act of self-sacrifice, he brings deliverance to his people. It’s a story of hope amid despair. The story of Samson reveals a duality with the Tribe of Dan by reminding us of the danger of walking away from our allotted calling, but also holding out the hope of redemption. If a tribe so compromised can still be listed in Ezekiel’s prophecy of God’s restored kingdom (**Ezekiel**

48:1), then there is hope for all who return to God’s truth. As part of the Kingdom of Israel, the territory of Dan was eventually conquered by the Assyrians and many in the tribe were exiled. Some of the territory's inhabitants fled south into the Kingdom of Judah, gradually assimilating into the kingdom's Israelite population and later even moving out of Middle Eastern regions.

Today, the descendants of the Tribe of Dan have been noted to be in various European countries. A 15th-century Latin chronicle found in Gottfried Leibniz's *Accessiones historicae* (1698), states the Danes were of the Tribe of Dan, while the antiquarian Henry Spelman made a similar claim in 1620 that the Danes were the Israelite Tribe of Dan, obviously indicated by the similarity in name. Additionally, British authors such as John Cox Gawler and J. H. Allen identified the Tribe of Dan with Denmark and another prominent British Israelite author, Edward Hine, took the view that the tribe of Dan had colonized Denmark, as well as Ulster, in Ireland.



IDOLATRY AND APOSTACY

One of the most surprising parts of Dan’s story is that the tribe is missing from the list of the 144,000 sealed tribes in **Revelation 7**, indicating that they will not be a part of the 144,000 sealed servants of God in **Revelation 7:4-8**. The prophecy of **Revelation 7** states that the twelve

tribes of Israel will be marked on the forehead with the seal of God, but does not mention the tribe of Dan, although it was included among the twelve tribes described as having settled in the Promised Land (**Joshua 19:40**). Many Bible historians believe that this omission could be a form of judgment for the idolatry conducted by the tribe.

Early Church writers, such as Irenaeus and Hippolytus, associated Dan with treachery and betrayal. Going back to **Genesis 49:16-17**, we can read that Dan was described as both a “**judge**” and a “**serpent**”, strangely linking Dan’s image to a serpent through betrayal of God. A serpent is a symbol often linked with cunning, stealth, and judgment. These verses reveal a tribal destiny marked by justice but also one of danger and betrayal. In Jewish tradition, serpents represented not just deceit but hidden power. Dan was originally destined to be a tribe of influence, but instead of being a positive influence with the other tribes, it became a spiritual stumbling block for all the other tribes Israel.

Again, in **I Kings 12:28–30**, King Jeroboam of the Northern Kingdom established golden calves in Dan and Bethel to prevent his subjects from going to Jerusalem to worship. Dan wasn’t just a location on a map; it became a destination for idolatrous worship and a legacy of apostasy. This form of idolatry wasn’t committed through ignorance -- it was a deliberate decision. Dan had become a religious center, but it was a false religion.

History teaches us that idolatry often begins with convenience, not necessarily with rebellion, as we see in the example of the Tribe of Dan stealing the idols and graven images of Micah. In short, the Tribe of Dan rejected God, adopted idolatry, which led to the abandonment of their practice of Godly religion (having apostasy), and demonstrated their lack of faith. Today, many people follow various

man-made religions and are convinced that all ways lead to God. This is nothing more than misplaced worship, or as in idolatry, the act of representing God by putting idols in place of or above God. Covetousness, excessive love for possessions, or dissatisfaction can lead one to spiritual apathy or rebellion, such as was the case of the Tribe of Dan. Sadly, this man-made worship from the Tribe of Dan became one of its lasting legacies.

FUTURE OF THE TRIBE OF DAN IN PROPHECY

However, despite all the mistakes and sins of the Tribe of Dan, it appears again in Ezekiel’s prophetic future vision (**Ezekiel 48**). These passages reveal that the Tribe of Dan will have land apportioned to them during the Millennial Kingdom of God. Dan’s presence in Ezekiel shows that even those who sin deeply are not forgotten by the Lord. The story of the Tribe of Dan is one of warning and also of potential redemption. Dan’s omission from Revelation is not the end.

To learn from the mistakes of Dan, we must make sure that we worship God and live according to His laws, always with faith. The history of the Tribe of Dan in the Bible challenges us to ask... “**Are we worshiping God on God’s terms – or on our own?**” It’s easy to justify compromises in the name of what we feel our needs or comfort dictate but we must remember that we are called to remain rooted in our spiritual inheritance, to avoid idolatry in all its subtle forms, and to trust in the One True God at all times.

What can we learn from the Tribe of Dan? Hope for salvation! In the last part of Jacob’s blessing on Dan, he mentions, “**I wait for thy salvation, O LORD**” (**Genesis 49:18 RSV**). Ezekiel reminds us that God’s Master Plan is bigger than individual failure. The Tribe of Dan’s biblical journey is one of promise, loss, and future hope. It teaches us about faithfulness, repentance, and the enduring mercy of God! ◆



CHALLENGE YOURSELF FOR SPIRITUAL SUCCESS

*Exercise is valuable, and its practice shares similarities with our spiritual life. Physical fitness helps us to understand and learn how to develop spiritual fitness. Just as we undertake physical training to make our bodies and our immune system stronger, so too does spiritual training make our spiritual **CHARACTER** stronger. There are multiple ways to achieve both our physical and spiritual fitness goals, which I will explain in this article. I'm going to encourage each of us to challenge ourselves for spiritual success!*

