SURVIVE AND THRIVE AS A FOLLOWER OF CHRIST

By
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PREFACE

The Bible is unique. It is the only book that has the answers to the basic questions of life and claims to be written by the true God. This book tells humanity who its Creator is, why it was created, and its ultimate destiny.

Although the Bible reveals the awesome purpose for human existence, it does so in a carefully coded message. The studies that we present reveal much of what is contained in these messages that has not been taught or understood since the demise and disappearance of the early church as a powerful spirit filled entity.

OUR GOALS

Our primary goal is to share our knowledge and understanding of the Sovereign God's plan and purpose for humanity with those who are interested in living their lives according to the law of God, not by the dictates and traditions of men. Our secondary goal is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as a warning and a witness to humanity before the Messiah returns to rule the earth.

We hope that you will find this study of God's word intellectually challenging and spiritually enlightening and beneficial.

If you want to know more about us, the work we are doing, or how you can participate in our biblically based educational and research projects, contact us at: www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net

Sincerely,
B. L.Cocherell
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INTRODUCTION

With the death of the apostles and the disappearance of spiritual leadership rooted in the teachings of Christ and the apostles which governed the early church, the second part of the prophecy recorded by Zachariah quickly came to pass:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd [Jesus], and against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep [the disciples] shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon [against] the little ones [the Father's elect children]" (Zech.13:7 KJV). See also Matt.26:31: Acts 20:28-30.

The scattering of the elect brought an end to the central authority of the early church, which maintained doctrinal integrity. This scattering also resulted in a fulfillment of a famine of knowledge and understanding of God's word among the elect as recorded by the prophet Amos (Am.8:11-13), as well as the spiritual destruction of many, which was recorded by the prophet Hosea (Hos.4:6).

Today, we find great confusion and doctrinal chaos among the elect about many extremely important spiritual and organizational issues set forth in the biblical record. These are issues which are necessary to understand and practice in order to lead a righteous lifestyle and fulfill the purpose for one's calling during this gospel age of salvation.

I do not have all the answers to every doctrinal, spiritual, organizational issue, and problem within the body of Christ. But I do believe that I understand some of the major issues and problems which adversely impact many congregations of the elect and how to effectively deal with them through the application and practice of biblical concepts, principles, and laws.

This book contains information that is vital in dealing with major issues concerning the Father's earthly children and it provides insight into concepts, principles, and laws set forth in the biblical record for the elect to practice in order to live in harmony with their heavenly Father, their Savior, and each other.

I have compiled the information in this book in the hope that the experiences which I and others have had in dealing with major issues within the congregations of God will help my brothers and sisters in their pursuit of immortality and in the performance of the work each has been called to perform during this lifetime.

I sincerely hope you find this information enlightening and spiritually beneficial.

B. L. Cocherell
"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for the brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment upon the head, that ran down upon the beard, even of Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psa.133:1-3 KJV).

It would be wonderful if all of the Father's elect children could dwell in unity, faith and purpose, associate with each other, and participate in each others formal worship assembly with the confidence that one's participation is pleasing to the Father and Jesus Christ. However, this is definitely not the situation we find among the Father's elect today.

In this age, there are hundreds of congregational associations that teach the keeping of God's law, the observance of the Sabbath, the annual festivals and overtly appear to be attempting to worship and serve the Father correctly. However, most of these various associations are separated by major doctrinal differences about subjects which are extremely important to one's salvation. These doctrinal differences and certain attitudes and behaviors keep the Sovereign Father's elect from being unified in belief and purpose.

Because the Bible clearly warns that the Father's elect children should avoid heresies, heretics, and participation in other religions, the following are some questions that the elect who are serious about their salvation should ask and answer about spiritual associations with others in the body of Christ:

• Is there anything wrong with associating on a spiritual level with people who believe most of the same things you do in regard to the true God and his teachings, but are clearly in error in one or more important doctrines?
• Can one participate in formal assemblies and associate on a spiritual level with people who hold major doctrinal differences without compromising one's beliefs or spiritual integrity?
• Does it really matter to God the Father and Jesus Christ who one associates with on a spiritual level or what group of the elect one chooses to assemble with for formal worship if one considers these people to be the Father's elect?
This chapter will examine these and other important issues concerning associations on a spiritual level with the Father's elect as individuals and collectively, as well as our responsibility to fulfill our calling and maintain our spiritual integrity before the Father and Jesus Christ.

A SERIOUS WARNING

The prophet Amos recorded this prophecy concerning the results of ancient Israel's rebellion against the Creator God:

"Only you have I known out of all the families on earth; therefore I will punish you for your lawlessness. Can two walk together, except they are in agreement?" (Am.3:2-3 Para.).

This question also applies to the Father's elect children today, because they are considered spiritual Israelites who must live as examples of God's way of life just like the ancient Israelites were to do. Moreover, the Father is going to send the Creator God (Jesus Christ) to punish the descendants of ancient Israel in the end of this age for their disobedience to his laws, precepts, and principles. Furthermore, he is sending Christ to punish his disobedient children who refuse to honor the covenant they made with him at their baptism.

"Can two walk together, except they are in agreement?" The answer is no.

Your Crown

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus Christ gives a very serious prophetic warning to a group of people called the church at Philadelphia. He says to them, "Behold, I come quickly: hold that fast which you have, that no one take your crown" (Rev.3:11 KJV Para.).

There are basically three ways a person can lose their crown:

- Failure to perform the responsibilities the Father has given them to perform.
- Allowing themselves to be influenced by evil people and become spiritually corrupt (They forfeit their crown because they allow sin to rule their life instead of righteousness).
- Not taking their call to salvation seriously and becoming too lazy to put forth the time and effort necessary to secure a place in the Family and Kingdom of God.

TWO CATEGORIES OF THE ELECT

Many of the elect think that Jesus Christ will unify all of the elect in the end of the age to perform a great work for God the Father; however, this will definitely not happen. The prophecies about the church during the end of the age show the Father's elect divided into two distinct categories—obedient and the disobedient.
The Obedient

The prophecies of Daniel, chapters 11 and 12, Habakkuk 1:5, Acts 13:40-41, and Rev.3:7-10 show that just before Jesus returns he is going to give many who are obedient to the faith tremendous opportunities to serve him and his Father. Because of their obedience and their diligence in performing their responsibilities, the elect in this category are found worthy to escape the horror that will take place during the end of the age (Lk.21:34-36; Rev.7:1-3; 12:6).

The Disobedient

The parable of the ten virgins in Matthew, chapter 25 and the messages to the seven churches of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 show that most of the Father's elect children will be living in disobedience to his laws, precepts, and principles and will not be good standing with him.

The elect in this category are not found worthy to escape the horror that will take place during the end of the age (Rev.12:17). It is Jesus' intent to deal with these individuals in a severe manner in order to awaken them to their calling.

CONCERNING UNITY

If there is only one Body of Christ (Eph.4:4-6) to which all the elect belong, one spirit, and one faith, why is there a lack of unity among the Father's earthly children, and why are they separated into various congregations that are generally antagonistic toward one another? The following are the three major reasons why no unity exists among the Father's elect children today:

1. The elect's spiritual leadership
2. Rebellion against God and his ways
3. Looking to the wrong source for salvation

Spiritual Leadership

Concerning unity within the body of Christ, the apostle Paul wrote:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ" (Eph.4:11-13 KJV).

Paul says that one of the reasons certain men are given positions of leadership within the body of Christ is to unify the Father's elect in doctrine and purpose. Being unified in doctrine and in purpose is truly the ideal; however, realistically this will not happen before Christ returns because of major problems which exist among the spiritual leadership of the elect.
Congregational Leadership

Today, a major reason for disunity among the congregations of the Father's elect is their spiritual leadership.

Jesus' reprimand to the Jews and the spiritual leaders of his day for their rebellion against truth is just as appropriate today as it was then (Matt.15:7-9), because many of the men in leadership positions within the congregations of God are not qualified to lead the elect of God for one or more of the following reasons:

• They may be unconverted.
• They are not authorized by Jesus Christ to lead the elect.
• They are false ministers masquerading as servants of God.
• Their motive for leading is self-serving.
• They are living in rebellion against God including blatant sin.
• They are afraid to teach truth for fear of losing their positions.
• They are otherwise not fulfilling their responsibility according to scripture.

If this were not true, there would be unity of belief and a spirit of cooperation and teamwork among the spiritual leadership of the church.

Satan's Deception and His Ministry

Satan's deception through false ministers causes much disunity and division among the various congregations of God. At the very beginning of the early church, Satan began his plan to destroy the elect of God by sending his ministers to subvert, deceive, and destroy the congregations of the elect from within. The apostle Paul warned the elect at Corinth to be aware of this threat to their eternal lives:

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled [deceived] Eve through his subtlety, so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes [and is] preaching another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit [an evil lying spirit], which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted [a false gospel]. . ." (2.Cor.11:3-4 KJV). See also Gal.1:6-9.

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15 KJV). See also Deut.13:1-5; Jer.23:21-22.

Satan has many ministers disguised as true ministers of God (Rev. 2:9; 3:9). Although these servants of Satan are actively deceiving the world at large, some of these individuals are within the congregations of God and are actively subverting the elect of God.
Although some of the individuals who claim to be the ministers of Christ are truly deceived themselves, some are not—they are willing tools of Satan. These individuals actively attempt to destroy the ill-informed, the unsuspecting, and the naive. Jesus knew this would happen and gave the following warning to his followers to beware of those who were not sent by him to shepherd his people:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many." (Matt.24:4-5 KJV).

The history of the church shows that Satan and his servants have been very successful in their mission to destroy the elect and in the destruction of those who are dedicated to restoring the faith once delivered.

Rebellion

Adam and Eve rebelled against the Creator God in the Garden of Eden. After being delivered from the slavery of Egypt, the children of Israel rebelled against God in the wilderness. Mankind in general has been in a condition of rebellion from the time of Adam to today (See Ezek.20:12-13; Isa.30:9-10; 66:3). Furthermore, many of the elect today are living in rebellion against God and his way of life. See Matt.25:1-13; Rev.chps.2-3.

Rebellion comes in many forms and always separates the rebellious from God the Father and Jesus Christ. The following prophecy about ancient Israel's rejection of God easily applies to many of the elect today:

"This is a rebellious people, Which say seers, . . . speak to us smooth things, . . . cause the Holy One of Israel to cease" (Isa.30:9-11).

The rebellious among the elect do not want to hear things which will reveal their true spiritual condition, because recipients of God's truth must either conform to or reject truth. In order to conform to truth, a person must change from unrighteousness to righteousness. The rebellious do not want to change from their self-willed and self-serving attitudes and behaviors and conform to God's ways; therefore, these individuals seek spiritual leaders who will not challenge their rebellion against God, but will instead teach them things which validate their concept of truth.

The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to continue to teach truth, even though a time would come when most of the elect would reject this truth:

"I charge you therefore before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears; And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (2.Tim.4:1-4 Para.).
The rejection of God's truth—both actively and passively—is rebellion against God, which is why Jesus Christ is going to punish six of the seven churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation.

**Looking to the Wrong Source**

Many of the elect fail to follow the clear warnings in the scriptures to take responsibility for their own salvation. These individuals place their confidence in a spiritual leader or an organization to secure salvation for them. These individuals are looking to the wrong source to secure their salvation. They have either forgotten or never truly understood the apostle Paul's admonition to the Philippians and Timothy about the effort required to secure salvation and to be an accountable and responsible member of the body of Christ:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12 KJV).

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness" (2.Tim.2:15-16 NKJV). See also Rom.12:2; 1.Thes. 4:10-12; 5:21; 2.Pet.3:13-18.

If ungodliness did not exist among the Father's elect, there would be unity of belief and a spirit of cooperation and teamwork among the elect and their spiritual leadership.

**GUILT BY ASSOCIATION**

Does God assign guilt by association and will he punish the innocent along with the guilty? It is a biblical fact that the innocent were sometimes punished with the guilty under the covenant the Creator God made with ancient Israel, because the innocent were either in the wrong place at the wrong time or had not heeded warnings to remove themselves from among the disobedient.

It is also a biblical fact that, during the gospel age of salvation, the innocent have been and will continue to be punished with the guilty under certain circumstances. This condition of guilt by association not only places one's physical existence in jeopardy but also one's salvation.

One of the ways a righteous person can put themselves in a situation where they place their salvation in jeopardy and risk being punished by Christ along with the wicked is through associating with unrighteous individuals or with an errant congregation of God's people.
The prophecies in the Book of Revelation, chapters 2 and 3 show that some of the elect within six of the seven congregational associations have attitudes and behaviors that are acceptable to the Father, so they are worthy of being given eternal life in his Kingdom. However, these prophecies also show some individuals are unworthy to escape the punishment which will be given to those with whom they are associating. But, why are these worthy people going to suffer punishment and trials along with those who are not worthy. The answer is that they are guilty by association.

In order to understand why the righteous will be punished along with the unrighteous and why Jesus Christ assigns guilt by association, we must understand our responsibility toward God the Father, Jesus Christ, and our fellow brethren in the body of Christ. The failure of the worthy who are among the congregations of the unworthy to follow the clear instructions of the Bible to perform their responsibility to the Father, Jesus Christ, and their brethren is the reason they will be punished along with the unworthy. The worthy fail to do the following things:

- Correctly respond to the spirit of truth
- Rebuke their sinful brethren
- Challenge false doctrine
- Warn of the consequences of sin and belief in false doctrines

Because they have failed to "Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (Jude v3 KJV) and shirked their responsibility to stand for righteousness, rebuke sin, challenge false doctrines, warn their brethren of the consequences of sin and belief in false doctrines, and aggressively stand for righteousness, they have become partakers of their brothers' sin (1.Tim.5:22; 2.Jn.vs.9-11); therefore, they will be punished with them.

Is Ignorance an Excuse?

A person is not given perfect knowledge and understanding of all the mysteries of God's plan or his laws, precepts, and principles at the instant they receive the holy spirit. However, ignorance of these things is no excuse for holding onto unrighteous attitudes, behaviors, and false doctrines, because all of the basic foundational truth required to live a righteous life and remain in good standing with God the Father and Jesus Christ can be acquired if one is willing to do the things described in the following scriptures:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness" (2.Tim.2:15-16 NKJV). See also 1.Thes.4:10-12.
"The heart of the righteous studies how to answer; but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things" (Pro.15:28 KJV).

"All who listen to my instructions and follow them are wise, like a man who builds his house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents, and the floods rise and the storm winds beat against his house, it won’t collapse, for it is built on a rock. But those who hear my instructions and ignore them are foolish, like a man who builds his house on the sand. For when the rains and floods come, and storm winds beat against his house, it will fall with a mighty crash" (Matt.7:24-27 LBP).

"Do not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is the good, the acceptable, and the perfect will of God" (Rom.12:2 Para.).

"Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1.Thes.5:21 KJV).

Although the holy spirit imparts knowledge, understanding, wisdom, and discernment, we must ask the Father for these and follow through with diligent and thoughtful Bible study:

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened" (Matt.7:7-8 KJV).

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are opened to their prayers..." (1.Pet.3:12 KJV). See also Jn.16:24; Mk.11:24; Rom.12:12; Col.4:2.

"Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law does he meditate day and night" (Psa.1:1-2 KJV). See also Psa.119:15-148; 1.Tim.4:12-16.

The Bible

It is important to understand that the Bible was written primarily for those whom the Father has called to salvation during this age. Through the Bible, it is possible to learn from the experience and teaching of others and gain valuable knowledge, understanding, and inspiration to help us in our daily walk with God:

"Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; so that the man of God may be perfect, fully furnished for every good work" (2.Tim.3:16-17 Para.).

"Now all these things happened to them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1.Cor.10:11 KJV). See also Dan.12: 9-12; Col.1:7-10.
With Knowledge and understanding comes a tremendous responsibility to be faithful and to practice the truth that has been given. The faithful must constantly keep in contact with their heavenly Father in order to keep clearly focused on their primary goals.

WITHDRAW FROM THE DISOBEDIENT

The biblical record is very clear about what to do when people have been warned about unrighteous behavior and refuse to repent. In Matthew, chapter 18 and in other scriptures, there are instructions which show how to discipline the disobedient within a congregation; however, what does one do when an entire church refuses to repent of their unrighteous attitudes, behaviors, or false doctrines?

What the apostle Paul says to the Thessalonians and to Titus also applies to an entire congregational association:

"Now we [the apostles and elders] command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother who walks disorderly, and not after the tradition received from us" (2.Thes.3:6 Para.).

"Stay away from foolish questions, and genealogies, and arguments, and quarrels about the law; for they are unprofitable and vain. and after the first and second warning avoid the heretic, knowing that such a person has been perverted, and sins, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:9-11 Para).

What the apostle Paul wrote about avoiding individuals who are disobedient or promote false or misleading beliefs may seem harsh to some people; however, it is not. It is how a righteous person must react to those who refuse to live righteously or discard false doctrines.

These are serious warnings to anyone who does not want to suffer the consequences of associating with the elect who are rebellious. The biblical instruction is clear. If one is to remain in good standing with God the Father and Jesus Christ, one must separate themselves from those of the elect who are in disobedience and refuse to repent.

Some of the elect continue their association with individuals or congregations that claim to follow Christ, even after learning they hold false doctrines or are otherwise living in sin and refuse to change from their error. The following are some of the many reasons some of the elect continue these dangerous associations:

- A misguided sense of loyalty or duty
- Fear of losing friends, a spouse or a family member
- Fear of being labeled self-righteous
- Fear of being alone without spiritual fellowship
Although many excuses can be made for continuing to associate with the elect who are disobedient, once one truly knows and understands that an individual or a congregation is holding false doctrines or practicing sinful behavior which will cause a loss of salvation, but refuse to change once they are shown their error, the biblical instruction is to stop associating with them until repentance is evident.

When deciding whether or not to associate with individuals within the Body of Christ, one should try to understand what their spiritual attitudes, behaviors, and doctrinal views are. If these are found to be inconsistent with the teaching of the Bible, a prudent question to ask oneself is why would I want to associate with the elect whom Jesus is going to punish for their rebellion?

LOVE TOWARD THE BRETHREN

Many worry that, if they disassociate themselves from their disobedient brethren, it shows a lack of love for these individuals. This is a valid concern; however, love for an errant brother or sister in the Body of Christ should always be viewed from the biblical perspective and not the world's perspective, because the two are very different and sometimes totally incompatible.

The apostle John wrote many things about how to determine if someone has love for the Father, Jesus, and the brethren. However, many do not understand that love for the Father, Jesus, and the brethren is tied to keeping God's laws, precepts, and principles. A person who truly keeps them is a loving person, but a person who refuses to keep them does not have the love of God abiding within them and is not in harmony with the Father and Christ:

"And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. . . He that abides in the doctrine of Christ, he has both the Father and the Son. If there come any to you, and bring not this doctrine, receive him not into your house, neither bid him God speed: For he that bides him God speed is partaker of his evil deeds" (2.Jn vs.6, 9-11 KJV).

"By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1.Jn.5:2-3 KJV).

The Father's elect children must show godly love toward one another, and godly love does not compromise the truth of God. The very act of disassociating oneself from the disobedient elect for the right reasons is in itself an act of godly love, because it is done for the purpose of revealing the need for repentance from wrong attitudes, behaviors, or false doctrines to the errant elect.
CHOICES

Never loose sight of the fact that, when a person has agreed to the covenant terms and conditions between themselves, God the Father, and Jesus Christ, that individual has embarked on a journey which will lead to eternal life or eternal death, depending on their choices and faithfulness to the agreement. The decision to choose good over evil is the same today as it was under the Creator's agreement with ancient Israel:

"This day I call heaven and earth as witnesses against you that I have set before you life and death, blessings and curses. Now choose life, so that you and your children may live" (Deut.30:19 NIV).

There is only one opportunity for salvation and those who venture into a covenant with God the Father put themselves in a very serious situation concerning attitudes, behaviors, and doctrinal issues. Our heavenly Father honors personal and group covenants and will continue to honor them as long as the elect who are part of these covenant relationships maintain their integrity.

Chose the Right Pathway to Eternal Life

Another reason why it is extremely important to choose one's spiritual associations carefully and to place one's faith in the Father and Jesus Christ and not in a person or an organization is that Jesus says the pathway which leads to eternal life is difficult to find and stay on:

"You enter in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many will be going in there. Because narrow is the gate, and narrow is the way, that leads to eternal life, and there will be few that find it" (Matt.7:13-14 Para.).

"Strive to enter in at the narrow gate: for I say to you, many, will seek to enter in this gate, and shall not be able" (Lk.13:24 Para.).

It is difficult to find because it takes total commitment to the Father's truth. In order to make sure that one has chosen the right path, one must spend much time and effort in seeking the Father's will in prayerful fellowship with him, in the study of his word, and in meditation on the things which pertain to his way of life.

THE SEVEN CHURCHES

The seven prophetic churches of the Book of Revelation reveal many keys to establishing and maintaining a harmonious relationship with God the Father and Jesus Christ. One of the primary lessons which can be learned from an analysis of these seven churches is that one must maintain righteous attitudes and behaviors and reject false doctrines in order to find favor with the Father and his Son.
Although there is much that can be learned from the entire Body of Christ and there are many benefits which can be derived from associating with individual Christians and with the various congregations of God, there are also many serious dangers in associating with the elect who are not in harmony with the Father and Jesus Christ. If one is associating with the elect who are truly committed to God the Father and Jesus Christ and in submission to them, one is most fortunate indeed, because this is the exception and not the rule among the congregations of God.

The Church of Philadelphia

Why is it that the prophetic church of Philadelphia in the Book of Revelation the only church that Jesus Christ does not punish? The answer is that they are the only individuals who are striving for total obedience to their heavenly Father and his law, and they are in total harmony with the Father and his Son.

The primary reason why the elect of the Philadelphia church do not fellowship with or perform a spiritual work with the elect who hold the attitudes and behaviors of the other six churches is that the Philadelphia attitude and behavior is a righteous reprimand and rebuke to the other six who hold unrighteous attitudes, behaviors, and false doctrines. Simply put, there is little common ground between those of the Philadelphia church and the other six on which to build a relationship, because the Philadelphia church truly obeys Paul's instruction to not fellowship with those who are disobedient to the faith. See 2.Cor.6:14-15; 2.Thes.3:6; Tit.3:9-11.

Self-delusion

Most of Father's elect want to think of themselves as having the attributes and behaviors of the Philadelphia church of Revelation, chapter 3. However, most are self-deluded and haven't really examined what is required in order to be accepted by the Father as a Philadelphian who is worthy of special consideration, empowerment, and protection.

Clearly, the vast majority of the elect do not have the characteristics that the Father and Christ require of the Philadelphia elect, because six-seVENTHS of the entire body of the elect are shown as not being in good standing with God the Father and Jesus Christ.

For most of the elect, the discovery of the identity of the Philadelphia church will come too late as the parable of the ten virgins teaches. Clearly the time to identify and cultivate the Philadelphia attitude and behavior is before it becomes apparent that one is a part of one of the other six churches.
SUMMARY

Although it can be a wonderful and fulfilling experience to associate with and worship with the Father's elect, in the final analysis, one's walk with the Father and Christ is an extremely personal matter. A person who is seeking to please the Father and Christ and obtain eternal life in the Kingdom of God should be very cautious about choosing with whom to associate inside and outside the body of Christ:

"See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be you not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph.5:15-17 KJV). See Col.1:7-10.

Jude cautioned the elect of God:

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was needful for me to write to you, and exhort you that you should earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints" (v3 KJV).

During the time that Jude wrote his letter, the truth of God was being corrupted by the heretical teachings of evil individuals and spiritual leaders. This scripture shows the importance of striving to recapture the system of beliefs which were delivered to the early church. The original Greek language of Jude, verse 3 gives the sense that it will take more than a casual effort to recapture the faith which was once delivered; it will take a diligent and dedicated effort.

Many of the Father's elect allow themselves to be seduced into false doctrines and a false sense of security through one or more of the following:

• The influence of evil spirits or people with whom they associate
• A lack of zeal and diligence to their calling
• The influence of their spiritual leadership
• Rebellion against God's instructions to resist evil
• The influence of heretics and false Christians

If this were not true, there would be unity of belief and a spirit of cooperation, teamwork, peace, and harmony among the Father's elect and their spiritual leadership.

Who is Accountable and Responsible?

In the final analysis, the Father holds each individual he calls to salvation personally responsible and accountable to work out their own salvation (Phil.2:12). Therefore, it is your responsibility to determine whether or not to associate with individuals or congregations that are not in harmony with your heavenly Father and your Savior.

By B. L. Cocherell
Deception from outside our heavenly Father's family comes in many forms and from many sources, such as false prophets, false ministers, Bible scholars within counterfeit Christianity, and the influence of evil spirits. All of these have some biblical truth, but blend it with error which leads away from righteousness and to the second death from which there is no return.

Within the New Testament, there are many warnings to the elect to be alert to the dangers to our salvation from interacting with unconverted individuals who go about promoting unrighteous precepts, principles, and concepts which are opposed to the truth set forth in the biblical record. Additionally, the elect are cautioned to be aware that divisions and deceptions will come from both converted and unconverted individuals within their congregations.

Because the Father's earthly family is a self-governing, self-monitoring, and self-disciplined entity with an educational process which is to be self-perpetuating, all of its members must actively participate in this process. Otherwise, there will be doctrinal chaos, a lack of unity, a nebulous concept of what the Father expects from each individual, and a general lack of spirit-power, which is exactly the condition that exists among many congregations during this age.

In this chapter, you will find examples of individuals among the elect who were causing problems within the congregations of the early church by promoting attitudes, behaviors, and false doctrines which were inconsistent with our heavenly Father's truth as set forth in the biblical record. Additionally, you will find examples that reveal the spiritual condition of some individuals who are the cause of deception, division, and trouble within a congregation and how to correctly deal with these individuals.

Deception by the Unconverted

As the early church fulfilled its responsibility to proclaim the Father's message of salvation, many individuals who fellowshipped within congregations of the elect remained unconverted, after which some ceased to associate with the elect and began to teach their own version of the truth in opposition to what Christ and the apostles taught.

Perhaps, the apostle John wrote the following to explain to those who could not understand why someone whom they believed to be of the elect would break fellowship and begin to promote things inconsistent with righteousness:
"Little children, it is the final hour: and as you have heard that antichrist shall come, even now there are many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the final hour" (1.Jn.2:18 KJV Para.).

The English word antichrist in verse 18 is translated from the Greek word antichristos, which means anyone opposed to Christ.

In John's first and second letter, he sometimes describes all individuals opposed to Christ with the word antichristos. However, in the context of verses 18 and 19 he uses antichristos to describe individuals who formerly fellowshipped with the elect:

"They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would no doubt have continued with us: but they went out, that they might be made manifest that they were not all of us" (1.Jn.2:19 KJV).

John clearly states that the behavior of these individuals is proof they were never converted.

"But you have an unction from the Holy One, and you know all things. I have not written to you because you do not know the truth, but because you know it, and that no lie is of the truth" (1.Jn.2:20-21 KJV).

The English word unction in verse 20 is translated from the Greek word chrisma, which means an unguent or smearing, i.e., (figuratively) a special endowment given through the Father's holy spirit.

The elect to whom John writes were anointed with the indwelling of the holy spirit; therefore, they knew and understood the truth about godly attitudes and behaviors. Moreover, they should have been able to recognize those who opposed Christ.

Many reject Christ and the message he taught, but for the most part these individuals are the unconverted:

Who is a liar but he that denies that Jesus is the Christ? He is antichrist, that denies the Father and the Son. Whosoever denies the Son, the same has not the Father: (but) he that acknowledges the Son has the Father also. Let that therefore abide in you, which you have heard from the beginning. If that which you have heard from the beginning shall remain in you, you also shall continue in the Son, and in the Father" (1.Jn.2:22-24 KJV).

In verse 23, John refers to a heretical teaching being taught at that time and still being taught today. This teaching denied that the Father and Christ are separate individuals in the God Family.

"And this is the promise that he has promised us, even eternal life. These things have I written to you concerning them that seduce [i.e., deceive] you" (1.Jn.2:25-26 KJV).
From what John writes in verse 26, it seems that these unconverted individuals he speaks of in verses 18, 19, 22 and 23 are attempting to deceive the elect into accepting false teachings.

"But the endowment which you have received of him abides in you, and you do not need anyone to teach you: but as the same endowment teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him" (1.Jn.2:27 KJV Para.).

Each of the elect has the indwelling of the holy spirit and each has the inherent ability to recognize the difference between spiritual truth and spiritual error, if they diligently pay attention to their calling and educate themselves in the Father's truth through prayerful study and meditation in the biblical record. See Jn.16:13.

Prophets

During the existence of the early church, there were many individuals claiming to be prophets, some of whom were among the elect (2.Pet.2:1). Some were truly inspired by God and some were not. Those who were not taught things which were half-truth or completely false. These teachings caused those who were not familiar with and skilled in the Father's foundational laws, precepts, and principles to stray from the truth. Therefore, John's instruction to evaluate what is being said to determine if it is true or not:

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1.Jn.4:1 KJV).

Here, the English word spirit is translated from the Greek word pneuma, which means a breeze or breath. Because pneuma has many meanings, what is being described by this word must be understood in the context in which it is used. The spirits to which John refers can be spirit-beings or people. Therefore, it is our responsibility to determine whether or not what they say is the truth.

The English words false prophets are translated from the Greek word pseudoprophetes, which basically means a person who pretends to be a prophet or a religious impostor.

In order to avoid being deceived by spirit-beings or individuals professing to be sent from God the Father or Christ, what they say must be carefully compared against the biblical record.

"By this you know the spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ is come in flesh is of God" (1.Jn.4:2 KJV Para.).

Various translators of the Bible have added many words to verse 3, which cloud its meaning. The following is a more accurate rendering:
"And every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is of God is not of God, and the same is of antichrist, of which you have heard that it should come; and is already in the world" (1.Jn.4:3 Para.).

To acknowledge Christ is much more than acknowledging he existed. Truly acknowledging Christ includes believing and practicing what he taught.

In order to keep from being deceived by people or evil spirits, you must have a good understanding of foundational biblical laws, concepts, precepts, and principles, as well as the gospel message which leads to salvation.

**Wolves Among the Flock**

Paul warned the elders at Ephesus to beware of elders who come from other areas to participate in their ministry with the purpose of destroying the elect:

"And from Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. . . Pay attention to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the holy spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his own blood. I know this, that after I depart grievous wolves shall enter in among you [the eldership], not sparing the flock" (Acts 20:17, 28-29 KJV Para.).

In verse 30, Paul warns that some of the Ephesian ministry will also be the cause of deception, division, and trouble.

"Also of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them. Therefore watch, and remember, that by the space of three years I ceased not to warn everyone night and day with tears" (Acts 20:30-31KJV Para.).

Paul's prophetic warning to the elders at Ephesus came true. This happened in the past and continues to happen in this age of the church as some elders relocate from one congregation to another seeking an opportunity to promote their own agenda, which often results in some of the elect being lead astray.

**The Latter Days**

The apostle Paul warned the evangelist Timothy to beware of those who would depart from the faith and begin speaking and teaching many things which are not true:

"Now the spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times saying that some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; telling hypocritical lies; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1.Tim.4:1-2 Para.). See also Jude verses 1-19.
Not every person who forsakes the faith leaves a congregation. Some continue their association and either openly or secretly attempt to influence others to also forsake the faith. Herein is a great danger to the elect who are new in the faith, weak in the faith, or easily influenced.

History shows that the failure of the Father's earthly children to take the apostle's warnings seriously eventually led to the demise and disappearance of the early church after the death of the apostle John.

**A Warning From Peter**

Peter warned that there will be false prophets and individuals who will surreptitiously introduce heretical teachings which deny the validly of Christ and his sacrifice:

"But there were false prophets also among the people, even as there shall be false teachers among you, who privily shall bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them, and bring upon themselves swift destruction" (2.Pet.2:1 KJV).

There have been and will continue to be false prophets among the elect. In this age, there are false prophets in the form of false Eljahs, counterfeit of the prophetic Two Witnesses, each with his or her own personal agenda.

There are also individuals who believe and teach that it is necessary to sacrifice a lamb on the Passover. Some teach obedience to the law as a means of justification, and others teach that the correct pronunciation of the Tetragrammaton (God's name in the Hebrew text) or an original form of the name of Christ is necessary to claim salvation.

Just as Peter predicted, many individuals have come among the elect and the ministry teaching destructive concepts, principles, and practices, many of which are confusing and contradictory. These individuals and their heretical beliefs and teachings are evidence that many who teach among the elect are unconverted or sent by evil spirits to destroy the naive and gullible.

"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2.Pet.2:2 KJV).

Because these perversions of the truth become believed, taught, and practiced by some of the elect, the Father's truth is ridiculed by the unconverted.

"And through covetousness [i.e., fraud or extortion] shall they with feigned [i.e., fictitious] words make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation slumbers not" (2.Pet.2:3 KJV).

These individuals cleverly devise false teachings, which deceive many of the elect and lead them away from the path which leads to salvation. The question is why would an individual with the indwelling of the holy spirit follow these deceptive individuals?
The answer is that many of the elect are vulnerable to being deceived, because they have not built a strong foundation in godly concepts, precepts, and principles or do not have a desire to put forth the time and effort to challenge heretical teaching through their own study and research into the biblical record.

The Heretic

Heretics will continue to be within the congregations of the elect until Christ returns, which is why the following instruction by Paul concerning how to deal with heretics is so important:

"A person who is a heretic after the first and second admonition avoid; Knowing that truly this one is subverted, and sins, being self-condemned" (Titus 3:10-11 Para.).

The problem in complying with Paul's instruction to Titus concerning heretics within a congregation is that a heretical teaching must first be recognized in order to challenge the individual teaching it.

Those Who Cause Divisions

Although a heretic is only one type of an individual who is the cause of division and divisiveness among the elect, what Paul wrote to the elect at Rome about how to treat those who cause division should also be applied to heretics:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark [i.e., be aware of] them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom.16:17-18 KJV).

Here are individuals who say and do things which seem to be in harmony with truth, but in reality what they teach is designed to deceive and destroy.

We who are many centuries removed from the teachings of Christ and the apostles should be extremely careful and pragmatic when considering whom to trust in spiritual matters so that we are not led astray by false prophets, ministers, teachers, or others within or outside of the church.

ESTABLISHING THE FATHER'S TEACHINGS

The apostles of the early church had the difficult task of firmly establishing the Father's laws, precepts, and principles as taught by Christ. They did this in order to guide the Father's earthly children in a harmonious relationship with him, Christ, and each other as each individual works out their salvation and performed the responsibilities and functions for which they were called.
A major problem the apostles encountered while establishing doctrines of the early church was the removal of false and irrelevant beliefs, teachings, traditions, and concepts carried over from Judaism and other religions from which many of the elect were called to salvation.

Many of the apostles' letters contained their attempt to counter beliefs, teachings, and practices which were in opposition to the Father's truth and were being taught by individuals within the various congregations under their care. If this was a major problem then, it most certainly is a major problem in this age.

**Justification Through the Law**

One of the heresies believed and taught by some individuals within congregations of the early church was that justification came through obedience to the law which was originally given to national Israel. In order to counter this false belief among the elect at Galatia, Paul opens his letter to them by introducing the topic of a false gospel:

"I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal.1:6-7 KJV).

Paul defined the problem he was about to deal with as a false or "perverted" gospel, which some individuals in the Galatian congregation were promoting; they were causing trouble by corrupting God the Father's good news message.

"But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let them be accursed. As we said before, so say I now again, If any preach any other gospel to you than that you have received, let them be accursed" (Gal.1:8-9 KJV Para.).

Throughout the rest of his letter to the Galatians, Paul explains what this false gospel is by showing the difference between being justified (i.e., found innocent) under the agreement the Creator God made with national Israel and the agreement God the Father makes with those he calls to salvation.

Paul's explanation to the Galatians about justification is focused on male circumcision, which he mentions fourteen times in the context of God's law, justification, and salvation. This seems to indicate that the teaching of mandatory male circumcision in order to be justified was one of the false beliefs and teachings which needed to be dealt with among the Galatians.

The false concept of mandatory male circumcision in order for a male to obtain salvation was so prevalent among various congregations of the early church that it finally had to be resolved in a formal council of elders at Jerusalem. See Acts chapter 15.
Mandatory male circumcision was only one of the many erroneous beliefs and teaching prevalent within various congregations of the early church which caused much deception, division, and trouble.

The following are several extremely important things to note from Paul's letter to the Galatians:

- Heretical beliefs and teachings within a congregation cause some individuals to lose their salvation.
- If allowed to continue unchallenged, heretical beliefs, teachings, and practices will eventually result in the entire congregation being corrupted.
- A person with the indwelling of the holy spirit who promotes heresy and is unrepentant will be punished with the second death in the lake of fire.

Obedience To The Law

Although it is absolutely true that obedience to certain laws given to ancient Israel are applicable to the Father's elect, there are some laws which do not apply during the gospel age of salvation. The following are several guidelines for determining whether or not a particular law must be practiced:

- Has the law been canceled or suspended by a direct "thus says the Lord," an act of God, or circumstances beyond our control?
- Has there been a change in the law or the method of its observance? A good example of this is the Passover and the observance of the annual festivals.
- Has the need for the particular law been eliminated? For example, the need for an animal sacrifice on the Passover has been eliminated, because the sacrifice of Christ now forgives sin and takes away its penalty.
- Has the law been changed so that the physical act or symbolism is no longer required? For example, wearing tassels is no longer required as a reminder of the commandments, because they are written in our hearts and we have the indwelling of the holy spirit to remind and teach us.
- Is the law made invalid by the new agreement? For example, animal sacrifice can no longer atone for spiritual sin or be used for becoming justified to God.
- Is it impossible to perform an act or law under present conditions? For example, the temple worship system cannot be performed, because a temple and its priesthood no longer exist.

The wonderful benefit revealed through the gospel message is that the Father's forgiveness of sin, justification (i.e., being found innocent of violations of God's law) and salvation come through Christ's sacrificial blood—not through a strict obedience to the law.
Deceivers Within The Church

In a letter to Timothy, the apostle Paul encourages him to continue performing his ministry and to continue in faith which some had forsaken:

"Now to the King eternal, immortal, invisible, the only wise God, be honor and glory for ever and ever. Amen. This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on you, that you by them might war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1.Tim.1:17-20 KJV).

This scripture shows two individuals, Hymenaeus and Alexander, who once believed the message of salvation, were baptized, received the indwelling of the holy spirit, and were members of a congregation. According to Paul, these two began to spread blasphemy, which was causing trouble among the elect; otherwise, Paul would not have put them in Satan's hands.

In another letter to Timothy, Paul again refers to individuals making trouble within a congregation which caused others to fail in their calling:

"Of these things put them in remembrance, charging them before the Lord that they strive not about words to no profit, but to the subverting of the hearers" (2.Tim.2:14 KJV).

Arguing about various doctrines is a major cause of instability within a congregation. To avoid arguments, it is important to carefully study the biblical record and ask the Father for knowledge, understanding, and guidance into his truth:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness. And their word will eat as does an ulcer: of whom is Hymenaeus and Philetus; Who concerning the truth have erred, saying that the resurrection is past already; and overthrow the faith of some" (2.Tim.2:15-18 NKJV Para.).

Hymenaeus is mentioned again with another individual. These two were attempting to convince others among the elect that the resurrection was past, which is inconsistent with the teaching of Christ, the apostles, and the prophetic record concerning the promise of life everlasting for the righteous.