Geary Whiting

WORK THROUGH THE NEGATIVE

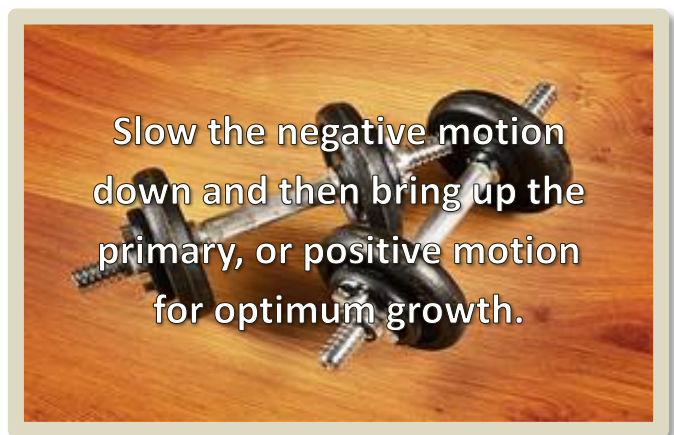
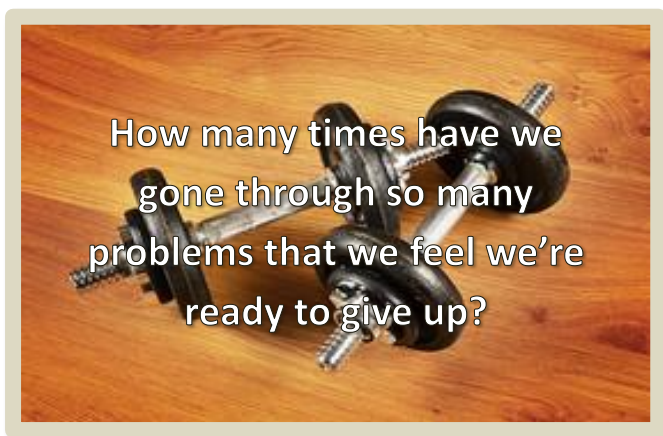
In our lives, we face a lot of trials and difficulties, many or all of which can drag us down or even lead to depression. However, just like a fitness program, we need to understand that the negative can help us to develop strength, because the negative is where we can make the greatest gains. For

example, when you look at a picture of a muscle and dissect that muscle, cut it in half, you're going to see a fiber and a fiber within that fiber. This is indicative of what we see with the development of spiritual growth. We grow a little bit, and we grow a little bit more, and we begin to grow more into our spiritual fibers. So, as a physical trainer, the first rule I use is to put the emphasis on the negative.

One might ask: what is the negative? Let me give you an example. If I'm doing a bicep curl to develop the muscles in my arms, and I'm pulling my arm upwards, that's a primary motion. The negative in this exercise is to take it away. Likewise, when lifting weight, when bench pressing, most people pick the weight up slowly and then drop it fast. That's the reverse of what it needs to be to develop proper muscular skills. When we utilize the negative physically, we become 40% stronger with the negative. If we utilize the negative in our lives, employ God's seven laws of success, we can work our way through the negative things that crop up in our lives and cause a spiritual challenge for us.

How many times have we gone through so many problems that we feel we're ready to give up? I know I did. At one time, my trials were so hard I felt I was ready to give up, but the answer was no, keep going! I wrestled with myself, telling myself that I didn't want to keep going, and that I was ready to give up at different points in my trials.

Well, when it was all said and done and my fervent prayers were answered, I could look back and see how much I've grown. I hated the negative aspect of what I went through, but I knew I had to persevere and, with God's help, I did. We may be very unhappy with some of the things we're experiencing in life right now, but we must experience negative things to develop our spiritual character properly. We must put



the emphasis on the negative because in the end, we're going to be perhaps as much as 40% stronger. Slow the negative motion down and then bring up the primary, or positive motion for optimum growth. **“My brethren, count it all joy when you fall into various trials” (James 1:2).**

USE GOOD FORM

When a person begins to undertake some serious bodybuilding activities, they want to make sure they look balanced. I once had a young fellow I was training, and I noticed his body was developing differently than it should have. I told him that I thought his form wasn't developing in a balanced manner. I had him run through his program for me, to check things out, and I noticed his front deltoid muscle was developing before and ahead of his medial deltoid. He had switched the program I had developed for him to get a bigger number of developments in that front muscle, and therefore he was developing awkwardly, in an unbalanced manner. He was not developing a balanced form.

If we don't develop good form, spiritually, we, too, will be out of balance. To develop in the proper way, we need be keeping God's Commandments, praying for others, and praying for ourselves as we grow -- that we'll have the strength to overcome the trials set before us and be able to continue to move forward with our spiritual development. How

many times have we been in the basement, so to speak, and we just think, “Wow, I just don’t know if I can take that” (whatever our trial or trouble is). We know what we’re supposed to be doing because the Bible shows us the path, and God’s apostle repeatedly through sermons and literature helped shine the lantern for us so we can find the right way. We just must move forward in a balanced way and follow it!

Once again, we know what we’re supposed to be doing. God’s people must be balanced and have a vision for themselves, a road map of where we are going and how to get there. We need to use good and proper form in everything we do, everything we say, and everything we study, which are the things that will develop us to be what the master trainer wants us to look like and to be like.

In I Corinthians 9:27 the apostle Paul gives us an example of a successful athlete who exercises self-control and discipline in all things. He fought his body to conquer it. That’s what the master trainer, God the Father, along with Jesus

Christ, as our supreme example, wants from us.

ALWAYS LOOK AT FAILURE

Failure! This is a big point to consider because no one likes failure! However, failure is what is going to give us growth. We all want to be successful, to accomplish every goal we set for ourselves, but sometimes we can get discouraged when faced with a situation that just seems to be overwhelmingly negative or difficult.

Sometimes we might feel like giving up, feeling like “I just can’t do this”, or feeling like a failure because we can’t seem to overcome the

negative in our lives facing us. Yes, we might feel like a failure, but the key we are to remember here, again, is that failure is what gives us growth. We must push through failure to achieve progress. Push, push, push!

Philippians 3:14 tells us to push forward to what’s ahead. We “...**press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus.**”

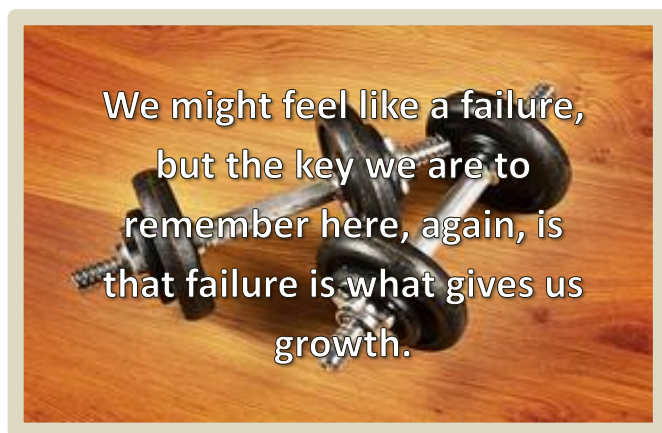
I wanted to share the story of Tammy, who was one of my clients. Tammy came to me and asked me to train her, but she specifically didn’t want to develop muscles because she didn’t want to look like a guy.

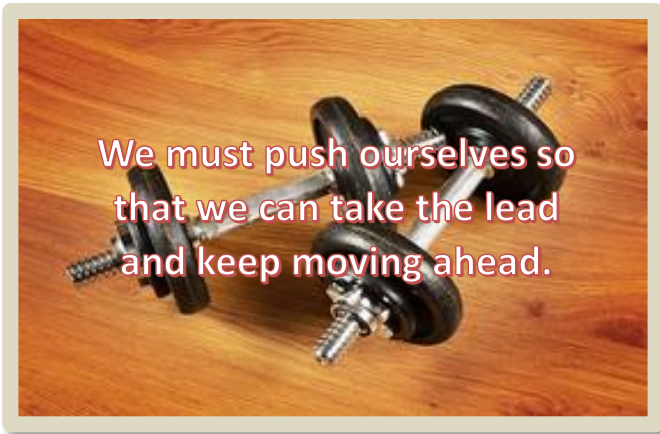
So, I agreed, and began working with her. As we went along, I noticed that halfway through each session, she would excuse herself and go into

the restroom. Then she came back out and we would continue the workout for the day. She continued to gradually move up her workout program, and accomplish more repetitions, session by session.

About three weeks into her workout program, she came to me and asked me to work her harder. When I asked her why, she told me that she noticed that she was able to get into a dress that she hadn’t been able to wear for a long time. Her enthusiasm made her want to do more, to accomplish more.

Sometime after that, she told me why she’d broken off in the middle of every workout to go to the restroom, and it wasn’t for the reason I thought. She said she went in just to break down and cry out, “I can’t take this anymore!” Then she said she’d take a deep breath and tell herself she could endure and set her resolve to





We must push ourselves so that we can take the lead and keep moving ahead.

get back to work and move forward. Tammy wanted to push through the failure she was facing!

We can make spiritual progress when we're challenged by failure, and to do so, we must push ourselves so that we can take the lead and keep moving ahead. Just like the lead dog in a dog sled pack, the one that has the most fun and the best view because they're out front, we, too, must take the lead in our lives and always move ahead.

The other dogs don't really have much opportunity to develop exceptional abilities because they only follow. We need to lead ourselves, to allot our time and direct our efforts, to get the most out of a good day to help us make it through a bad one. If we haven't been getting enough Bible study because of troubles facing us, push ahead and add more prayer and more study. Pick a subject and exhaust the study of it. Don't just casually read through the scriptures but throw yourself into it and work like a bulldog to master your understanding of it. By doing so, you make progress when you are challenged by a trial or even possible failure.

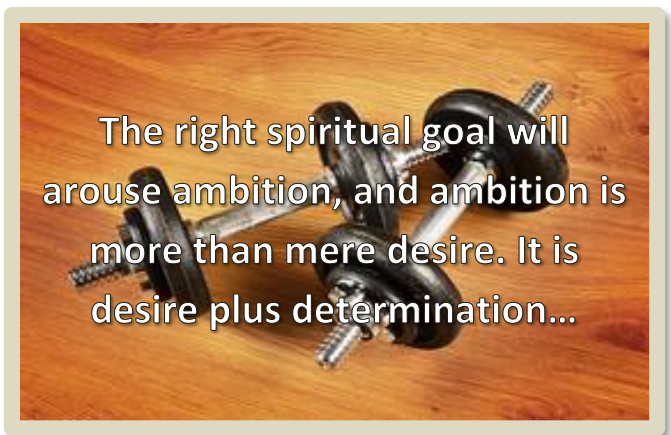
SET A GOAL

Always have a goal before you start your planned study to achieve the maximum balance and accomplishments from your spiritual

workout. I try to examine myself, and see how I can push harder, to try to exceed my maximum level. I do so by finding out the best prayer and study patterns that work for me. I determine what my environment needs to be, what I need around me, so I can get the most out of my spiritual goals and studies. Long before I even crack open the Bible, I have a purpose for what I'm going to study and why I need to study it. I don't want to just READ the Bible; I want to STUDY the Bible. Like we see in the story of the 10 virgins in **Matthew 25:1-13**, we can fail to reach the most important goals in our lives because of lack of forethought and planning.

In his book, *The Seven Laws of Success*, Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong explained that the first law of real success is to have the right goal! He went on to say, "...if you are to arrive at **SUCCESS in LIFE, you must first set the right goal, and then comes the PREPARATION to achieve that goal.**" He encouraged the reader of his book to be sure to fix the *right* goal, not just any goal. So, once we learn enough to choose a goal, or a subject for our Bible study, we need to learn the best way for us, the right training and experience to achieve that goal.