This heresy of Hymenaeus and Philetus was extremely deceptive and dangerous, because the opportunity for salvation would be gone if the resurrection were already past. If that were true, why would anyone bother living a righteous life?
When any biblical teaching is clearly understood and proven beyond doubt, such as the promise of everlasting life as a reward for the righteous, all arguments to the contrary must be dealt with using the logic contained in the biblical record as proof of the correct understanding.

It is obvious from what Paul writes to Timothy about the heresy being promoted by Hymenaeus, Alexander, and Philetus that the elect who were being affected by their heresy were not sufficiently familiar with and skilled in the Father’s foundational laws, precepts, and principles to be able to counter these false beliefs. The lack of a strong biblical foundation continues to plague the elect in this age and is the cause of many problems among them.

The Elect At Corinth

Among the many divisive issues which were causing problems for the elect at Corinth was improper behavior during the Passover ceremony by some of them.

This seemed only to be a problem within the congregation at Corinth. But, for it to be a problem, someone had to be promoting this behavior. Again, we see God’s truth being perverted by individuals within a congregation.

"Now in this that I declare to you I praise you not, that you come together not for the better, but for the worse. For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear that there be divisions among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1.Cor.11:17-19 KJV).

Those who challenge heretical teachings within a congregation and show them to be false will be recognized as being a guardian and defender of God’s truth.

"When you come together into one place, this is not to eat the Lord’s supper. For in eating every one eats their own supper ahead of the others: and one is hungry, and another is drunk" (1.Cor.11: 20-21 KJV Para.).

This problem was due to some within the congregation deciding that they could observe the Passover in whatever manner they wanted, rather than in the way the apostle Paul taught.

False Brethren

In a second letter to the elect at Corinth, Paul reminds them of his authority as an apostle and lists some of the things he has suffered and some of the problems he had to contend with as he carried out his ministry. One of these problems was dealing with the dangers posed to him by counterfeit Christians within various congregations of the elect:
"In journeying often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by my own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren . . ." (2.Cor.11:26 KJV).

Are false brethren a problem for true ministers of Christ today? Absolutely! Not only are they a danger to a true minister of Christ, but also to all the elect within a congregation.

Warning to the Church of Thyatira

"And to the angel of the church in Thyatira write; These things says the Son of God, who has his eyes like to a flame of fire, and his feet are like fine brass; I know your works, and charity, and service, and faith, and your patience, and your works; and the last to be more than the first. Notwithstanding I have a few things against you, because you suffer that woman Jezebel, which calls herself a prophetess, to teach and to seduce my servants to commit fornication, and to eat things sacrificed to idols" (Rev.2:18-20 KJV).

Here, the English word fornication is translated from the Greek word porneuo, which means (in fact) to indulge unlawful lust (of either sex) or (figuratively) the practice of idolatry:

This woman claimed to be a prophetess, who the eldership allowed to influence some of the congregation to violate God's law. Her negative influence shows a tremendous lack of leadership by Thyatira's elders and their lack of knowledge and understanding about how to live a righteous life.

"And I gave her space to repent of her fornication; and she did not repent. Behold, I will cast her into a bed, and them that commit adultery with her into great tribulation, except they repent of their deeds. And I will kill her children with death; and all the churches shall know that I am he which searches the reins and hearts: and I will give to every one of you according to your works" (Rev.2:21-23 KJV Para.).

Verses 21-23 contain a serious warning to challenge teachings within a congregation which are not in harmony with truth and to not blindly follow a person who seems to speak with authority.

A Form of Godliness

What the apostle Paul wrote to Timothy about the behavior of people who will live during the few years before Christ returns was not only prophetic for the end of the age of human rule. It was also a warning for the elect of his time and the elect who will live until Christ returns.
"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men [i.e., people] shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, unholy, Without natural affection, truce-breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despising those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2.Tim.3:1-5 KJV).

A casual reading of Paul's warning to Timothy seems to indicate that he is writing about unconverted individuals; however, when we read verse 6, it is clear Paul is warning about both converted and unconverted individuals within congregations:

"For of this sort are they which creep into houses, and lead captive silly women laden with sins, led away with divers lusts, Ever learning, and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth" (2.Tim.3:6-7 KJV).

These individuals have biblical knowledge, but do not understand the physical and spiritual concepts and principles being taught through the biblical record; therefore, they are either unconverted, full of intellectual vanity, or self-deceived.

"Now as Jannes and Jambres withstood Moses, so do these also resist the truth: men [i.e., people] of corrupt minds, reprobate concerning the faith" (2.Tim.3:8 KJV).

The English word reprobate in verse 18 is translated from the Greek word adokimos, which means rejected; by implication, worthless.

Here again is a warning to be aware that not everyone who claims to follow Christ is one of the elect and that the elect must pay attention to what other individuals within a congregation say and do in order to determine whether or not their true character and intent is righteous.

The Unconverted Creep In

Jude warns the church about heretics within the congregations:

"Beloved, when I gave all diligence to write to you of the common salvation, it was necessary for me to write to you, and exhort you to earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. For there are some people crept in without you being aware, who were previously ordained to this condemnation, wicked, turning the grace of our God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ" (Jude 3-4 KJV Para.).

At the time Jude wrote this letter, the church was under intense attack by individuals who were attempting to take advantage of the elect and by individuals and evil spirits who intended to destroy as many of the elect as possible. These constant attacks eventually resulted in the demise of the early church as a dynamic and spiritually powerful entity.
The Fifth Column

A very effective tactic used by individuals and evil spirits to destroy the elect is what is commonly called, in military terms, a fifth column, which is comprised of people who secretly undermine a larger group from within. This fifth column sometimes uses sympathizers called dupes who are deceived into thinking they are accomplishing something for the greater good.

One of the objectives of the members of a fifth column is to infiltrate the membership of a congregation and its leadership. Once entrenched in the fabric of a congregation, they go about causing division and chaos while seeking to destroy as many of the elect as possible.

Have individuals intent on destroying the elect infiltrated some congregations of the elect today? Are there individuals influenced by evil spirits within some congregations of the elect today? Absolutely there are. These individuals pose a great danger to the elect, because they are rarely recognized for who and what they are. But why are these individuals rarely recognized?

This situation exists because many of the elect are extremely gullible and naive when it comes to trust relationships within a congregation. Most believe that, because a person associates with them and claims to be a follower of Christ, they are. However, this may not be true for many reasons.

Jude's Warning

Jude reminds the elect that they knew about what happened to those who rebelled against God after being rescued from Egypt and what is going to happen to some of the heavenly host who rebelled:

"I will therefore put you in remembrance, though you once knew this, how that the Lord, having saved the people out of the land of Egypt, afterward destroyed them that did not believe. And the angels which kept not their first estate, but left their own habitation, he has reserved in everlasting chains under darkness to the judgment of the great day. Even as Sodom and Gomorrha, and the cities about them in like manner, giving themselves over to fornication, and going after strange flesh, are set forth for an example, suffering the vengeance of eternal fire." (Jude 5-7 KJV Para.)

In verses 8 through 10, Jude refers to individuals among the elect who have the same attitude as the rebellious angels:

"Likewise also these dreamers defile the flesh, despise rulers, and speak evil of good. Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, did not dare to bring a railing accusation against him, but said, The Lord rebuke you" (Jude 8-9 KJV Para.).
"But these speak evil of those things which they do not know: but what they know naturally, as brute beasts, in those things they corrupt themselves. Woe to them! for they have gone in the way of Cain, and ran greedily after the error of Balaam for reward, and perished in the gainsaying of Core" (Jude 10-11 KJV Para.).

In verses 12-13, Jude seems to be referring to the punishment of evil spirits who are influencing or possessing individuals within the church in order to frustrate the work of the church and destroy the elect.

In verses 16-18, Jude again speaks of individuals within congregations who are there to destroy the elect:

"These are murmurers, complainers, walking after their own lusts; and their mouth speaks great swelling words of adoration for the sake of their own benefit" (Jude 16 KJV Para.).

"But, beloved, you remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ; How that they told you there will be those who are contemptuous in the last time, who walk after their own ungodly lusts. These are they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the Spirit" (Jude 17-19 KJV Para.).

Verse 18 shows that there are individuals within the congregations who are not converted and are there to take advantage of the elect. And in verse 22, Jude refers to unconverted individuals within the congregation who need to be shown compassion:

"And to some be compassionate and withdraw from them" (Jude 22 Para.).

The reason to show compassion to these unconverted individuals is that they have been deceived into working against the elect.

"And others save with fear, pulling them out of the fire; hating even the garment spotted by the flesh" (Jude 23 KJV Para.).

But those who have been deceived into causing trouble and are converted must be advised that what they have been doing is wrong and that, if they do not stop this behavior and repent, they will die the second death from which there is no return.

To The Ephesians

In Paul's letter to the elect at Ephesus, he explains the reasons for certain responsibilities and functions within the church:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-12 KJV).
An important function and responsibility of the ministry and others who lend support to them through their individual gifts of the spirit is to help their brothers and sisters in the Father's family to mature spiritually. However, in order for this to be accomplished, the elect whom these individuals serve through their functions and responsibilities must be attentive and receptive to the help which is offered.

"Till we all come in 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 fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men [i.e., people], and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive: But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ" (Eph.4:13-15 KJV).

If there is to be spiritual growth and unity within a congregation and its converted membership, each converted member must constantly guard against individuals who are attempting to promote deceptive teachings and lifestyles contrary to what is acceptable to our heavenly Father and Christ our elder brother.

Many of the elect in this age have not been taught to pay attention to the extremely serious warnings to be alert for individuals who are overtly or secretly promoting unrighteous attitudes, behaviors, and heretical teachings. Because of this lack of awareness, the elect continue to suffer the effects of deception and division promoted by individuals and evil spirits who seek to destroy them from within congregations.

**Counterfeit Christians**

As Jesus was preparing his disciples for their conversion and their responsibility as spiritual leaders after his death and resurrection, he warned them through the parable of the wheat and the tares of an extreme danger which would always be present within the congregations of God:

"The kingdom of heaven is like a man who sowed good seed in his field. But while everyone was sleeping, his enemy came and sowed weeds [tares] among the wheat, and went away. When the wheat sprouted and formed heads, then the weeds also appeared. The owner's servants came to him and said, Sir, didn't you sow good seed in your field? Where then did the weeds [tares] come from? An enemy did this, he replied. The servants asked him, Do you want us to go and pull them up? No, he answered, because while you are pulling the weeds, you may root up the wheat with them. Let both grow together until the harvest. At that time I will tell the harvesters: First collect the weeds and tie them in bundles to be burned; then gather the wheat and bring it into my barn" (Matt. 13:24-30 NIV).
Verses 24-30 tells us there are two different types of grain planted in the field—good grain and bad grain. The beneficial grain was planted by the owner of the field and the harmful grain was planted by the owner's enemy, but both the good and bad grain must be left to mature together until the harvest.

"His disciples came to him and said, Explain to us the parable of the weeds [tares] in the field. He answered, The one who sowed the good seed is the Son of Man [Jesus Christ]. The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the sons of the kingdom [the elect]. The weeds are the sons of the evil one, and the enemy who sows them is the devil. . ." (Matt.13:36-39 NIV).

The wheat is symbolic of the Father's earthly children and the tares are symbolic of the children and servants of an evil spirit-being.

Within many congregations of the elect, there are both spiritual wheat and tares. The tares (i.e., counterfeit Christians) are extremely dangerous to one's salvation, because they outwardly appear to be the elect, but are spiritual poison to the elect. Their only mission is to subvert and destroy those the Father has called to salvation.

"The harvest is the end of the age, and the harvesters are angels. As the weeds are pulled up and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of the age. The Son of Man will send out his angels, and they will weed out of his kingdom everything that causes sin and all who do evil. They will throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears, let him hear" (Matt.13:39-43 NIV).

This parable tells God the Father's earthly children the following things about professing Christianity as a world religion and certain individuals who fellowship with his children in their assemblies:

- Not everyone who claims to be a follower of Christ is a child of God.
- Christ allows false Christians to exist within the congregations of his heavenly Father's elect.
- Spiritual tares are not to be removed when they are recognized, because their removal might uproot some of the spiritually immature elect.

Although the spiritual tares can be identified, many of the elect cannot tell the difference between a true follower of Christ and a false one, simply because they have not put forth enough effort to truly know and understand the difference between good and evil on both a physical and spiritual level.
Although the removal of the tares from among the Father's children is the responsibility of Jesus Christ, the parable of the wheat and tares is a clear warning to those who are serious about their salvation that they need to develop a keen sense of spiritual hearing and eyesight in order to keep from being deceived and led astray by counterfeit Christians.

Deception And Divisiveness

Much of the deception and divisiveness which troubles some congregations of the elect is caused by false prophets and unconverted ministers or leaders within the congregations. Additionally, there may also be individuals within a congregation who are highly influenced or possessed by evil spirits. Moreover, there are both converted and unconverted individuals within congregations who are busy-bodies, trouble-makers, and vain, ego-driven intellectuals who seduce and deceive some of the elect into following attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs which are not godly.

It is evident from the many different beliefs and opinions on important biblical issues dealing with the path to salvation that there are many deceptive doctrines being taught within various congregations of the elect throughout the world.

Some of this deception and divisiveness is being taught and promoted by well-meaning brothers and sisters in the faith who are themselves deceived, as well as by unconverted individuals, counterfeit Christians, and individuals who are influenced or possessed by evil spirits.

Summary

Throughout the centuries, evil men and women have risen within the Body of Christ and abused and manipulated its members in order to fulfill their own sinful lusts and desires. As we approach Christ's return, there are those within the congregations who perpetuate this same evil upon the Father's earthly children.

Seducing spirits and evil men and women within and outside of congregations of the elect will continue their efforts to deceive and divide the ministry and the membership through heretical teachings.

The apostle Paul gave the following advice to the elect at Rome about how to deal with those who cause deception, division, and trouble for the Father's earthly children:

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom.16:17-18 KJV).
Today, as it was with the early church, many will not heed sound doctrine because of personal beliefs which are in opposition to truth. For various reasons which are inconsistent with God's truth, many would rather follow other people and seducing spirits than truth.

Because this is the day of salvation for those whom the Father has called to be among his firstborn, we should be very careful what we come to believe and who we trust in spiritual matters. It is a good practice to only trust those who have proven through the test of time that they are trustworthy and not place our total trust in anyone other than our heavenly Father and our Savior. Trust should always be verified by comparing a person's attitude, behavior, and performance with the standards set forth in the biblical record.

There are many other warnings to watch out for individuals who are attempting to promote deception and division among the elect which could be reviewed, but the accounts which have already been discussed show the danger to the elect which will always be present before Christ returns.

In the final analysis, the accountability for disunity, disharmony, and doctrinal perversion within a congregation belongs to each and every member. Additionally, it is the responsibility of each member to become intimately familiar with and skilled in the Father's foundational laws, precepts, and principles in order to fulfill their function and responsibility within a congregation.

By B. L. Cocherell
CHAPTER THREE

EXTREME DANGER FROM THE SPIRIT REALM

The biblical narrative is replete with descriptions of spirit-beings who inhabit the earth and spirit-beings who come to earth from beyond this physical realm. Additionally, the Bible contains hundreds of direct and indirect references to angels, demons, Satan, and a variety of other spirit-beings who inhabit the spirit realm.

Although much is said in the Bible about spirit-beings loyal to God the Father and Christ and those that are not, few people truly understand that evil spirits are extremely powerful and dangerous and should be dealt with accordingly.

Many of the Sovereign Father's earthly children feel there is no danger from the spirit realm because of a misconception that they cannot be deceived by evil. This misconception is mainly due to the following English mistranslation of Matthew 24:24:

"For there shall arise false christs, and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders; insomuch that, if it were possible, they shall deceive the very elect" (KJV).

The words "if it were possible" are where the mistranslation conveys the thought that it is impossible to deceive the elect. However, the correct translation is "if possible" which conveys the correct thought.

Is it possible to deceive a person who has the indwelling of the holy spirit? Yes, it is possible to deceive the elect and to lead them astray under certain circumstances. The biblical record of the early church documents some of the elect being deceived and lead astray. See Rom.16:17-18; 1.Tim.1:18-20.

Evil spirits in positions of authority and power in both the heavenly and physical realms are a clear and present danger to members of God the Father's earthly family of king-priests.

If it were not possible to deceive the elect, the many warnings given by Christ and the apostles about false christs, false prophets, and counterfeit Christians and ministers would not have been necessary. Moreover, the many detailed instructions about how to resist evil influence and how to do battle with evil spirits and defeat them would have also been unnecessary.

Because almost all opposition to God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the elect comes from the influence of evil spirits, it is extremely important for anyone who is serious about their salvation to be able to discern when there is an evil influence or the presence of an evil spirit and to know how to appropriately deal with these situations.
Both Peter and James warn that the devil is an enemy who is actively attempting to destroy the righteous and that the way to conquer the devil is to resist him and to have faith that the Father will deliver the righteous:

"Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time: Casting all your care upon him; for he cares for you. Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world. But the God of all grace, who has called us to his eternal glory by Christ Jesus, after that you have suffered a while, make you perfect, establish, strengthen, settle you" (1.Pet.5:6-10 KJV).

"Submit yourselves to God. Resist the devil, and he will flee from you. Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you..." (Jms.4:7-8 Para.).

Although our own failings and lustful desires are formidable foes to conquer, you must also be aware of powerful spiritual forces that are a tremendous threat to your salvation. Paul warns that the most powerful enemies of the elect are not of this world, but are from the spirit realm and he encouraged the elect at Ephesus to use the power and protection that has been provided to help them in their battle against evil and evil spirits:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places" (Eph.6:10-12 KJV). See also verses 13-18.

The existence of the dark side of the spirit realm was common knowledge to those called to salvation during the days of the early church. Paul gives an exhortation to the elect at Rome concerning the power of God in one's life to overcome physical trials and spiritual evil:

"Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or peril, or sword? As it is written, For your sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter. No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us. For I am persuaded, that neither death, nor life, Nor angels, nor principalities, nor powers, nor things present, nor things to come, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature, shall be able to separate us from the love of God, which is in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Rom.8:35-39 KJV).

"Be not overcome of evil, but overcome evil with good" (Rom.12:21 KJV).
The spiritual warfare the elect are engaged in is a life and death matter. A major goal of Satan and other evil spirits is to destroy the Sovereign Father's earthly children. In order to become victorious over these evil beings (Rom.12:12), you must know and understand who and what the enemy is and its strengths and weaknesses. If you do not know these things about your enemy you are at a serious disadvantage when you encounter an evil spirit. Once you know the enemy and its potential for destruction, you must thoroughly acquaint yourself with the superior weaponry of God's spirit which is provided to each of the Father's elect in order to overcome evil.

Throughout the biblical record are descriptions of the resources and weapons necessary in order to wage spiritual warfare and defeat the enemy. Without these resources and weapons needed to wage spiritual warfare and the knowledge and understanding of how to use them, your battle against evil spirits is lost before it begins.

Authority

Although evil spirits are powerful adversaries, they are no match for the elect who truly believe in the Father and Jesus, because the elect have been given powerful authorizations to remove and control evil spirits.

The removal of evil spirits from individuals within whom they reside and the resisting of an evil spirits' influence are the two primary areas the elect need to be concerned with when dealing with evil spirits. Although there are obviously other areas of concern, these are the two which are most likely to be encountered in one's daily life.

God the Father controls, energizes, and sustains all that exists and nothing can or will exist unless he allows it. This is one reason that evil spirits fear the authority of the Father, Jesus Christ, and those who have been delegated authority over them.

Evil spirits easily recognize the Father's earthly children and their authority. Two examples of an evil spirit's ability to recognize a person who has the indwelling of the holy spirit and those who do not are the accounts of the apostle Paul and those traveling with him and the seven sons of Sceva the priest. See Acts 16:16-18; 19:13-16.

Evil spirits clearly know and understand what authority the elect have and do not have over them. They also understand that the Sovereign God is a God of law and that all things must be done in accordance with his law and within the boundaries of a fixed set of rules.

From what is recorded in the New Testament, there is a distinct difference between the authority that elders and congregational members have over evil spirits. Therefore, when dealing with an evil spirit, you must know and understand your authority level and the rules which determine how to deal with evil spirits.
Dealing with Evil Spirits

When it is discovered that there is an evil spirit or evil presence within or associated with a person, or there is an evil spirit or presence is manifesting itself in your surroundings, the appropriate action is to carefully and thoughtfully assess the situation and decide what action is necessary. The action to be taken depends entirely upon the circumstances of the situation. Sometimes no action is required because the circumstances are temporary and will not affect you, your loved ones, or others of the elect during or after the encounter.

If it is determined that you must take action, speak or project your thoughts directly to the evil spirit(s). This will reveal to the spirit(s) that you are aware of their presence and that you know you have authority over them from the Father and Christ.

The following are some of the authorizations that the Father's elect children have a right to exercise over evil spirits:

- Command the spirit(s) to remove itself or its influence from your home, property, or surroundings.
- Command the spirit(s) to never come into your presence again.
- Command the spirit(s) to keep silent and not bother you.
- Ask the Father to take care of the situation.

Commanding Evil Spirits

A command directed to evil spirit(s) does not need to be lengthy; it just needs to contain what you want done and your authority to command. However, you must be very clear as to what is being commanded, because evil spirits go by the letter of the law in their response to a command. Therefore, you must say exactly what you want to be done or not to be done and leave nothing to be interpreted by the evil spirit(s).

The Statement

The statement in which you deliver your command to the evil spirit(s) must contain your authority to command and what you want done, as in the following sample statements:

- I command you to (whatever is to be done) in the name and authority of Jesus Christ.
- By the authority of Jesus Christ the Son of God, I command you to (whatever is to be done).
- In the name of Jesus Christ, I command you to (whatever is to be done).
Fear of Punishment

When Jesus went to the country of the Gergesenes, he was met by two men who were possessed with evil spirits. When the spirits recognized Jesus, they asked him if he had come to punish them before their appointed time? See Matt.8:28-33.

There are many punishments reserved for spirit-beings who rebel against God, but some punishments are more unpleasant than others. This is why these spirits said what they did about being tormented. Evil spirits know that they are going to be punished for their rebellion against God, but they do not want to receive this punishment before it is due. Therefore, you can use this fear of punishment to your advantage by telling the spirit(s) to obey what you are telling them or you will ask the Father to punish them before their time. If you use this approach, you must follow through as soon as the opportunity presents itself and tell the Father what you have done and ask him to honor your threat of punishment to the evil spirit(s).

Masters of Deception

Evil spirits are masters of deception and throughout the ages they have cleverly produced many counterfeits of the Father's truth, his good news message, his worship system, and his way of life for humanity.

Although powerful adversaries, evil spirits are no match for those who truly believe in the Father and Jesus, because they have the power to overcome evil through the power that is in the blood of Christ and the holy spirit.

The Bible was written primarily for those whom the Father calls to salvation during this age. Through the things written in this book, we can learn from the experience and teaching of others and gain valuable knowledge, understanding, and inspiration to help us in our daily walk with God. Moreover, we can learn how to use spiritual gifts and authorizations of spirit-power:

"Every scripture is God-breathed and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness; So that a godly person may be perfect, fully finished for every good work" (2.Tim.3:16-17 KJV Para.). See also Eph.6:10-17; Heb.4:12.

"Now all these things happened to them for examples: and they are written for our admonition, upon whom the ends of the world are come" (1.Cor.10:11 KJV). See also Dan.12: 9-12; Col.1:7-10.

Listen And Obey God's Instructions

Because God speaks to us through his written word, we should study it in order to build a strong foundation of knowledge to help us grow and overcome:
"All who listen to my [i.e., Jesus'] instructions and follow them are wise, like a man who builds his house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents, and the floods rise and the storm winds beat against his house, it won't collapse, for it is built on a rock. But those who hear my instructions and ignore them are foolish, like a man who builds his house on the sand. For when the rains and floods come, and storm winds beat against his house, it will fall with a mighty crash" (Matt.7:24-27 LBP).

SUMMARY

The biblical record shows that the elect are given certain authorizations to control evil spirits and their influence upon people and this physical existence; therefore, it is the responsibility of each of the elect to be aware of the authority and control they have been given over evil spirits and their influence, the dangers involved from communication and interaction with evil spirits, and the responsibility to oppose this real threat to one's salvation and eternal destiny.

It is important to remember that being delegated authority to use the power of the Father's holy spirit is not only a great blessing and privilege, it is also an awesome responsibility which must be taken seriously. Moreover, it is wise to study the biblical accounts which show how Christ, the apostles, and other of the early church dealt with evil spirits in order to understand your authority and how to use it correctly.

Because there are hundreds of references and allusions to the spirit realm and spirit-beings in the biblical record, there is absolutely no way to explain the spirit realm, the purpose of righteous spirit-beings, the dangers posed by evil spirits and how to do battle with them in a short and concise document.


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Because almost all opposition to the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Father's earthly children comes from the influence of evil spirits, it is extremely important for the elect to be able to discern the difference between a good and an evil spiritual influence (1.Cor.2:11-16).

In his chapter you will find biblical laws and principles which are absolutely necessary to know and understand in order to test a spiritual influence and accurately determine whether it is good or evil. Moreover, this chapter shows how to use these laws and principles to resist and overcome an evil influence.

**Supernatural Experiences**

Some people believe a pleasant or benign supernatural experience is a confirmation of their belief system, and that such experiences are from the true God. Moreover, because no physical harm came to them during the experience, they believe that they are in no danger.

Although a religious or supernatural experience may be pleasant and seemingly harmless, it is very dangerous to automatically assume the experience is from the true God or one of his servants. Just because someone feels that he or she has had a supernatural experience, such as a dream, a vision, the appearance of an apparition, the hearing of a disembodied voice, or some other unexplained experience with religious implications, it does not mean the experience is from the true God or one of his servants. The word of God clearly says to test the spirits to see if they are of God or not (1.Jn.4:1-6).

**Gideon Tests the Spirit**

Gideon is mentioned in the Book of Hebrews, chapter 11 as one of the faithful who has obtained salvation and will be included in the first resurrection (Heb.11:32-33, 39). Gideon was not a novice in the worship of the Creator God; he understood who God was, how he was to be worshiped, and God's promises to Israel. Gideon was well grounded in his faith relationship with God, yet he questioned the validity of the message sent to him by God through a spirit-being. See Jdg.6:11-40.

The account of Gideon shows that the true God does not condemn those who are suspicious of supernatural experiences and question their source and validity.
A Serious Warning

The apostle John gave an extremely serious warning to the Father's elect about people who claim to be true servants of God, but may not be. John instructs the Father's elect to put these people to the test to see if they are what they say they are. Although John's warning primarily speaks to people who are false prophets, his warning should also be taken to include the testing of other individuals to determine if they, their beliefs, or their teachings are influenced by evil spirits:

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits, to see whether they are from God; for many false prophets have gone forth into the world" (1.Jn.4:1). See Matt.24:4-5; 2.Cor.11:3-15.

Here, John speaks of an influence from spirit-beings and instructs the Father's children to put them to the test of truth.

Deceptive Spirits

In Jesus' reprimand to the Jewish religious leaders regarding their false religious beliefs and practices, their sinfulness, and their conspiracy to murder him, he notes that the Devil is the father of lies (Jn.8:44). This is the same evil spirit that mixed truth with error in order to deceive Eve and cause her and Adam to rebel against God. He is also the same spirit-being who (along with other evil spirits) is deceiving the whole world politically, philosophically, and religiously today (Rev.12:9).

The account of a lying spirit going from heaven to deceive Ahab's prophets into telling him lies (1.Kgs.22:19-22) and the end of the age prophecy of Ezekiel, which says that spiritual leaders of the Israelitish people will be liars who deceive the gullible (Ezk.13:1-10), clearly show we should be very cautious about who and what we believe in spiritual matters.

That Which is Good

One of the simplest ways to determine if an influence, spirit-being, belief, teaching, or person is good or evil is to see if there is conformity to or a violation of God's law and his instructions to his people. Good conforms to God's law and instructions; evil violates God's law and instructions.

The apostle Paul instructs the Father's elect at Thessalonica to "Prove all things; hold fast that which is good" (1.Thes.5:21 KJV).

THOSE WHO ARE AGAINST CHRIST

There are many people who teach things which are contrary to the teachings of God, but say they follow his ways. In his letter to the elect, the apostle John repeats a prophecy which was known to those to whom he was writing, and he tells them its fulfillment was in progress at that time. Moreover, he says those who were against Christ at that time were never true sons of God and they had revealed their true nature and purpose by leaving the body of Christ:
"Young ones, it is the last hour and as you heard that the antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have risen up; from which you know that it is a last hour. They went out from us, but were not of us. For if they were of us, they would have remained with us; but they left so that it might be revealed that they were not of us" (1.Jn.2:18-19 Para.).

John confirms that those who have the spirit of God also have the knowledge and ability to discern truth from error in spiritual matters:

"And you have an anointing from the Holy One, and you know all things. I did not write to you because you did not know the truth, but because you know it, and because every lie is not of the truth" (1.Jn.2:20-21 Para.).

John presumes the people to whom he is writing are not novices in the faith, but are experienced in God's truth. Herein is a major key to having discernment between good and evil: in order to know the truth, a person must diligently, sincerely, and prayerfully study God's word. People who lie about spiritual matters will be known by people who have the holy spirit within them, because the holy spirit reveals truth: See Jn.14:16-17; 15:26; 16:12-13; 1.Cor.2:12-16.

Those Who Deny Christ

Those who are against Christ do not teach the truth concerning Jesus as the Creator God and Savior of humanity. They also deny the individuality of the Father and the Son. Evil spirits teach a mixture of truth and error and pervert the knowledge of God and his system of worship in order to deceive the gullible:

"Who is the liar, except the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? The one who denies the Father and the Son is the antichrist. Anyone who denies the Son does not have the Father" (1.Jn.2:22-23 Para.).

Only those who understand and believe the truth about the Father and the Son have the Father's spirit. John says that all others who claim to be followers of the true God are liars. They are liars because they deny the foundational truth about the individuality of the Father (the Sovereign God) and the Son (the Creator God and Savior of humanity).

"What you heard from the beginning, let it abide in you. If what you heard from the beginning abides in you, you will abide both in the Father and in the Son" (1.Jn.2:24 Para.).

The truly converted people of the first age of the church understood exactly what John was saying about the Father, Christ, and the Father's holy spirit, because they were taught the mysteries about the plan of God by the apostles. However, this knowledge was lost when the organized church disappeared shortly after the apostle John's death. Now, in the last age of the church, this knowledge is again necessary, and is being revealed to those whom the Father is calling to salvation. See Dan.12:1-10; Matt.13:10-12; Rom.16:24-26.
The Sinless

One of the things that John stresses in his writings is that the spirit of God residing within the children of God separates them from the world, makes them sinless before God the Father, and reveals to them those who oppose and reject Christ and the Father. This is an extremely important understanding because each of the elect has been given the ability to discern good from evil; however, it is the responsibility of the elect to strengthen and exercise this ability:

"Everyone who remains in him does not sin. Everyone who continues to sin has not seen him, nor known him" (1.Jn.3:6 Para.).

John speaks of the purity and sinlessness of those who practice righteousness and have the spirit of God. In 1.John 3:6, the English word seen is translated from the Greek word horao, which means to stare at, to discern, or to perceive. John says that the children of God who reside in Christ remain sinless and understand the things pertaining to Christ, whereas sinners cannot understand or know God.

"Little children, let no one lead you astray; the one practicing righteousness, is righteous, even as the One is righteous. The one practicing sin is of the Devil, because the Devil sins from the beginning. For this the Son of God was revealed, that he undo[destroy] the devil's works" (1.Jn.3:7-8 Para.).

The Devil's works refers to the deception of Eve, which resulted in humanity being placed under the death sentence for the violation of God's righteous law. Christ has destroyed the Devil's work through his righteousness, his life, and his perfect sacrifice. Thereby, he removed the death sentence for those who obey God.

The Seed

"Everyone being begotten of God does not sin, because his seed [spirit of God] abides in him, and he is not able to sin, because he has been born of God. By this the children of God and the children of the Devil are revealed: Everyone who does not practice righteousness is not of God; neither is the one who does not love his brother" (1.Jn.3:9-10 Para.).

It is impossible to understand what John is saying here unless one understands that the spirit of God the Father which resides within his children keeps them in a sinless condition before him. As long as a child of God seeks to live a righteous life and does not willfully and habitually practice sin, no sin is imputed to them. This is because the spirit of Christ also lives in the Father's children through the holy spirit. Therefore, his righteous qualifications are also imputed to those who possess the Father's holy spirit. See Rom.8:33-34; 1.Jn.1:1-7; 2:1-2; 5:18.
A child of God who is serious about their calling will be diligently seeking to live their life according to every word of God. This is yet another way to test the spiritual influence behind anyone who professes to follow the true God.

**Jesus Christ has Come in the Flesh**

The apostle John cautions those who are truly the Sovereign Father's earthly children to test the spirits and not become deceived:

"Dear friends, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God, because many false prophets have gone out into the world. This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world" (1.Jn.4:1-3 NIV).

John says a child of God can determine that a spirit (i.e., a spirit-being or spiritual influence) is from God if it acknowledges that Christ has come in the flesh. If this acknowledgment is not made, the spirit-being or spiritual influence is evil and against Christ.

On the surface, it seems the formula John gives to determine the character of a spirit-being or spiritual influence is simple and direct; however, the key to understanding John's instructions is understanding what he means when he says, "Jesus Christ has come in the flesh."

Most people admit that the person Jesus lived and was a religious leader. Some acknowledge that he was a prophet, and some acknowledge him as the prophetic Savior of humanity. However, very few truly understand or will acknowledge him as the Creator God who became the Savior, died, was resurrected, and now lives in the flesh of the children of God through the presence of the holy spirit.

**The Mystery of Christ in You**

In speaking to the Galatians and Colossians, Paul reminds them of the importance of Christ who resides within them.

**To the Galatians**

"I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me" (Gal.2:20 KJV).

Paul says that his past life is dead through the application of Christ's sacrifice. The old Paul died at baptism and a new Paul was born with Christ living in him through the presence of the holy spirit.
"My little children, of whom I travail in birth again until Christ be formed in you, I desire to be present with you now, and to change my voice; for I stand in doubt of you" (Gal.4:19-20 KJV).

In speaking to the Galatians about his concern for their spiritual growth, Paul uses the Greek word morphoo, which means to form, to fashion, and to take on form (especially in the womb).

This is the only place in the New Testament where this Greek word is used in the context of growth. Paul's concern for the Galatians' deteriorating spiritual condition reached the point that he had serious doubts that Christ's spirit was ever within them.

To the Colossians

"Whereof I am made a minister, according to the dispensation of God which is given to me for you, to fulfill the word of God; Even the mystery which has been hid from ages and from generations, but is now made manifest to the Saints; To whom God would make known what is the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles; which is Christ in you, the hope of glory" (Col.1:25-27 KJV).

The mystery of how Jesus Christ lives in the flesh of every child of God was understood by those of the first age of the church and it can be understood today by those who have the spirit of God residing within them.

"Little children, you are of God and have overcome them, because he in you is greater than he in the world" (1.Jn.4:4 Para.).

John says the children of God have overcome those who were against Christ through Christ who lives within them.

"They are of the world; therefore they speak of the world, and the world hears them. We are of God; the one knowing God hears us. Whosoever is not of God does not hear us. From this we know the spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1.Jn.4:5-6 Para.). See also 1.Jn.2:18-29.

Only those who have the spirit of God dwelling within them are truly able to understand and discern spiritual matters (1.Cor.2:9-13). If a person does not understand the foundational things of God's truth, it is a strong indication that they are neither called of God nor have the indwelling of the holy spirit.

Those Who Cannot Understand

A very intelligent man with whom I worked many years ago ask me during a lunch break one day to explain a rather simple biblical concept to him. As I remember, I quoted some scriptures and explained their meaning as simply and clearly as possible. After listening intently to what I told him, he told me that he knew what the words meant, but could not understand their meaning.
This person had no trouble understanding the dictionary meaning of the words, but he could not grasp their spiritual intent. Such is the situation with a person who is not being called to salvation during this age and does not have the indwelling of the holy spirit, which gives spiritual knowledge and understanding. See Jn.14:17, 26; 16-12-13.

For many years, I had a close acquaintance who was a fellow minister and married to an intelligent, articulate woman who had been baptized correctly, was a highly principled person, and an excellent wife to her husband and mother to her children. This woman thought that because she was baptized correctly and had an academic knowledge of the scriptures, she had the indwelling of God’s spirit.

I had many conversations with her over the years and knew from our conversations that she did not have a depth of spiritual understanding. Not too long before his wife became ill and died, she told her husband that she did not understand the scriptures or other things the same way as others in the congregation understood them. Although this woman had been baptized correctly, she never received the indwelling of the holy spirit, so she could not understand scripture beyond an academic understanding. See Matt.13:10-16.

The Indwelling of the Father

"No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and his love having been perfected in us. By this we know that we abide in him, and he in us, because of his spirit he has given to us” (1.Jn.4:12-13 Para.). See Lk.24:46-49; Acts 5:32.

Here, John speaks of God the Father whom no human has seen. John presupposes that those to whom he is writing know who God the Father is and that his presence dwells within those whom he has adopted into his earthly family of king-priests.

"And we have beheld and bear witness that the Father has sent the Son as Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him, and he in God" (1.Jn.4:15 Para.).

The Father sent the Creator God to earth to become his Son and the Savior of humanity. Only those who truly understand and acknowledge this fact will have the Father residing within them, and they will reside within the Father. See Jn.14:23.

"And we have known and have believed the love which God has in us. God is love, and the one abiding in love abides in God, and God in him" (1.Jn.4:16 Para.).

The understanding and the acknowledgment of the indwelling of the Father and Jesus Christ within the elect of God is one of the many ways one can determine whether or not a person, a spirit-being, or a spiritual influence is of God.
Testing False Ministers and False Doctrine

Paul's instructions to Timothy (2.Tim.4:1-3) and Titus (Tit.2:1-8) about the teaching of sound doctrine, as well as his warning about elders who go astray and people who are false ministers are still very important today, because there are many who claim to teach the truth, but actually teach false doctrines, which lead people astray.

In order for us to discern the influence behind a spiritual leader and their doctrine, we must carefully study the leader's life and what is being taught. The warnings to six of the prophetic churches in chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation are examples of spiritual leaders and the people they lead not fulfilling their responsibilities pertaining to true doctrine.

Religious Deception

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15 KJV). See also Deut.13:1-5; Jer.23:21-22; Rev.2:2.

Satan has many ministers (Rev.2:9; 3:9), and some of them are within the congregations of God's true followers. Some of these individuals are truly deceived themselves, but some are not and they go about actively trying to destroy the unsuspecting, the ill informed, and the gullible. Jesus knew this would happen and warned his followers to be aware of those who were not sent by him to shepherd his people:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt.24:4-5 KJV). See also Matt.7:21-23.

Although it is true that not all individuals who teach things in opposition to biblical truth are possessed by an evil spirit, it is a biblical fact that the majority of the world as a whole is being influenced and deceived politically, philosophically, and religiously by Satan and other evil spirits; therefore, it is extremely important to be able to differentiate between what is just a deceived person and one who is being actively influenced or possessed by an evil spirit.

A Prophetic Warning

Isaiah records the following prophetic warning to the House of Israel who are scattered throughout the world during the end of this age, just prior to Christ's return:

"Behold, I and the children whom the Lord has given me are for signs and for wonders in Israel from the Lord of hosts, which dwells in mount Zion. And when they shall say to you, Seek to them that have familiar spirits, and to wizards that peep, and that mutter:
should not a people seek to their God? for the living to the dead? To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them" (Isa.8:18-20 KJV Para.).