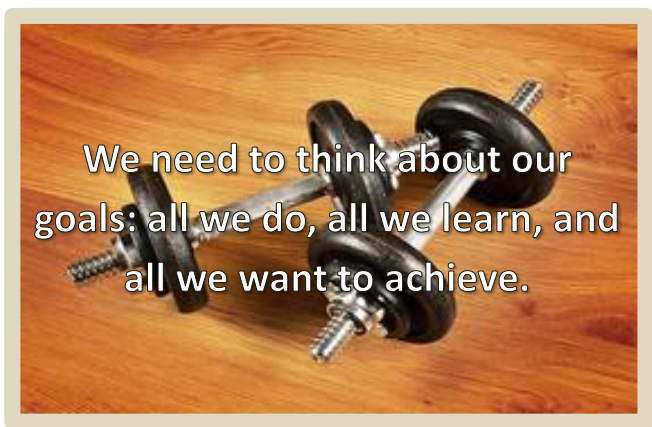
If we fail to set any definite goals for ourselves, we neglect the ability to attain our purpose in life and perhaps we might even lose the total level of the incredible human potential God has in mind for us. The right spiritual goal will arouse ambition, and ambition is more than



The right spiritual goal will arouse ambition, and ambition is more than mere desire. It is desire plus determination...

mere desire. It is desire plus determination to achieve that desire. The right goal will be so intensely desired it will inspire us to increase our efforts. We all have problems -- in our families, at work or school and in our spiritual lives, but we have a goal, a prize well worth winning, that keeps us going! That great goal is to achieve the perfect prize, the one offered by God to every human being, the incredible human potential of becoming part of God's spiritual Family.

To achieve that, we need to set daily, individual goals for our spiritual workout. We need to exhaust a subject we choose for our Bible study, to study more and take it to the point where we've got all the facts. The point where we've got the full picture and can incorporate that subject within the balance of our Christian lives.



LESS IS MORE

This statement "less is more" may seem to be totally opposite from what we might think a workout, physically or spiritually, should be, but it addresses a determination of our actions in regard to intensity. There is a comparison between high intensity workouts and the typical ones.

High intensity in shorter bursts of time develops a greater strength. A study of the silverback apes discovered that they are incredibly strong because whatever they do, they do in short

periods of time and short bursts of high intensity.

We can apply this principle to our lives as well. For example, when we study, we should put our whole heart into it. If we merely read superficially over verses in the Bible, skimming over them, they will leave little or no impression in our minds. It is imperative, therefore, that we dwell on and concentrate intensely on what we are studying!

However, we also need to do something else during our daily, spiritual workout. We can't just put all our effort into studying and not include meditation or prayer. We need to determine what we need to do to achieve spiritual success, allot the proper time for each aspect in our workout, and approach each element with intensity and determination for maximum growth. King David gives us many examples of fervent prayer and meditation in the book of Psalms.

The entire chapter of **Psalm 119** contains multiple examples of his intense approach and appreciation in prayer and meditation to God, with **Psalm 119:97** perhaps the most famous of all those scriptures. "**O how love I thy law! It is my meditation all the day.**" (**Psalm 119:97 - KJV**)

We can't just approach our spiritual workout with apathy. We need to think about our goals: all we do, all we learn, and all we want to achieve. Then we need to make sure we understand it and move forward with intensity and commitment to achieve our goals, to achieve spiritual balance and growth by fervently employing all the key elements we have learned through God's leadership and inspiration.

SEE THE FINE LINE OF PROGRESS

Close your eyes and picture in your minds the progress you've made as a true Christian

throughout your life. Picture this as you approach your spiritual workout and as you determine your goals to move forward and improve on your existing progress. I used to have my clients close their eyes during their workouts with dumbbells, and I always found they could lift a heavier weight than they thought they could. More than they had anticipated. There is a fine line in physical progress that also exists in spiritual progress.

We need to always keep in mind that we have that exceptional master trainer in God the Father (**I Corinthians 1:26**) who will do some

phenomenal things with the ones He has called. We can take that to the bank! The only way to obtain our prize is to finish the course designed for us. In the Christian race, the Christian workout, so to speak, to obtain the "prize" of salvation and eternal life, we must endure to the end. **"But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Matthew 24: 13).**

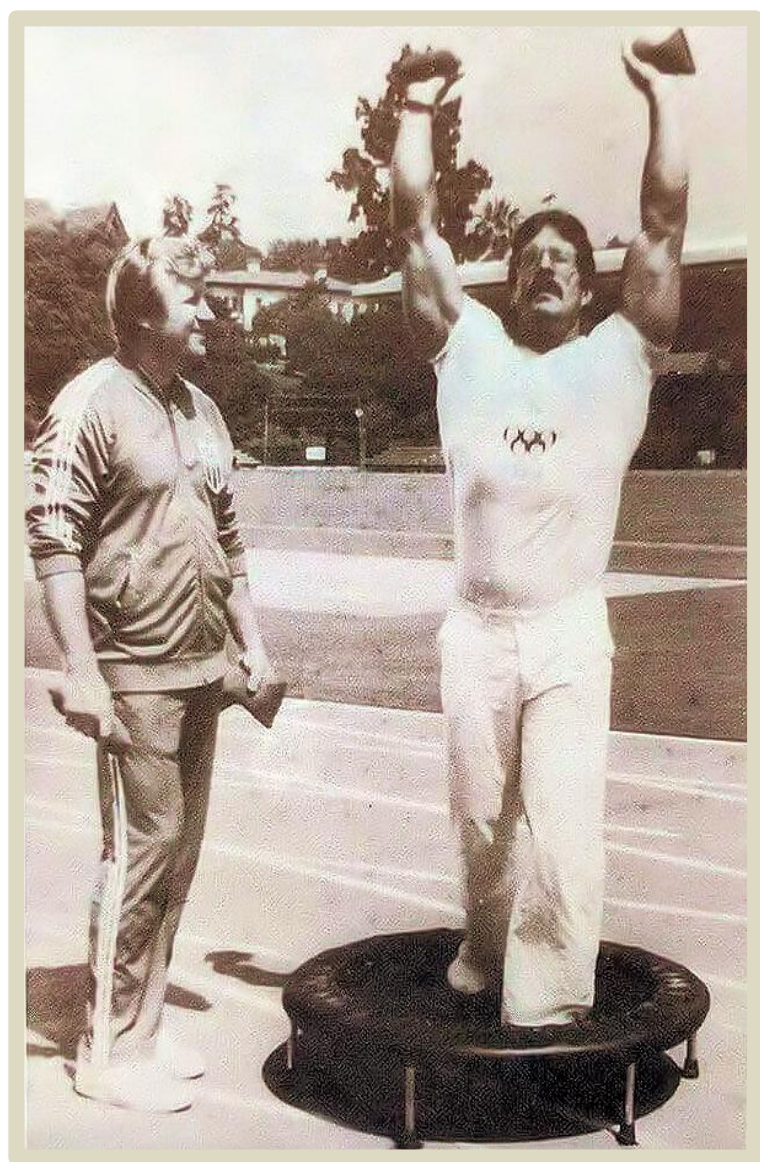
So, when we are in training, we need to cooperate with God, follow His laws and rules for success, and have a good spiritual workout every day of our lives! ♦