After Solomon's death and the break-up of national Israel into two distinct nations (the House of Judah and the House of Israel), the ten tribes of the House of Israel departed from the worship of the true God in pursuit of gods of their own choosing. Throughout the centuries, these Israelites who are scattered throughout the world have had a fascination with spiritualism and occult practices and have incorporated many of these practices and rituals into their various philosophies and religions, which is why Isaiah recorded this prophetic warning.

This prophetic warning reveals the basic method to use in determining if a person is influenced or possessed by an evil spirit: "To the law and to the testimony: if they speak not according to this word, it is because there is no light in them." This tells us that, if what a person says or what a religion teaches does not conform to the true God's laws, precepts, and principles, what is said or taught is without God's truth.

This prophetic warning gives us a benchmark from which to evaluate a person in the light of God's truth. If there is no spiritual light in them and they are speaking things which are in opposition to the true God's way of truth, there are only two sources from which this information can come: 1) The person's own thoughts and opinions predicated on their life experience; or 2) An evil influence.

Christ said the following about individuals who are at odds with him and his Heavenly Father:

"A good man out of the good treasure of his heart brings forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart brings forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaks! And why do you call me, Lord, Lord, and do not the things that I say?" (Lk.6:45-46 KJV Para.).

Conformity or opposition to God's truth is an indicator of the spirit behind religious words and practice.

False Doctrine

No matter how cleverly crafted and eloquently stated a false doctrine is it is a teaching that is in opposition to the Father's truth. Although a false teaching may have some elements of truth within it, a false teaching will always have some error that will lead a person away from the foundational truth of God, which will result in eternal death for those who believe it. The following are five of the foundational errors of false doctrines:
• The false teaching that Christ has released humanity from the obligation to obey God's law.
• The lie that there are no faith and works involved in obtaining salvation.
• The deception that God the Father and Jesus Christ are the same spirit-being.
• The false teaching that God accepts many different methods of worshiping him.
• The lie that God's truth is subjective without empirical values.

Discernment of Spirits

The apostle Paul mentions at least twenty-one separate authorizations, gifts, and responsibilities which are given by God the Father and administered to his elect children through Christ for the edification of the church and the performance of its work. One of these authorizations, gifts, and responsibilities is the discernment of spirits:

"To one there is given through the spirit the message of wisdom, to another the message of knowledge by means of the same spirit, to another faith by the same spirit, to another gifts of healing by that one spirit, to another miraculous powers, to another prophecy, to another distinguishing between spirits, to another speaking in different kinds of Languages, and to still another the interpretation of Languages. All these are the work of one and the same spirit, and he gives them to each one, just as he determines" (1.Cor.12:8-11 NIV Para).

The English word distinguishing in verse 10 is translated from the Greek word diakrisis, which is derived from the Greek word diakrino, which means figuratively, to separate, to discriminate (by implication, decide). Diakrisis, basically means to make a judicial estimation; that is, to compare what is known against a standard of law and then make a determination based on law. The law concerning God's code of law and standard of righteous behavior is found in the Bible.

Although comparing a person's words, attitude, and behavior against God's code of law and standard of righteousness is certainly one way to determine if a person is influenced or possessed by an evil spirit, the method Paul writes of to the elect at Corinth is very different and involves the dwelling of the holy spirit within a righteous person.

The apostle Paul wrote that the use of an authorized function of the holy spirit within a person provides them with the ability to make correct spiritual evaluations and judgements:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him. But God has revealed them to us by his spirit: for the spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God" (1.Cor.2:9-10 KJV Para.).
It is through the holy spirit that revelation is given and inquires are made into all things, which include the mysteries of God.

"For what man knows the things of a man, if not the spirit of man which is in him? even so the things of God no man knows, but the spirit of God" (1.Cor.2:11 KJV Para.).

The spirit in man is man and contains the knowledge of things pertaining to the physical realm of existence. The spirit of God, which is the holy spirit, contains the knowledge of the things pertaining to God and the spirit realm of existence.

"Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; that we might know the things that are freely given to us of God. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teaches, but which the holy spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual" (1.Cor.2:12-13 KJV Para.).

Paul reminds the Corinthians they are not like other human beings, because they have been given the Sovereign Father's holy spirit, which gives them access to spiritual knowledge and understanding. This knowledge and understanding includes the Sovereign Father's plan for humanity, what the spirit of God is, who and what God is, and many other things pertaining to the spirit realm.

Verses 12 and 13 are very important because they tell us that the holy spirit which dwells within each of the Father's earthly children is the conduit through which spiritual knowledge and understanding is given. The indwelling of the holy spirit provides a person with the ability to compare spiritual things with spiritual things.

The English word comparing in verse 13 is translated from the Greek word sugkrino, which basically means to determine the difference between one thing and another.

A person with the ability to determine if another person is influenced or possessed by an evil spirit knows with certainty that their judgement is correct. This person is not merely making an educated guess as to whether or not a person is influenced or possessed by an evil spirit based on an observation of a person's words, attitudes, or behaviors; this spiritually gifted individual has a knowing beyond the normal physical senses which provides the ability to recognize an individual who is influenced or possessed by and evil spirit.

"But a natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But truly the spiritual one discerns all things, but he is discerned by no one. For who has known the mind of the Lord? Who will teach them? But we have the mind of Christ" (1.Cor.2:14-16 KJV Para.).
The knowledge taught by Paul, the other apostles, and elders was not obtained from the spirit of man; it was knowledge conveyed to them through one of the functions of the holy spirit which resided within them.

Humans with only the spirit of man cannot receive or understand the things of God, because they are of the original human creation. However, sons of God are not of the original creation; they are a new and different creature and have different potentials and abilities (2.Cor.5:17; Gal.6:15). One of the abilities given to specific individuals within the Father’s earthly family is the ability to know whether or not an individual is influenced or possessed by and evil spirit.

A Gift of Discernment

Within a congregation I once attended, there were two men who had a long history of spiritual leadership and were talented speakers in the pulpit; however, there was something about these men that seemed a bit odd and inconsistent with a righteous thought process.

When giving a sermon before the congregation, one of the men would always subtly inject a thought that would question the validity of God and the Bible. The other individual was always subtly promoting controversial subjects, questioning established doctrine, or insinuating things which could cause controversy. Both of these men were very clever in their speech, so it was difficult to detect the deception in their words.

Because of their behavior, several elders suspected they (and even some other individuals who occasionally associated with the congregation) were either highly influenced or possessed by evil spirits, but could not prove this suspicion beyond a shadow of a doubt. Therefore, they could not take the appropriate action without causing chaos within the congregation.

During one of the annual festival days, a man visiting the congregation for the first time, came to one of the elders and told him that there were several individuals there who were possessed by evil spirits, and that one individual was highly influenced but not possessed. Hearing this, I asked the elder to have the man write a note documenting his allegations in order to see if his observations matched ours.

Upon inspecting his list along with his comments, we found that what he was able to discern about these individuals matched perfectly with what we had been thinking all along.

His list and comments confirmed two things to the group of elders with whom I was associating: 1) Our suspicions about certain individuals were correct; and 2) The man who presented us with the list and comments had the gift of discernment of spirits, which is one of the spiritual gifts noted by the apostle Paul (1.Cor.12:10).
SUMMARY

As individuals in this present age become more influenced and deceived by evil spirits and subsequently more corrupt, deviant, and evil, it becomes extremely important for anyone who is serious about their salvation to clearly understand how to differentiate between good and evil individuals and between good and evil spirit-beings.

Whether you are concerned with spiritual leaders, religious teachings, the manifestation of spirits, spirit influence, or anything else pertaining to the spirit realm and its interaction with the physical realm, it is your responsibility to diligently and prayerfully study the Bible, meditate on what you find there, and diligently apply the instructions and wisdom revealed to you through the holy spirit.

The writer to the Hebrews wrote the following about spiritual maturity and the importance of diligently studying the Bible in order to become skilled in the practice of a righteous lifestyle and the ability to judge between good and evil:

"For every one that uses milk is unskillful in the word of righteousness: for he is a babe. But strong meat belongs to them that are of full age, even those who by reason of use have their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb.5:13-14 KJV).

Try the Spirits

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits whether they are of God: because many false prophets are gone out into the world" (1.Jn.4:1 KJV).

There are important things that you can learn from what John says, which will help you determine what is and is not truth.

Do not believe a new teaching without doing your due diligence to find out if it is true or not, because there are many people who teach many things which are in opposition to God’s truth. Therefore, the person who is promoting a new teaching may be influenced by a lying spirit or have some other goal which is not compatible with God’s truth.

There are many who teach the Bible who seem to be of the Sovereign Father's earthly family, but do not have his spirit dwelling within them. Additionally, many of these counterfeit Christians are in leadership positions within many of the congregations of God’s elect or are closely aligned with the true elect in some other way. See Acts 20:28-31; 1.Tim.4:1-3; Jude 1-19.

There is a spiritual influence on earth that is against Christ (John calls this influence "the spirit of anti-christ") and this spiritual influence is actively attempting to destroy the Father's earthly children and his worship system.
If you have the indwelling of the Father's spirit of truth, you can know the difference between truth and error if you will put in the time and effort to seek the truth on any teaching regarding your salvation (e.g., obedience to the Sabbath commandment.

Just because someone says something is true, it does not make it true. The spirit of anti-christ is very clever and deceptive. However, no matter how clever the teaching, the argument, or the logic presented, if it does not conform to the other teachings in the Bible, it is a false teaching which is designed to lead a person away from God's truth and the true path which leads to eternal and immortal life in the Kingdom of God.

By B. L. Cocherell
It is clear from what is written in the biblical record that the Creator God (Jesus Christ) established both a civil and spiritual system through which the Israelites were to be governed. This system was designed so they could live together in harmony and perform the work they were given to do. Moreover, it is also clear that when Jesus Christ returns he will establish a civil and spiritual system through which national Israel and the entire world will be governed.

Under the first covenant with national Israel, the priests, judges, prophets, and kings who were placed in positions of leadership were also given the authority and power to judge a matter, render decisions, and impose and enforce punishments. Along with this authority came tremendous accountability for how they performed their responsibilities to lead and govern the people who were placed under their care and protection.

The Ministry Before and After Christ

The Creator God required those placed in the various positions of authority and responsibility to execute their duties in a fair, righteous, and merciful way. All the leaders of Israel were held personally accountable to the Creator for the performance of their responsibilities. Even Moses and King David were severely punished for improper behavior. Moses was not allowed to enter the Promised Land after leading the Israelites for forty years, and David was punished severely for his adulterous affair with Bathsheba and the subsequent murder of her husband Uriah.

Under the first covenant with national Israel, those separated for service and leadership were authorized and empowered in order to carry out their responsibilities. After Christ's death and resurrection, we also see authority and responsibility given to the apostles and elders to govern the early church, make judgments, and pronounce sentences. See Acts 5:1-11; 8:9-24; 15:1-19; 1 Cor. 5:1-13; 1 Tim. 1:18-20.

This chapter provides foundational information which is necessary in order to understand the past, present, and future leadership of the Father's elect in the context of various aspects of authority, responsibility, and accountability.
Since the establishment and eventual demise of the early church, much of the understanding pertaining to the authority and responsibilities of those who are in positions of leadership among the various congregations of God has been lost. Today, there are many different views and philosophies of how congregations should be led. Moreover, congregational governments range in form from anarchistic, autocratic, democratic, republic, and mixtures of these.

Today, we find great division and confusion among the Father's elect about exactly what constitutes the organized body of Christ pictured in the New Testament. What we find today are many differing groups of true Christians who only faintly resemble the early church in governmental and organizational structure.

The various congregations of the early church were not distinctly different from each other when it came to doctrinal views on how to worship God and obtain salvation (1.Cor.1:13). Moreover, if all true Christians submitted to God's rule in their lives, disunity among the various congregations of the elect today would disappear. However, total unity among the various congregations of the elect is unlikely to occur during the end of the age because of what is revealed in prophecy about the seven churches which will exist shortly before Christ's return. Nonetheless, there is still hope for any who will listen and heed what the spirit says to the churches about abolishing disunity (Rev.3:22).

A major question before all who are called to salvation from now until Christ returns concerns how to obtain peace, harmony, and a common purpose among and within the various congregations of the elect so that there will be an atmosphere conducive to spiritual growth and the fulfillment of the work of the church.

Note:

Much of what is written in this book about the organizational and governmental structure of congregations is in the context of the early church, because only time will reveal how much of the original governmental system of the early church will be practiced within the body of Christ before he returns.

Since the demise of the early church, Jesus Christ has sanctioned or allowed certain individuals throughout the centuries to lead his Father's children as stewards of the truth. However, this does not mean that any of these individuals have been elders in the same sense as the spiritual leaders of the early church. In fact, the history of the church shows just the opposite. When the early church disappeared as a powerful entity, so did most of its dynamic spirit-filled leadership.

Carefully read and study what follows concerning the demise and disappearance of the early church, because without this background information, what is presented in this book about church authority and government will make little sense.
Please keep in mind as you review this book that much of it was composed in the year 2013, and that conditions and circumstances in the world and in the body of Christ today may be dramatically different from when this book was first published.

Also keep in mind that, although today's circumstances are different from those of the early church, the empirical spiritual values and judgments that Jesus Christ established for the members of the early church and its spiritual leaders have not changed and many of these same principles can be applied today because they are timeless.

**SHEPHERDING OF GODS PEOPLE**

The biblical record shows that, before and during the establishment of the early church, God's chosen people were to be shepherded by spiritual leaders of his choosing, which will also be the case after Christ returns.

**Adam to Noah**

We know from the Genesis record that the Creator God taught Adam and Eve his sacrificial system of worship. We also know that Cain and Abel were taught God's system of worship as well (Gen.4:1-7). Second Peter 2:5 tells us that Noah was a preacher of righteousness who had authority from the Creator God to pronounce blessings and curses (Gen 9:25-27). Therefore, it can be assumed that, from the time of Adam and Eve to the time of Noah, there were men who were sanctioned by God to teach and guide his people in the path of righteousness.

**Noah to Abraham**

Noah was a preacher of righteousness; therefore, some form of organized spiritual leadership representing the true God was in existence before Abraham. In Genesis 26:1-5, the Creator tells Isaac about his promise to Abraham of national greatness. He then promises to also bless Isaac because Abraham obeyed him and practiced his commandments, laws, and statutes, which means there must have been men sanctioned by God to teach and guide his people in his ways from the time of Noah to the time of Abraham.

**Abraham to Moses**

From Abraham to Moses, little is recorded in the biblical record about how righteous individuals worshiped and served the Creator. However, what is recorded clearly documents that a worship system was in place through which the Creator could be worshiped and served.
Moses to Jesus

From the beginning of the nation of Israel, God sanctioned prophets, priests, and judges to guide and teach his people in the ways of righteousness. They were first taught through Moses who was a civil and spiritual leader; then, the Creator separated Aaron, his sons, and the tribe of Levi to serve him and his people as spiritual leaders. Moreover, he chose some of the people to serve as judges in civil matters. When one reads the biblical records about the establishment of national Israel, it becomes clear that the system of civil and spiritual government the Creator God gave them was highly efficient, extremely fair, and just.

After the Israelites entered the promised land, they rebelled against the rule of the prophet Samuel and wanted a king to rule over them. Therefore, God adjusted the original governmental system he had given them and added a king as their civil ruler. However, the king had to remain subject to the spiritual leadership of the priesthood and its authority over Israel. This is an important point, because it shows that, although the civil authority passed from the priesthood and judges to the kings of Israel, the authority and responsibility for teaching God's laws, precepts, and principles and the performing of all rites and sacrifices always remained with those specifically chosen by God for this purpose.

During Jesus' Lifetime

During Jesus' lifetime, the Levitical Priesthood were the spiritual leaders of the Jews, and the Sanhedrin was the Supreme Council and highest Court of Justice in Judah. The Sanhedrin had great independence and power under Roman rule; they had the power to arrest and to judge all types of cases, even those involving capital punishment.

Although the origin of the Sanhedrin is obscure, Jewish tradition traces it back to Moses and the seventy elders mentioned in Numbers 11:16-25. According to the best evidence, the Sanhedrin was composed of seventy-one members: the high priest as its president, some of the high priest's close relatives, scribes (professional lawyers), and elders (chief men among both priest and laymen). See Matt.26:3,57,59; 27:41; Mk. 14:53; 15:1; Lk.22:66. The High Priest and those who served under him as members of the Sanhedrin during Christ's lifetime predominantly belonged to the orders of Sadducees and Scribes.

Jesus accepted this tribunal as the official civil and spiritual authority of the Jews during his lifetime and said that the Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses seat. See Matt.23:1-2.

From Jesus to the Jewish Rabbis

In most cases, it is unknown whether or not the Rabbis of the present Jewish sects are descendants of Levi. If the Rabbis are not descendants of Levi, and there is no officiating Levitical priesthood to give them the authority to teach, they have no authority to act as spiritual guides to Israel, because the Levites were the only ones with the authority to
administer God's worship system to national Israel under the Mount Sinai covenant. See Lev.10:8-11.

**After Christ Returns**

After Christ returns and establishes the Kingdom of God on earth, the scriptures show that the descendants of Zadok will rule the Levitical Priesthood and administer God's sacrificial system of worship from Jerusalem similar to the way it was administered under the terms and conditions of the first agreement with national Israel. See Ezk. 40:46; 43:19; 44:15; 48:11.

**THE LEADERSHIP OF THE EARLY CHURCH**

In order to understand what is said in the New Testament about the organizational and governmental structure of the early church, it is helpful to review some of what is recorded by secular historians about God's people who were called the Nazarenes before and after 70 A.D..

Information provided by Luke reveals that the congregation of God at Jerusalem was composed mostly of Jewish converts of which a great many were priests (Acts 6:7). Luke gives no hint that their conversion from Judaism to Christianity conflicted with their duties in the temple. Therefore, it is highly likely that some of them continued their ministry for some time after their conversion.

It is also likely that the ministry of these converted priests was needed, because there were many thousands among the Jews who believed the gospel message (Acts 21:20). It seems plausible that these converted priest and the elders assisted James and the apostles in the administration of the church according to the familiar Jewish model of the Sanhedrin. (Acts 15:4,22,23; 16:4; 20:17,18).

In his research on the history of the early church, Samuel Bacchicochi finds that the early church leadership and membership were greatly influenced in the way they administered the church by their past religious experience in Judaism:

"The foregoing analysis of the New Testament sources regarding the Jerusalem Church has firmly established that the primitive Christian community there was composed primarily of and administered by converted Jews who retained a deep attachment to Jewish religious customs, such as Sabbath-keeping. It is therefore impossible to assume that a new day of worship [i.e., Sunday] was introduced by the Jerusalem Church prior to the destruction of the city in A.D. 70. We might add that in view of the enormous influence exerted on the Church at large by the Jewish Christian leadership and membership W.D. Davies, a well-recognized researcher on early Christianity, concisely summarizes the religious situation of the time:'
"Everywhere, especially in the East of the Roman Empire there would be Jewish Christians whose outward way of life would not be markedly different from that of the Jews. They took for granted that the gospel was contiguous with Judaism; for them the new covenant, which Jesus had set up at the Last Supper with his disciples and sealed by his death, did not mean that the covenant made between God and Israel was no longer in force. They still observed the feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles; they also continued to be circumcised, to keep the weekly Sabbath and the Mosaic regulations concerning food. According to some scholars, they must have been so strong that right up to the fall of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, they were the dominant element in the Christian movement." From Sabbath to Sunday by Samuele Bacc-hiocchi, page 151.

The seemingly excessive attachment of the Jerusalem Church to the temple and its attending worship system may be perplexing to some; however, it is important to remember that, after Christ returns, a new temple will be erected in Jerusalem and the sacrificial system will be established again as a part of the next phase of God's plan for the salvation of humanity. See the Book of Ezekiel.

The apostles and the Jewish converts viewed the acceptance of Christ as the fulfillment of their Messianic expectations that enhanced their religious life; they did not view acceptance of Christ as the destruction of their religion.

The Nazorean Council at Jerusalem

It is clear from secular records and the Book of Acts that, prior to 70 A.D., the Nazarenes had established a council at Jerusalem which governed all of the followers of Christ. This council of apostles and elders under the presidency of James was in direct opposition to the Jewish Sanhedrin. The Nazarenes saw themselves as loyal Israelites who gave their allegiance to Jesus Christ as the Messiah and rightful king of Israel. Therefore, they felt justified in creating a governmental system with which to exercise authority, responsibility, accountability, and jurisdiction over all believers at home and abroad until Christ returns.

The appointment of James to the presidency of the Nazarene's council seems to be partially a political appointment, because he was of the royal bloodline of King David (he was the son of Joseph and the brother next in age to Jesus). This might explain why he had been chosen over Peter. Moreover, Acts 15 shows him officiating over the council of elders after the manner of the ancient priesthood. Because the disciples expected Christ to return in their day to set up the Kingdom of God on earth, it would be quite natural to have one of Jesus' relatives (Gal.1:19) in the position of the presidency representing him as the ruler of the spiritual nation of Israel.
A great deal that appears obscure about the early church's organizational and governmental structure becomes clear when it is understood that, before and after 70 A.D., there was a Nazorean council of elders which functioned much as the original Sanhedrin and this council exercised authority over the entire body of believers throughout the world.

In Acts 15, the apostles and others act exactly like the Jewish Sanhedrin in making decisions concerning the body of the elect. This council sent out men to supervise new groups of believers; Peter and John were sent to Samaria, and Barnabas was sent to Antioch. They dispatched a delegation to Antioch to investigate the admission of Gentile converts to the church. They adjudicated disputes and rendered doctrinal decisions (Acts 15:13-21). And they directed the collecting of money and other gifts from among the congregations and distributed them to those in need.

The Nazorean Council at Pella

After the martyrdom of James (Jesus' brother) and the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., secular history shows the leader of the Nazarenes to be Simeon, the son of Cleophas, who is mentioned in Luke 24:18. Simeon's father, Cleophas, was a Galilean and a descendant of David. Moreover, he was said to be a cousin of Jesus because his father was Joseph's brother. After 70 A.D., history shows the Nazarenes were in Pella with Simeon as president of the Nazorean Sanhedrin.

According to Hegesippus, the blood relatives of Christ continued in the presidency of the Nazorean council until the time of Tarjan Caesar. Hegesippus also says that Eusebius and Epipanius bore witness that the Nazarenes were persecuted when they lived in the East after the fall of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. and that many Jews joined them.

It is clear from secular history that the apostles established a council of apostles and elders similar to the Jewish Sanhedrin. Even if this were not true, it does not negate the fact that the early Church had an organizational and governmental system in which the apostles and elders were in authority.

Authority with Limitations

The decisions made by the council of elders surrounding the issues put forth in Acts, chapter 15 reveal that the elders did not have the right to act independently of the rest of the eldership, and that they were subject to the rule and counsel of a governing body composed of other elders. However, it is evident that this situation is not likely to exist throughout the entire Body of Christ during the end of the age, because chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation warn that there will be division among God's people.
DOES THE CHURCH EXIST TODAY?

Does the church Jesus built exist on earth today? If the church does exist, are the Father's elect doing the same work he commissioned the original church to do?

What Is a Church?

In order to understand the congregational structure and government as set forth in the New Testament, one must first understand what the Body of Christ is and the purpose for it being established.

The English word church is translated from the Greek word ekklesia, which means calling out (i.e., a popular meeting, an assembly, especially a religious congregation). The word church simply means a group of people meeting together. Attaching the word church to a group or an organization does not necessarily make it a part of the Body of Christ. The Ekklesia (the church) which would exist during the gospel age of salvation was established by Jesus on the Festival of Pentecost after his crucifixion and resurrection (Lk.24:49; Jn.14:26; 16:7; Acts 2:1-27).

In the purest sense, the church Jesus said he would establish is a spiritual entity composed of people who are called out of this evil world by God the Father (Jn.6:44; 65) to believe what Jesus taught and submit to his rule in their lives (Jn.14:15-24). These individuals either gather together as a group or separately worship their heavenly Father seeking to learn his way of life, work out their salvation, and perform the work they have been called to do.

Most Quasi-Christians of today believe the church Jesus established is a very efficient organization with buildings, facilities, and all the trappings of corporations and businesses. However, the early church was not a wealthy organization, owning buildings and vast land holdings. It is pictured as a fluid organization that cared for its own, supported its spiritual leadership through offerings, shared wealth and material goods among its membership, and met in homes and public places to fellowship and worship the Father.

Quasi-Christian churches and most of the true congregations of the elect today are very different in organizational structure from what Jesus had in mind when he said, "I will build my church" (Matt.16:18) and "For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in their midst" (Matt.18:20).

The church Jesus built is comprised of individuals God the Father has called out of this world's societies to be a part of his earthly family of king-priests (the church, 1.Cor.1:1-31).
The collective church is not a corporate business entity or a building. An organizational structure is only the modality through which a collective work can be performed to proclaim the Father's good news message and to perform the function and responsibility of the ministry to guide, teach, and protect the elect as noted by the apostle Paul. See Matt.28:19-20; Eph.4:11-16.

Regardless of what some believe, physical corporations or organizations are not what Christ built. The reality is that the Father's elect (i.e., the church) are scattered throughout the world. Some are organized into collective groups and some are alone and separated from fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ.

The Body

The Body of Christ is a spiritual organism. Christ is its head, and the body is composed of those called by the Father to salvation during this gospel age. Each individual selected by the Father to become a firstborn son of his new creation has a function and responsibility in his earthly family.

THE PURPOSE OF THE CHURCH

There are primarily four reasons for the establishment of the elect as congregations:

1. To proclaim the Father's good news message to the world as a witness and a warning:

   "And this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness to all nations; and then shall the end come" (Matt.24:14 Para.).

2. To teach the message of salvation through the sacrifice of Christ, repentance, and obedience to the Sovereign Father's laws, precepts, and principles:

   "Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit, and teach them to observe all the things I have commanded you" (Matt.28:19-20 Para.).

   "Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:38 Para.).

3. To prepare a people to help Christ rule this world after his return:

   "And [Christ] has made us to our God kings and priests; and we shall reign on the earth" (Rev.5:10 Para.). Also see 1.Thes.3:13; Rev.3:21; 20:4-6.
4. To assist those the Father calls to salvation (Jn.6:44; 65) to grow in grace and knowledge (2.Pet.3:18) and learn and perfect the Father's ways in their lives so they will be able to fulfill the purpose for being called to salvation during this gospel age. (Rev.5:10).

**One Body and One Spirit**

Contrary to what most people believe, Jesus Christ does not sanction the many divergent beliefs among the congregations of the elect. He wants all his Father's children to be in conformity to the pure word of truth which is above and beyond one's personal beliefs and opinions:

"There is one body, and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph.4:4-6 Para.). See also 1.Corr.12:1-31, especially verses 11-13.

The word faith (Greek: pistis) in verse five is especially important because it means belief. For there to be a unified body, there must be unity in the things that the body of believers hold to be true:

"And he gave some apostles; and some prophets; and some evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers:, For the perfecting of the Saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of faith, and of the knowledge of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ" (Eph.4:11-13 KJV).

It is true that there is only one collective body of Christ in existence today (Eph.1:22-23; 1.Corr.12:12-13); however, there are many congregations of the elect scattered throughout the world with many differing opinions as to how to accomplish the proclaiming of the gospel message and one's spiritual walk with the Father and Christ.

It should be apparent to anyone that our associations always have either a positive or negative impact on us. This is especially true of our spiritual associations. Therefore, if you are truly seeking to obey the Father and Christ and grow toward spiritual maturity, you will desire to be with people who are truly moving forward spiritually.

The warnings to the churches in chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation and the warnings Jesus gave to the elect in many of his parables show that each individual called to salvation during this age should be extremely careful with whom they associate on a spiritual level.
MANY DIFFERING CONGREGATIONS

If there is only one Body of Christ (Eph.4:4-7) to which the elect belong, only one spirit, and only one faith, why are the Father's earthly children separated into various congregations which are generally antagonistic toward each other? Why are there so many different opinions as to what is truth? And what is the correct organizational structure of the Body of Christ?

Rebellion

Adam and Eve rebelled against the Creator God in the Garden of Eden. The children of Israel rebelled against him in the wilderness after being delivered from the slavery of Egypt. Mankind has been in a condition of rebellion from the time of Adam to today (See Isa.30:9-10; 66:3; Ezk.20:12-13). It is a sad fact that many of the Father's elect are in rebellion against him and his Son today.

Jesus called the religious leaders of his day hypocrites, snakes, liars, and deceivers, because they were not teaching total truth. Instead, they were teaching Jewish traditions and their own philosophy and interpretation of God’s laws, precepts, and principles, which constituted rebellion:

"You hypocrites, Isaiah correctly prophesied of you, saying, This people draw near to me with their mouth, and honor me with their lips; but their heart is far from me. But in vain they worship me, teaching for doctrines the commandments of men" (Matt.15:7-9 Para.). See also Matt.23:13-33; Jn.8:44-55.

Jesus' reprimand to the Jews and the spiritual leaders of his day for their rebellion against truth is just as appropriate today as it was then. Not only are the Jews and their spiritual leaders in rebellion against truth today, but also many of the Father's elect and their spiritual leaders are in rebellion. If this were not true, there would be unity among the elect.

The apostle Paul's warning to Timothy also applies to this present age of the church:

"The Spirit clearly says that in later times some will abandon the faith and follow deceiving spirits and things taught by demons. Such teachings come through hypocritical liars, whose consciences have been seared as with a hot iron" (1.Tim.4:1-2 NIV).

"Preach God's truth at all times and reprove, rebuke, and exhort with all patience and doctrine. For the time will come when they [some of the elect] will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts they shall heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (2.Tim.4:2-4 Para.).

Many of the Father's elect will do as they please and follow ministers who preach things which are pleasing to hear, but lack spiritual truth.
"And from Miletus Paul sent to Ephesus, and called the elders of the church. . .Take heed, therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the holy spirit has made you overseers, to feed the church of God, which he has purchased with his blood. For I know that after I leave, grievous wolves will come among you, that will not spare the flock. Also among you shall men arise, speaking perverse things, in order to draw away disciples after themselves" (Acts 20:17, 28-30 Para.).

Paul's warning to the elders at Ephesus has come true. Throughout the centuries, evil men and women have risen to positions of leadership within the Body of Christ and abused and manipulated the Father's children in order to fulfill their own sinful lusts and desires. And there are those today who perpetuate this same evil upon the elect. See Rom.16:17-18.

Rebellion comes in many forms and always separates the rebellious from the Father and Christ. Today's divided elect are an example of people's desire to obey their own self-will rather than their Father's will.

Deception

Another reason for disunity and division among congregations of the elect is Satan's deception. In the early days of the church, Satan began his plan to destroy the Father's elect from within the church. The apostle Paul warned the elect at Corinth to be aware of this threat to their eternal lives:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15 KJV). See also Deut.13:1-5; Jer.23:21-22.

Yes, Satan has many ministers disguised as true ministers of God (Rev.2:9; 3:9). Some of these individuals within and without congregations of the elect who claim to be ministers of Christ are truly deceived themselves. But, some are not. These individuals actively try to destroy the unsuspecting, the ill informed, and the naive. Jesus knew this would happen and warned his followers to be aware of those who were not sent by him to shepherd his people:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ; and shall deceive many" (Matt.24:4-5 KJV).

Study The Bible

There are two important ways to gain the knowledge and understanding with which to determine what is or is not truth and who is or is not a servant of God: 1) study the Bible; and 2) prove all things.
"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness" (2.Tim.2:15-16 NKJV). See also 1.Thes.4:10-12.

In order to be equipped to determine what is or is not truth and who is or is not of the elect, you must seek this knowledge and understanding through a diligent study of the biblical record.

Prove All Things

"Test all things; and hold fast that which is good" (1.Thes.5:21 Para.). See also Rom.12:2.

A person can only know what is good if they diligently study and meditate on what is written in the biblical record where the difference between good and evil is defined.

"These were more noble than those in Thessalonica, in that they received the word with readiness of mind, and searched the scriptures daily, whether these things were so. Therefore, many of them believed . . ." (Acts 17:11-12 KJV).

The more noble people were those who were serious about knowing and understanding God's truth; therefore, they diligently studied the scriptures in order to prove to themselves what was correct before God.

Non-biblical Sources

There are many excellent books which have been written containing historical, archaeological, and scientific facts about the Bible. However, when attempting to understand what is actually written in the biblical record, Bible commentaries and other informational sources have a limited value. This is true because, the vast majority of these books were written by individuals without the indwelling of the holy spirit and therefore give little insight into doctrinal issues concerning the elect. Moreover, one should exercise caution using these sources and measure the information in them against the empirical standard of the Bible itself.

THE THREE CHURCH AGES

The gospel age of salvation seems to be broken down into three different ages of the church: The early church, the dormant church, and the end-time church.

1. During the early church age, Jesus inspired the recording of a foundational body of knowledge upon which all subsequent true and faithful believers could order their lives and build congregations.

2. During the age that followed the early church, the church lay dormant for centuries without great power or numbers, and had only the most basic of spiritual truths to sustain its spiritual growth.
3. The end-time church age will exist a few short years before Christ's return. It is during this last age of the church that some of the Father's earthly children will be given great spiritual truth and power to proclaim his good news message and prepare the world for his Son's return.

I Will Build My Church

*Jesus said, "I will build my church; and the gates of hell [hades: the grave] shall not prevail against it" (Matt.16:18 Para.).*

This is the scripture which is most often used to prove that the church Jesus established still exists today. However, this is not what Jesus said. He was assuring his disciples that the church he would build will neither be destroyed nor cease to exist; it will endure. He did not promise enduring power throughout the ensuing centuries or unity and prominence until his return.

Jesus has kept this promise; his church (i.e., his Father's elect) still exists, but not in the form that most associate with the churches of today's world. Jesus did build his church and it does exist today. Some of its members worship the Father alone and some worship in various collective groups. However, during the end-time age of the church many of the elect will come together in unity of belief and do a powerful work of proclaiming the Father's good news message.

The Commission to the Elect

"Go you therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you, and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world" (Matt.28:19-20 KJV).

The Promise of Power

"And these signs shall follow them that believe. In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak in various languages; They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and the sick shall recover" (Mk.16:17-18 Para.).

THE FIRST AGE

At the conclusion of Mark's Gospel, he writes the following about the work and power of the early church:

"And they went forth, and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them, and confirming the word with signs following. Amen" (Mk.16:20 KJV).
After the establishment of the church in Jerusalem, the Father's elect did go forth evangelizing and spreading his good news message of salvation and the Kingdom of God. Their spiritual zeal changed the course of history. However, it was not in the Father's plan to save the world during Jesus' lifetime or during the apostolic era of the church. If this had been his plan, he would have done it (Isa.6:8-10; Matt.10:34-36; 13:10-15; Mk.4:11-12; Lk.8:9-10).

Authorizations of Power

Few people realize the awesome power Jesus placed at the disposal of the early church as a unified body and the discretion with which they were authorized to use this power. There are at least 21 distinct authorizations of supernatural and physical gifts noted in the New Testament which were given to the organized, unified Body of Christ. Each of these authorizations were to be used to build the Body into a powerful and dynamic force:

"For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the Body" (Eph.4:12 KJV). See also Eph.4:7-11; Rom.12:3-8; 1.Cor.12:8-10, 28-30.

In the New Testament, there are many accounts of the elect using their powerful authorizations to perform the commission Jesus gave the church (Acts 3:1-9; 5:1-15; 6:8; 13:8-11; 15:12). The apostles and others performed miraculous works at their discretion; however, as dynamic and powerful as these people were, they ceased to exist as a dynamic, unified, powerful entity.

Although Jesus foretold that the elect would be persecuted for their adherence to the truth of God (Jn.15:20; 17:14-17; Acts 8:1; 2.Tim.3:12) and teaching God's ways, this is not the primary reason that the early church disappeared as a powerful, unified, spirit-filled entity.

False Prophets

Jesus warned that many of the elect would be deceived by false prophets:

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matt. 24:11).

"Wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many will go into that gate and in that way: Because straight [difficult] is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leads to life, and few will find it" (Matt.7:13-14 Para.).

Peter and Jude also warned that many would be misled by false teachers who would come among the elect and bring in heresies:

"And many shall follow their pernicious ways; by reason of whom the way of truth shall be evil spoken of" (2.Pet.2:2 KJV).
"Earnestly contend for the faith which was once delivered to the saints. For there are certain men crept in unawares, who were before of old ordained to this condemnation, ungodly men, turning the grace of God into lasciviousness, and denying the only Lord God, and our Lord Jesus Christ. . . . These be they who separate themselves, sensual, having not the spirit" (Jude 3-4,19 KJV).

Confusion and Division

"Now I [Paul] beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no division among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment. For I have been told of you, my brethren, by them who are of the house of Chloe, that there are contentions among you. Now I say this, that every one of you says I am of Paul; and I of Apollos; and I of Cephas; and I of Christ. Then Paul asks: Is Christ divided?" (1.Cor.1:10-13 Para.).

It is absurd to think that Jesus Christ is not quite sure what the elect should believe in regard to truth or how they should function as a united body. Does Jesus Christ care how the elect worship and serve his heavenly Father? See Deut.5:29; 12:29-32; 30:15-16. Yes, he does care and he will punish those who refuse to hear what the spirit says to the churches. See chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation.

God the Father is a God of order, not confusion (1.Cor.14:33). He is an orderly being. Look at the order of all that exists. From the balance of universe down to the smallest atomic structure, all of the physical creation shows great order; it is not in confusion. Because God created the physical existence to function in an orderly manner, doesn't it make sense that he would have his people worship him in an orderly, structured way?

Seduction of the Apostolic Church

Jesus warned that the early church would be seduced into disobedience and false worship:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am the Christ: and shall deceive many" (Matt.24:4-5 KJV).

"And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many. And because iniquity shall abound, the love of many shall wax cold" (Matt.24:11-12 KJV).

The elect of the early church were continually warned and admonished to keep the Faith Once Delivered and to be on guard against those who wanted to destroy them.
Paul wrote the following to the Galatians and to Timothy about individuals perverting the true gospel message and those who would depart from the faith, and begin speaking and teaching many things which were not true, and that a time would come when most of the elect would reject truth:

"I marvel that you are so soon removed from him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel: Which is not another; but there is some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ" (Gal.1:6-7 KJV). See also 2.Cor.11:13-15.

"Now the spirit speaks expressly that in the latter times some shall depart from the faith, giving heed to seducing spirits, and doctrines of devils; speaking lies in hypocrisy; having their conscience seared with a hot iron" (1.Tim.4:1-2 KJV).

"For the time will come when they [the Elect] will not accept sound teaching. ... And they shall not pay attention to the truth, and shall turn away it, and shall turned instead to fables" (2.Tim.4:3-4 Para.).

Many who fellowshipped in congregations of the early church would not accept sound teachings. They sought out teachers who taught things which were pleasing, but did not require them to diligently pursue a righteous lifestyle. These teachers deceived the elect who were gullible and spiritually lazy. Soon, a counterfeit of the Father's worship system came into being and surpassed the true church in size and influence and became confused with the worship system Jesus had established.

The Demise and Disappearance

The dynamic, powerful, organized entity Jesus established on the Festival of Pentecost ceased to exist and almost disappeared from the historical record. The answers to the perplexing questions about the demise and disappearance of the early church as a powerful entity are answered in part by the warnings of Jesus and the apostles. The rest of the answer is found hidden in the prophecy of Zechariah.

The Prophecy of Zechariah

Matthew, Mark, and John all record Jesus quoting the prophecy recorded by Zechariah, which foretold the scattering of Jesus' disciples after his death:

"All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad" (Matt.26:31 KJV). See also Mk.14:27; Jn.16:32.

This is an extremely important prophecy because the few words Jesus did not quote gives us the key to understand why the apostolic church ceased to exist as a powerful entity.
"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd [Jesus], and against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep [the disciples] shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon [against] the little ones [the elect]" (Zech.13:7 KJV).

The little ones mentioned in verse seven are the Father's elect as noted in many scriptures (see Matt.8:12; 18:3-10; 19:13-14; Mk.9:42). But, why would Jesus Christ turn against the little ones? And why did Jesus omit this prophecy?

The reason Jesus would turn against the little ones is that they would turn against the Faith Once Delivered and cease to be zealous for truth. The reason that Jesus did not quote the rest of what Zechariah recorded is that it was a different prophecy, which would be fulfilled at a different time. The prophecy recorded by Zechariah would begin its fulfillment during the apostolic age of the church and continue until a time shortly before Christ returns.

THE SECOND AGE

The Father's children have not been destroyed from the face of the earth, they are not in hiding, they do exist on earth, and the Father's plan and purpose for his elect children and humanity has not been destroyed by Satan.

After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., following the death of John, the organized, powerful preaching of the gospel ceased. The elect were persecuted and their numbers were dramatically reduced in the great martyrdoms inflicted by the Romans. After this, the elect disappeared into obscurity (See Jn.16:1-3).

The concentrated supernatural and physical power of the holy people dissipated, which made a powerful, organized work impossible. From that time to the present there has been very little recorded about the true people of God. Until the 19th century, the only remaining records of them were those of their enemies.

Throughout the Centuries

During the centuries that followed the demise of the early church, a counterfeit gospel was allowed to grow and be established as false Christianity in order to fulfill the prophetic events which will take place at the end of this age. The true spiritual Body of Christ continued throughout the centuries, but not as a powerful organization. Though small in numbers, the Father's elect have continued to exist in relative obscurity, without losing the understanding of the most basic truths necessary for salvation. Although the true spiritual Body of Christ never completely died, it accepted much error and made many departures from the Faith Once Delivered. This is why Jesus foretold that, just before his return, an Elijah would come to restore the Faith Once Delivered. See Mal.4:5-6, Matt.17:10-13.
THE THIRD AGE

The prophecies which speak of the end of the age show that, just before his return, Jesus will again establish a dynamic, powerful people to proclaim his Father's good news message and the coming Kingdom of God to earth. These people will be unified in belief and filled with dynamic supernatural power. God the Father and Jesus Christ will use this unified body of believers to bring an end to human rule on earth.

These people will manifest the authorizations of the original church and more. These are the elect who will have the ability to defy the laws of the physical universe with their supernatural power. Moreover, no physical or spirit-power will be able to stop them from performing their God-given task.

The prophet Habbakkuk speaks of these people when he says:

"Behold you among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, you will not believe, though it were told" (Hab.1:5 Para.). See also verses 1-4.

The apostle Paul issued a prophetic warning to those of his day and the future in regard to Habbakkuk's prophecy:

"Beware, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I will work a work in your days, a work which you in no way will believe, even though you are told about it" (Acts 13:40-41 Para.).

Jesus also spoke of these people when he said the following:

"Truly, truly, I tell you, he that believes on me, the works that I do he shall also do, and greater works, than these he shall do; because I go to the Father. And whatsoever you shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the son. If you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (Jn.14:12-14 Para.).

As powerful as the apostolic era of the church was in the performance of their responsibility to proclaim the Father's message, they did not do a greater work than Jesus. However, some of the Father's elect who will live just before Christ returns will do this greater work. They will do a greater work because they will have the kind of faith, power, and protection necessary to do a greater work. However, the elect who do this great work will not be comprised of all the congregations of the elect, because Jesus himself will bring major persecution on most of the Father's elect children in order to wake them out of their spiritual lethargy in the hope of saving them from the second death in the Lake of Fire.
The Philadelphians

"To the angel of the church in Philadelphia write: These are the words of him who is holy and true, who holds the key of David. What he opens no one can shut, and what he shuts no one can open. I know your deeds. See, I have placed before you an open door that no one can shut. I know that you have a little strength, yet you have kept my word and have not denied my name. I will make those who are of the synagogue of Satan, who claim to be Jews though they are not, but are liars—I will make them to come and fall down at your feet and acknowledge that I have loved you" (Rev.3:7-10 NIV).

These are the Father's elect who will comprise the organized, unified, powerful Body of Christ at the very end of the age. Notice that Jesus will grant them so much power that no one can stop them from accomplishing their task.

They will perform such a powerful work and witness that vast numbers of people will be converted and obtain salvation. These individuals will devastate the religions and governments of this world during the climactic end of human rule on earth. For their obedience and faithfulness, they are promised protection from the awesome final events that will culminate in Christ's return.

A NEED TO KNOW

If Jesus Christ follows the same pattern in establishing a powerful unified church in the end of the age in order to proclaim his Father's good news message as he did with the early church, those who will become a part of this dynamic work should know what its organizational and governmental structure is like and how it functions.

The information in the following chapters should give any serious student of the Bible enough knowledge to be able to understand the organizational and governmental structure of the early church and what one's attitude, behavior, and responsibility should be today pertaining to the organizational and governmental structure of the Church and those who govern and serve the elect through it.

By B. L. Cocherell, Vernon. O. Jones, C.E. Barrett
Today, there are many individuals within the congregations of the elect who either want a leadership position or are already in a leadership position, but seriously underestimate the enormity of the responsibility of leading the Father's elect in their pursuit of immortal life.

Although every man called to the eldership in the early church was called to serve the Father's elect, not all had the same authority, function, responsibility, or gift of the spirit. Moreover, not all were called to serve as spiritual leaders within congregations.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the churches in Corinth and Ephesus and listed the various functions, responsibilities, and gifts of the spirit, he defined the functions and responsibilities of those charged to minister within the congregations on a daily basis:

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with languages? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and ye yet show I to you a more excellent way" (1.Cor.12:27-31 KJV Para.).

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in 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 fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love" (Eph.4;11-16 KJV).
A Serious Responsibility

Those who were called to be spiritual leaders within the congregations of the early church had a uniquely different responsibility from others within the eldership. Not all men are suited for this type of work, because it takes a person of exceptional patience, gentleness, kindness, self-sacrifice, wisdom, spiritual understanding, and dedication to serve the people of God in this capacity.

Paul cautions those who had been given the responsibility of a congregational elder to be very careful about how they fulfilled their responsibility to serve the Father's children:

*Take heed, therefore to yourselves, and to all the flock, over which the holy spirit has made you overseers ['superintendent' or 'official in charge'], to feed the church of God, which he [Jesus] has purchased with his blood. For I know that after I leave, grievous wolves [evil people] will come among you, that will not spare the flock. Also among you shall men arise, speaking perverse things, in order to draw away disciples after themselves. . .I have shown you all things, and that you ought to work to support the weak, and to remember the words of the Lord Jesus, when he said, It is more blessed to give than to receive" (Acts 20:28-30, 35 Para.).

The following is a list of the subjects pertaining to the spiritual leadership and organizational structure of the church that will be reviewed in this chapter in order to gain insight into the attitudes and responsibilities that each of the elect should have during this age of the church:

- Qualifications of an elder
- Attitude toward service
- Elder's right to govern the elect
- Stewards of God's mysteries
- Elder's accountability
- Peter and the keys of heaven

QUALIFICATIONS OF AN ELDER

All men who were called to the eldership of the early church had to meet high personal and spiritual standards in order to qualify for this office of service. And they all were called to serve their brothers and sisters in Christ in some capacity. However, those who were called to be congregational elders and those who taught spiritual truths were held to the highest standard of accountability. Consequently, they received the greater condemnation and judgement for failure to properly execute their responsibilities. See Jms.5:1; Heb.13:7.
"If a man desires the office of a bishop [pastor], he desires a good work. For a bishop must be blameless [have unimpeachable virtue], the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality, apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedily looking for monetary gain; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that rules his own house well, having his children in subject with all gravity; (If he cannot rule his own house, how can he rule the church of God?). . . not a novice. . . moreover, he must have a good report of those outside of the church" (1.Tim.3:1-7 KJV Para.).

"The servant [an elder] of the Lord must not strive; but must be gentle to all men, apt to teach, patient, and in meekness instructs those that oppose themselves; as if God will give them repentance to acknowledge the truth" (2.Tim.2:24-25 Para.).

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1.Cor.4:1-2 KJV).

"For a bishop [a pastor] must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate" (Titus 1:7 KJV).

These are just a few of the qualifications a man must have before he can be ordained as the spiritual leader of a congregation. These qualifying attitudes and behaviors also must be maintained during his pastoral function. The responsibility for maintaining the congregational elder's integrity was not only his but also the congregations, because within the body of Christ everyone must work together for the common good.

**ATTITUDE TOWARD SERVICE**

Although everyone who is called of the Father to become a firstborn son of his new creation is expected to serve their brothers and sisters in the faith, those called to be spiritual leaders must be devoted to serving their fellow brothers and sisters in the faith. Without question, the responsibility of the congregational elder within the early church was one of the most demanding, time consuming, and stressful functions within the eldership. Moreover, because of the opportunity of service and personal accomplishment, spiritual leadership had the potential to be an exceptionally gratifying and joyful experience.
**Christ's Example of Service**

"I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd gives his life for the sheep. But he that is a hired hand, and not the shepherd, who doesn't own the sheep, sees the wolf coming, and leaves the sheep, and flees: and the wolf catches them, and scatters them. The hired hand flees, because he is a hired hand, and doesn't care for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and I know my sheep, and am known by my sheep. As the Father knows me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep" (Jn.10:11-15 Para.).

Jesus set the example for spiritual leaders to follow as they serve the Father's elect children. Jesus' dedication to the salvation of humanity was total; he held nothing back. He even set aside his immortality as the Creator God to become a human being and allowed himself to be unjustly put to death in order to pay the penalty for the sins of humanity.

In verses 11-15 of John, chapter 10, Jesus speaks of himself as a good shepherd, not one who is just hired to do a job. This is an important point, because Jesus reveals that those who serve the Father's elect have a vested interest in the people they serve. In reality, all of the elect are part of the Father's family; therefore, any person placed in a position of a guardian or a teacher of their brothers and sisters in the faith must be more responsible for their charge than a hired servant whose interest is only temporary.

"But Jesus called the twelve disciples to him, and said, You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you: but whoever will be great among you, let him be your minister; And whoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant: Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt.20:25-28 Para.).

"Don't be called masters: for one is your Master—that is Christ. But he that is greatest among you shall be your servant. And whoever shall exalt himself shall be abased; and he that shall humble himself shall be exalted" (Matt.23:10-12 Para.).

The spiritual leaders of the elect were not to be dictatorial and over-bearing as they governed and served the church; they were to be individuals who led by example as they assisted and guided those in their care toward spiritual perfection.

"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder [co-elder], and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not because you are forced to, but willingly: and not for the sake of money, but because you have a willingness to serve" (1.Pet.5:1-2 Para.).
At the time Peter wrote this, there were attitudinal problems developing among some of the elders who regarded the eldership as a burden or just a regular job, rather than an opportunity to serve their fellow brothers and sisters in the faith. However, Peter reminds the congregational elder of the reason that they were called to serve the elect as spiritual leaders. He also reminds them to respect the opinions and suggestions of those who have served for a long time and to serve with humility, because they will receive their reward for service at the proper time:

Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away. Likewise, you younger [younger spiritually], submit yourselves to the elder. Yes, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. Humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1.Pet.5:3-6 KJV).

ELDER’S RIGHT TO GOVERN

The New Testament shows that the spiritual leaders of the early church had broad discretionary authority and power with which to govern, guide, and serve those under their care and protection. Some today feel that a spiritual leader is only to serve as a teacher, preacher, or in some physical capacity without the power or authority to enforce or take any corrective action upon those who are disobedient to the faith. Others feel that Jesus Christ authorized spiritual leaders to have absolute power and authority over the elect in every aspect of their lives.

Neither of these two extreme views of authority and power are correct. However, elders of the early church did have the authority to protect and reprimand the elect when it was necessary (See Acts 5:1-10; 1.Cor.5:1-5). Today, it is the responsibility of all the elect to protect and defend the faith and the faithful, because the church is one body. All the elect have a responsibility to work to benefit the spiritual body as a whole (See 1.Cor.12:1-31; 2.Cor.2:3-10). Nevertheless, no one can work out another person's salvation (Phil.2:12) or force another person into the Kingdom of God. Therefore, those whom Jesus selected as spiritual leaders were not given the authority to control every aspect of the lives of those under their care.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, Paul fulfills his responsibility as a spiritual leader when he passed judgment and sentence upon an offending brother in Christ:
"It is reported commonly that there is fornication among you, and such fornication as is not so much as named among the Gentiles, that one should have his father's wife. And you are puffed up, and have not rather mourned, that he that has done this deed might be taken away from among you. For truly I am absent in body, but present in spirit, have judged already, as though I were present, concerning him that has so done this deed. In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ [by his authorization], when you are gathered together, I am with you in my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, To deliver such an one to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that the spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1.Cor.5:1-5 Para.).

The expression "in the name of our Lord Jesus" is used to show that Paul had the authority from Jesus Christ to pass judgement regarding this matter. This plainly shows that Paul had the authority to make a binding decision regarding spiritual issues and that this authority and responsibility was not just meant for Peter as some believe.

"This charge I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on you, that you by them might war a good warfare; Holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck: Of whom is Hymenaeus and Alexander; whom I have delivered to Satan, that they may learn not to blaspheme" (1.Tim.1:18-20 Para).

Here, Paul used his authority as an apostle and elder to instruct and inform Timothy and the church of his decision concerning two men who had violated their sacred calling. Paul had the authority and power to remove these men from the congregation and give them over to Satan for punishment. This action against Hymenaeus and Alexander shows that the elders of the early church had the authority and power to remove individuals from the congregations when it was necessary.

From the following scriptures, it is evident that the elders of the early church had the authority and power to govern the church and remove and punish those who were unruly or causing trouble within the congregations:

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how you ought to follow us: for we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you: . . . For even when we were with you, this we commanded you, that if any would not work, neither should he eat. For we hear that there are some which walk among you disorderly, working not at all, but are busybodies. Now them that are such we command and exhort by our Lord Jesus Christ, that with quietness they work, and eat their own bread. But you, brethren, be not weary in well-doing. And if any man obey not our word by this epistle, note that man and have no company with him, that he may be ashamed" (2.Thes.3:6-14 KJV).
"These things speak, and encourage, and censure with all authority. . ." (Titus 2:15 Para.).

"Therefore I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power [authority] which the Lord has given me to edification, and not to destruction" (2.Cor. 13:10 KJV).

"But now I have written to you not to keep company, if any man that is called a brother be a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one no not to eat. For what have I to do to judge them also that are without? do not you judge them that are within? But them that are without God judge. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1.Cor.5:11-13 KJV).

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them" (Rom.16:17 KJV).

Authority and power are not given to those who serve the elect as spiritual leaders so that they can be glorified in the eyes of the elect and be served by them instead of being their servants. This authority is given so that the spiritual leadership is able to serve the elect more efficiently and effectively.

STEWARDS OF GOD'S MYSTERIES

"Let a man so account of us, as of the ministers of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1.Cor.4:1-2 KJV).

The elders of the early church understood that they were Christ's servants and stewards of God's sacred truth who were charged with the responsibility of teaching and preserving the pure Word of God. The same condition should exist today among all of the elect of God, especially among any who claim to be spiritual leaders of God's people.

Teach Sound Doctrine

"I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, who shall judge the quick [those who are alive] and the dead at his appearing and his kingdom; Preach the word; be instant in season, out of season; reprove, rebuke, exhort with all longsuffering and doctrine. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine; but after their own lusts shall they heap to themselves teachers, having itching ears. And they shall turn away their ears from the truth, and shall be turned to fables" (2.Tim.4:1-4).
Some people can only endure in the way of truth for a short time before they begin to give in to their own lustful ways which are the opposite of God's ways. In order to placate their consciences, some individuals search out those who will tell them what they want to hear instead of reprimanding them for the error of their ways. It is sad, but many whom the Father calls to salvation walk this path to eternal destruction in the Lake of Fire. See 1 Tim. 1:18-20.

"But speak you the things which become sound doctrine; That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in love, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed. Young men likewise exhort to be sober minded (KJV). In everything set them an example by doing what is good. In your teaching show integrity, seriousness and soundness of speech that cannot be condemned, so that those who oppose you may be ashamed because they have nothing bad to say about us" (NIV) (Tit. 2:1-8 KJV/NIV).

Paul's instructions to Timothy and Titus about teaching sound doctrine and his warning about elders who go astray and those who are false ministers is very important today. Today, there are many who claim to teach the Father's truth to his elect, but they actually teach false doctrine and lead people astray. There are also many who teach for financial gain instead of teaching the things that will reprimand and correct the sinner.

In order for a person to know if the spiritual leader who is serving them is teaching truth, a person must carefully study what is being taught. The warnings to six of the prophetic churches in chapters two and three of the Book of Revelation are examples of spiritual leaders and the people they lead not fulfilling their responsibilities pertaining to biblical truth.

**Doctrine and the Elect of God**

God the Father and Jesus Christ reveal truth to all of the elect who strive to grow in spiritual truth, knowledge, and understanding. However, what is a person's responsibility concerning new truth? Does one have the right to decide what is and is not truth? Yes! Each person has the right to determine what they believe is truth. However, just because a person decides something is truth, does not make it so.

Did the elders or non-elders of the early church have any authorization from God to establish doctrine on their own, or was it their duty to be in subjection to the decisions of the authorities who are charged with such matters? Acts, chapter 15 reveals that all must be subject to constituted spiritual authority and to one another in matters concerning doctrine.
Although it is true that the eldership of the early church had the authority, responsibility, and accountability to decide doctrinal matters (1.Cor. 4:1). It is also true that, through his holy spirit, the Father reveals his truth to all his children who truly seek his will in their lives.

During the existence of the early church, those who thought they had new understanding concerning God's word or a question regarding the validity of a doctrine had the responsibility to submit this new understanding or doctrinal question to those in leadership positions for their review. When the eldership rendered a decision on the issue, it was the responsibility of the individual(s) who submitted the issue for consideration to abide by the collective decision of the elders:

"Obey them [the elders] that have the rule [authority] over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls [your spiritual life], as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb.13:17 KJV).

The elders of the early church had the authorization and accountability to protect the salvation of the elect. Keep in mind that these elders were responsible and accountable to the Father and Jesus Christ to carefully protect the elect's eternal salvation as much as they could. Therefore, one of the major concerns of any spiritual leader should be the maintaining of doctrinal integrity and making sure that heresies do not creep into the body of Christ.

**ELDER'S ACCOUNTABILITY**

Among the many problems Paul reprimand the Corinthians about was a sectarian attitude some had toward the ministry. Paul reprimanded them for focusing on the different personalities within the ministry instead of focusing on God the Father and Jesus Christ and other important spiritual issues. Within this reprimand is a serious warning for spiritual leaders to perform their responsibility correctly, as well as a serious warning to the elect to avoid sectarianism because of the disastrous impact it can have on everyone in the Body of Christ:

"For you are yet carnal: for whereas there is among you envying, and strife, and divisions, are you not carnal, and walk as men? For one says, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are you not carnal? Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase" (1.Cor.3:3-6 KJV).

Here, Paul addresses the core issue which was causing strife and division among them and he shows where their primary focus should have been directed.
"For we are all laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. . . Now if any man [an elder] build upon this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble. Every man's work shall be made manifest: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try every man's work of what sort it is" (1.Cor.3:9-10, 12-13 KJV).

Elders should be extremely careful how they perform the work they are called to do within congregations of the elect, because how they conduct their ministry affects those under their care, as well as their reward at Christ's return.

"If any man's [elder's] work abide which he has built thereupon, he shall receive a reward. If any man's [elder's] work shall be burned [doesn't stand up through trials], he shall suffer loss: but he himself shall be saved; yet so as by fire [trial] " (1.Cor.3:14-15KJV).

There are rewards for being a good steward of God's word and for being a good shepherd to God's people; however, there is an enormous amount of accountability for how one performs their responsibilities as a spiritual leader of the Father's elect, because their salvation is at stake. Paul says that, if a man makes an irreversible mistake in shepherding the elect, he will suffer some loss of reward in the Kingdom, but he will still obtain salvation if he remains faithful to his calling.

Paul and the writer to the Hebrews wrote the following about the tremendous accountability of spiritual leaders within the Father's earthly family:

"My brethren, be not many masters, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation" (Jms.3:1 KJV).

"Obey them [the elders] that have the rule [authority] over you, and submit yourselves: for they watch for your souls [your spiritual life], as they that must give account, that they may do it with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you " (Heb.13:17 KJV).

Everyone who is called to salvation during the gospel age will stand before Jesus Christ to give account for themselves; however, those who are called to serve congregations will also be held accountable for how they discharge their responsibility toward those they were called to serve. This is a very heavy responsibility that is given to those who serve the congregations and it should not be lightly dismissed by those who serve and those who are served, because everyone is held accountable.
PETER AND THE KEYS OF HEAVEN

The Catholic Church, other quasi-Christian religions, and some true Christians cite Matthew 16:18-19 as their authority to rule the people of God and determine doctrine. A misunderstanding of the intent and purpose of what Jesus actually said to Peter concerning the keys of heaven has led to the false assumption that Peter was the chief apostle and that men are given discretionary power to change and manipulate the laws of God as they desire.

The misunderstanding about what the keys were to which Jesus referred has resulted in many troubling and burdensome decrees being issued by various spiritual leaders of the elect. These decrees have caused some of the elect to suffer much injustice at the hands of well-meaning, but misguided elders.

What are the keys to the kingdom of heaven to which Jesus referred and were these keys given to Peter only or to all of the apostles and all elders throughout the ages?

In order to understand Jesus' statement about the keys, the context in which this statement was made, and the identifying of those to whom it was made must be understood:

"And coming to Caesarea of Philipi, Jesus questioned his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I am, the son of man? And they said, Some say that you are John the Baptist; and others say that you are Elijah, and others Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. And he said to them, But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter answered, and said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt.16:13-16 Para.).

In response to Peter's correct answer, Jesus said:

"You are blessed Simon son of Jonah, for flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but my Father who is in heaven revealed it to you" (Matt.16:17 Para.).

This is where most people go astray in seeking to understand to whom Jesus gave the keys of the kingdom of heaven. Just because Jesus directs his next statement to Peter, it does not necessarily mean that what he says later is also directed only to him.

"And I say to you, That you are Peter [a pebble], and upon this rock [a large craggy outcropping of rock] I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it" (Matt.16:18 Para.).

It is a mistake to believe that Jesus was going to build his church on Peter. The language shows that the foundation upon which Jesus would build his church was the truth concerning who he was, why he came to earth, and what he taught.
"And I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to you: and whatever you will bind on earth shall occur, having already been bound in heaven: and whatever you may loose on earth shall be loosed, having been already loosed in heaven" (Matt. 16:19 Para.).

There is absolutely nothing in the language structure of verse 19 to show that Jesus only directed this statement to Peter. Jesus' very next statement seems to show that he addressed all of the disciples:

"Then he warned his disciples that they should not tell anyone that he was the Christ" (Matt. 16:20 Para.).

In context, Jesus' reference to the keys of the kingdom of heaven is addressed to all of the disciples, not to Peter only:

Acts, chapter 15 shows that James, not Peter, was the one who presided over the council of elders in Jerusalem and that all the elders were involved in the decision making process when establishing doctrine. Acts 15 also shows that it was James, not Peter, who had the authority to make the final decision concerning matters set before the council of elders in Jerusalem. Moreover, both secular history and the Bible show that Peter did not occupy a position as the overseer of the church, and the Bible shows that the foundation of the church is Jesus Christ.

The Keys

Some people believe that the keys of Matthew 16:19 are symbolic of a badge of power or authority, and that the individual or the group that possess these keys is authorized to lock and unlock, bind and loose things; therefore, it is important to understand exactly what these keys symbolize.

It is clear that Jesus Christ is the keeper of the keys pertaining to the House of David (Isa. 22:22; Rev. 3:7) and the keys that control the abode of the dead and death itself (Rev. 1:18). Moreover, he is the one who sends forth the angel with a key to open the abyss in order to punish humanity just before he comes to conquer the earth (Rev. 9:1; 20:1). These facts make it clear that other things Jesus says about keys should be considered important to the understanding of what unlocks the kingdom of heaven to humanity.

In a conversation with the teachers of Jewish traditions and God's law, Jesus explains what the keys are that unlock the way into the kingdom of heaven:

"Woe to you lawyers! Because you burden men with burdens that are hard to bear, and you yourselves do not touch the burdens with one of your fingers" (Lk. 11:46 Para.).
The burdens that the lawyers placed upon the Jews were the Jewish traditions and erroneous interpretations of God's law. These false teaching that were enforced upon the Jews not only made their physical life difficult but also made the worship of God a burden rather than the joyous experience that obedience to God was intended to be. Because of their arrogance and self-importance, they did nothing to lighten this heavy burden that they and their fathers before them had placed upon the people.

Woe to you! Because you build the tombs of the prophets, and your fathers killed them. So you bear witness and consent to the works of your fathers; for they indeed killed them, and you build their tombs” (Lk.11:47-48 Para.).

The prophets were sent by the Creator God with two primary messages: The first was a call to repentance and a return to the true teachings of God, and the second message was prophetic for future generations. Some of these prophets were killed by the chosen people, because the people were unwilling to obey God:

"And because of this, the wisdom of God said, I will send prophets and apostles to them, and they will kill and drive out some of them, that the blood of all the prophets poured out from the foundation of the world may be required from this generation, from the blood of Abel to the blood of Zechariah who perished between the altar and the House. Yes, I say to you, it will be required from this generation" (Lk.11:49-51 Para.).

Although his chosen people continued to rebel against him, God continued to send messengers to call his people to repent and return to him and his ways. However, the people and their spiritual leaders continued to reject God's messengers and their message. This is why the people and their spiritual leaders did not recognize Jesus as the Messiah, and why they did not understand the message he brought from his Father. Moreover, because they rejected and murdered God's messengers, that generation will be held accountable for the death of these righteous men.

The Key of Knowledge

"Woe to you lawyers! Because you took away the key of knowledge; you yourselves did not enter, and you kept out others from entering" (Lk.11:52 Para.).

Verse 52 reveals that certain knowledge allows a person to have access to the pathway leading to the kingdom of heaven. These spiritual leaders had hidden the key of knowledge. They were afraid of God's truth, so they suppressed it. They did not use this knowledge to enter into the good graces of God and kept others from the only truth that would have set them free from their bondage to sin. See Hos.4:6.
Jesus gave his disciples the keys to unlock the way to the kingdom of heaven. These keys are the things which comprise the body of knowledge about Jesus Christ and the message he brought from his Father which shows the way to obtain eternal life.

How did Peter know Jesus was the Messiah? And how does anyone the Father calls to salvation know who his Son truly is? Peter knew that Jesus was the Messiah, because the Father revealed this knowledge to him. Likewise, those called to salvation today know Christ, because the Father reveals him to them (Jn.6:44, 65).

It is impossible to know what comprises the keys to the kingdom of heaven without understanding that, when Jesus referred to these keys, he was referring to a prophecy recorded by Isaiah about a change in who would be authorized to teach the mysteries of God.

The Prophetic Keys

The beginning of Isaiah, chapter 22 refers to the time before Christ returns when God's wrath will be poured out on Jerusalem. But beginning in verse 15, Isaiah records a different prophecy that has to do with a change in who is authorized to teach the mysteries of God:

"This says the Lord God of hosts, Go, you get to this treasurer, even to Shebna, which is over the house, and say, What have you here? and whom have you here, that you have cut you out as sepulcher here, as he that cuts him out a sepulcher on high, and that cut a habitation for himself in a rock?" (Isa.22:15-16 KJV Para.).

After the Creator gave his reprimand to Shebna for thinking more highly of himself than he ought, the Creator informs him that he is going to be removed from this high position of authority over his master's house:

"Behold, the Lord will carry you away with a mighty captivity, and will surely cover you. He will surely violently turn and toss you like a ball around the earth: there shall you die, and there the chariots of your glory shall be the shame of your lord's house. And I will drive you from your station, and from your state shall he pull you down" (Isa.22:17-19 KJV Para.).

Some believe that this Shebna is the scribe mentioned in the second Book of Kings. However, this is not so, because this Shebna is over his master's possessions, whereas the scribe Shebna was not. This Shebna symbolically represents the Levitical priesthood whose sacred trust was to preserve and teach God's laws and truth correctly, but who would in time fail in this responsibility.

"And it shall come to pass in that day, that I will call my servant Eliakim the son of Hilkiah" (Isa.22:20 KJV Para.).
The name Eliakim means God of raising and the name Hilkiah means portion of Jah (i.e., God). The rest of this prophecy reveals Eliakim as being symbolic of Christ who is God the Father’s firstborn son and the custodian of the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

"And I will clothe him with your robe, and strengthen him with your girdle, and I will commit your government into his hand; and he shall be a father to the inhabitants of Jerusalem, and to the house of Judah" (Isa.22:21 KJV Para.).

Verse 21 foretells a transfer of authority from one to another—the Levitical priesthood would have their authority to preserve and teach God’s truth taken from them and given to Christ, and Christ will be like a father to Jerusalem and Judah.

"And the key of the house of David will I lay upon his shoulder; so he shall open, and none shall shut; and he shall shut, and none shall open" (Isa.22:22 KJV Para.). See also Rev.3:7.

Christ, a descendant of David, is given the keys to open access to the kingdom of heaven—what he opens, no one can shut, and what he shuts, no one can open. These are the same keys Jesus promised to give his disciples:

"And I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven to you: and whatever you will bind on earth shall occur, having already been bound in heaven: and whatever you may loose on earth shall be loosed, having been already loosed in heaven" (Matt.16:19 Para.).

Jesus had the authority to give the keys to the kingdom of heaven to his disciples because he was the prophetic Eliakim who would be given authority over his heavenly Father’s earthly children.

After his death and resurrection, Jesus commissioned the remaining eleven disciples to proclaim God the Father’s good news message which reveals the way to enter the kingdom of heaven. See Matt.28:16-20; Mk.16:15-19.

Continuing in Isaiah 22:23:

"And I will fasten him as a nail in a sure place; and he shall be for a glorious throne to his father’s house. And they shall hang upon him all the glory of his father’s house, the offspring and the issue, all vessels of small quantity, from the vessels of cups, even to all the vessels of flagons" (Isa.22:23-24 KJV Para.)

Christ is firmly established over his heavenly Father’s household and for all time is the custodian of the keys to the kingdom of heaven.

Verse 25 seems to refer to Christ’s sacrifice through which the penalty (i.e., the burden) for the violation of God’s law can be removed.
"In that day, says the Lord of hosts, shall the nail that is fastened in the sure place be removed, and be cut down, and fall; and the burden that was upon it shall be cut off: for the Lord has spoken it" (Isa.22:25 KJV Para.).

From what is recorded by the prophet Isaiah and what Jesus said to his disciples, as well as what is recorded in the Book of Revelation about the keys in his possession, it is clear that Christ gives the apostles and all subsequent elders the authority to open the door to the kingdom of heaven through proclaiming his Father's good news message.

The keys that open the way to the kingdom of heaven are the knowledge and understanding of what is written in the biblical record about God the Father's plan for humanity's salvation through Christ's sacrifice. This is the knowledge and understanding Peter revealed to a great number of people on the festival of Pentecost and to the Roman centurion Cornelius and his close friends and relatives. And this is the knowledge Philip revealed to the Ethiopian eunuch, and it has been proclaimed through the centuries by the Father's elect.

All true elders and members in the Father's earthly family have the keys to heaven by virtue of their being members of the Father's earthly family of king-priests and they are authorized to use these keys to fulfill their particular function and responsibility as one of the Father's elect. Additionally, elders have the authority to issue decrees, punishments, and ordinances if these are in agreement with what is already established in heaven.

The apostle Paul gave the following primary reasons for the establishment of the spiritual leadership of the early church:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in 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 fulness of Christ" (Eph.4:11-16 KJV).

Additionally, the leadership within the church must always protect the elect from threats to their salvation from internal and external sources.

The need for a dedicated, righteous leadership was necessary during the early church and is just as necessary today in order for the church as a collective body to fulfill many reasons for its establishment.

By B. L. Cocherell
CHAPTER
SEVEN

LEADERSHIP DURING THIS AGE

Jesus said the church he would build would endure (Matt.16:18); therefore, we know this body of true believers exists on earth. Because we know it exists, we also know there are spiritual leaders who have been given the responsibility to guide and teach this body of believers in the path of righteousness and in their performance of the work of the church; otherwise, the church would have ceased to exist.

Although the church still exists on earth, many centuries have passed since its establishment. During this passage of time, the Father's truth has been perverted in almost every conceivable way by quasi-Christianity, Satan, evil spirits, and others who have sought to destroy it.

Around 300 A.D., the historical record of the early church and its spiritual leadership seems to have almost completely disappeared. The records that do exist of individuals and groups of individuals who attempted to maintain the teachings of the early church throughout the centuries show a total lack of continuity in the succession of spiritual leadership.

Because no unbroken succession of spiritual leadership can be shown in the historical record, it is extremely important to find out if the spiritual leaders of the group of people with whom you associate have been sanctioned by Christ. Moreover, it is imperative that you know how to recognize a person whom Christ has sanctioned as a spiritual leader.

Jesus promised to establish an enduring body of believers and delegated the authority and responsibility for the care and protection of his Father's chosen people to the apostles who, in turn, delegated some of their authority to other men. He also warned those who would come to believe the message he brought from his heavenly Father and follow his teaching, to beware of those who would attempt to destroy them through clever deceptions.

When asked by his disciples what sign would precede his ascent to power and the end of that age, he gave the following two warnings about deceptive individuals:

"Take heed that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ; and shall deceive many. . . . And many false prophets shall rise, and shall deceive many" (Matt.24-5, 11 KJV).
There are many people in this age who claim to be followers of Christ and use the name of Jesus in their ministry. The problem is to determine the difference between those whom Jesus Christ has sent to serve as elders, those whom Satan has sent to mislead the elect, and those who think that Jesus has sent them, but have actually sent themselves.

In many cases, it is very difficult to determine if a person is truly under the authority of God the Father and Jesus Christ, because there are many sincere people in the world who honestly believe that they are serving the Father and Christ through their efforts to preach what is found in the Bible and their performance of physical and supernatural works. However, sincerity is not a test of righteousness nor is it a proof that Christ has authorized a person to do a work for him and his heavenly Father. Sincerity is just an indication of how dedicated a person is to what they are doing:

"Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them I never knew you: depart from me you that work lawlessness" (Matt.7:21-23 KJV Para). See also Mk.13:6; Lk.21:8.

There is no doubt that many people today have the ability to perform awesome natural and supernatural works. And many people who do these things claim they are doing them on behalf of Jesus Christ. However, Jesus said that many would come in his name (appropriating his name) and deceive many. It does not matter if a person intentionally or unintentionally deceives another person, because the end result is the same. Therefore, if God the Father has called you to salvation, you must be extremely cautious with whom you associate on a spiritual level.

There are many who are able to present their beliefs about the Bible and God with great zeal and persuasiveness; however, this does not mean what they preach is true or what they teach is taught for the right purpose. Each individual the Father has called to salvation during this age is warned to test the spirits in order to determine if the source or intent of a belief, teaching, or supernatural work is good or evil (1.Jn. 4:1).

CHOOSING AND ORDAINING ELDERS

The question of how spiritual leaders were selected and ordained during the early church is easily answered in the Book of Acts and the writings of the apostles. However, no credible documentation exists showing a continuity of elder succession descending from the early church to this present age. Therefore, the questions that must be answered are how are elders of the church selected and ordained today and who does the selection and ordaining? In order to answer these two questions, what took place in the early church regarding the selection and ordination of apostles, elders, and other spiritual leaders must be understood.

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The Early Church

At the beginning of Christ's ministry, he chose twelve men to be his close companions and to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God. He also chose seventy others and commissioned them to proclaim the same message. Although Jesus gave all of these men the power to heal and cast out evil spirits, none of these eighty-two men had the holy spirit residing within them until after Christ's death and resurrection.

A Replacement for Judas

After the Festival of Pentecost, when the holy spirit was given to those who were worthy of receiving it, the apostles selected a replacement for the traitor Judas who had committed suicide:

"And they [the eleven apostles] selected Joseph who was called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias. And when they had prayed, and said, You Lord, who knows the hearts of all men, show which of these two men you have chosen, that he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas through transgression fell . . . And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles" (Acts 1:23-26 KJV Para.).

The following are three important things revealed in Acts 1:23-26:

1. The apostles selected two men whom they thought were qualified to fulfill the responsibilities of an apostle.
2. They asked God the Father to make the choice between these two men.
3. The method they used to have the will of God the Father revealed to them was through the use of lots. It is logical that they would use this method because it was used by the priesthood to gain certain kinds of knowledge and insight from the Creator God and to determine his will in certain other matters, such as which goat was to be sacrificed and which goat was to be set free on the Festival of Atonement (Lev.16:7-10).

An Apostle to the Gentiles

The circumstances and events that surrounded the call of Paul to serve the Father and Jesus Christ as an apostle (Acts 9:1-31) reveal some major clues to understanding how to recognize spiritual leaders who are in the service of the Father and Jesus Christ today and those who will serve in the end of the age just before Christ returns:

• Paul was a Pharisee who was well versed in the law and the prophets; therefore, he had the necessary foundational knowledge upon which the Father and Christ could build a spiritual relationship with him.
• When presented with the truth concerning Jesus, Paul recognized this truth because the Father had opened his mind to this understanding through the power of the holy spirit.
• Ananias was personally told by Jesus in a vision to baptize Paul into the Family of God.
• The disciples at Damascus accepted Paul into their fellowship because of what Ananias told them and by the things that Paul began to teach concerning Jesus Christ.
• The disciples in Jerusalem and the rest of the congregations of God recognized Paul as one of the Father's elect and as an apostle because they believed what they heard about him from reputable men, such as Ananias and Barnabas. Moreover, they recognized that Paul taught the truth about Jesus and God the Father's good news.

Aside from these five clues, there is another major point to consider concerning those who were selected to become apostles: none of the apostles were selected to fulfill their responsibilities by men; they were all selected by God the Father (Jn.6:44, 65) through Christ's authority from his Father as the chief administrator over his earthly family and nation of king-priests. This shows us that, during the early days of the church, Jesus Christ was very much involved in determining who would be used to proclaim the gospel and minister to his Father's elect.

Ordaining Spiritual Leaders

Nowhere in the New Testament do we find an authorization for non-elders to select or ordain individuals for service as spiritual leaders of congregations, as is the custom in some congregations today. However, the following scriptures leave no doubt that the apostles, evangelists, and elders of the early church had the authority to ordain elders at their discretion as they established congregations in the places where they evangelized.

Those Who Are Sent

"How, then, shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? As it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!" (Rom.10:14-15 KJV).

Paul's Instruction to Titus

"To Titus, my own son after the common faith: grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set things in order, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you" (Tit.1:4-5 Para.).
The Greek word for elders here is presbyters, which means elderly, older, a senior. Specifically, it denotes an Israelite of the Sanhedrin. Figuratively, it denotes a member of the celestial council.