1980, the Olympics!

In the early 1980s, while working with Harry Sneider, Geary Whiting studied with Carl Miller, 1976 Olympic weightlifting coach, in Santa Fe, NM and then met Mike Mentzer, "Mr. Heavy Duty" (shown with Harry Sneider in the picture), and trained him in Olympic Lifting.

During their training sessions, Mike and Geary discussed many interesting and advanced concepts in strength and conditioning.

Geary worked with the US Olympic high jump team and with Deverik Lampley, US Olympic track and field athlete who ranked 4th in the United States in the 100/200 meters in the late 1980s.



OUR FUTURE MISSION

Respect for other people is no longer taught as it used to be, and as a result it has disappeared from most young people. It has given way to indifference, competition and even animosity, which have replaced concern and love for our neighbors.

Kennedy Athin'g

Our world is sick, and particularly so because of the break-up of the family unit. Many of the youngest members of recent generations have been left to their own devices. They lack reference points and because they have not been taught honor or honesty, many of them behave as if they had no awareness of the difference between right and wrong.

Satan and his henchmen are at work as never before, and sensing that the end of their reign on earth is approaching, they are doubling their efforts and redoubling their activity. Just as they tried before to take over the throne of God, this time they hope to influence humanity so that it will destroy itself, and they are working relentlessly to achieve this.

Most people great or small, including the leaders of this world, are under their

influence, and we can see that war is looming on the horizon, and that people are preparing for it. Nevertheless, although we who are of God are privileged targets for them, we have the advantage of being able to count on God's divine protection. **"He who is born of God guards himself, and the evil one does not touch him" (1 John 5:18)**. Some people still pray and prostrate themselves before idols, and many attend the churches of the world at weddings and funerals, but most are seduced by the god of this world and do not know or love the true Creator God.

This mindset of most of Israel's descendants is prophesied for the end-time, and God's Word, the Bible, calls these times we are living in "**EVIL**." Addressing some of Christ's followers in his day, but also those of us who are part of this end-time, we read in **Ephesians 5:15-16, "See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise,**

redeeming the time, because the days are evil.” We, too, used to be among those who were unbelieving and seduced by the evil one, and if God had not called us to Himself, we would still be among them. However, God *has* called us to the truth, so we must conduct ourselves with circumspection and redeem the time. Redeeming the time is a matter of behavior and realizing that God has not called us to Himself, or out of this world, just so that we can selfishly save ourselves. We are called to prove our trustworthiness and faithfulness to God so that in our future life we will be found worthy to work with Jesus Christ to save humanity.

“Then I looked, and behold, a Lamb standing on Mount Zion, and with Him one hundred and forty-four thousand, having His Father's name written on their foreheads ... These are the ones who follow the Lamb wherever He goes. These were redeemed from among men, being firstfruits to God and to the Lamb” (Revelation 14:1,4). This passage explains our submission to God and therefore means that since our conversion, we have no longer attended the churches of this world, nor bowed down before idols.

As far as our future mission is concerned, it consists in participating in the government that Jesus Christ will establish on this earth at His return, and in reigning with Him over humanity during the millennium. Indeed, most of the world's elected politicians and other governing bodies, seduced by Satan, seek only their own interests, and as a result, they are often corrupt and dishonest.

In **Revelation 20:4** we see, **“And I saw thrones, and they sat on them, and judgment was committed to them. Then I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for their witness to Jesus and for the word of God, who had not worshiped the beast or his image, and had not received his mark on their foreheads or on their hands. And they lived and reigned with Christ for a thousand years.”** It is at the beginning of this period of a thousand years that the elect, along with

other faithful of different times, will be crowned kings and priests of God and of Christ, and will reign over assigned cities, as alluded to in the parable of **Luke 19:15**.

What we will participate in after this thousand-year period, and the hundred-year period that will follow, is not yet clearly revealed to us, but the universe is immense, so immense that it has no limit, and is always expanding. If we continue to serve God faithfully, we can consider that we will have free access to its remotest confines, be able to move about in it at the speed of thought, and that we will be given a position of responsibility in it.