Titus was a convert of the apostle Paul and was regarded as a son after the faith. In this scripture, Paul gives an authorization for an elder to ordain other elders. Titus 1:6-9 shows some of the prerequisites necessary to be considered a candidate for the eldership of the early church.

"And when they [Paul and Barnabas] had ordained them elders in every church, and had prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord, on whom they believed" (Acts 14:23 KJV).

Other Spiritual Leaders

Besides apostles and elders, there were several other positions of spiritual leadership and responsibility, such as prophets and teachers, noted as being within the early church for which no formal public ceremony of ordination is mentioned. It is important to be aware of these positions of responsibility, because some of these will exist among the Father's elect during the end of the age.

Under the first covenant with national Israel, the Creator God chose men who were to serve as priests from the tribe of Levi and, specifically, from the descendants of Aaron (the first high priest of Israel). After Israel's rebellion in the wilderness, God chose some men who were not descended from the tribe of Levi or Aaron to fulfill physical and spiritual responsibilities within the houses of Judah and Israel.

After the establishment of the early church, certain individuals were selected and authorized by Christ to fulfill specific responsibilities. The scriptures show that Paul was personally selected by Jesus for his task (Acts 9:1-18) and Barnabas was selected as a prophet and teacher (Acts 13:1) before he was separated to the ministry as an evangelist.

Below are some individuals who were selected and separated for specific responsibilities outside the eldership ordination process:

"Stephen was full of faith and power, and did great wonders and miracles among the people" (Acts 6:8 KJV Para.).

"Now in the church in Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen" (Acts 13:1 Para.).

"And Judas and Silas, being prophets also themselves, exhorted the brethren with many words, and confirmed them"(Acts 15:32 KJV).

"And God has set some in the Church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of languages" (1.Cor.12:28 KJV Para). See also Joel 2:28-29; Acts 2:17; 21:9-10.
The English word *prophets* in the New Testament scriptures is translated from the Greek word *prophetes*, which means *a foreteller*; by analogy, *an inspired speaker*.

It is important to understand that, during the early church, some men were chosen to perform specific responsibilities, although they were not ordained as elders. Additionally, the evangelist Philip's four virgin daughters were selected as prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9).

Nowhere in the scriptures is it found that prophets or teachers were ordained to their function by either the priesthood or the eldership. What is found are prophets and teachers who were personally selected to a position of service, authority, or responsibility by the Creator God (Jesus Christ) after which they were acknowledged by God's people as they fulfilled these positions.

The scriptures show many individuals (men and women) under the covenant with national Israel and the Father's agreement with his earthly children given responsibilities outside of physical bloodlines or a formal ordination ritual. Therefore, there is a precedent for this same situation to exist during the end of the age.

**Authority Within the Church**

When we review all of the scriptures which pertain to the ordination of men as apostles or elders within congregations of the Father's elect, it becomes apparent that all apostles, prophets, teachers, evangelists, pastors, miracle workers and other spiritual leaders, besides congregational elders, were selected by God the Father and Jesus Christ for their offices (1.Cor.12:28; Eph.4:11-12).

As the chief apostle and high priest over the church (Heb.3:1), Jesus Christ is the only one whom the Father has authorized to call and place individuals into positions of spiritual leadership for the care and protection of his people and the ministry of proclaiming his good news message.

It is also clear from the Bible and secular history that the apostles of the early church who comprised its governing body were authorized by Jesus Christ to ordain elders to local congregations. Secular history shows that this authorization continued until the organized effort of the early church disappeared sometime after the death of the apostle John.

**SPIRITUAL LEADERS TODAY**

The same qualifications and prerequisites are necessary to be an elder today as during the time of the early church. Additionally, the same cautionary measures should be taken before selecting and ordaining an elder to this function and responsibility. However, a prospective elder's true spiritual character is not always apparent, which can lead to a man being ordained who is not truly qualified to serve as an elder.
Although elders are ordained within the congregations of the elect, an honest review will show that many of these men are not qualified to serve the elect as an elder for one or more of the following reasons:

- They may be unconverted.
- They are not authorized by Jesus Christ to lead the elect.
- They are Satan's servants disguised as servants of God.
- Their motive for leading is self-serving.
- They are living in rebellion against God including blatant sin.
- They are afraid to teach truth for fear of losing their positions.
- They are otherwise not fulfilling their responsibility according to scripture.

If all elders who serve God's people were qualified, there would be unity of belief and a spirit of cooperation and teamwork among the spiritual leadership of the various congregations of the elect, instead of the current doctrinal and organizational chaos.

No Central Authority

It is evident that, during this age, no central authority exists on earth governing all of the Sovereign Father's family of king-priests scattered throughout the nations or teaching the Father's truth clearly and concisely. Because no central authority exist to govern the elect in this age and no elders can be found who exhibit the same credentials as elders of early the church, how can you be assured that those who lead the congregation you attend are serving your best interest?

Fortunately, the scriptures are full of instructions concerning how to recognize the difference between an elder who is authorized by Jesus Christ to lead, teach, and serve his heavenly Father's elect children and one who is not. Therefore, it is your responsibility to spend the time and effort to study the Bible in order to have the knowledge with which to determine who is or is not an elder authorized by Jesus Christ.

One Body, One Spirit, and One Faith

"There is one body, and one spirit, even as you are called in one hope of your calling; One Lord, one faith, one baptism, one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all" (Eph.4:4-6).

Although it is true that our heavenly Father has only one true body of believers on earth. It is also true that, within this body of believers, there are many congregational associations, many of which have differing beliefs and teachings concerning the function, conduct, and authority of an elder. Some of these beliefs have the potential to adversely impact one's walk with their heavenly Father and their Savior.
Some congregational associations of the elect are led by elders who are righteous, some are led by elders who are not righteous, and some have a mixture of both righteous and unrighteous elders. Therefore, it is extremely important for anyone who is truly seeking to obey God the Father and Jesus Christ and grow toward spiritual maturity to take charge of their own spiritual welfare and diligently seek to associate with people who are truly in harmony with godly laws, precepts, and principles.

Beware of Counterfeit Christians

Since the early years of the church, there have been many counterfeit prophets, apostles, and ministers of Christ. However, the word of God proves these individuals to be liars and deceivers as wolves among the sheep who devour the unsuspecting, the ill informed, and the naive:

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as the ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15 KJV). See also Deut.13:1-5; Jer.23:21-22; Rev.2:9; 3:9.

Jesus warned his disciples that many would come pretending to be righteous, but who in reality would be seeking to destroy them. In addition to this warning, Jesus said that these unrighteous individuals could be recognized by what they produced:

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but are in reality wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits; but the corrupt tree produces evil fruits. A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not produce good fruits is to be cut down and thrown into the fire. Then surely from their fruits you shall know them" (Matt.7:15-19 Para.).

One of the best ways to determine who is or is not an elder authorized by Christ to lead, teach, and serve the elect, is to analyze the message they bring and the life they lead. In order to do this, you must know the difference between a correct message and a false message and the difference between righteous and unrighteous individuals.

If it is found that an elder's message and lifestyle conforms to the Father's truth, then he should be given the honor and respect due as a servant of the elect. If his message or lifestyle is found to be inconsistent with or in opposition to truth, he must be dealt with in accordance to the biblical instructions concerning such individuals.
Holy Spirit

The holy spirit is the custodian and repository of all truth and resides within the elect to reveal and teach truth. Therefore, through the guidance of the holy spirit, it is possible to receive insight into what is necessary in order to recognize the difference between righteous and unrighteous attitudes and behaviors:

"It is the spirit of truth; which the world cannot receive, because it sees it not, neither knows it: but you know it; and it dwells with you, and shall be in you" (Jn.14:17 KJV). See also Jn.15:26.

"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when it the spirit of truth, is come, it will guide you into all truth: for it shall not speak of itself; but whatever it shall hear, that shall it speak" (Jn.16:12-13 Para.). See also 1.Cor.2:11.

Knowledge about the physical realm of existence is discerned by the human spirit, and knowledge and insight into things of the spirit and the spirit realm are revealed through the holy spirit:

"For who among men knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man within him? So also no one has known the things of God except the spirit of God. But we have not received the spirit of this world, but the spirit from God; that we may freely know the things given to us by God" (1.Cor.2:10-11 Para.).

The Father's elect are not human as others are human. The elect have the Father's holy spirit residing in them, which provides access to spiritual knowledge, understanding, and insight.

"Which things we also speak, not in words taught in human wisdom, but in words taught by the holy spirit, comparing spiritual things with spiritual things" (1.Cor.2:13 Para.).

Comparing attitudes and behaviors to known spiritual standards will reveal who is or is not authorized by Christ as an elder and who is or is not fulfilling the function and responsibility of a true elder.

Discernment

"But a natural man does not receive the things of the spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him, and he is not able to know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But truly the spiritual one discerns all things, but he is discerned by no one. For who knew the mind of the Lord? Who will teach him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1.Cor.2:14-16 Para.). See also 1.Cor.2:11.
A human with only the spirit of man cannot receive or understand the things of God, simply because they are of the original human creation. However, the Father's earthly children are not of the original creation; they are a new and different creature with the ability to discover and understand the true meaning of physical and spiritual things as they pertain to the Father's plan for the salvation of humanity. It is the power of the holy spirit that resides within the elect that enables them to discern who is or is not a servant of God during the end of the age.

In addition to asking the Father for spiritual insight and understanding, you must also put forth the effort to study and meditate on what is written in the biblical record. Doing this will give you the ability to determine what is or is not truth, and who is or is not fulfilling the function and responsibility of an elder.

**SUMMARY**

In this age of the church, it is extremely important for you to know who is or who is not authorized by Christ as an elder.

Many in leadership positions within the congregations of the elect today cite various scriptures and obscure historical references in an attempt to validate their authority to lead the Father's earthly children. However, the facts show that none of these men can prove beyond doubt that they are authorized by Jesus Christ to be in a leadership position within the church. Therefore, the only way to know if a man is authorized by Christ or is fulfilling the function and responsibility as an elder is to compare his attitude, behavior, lifestyle, and performance with the biblical standards set forth for an elder.

The primary function and responsibility of an elder within the congregations of the elect is to lead by example, teach truth, and protect from harm in a spiritual sense. Elders are to serve their brothers and sisters in the faith, not be served by them. Jesus said the following about this service:

"You know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion [lord it over] over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be great among you, let him be your servant: Even as the son of man came not to be ministered to, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many" (Matt.20:25-28 KJV).

A true minister of Christ and elder within a congregation of the elect is a servant among servants. See Jn.21:15-17; 2.Cor.1:21-24; Heb.13:17.

**Honor and Respect**

"And we beseech you, brethren, to know them which labor among you, and are over you in the Lord, and reprimand you; and esteem them very highly in love for their work's sake. And be at peace among yourselves" (1.Thes.5:12-13 KJV).
Sometimes what is not said is just as important as what is said. Here, Paul exhorts the elect to develop a close relationship with their spiritual leaders. If this were not a problem, why would Paul mention it? It is essential for members of a congregation to truly know those who lead them in order for there to be trust, harmony of purpose, and spiritual growth. The mention of being at peace is also an indication that there was a problem which was causing disunity and turmoil within the congregation. It seems likely that Paul's instruction for the congregation to get to know their spiritual leaders and highly esteem them is the solution to this congregation's particular problem.

The writer to the Hebrews tells the elect to obey their spiritual leaders who are serving them, because they are protecting them from spiritual harm. Notice also that these elders will be judged on how well they perform their responsibility:

"Obey them who have the rule over you, and submit [yield] yourselves to them: for they are men standing guard over your spirit, and God will judge them on how well they do this, therefore, obey that they may rule you with joy, and not with grief: for that is unprofitable for you" (Heb.13:17 Para.).

The context of verse 17 reveals that the elect should heed the counsel, reprimands, and instruction of the elders, because they were placed in their positions of leadership to benefit those whom the Father has called to salvation.

Although honor, respect, and obedience is due elders who serve the elect, honor and respect is not to be carried to the point of worshiping an individual. Additionally, obedience should be within the confines of godly laws, precepts, and principles.

**Those Who Rule Well**

"Let the elders that rule well be counted worthy of double honor, especially they who labor in the word and doctrine" (1.Tim.5:17 KJV).

Elders who rule well benefit all who are ruled. Ruling well is extremely difficult, because people have differing needs, desires, and personalities. When one considers all of the various aspects of leadership, an elder who rules well is truly deserving of respect and honor.

Honoring those who labor in truth and doctrine is not only important to the one laboring but also those who benefit from this labor. The prophet Hosea was inspired to record, "My people are destroyed for lack of knowledge" (Hos.4:6). Without knowledge and understanding, one cannot make informed decisions. Therefore, those who labor diligently to research and teach God's word to the elect should be given the respect and honor due to them for their important service.
A Warning

The apostle Peter issued the following extremely serious warning to both elders and non-elders about Satan who is actively trying to destroy the Father’s elect children:

"Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walks about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist steadfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world" (1.Pet.5:8-9 KJV Para.).

Satan and other evil spirits are continually seeking to destroy all people, including the elect; moreover, they specifically target men whom Christ authorizes as elders to lead and serve the elect, because a leaderless people are more easily conquered and destroyed.

Much of the doctrinal and organizational chaos within congregations of the elect today is the result of the elect being lead by a servant of Satan, unqualified elders, and elders who are influenced by evil spirits in their attempt to destroy the elect through a corrupted leadership.

Because your eternal life may depend on making the correct decisions about who to follow as a spiritual leader, it is important to spend the time and effort to prayerfully study the issue of spiritual leadership in order to have the knowledge with which to make informed decisions concerning those to trust and follow in spiritual matters.

By B. L. Cocherell

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CHAPTER EIGHT

LEADERSHIP JUST BEFORE CHRIST RETURNS

DURING THE FINAL YEARS

The prophecies about the end of the age show that, during the final years before Christ returns, there will be many false prophets and teachers in the world and among the congregations of the elect. Therefore, it is extremely important for the elect to be able to recognize the difference between righteous and unrighteous individuals.

It is an undeniable fact that many religions inspired and guided by evil spirits exist in this age and it will be no different in the time just before Christ returns. One the most powerful religions that will exist during the end times is identified in the Books of Daniel and Revelation as a political and religious system, which is led by an extremely powerful evil and deceitful individual who opposes the Sovereign God, Christ, and the elect.

Is it possible to deceive a person with the indwelling of the holy spirit into following unrighteous leaders and being deceived into believing false and destructive teachings? Absolutely, it is possible. Look at the doctrinal chaos that has existed in the past and that still exists within the Father's earthly family of king-priests. The fact that it is possible to deceive the elect places each individual who truly desires to follow God the Father's truth in a difficult situation concerning whom to trust as a spiritual leader and teacher, as well as whom to associate with in a spiritual context.

The prophecies about the end of the age also reveal that, during the final years before Christ returns, a strong spiritual leadership will be sent to serve the elect and proclaim the Father's good news message. Those who will be sent are shown to be prophets, teachers, witnesses, and elders. Therefore, we can assume that these are positions of responsibility to exist within one or more of the congregations of the elect.

The Last Witness And Warning

A few years before Christ returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, the prophecies show the dynamic power of the holy spirit again being manifested through the Father's elect.

During this time, many of the elect will be filled with tremendous supernatural power with which to defy and manipulate the laws of the physical universe. No spiritual or physical power will be able to stop them from performing their God-given task to teach God's truth, proclaim the entire gospel message, announce the return of Christ, and warn a sinful and rebellious world that it is about to meet its Creator.
Notice what the prophet Habakkuk says to the tribes of Israel who are scattered among the nations in the end of this age: "Behold you [the various tribes of Israel] among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, you will not believe, though it were told you" (Hab.1:5 KJV Para.). See also verses 1-4.

Who will be leading the elect during the last few years as they perform their end of the age work and how will these men be recognized? For the elect living during that time, the answer to this question is extremely important because of the many warnings in the biblical record to not be deceived by individuals who claim to be followers of Christ, but are not.

The Creator God selected the men to lead the tribes of Israel during and after their formation as a nation and Jesus selected the spiritual leaders, prophets, and others to guide the early church. If this same precedent is followed, Christ will select men called to salvation by his heavenly Father (Jn.6:44;65) to guide the elect during the end times to proclaim the good news of salvation and to warn and witness about his return to establish his Father's kingdom on earth.

Very few people truly believe what is written in the Bible, and those who teach biblical truth are mostly hated for what they teach. Into this world filled with false religion and hatred of the true God, the Sovereign God will send a powerful witness and warning. Among those who will be sent to proclaim the true gospel message and Christ's return will be the third Elijah, the two Witnesses, and other righteous individuals, such as elders, prophets, and teachers who are chosen to lead and teach the elect. Therefore, being able to recognize these individuals and their message is extremely important.

THE THIRD ELIJAH

Along with a strong warning for all Israelites to repent and truly worship and serve the Sovereign God, the prophet Malachi was inspired to record many major events that will occur before Christ returns. One of these events is the sending of a messenger to prepare the way for this return:

"See, I will send my messenger, who will prepare the way before me. Then suddenly the Lord you are seeking will come to his temple; the messenger of the covenant, whom you desire, will come", says the Lord Almighty. But who can endure the day of his coming? Who can stand when he appears? For he will be like a refiner's fire or a launderer's soap. He will sit as a refiner and purifier of silver; he will purify the Levites and refine them like gold and silver. Then the Lord will have men who will bring offerings in righteousness" (Mal.3:1-3 NIV).
Malachi's prophecy shows that, when the messenger who has been sent to prepare the way for Christ's return has completed his task, Jesus Christ will quickly come to his temple. Therefore, the sending of the third Elijah is a part of the events which surround the existence of a temple in Jerusalem for the worship of the God of Israel. Moreover, whether the third Elijah is the leader of a congregation of the elect or performs his task without the assistance of others, it is clear that Elijah will be in the service of God the Father and Jesus Christ and will know and understand the Father's true message to humanity.

"Behold I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction" (Mal.4:5-6 Para.).

The scriptures do not reveal exactly how far in advance of the Day of the Lord that this Elijah will be sent or how long his ministry will last. It is only revealed that Elijah will be sent by the Creator God (Jesus Christ), and that he is charged with preaching a message of repentance and restoration of the Faith Once Delivered. Moreover, he will be sent to preach this message in order to convince people to worship and serve the Sovereign God, so that he will not completely destroy the earth.

The third Elijah has an extremely important mission concerning Christ's return and the survival of humanity. Clearly, the third Elijah will be sent to prepare the way for Christ's return to restore the Father's truth and way of truth which has been perverted since it was first revealed to his chosen people.

Why Elijah Must Come

"And his [Jesus'] disciples asked him, Why do the Scribes say that Elijah must come first? Jesus replied. Elijah truly will come first and restore all things. But I tell you, Elijah has already come, and they did not recognize him, but have done to him what ever they wanted to do. Likewise shall the Son of Man suffer at their hands. Then the disciples understood that he was speaking to them about John the Baptist" (Matt.17:10-13 Para.). See also Matt.11:10-14; Mk.9:11-13.

Jesus said that John the Baptist was the prophetic Elijah who was to come before the Messiah. When he said, "Elijah truly will come first and restore all things", Jesus reveals that there is still another Elijah to come after John the Baptist. John the Baptist did not come to restore anything; however, when the third Elijah comes, he will be involved in the restoration of things pertaining to the Sovereign God's laws, precepts, principles, and worship system.
What are some of the things Elijah will restore? It is important to answer this question, because an understanding of the primary things to be restored is a major clue to the identity of Elijah and those who are authorized to lead and teach the Father's elect.

The Prophecies

The only clear prophecies concerning Elijah's ministry during the time just before Christ returns as Lord of lords and King of kings are found in the prophecies recorded by Malachi and Matthew. Within these prophecies are the keys to understanding the ministry of Elijah and the things which the spiritual leaders of the Father's elect should teach during the end of the age. Elijah will prepare the way for Christ's return and he will turn the hearts of the fathers to the sons and the sons to the fathers:

"Behold I am sending you Elijah the prophet before the coming of the great and dreadful day of the Lord. And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the sons, and the heart of the sons to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with utter destruction" (Mal.4:5-6 Para.). See also Mal.3:1.

The prophetic reference to fathers and sons by Malachi is a reference to the fathers who taught the truth of God: the Patriarchs, Moses, the Aaronic priesthood, and later, the Apostles. The sons are a reference to those who are taught the righteous ways of God through these teachers of righteousness.

The Things to be Restored

"And Jesus replied, Elijah truly will come first and restore all things" (Matt.17:11 Para.).

The reference to Elijah's restoration of all things by Jesus is a reference to the teachings of God's worship system, which includes the sacrificial system and Jesus' teachings concerning the salvation of humanity and the relationship between God the Father and his elect children.

The message of the third Elijah is centered around the restoration of the Father's truth. Therefore, we should expect the third Elijah to restore an understanding of how the worship system the Creator God instituted at Mount Sinai and the worship system Jesus Christ instituted at Jerusalem work together in the salvation of those who will believe and worship God the Father in truth. Moreover, we should expect other true spiritual leaders of the Father's elect to teach these same things.
When these two aspects of the Father’s worship system are understood in connection with his plan for the salvation of humanity and believed by those whom he calls to salvation, it can truly be said that the hearts of the fathers are turned to the sons and the sons to the fathers. Indeed, belief in and adherence to the Sovereign Father's true worship system results in a return to a harmonious relationship between the fathers who taught righteousness (i.e., the Patriarchs, Moses, Aaron, the Apostles, and others) and the sons (i.e., those who truly believe and practice what they are taught about righteousness).

To Whom is the Third Elijah Sent?

The first Elijah and the second Elijah (John the Baptist) were both sent to the covenant people (Israelites). All the prophecies concerning national Israel just before the return of Christ show a powerful warning and witness message being given to the House of Judah (the Jews) and the House of Israel (the ten scattered tribes of Israel). From these prophecies, we can see that the third Elijah will also proclaim God's message to these people. If indeed the third Elijah is sent to modern day Israel, his message will be heard loudly and clearly by the Jews in the nation of Israel, as well as by the other tribes of Israel who are scattered around the world.

The Third Elijah's Message

The ministries of the first Elijah and the second Elijah had one major thing in common; they both preached a powerful warning message of repentance to God's covenant people and a call for them to return to the true and uncorrupted worship of the true God so that they would not have to face his wrath.

The primary emphasis of the ministries of the first and second Elijah concerned the restoration of a correct relationship between the covenant people and their God. It is also evident by what is said of the third Elijah's ministry that this will also be one of his messages.

A Warning of Punishment

Before God administers punishment, he always sends a prophet to warn his covenant people that he is about to punish them for their wickedness and rebellion against him. Therefore, because the third Elijah will be a prophet, it is logical to assume that, along with his call for Israel to repent and worship the Sovereign God, he will warn them about the consequences of not doing this. See Amos 3:1-7.

If the third Elijah comes with the same type of authority and discretionary power as the first Elijah, he will most likely use this power like the first Elijah did in the performance of his responsibilities.
How Will Elijah be Recognized?

Because the second Elijah was not recognized until Christ revealed that he was John the Baptist, how will the third Elijah be recognized for who and what he is? There are three major traits which will help one recognize the prophet Elijah:

1. His message will reveal the connection between the Creator God's covenant with national Israel, the covenant the Sovereign Father established through Jesus Christ with his elect children, and the new covenant which will be established with national Israel after Christ returns.

2. His call for the civil and religious leaders and the people of the houses of Judah and Israel to repent and worship the Sovereign God.

3. His knowledge, understanding, and proclamation of the true gospel message as set forth by Jesus Christ, the apostles, and the unified spirit-filled body of Christ.

The things which distinguish the prophet Elijah and his work from false prophets and their work are also many of the things that separate a true spiritual leader of the Father's elect from those who are not sent or sanctioned by Jesus Christ to lead and teach the elect.

THE TWO WITNESSES

Within the prophecies of Haggai and Zechariah, there are a number of spiritual leaders spoken of who will live during the end of the age and are associated with the Levitical Priesthood and the Father's elect.

The two men who are called the Two Witnesses in Revelation, chapter 11 are two of the Father's elect who will play a pivotal role in fulfilling prophecies concerning the calling of humanity to repentance and the proclaiming of the Father's good news message to humanity.

The scriptures show that these two men will have tremendous authority, responsibility, and supernatural power in order for them to accomplish their mission just before the first resurrection and Christ's return to conquer the earth and establish the Kingdom of God on earth (Matt.24:14).

Because the actions of these two men and those who are associated with their ministry will have a dramatic impact on the whole world during their 3 ½ year ministry, it is important to understand who they are and why they are sent. The following pages of this chapter will present the major prophecies concerning these two men in chronological order, their initial call to repentance, and their subsequent service to Jesus Christ. This also reveals much about other men whom Christ will use as spiritual leaders during the last few years before his return.
THE TEMPLE IN JERUSALEM

Because the building of a temple and the establishment of the sacrificial system of worship is central to the mission of the Two Witnesses and the fulfillment of many of the prophecies leading up to the first resurrection and Christ's return, it is important to have an overview of how the building of a temple will develop in Jerusalem.

The prophet Daniel speaks of the daily sacrifices being stopped and the desecration of the holy place within the end of the age temple at Jerusalem. Matthew records that Jesus referred to this same event as being one of the signs leading to his coming. In order for the daily sacrifices to be stopped and the holy place to be desecrated, there are a minimum of three things which must exist in Jerusalem in accordance with the Sinai covenant: An altar for sacrifices, priests of the Aaronic bloodline to perform the sacrifices, and a temple with a holy place.

The temple is the focal point of the Two Witnesses' ministry; therefore, the Aaronic priesthood must be reestablished with a high priest officiating over it, and a temple must be constructed at Jerusalem before Christ returns. A question that needs to be answered is who will begin the process of building a temple and the establishment of the priesthood and sacrificial system at Jerusalem?

THE PROPHET, ZERUBBABEL, AND JOSHUA

Haggai 1:1-8 shows that a prophet of God will be sent to the prophetic Zerubbabel and Joshua with a message regarding the building of a temple in Jerusalem a short time before Christ returns:

"In the second year of Darius the king, in the sixth month, in the first day of the month, came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet to Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and to Joshua, the son of Josedech, the high priest, saying: So speaks the Lord of hosts, saying, These people say, The time has not yet come for the Lord's house to be built" (vs.1-2 Para.).

"Then came the word of the Lord by Haggai the prophet, saying, Is it time for you, O you, to dwell in your finished houses, and this house lie waste? Now, therefore, this says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways [examine what you are doing.] You have sown much, and bring in little; you eat, but you have not enough; you drink, but you are not filled with drink; you clothe you, but there is none warm; and he that earns wages earns wages to put it into a bag with holes. This says the Lord of hosts; Consider your ways [think about what you are doing]. Go up to the mountain, and bring wood, and build the house [the temple]; and I will take pleasure in it, and I will be glorified, says the Lord" (vs.3-8 Para.).
The prophetic Haggai (a prophet who is chosen for this specific purpose) brings a stern reprimand from God to the prophetic Zerubbabel (a high Israeli civil official) and the prophetic Joshua (the high priest) regarding the lack of enthusiasm that they and the people of the House of Judah (the Jews) have for building God's temple in which to perform his worship system.

After this stern reprimand from God through his prophet, the civil official, the high priest, and many of the Jewish people will be moved to build a temple for the worship of God (Hag.1:12).

**The Prophet Sent Again**

"Then the Lord's messenger Haggai, spoke the Lord's message to the people, saying, I am with you, says the Lord. And the Lord stirred up the spirit of Zerubbabel the son of Shealtiel, governor of Judah, and the spirit of Joshua the son of Josedeche, the high priest, and the spirit of all the remnant of the people; and they came and did work in the house of the Lord of hosts, their God. In the four and twentieth day of the sixth month, in the second year of Darius the king" (Hag.1:13-15 Para.).

God will again send a messenger to encourage these two men and the people to start building the temple. This shows that Christ will ordain and send prophets and messengers to instruct and reprimand those whom he has called to serve him during the end of the age.

**THE PROPHETIC ZERUBBABEL**

The prophetic Zerubbabel (a civil official in the Jewish nation of Israel) will receive a number of different messages from Jesus Christ through prophets and other men in positions of leadership within the body of the elect concerning his call to repentance and salvation. These men are intended to inform him of the authority, supernatural power, and responsibilities he will be given during the end of this age.

**His Call and Authority**

"And again the word of the Lord came to Haggai in the twenty fourth day of the ninth month, saying. Speak to Zerubbabel, the governor of Judah, saying, I will shake the heavens and the earth; And I will overthrow the throne of kingdoms, and I will destroy the strength of the kingdoms of the nations; and I will overthrow their chariots, and their riders and horses, and their riders shall come down, each one by the sword of his brother. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, I will take you, O Zerubbabel, my servant, son of Shealtiel, says the Lord, and will make you as a signet: for I have chosen you, says the Lord of hosts" (Hag.2:20-23 Para.).
Clearly, this prophecy is for the end of this age when Christ will shake the heavens and the earth before coming to conquer the nations of this world. Notice that Zerubbabel is called to be a signet (Heb: Sum hotam, i.e., an authorized seal) for God. This man is called to become one of God the Father's elect and is given the authority to use the awesome power of the Father's holy spirit in a discretionary manner in order to carry out his responsibilities during the end of the age.

His Power Over Nations

In order to understand this prophecy, one should keep in mind that all of this prophecy is in the context of a prophet being sent to command a governmental official in the Jewish nation of Israel to initiate the process of building a temple. Whatever Zerubbabel is going to do for God, he is going to do it through the supernatural power which he is given.

"This is God's message to Zerubbabel. Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of Hosts. Who are you, O great mountain [government/nation]? Before Zerubbabel you will become level ground. And he will bring forth the capstone [a reference to Christ] to shouts of Grace! Grace to it. And the word of the Lord came to me [Zechariah] saying, The hands of Zerubbabel have laid the foundation of this temple; his hands will also complete it. Then you will know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you" (Zech.4:6-9 Para.).

This shows the awesome power over this world's nations that the prophetic Zerubbabel will have. Moreover, it shows that he will participate in proclaiming the gospel message which will result in the first resurrection and Christ's triumphant return.

The prophecies of Zechariah leave little doubt that a high ranking civil official of the Jewish nation of Israel is the prophetic Zerubbabel who will initiate the building of a temple at Jerusalem. Additionally, these prophecies may indicate that he is one of the two witnesses. But, if he is not one of the two witnesses, he is surely an extremely important and powerful man within the Father's earthly family of elect individuals who will proclaim his message to the world during the end of this age.

THE PROPHETIC JOSHUA

The third chapter of Zechariah contains the prophecy concerning the conversion of the high priest (who officiates in a temple at Jerusalem) to true Christianity during the end of the age.

"Then he [God's messenger] showed me Joshua the high priest standing before the angel of the Lord, and Satan standing at his right side to accuse him. The Lord said to Satan, The Lord rebuke you, Satan! The Lord, who has chosen Jerusalem, rebuke you! Is not this [Joshua] a burning stick snatched from the fire? And Joshua was clothed with filthy garments and he stood before the angel" (Zech.3:1-3 Para.). See also Amos 4:11.
This prophetic Joshua is called a burning stick pulled out of the fire, which symbolically pictures him as one who is in the process of being destroyed because of his sinfulness. However, God the Father has rescued him from eternal death for his own righteous purpose. Notice that Joshua's garments are very dirty. This is another reference to the spiritual condition of this man before his repentance and adoption as one of the Father's earthly children.

Joshua's Sins Forgiven

Verses four and five show that a prophet (the prophetic Zechariah) is directly involved in the events surrounding the high priest's conversion process:

"The angel [messenger] said to those who were standing before him, Take off his filthy clothes. Then he said to Joshua, See, I have taken away your sin [lawlessness], and I will cloth you with a change of ceremonial robes. Then I [Zechariah] said, Put a clean turban on his head. So they put a clean turban on his head and clothed him, while the angel of the Lord stood by" (Zec.3:4-5 Para.).

The angel (messenger) says that he has taken away this man's sins. And it is the prophet (the prophetic Zechariah) who says to place a clean turban upon Joshua's head. The placing of the turban shows that this prophet is involved in the conversion process of the high priest.

Concerning the messenger noted in verses four and five, it must be understood that angels do not have the authority to forgive sins. There are only two beings shown in the scriptures who can remove sins: God the Father and Jesus Christ through the authority given to him by his Father. Since the Father will not come to earth until his plan for the salvation of humanity has been completed, this messenger must either be Jesus Christ himself or someone else who has been authorized to give this message of forgiveness to the high priest.

"The angel of the Lord gave this charge to Joshua: This is what the Lord Almighty says: If you will walk in my ways and keep my charge, then you will judge my house and have charge of my courts, and I will give you a place to walk among these standing here" (Zech.3:6-7 Para.).

The following are several important things to note in verses 6 and 7.

1. The high priest had not been a righteous man, because he lived his life as a Jew and followed the practices of Judaism, which is a practice Jesus said was in opposition to the righteous ways of his heavenly Father. See Matt.3:7; 12:33-34; 15:7-9.

2. In order to continue in his office as high priest, this man must not only observe and practice the way of righteousness revealed to him but also perform the mission given to him.
3. This man is being offered the awesome opportunity to represent God the Father and Jesus Christ, govern the Father's household (the elect) under Christ, be responsible for spiritual things of God on earth, and fellowship with the elect.

4. Not only does this man have an awesome opportunity, he also has an equally awesome responsibility. However, if he does not follow through with what he has been instructed to do, he will lose his eternal salvation. Whoever functions as the high priest in the end of the age will have the indwelling of the holy spirit and is one of the two witnesses. Anyone who fails to practice the Father's truth and ways after receiving the holy spirit will die the second death in the Lake of Fire. See Matt.13:36-42; Rom.6:23; Rev.21:8.

"Hear now, O Joshua the high priest, you and your friends who are sitting before you, for they are men wondered at. For, behold, I will bring forth my servant the Branch. For behold, the stone which I have set before Joshua: on the one stone are seven eyes; behold I will engrave an engraving, says the Lord of hosts, and I will remove iniquity of that land in one day. In that day, says the Lord of hosts, you shall call each man his neighbor to sit under the vine and under the fig-tree" (Zech.3:8-10 Para.).

The English phrase wondered at in verse 8 is translated from the Hebrew word mowpheth which is derived from the word yaphah; a primitive root, which means properly, to be bright, i.e. (by implication) beautiful. Mowpheth has the sense of conspicuousness; a miracle; by implication, a token or omen.

These men "wondered at" are men who attract attention to themselves because of their status and perhaps supernatural powers which they have been given through the holy spirit. These men are likely Joshua's fellow priests who form the foundation of the congregation of God at Jerusalem during the end of the age.

THE THREE MEN FROM BABYLON

Either just before or shortly after the temple has been constructed at Jerusalem, there will be three individuals who come to the high priest bearing gold and silver to be used in the making of crowns for his use as he officiates as high priest.

This is an extremely technical prophecy which is difficult to understand. Perhaps, the only ones who will fully understand it before Christ returns will be those who are directly involved in its fulfillment. However, there is some important information which can be gleaned from this prophecy regarding the high priest, his end of the age ministry, and the elect who will be sent to him.
"And the Lord spoke to me saying, Take of them, from the exiles Heldai, and from Tobijah, and from Jedaiah who have come from Babylon; and in that day you go and enter into the house of Josiah, the son of Zephaniah" (Zech.6:9-10 Para.).

At this point in time, there will be several men who truly understand the Father's good news message. Moreover, these men will have been given the authority and responsibility to teach this message to other people.

These men will come to Jerusalem from among the ten scattered tribes of Israel (the exiles) who are collectively called spiritual Babylon. Then, these three will meet with another of Father's elect who lives in Jerusalem (Zech.6:10) and all four men will go to Joshua the high priest to present him with the Faith Once Delivered. These men are sent to give the high priest the Father's message because the high priest is going to be instrumental in proclaiming this same message (Zech.6:11-13). This meeting seems to constitute the beginning of the conversion process of the Two Witnesses. Moreover, it will probably occur either shortly before or after the completion of the temple construction in Jerusalem and the institution of the sacrificial system (early Winter about 4 to 6 years before Christ returns).

"And take the silver and gold and make crowns, and set it on the head of Joshua, the son of Jehozadak, the high priest: And tell him this is what the Lord of hosts says, Behold! The man whose name is the Branch! And he shall spring up out of his place, and he shall build the temple of the Lord... And these crowns will be to Helem, Tobijah, Jedaiah, and Hen the son of Zephaniah a memorial in the temple of God" (Zech.6:11-12, 14 Para.).

Verse 14 seems to support the premise that the crowns are symbolic of the Faith Once Delivered and will become a memorial to these four men in the temple (the end of the age church). If this is true, perhaps there will be men who will come to Jerusalem from the scattered tribes of Israel to be a part of proclaiming the Father's message to the priesthood and the Jews.

"And they that are far off shall come and build in the temple of the Lord, and you shall know that the Lord of hosts has sent me to you" (Zech.6:15 Para.).

Those who will come to build will understand the prophecies about the temple and the Two Witnesses, But who is it that "shall know that, the Lord of hosts has sent me to you"? And who is sent? The ones who will understand this information are the prophetic Joshua who is the high priest and his fellow priests who will serve with him in the temple at Jerusalem. Moreover, the one who brings this information is a prophet sent by Christ.
Another interesting thing to note in verse 15 is that the word you is in the plural form, which suggests a group of people are being addressed by the prophet sent by Christ.

The conversion of the high priest and many of his fellow priests shows that, just before his return, Jesus will call many among the elect to fulfill the responsibilities of prophets and spiritual leaders.

THE TWENTY FOUR ELDERS

Revelation 4:4-11 and 5:1-14 picture an event in heaven that could be similar to Paul's experience. One thing that makes this event especially interesting from the perspective of the church during the end of the age is the fact that the 24 individuals who are before God's throne are called elders, have crowns, and are dressed in white. The English word elder is translated from the Greek word presbuteros, which is never used to describe a spirit-being. It is always used in the Bible to describe men who are in positions of leadership. These men in white (symbolic of righteousness) have crowns (symbolic of authority) and are redeemed (purchased and saved) from among men by the blood of the Lamb (Jesus Christ).

Perhaps, Revelation, chapters 4 and 5 picture 24 spiritual leaders of the Father's elect at his and Christ's throne. Although the 24 elders are spoken of before the first four seals are shown to be opened, this event concerning the 24 elders fits well into the chronological order of the end of the age, because it seems to occur in sequence leading to the sealing of the Father's elect for their protection from the events following the opening of the seventh seal.

One must remember that the things shown in the Book of Revelation are in a vision and without a consistent chronological flow of events as they progress toward Christ's return. Therefore, it is likely that the first four seals and their riders have been open and active since the demise of the early church. And the events which caused their opening will intensify as Christ opens other seals.

It is also possible that the 24 elders have something to do with the structure of the church in the end of the age. If this is so, the vision of the 24 being before God the Father and Jesus Christ seems to have something to do with their being given spiritual insight and knowledge. This was done with the apostle Paul to help him carry out his responsibilities to preach the gospel and minister to the Father's elect. If Revelation, chapters 4 and 5 give information about events surrounding future church leadership, these 24 elders may also be very instrumental in doing the greater work Jesus said will be done just before his return (Jn.14:12).
SUMMARY

True servants of the Father and Christ, as well as true prophets, teachers, and spiritual leaders of the elect can be recognized by their message and lifestyle by those who are well versed in the scriptures and are in a harmonious relationship with their heavenly Father and their Savior. This is true because the holy spirit is the custodian and repository of all spiritual truth and resides within the Father's elect to reveal and teach truth, knowledge, and understanding.