Let us rejoice in this marvellous future that is offered to us. If we remain faithful and persevere until the end of our life here on earth, we will become kings and priests of God, after Christ's return to this earth. He will be crowned King of Kings, and we will reign under His leadership. **“I was watching in the night visions, and behold, One like the Son of Man, Coming with the clouds of heaven! He came to the Ancient of Days, and they brought Him near before Him. Then to Him was given dominion and glory and a kingdom, that all peoples, nations, and languages should serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, And His kingdom the one Which shall not be destroyed” (Daniel 7:13-14).**

It is our future mission to finally participate in this regeneration of humanity that God has called us for and that Christ has chosen us for, as soon as Christ returns in His glory accompanied by His angels. Satan and his henchmen will be put aside, and all of us who will have persevered to the end will be resurrected to become spiritual beings and begin to teach the divine ways of God's laws to humanity during the Millennium. We will begin to teach these last generations feelings of empathy, kindness and love in place of the feelings of competition, hatred and animosity that Satan is currently distilling in our world. ◆

THE Fruit OF THE Spirit



Patience

When we are children, we often feel that time does not pass quickly enough. We aspire to grow up, to no longer depend on our parents, but to make our own decisions; in short, to depend solely on ourselves and to take charge of our own lives. When we reach a respectable age, we realize that time has passed very quickly, sometimes even too quickly, and we sometimes regret some of the decisions we have made and others that we have neglected.

Pollycap Ogalo

Many of us have already reached an adult age, and although we have already lived through a lot and experienced many things, we have the privilege of knowing God and being known by Him. We understand what He expects of us, but we still sometimes make mistakes and we still sometimes sin, because we are still attracted and influenced by certain attractions of this world.

Indeed, as far as most of us are concerned, we still have certain shortcomings to overcome, such as, for example, lack of patience, but also

sometimes covetousness, anger or animosity toward others. This is a battle that we will have to wage until the end of our lives, that of overcoming our bad human nature, which is still influenced by the god of this world.

We are no longer OF this world. We are soldiers of Christ, and as it is written: **“No one engaged in warfare entangles himself with the affairs of *this* life, that he may please him who enlisted him as a soldier” (II Timothy 2:4).** Isn't the most important thing for us to do now is the will of our great God, to practice His laws and His ordinances, because it is in Him that we

have hope? He is our future! Since we consider ourselves to be part of His people, part of His warriors, we must behave as such. Christ has given us defensive weapons to use, and among them is the sword of the Spirit, for it is by the Spirit that we must live, fight and defend ourselves, and the Spirit, as we know, must bear fruit, among which is PATIENCE.

Galatians 5:22-25 shows us the following: **“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control. Against such there is no law. And those *who are* Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit.”** Let us ask ourselves, have we really and definitively crucified the flesh with all its passions and desires, and are we now living and walking principally according to the Spirit?

It is essential for us not only to memorize all these qualities of the fruit of the Spirit, but above all to put them into practice. It is thanks to the Spirit of God that we will be able to suppress our negative feelings, such as anger, animosity and any other grudges we may hold.

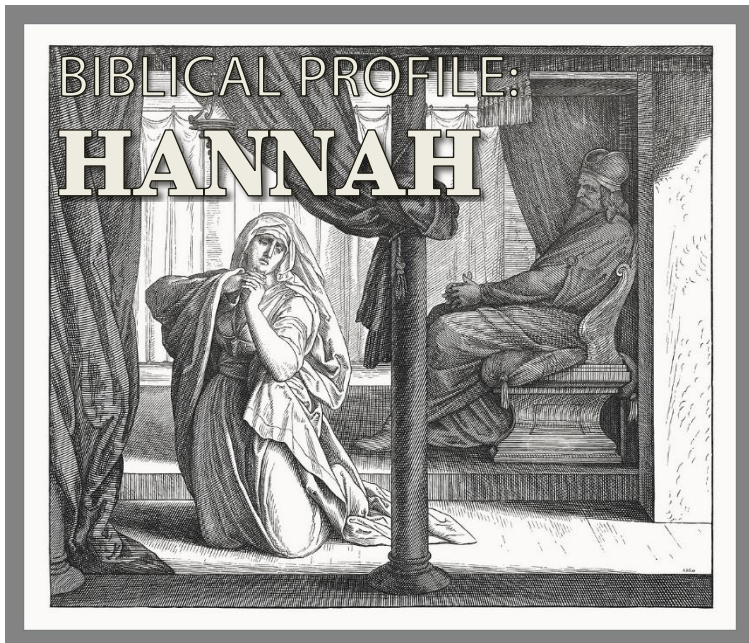
“For you did not receive the spirit of bondage again to fear, but you received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, “Abba, Father.” The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs -- heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with *Him*, that we may also be glorified together” (Romans 8:15-17). In the next verse (**verse 18**), the Apostle tells us: **“I consider that the sufferings of this present time cannot be compared with the glory to come, which will be revealed for us.”** So, let us rejoice and be patient. Although we are living in difficult times now, it is nothing compared to what some believers who have gone before us have suffered.

We see the following in **Romans 12:10-12... *Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor giving preference to one another; not lagging in diligence, fervent in spirit, serving the Lord; rejoicing in hope, patient in tribulation, continuing steadfastly in prayer;*”** It is because of the Spirit of God in us that we will be able to practice patience and seek peace with all our fellow men, to put love of neighbor first, to have indulgence, kindness and goodness, and if we know how to master these things, it will bring us joy. God Himself is a great practitioner of patience and He wants us to know how to practice it too, and I'd like to take this opportunity to pay tribute to our driver Mr. Gary Liebold, who, let's face it, is a model of patience, so let's try to be like him in this respect, if we can.

When it comes to knowing how to control ourselves and have patience, the Holy Scriptures mention certain people whom we can also consider as examples to follow, such as Moses, where in the book of **Numbers**, at the end of **chapter 12, verse three**, we are told: **“(Now the man Moses was very humble, more than all men who were on the face of the earth.)”** If God chose Moses to confront Pharaoh several times and put him at the head of His people to lead them out of the land of Egypt, it was because He had discerned in him certain qualities that were required, including patience.