Fortunately, the biblical record contains detailed information about how to recognize the difference between a righteous and an unrighteous person. However, it is the responsibility of each person to make an effort to study God's word in order to have the information with which to determine who is or is not a true servant of God.

The Book of Judges is important to the subject at hand, because it shows a period of time when the spiritual leaders of Israel had lost their ability to correctly influence the covenant people:

"In those days there was no king [Heb. 'melek'] in Israel, and every man did that which was right in his own eyes" (Jdg.17:6 Para.). See also Jdg.21:25.

Although the Hebrew word melek is mostly translated as meaning a king in Judges 21:25 and 17:6, it also has many other meanings that have to do with authority. One of these meanings concerns spiritual leadership, and because one of the central themes of the Book of Judges has to do with the lack of spiritual leadership in Israel, it seems that these two verses show the result of the lack of a strong spiritual leader to guide the Israelites in the path of righteousness.

Among the Father's elect today (2013), no physical melek (leader) guides the Father's entire household on earth. The vast majority of the Father's elect are doing whatever is right in their own eyes.

Although it is obvious that, since the death of the apostle John, the spiritual body of Christ (the Father's elect children) has been essentially devoid of strong spiritual leadership, it is also obvious that, from the time of Adam to now, God has always been favorable toward anyone who will honestly seek to obey him and learn his ways. Moreover, he always provides his people with the knowledge and understanding necessary for them to obtain salvation and remain in harmony with him.

"The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom: a good understanding have all that do his commands: his praise endures forever" (Psa.111:10 Para.).

"And the angel said to Daniel, Go your way Daniel: for the words are shut up and sealed until the time of the end. Many shall be purified, and made white and tried: but the wicked shall do wickedly: and none of the wicked shall understand; but the wise shall understand" (Dan.12:9-10 Para.).
The fulfillment of the promises concerning knowledge, understanding, and wisdom given to the Father's elect requires an honest effort to seek and do his will in one's life.

**The Last Few Years**

From what is said about the Father's elect who will live during the last few years before Christ returns, it is found that some have righteous spiritual leaders who serve them well and some have spiritual leaders who are leading them astray. The scriptures warn those who have been called to salvation to avoid placing trust in other people to make spiritual decisions on their behalf (Jer.9:4; Mic.7:5-7). Regarding trusting others with your salvation, the apostle Paul says to the Philippians, "Work out your own salvation in fear and trembling" (Phil.2:12 KJV).

It is important to note that nowhere in the prophecies about the seven major groupings of the elect that will exist during the end of the age do we find the slightest hint that these seven major groups are united in a common effort. What we do see in the prophecies about these seven prophetic churches (Rev.2:1-29;3:1-21), the 10 virgins (Matt.25:1-13), and the prophetic woman and man-child (Rev.12:1-17) is congregations of the elect and individuals separated by major doctrinal differences that are being dealt with collectively and individually by Jesus Christ.

The instruction from the biblical record is to be continually alert to the danger posed by people who teach things that are in opposition to truth. Moreover, the elect are instructed not to encourage or tolerate people, beliefs, or teachings which are inconsistent with the pure truth of God.

Throughout the centuries, the Father's elect have lived under many different circumstances, and each age has presented its own unique challenges to righteous individuals. Today is no different. This is a unique age with its own unique set of circumstances which must be dealt with in a righteous manner in order to obtain salvation and the rewards of a righteous life.

Clearly, it is Jesus Christ who will call, ordain, and send individuals to raise up congregations, lead the Father's elect, and proclaim his Father's good news message before his return. While we await his arrival, it is our responsibility to remain watchful and faithful to our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ our Savior, so that we may be found worthy to escape the things which will shortly come upon the earth and receive eternal and immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God.

Clearly, the way to determine who is or is not a spiritual leader of the elect is to carefully analyze the message these individuals bring and the lifestyle they lead. See Matt.7:15-19.

B. L. Cocherell
WOMEN'S ROLE IN THE CHURCH

Since the disappearance of the early church, there has arisen much confusion concerning the role of women within marriage and the Sovereign Father's earthly family of believers. Some believe women should only participate in marriage and the church in a passive manner and be completely subordinate to the authority of men, while others believe women should have equal status with men in marriage and as spiritual leaders in the church, fulfilling the functions of preaching and teaching the gospel message.

Although volumes could be written about the relationship between men and women within marriage and within the Sovereign Father's earthly family of believers, this chapter will only present an overview of these topics and will examine the following seven subject areas in order to define the role of women within the congregations of the elect:

1. The intended relationship between men and women at creation and the adjusted relationship after Adam and Eve's disobedience.
2. The relationship between men and women under the New Covenant.
3. The culture that affected the early church.
4. The marriage relationship between men and women as the elect.
5. The instructions for order within the formal teaching and worship assemblies of the elect.
6. Authorized leadership according to the biblical record.
7. Women's functions and responsibilities within the early church and its ministry.

THE ORIGINAL RELATIONSHIP

It was God's original intent for men and women to live together in a harmonious, sharing relationship:

"And the Lord God said, It is not good that the man should be alone; I will make him a helper that is fit for him" (Gen.2:18 KJV Para.).

The English word helper in verse 18 is translated from the Hebrew word ezer, which can mean partner. The usage of this Hebrew word shows that Adam and Eve were to have a harmonious relationship with different roles in order to contribute to the success of their marriage.
The apostle Paul's statements about the creation of humanity also show that the first man and woman were supposed to live in a harmonious partnership:

"For the man is not of the woman; but the woman of the man. Neither was the man created for the woman; but the woman for the man. . . . Nevertheless neither is the man without the woman, neither the woman without the man, in the Lord" (1.Cor.11:8-9, 11 KJV).

THE ADJUSTED RELATIONSHIP

After Eve took the forbidden fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil and gave some to Adam, the relationship between them was altered forever. One of Eve's punishments for her disobedience was the loss of equal status in the relationship between a man and a woman:

"God said to the woman, "You shall bear children in intense pain and suffering; yet even so, you shall welcome your husband's affections, and he shall be your master" (Gen.3:16 TLB Para.)

Eve's punishment represents a significant change from the original intent of the man-women relationship. Instead of being an equal partner in the marriage relationship, the woman was to be subservient to her husband, be his property, and be second in authority to man.

Today the only women exempt from the penalty imposed on women because of Eve's disobedience are righteous women who are king-priests in the Sovereign Father's earthly family. These righteous women are not property, but along with righteous men are the Father's earthly children, and joint heirs of his kingdom with Christ. See Rom.8:14-17; 1.Pet.3:1-7.

In his instructions to Timothy concerning how godly women should conduct themselves and perform their role in the marriage and the church, Paul wrote:

"For Adam was first formed, then Eve. And Adam was not deceived, but the woman being deceived was in the transgression. Notwithstanding she shall be saved in childbearing [a looking toward the Saviors birth], if they continue in faith and charity and holiness with sobriety" (1.Tim.2:13-15 KJV).

Because of their disobedience in the garden of Eden, the relationship between men and women has been altered. The same rules of conduct and responsibility which existed in the garden no longer apply to the man-woman relationship. Instead of an equal partnership within the marriage, the man must now bear the full responsibility before God as the authority figure in the marriage and the woman is responsible before God to follow her husband's leadership.
THE NEW COVENANT RELATIONSHIP

It is extremely important to place the New Covenant relationship between men and women in the proper context in order to understand women's role in the church:

"For as the body is one, and has many members, and all the members of that one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For by one Spirit are we all baptized into one body [both men and women], whether we be Jews or Gentiles, whether we be bond or free; and have been all made to drink into one Spirit. For the body is not one member, but many" (1.Cor.12:12-14 KJV).

"There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you be Christ's, then are you Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise" (Gal.3:28-29 KJV).

What Paul wrote about spiritual equity within the Body of Christ is the inspired word of God; there is absolute spiritual equity among males and females. All the elect are coheirs with Christ; however, there is not equity in function and responsibility within the Body of Christ. In his first letter to the Corinthians, the apostle Paul explains the different functions and responsibilities within the Father's earthly family of believers during the gospel age of salvation:

"And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are diversities of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all" (1.Cor.12:5-6 KJV).

"Now you are the body of Christ [both men and women], and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of tongue" (1.Cor.12:27-28 KJV).

Paul explains that various members within the Body of Christ have different functions and responsibilities. Although all are members, not all have identical functions or responsibilities. The same is true of gifts of the spirit; not all have exactly the same gifts or the same number of gifts. Functions, responsibilities, and supernatural abilities and powers are given according to the Father's will and for the needs and work of the church. The scriptures show no equity in function, responsibility, and supernatural abilities or powers within the church. Christ administers what is given to each of the elect (men and women) by his heavenly Father as he sees fit in order to accomplish his responsibility before his Father for the care and work of the church.
THE CULTURE OF THE DAY

In order to have a clear picture of the problem concerning relationships between men and women in the early church, it is necessary to know something about the culture that existed during the beginnings of the early church and the general attitude which most men had toward women at that time.

In the Greek culture, respectable wives led a very secluded life. They took no part in public affairs and rarely, if ever, appeared at meals or social occasions with men. Moreover, they were severely limited in their opportunities for recreation and other social contacts. They were mostly kept at home where conversation between the husband and wife was neither valued nor expected. Wives were expected to bear children and to serve the needs of men. Moreover, the Greek culture greatly influenced the Jewish culture and the relationships between men and women.

Another prevalent view at that time was the Stoic philosophy, which taught that women were a distraction and a temptation to men and should be avoided by men so they could be free to pursue things which make men superior.

Both the Greek and the Stoic philosophies underlie the traditional interpretations of the writings of Paul regarding women's roles in marriage and the church.

The question of educating women was never wholly settled in ancient Judaism, but rarely were women educated. A rabbinical teaching about women says, "It would be better to see the torah burnt than to hear its words upon the lips of a woman." And another says, "Teaching a girl is the same as starting her on a road to depravity" (Yerushalmi, Sofah 3:4.).

Within the practice and tradition of Judaism at that time, many Jewish men included the following statement in their prayers: "I thank God that he has not made me a Gentile, a woman, or a boar "(Rabbi Judah bar Ilai.). Josephus also records how the Jewish law declared that the wife "is inferior to her husband in all things" (Josephus Ant. XVII, I, 2).

With the understanding that the membership of the early church was heavily influenced by the Greek and Jewish culture and the Stoic philosophy of their day, and that a situation existed wherein women who were mostly uneducated and had little exposure culturally or socially to the society around them were being called to be part of the body of elect, it is easier to understand the cause of some of the problems between men and women in the early church. Furthermore, it can be understood why Paul wrote the things he did about women's participation in formal worship assemblies and their need to be taught how to conduct themselves in their new found freedom within the Body of Christ.
THE MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIP

In Ephesians, chapter 5, the apostle Paul addresses issues concerning authority within a marriage relationship, the attitude of male superiority, and the mutual love and respect husbands and wives should have for each other:

"Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands, as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything" (Eph.5:22-24 KJV).

Paul writes that the husband is in authority over his wife just as Christ is in authority over the church; therefore, it is the duty of the wife to be subject to this authority.

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it: That he might sanctify and cleanse it with the washing of water by the word, That he might present it to himself a glorious church, not having spot, or wrinkle, or any such thing: but that it should be holy and without blemish. So ought men to love their wives as their own bodies. He that loves his wife loves himself. For no man ever yet hated his own flesh; but nourishes and cherishes it, even as the Lord the church: For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones" (Eph.5:25-30 KJV).

Paul's instructions to the husband in verses 25-30 were in opposition to the culture of the day. Paul says that wives are not to be treated as property or second class citizens, but they are to be treated as befits a child of God. Paul says that, because the husband is in authority over his wife, he is responsible to love his wife in the same unselfish sacrificial way that Christ loves the church. The husband must diligently work to preserve and nourish his wife as Christ does the church. Moreover, a husband must love and care for his wife as he does his own body.

"For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined to his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church. Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband" (Eph.5: 31-33 KJV).

There is no doubt that the husband is first in authority in a godly family unit and his authority must be tempered with love and concern for his wife as they work together to serve the Father, Christ, and each other toward their goal of salvation.
An Erroneous Assumption

Some men feel that, because they are called the head of the wife and the wife is subject to them, they have absolute authority over their wives in everything. This erroneous assumption is the cause of much distress between men and women within the church. In order to clearly understand the authority of men in the church, the original meanings of the Greek words translated into English as *head*, *subjection to*, and *love*, which are in Ephesians, chapter 5 need to be understood.

The Head

*For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church...* (Eph.5:23 KJV).

The Greek word used to designate a leader who has absolute authority over another person in a hierarchical structure is *arche*. Paul did not use this word that describes absolute authority over another person when he spoke of the husband’s authority in the marriage; he chose a word that has an entirely different meaning.

The English word *head* in verse 23 is translated from the Greek word *kephale*, which denotes the head of a body. This word is also used to mean *foremost* in terms of position, much as a capstone might be used in construction; however, *kephale* is never used to mean *leader*, *boss*, *chief*, or *ruler*. The *kephale* was the man who went before the troops in battle; he was the point man. Thus, the intent here is that the husband is the head of the wife as the leader, the point man, the one out in front, not as the one who has absolute authority over another person’s life.

Paul said that the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church. As head of the church, Christ has deep love for the church and leads by example. Therefore, a husband is to also lead by example.

Be Subject To

"Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Eph.5:24 KJV).

In verse 24, Paul did not use the Greek word *Hupotasso*, which means *to subordinate*; he used the Greek word *Hupotassomai*, which connotes a voluntary and willing support role and implies *allegiance to, to tend to the needs of, to be supportive, to be responsive to*.

Paul also expressed the need for the same type of *hupotassomai* attitude within the entire church when he said, "submitting yourselves one to another in the fear of the Lord" (Eph.5:21). The willingness to be supportive and responsive to the needs of another person in the church is necessary for there to be peace and harmony within the church.
Love

"Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it" (v.25). The English word translated as love is the Greek word agapeo, which is almost identical in intent and meaning to hupotassomai. Both involve a suppression of self-interest in order to serve the needs of someone else. Agapao is being responsive to the needs of others with a willing sacrificial type of love whereby one is willing to lay down their life for others.

The Husband-Wife Relationship

The husband-wife relationship is very important to one's spiritual growth and one's relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ. The principles of leadership and responsibility before God are the same regardless of whether one or both mates are members of the Father's earthly family. The apostle Peter wrote the following about husbands and wives who are both of the elect:

"In like manner, you husbands, dwell with them [the wife] according to knowledge, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered" (1.Pet.3:7 KJV).

Both men and women are called equally to be in the first resurrection. However, in regard to their specific roles, there are some differences. This is important for the husband to understand, because if he does not have the proper attitude, behavior, and respect for his wife, his prayers to the Father will be hindered, because he will not be in harmony with God's laws concerning his relationship with his wife.

WOMEN AS SPIRITUAL LEADERS

In many biblically based churches and organizations there are women holding positions of leadership. Some are ministers, pastors, preachers, teachers, and evangelists. These women and the membership of these various churches and organizations firmly believe that the Bible authorizes women to occupy these positions of leadership.

Does the biblical record authorize women to occupy leadership positions within the church or is this belief in error? The answer to this question is extremely important because Jesus said the following about those who falsely assume they are doing his and his heavenly Father's will, but clearly are not:

"Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but the one that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name have cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that practice lawlessness" (Matt.7:21-23 KJV Para.).
The reason these individuals who think they have secured salvation by their works are not worthy of eternal life is that all of the good works they have performed have not been done within the framework of God's law. Therefore, they are guilty of practicing lawlessness, and the penalty for practicing lawlessness is death. See Rom.6:23.

It is important to understand the basic laws, concepts, and principles governing those who are sanctioned to be leaders of God's chosen people in order to see whether or not the Sovereign Father allows women to occupy positions of leadership within his earthly family and to represent him in an official capacity to the world.

Promises to Ancient Israel

The Creator God gave these promises, instructions, and warnings to national Israel through Moses prior to their entering the promised land:

"And the Lord shall make you the head, and not the tail; and you shall be above only, and you shall not be beneath; if that you pay attention to the commandments of the Lord your God, which I command you this day, to observe and to do them: And you shall not go aside from any of the words which I command you this day, to the right hand, or to the left, to go after other gods to serve them" (Deut. 28:13-14 KJV Para.).

The Creator was very clear in his instruction to the nation of Israel. He demanded absolute loyalty and obedience, else the promised benefits would not be given. Instead, curses would come upon them as noted in verse 15:

"But it shall come to pass, if you will not pay attention to the voice of the Lord your God, to observe to do all his commandments and his statutes which I command you this day; that all these curses shall come upon you, and overtake you" (Deut.28:15 KJV Para.).

After the death of Moses, the Creator God gave Joshua similar promises, instructions, and warnings:

"Be strong and of a good courage: for to this people you shall divide for an inheritance the land, which I swore to their fathers to give them. Only be you strong and very courageous, that you may observe to do according to all the law, which Moses my servant commanded you: turn not from it to the right hand or to the left, that you may prosper wherever you go. This book of the law shall not depart out of your mouth; but you shall meditate therein day and night, that you may observe to do according to all that is written therein: for then you shall make your way prosperous, and then you shall have good success" (Josh.1:6-8 KJV) See also Deut.5:29.

The Creator demanded absolute loyalty and obedience in order to reap the benefits promised for obedience.
If the Creator God was interested in loyalty and obedience from the Israelites, how much more is the Sovereign God interested in loyalty and obedience from those he sent his Son to save? From what is said in the New Testament, he is very interested in our loyalty and obedience.

Jesus said the following about God's law that he gave for the benefit of mankind:

"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smaller letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (Matt.5:18 NIV).

Are heaven and earth still here? Yes, they are! Has everything in God's word been fulfilled? No, it has not! Is the Law of God still in effect? Yes, Jesus says it is! Jesus said the following about anyone who would dare violate this law:

"Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least [i.e., less than nothing] in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commandments will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt.5:19 Para).

What does God's law have to do with whether or not women can occupy positions of leadership within the Father's earthly family and represent him in a formal way to the world? The answer is that the Sovereign God is a God of law and he has set in place a specific organizational structure through which he expects to be served and worshiped. What follows will clearly show this organizational structure as it pertains to those who are authorized to serve him as leaders of his chosen people.

**Ancient Israel**

When Ancient Israel was formed into a nation, the Creator God chose men from the tribe of Levi to serve him as priests and spiritual leaders of his people. God said to Moses:

"And I will sanctify the tabernacle of the congregation, and the altar: I will sanctify also both Aaron and his sons, to minister to me in the priest's office" (Ex.29:44 KJV).

The biblical and historical record of ancient Israel clearly shows that the Creator God chose only males of the tribe of Levi to serve him as the spiritual leaders of Israel.
Prophetesses of Ancient Israel

When the subject of leadership is discussed, those who advocate women being placed in positions of leadership will almost always cite the scriptures that speak of women prophetesses. It is true that both men and women were given this function and responsibility in ancient Israel. However, the biblical record shows a major difference between men and women in their performance of this function and responsibility.

It is important to understand that a prophet or a prophetess is always directly chosen by God for a specific task, such as delivering a message of repentance to God's people, foretelling or delivering punishment for disobedience to God, blessing or cursing people or nations on behalf of God, foretelling future events, and in some cases, teaching spiritual lessons. It is also important to understand that there is a clear difference between the function and responsibility of a prophet and a prophetess shown in the biblical record.

Although male prophets in ancient Israel were at times leaders of God's people, prophetesses were never shown as being authorized to hold positions of leadership by the Creator God. To this statement many will reply, What about Deborah the prophetess who judged Israel?

The simple fact is that a linguistic analysis of the biblical record shows that Deborah did not judge Israel in the sense of governing Israel as its civil or spiritual leader; rather, she conveyed God's condemnation of the Israelites for evil practices, foretold future events concerning them, and reminded them of God's instructions to wage war with Sisera the captain of Jabin's army:

"And the children of Israel again did evil in the sight of the Lord, when Ehud was dead. And the Lord sold them into the hand of Jabin king of Canaan, that reigned in Hazor; the captain of whose host was Sisera, which dwelt in Harosheth of the Gentiles. And the children of Israel cried to the Lord: for he had nine hundred chariots of iron; and twenty years he mightily oppressed the children of Israel" (Jdg.4:1-3 KJV).

The context in which Deborah the prophetess is mentioned is that of national Israel's punishment for their evil behavior before God.

"And Deborah, a prophetess, the wife of Lapidoth, she judged Israel at that time. And she dwelt under the palm tree of Deborah between Ramah and Bethel in Mount Ephraim: and the children of Israel came up to her for judgment" (Jdg.4:4-5 KJV).

Here, the English word judged is a translation of the Hebrew word shaphat, which means to judge, i.e., pronounce sentence (for or against); by implication, to vindicate or punish; by extension, to govern; passively, to litigate (literally or figuratively).
In this verse, the English word *judgment* is a translation of the Hebrew word *mishpat*; which means properly, a *verdict* (favorable or unfavorable) pronounced judicially, especially a sentence or formal decree, divine law, individual or collective, including the act, the place, the suit, the crime, and the penalty; abstractly, justice, including a participant's right or privilege (statutory or customary), or even a style.

Most translators of the Bible follow the lead of the King James translations and interpret the words judged and judgment to infer that Deborah governed Israel; however, the Hebrew words *shaphat* and *mishpat* do not convey the meaning of governance in the context of the biblical record concerning Deborah. These words convey a condemnation of Israel for their evil behavior, which is consistent with the historical record of Judges, chapters 4 and 5.

A careful review of Judges, chapters 4 and 5 do not show an authorization from God for Deborah to govern or lead Israel in any capacity, but shows the lack of male leadership in Israel at that time and their unwillingness to assume their function and responsibility as leaders of Israel.

The context of these chapters also documents a lack of male leadership in Israel at that time. Clearly, no male prophet was in Israel at that time; therefore, people sought counsel from Deborah who had shown herself to be a righteous person and prophetess through whom God would give insight and instructions.

The song of Deborah is a further indication that these Israelite males were not diligently performing their responsibilities as leaders of Israel and were behaving as little children who needed a mother to care for them:

*"The inhabitants of the villages ceased, they ceased in Israel, until that I Deborah arose, that I arose a mother in Israel"* (Jdg.5:7).

The biblical record does not show Deborah in a leadership position in Israel, it shows her as a person given the responsibility as a prophetess to convey the Creator's condemnation of the Israelites for evil practices, to foretell future events concerning them, and to reminded them of God's instructions to wage war with Sisera the captain of Jabin's army.

The biblical record shows that the prophetess Deborah advised the Israelites concerning God's will for them, gave them warnings from God and conveyed knowledge of prophetic events. Huldah the prophetess warned King Josiah and the people of Judah of punishment because of their rebellion against God, and Anna the prophetess spoke of the advent of Christ. But, none of these women were in positions of leadership.
DURING CHRIST'S EARTHY MINISTRY

During Christ's ministry, he chose twelve men to be his close companions and prepared them to occupy leadership positions in what would be his Father's holy nation and earthly family. To these men he revealed the identity of his Heavenly Father and his good news message of salvation. Christ also chose 70 other men (Lk.10:1-12) and sent them with great spirit-power (Lk.10:17-20) to proclaim the Kingdom of God.

After Christ's death and resurrection, he gave the 11 remaining disciples, who were later to be known as apostles, their commission:

"You go and teach all races. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; but he that does not believe shall be damned" (Mk.16:15-16 Para.).

THE EARLY CHURCH

Christ delegated the administration of the early church to the apostles who in turn delegated some of their authority to other men, just as Moses had done when he appointed judges over Israel:

"Truly I say to you, Whatsoever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt.18:18-20 KJV Para.).

There are many scriptures that show the apostles using their authority to make decisions concerning the written law. The apostles also had the authority to set forth oral law which was just as binding on the Father's earthly children as the written law. These apostles were sitting in Christ's seat of authority over the Father's holy nation during their lifetime, just as those who sat in Moses' seat of authority over national Israel. See Acts 15:1-41; 1.Cor.5:4-6; 1.Tim.1:17-20.

The organizational structure of the early church as set forth by Jesus Christ was clearly a theocratic system governed by men through which the Sovereign Father's earthly children were to worship and serve him in temples of flesh.

The following scriptures outline the organizational structure of the early church:

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak other languages? do all interpret?" (1.Cor.12:27-30 KJV Para.).
The English word *prophets* in 1 Cor. 12:29 is translated from the Greek word *prophetes*, which means *one who foretells, an inspired speaker*, or by extension, *a poet*. Although this is the Greek meaning of the word *prophetes*, the intent of its usage in the New Testament goes far beyond its Greek meaning. Prophecy in the early church seemed to encompass the full range of the meaning of the word *prophetes*. Future events were foretold, God's message to mankind was proclaimed, instructions from God were given, and mysteries of God were revealed. See Acts 11:27-28; 15:32-35; 21:10-11; 1 Cor. 14:29-33; Eph. 3:3-6.

**ORDER WITHIN FORMAL ASSEMBLIES**

In his first letter to the Corinthian church, Paul addresses serious problems concerning disorderly conduct during formal assemblies of the church and gives the following instructions to eliminate this situation:

"Every man praying or prophesying, having his head covered, dishonors his head. But every woman that prays or prophesies with her head uncovered dishonors her head: even as one shaved" (1 Cor. 11:4-5 KJV Para.).

The English word *prophecies* in verse 5 is translated from the Greek word *propheteuo*, which is a derivative of the Greek word *prophetes* and means to *foretell events, divine, speak under inspiration*, and exercise the *prophetic office*:

Yes, women receive revelations and can reveal these revelations to others as many scriptures indicate. The daughters of the evangelist Philip were among those of the early church whom God chose to receive and convey information to others of the elect. See Acts 2:14-18; 21:7-9.

The question is not whether women can prophesy, because righteous women can and do prophesy. The question is, whether or not it is proper for a woman to prophesy in the congregational assemblies of the elect?

Notice what Paul wrote about how men should conduct themselves when speaking to the congregation in a formal assembly:

"Let the prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge. If any thing is revealed to another that sits by, let the first hold his peace. For you may all prophesy one by one, that all may learn, and all may be comforted. And the spirit of the prophets is subject to the prophets. For God is not of confusion, but of peace, as in all churches of the saints" (1 Cor. 14:29-33 KJV Para.).

The English word *prophets* in verse 29 and throughout this text is translated from the Greek word *prophetess*, which means a *foreteller (a prophet); by analogy, an inspired speaker*:

Clearly, not every one should be speaking at the same time if they have been given a revelation or have special understanding. Paul stresses order among the elect in a formal setting when they come together to worship the Father, to learn, and to share in learning.
Paul's Decree

Continuing to instruct the elect at Corinth in the proper conduct that should be exhibited during their formal assemblies, the apostle Paul issues the following decree:

"Let your women keep silence in the churches: for it is not permitted to them to speak; but they are commanded to be under obedience, as also says the law" (1.Cor.14:34 KJV).

The English word silence in verse 33 is translated from the Greek verb sigao, which means a voluntary silence and connotes a request for silence in the midst of clamor and disorder. Additionally, Paul says that it is a shame for a woman to speak in church. The English word speak is translated from the Greek word laleo, which means to talk.

Paul approved of women being together with men during formal assemblies of the church, because in Christ they are one. However, these were new and radical ideas to both Gentiles and Jews. This newfound freedom led to a disregard for orderliness and courtesy during their formal teaching and worship assemblies, especially on the part of women who were not accustomed to listening to public speakers or participating in public worship.

Paul backs up his decree by invoking the authority of God's law. But, of what law is Paul referring? It is the law concerning the authority between a man and a woman which was first given to mankind after Eve disobeyed God's instructions by taking and eating the fruit of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil:

"To the woman he said, I will greatly multiply your sorrow and your conception; in sorrow you shall bring forth children; and your desire shall be to your husband, and he shall rule over you" (Gen.3:16 Para.).

This law does not speak to the intellect or worth of an individual, but to responsibility and function within the theocratic system through which God governs his people. Men are to be in authority over women, so says God's law.

Paul was taught as a Pharisee and clearly understood God's law, thus his decree that women should keep silent in the assemblies of the elect. Although women are permitted to sing praises to God in the congregation, they are not allowed to preach, teach, or prophecy in congregational assemblies:

"And if they will learn any thing, let them ask their husbands at home: for it is a shame for women to speak in the church. What? came the word of God out from you? or came it to you only?" (1.Cor.14:35-36 KJV).
The English word *shame* in verse 35 is translated from the Greek word *aischron*, which means *a shameful thing* (i.e., indecorum). In verse 36, Paul states the fact that God's truth and way of truth was delivered to mankind through men, not women.

Paul's instruction to the elect at Corinth in chapter 14 concerns the issue of authority and order in the congregation. Men who receive a revelation should speak in an orderly fashion and women should not speak-out in the congregation, but must keep silent.

This silence of women within the congregational worship assemblies when a minister or other men are speaking, not only shows respect for God and his law but also for the authority of the spiritual leader and the other men in the congregation. Moreover, it is evident that, if women are to be silent in a formal congregational assembly, they are also prohibited from prophesying or teaching within a formal assembly.

Although righteous women are sometimes chosen and authorized to convey messages and prophecies from God, women cannot, according to the authority structure of the church, formally proclaim these messages or prophecies within formal congregational assemblies. Therefore, in order for a prophetess to fulfill her responsibility, she must do so within the authorized structure of the church; otherwise, she acts without divine authority, and usurps the divinely appointed order of authority.

In summarizing his decree concerning the issue of authority and order within the formal assemblies of the elect, Paul again invokes his authority and God's law in order to firmly establish his decree:

"If anybody thinks themselves a prophet or spiritually gifted, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command. If anyone ignores this, let them be ignored" (1.Cor.14:37-38 Para.).

**TEACHERS**

"And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, . . .." (1.Cor.12:28 KJV).

Here, the English word *teacher* is translated from the Greek word *didaskalos*, which means an *instructor*.

As with the function of a prophet, both men and women are noted as fulfilling the teaching function. However, the teaching performed by the men of the early church is different from that of women. The teaching performed by men was instruction in God's truth to the elect and the proclaiming of the good news message to the world. Whereas, the older women were to teach the younger women by a righteous example, as well as by oral instruction:
"But you speak the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things: That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:1-5. KJV Para.).

The function of teaching within the church carries with it the responsibility to make sure that what is taught is truth, because what one teaches, if not correct or not thoroughly explained, has the potential to adversely impact a person's life and spiritual growth.

The New Testament shows teachers can be men or women depending on what is taught and the circumstances surrounding the teaching process. For example, older women with more experience in the Father's truth and the practical application of a righteous lifestyle are to teach younger women as noted in Paul's letter to Titus (Tit.2:3-4). However, Paul's instruction to Titus does not authorize women a teaching office or position of authority within the church, nor does this instruction relieve men of their leadership responsibility within the church.

The biblical record clearly shows that Christ delegated the responsibility of spiritual leadership and the teaching of his heavenly Father's truth and way of truth in an official and formal capacity to men. And after Christ returns, men will still be responsible for spiritual leadership and the maintenance of the worship system at the temple in Jerusalem.

**Paul's Instruction To Timothy**

In his letter to the evangelist Timothy, the apostle Paul gives the following clear instruction concerning women and the church:

"A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to have [usurp] authority over a man; she must be silent" (1.Tim. 2:11-12 NIV).

The clear inference of the first part of verse 12 is that women of the church were not the teachers of God's truth, but were to learn these things from men who are authorized to teach.

Verse 12 warns women to not usurp the authority of a man. The English phrase *usurp authority* is translated from the Greek word *authenteo*, which literally means *to act of oneself* and figuratively means *to dominate*. At one time, *authenteo* described one who kills with his own hands. Later, it was used to indicate how one may act on his or her own authority and dominate others in an autocratic manner.

The English word *silent* in verse 12 is translated from the Greek word *hesuchia*, which means *stillness* i.e., *quietness, or silence.*
Many men seize upon Paul's instruction to Timothy in verse 12 to prove that women in the Body of Christ are prohibited from functioning in any kind of teaching responsibility. However, this is not what this scripture says; otherwise, Paul would have been contradicting himself, because he told Titus to have the older women teach the younger women (Tit.2:1-5).

Some who attempt to justify the practice of women in positions of leadership within the church feel that Paul was just stating an opinion to Timothy; however, this was not Paul's opinion in this matter, it was Paul's instruction to Timothy regarding a problem, which needed to be rectified.

**Women Serve With Men**

Paul mentions many women in his letters. His comments about some of these women shows that they had a significant role in serving the church membership and supporting its work and the work of the ministry. These accounts also show that both men and women worked together to accomplish the goals of the church and its ministry. The following examples show how women helped in supporting the work being done by the apostles and other elders.

**Euodias and Syntyche**

"I beseech Euodias, and beseech Syntyche, that they be of the same mind in the Lord. And I entreat you also, true yoke-fellow, help those which labored with me in the gospel, with Clement also, and with other my fellow-laborers, whose names are in the book of life" (Phil.4:2-3 Para).

Here, Paul shows that there were two women (Euodias and Syntyche) who worked with him as he proclaimed the gospel. Paul does not say exactly what these two did, but whatever they did, he considered them an integral part of his evangelistic team.

**Aquila and Priscilla**

Aquila and Priscilla were a married couple who helped Paul in his ministry and allowed the church to meet in their home. It is interesting that the husband Aquila is mentioned first in Paul's letter to the Corinthians and Priscilla is mentioned first in his letter to the Romans, which may indicate special recognition for her service to the church:

"The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house" (1.Cor.16:19 KJV).

"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my helpers in Christ Jesus" (Rom.16:3 KJV).
Phebe

"I commend to you Phebe our sister, which is a servant of the church which is at Cenchrea: That you receive her in the Lord, as becomes saints, and that you assist her in whatsoever business she has need of you: for she has been a helper of many, and of myself also" (Rom.16:1-2 KJV Para.).

Paul introduces Phebe as a prominent member of the church who should be received with the courtesy and respect due to a child of God. Paul had apparently sent her to Rome to accomplish some task for him and he instructed the elect there to assist her in the things that she had to do there. This account shows that some women in the church were trusted with responsibilities that would affect the church and its ministry.

After Christ Returns

The prophet Ezekiel was inspired to record that, after Christ returns and establishes God's government on earth, men of the tribe of Levi will be the spiritual leaders of God's worship system on earth:

"But the priests the Levites, the sons of Zadok, that kept the charge of my sanctuary when the children of Israel went astray from me, they shall come near to me to minister to me, and they shall stand before me to offer to me the fat and the blood, says the Lord God: They shall enter into my sanctuary, and they shall come near to my table, to minister to me, and they shall keep my charge" (Ezk.44:15-16 KJV). See also Jer.33:17-22.

It is easily shown from the biblical record that, before the advent of Christ, the Creator chose only males of the tribe of Levi to serve him in the capacity of priests and teachers of his law.

After Christ returns to establish the Kingdom of God on earth, the descendants of Levi will be brought into the land of their inheritance. National Israel's theocratic governmental and organizational structure will be restored as it was at the beginning of the nation under the leadership of the Levitical priesthood:

"Therefore says the Lord, the Lord of hosts, the Mighty One of Israel, Ah, I will ease me of my adversaries, and avenge me of my enemies: And I will turn my hand upon you, and purely purge away your dross, and take away all your tin: And I will restore your judges as at the first, and your councillors as at the beginning: afterward you shall be called, The city of righteousness, the faithful city. Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts with righteousness. And the destruction of the transgressors and of the sinners shall be together, and they that forsake the Lord shall be consumed" (Isa.1:24-28 KJV).
SUMMARY

One only has to review the qualifications which were necessary to become and remain an elder in the early church to clearly understand that the leadership of the Father's elect children is the function and responsibility of men. All the apostles, evangelists, and elders of the early church were men; there are no examples of a woman being authorized to hold a position of leadership in ancient Israel or the early church.

The biblical record shows the following about positions of leadership in ancient Israel, the early church, and the millennial rule of Christ:

- The Creator God only chose and authorized men to fill positions of leadership in ancient Israel.
- Christ only chose and authorized men to proclaim the Kingdom of God and his Father's good news message while he was alive.
- The apostles only chose and authorized men to fill positions of leadership in the early church.
- After Christ returns to conquer the earth and establish his Father's government and worship system in Jerusalem, only men will occupy positions of leadership.

No authorization can be found in the entire Bible authorizing women to hold positions of leadership within ancient Israel, the congregations of the Father's elect, or to perform the function of proclaiming the gospel message to the world.

The Early Church

The apostles and elders of the early church had tremendous latitude as to how they accomplished their responsibilities. Today, it is no different; there is great latitude in how formal worship assemblies are conducted and what responsibilities are given to men and women.

Although the primary leadership role within the church lies with men (Eph.4:11-14; 1.Tim.3:1-5, 8-12; Tit.1:5-9), the importance and the value of women's participation in the work of the church should never be underestimated or undervalued, because women are also called to be coworkers in the faith and coheirs of the Kingdom of God with Jesus Christ.

It is evident from the scriptures that men and women share an equal calling to salvation (Gal.3:28-29; 1.Pet.3:7). It is also clear there are many different functions and gifts given to both men and women within the body of Christ and that both have a responsibility to work together in harmony to fulfill God's purpose in the marital relationship, the family, and the work of the church (1.Cor.12:12-14, 27-31).
Questions

Are women who assume positions of spiritual leadership usurping the authority, function, and responsibility of men in violation of God's will and his law with regard to who is authorized to occupy positions of leadership during this gospel age of salvation?

Could the specter of women promoting themselves as leaders be a part of the prophesied curse that the Creator God pronounced through Isaiah?:

"Woe to the wicked! it shall be ill with him: for the reward of his hands shall be given him. As for my people, children are their oppressors, and women rule over them. O my people, they which lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths" (Isa.3: 11-12 KJV).

By B. L. Cocherell
CHAPTER TEN
DEACON AND DEACONESS

Many churches that claim to follow the organizational structure of the early church ordain individuals into an office of authority as a deacon or a deaconess. These individuals then become an integral part of a congregation's governing body in service to the ministry or in performing administrative functions within the congregation.

But, is the practice of ordaining a person to an office of authority as a deacon or a deaconess what the apostles intended? This is an important question to answer if a congregation's leadership is serious about following the letter and the spirit of what the apostles established in order to serve the needs of a congregation. In order to come to a biblical understanding about the practice of ordaining deacons and deaconesses, one must believe what the Bible actually has to say on the subject.

Common Belief

It is commonly believed that Philippians 1:1 and 1.Timothy 3:8-13 document the establishment of the office of deacon and deaconess. However, a careful review of these scriptures reveal the error of this belief. Moreover, when the scriptures concerning the duties of a deacon are reviewed in the context of Acts 6:1-7, the true intent for this service to the elect can be clearly understood.

Diakonos, Diakoneo, And Diakonia

The translators of the King James version of the Bible left the three Greek words diakonos, diakoneo, and diakonia untranslated in specific texts and inserted the words deacon, deacons, and the office of a deacon, which gives the impression that the word deacon refers to a position of authority within the church. Therefore, before reviewing the texts in which the words deacon and deacons are used, it necessary to know the meaning of the following three Greek words:

- Diakonos seems to be from the word diako, which means to run errands; i.e., an attendant or a waiter (at the table or in other menial duties).
- Diakoneo basically means to wait upon (menially or as a host, friend).
- Diakonia basically means attendance (as a servant).

None of these three Greek words implies an official capacity or office of authority, but all speak to a service being provided to other people.
OFFICE OR SERVICE?