Whether with our spouse or with our children, with our brothers and sisters in the faith, at work, and in so many other situations, a lack of patience can lead us to commit blunders that risk breaking up and putting an end to sometimes intimate relationships. Particularly when certain equivocal situations arise, it is often imperative not to react on the spot, as we commonly say, but to allow time to pass, to think things through before acting.

(Continued on page 35)



The story of Hannah, found in I Samuel 1-2, is one of the most inspiring examples of faith, perseverance, devotion, and humility.



Hannah, one of two wives of Elkanah, an Ephraimite, longed for a child but remained childless, causing years of sorrow and disappointment. Each year, during their family's pilgrimage to the tabernacle in Shiloh, Hannah would pray fervently for a child. During one significant occasion on

this pilgrimage, Hannah poured out her heart to God in deep distress and promised that if He gave her a son, she would dedicate him to the Lord's service for his entire life. God heard her cries and blessed her with a son whom she named Samuel, and who later became a great prophet. From Hannah's story, we can discover powerful lessons that can guide us in our own lives today.

Hannah is a significant figure in the Bible for several reasons. Her deep faith in God is evident in that despite years of barrenness, she continued to trust in God's plan for her life. Hannah's perseverance is seen in her persistent prayers and annual pilgrimages to Shiloh, where she continually sought God's intervention despite not receiving an immediate answer. Her devotion to God is evident in that she honored her vow to God to fulfill her promise by bringing Samuel to Eli to be raised in the tabernacle. Hannah approached God in prayer with humility, referring to herself as His servant, and her humility continued to be shown by her willingness to make a significant personal sacrifice when she dedicated her son to God's service.

Another aspect of the narrative of Hannah is that this is one of the few times in the Bible that highlights the power of a mother's prayer. Her fervent plea to God for a child, coupled with her vow to dedicate him to the Lord, emphasizes the importance of selfless and sincere prayer. In **I Samuel 1:11**, Hannah began her prayer by addressing God as the "**Lord of Hosts**," a title that recognizes God's supreme power and authority. Biblical historians believe that Hannah was the first person since God created the world to use the name "**Hosts**." Additionally, unlike some other Biblical figures who attempted to take matters into their own hands, Hannah turned to God in her distress, acknowledging His authority and power. Her prayer is an amazing example of a personal, heartfelt plea to God.

The account of Hannah teaches us how patience, faith, and perseverance are needed even in modern times. Her faith and trust teach us to rely on God fully and is a perfect example of how the power of sincere prayer can bring real change. Her example shows that sometimes we must wait for answers to our prayers, but when we give our hearts over to God with complete faith, He listens and works miracles. By examining Hannah's life and the significance of her story, from her heartfelt cries for a child to her triumphant song of praise, we are reminded of the importance of steadfast faith and the power of prayer and trust in God amid life's challenges, for God's plans are always perfect and designed for our best interests. ♦

Mystery of the Ages...

(Continued from page 9)

The very basic teachings, the belief and the doctrines of God's True Church, are based on the righteousness of and obedience to God's law of love shed abroad in our hearts by the Holy Spirit (**Romans 5:5**). This basic teaching includes, therefore, all the fruits of the Holy Spirit... **"love, joy, peace, longsuffering, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control"** (**Galatians 5:22-23**). The beliefs of God's true Church are simply those of "living by every word" of the Holy Bible. The Church is called out of the world, then, to live the way of God!

A TIMELINE FOR SALVATION

God's Master Plan offers salvation and eternal life to every person ever born, all in a specific timeline. Those who are called out of the world and into the Church currently are called for a unique purpose and work, to undertake spiritual training, to aid in the conversion of humanity. They are called at a time when they must overcome the spiritual attacks of Satan and the pulls of the world. The rest of the world will be called at a time when Satan is removed,

and their minds are fully opened to Christ and the education He and the saints then made immortal, offer in the Kingdom of God. Satan has deceived the minds of the entire unbelieving world (**II Corinthians 4:4**). Neither professing Christians nor scholarly theologian leaders today comprehend the major purposes for which Jesus Christ came! So, to reiterate, the Church is the called out, begotten children of God forming the Body of Christ (**I Corinthians 12:27; Ephesians 1:23**). It is the spiritual organism that shall be the "Bride of Christ," married to Christ, after its resurrection to immortality, and the spiritual temple to which Christ shall come at His second coming (**Ephesians 2:21**).

In the next issue of *The Lantern* magazine, we will continue to summarize *Mystery of the Ages*, covering chapter seven, the "Mystery of the Kingdom of God." Once again, please remember that each of these articles is not meant to take the place of actually reading the book itself on our own, but to serve as an overview of each chapter concerning the mysteries of the Bible, and to be used as a tool to encourage us to read, or re-read, the book and study it on our own. ♦

Patience...

(Continued from page 33)

"A fool's wrath is known at once, But a prudent man covers shame" (Proverbs 12:16).

So, when this kind of situation arises, let's be prudent and wait. Let's first entrust ourselves to God and ask Him how we can resolve the problem in such a way as to avoid a possible conflict. For, if we are totally sincere and if we seek to do His will before our own, God is listening to us, and if we act according to His will, we will be sure to make the right decisions. We know His will, which is to fight with the

weapons of defense He has given us. Patience and love go hand in hand: the more we love, the more patient we will be, and the more patient we will be, the more we will love.

"Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth" (I Corinthians 13:4-6 - NIV). Just as we live by every word that comes from the mouth of God, it is a matter of wisdom sometimes to know how to wait and be patient. ♦

BIBLE STUDY

WHAT IS A REAL CHRISTIAN?

Jesus described the very basis of real Christianity in what is commonly called the Sermon on the Mount. He pointed out certain characteristics that would clearly identify His true followers. A real Christian is one who has sincerely repented of his sins and has the power of God's Holy Spirit to follow Christ by imitating His example, and walking with Him.