The following are several accounts which many believe document the sanctioning of individuals to the offices of authority identified as deacon and deaconess within the congregations of the elect.

Seven Servants

As the early church grew, it became apparent there was a need for someone to care for the physical needs of its widows. As a result of this need, men were selected by the membership of the church and ordained by the apostles to perform this task:

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration [diakonia]. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables [diakoneo]. Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the holy spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry [diakonia] of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the holy spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they [the Apostles] had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased . . ." (Acts 6:1-7 KJV).

The following are four important facts to note in this account:

1. The only responsibility given to these men was that of serving the needs of widows.
2. The responsibility for selecting men to serve the needs of widows is a function of congregational members—not the ministry who are the ones doing the selecting in many churches today.
3. The prerequisites for being given the responsibility to serve the needs of widows is recognizable, righteous character and wisdom.
4. Only men were selected to perform this service to the widows.

The Greek words diakoneo, diakonia, and diakonos noted in Acts 6:1-4 are derived from the Greek word diako, which basically means to run errands i.e. to serve. These Greek words simply mean someone who serves and they are used in the New Testament texts to refer to men and women who served their brothers and sisters within the congregations of the elect.
Servants, Bishops, and Deacons

"Paul and Timotheus, the servants [voluntary slaves] of Jesus Christ which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons [diakonos]" (Phil.1: 1 KJV).

In this text, the translators of the King James version of the Bible left the Greek word diakonos untranslated, which gives the impression that both bishops and deacons are positions of authority within the church. However, there is nothing in this text indicating that the diakonos were anything other than fellow ministers or fellow servants in the church.

Bishops and Deacons

"This is a true saying, If a man desire the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sober, of good behavior, given to hospitality; apt to teach; Not given to wine, no striker, not greedy of filthy lucre; but patient, not a brawler, not covetous; One that rules well his own house, having his children in subjection with all gravity; (For if a man know not how to rule his own house, how shall he take care of the church of God?). Not a novice, lest being lifted up with pride he fall into the condemnation of the devil. Moreover, he must have a good report of them which are without; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1.Tim.3:1-7 KJV).

The apostle Paul outlines for Timothy a number of requirements that must be met by a man who wants to serve his brothers and sisters in the faith as a bishop (an overseer). In the following part of Paul's instructions, the translators of the King James version of the Bible left the Greek words diakonos and diakoneo untranslated which gives the impression that a completely different function and responsibility than that of a bishop is being addressed.

"Likewise must the deacons [diakonos] be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience" (1.Tim.3:8-9 KJV).

Verse 8 begins, "Likewise must the deacons. . ."; which in English gives the impression that the word deacon identifies men in positions of authority. However, the phrase must the in verse 8 is not in the original text. Additionally, the Greek word diakonos only identifies individuals who provide a service. Therefore, a more accurate translation would be: "In the same manner, servants. . ." This eliminates the impression that a reference is being made to individuals in an office of authority.

"And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon [diakoneo], being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things" (1.Tim. 3:10-11 KJV).
In verse 10, the King James translators rendered the Greek word *diakoneo* as "let them use the office of a deacon" in an attempt to show an office of authority separate from that of a bishop. However, verse 10 would be more accurately translated as "And let these also first be proved; then serve being found blameless."

"Let the deacons [diakonos i.e., servants] be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon [diakoneo] well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1.Tim.3:12-13 KJV).

In verse 12, the King James translators again render the Greek word *diakonos* as deacons instead of servants to give the impression that this Greek word identifies men in positions of authority.

In verse 13, the King James translators rendered the Greek word *diakoneo* as "have used the office of a deacon." Verse 13 would more accurately be translated as "For they that serve well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus."

Whether or not Paul was adding additional emphases to the prerequisites for bishops in verses 8-13 or he also intended to set forth a list of prerequisites for others who were to serve their brothers and sisters within congregations of the elect, the context and the Greek language of verses 8-13 do not support the presumption that the Greek words *diakonos*, *diakoneo*, and *diakonia* refer to anything other than the action of service by an individual.

**Stephen**

The accounts of Stephen in Acts 6:8-15; 7:1-60 show him as one of the original seven men chosen to serve the widows, as well as a gifted preacher of the gospel and one who worked miracles. Although Stephen was an extremely gifted and dynamic individual, the biblical record does not indicated that he was in a leadership position within the church. However, it does show him as a dedicated servant within the church who served the needs of widows.

**Phebe**

Although there were other women noted by the apostles as serving their brothers and sisters within the congregations, only Phebe is noted as being a servant (*a diakonos*) within a congregation, a helper of Paul, and one to whom he entrusted major responsibilities. Paul said of Phebe:

"I commend to you our sister Phebe who is a servant [diakonos] of the congregation of Cenchrea: Receive her in the Lord, as is worthy of saints, and assist her in whatever business she needs your help to do, because she has been my helper, as well as helping many others" (Rom.16:1-2 Para).
Paul introduces Phebe as a member of the congregation at Cenchrea who should be received with the courtesy and respect due to her as one of the elect. It seems that Paul had sent her to Rome to accomplish some task for him and instructed the elect to assist her. This account shows that some women in the church were trusted with responsibilities which would affect the church and its ministry. However, this account does not indicate that Phebe occupied an office of authority within the church.

Philip and His Daughters

Philip the evangelist was one of the original seven men chosen to serve the widows noted in Acts 6:5:

"Paul and his group went to Caesarea: and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and stayed with him. And Philip had four virgin daughters who prophesied. And while they were there many days, the prophet Agabus came to us from Judaea" (Acts 21:8-10 Para.).

This account indicates that Philip was an evangelist before or after he had been given the responsibility to serve the widows of the church and that this service to the widows was in addition to his other responsibilities. But this account does not indicate that Philip occupied an office of authority as a deacon within the church.

Although Romans 16:1-2 and Acts 21:8-10 are believed by many to justify the organizational offices of deacons and deaconesses within the church, no such authority is found in them.

Summary

When the apostle Paul documented the organizational functions of the ministry, he did not mention deacons or deaconesses as a function of the ministry of the gospel or as an office of authority within the church:

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in 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 fulness of Christ" (Eph. 4:11-13 KJV).

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of tongues. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with tongues? do all interpret? But covet earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I to you a more excellent way" (1.Cor. 12: 27-31 KJV).
The Needs Of Widows

The early church had a problem which necessitated serving the needs of the widows in a fair and equitable manner. The apostles determined that the care of widows was not a part of their function or responsibility, but it belonged to men of good character within the congregation. The apostles instructed the elect to choose men to perform this task, and then through the laying on of their hands they ordained the men to this task. The following define the things which were and were not a part of the authority, function, or responsibility of these men:

- They were to administer and distribute the goods and services provided for the care of deserving widows within the congregation.
- They were neither the personal servants or assistants of the ministry nor were they to administer the affairs of the church.

Although many biblical commentaries apply the meaning of diakoneo, diakonia, and diakonos to imply a teacher, a minister, or a church official, no biblical authority can be found for such an application of these words.

When the scriptures containing these three Greek words are honestly analyzed in context, none of these words support the belief that a deacon or deaconess as an office of authority existed within the early church. In the strictest sense, the use of these three Greek words, when applied to the elect, connote a service rendered by individuals to individuals within the church.

The establishment of deacon or deaconess as an office of authority within the congregations of the Sovereign Father's earthly family is contrary to the apostles' instruction and intent. No such function or responsibility should exist unless there is a need within a congregation to serve the physical needs of widows. And if this need arises, the apostles' instructions should be followed in having the congregation, not the elders, select men to carry out this function.

By B. L. Cocherell

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CHAPTER ELEVEN

PROBLEM RESOLUTION

One of the most apprehensive and painful experiences is having to confront a brother or sister in the body of Christ with issues regarding interpersonal problems or sinful attitudes or behavior. It would be good if such issues never occurred among the elect, but the reality of the human experience is that these types of problems will occur. Moreover, these issues must be dealt with according to God’s law in the way taught by Jesus Christ and his apostles.

Jesus said the elect are the salt and light of the earth, which means we are the ones who preserve and show the way of righteousness. Therefore, it is incumbent upon us to manifest God’s way in everything we do, including the positive resolution of interpersonal conflict and sinful attitudes and behaviors. See Matt.5:13-16.

Foretelling the advent of Christ, Isaiah was inspired to write:

"The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness’ sake; he will magnify [make great or cause to be great] the law, and make it honorable [make great or to expand]" (Isa.42:21 KJV).

Throughout Jesus’ ministry, he expounded the precepts and principles of his Father’s laws. He also explained that these laws must become a part of our attitude and behavior if we are to be true followers of God and expect to enter the Family and Kingdom of God as an immortal spirit-being.

Jesus and The Law

Jesus taught that anyone who wants to follow him must believe and practice the things he taught about his Father’s laws, precepts, and principles. The practice of God’s law includes the practice of the laws which were set forth to govern the congregations of God:

"Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfill. [fill to the full]. For truly I say to you, Till heaven and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled [come to pass]" (Matt.5:17-18 KJV)

"Whoever therefore shall break one of these least commandments, and shall teach men so, shall be called least [less than nothing] in the Kingdom of Heaven: But whoever shall do and teach them shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven. For I say to you that except your righteousness exceeds that of the scribes and Pharisees, you shall in no way enter into the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt.5:19-20 KJV).
The Scribes and Pharisees were known to be extremely legalistic; in that, they followed the letter of the law, but also added their own rules to make the law more restrictive. However, they did not follow the spirit of the law, so their righteousness was actually self-righteousness. The Father's elect must understand both the letter and the spirit of the law and apply both in our lives. This is much more righteous than the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day.

Obey the Law

The Father's elect must obey the civil laws in the nations where we live, unless these laws are in conflict with God's laws. Additionally, because the Father is sovereign over all that exists, there is no higher authority to whom we can appeal in order to resolve or adjudicate a matter within the collective body of Christ. See 1.Cor.6:1-10.

JESUS' INSTRUCTIONS ON CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Jesus sets forth a number of precepts and principles in Matthew 18:1-14 which are directly related to preventing and resolving interpersonal problems and sinful attitudes and behaviors within the congregations of God.

Who is the Greatest

Prior to being converted into earthly children of God the Father, Jesus' disciples were concerned about who among them would receive the greatest reward:

"The disciples came to Jesus asking, Who is the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven?" (Matt.18:1 KJV). See also Mk.9:33-35.

Jesus used this occasion to explain the proper attitude we should have about heavenly rewards and how to resolve problems caused by interpersonal conflict and spiritual sin, which would arise among his followers after his death.

As a Little Child

"And Jesus called a little child to him, and set him in the midst of them, and said, Truly I say to you, except you become converted and become as little children, you shall not enter the Kingdom of Heaven. Whoever shall humble himself as this little child, the same is greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matt.18:2-4 KJV). See also Mk.10:13-15.

In order to begin the process whereby you will receive rewards in the Kingdom of Heaven, you must first be converted and become one of the Father's children, after which you must assume many childlike qualities of attitude and behavior in order to successfully live a life pleasing to the Father and enter his heavenly kingdom.
Childlike humility is the opposite of self-importance and haughtiness. Little children are teachable and eager to learn, trusting and dependent on their parents to supply their needs of care and protection, and accepting and giving of love without thought of personal gain. These are but a few of the many childlike qualities one who is a child of God should cultivate and make a part of their attitude and behavior in order to please the Father and enter into his heavenly kingdom.

Caring for Each Other

"And whoever shall receive one such little child in my name receives me. But whoever shall offend one of these little ones that believe in me, it would be better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck, and that he were drowned in the sea" (Matt.18:5-6 Para.). See also Mk.9:36-37.

There are two very important lessons to be learned from what Jesus says in this analogy: one lesson is about being courteous and hospitable toward all of the Father's children and accepting them into loving fellowship, but the other lesson is actually an extremely serious warning not to be the cause of an offence to any of the elect.

Causing Problems

"Then he said to the disciples, It is impossible that offences will not come: but woe to him through whom they come! It would be better for him that a millstone were hanged around his neck, and he was cast into the sea, than he should offend one of these little ones" (Lk.17:1-2 KJV). See also Mk.9:42.

The English word offences in Luke is translated from the Greek word skandalon, which means a trip stick (figuratively to cause offense or displeasure). The general usage of the word skandalon in the New Testament connotes an obstacle to faith, which is a cause of failing and destruction. The use of the word skandalon should leave no doubt that Jesus is describing a person who is the cause of one of the elect failing to obtain salvation. This is the context in which Jesus explains the method for problem resolution within the church.

To be discourteous and inhospitable to one of the elect, to not give them the respect they deserve, or to be the cause of one of the elect's failure to obtain salvation brings serious consequences:

"But woe to the world because of offences. It is of necessity that offences come, but woe to the man that cause offences to come" (Matt.18:7 KJV Para.).

It is always better to live our lives in a way which avoids interpersonal problems and sinful attitudes and behaviors. However, this is not always possible; therefore, Jesus gave a serious warning to be careful not to be the cause of someone's failure to obtain salvation.
Removal of Sinfulness

"Therefore if your hand or your foot offends you, cut them off, and cast them from you: it is better for you to enter into life lame or maimed, rather than having two hands or two feet to be cast into everlasting fire. And if your eye offends you pluck it out, and cast it from you: for it is better for you to enter into life with one eye, rather than having two eyes to be cast into hell fire" (Matt.18:8-9 Para.). See also Mk.9:43-48.

Both verses 8 and 9 pertain to serious problems in the behavior of the elect toward each other which will lead to eternal death if they are not resolved.

When dealing with personal problems, it is clear that, in order to eliminate a situation which threatens your eternal life, you must first be aware that a problem exists. This can be accomplished in several ways: through personal introspection, study of God's word, prayer and fasting for guidance, or the advice or observations of another person.

In the church as a whole, when dealing with problems which concern a member who is found to be incorrigible, that member of the body must be removed in order for the rest of the body to survive and prosper.

Do Not Despise

"See that you do not despise one of these little ones: for I say to you, that in heaven their angels do always behold the face of my Father that is in heaven. For the Son of man is come to save that which was lost" (Matt.18:10-11 KJV).

This scripture contains clear instructions showing that individuals within the church should have respect and concern for each other. The instruction not to despise (to regard in an unseemly manner or to be unconcerned about) one of the little ones (one of the elect) parallels the love, care, and concern which the Father and Jesus Christ have for the elect when they go astray.

The reason the Creator God divested himself of his immortality and became human was for the purpose of saving people from eternal death. Therefore, each of the elect should also be concerned that all who are called to salvation are saved.

In order to provide optimum conditions within the church for spiritual growth and the securing of salvation, all must seek to have a harmonious relationship with each other, even if it involves confronting a brother or sister in the faith to resolve problems regarding interpersonal relationships or sinful attitudes or behavior:
"What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep, and one of them has gone astray, does he not leave the ninety-nine, and go into the mountains, and seek the one that has gone astray? And if he finds it, truly I say to you, he rejoices more for that sheep, than the ninety-nine that did not go astray. Even so, it is not the will of the Father that is in heaven, that one of these little ones should perish" (Matt.18:12-14 KJV Para.).

In these three verses, Jesus shows the tremendous value the Father places on each individual he calls to salvation and the lengths to which he will go in order to bring those who go astray back into a harmonious relationship with him.

The attitude that each of the elect should have about problem resolution within the church should be the same as God the Father and Jesus Christ's. The reason for giving instructions about problem solving within the church is to save those who stray from righteousness and to prevent others from going astray.

Duty and Responsibility

"Brethren, if one is overtaken in a fault, you that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself lest you are tempted. Bear you one another's burdens, and so fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal.6:1-2 KJV Para.).

It is the duty and responsibility of each member in the Body of Christ to be concerned for the well-being of each and every member. If all will perform their duty and responsibility in the process of problem resolution within the body, the body will be healthy and can perform as it should. If problem resolution is not performed properly, the body will be sickly and not able to perform to its full potential.

When we consider the instructions and warnings Jesus gave about the attitude and behavior the elect should have toward each other, it should be obvious that resolving any interpersonal problems and sinful attitudes and behaviors within the church should be an extremely high priority.

The Law and Process

Jesus established the law and the process by which interpersonal conflict and spiritual problems among the Father's elect are to be resolved. Following this process is mandatory, not optional. The following scriptures concisely explain this law and process:

"If your brother shall trespass against you, go and tell him his fault between you and him alone: if he shall hears you, you have gained your brother" (Matt.18:15 KJV Para.).
"But if he will not listen to you, then take one or two others with you, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established. And if he will not listen to them, tell it to the church: but if he will not listen to the church, treat him as you would a Gentile and a tax collector" (Matt.18:16-17 KJV Para.).

"Truly I say to you, Whatsoever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, That if two of you agree on earth as touching anything they ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt.18:18-19 KJV Para.).

The process Christ commands the elect to follow when resolving conflict and problems among each other can be difficult and sometimes painful to perform, with each progressive step in the process becoming more difficult and painful for all who are involved. However, conflicts and problems among the elect are very serious and must be dealt with seriously.

Types of Problems

There are basically three types of problems which arise among the Father's elect. The first is purely interpersonal and involves no sin, the second is interpersonal and involves sin, and the third involves sinful attitudes and behaviors.

The scriptures tell us that God the Father is a God of order, not confusion; therefore, the elect are admonished to do everything in an orderly way (1.Cor.14:33,40). To this end, Christ gave clear instructions about how to deal with the following issues surrounding conflict and spiritual problems within the church:

- Interpersonal problems involving no sin
- Interpersonal problems involving sin
- Sinful attitudes or behaviors
- Accusation against an elder
- Separation from fellowship

Today

Because we live in very different times and circumstances from those of the early church, it is apparent that some of the instructions given for problem solving cannot always be complied with. However, we are responsible to comply with as many of these instructions and principles as possible. If we do this, we can be assured the Father and Jesus Christ will look favorably on our effort and bless us accordingly.
INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS INVOLVING NO SIN

It should be the goal of everyone who seeks to obtain salvation and please God the Father and Jesus Christ to live their life in a way which avoids misunderstandings, disagreements, conflicts, and other interpersonal problems (Rom.12:18). But, it is not always possible to avoid these problems. The reality of the human experience is that these things will happen even within the church.

There are basically three types of interpersonal problems which occur between individuals in the church but do not involve sin: 1) being wronged or offended by someone; 2) wronging or offending someone; or 3) having a misunderstanding or disagreement with someone. Whichever the case may be, the problem must be dealt with and resolved in order for there to be peace and harmony between the individuals and within the church as a whole.

Unresolved interpersonal problems not only have a negative impact on everyone involved but also tend to cause disunity among the congregation over time.

The following is a list of the more serious things which can happen when interpersonal problems are not resolved:

• Attitudes and behaviors may develop that are not consistent with a righteous way of life.
• Attitudes and behaviors may develop which adversely affect the whole congregation.
• The problem may escalate.
• The harboring of ill feelings toward the offending person may develop.
• Peace and harmony within the congregation may be adversely affected.

There are only two ways to resolve interpersonal problems which do not involve sin. The first way is to forgive the other person who has wronged or offended you. The second way is to discuss the problem with the other individual with the correct attitude and a sincere desire to resolve the issue.

IT IS ALSO YOUR PROBLEM

Although you may be the one offended or wronged, your responsibility before God is to have a correct attitude toward the other person and act in a righteous manner by attempting to resolve the problem. In fact, your salvation may be in jeopardy if you do not approach the problem with the right attitude.
We should all realize how very easy it is to wrong or offend another person. Many times a person does not even realize they have wronged or offended someone, because it is done through ignorance, carelessness, or poor judgement with no malice intended. Normally, wrongs and offenses are unintentional and can easily be resolved if all parties to the wrong or offence approach the problem with a righteous attitude. Jesus says we should always forgive those who wrong us:

"And when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive them, so that your Father in heaven may also forgive your sins. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your sins" (Mk.11:25-26 Para.). See also Matt.6:14-15.

To harbor a grudge or ill feelings toward a brother or sister in the faith is in opposition to God's ways and must be repented of and reconciled in your own mind. If we cannot forgive another person who has wronged us, we do not have the same righteous attitude the Father has; therefore, we cannot expect him to forgive us when we sin.

"Be you angry, and sin not: do not let the sun go down upon your wrath: neither give place to the devil" (Eph.4:26-27 Para.).

Anyone striving for spiritual maturity should resolve problems as quickly as possible in order to avoid allowing a wrong attitude or bitterness to take root in their mind and spirit, which can provide an opening for evil to influence their life:

"Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be put away from you, with all malice: and be kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you" (Eph.4:31-32 Para.). See also 1.Jn.5:14-17.

Reconciliation

When you realize you have wronged or offended another person, it is your duty and responsibility to attempt to resolve the problem in order to establish or restore harmony between yourself and the other person.

"You have heard that it was said of them of old time, you shall not kill; and whosoever shall kill shall be in danger of the judgment. But I say to you, that whosoever is angry with his brother without a cause shall be in danger of the judgment: and whoever shall say to his brother, raca, shall be in danger of the council: but whoever shall say, you fool, shall be in danger of hell fire. Therefore, if you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you. Leave there your gift before the altar, and go your way; first be reconciled to your brother, and then come and offer your gift" (Matt.5:21-24 KJV).
When you have sincerely rendered your apology and made amends for the wrong or offense you have done to your brother or sister in the faith, you can then present yourself before the Father with a clear conscious.

**FORGIVE AND FORGET**

Sometimes, rather than pursuing a resolution through a face-to-face confrontation, it is more prudent to forgive and forget and pray that the Father will forgive the other person and reveal their problem to them. This way you gain peace of mind, avoid unnecessary conflict, and become blameless before the Father.

"But the end of all things is at hand: be you therefore sober, and watchful with prayer. And above all things have fervent love among yourselves: for love covers a multitude of sins" (1.Pet.4:7-8 KJV). See also Pro.10:12.

"Put on therefore, as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, longsuffering; Forbearing one another. If anyone have a quarrel against any: even as Christ forgave you, you do the same. And above all things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to which you are also called in one body, and be thankful" (Col.3:12-15 Para.).

"Pay back no one evil for evil. Provide things that are honest in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as you can, live peaceably with all people. Dearly beloved, avenge not yourselves, but rather try to avoid being wrathful: for it is written, vengeance is mine; I will repay, says the Lord. Therefore if your enemy is hungry, feed them; if he is thirty, give them a drink: for in so doing you shall heap coals of fire on their head. Do not allow evil to overcome you, but overcome evil with good" (Rom.12:17-21 Para.).

"Let love be without dissimulation. Abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good. Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another" (Rom.12:9-10 KJV).

"I therefore, the prisoner of the Lord, beseech you that you walk worthy of the vocation wherewith you are called, with all lowliness and meekness, with longsuffering, forbearing one another in love; endeavoring to keep the unity of the spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph.4:1-3 KJV).
CONFRONTATION

Normally, wrongs and offenses are unintentional and can be easily resolved if all who are a party to the wrong or offense approach the problem with a righteous attitude. When an interpersonal problem arises, there are many things to consider before confronting a brother or sister in the faith with a problem which does not involve sin. The following potential results of a confrontation should be considered:

• Will it accomplish anything positive?
• Will it improve relations between you and the other person?
• Will it help the other person in their spiritual growth process?
• Will it help you in your own spiritual growth process?

If the problem is serious and has the potential for future conflict and an adverse effect on others, it may be prudent to attempt to resolve it through confrontation.

However, before confronting a brother or sister in the faith with the intent of resolving an interpersonal problem, you must make sure you know the facts and clearly understand them in light of God's laws, precepts, and principles; otherwise, you may end up causing a problem instead of resolving one.

Because what you say to the person you are confronting will either have a negative or positive effect upon their spiritual condition, it would be wise to carefully contemplate what you are going to say before meeting with them. Depending on the seriousness of the problem, you might also want to pray and fast for understanding and wisdom in order to deal with the situation:

"Wherefore my beloved brethren, let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God" (Jms.1:19-20 KJV Para.).

"A soft answer turns away wrath" (Pro.15:1).

A concerned and loving approach may keep anger from developing and exacerbating the problem. Remember that the reason for the confrontation is to attempt to establish or restore harmony between you and another person.

STEP ONE

The first step in the process of resolving interpersonal problems where no sin is involved is to go to the other person privately and alone, state your case, and attempt to arrive at a mutually satisfactory solution.

If the problem is resolved to your mutual satisfaction, the process of problem resolution stops at this point, because there is no need to go any farther—the problem has been resolved.
If the other person will not listen to you, does not think there is a problem, or does not want to resolve the problem, you must do the following:

1. Request another meeting with witnesses present.

Note:

These witnesses may also act as mediators and give counsel to resolve the situation if everyone included agrees. See also Pro.11:14 and the section in this chapter entitled "Interpersonal Problems Involving Sin or Sinful Attitudes or Behavior", along with its subsections about witnesses and perjury.

2. Request another meeting with a mutually acceptable judge picked from among the members of the congregation to render a judgement concerning the situation.

Judgements, Warnings, and Injunctions

The following are two excellent examples in the Bible which show how the Father's elect should resolve their differences in a fair and equitable manner when they cannot reach an agreement between themselves:

"If a matter is too hard for you to judge, between blood and blood, between plea and plea, and between stroke and stroke, concerning matters of controversy within your boundaries: then you shall go to the place that the Lord your God shall choose, and you shall come to the Priests the Levites, and to the judge, and enquire; and they shall judge the matter for you" (Deut.17:8-9 Para.).

Under Israel's covenant with the Creator God, if a problem arose which was too difficult to resolve on a local level or between individuals, it had to be brought to those whom God had placed in authority to adjudicate and decide such matters.

"And you shall accept their judgement and comply with all that they tell you, which they of that place which the Lord shall choose shall show you according to the law which they shall teach you, and according to the judgment which they shall tell you, you shall comply: you shall not deviate to the right hand, nor to the left, from what they tell you to do," (Deut.17:10-11 Para.).

After the priest or the judge rendered a decision concerning the matter brought to them, their decision had to be honored and carried out by the individuals for whom it was rendered.

"And anyone who is presumptuous, and will not listen to the priest that stands to minister there before the Lord your God, or to the judge, even that person shall die: and you shall put away the evil from Israel. And all the people shall hear, and fear, and not be presumptuous" (Deut.17:12-13 Para.).
The Creator warned that everyone must do exactly as they were told concerning the judgement; otherwise, they would be put to death. The obvious reason for this severe punishment for disobedience was to emphasize the serious consequence for disobeying those who represent God in problem resolution.

"For we know him who has said, vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense, says the Lord. and again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb.10:30-31 KJV).

"Dare any of you, having a matter against another, go to law before the unjust, and not before the saints? Do you not know that the saints shall judge the world? And if the world shall be judged by you, are you unworthy to judge the smallest matters? Don't you know that we shall judge [manage] angels? how much more things that pertain to this life?" (1.Cor.6:1-3 KJV).

In order to have the spiritual maturity to fulfill the office of a king and a priest and to rule and teach those who have never heard or understood the Father's truth and offer of salvation, the elect are being trained and prepared through life experience which includes making righteous decisions in difficult situations like problem resolution.

"If then you have judgments of things pertaining to this life, set them to judge who are least esteemed in the Church. I speak to your shame. Is it so, that there is not a wise man among you? no, not one that shall be able to judge between his brethren? But brother goes to law with brother, and that before the unbelievers" (1.Cor.6:4-6 KJV).

It is a disgraceful thing for those who have been called to become kings and priests after Christ returns to be unable to resolve interpersonal problems among themselves. Therefore, Paul gave the following strong reprimand about a lack of spiritual maturity:

"Now therefore there is utterly a fault among you, because you go to law one with another. Why do you not rather take wrong? Why do you not rather suffer yourselves to be defrauded? No, you do wrong, and defraud, and that your brethren. Know you not that the unrighteous shall not inherit the kingdom of God?" (1.Cor.6:7-9 KJV).

STEP TWO

The second step in the process of resolving interpersonal problems where no sin is involved is meeting with the person with whom you have a problem, along with witnesses who will offer counsel or a judge who will render a judgement.
The Witnesses, Mediators, or Judges

The reason for this meeting is to resolve the problem. The witnesses/mediators are there to help mediate a solution, and if a judge is present, he is there to render a judgment. Therefore, each of these individuals should have good character, be logical, have a good understanding of the scriptures, and be able to view situations with a degree of impartiality. It would also show good faith to ask the person with whom you have the misunderstanding if he or she wants to help choose the witnesses/mediators or judge:

"Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God" (Matt.5:9 KJV).

The Meeting or Hearing

The meeting or hearing should be conducted much like any other formal meeting. One of the witnesses/mediators should be chosen to chair the meeting, but if there is a judge present, he should preside over the hearing.

Note:

Because there are no details in the biblical record as to how these meetings or hearings should be conducted, it seems adequate to apply Robert's Rules of Order to the meeting or hearing. Robert's Rules of Order are available in almost all libraries, book stores, and on the internet.

The Process Ends

Because there is no sin involved, if the problem is resolved through either a meeting with the witnesses/mediators or a hearing before a judge, the process of problem resolution stops at this point, because the problem has been resolved in accordance with God's laws, precepts, and principles.

Refusal To Meet Again

If the person refuses to meet with you and the witnesses/mediators or judge to resolve the problem, this person is exhibiting a lack of godly love and respect for you and is failing to obey the law which Christ established to resolve interpersonal conflicts and problems within the church; both of these are sinful attitudes and behaviors.

Because you have sought a resolution to the problem according to the law Christ established, but the other person refuses to meet again, a problem involving sin now exists. Therefore, you must now follow the instruction noted in the beginning of Matthew 18:17:

"And if he will not listen to them, tell it to the church: but if he will not listen to the church, treat him as you would a Gentile or a tax collector" (Matt.18:17 KJV Para.).
INTERPERSONAL PROBLEMS INVOLVING SIN OR SINFUL ATTITUDES OR BEHAVIORS

There are two basic problem areas which require the three-step method of problem resolution outlined by Christ in Matthew, chapter eighteen. These problems are interpersonal problems which involve a sinful action by one person against another in the church and sinful attitudes and behaviors which are obvious violations of God's laws.

Both of these problem areas involve sin which must be resolved because of the adverse effect it has on an individual's salvation, the harmony between people, and the collective work of the church.

Sinful Action Against Another person

"If a brother sins against you, go to him privately and confront him with his fault. If he confesses it, you have won back a brother" (Matt.18:15 LBP).

"Take heed to yourselves: If a brother sins against you, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him, And if he sins against you seven times in a day, and seven times in a day turns again to you, saying, I repent; you shall forgive him" (Lk.17:3-4 KJV).

"Then Peter came to him and said Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Perhaps seven times? Jesus said to him, I say not just seven times, but seventy times seven" (Matt.18:21-22).

Many assume the sin(s) noted in these verses are merely some sort of personal affront, offense, or a wrong done to a person. However, what is being discussed is far more serious. The English words sins and sin in these verses are translated from the Greek word hamartano, which has to do with breaking God's law.

There are three important things to learn from the verses cited above. The first thing is that, when you become aware that a brother or sister in the faith is sinning, you are responsible before God to go to the offender in private and confront that person with their sin. There is no option to go or not to go; you are commanded to go. The only exception to this instruction is given in 1.John 5:16-17:

"If anyone sees a brother commit a sin that will not bring the death penalty, that one shall ask, and the father shall give one life that does not commit a sin worthy of death. There is a sin worthy of death. I'm not saying to pray for that one. All unrighteousness is sin: but there are sins that are not worthy of death" (1.Jn.5:16-17 Para.).
The second thing to understand is that the reason for confronting the sinning individual is to bring it to their attention in the hope that they will repent. Thereby, they can save themselves from the second death in the Lake of Fire. See Rom.6:23.

The third thing to understand is that you must always forgive a person who repents of their error.

**Obvious Violations of God's Laws, Precepts, and Principles**

The biblical record lists many attitudes and behaviors which are in direct opposition to God's laws, precepts, and principles, such as adultery, sexual perversion, fornication, incest, idolatry, witchcraft, fighting, jealousy, wrath, strife, division, heresy, murder, drunkenness, theft and more. If these attitudes and behaviors are not acknowledged and repented of they will cause a person to lose their salvation. See Ex.20:1-17; Gal.5:16-26.

**THE THREE-STEP METHOD**

Some might think that, when Jesus gave the three-step method for problem resolution within the church, he was presenting a new way to resolve conflict, but this was not the case at all. He was not instituting new precepts and principles; he was only expounding laws originally given to ancient Israel at the beginning of their covenant relationship with him (the Creator God). Jesus merely applied these existing laws, precepts, and principles, to those who would participate in his Father's earthly family after his death and resurrection.

**Three Things to Consider**

There are at least three things that you should seriously consider doing before going to a brother or sister in the church with the intent of resolving a problem involving sin which has the potential to cause a person to lose their salvation:

1. Make sure you know the facts and clearly understand them in light of God's laws; otherwise, you may end up causing a problem instead of resolving one.

2. Because what you say to the person you are confronting will either have a negative or positive effect upon their spiritual condition, it would be wise to carefully contemplate what you are going to say before meeting with them. Depending upon the seriousness of the problem, you might also want to pray and fast for understanding and wisdom in order to deal with the situation.

A concerned and loving approach may keep anger from developing and exacerbating the situation. Remember, the reason for the confrontation is to save the brother or sister in Christ from eternal death:
"Wherefore my beloved brethren, let everyone be swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath: For the wrath of man does not work the righteousness of God" (Jms.1:19-20 KJV Para.).

"A soft answer turns away wrath" (Psa.15:1).

3. Before confronting a brother or sister in Christ who is sinning, you must make sure you are committed to the process of problem resolution at that point in time; otherwise, it is prudent to wait until you are committed. Because, once you begin this process you must follow it through to completion.

STEP ONE

The first step is to go to the other person privately and state your case, making sure you carefully explain the problem which needs to be resolved.

If the person acknowledges their error and repents, you have fulfilled your duty and responsibility as a member of the Father's earthly family. The process of problem resolution stops at this point, because the problem has been resolved.

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert them; let them know, that the one which converts the sinner from the error of their way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jms.5:19-20 KJV Para.).

Although it is never pleasurable to receive correction, the person who has received the reprimand should be grateful for having the problem brought to their attention so it can be resolved.

At Least Two Witnesses

Because violations of God's law which are capital crimes are punishable by death in the Lake of Fire, there must be at least two witnesses to substantiate the accusation of sin against a brother or sister in the church. See Deut.17:6-7; 19:15 Num.35:30; Jn.8:17.

If you are the only witness to the sin and have discussed it with the sinner, you have fulfilled your duty as a member of the Father's family.

Because you are the only witness, if there is no repentance forthcoming, you cannot proceed to the next step in the process of problem resolution. However, because you have sought a resolution in good faith, you should request the Father to deal with the sinner in the hope that he or she will repent.

In cases where sin is involved and there are not the required number of witnesses to complete the three-step process of problem resolution, the scriptures show that God will deal with the sinner through methods of his choosing.
"For we know him who has said, vengeance belongs to me, I will recompense, says the Lord, and again, the Lord shall judge his people. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Heb.10:30-31 KJV).

STEP TWO

If you have brought the problem to the attention of the person who is in error, and he or she will not listen to reason and refuses to resolve the problem, you are obligated to proceed with the second step in the problem resolution process:

"But if he will not hear you, then take with you one or two more, that in the mouth of two or three witnesses every word may be established" (Matt.18:16 KJV).

There are two important points to understand from verse 16 regarding this step in the process of problem resolution.

1. The individual will not listen to you. The English word hear in verse 16 is translated from the Greek word parakoe, which means to disregard. In this case, an individual has been given an opportunity to resolve a problem of which he or she may or may not be aware of, but either refuses to acknowledge the problem exists or refuses to resolve it.

2. After the errant individual has been made aware of the problem and has still refused to resolve it, he or she must be approached again, but with one or two others who are also aware of the problem.

The English word witness in verse 16 is translated from the Greek word martus, which means being a witness to facts. This word also occurs in Mark 14:63 where the high priest finds no need of any more witnesses after Jesus' confession. The usage of the word martus shows that the witnesses must have first-hand knowledge of the sin.

Witnesses Under the First Covenant

Because of the seriousness of the second and third steps in the process of problem resolution, it is extremely important to clearly understand the need for the witnesses from the perspective of the first covenant with national Israel:

"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. so you shall put the evil away from among you" (Deut.17: 6-7 KJV).

"Whoever kills any person, the murderer shall be put to death by the mouth of witnesses: but one witness shall not testify against any person to cause him to die" (Num.35:30 KJV).
"One witness shall not rise up against a man for any lawlessness, or for any sin, in any sin which he sins. At the mouth of two witnesses, or at the mouth of three witnesses, a thing shall be established" (Deut.19:15 KJV).

"It is also written in your law, that the testimony of two men is true" (Jn.8:17 KJV).

There are two primary reasons for taking along witnesses when trying to resolve interpersonal problems involving sin. The first reason is to confirm to the accused that the problem exists and to convince him or her that it needs to be resolved and repented of. The second reason is to establish the fact that the brother or sister has been given a second opportunity to understand the seriousness of their sinful attitude or behavior and a second opportunity to repent and resolve the problem.

The witnesses have a tremendous responsibility to make sure what they say during the meeting is the truth, because they hold the person’s life in their hands. Moreover, they must follow through with the third step in the problem resolution process if the sinning individual will not hear them.

**Perjury**

"If a false witness rise up against any man to testify falsely against him; Then both the men, between whom the controversy is, shall stand before the Lord, before the priests, and the judges, which shall be in those days. And the judges shall diligently investigate: and, if the witness is a false witness, and has testified falsely against his brother; Then you shall do to him, as he had thought to have done to his brother: so shall you put evil away from among you. And those who remain, shall hear, and fear, and shall from that time commit no more evil among you" (Deut.19:16-20 Para.).

Under Israel’s first covenant with God, when a false witness was discovered, they were to be given the same punishment the accused would have received if found guilty of the accusation. God knows the heart; if a witness lies, they lie to the elect and to the Father and Christ. In the case of Ananias and Sapphira, their lie brought about their deaths at the command of the apostle Peter (Acts 5:1-11).

**Be Discrete**

It is important that you and the witnesses do not speak of the matter publicly, but go to the individual privately and inform him or her of the seriousness of the problem and that it needs to be resolved.

**If the Person Repents**

If the person acknowledges their error and repents, you and the witnesses have fulfilled your duty and responsibility. The process of problem resolution stops at this point, because the problem has been resolved.
STEP THREE

If the errant individual will not listen to reason, repent, and resolve the problem after you and the witnesses have gone to him or her, you and the witnesses are obligated to proceed with the third step in the problem resolution process:

"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Matt.18:17 NIV).

Blatant Sin

"He that despised Moses' law died without mercy under two or three witnesses: of how much sorer punishment, suppose you, shall he be thought worthy, who has trodden under foot the Son of God, and has counted the blood of the covenant, wherewith he was sanctified, an unholy thing, and has done despite to the spirit of grace?" (Heb. 10:28-29 KJV).

A person who blatantly sins under the agreement the Father has made with his earthly children is just as guilty as those who despised his law under his first covenant with national Israel. The only difference is that, instead of a physical death to be administered under the first covenant, a death from which there is no return is to be administered under the agreement between the Father and the elect:

"For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:23 KJV).

The third step is the final and last attempt to get a brother or sister to realize the seriousness of their situation and repent of their sin—this is the court of last resort. This step involves an open hearing to find the truth about the situation and resolve the problem or render a judgement.

Tell It to the Church

When Jesus said, "tell it to the church" he spoke prophetically of the congregation(s) of the Father's elect which would exist after his death, but in the context of the system of problem resolution as it existed under God's first covenant with Israel.