1) A real Christian is seeking, in every aspect of his life, to do God's will as revealed in the Bible. We know that we have no spiritual resources apart from God, and that we must look to and rely on Him to pour out His Holy Spirit upon us. This is the true definition of the **"poor in spirit"** as found in **Matthew 5:3**. The **"poor in spirit"** is really a frame of mind. Christ went on to show that those who are truly humble and esteem others better than themselves (**Philippians 2:3**) will be blessed to be in God's Kingdom.

2) The Christian who is meek will inherit, or take part in, the governance of the earth in addition to being born into God's Kingdom (**Matthew 5: 5**). True Christians will exhibit this characteristic in the way they conduct their daily lives. Humility does not mean weakness! There is a difference between being meek and being weak. Jesus was meek, but never weak!

3) A true follower of Jesus Christ, a real Christian, will be **"hungering and thirsting"** for righteousness (**Matthew 5:6**). To **"hunger and thirst"** for righteousness is to be deeply motivated to obey God and to keep His laws. Those who are truly hungering and thirsting for righteousness will be studying God's Word for true understanding and be willing to change

when they've been wrong, admitting their wrong beliefs, their mistakes, and their sins.

4) A real Christian has been conquered by God and has come to realize how God's Laws have been broken by sinning against them (**1 John 3:4**). Then the Christian has obeyed the command to be baptized, indicating to God the deep desire to live by every word of God for the remainder of his or her life.

5) Due to a person's repentance, baptism, and the laying on of hands by one of God's ministers, the devoted Christian will be given the Spirit of the Father and become a Spirit-begotten child of God. It is then that he or she becomes a real Christian (**Romans 8:9-10**)!

6) Finally, real Christians who have the Holy Spirit and a knowledge of God's Truth have a responsibility to be **"lights"** in the world. God's people should be exhibiting the fruit, or characteristics, of God's Holy Spirit in their daily lives (**Galatians 5:22-23**). They should be reaching out with friendliness and with a helping hand toward others who can observe a portion of the mind and character of God in action, through the example set by TRUE Christians. ◆

Excerpts From the Desk of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong...

For each continuing issue of our magazine, we will post various EXCERPTS from Mr. Armstrong's past writings, sermons, and Bible studies.

Bible Study – Galatians 3 & 4

Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong

December 5, 1980

New Testament Prophets Don't Set Doctrine

...Now, there's not a prophet in the New Testament who had anything to do with the basic teaching, the basic doctrine and knowledge that came from God into the Church. There was the prophetess ... what was it ... Ana who was eighty-some years old. And when Jesus was just barely born, she picked up the Christ-child and thanked God for Him, blessed Him, and handed Him back to His mother. But she was past doing anything. God did not reveal truth to her. She did not write a book. She did not write anything that became part of the foundation of the Church.



Then there was a prophet, Agabus, who had a message straight from God, that if Paul went on down to Jerusalem, he was going to encounter trouble. Well, God wanted Paul to know that. But Paul was determined to go anyway, and he did, and he got into trouble. But that prophet merely had that message for the Apostle Paul. He contributed nothing to the doctrine, the teaching, the foundation, of the New Testament Church.

Now, there were two others who were among the three or four that God had revealed to them that they should lay hands on Saul and Barnabas, and ordain them as apostles, and send them. Now, that's when Paul was made an apostle. And God revealed that through two different prophets, but that's all they did. They did not contribute any of the foundation of the New Testament Church. There was not a prophet in the New Testament Church that was part of the foundation. **There was not a prophet in the New Testament Church who had an executive or an administrative position - not a one. And there is none in the Church today.**

The duty of a prophet in the New Testament Church was to receive a message from God and communicate that message to the apostle. Now, the only two instances we have, that's what happened. And I would know if there was a prophet in the Church, because he would have communicated something to me, and I would have known it came from God. It would have been in such a way that it would have been evident and so have made it known to me. But nothing like that has ever happened.

Now, I have had men come to me, and ... I've not had any man come to me and say that he was Jesus Christ, but my son, Ted, did once. A man came to his office and said, "I'm Jesus Christ." Well, Ted said, "Now, if you were Jesus Christ, I won't be able to throw you out of this office." So he grabbed the man by his coat collar and the seat of his trousers and showed him out of the office...

...But I have had men come to me and claim they were Elijah or something like that. And, of course, they were not. But they were just mentally deranged, that is all. **But there are no prophets in the Church today.** So we have the one apostle, and I did not appoint myself an apostle...

(Emphasis above, by the editor of The Lantern magazine)



COMING ARTICLES



II Peter 1:19

◆ Forged Like a Katana

One night I was looking at the history of the Samurai sword, the katana, and when I saw what went into the making of that masterpiece, I broke down and cried. I got down on my knees, and I prayed to God, saying, "Father, if I am to live up to this quality, this standard, and what it takes to make it so, can I do it?" I wanted to take it very seriously and apply this example, the making of a katana, to my spiritual life.

◆ A Pearl of Great Price

Imagine if you like to scuba dive, and while on one of your adventures, you find an oyster or clam that had a beautiful pearl inside. Would you keep the pearl? I once did an underwater walk on the bottom of the ocean in the Bahamas -- no scuba diving, though -- and I held a starfish and had a photo taken while underwater with a grouper swimming by me, but no oysters and no pearls. Believe me, if I had found a pearl in an oyster, I would have brought it home!

◆ Biblical Personality Profile: Abraham

Abraham plays an important role in the Christian faith and is one of the most important figures in the Bible apart from Jesus Christ. No one can really understand the Old Testament without understanding Abraham, for Abraham was the first man chosen by God for a role in the plan of redemption of mankind. It was Abraham whom God chose to be the father of many nations because he was obedient and faithful to God above all the men of his day (**Genesis 15:5-6**).