Some assume that "the church" refers to the whole assembled congregation and that the congregation as a whole should adjudicate the case. However, if the problem solving process is to remain consistent with the law given to ancient Israel, the problem must be brought before the constituted authority to judge the matter. This authority within a congregation belongs to the eldership or other men who have been delegated this authority within the congregation.
The example of the adjudication process in Israel is one of judges and priests adjudicating matters of the law: the judges dealt with the civil law and the priest dealt with the spiritual law. At no time in the history of Israel did the Creator God appoint the people or the congregations to make decisions about his civil or spiritual law. Therefore, the system the Creator originally gave to Israel is the model which should be practiced within congregations of the elect.

In national Israel's infancy, Moses administered the civil law and Aaron administered the spiritual law. Later, the judges and the priesthood administered both the civil and the spiritual law. During Christ's time, the Sanhedrin administered the law, and after the establishment of the early church, elders within the congregations administered the law. But, issues that could not be judged on the local level were taken to the council of elders in Jerusalem, and later in Pella, for adjudication. See Acts, chapter 15.

The Hearing

This is the final step in the process of problem resolution. Matthew 18:17 requires the individual who originally brought the accusation, the witnesses, and the accused to present themselves to the constituted authorities of the church and present their case.

Note:

Because there are no details in the biblical record as to how these meetings or hearings should be conducted, it seems adequate to apply the Robert's Rules of Order to the meeting or hearing. Robert's Rules of Order are available in almost all libraries, book stores, and on the internet.

Because the accused does not acknowledge there is a problem and has twice refused to consider a resolution, it is highly unlikely the accused will appear at the hearing. Nevertheless, the hearing must proceed with or without the accused, and the constituted authorities must render a decision about the matter.

The Decision

The decision of the constituted authority within the church is binding upon the accused and the congregation. If the accused is found guiltless, the accused is acquitted, if the accused is found guilty and repents, he or she is forgiven. But, if he or she is found guilty and refuses to repent, that individual is to be separated from the congregation:

"Truly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, that if two of you agree on earth as touching anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven. For where two or three are gathered together in my name, there am I in the midst of them" (Matt.18:18-20 Para.).
"If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, treat him as you would a pagan or a tax collector" (Matt.18:17 NIV).

If the accused is found guilty before the constituted authorities of the congregation and refuses to repent and resolve the problem, the entire congregation must be notified that this individual has been separated from fellowship until the problem is resolved and the fruit of repentance is evident (Matt.3:8).

ACCUSATIONS AGAINST AN ELDER

Because an elder occupies a position of authority within the congregation, some feel there is no recourse against an elder with whom they have an interpersonal problem or an elder who exhibits a sinful attitude or behavior or misuses his office. The elder is still a part of the Body of Christ and is not above the law which regulates the behavior of the elect.

If anyone in the congregation has an interpersonal problem with an elder that does not involve sin, the same rules apply which would apply to anyone in the congregation in regard to this type of problem resolution. However, if the problem involves sin and the elder is not conducting his life according to the faith, he must be confronted according to the rules which govern confronting and disciplining an elder.

ACCUSATIONS

Making an accusation against an elder is extremely serious, because of his position of authority and responsibility within the congregation. Therefore, considerable thought and prayer should be made before making an accusation against an elder.

"Against an elder receive not an accusation, but before two or three witnesses" (1.Tim.5:19 KJV).

Elders are given special protection against false accusations, because they are in a high profile position which is easily subjected to criticism; therefore, any accusations against an elder must be absolutely verified by two or three witnesses and brought to the other elders for investigation and adjudication.

"Them [the elders] that sin rebuke before all, that others also may fear" (1.Tim.5:20 KJV).

Those who are not of the eldership and who repent of a sin when it is brought to their attention are forgiven and are not to be rebuked publicly; however, the sinning elder must be rebuked publicly, even if he repents. This is done because the elders are charged with the care of the church before God; therefore, they have a greater condemnation for sin. The public rebuke of an elder demonstrates to everyone that no one in the church is exempt from obedience to God's laws and everyone must respect and obey them.
"I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality." (1.Tim.5:21 KJV).

There is always a tendency to cover up for friends, but the elders are specifically prohibited from this type of behavior. God knew that it would be difficult to be objective when there are problems involving close friendships; therefore, he inspired Paul to make his position clear about an elder who goes astray. When there is a problem involving an elder, personal friendships must be set aside and must not interfere with the problem resolution process. Any situation concerning an elder must be dealt with in a righteous manner without partiality.

Open Rebuke

There are two valuable examples regarding how the apostle Paul dealt with problems regarding the behavior of elders:

"Who then is Paul, or who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, even as the Lord gave to every man? I have planted, Apollos has watered; but it is God who gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants or he that waters anything great, because it is God that gives the increase. For we are all laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry, you are God's building" (1.Cor.3: 5-9 Para.).

The context of this scripture is Paul's rebuke to the elders and the rest of the congregation at Corinth for allowing divisions and cliques to exist in their congregation. He also reprimands them for focusing on different personalities in the ministry instead of focusing on God the Father and Jesus Christ.

"But when Peter came to Antioch, I confronted him face-to-face, because he was to be blamed. For before some came from James he ate with the Gentiles. But when they came, he drew back and separated himself, being afraid of those of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also separated with him, even Barnabas was lead away with their separation. But when I saw that they did not walk uprightly with the truth of the gospel, I said to Peter before them all, if you being a Jew live as a Gentile, and not as the Jews, why do you compel the Gentiles to behave as a Jew?" (Gal.2:11-14 Para).

Paul speaks of confronting Peter about his behavior toward the Gentile converts when he was around the Jews. Peter was obviously wrong in his attitude and behavior and was setting a wrong example to the church and to the Jews. Therefore, Paul rebuked Peter for his error.

The scriptures state that when an elder sins, he must be rebuked. And if no repentance or resolution to his problem is forthcoming, he must be separated from fellowship, just as anyone else who would blatantly disobey God's laws, precepts, and principles.
SEPARATION FROM FELLOWSHIP

All sin is repugnant to God the Father and Jesus Christ who are righteous. The Father wants to see his children grow in spiritual maturity and live righteous lives before him so that they can enter his heavenly Family and Kingdom. If left unchecked, the tolerance of sin within a congregation places the elect in jeopardy of losing their salvation; therefore, sin must not be tolerated within a congregation.

Separation from fellowship is an act of last resort and must be done in an attitude of love and concern for the following positive reasons:

- To help those living in sin, teaching heretical doctrines, or promoting strife and division within the congregation to realize the seriousness of their attitude and behavior
- To remove those who continue to adversely affect the peace, harmony, and work of those striving to live righteous lives

Through separation from fellowship, the sinning individual may awaken to the fact that they are in danger of losing their salvation and be moved in heart and mind to repent and recommit their life to the Father and his ways. Thereby, they can be restored to fellowship with the brethren and save themselves from eternal death.

Separate the Sinful

"Now I beseech you, brethren, mark them which cause divisions and offences contrary to the doctrine which you have learned; and avoid them. For they that are such serve not our Lord Jesus Christ, but their own belly; and by good words and fair speeches deceive the hearts of the simple" (Rom.16:17-18 KJV).

"Now we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you withdraw yourselves from every brother that walks disorderly, and not after the tradition which he received of us. For yourselves know how you ought to follow us: For we behaved not ourselves disorderly among you" (2.Thes.3:6-7 KJV).

Avoid the Heretic

"Stay away from foolish questions, genealogies, arguments, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain. After the first and second warning, avoid a heretical person, knowing that such a person has been perverted, and sins, being self-condemned" (Tit.3:9-11 Para.). See also Tit.1:10-11.

Although Paul does not specifically instruct Titus to put the heretic out of the congregation, it is quite clear that one should not fellowship with this type of person. Avoiding an individual is essentially the same as separating them from the congregation.
The Authority To Separate

Jesus Christ has given the authority and responsibility to the eldership and the congregations to separate themselves from people who are disobedient to the truth. Why and how this is done is stated in God's law and is easily understood by anyone who is led by the Father's holy spirit.

Separation from the congregation does not mean a person has lost their salvation; God the Father has reserved for himself the authority to remove his holy spirit from a person. This is not within the authority of the elect or the eldership. However, separation from fellowship does mean there are some serious issues which must be reconciled in the individual's life in order for them to obtain salvation.

THE CORINTHIAN EXPERIENCE

The congregation at Corinth seems to have been a group of Christians with many problems. Both of Paul's letters to them contain strong correction. His first letter was almost totally devoted to correction for sinful behavior.

No other congregation was corrected on as many points as the one at Corinth, which should be evidence of the spiritual character and maturity of these people. This is not to say that they were not of the Father's elect; they absolutely were. However, they had major problems in understanding how to conduct themselves; they were truly babes in the faith.

It is apparent that many of those at Corinth thought they were spiritual giants; however, Paul puts their false image of themselves to rest early in his letter:

"And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to carnal, even as to babes in Christ. I have fed you with milk, and not with meat: for hitherto you were not able to hear it, neither yet are you able" (1.Corr.3:1-2 KJV).

Paul apparently thought he was being gentle with his reprimand and he probably was. However, it does make one wonder what he would have said if he had thought they could have taken mature adult spiritual correction. The first chapter of the Book of Corinthians shows the majority in the Church at Corinth to be sectarian, carnal, immoral, unloving, poorly versed in the scriptures and undisciplined in worship.

Paul reprimands them for envy, strife, division of opinions, arguing, jealousy, immorality, incest, lawsuits, drunkenness, conceit, lack of Christian love, carnal mindedness, desecration of their bodies (the Father's temple on earth), intellectual vanity, misuse of spiritual gifts, and disorderly and shameful conduct in and outside of church meetings. This is by no means a complete list of the things Paul tells those at Corinth to correct. Paul's overall message to them was a call to repentance.
Blatant Sin

Paul's reprimand to those at Corinth for allowing blatant sin in their congregation shows the danger of such a collective attitude and the swiftness with which those who practice sin should be dealt with and removed from the congregations of God.

"Everyone is talking about the fornication that is practiced among you, not even the heathen do this. You have a man among you that is fornicating with his father's wife. And you are proud of this. Why aren't you mourning in shame, and making sure that this person is put out of your midst?" (1.Cor.5:1-2 LBP Para.).

Here is a situation that is obviously sin, which was not being handled properly by those of the Corinthian congregation.

"For truly I am absent in the body, but I am present in the spirit. I have already judged the one who did this thing, as if I were present: In the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, when you are gathered together, I am with you in my spirit with the power of our Lord Jesus Christ, deliver that man to Satan for the destruction of the flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the day of the Lord Jesus" (1.Cor.5:3-5 Para.).

Although Paul was not physically present in Corinth, he was in authority over it. Therefore, he commanded them to do the right thing and separate this man from their fellowship and give him into the hand of Satan for punishment. Paul sentenced this man to this kind of punishment so that he might come to understand the seriousness of what he had done, repent of this evil deed, and be saved. This punishment was also intended to be an object lesson to the other members of the congregation. It would teach them that sinful behavior should not be tolerated among them and that they must live a righteous life in order to obtain salvation:

"Your boasting is not good. Do you not know that a little leaven permeates the whole lump of dough? Therefore, purge out the old leaven (sin) so that you may be a new lump, even so as you are unleavened. For Christ our Passover was sacrificed for us" (1.Cor.5:6-7 Para.).

In no way should sin be tolerated among the Father's elect, because there is a good chance that others will eventually fall prey to sin if it is. Jesus did not die for the forgiveness of our sins so we could continue to sin; he sacrificed himself so we could become righteous and remain righteous.

Another Reprimand

Again, Paul reprimands those at Corinth for tolerating sin in their midst instead of putting the sinful individuals out of the congregation. Furthermore, he commands them to separate a wicked individual from fellowship:
"I wrote to you in a letter not to fellowship with fornicators: Yet not altogether with the fornicators of this world, or with the covetous, or extortioners, or with idolaters; for then you would have to leave this world. But I have written to you not to fellowship with those of the brotherhood who are named as a fornicator, or covetous, or an idolater, or a railer, or a drunkard, or an extortioner; with such a one do not even have a meal. Is it my Job to judge outsiders? Do you not judge those within the church? But those who are without, God judges. Therefore put away from among yourselves that wicked person" (1.Cor.5:9-13 KJV Para.).

A Third Reprimand

"This is the third time that I am coming to you. In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established. I told you before, and tell you again as I did the second time; and being absent now I write to them which heretofore have sinned, and to all others, that, if I come again, I will not spare" (2.Cor.13:1-2 KJV Para.).

"Therefore, I write these things being absent, lest being present I should use sharpness, according to the power which the Lord has given me to edification, and not to destruction" (2.Cor.13:10 KJV).

Few realize the power the early apostles had at their disposal and the discretion with which they could use this power for the good of the Father's elect. Paul had already reprimanded those at Corinth twice before and he warned them that, if he had to come to them in person, he would come in power and authority to punish the disobedient.

SUMMARY

It is the responsibility of all the elect, whether they are an elder or a congregational member, to monitor their own behavior and be alert for those who endanger their own salvation and that of others through sinful attitudes and behaviors. When such a person is noted, it is the responsibility of the one who has noted the problem to take the appropriate action in order to resolve the problem for the good of all.

Those who persist in violating God's laws, precepts, and principles through heretical teachings or sinful attitudes and behaviors must be shown the error of their ways. If these individuals will not listen to reason and repent of their evil ways, they must be separated from the congregation for the good of everyone concerned:

"And if anyone does not obey the words of this letter, note that person, and have no company with them, so that they may be ashamed. Yet do not count them as an enemy, but admonish them as as a member of the family" (2.Thes. 3:14-15 Para.).
The apostle Paul says the reason for separating a person from fellowship is to cause them to be ashamed and repent of their sinfulness. A person who is put out of the congregation is not to be viewed as an enemy, but as one whom the Father has chosen to be one of his elect children and who needs to be severely disciplined in an attempt to save them from eternal death.

Every effort should be made by all concerned to help restore such an individual to right-standing with God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the brethren in the congregation.

When a separated person has repented of their sins, the eldership and congregation should rejoice in this repentance and receive such an individual in an attitude of forgiveness and acceptance, based on godly love for the individual.

*Jesus said, "There is joy in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner that repents"* (Lk.15:10 KJV).

By B. L. Cocherell
Most people today define heresy as any idea or teaching which is contrary to their particular religious ideology or belief structure: Therefore, any other ideology or belief which is in opposition to theirs is considered heresy, and the person who believes or teaches it is a heretic.

Because the words heresy, heresies, and heretic are used in the New Testament to define concepts, teachings, and wrong attitudes, which must be eliminated within the congregations of the Father's elect, it is necessary to understand what constitutes heresy and who is to be considered a heretic.

The word heresy is borrowed from the Greek language. A literal translation of the word heresy is simply a choice, but in the Septuagint, heresy is translated as a free choice. In later classical Greek literature, heresy takes on the meaning of a philosophical school or sect of one's choosing. The Jewish historian Josephus, uses the word heresy to denote a religious body. Today, the word heresy is mostly used to convey a sense of condemnation for a particular belief or opinion.

Although the early technical meaning of heresy referred to making a choice or belonging to a religious sect, the scriptures where the words heresy, heresies, and heretic are used show that, with the establishment of the early church and the introduction of an expanded understanding of God's plan for the salvation of humanity through Jesus Christ, the words heresy and heretic took on a completely different meaning when used in reference to God's truth.

The words heresy, heresies, and heretic as used by the writers of the New Testament have meanings that embrace the concept of being in opposition and hostile toward God's truth or holding or teaching doctrines which are in opposition to his truth. Moreover, these words connote the condemnation of those who believe and teach things in opposition to established truth.

The Sadducees

"Then the high priest rose up and all they that were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees) and were filled with indignation" (Acts 5:17 KJV).

Here, the Greek word heresies was translated into the English word sect to denote a certain group of people who held certain beliefs concerning the laws and teachings of the God of the Jews.
The Heresy of Circumcision

The Book of Acts shows that the apostles and elders of the early church held a conference in Jerusalem in order to decide certain doctrinal issues, one of which was the doctrine of circumcision:

"There arose certain of the sect of the Pharisees, which believed, saying, it is necessary to circumcise them [Gentile Christians] and command them to keep the law of Moses" (Acts 15:5 KJV).

Here, the English word sect (i.e., heresies) refers to those who hold certain opinions concerning the law of circumcision and the law of Moses and their application to Gentile converts. During this conference, these subjects were discussed and both sides presented their opinions about these issues.

Paul goes Before Felix

"For we have found this man a pestilent fellow. . .a ringleader of the sect [heresies] of the Nazarenes. . .But this I confess to you, that after the way which they call heresy, so worship I the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the law and in the prophets" (Acts 24:5, 14 KJV).

Tertullus accuses Paul of being a trouble maker and a leader of those who are called Nazarenes and Paul confirms that he does believe in the way called heresy. When Acts 24:1-14 is reviewed, it becomes clear that the word sect (heresy) is used to criticize the religious group with which Paul is associated. These are the first indications in the New Testament of the word heresy being used as a condemnation of a system of beliefs.

Although the Greek meaning of heresy appears to have originally been a neutral term used to indicate a difference of opinion rather than a strong condemnation, Acts 24, verses 5 and 14 show that heresy took on a new meaning within the religious community.

Paul in Rome

After Paul arrived in Rome to appeal to Caesar about the accusations the Jews made against him, he called for the leaders of the Jews to meet with him so he could explain why he had appealed to Caesar:

"For this cause therefore have I called for you, to see you, and to speak with you: because that for the hope of Israel I am bound with this chain. And they said to him, We neither received letters out of Judea concerning you, neither any of the brethren that came showed or spoke any harm of you. But we desire to hear of you what you think: for as concerning this sect [heresies], we know that everywhere it is spoken against. And when they had appointed him a day, there came many to him into his lodging; to whom he expounded and testified the Kingdom of God, persuading them concerning Jesus, both out of the law of Moses and out of the prophets, from morning till evening" (Acts 28:19-23 KJV).
No condemnation is intended in verse 22 by the use of the word sect (i.e., heresies), although the followers of Christ were condemned by the Jews who lived in Judea.

The Corinthian Problem

Paul's letter to the Corinthians gives us more insight into the word heresy as it is used to denote something objectionable among the Father's elect:

"For first of all, when you come together in the church, I hear there are divisions [schisms] among you; and I partly believe it. For there must be also heresies among you, that they which are approved may be made manifest among you" (1.Cor.11:18-19 KJV).

There are several important things to understand about the choices the Corinthians were making about their spiritual behavior. There were major differences of opinion among them concerning many spiritual issues, and because of these various opinions, the church was not unified in their worship of God.

Paul reprimands some of the Corinthians for making wrong choices about the things they had come to believe about God's laws, precepts, and principles. He says that, because of this division, those who understand the spiritual intent of God's laws, precepts, and principles are revealed, which implies that those who did not truly understand these things were either not part of the elect or were weak in their understanding of spiritual precepts and principles.

The Galatians

"Now the works of the flesh are certainly revealed, which are: adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lustfulness, Idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, fighting, jealousy, wrath, strife, division, heresy, envy, murders, drunkenness, wild parties, and things like these: of which I tell you beforehand, as I have said before, that the ones which do such things will not inherit the Kingdom of God" (Gal.5:19-21 Para.).

In Paul's critical assessment of the choices being made by some of the Galatians, heresy is listed as one of the works of the flesh. Here, the use of the word heresy clearly denotes something which is in opposition to God's law. Notice that those who make these wrong choices regarding their beliefs and behaviors will not inherit the Kingdom of God.

In the context of verses 19-20, heresy involves more than just making a choice or having a difference of opinion. There is something very wrong with the choices and opinions being made, because they are spiritually life threatening and will cause the loss of one's salvation.
All of these things Paul mentions in his critical assessment of the choices being made by some of the Galatians have to do with unrighteous lifestyles, attitudes, beliefs, and behaviors. These are all things which are wrong from God's perspective and are condemned because their practice will lead a person to the second death in the Lake of Fire from which there is no return.

In verses 19-20, the word heresy is not used in the purely technical sense; it is used to convey the thought that these choices and opinions are to be viewed as sinful and must be avoided by the Father's elect.

Avoid the Heretic

Many people have been ostracized from religious organizations because their lifestyles, personal choices, opinions, or beliefs are in opposition to the beliefs of their spiritual leaders. During the Catholic inquisition of the middle ages, many people were branded as heretics and put to death for their lifestyle choices and opinions. Since the demise of the early church, many of the elect have also set their own criteria for branding a person a heretic and have used their own reasoning instead of God's truth as a basis for removing people from their fellowship.

It is not within the authority of the Father's elect to set the standards for what is heresy or who is a heretic, because these standards have already been set by God the Father and Jesus Christ. However, it is the responsibility of each of the Father's elect to know and understand what these standards are:

"Stay away from foolish questions, genealogies, arguments, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain. After the first and second warning, avoid a man of heresy, knowing that such a person has been perverted, and sins, being self-condemned" (Tit.3:9-11 Para.). See also Tit.1:10-11.

Paul instructs Titus to warn the person who has caused division within the congregation with their foolish questions and arguments about the law. It is important to note that Paul does not say not to study these topics; he is referring to a specific type of individual who creates arguments and causes divisions in order to harm the Father's elect.

After a person is warned twice that what they are doing is in opposition to God and his truth, this person is to be avoided by the entire church, because of their perverted perspective of God's laws, precepts, and principles and their sinful attitude and behavior. It is also important to note that a person's heresy itself will reveal them as a heretic to those who have a solid spiritual foundation.

Although Paul does not specifically instruct Titus to put the heretic out of the congregation, it is clear that a heretic's beliefs, teachings, and practices should be avoided. It is also clear that, if a person is excluded from fellowship, that person essentially has been separated from the congregation.
People are not to be rejected from fellowship or put out of a congregation for making choices or holding opinions which are not in opposition to God's laws, precepts, and principles. However, it is important to understand there is a body of truth which is empirical and unalterable, which must be believed, taught, and observed by all who serve God the Father and Jesus Christ. When a person is in opposition to these foundational truths or teaches things which are in opposition to these truths, they must be considered a heretic.

DIVISIONS AND SCHISMS

"I plead with you, brothers, to take note of those who cause division and stumbling contrary to the teaching which you have learned, and turn away from them. For these people do not serve the Lord Jesus, but serve their own belly; and by their smooth flattering words, they deceive the hearts of the innocent" (Rom.16:17-18 Para.).

Paul warns the church in Rome to take note of those who question the truths they were taught and those who caused some to believe things which are in opposition to God's truth. Paul says these people must be avoided because they do not serve Jesus Christ, but serve themselves and deceive those who are not well grounded in foundational truth.

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1.Cor.1:10 Para.).

Here, Paul appeals to the Corinthians to eliminate differences of opinions they have about God's truth and become unified in doctrine, so there will be harmony among them.

Unity of the Faith

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in 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 fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ " (Eph.4: 11-15 Para.).

One of the primary purposes of the eldership is to help the elect reach spiritual maturity and perfection, and it is the responsibility of each of the elect to strive to know and understand the difference between spiritual truth and spiritual error. This knowledge will enable the elect to not be easily deceived by heretical teachings.
There are obviously going to be differences of opinion concerning many subjects within the scriptures; however, there should never be a difference of opinion about foundational truths pertaining to the Father, Jesus Christ, and how the elect are expected to conduct their lives to obtain salvation.

Heretics and Damnable Heresies

The apostle Peter gives a serious warning to be aware of heretics and heresies, and he shows that the end result of a heretic's beliefs and teachings is eternal destruction. A heretic receives no call to repentance, which seems to indicate that once a child of God has set their mind to believe and teach things which are in opposition to God's truths (i.e., heresies), a fatal mistake has been made which cannot be reversed.

"But there were false prophets also among the people, there shall even be false teachers among you, who surreptitiously bring in damnable heresies, even denying the Lord that bought them. And many shall follow their pernicious ways [i.e., that which causes ruin, or loss]; by whom the way of truth shall be criticized. And by deception and with clever words they shall make merchandise of you: whose judgment now of a long time lingers not, and their damnation does not slumber" (2.Pet.2:1-3 Para.).

Peter says to be wary of those in the congregations who sneak around in private and teach things which are untrue about things of the spirit. Notice that the things these people teach are things which will cause them to lose their salvation. Without exception, people who teach things which are in opposition to God's truth deny Jesus and his teachings about himself, his Father, and his Father's good news message of salvation. In the next few verses, Peter leaves no doubt as to the intent of those who teach heresy and the punishment they will receive:

"For if God did not spare the angels that sinned, but cast them into prison, an delivered them into chains of darkness, there to be reserved for judgement; and did not spare the old world, but saved Noah the eighth preacher of righteousness, and brought the flood upon the world of the ungodly; and turned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrha into ashes... making them an example to those who after them will live in an ungodly way: and he delivered just Lot who was vexed by the filthy conversation of the wicked... the Lord knows how to deliver the Godly out of temptations, and reserve the unjust to the day of judgement to be punished" (2.Pet.2:4-9 Para.).

Those within the congregations of the elect who teach things which are in opposition to God's truth are in the same category as the wicked angels and the most wicked of humanity, because they are attempting to subvert and destroy those whom the Father has called to become his first born sons. It is extremely clear that God will have no mercy on those who teach heresies.
"But chiefly these walk after the flesh in the lust of uncleanness, and despise governments. They are presumptuous, self-willed, and not afraid to speak evil of dignitaries. Whereas angels, who are greater in power and might, do not bring railing accusations against them before the Lord. But these, are as natural brute beasts, which are made to be taken and destroyed, these speak evil of the things they do not understand; and they shall utterly perish in their own corruption. And shall receive the wages of unrighteousness, as they that count it pleasure to riot in the day time. Spots they are and blemishes, sporting themselves with their deceiving while they feast with you" (2.Pet.2:10-13 Para.).

Peter shows the true priority of a heretic is physical rather than spiritual, and in God's eyes, their existence is of no more value than an animal whose thought process is totally inward. Peter calls heretics spots and blemishes that contaminate the sanctity of the elect.

"Having eyes full of adulteries and never ceasing from sin, enticing unstable souls: having a heart busied with covetous practices; cursed children: Which have forsaken the straight path, they went astray, following the way of Balaam the son of Beor, who loved the way of unrighteousness; but was rebuked for his iniquity: the dumb ass speaking with man's voice held back the madness of the prophet. These are springs without water, clouds being driven by a tempest; for whom the blackness of darkness is reserved forever" (2.Pet.2:14-17 Para.).

A heretic is one of the Father's elect children who, for whatever reason, has gone astray and forsaken the path of righteousness. The heretic is self deceived and has lost the ability to discern between truth and lies. Their spiritual life-force has dried up; they can give nothing of spiritual value, because they have nothing of true value to give.

"For when they speak great swelling words of vanity, by the lusts of the flesh, by unbridled lusts of the flesh, they entice those who were escaping the ones who live in error. While they promise them liberty, they themselves are the slaves of corruption; for by whom anyone is overcome, of the same is he brought in bondage. For if after they have escaped the pollution of the world through the knowledge of the Lord and the Savior Jesus Christ, they are again entangled therein, and overcome, the latter end is worse with them than the beginning. For it had been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than, after they have known it, to turn from the holy commandments delivered to them. But it is happened to them according to the true proverb, The dog is turned to his own vomit again; and the sow that was washed to her wallowing in the mire" (2.Pet.2:18-22 Para.).
The apostles Paul and Peter have defined what heresy is and who a heretic is for us. A heretic's beliefs and teachings are extremely dangerous to the Father's elect who are diligently seeking to please the Father and mature spiritually, because the heretic believes and teaches things which are spiritually life threatening. Heretical teachings are not just opinions and choices on some small, minor point of Christian living that are without consequence; heretical teachings lead to the denial of the Father and Jesus Christ and their teachings.

This is why Paul tells Titus to "Stay away from foolish questions, genealogies, arguments, and quarrels about the law, for they are unprofitable and vain. And that after the first and second warning, avoid the heretic, knowing that such a person has been perverted, and sins, being self-condemned" (Tit.3:9-11 Para.).

SUMMARY

The scriptures instruct the elect to deeply love and respect each other and watch for each other's spiritual safety. Therefore, each of the elect should continually be on guard for heretics and heretical teachings. It is by the opinions a person has and the choices they make concerning the Father's truth that they are recognized as a righteous person or a heretic. The key to not being seduced by a heretic's teaching is to be well grounded in the foundational truths about God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the things pertaining to one's salvation.

When a person continually promotes things which are inconsistent with the Father's foundational truths and continually attempts to persuade others to believe and practice things inconsistent with the Father's truth, this person is in one of the following spiritual conditions:

1. This person has not been called to salvation and cannot understand spiritual concepts and principles in the same way as one who has the indwelling of the holy spirit.
2. This person is either new to the faith or has not taken the time and made the effort to diligently search the scriptures in order to be well grounded in foundational truths.
3. This person has been sent by an evil spirit to subvert and destroy the Father's elect.
4. For whatever reason, the person has strayed from the path of righteousness and become a heretic who opposes the Father's truth and his right to guide and rule their life.

Jesus' warning about false prophets can also be applied to heretics and their beliefs and teachings, because no good can come from accepting them:
"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but are in reality dangerous wolves. By their fruits you shall know them, Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits; but the corrupt tree produces evil fruits. A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not produce good fruits is to be cut down and thrown into the fire. Then surely from their fruits you shall know them" (Matt.7:15-20 KJV Para.).

The instruction from the Bible is to be continually alert to the danger of heretics and their beliefs and teachings, and not to encourage or tolerate people, beliefs, or teachings which are inconsistent with the Father's truth.

**Heretical Teachings**

No matter how cleverly crafted and eloquently stated a heretical teaching is, it is a teaching in opposition to the Sovereign Father's truth. Although a false teaching may have some elements of truth within it, a false teaching will always have within it some error that will lead a person away from foundational truth, which will result in eternal death for those who believe or practice these heretical teachings.

**Clever Counterfeits**

In order for an evil spirit, a false prophet, or a heretic to counterfeit a biblical teaching with a perverted version, they must design their deceptive teachings to closely resemble what is genuine so that it is extremely difficult to distinguish between the two. There is a tremendous danger in accepting doctrines which sound correct without first examining them with cold, hard logic.

The teachings of most evil spirits, false prophets, and heretics seem plausible because they are cloaked in the aura of spirituality. These individuals can easily deceive those who allow their emotions or intellectual vanity to influence their spiritual discernment. However, the teachings of these types of individuals always have one or two major flaws:

- Their teachings never harmonize with the entire Bible.
- Their teachings always involve the breaking of one or more of God's laws, precepts, or principles.

The writers of the New Testament described teachings, beliefs, and practices which are in opposition to the Father's truth and way of truth as doctrines of demons or heresies, which if believed or practiced will lead a person away from truth.

By B. L. Cocherell
Does the physical location where congregations of the elect assemble to worship God the Father have any positive or negative impact on one's relationship with him or his Son? Does it displease the Father for his children to assemble to worship him in places dedicated to false religious systems or to other gods?

In order to come to an understanding of the Father's will about where one should and should not assemble to worship him, one must understand the instructions that the Creator God gave to the nation of Israel concerning how to deal with false religions and the places where false gods were worshiped.

A COMMAND AND WARNING FROM GOD

"Obey what I command you this day. Behold, I am about to remove the Amorite, the Canaanite, the Hittite, the Perizzite, the Hivite, and the Jebusite from before you. Consider what you do, lest you make an agreement with the inhabitants of the land where you are going, and it becomes a snare in your midst" (Ex.34:11-12 Para.).

The Creator commanded the nation of Israel not to make treaties or agreements with the nations in Cannan, and he warned them that such agreements would only cause them trouble.

"But instead you shall destroy their altars, break their images, and cut down their groves [places of worship]. You shall not worship another god: for the Lord, whose name is jealous, is a jealous God: Lest you make an agreement with the inhabitants of the land, and then go whoring after their gods, and sacrifice to their gods, and one of them [the idol worshiper] call to you, and you eat of his sacrifice; And you allow their daughters to be taken by your sons, and their daughters go whoring after their gods, and cause your sons to do the same" (Ex.34:13-16 Para.).

The Creator told the Israelites to destroy the places where false gods were worshiped and warned against making agreements with the people of the land. The phrase "eat of his sacrifice" implies participating in their form of worship. The Creator made it very clear that he did not want the Israelites to have anything whatsoever to do with these idolatrous religions.

In the Book of Deuteronomy, the Creator commands the Israelites to totally eliminate the people and their religious systems of worship from the land he was giving them.
"When the Lord your God brings you into the land to possess it, and has cast out these nations stronger than you, and God has made you victorious over them you shall strike them and totally destroy them; you shall not make an agreement with them, nor show mercy to them. Neither shall you marry them; do not give your daughters to their sons, nor allow your sons to marry their daughters, nor their daughters to marry your sons. Because they will cause your sons to stop following me, so that they may serve other gods: if you allow this, the anger of the Lord be kindled against you, and suddenly destroy you" (Deut.7:1-4 Para.).

"This is how you will deal with them: You shall destroy their altars, break down their images, cut down their groves, and burn their carved images with fire. For you are a holy people to the Lord your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people to himself above all people on the face of the earth" (Deut.7:5-6 KJV Para.).

The Creator God commanded the Israelites to totally destroy these people, their places of worship, and the symbols of their religion. The Israelites were to completely separate themselves from other religions and from the things pertaining to their evil religious practices. God the Father is a righteous God and his people must be righteous; he will not tolerate anything evil among his people. See also Deut.12:1-3; 2.Cor.6:14-18.

The history of Israel is full of examples which show that, when Israel followed God's instructions to remove all vestiges of false religion, they prospered nationally and individually. However, when they refused to obey God's instructions regarding false religion and its practitioners, they always suffered for their rebellion.

**THE ARK IN THE TEMPLE OF DAGON**

The Israelites did not follow God's instructions to totally destroy the people and remove all of their religious systems from the land; instead, the Israelites entered into agreements with some of them. Therefore, God allowed the Israelites to be in a constant state of conflict with these people and other nations. In one of their many battles with the Philistines, God allowed the capture of the Ark of the Covenant as a lesson of what their disobedience had caused:

"And the Philistines took the ark of God . . . and brought it into the house of Dagon, and set it by Dagon. And when the people of Ashdod arose early on the next day, behold, the statue of Dagon had fallen upon its face on the ground before the ark of the Lord. And the people put Dagon back in its place. And when they arose early the next day, behold, Dagon was on its face again before the ark of the Lord; but this time the head of Dagon and both the palms of his hands were cut off; leaving only the stump of Dagon on its platform . . . And the Lord’s hand was heavy on the people of Ashdod, and he destroyed them, and plagued them with hemorrhoids, even Ashdod
and the coasts thereof. And when the men of Ashdod saw what had happened, they said, the ark of the God of Israel shall not remain with us: for his hand is greatly against us, and Dagon our God” (1.Sam.5:1-7 Para.).

Here is an example of how the Creator viewed the mixing of holy objects set aside for his use with things dedicated to false religious systems. What the Creator God said was an abomination during the days of ancient Israel is still an abomination in the Father's sight today (Mal.3:6).

The elect are sacred vessels within which his holy spirit resides. That which is holy should not reside with the unholy. The Father does not want anything holy and dedicated to his service to be placed alongside that which is unholy.

THE ELECT ARE TEMPLES OF GOD

"Don't you know you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If anyone defiles the temple of God, God shall destroy them; for the temple of God is holy, and you are his temple" (1.Cor.3:16-17 Para.).

The temple of God is not only the physical body; the mind is also a temple because this is where the Father's holy spirit resides. Should the Father's children bring their body and mind within a temple of Satan? Those who serve the Father should find the surroundings of a place dedicated to a false god as repugnant as he does. The scriptures clearly show that the Father and Christ hate these places and what they represent. The scriptures also show the consequence of mingling with this world's false religious systems. See Amos 3:3.

SPIRITUAL FORNICATION

Although the text below speaks to physical fornication, its principle also applies to spiritual fornication with false religious systems.

"Don't you know that your bodies are the members of Christ? Shall I take the members of Christ, and make them the members of a whore? God forbid. . . . Don't you know that he that is joined to a whore is of one body? For two, he says, shall be one flesh. But he that is joined to the Lord is one spirit. Flee fornication . . . . Don't you know that your body is the temple of the holy spirit that is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore glorify God in your body, and in your spirit, that belong to God” (1.Cor.6:15-20 Para.).

Do the Father's elect glorify him when they bring the temple of his holy spirit into a temple of a false religious system and attempt to worship him in a place dedicated to beliefs and practices which are in opposition to him and his worship system?
An Idol is Nothing

Some of the elect believe that, because their reason for assembling in a place dedicated to the practice of a false religious system is to worship and serve the Father, their worship of him in that place is acceptable to him. They base this belief on the following text:

"But about sacrifices to idols, we know that we all have knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. . .. Concerning the eating of things sacrificed, we know that an idol of this world is nothing, and that there is no other god except one. For even if some are called gods in heaven or on earth; even as there are many gods and many lords but to us one God, the Father of whom are all things; and one lord, Jesus Christ, through whom are all things, and we by him. However, everyone does not have this knowledge: but some being aware of the idol eat an idolatrous sacrifice at this present time; and their conscience being weak is defiled" (1.Cor.8:1-7 NIV (Para).

Some of the elect at Corinth would knowingly eat things sacrificed to idols, but they did not have a clear conscience in doing it; therefore, it was sin for them to do this, because they were compromising their conscience in this matter.

"But meat [food] commends us not to God: for neither, if we eat, are we the better; neither, if we eat not, are we the worse. But take heed lest by any means this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak. For if any man see you which has knowledge sit at meat [at a meal] in the idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened to eat those things which are offered to idols; And through your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you sin so against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ" (1.Cor.8:8-12 KJV).

This text seems to say that the Father's elect may eat a meal prepared from the things sacrificed to idols, which is exactly what it says. However, the subject being addressed in this text is that of eating food which has been offered to an idol; it is not one of worshiping the true God in place dedicated to other religions and gods. The subject is whether or not it is circumspect for one of the Father's elect to eat things sacrificed to idols in a place which is dedicated to other religions and gods.

There is an indication that some of the members of the church at Corinth understood that the food sacrificed to idols did not become pure or impure by the act of sacrificing, which was believed by those who sacrificed to these idols and false gods.

Associating with Evil

Paul wrote the following to the Corinthians and warned them not to have a close association with false religions which are devised by evil spirits:
"What say I then? That the idol is anything, or that which is offered in sacrifice to idols is anything? But I say, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice, they sacrifice to devils, and not to God: and I would not that you should have fellowship with devils. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of devils: you cannot be partakers of the Lords table, and of the table of devils" (1.Cor.10: 19-21 KJV).

The English word fellowship in verse 20 is translated from the Greek word koinonos, which does not mean fellowship, it means to have a close association. A large part of the question being discussed in chapter 10 pertains to how close an association the Father’s elect can have with false religions and their practices and still maintain a righteous attitude and a good relationship with the Father. Paul answers this question in verse 23:

"I can do all things that are lawful.; however, doing these things is not always expedient: Although I can do all the things that are lawful, doing all these things is not always constructive" (1.Cor.10: 23 Para.).

WISE USE OF LIBERTY

Just because a person has a good understanding of a subject does not mean that person has the liberty to exercise that understanding in front of others, because each person is in a different stage of spiritual growth. Some will have reached a high degree of spiritual maturity, but others will still be babes in the truth. The scriptures show that we must be careful how we treat the spiritual babe and how we should set an example for those still young in the faith.

The overriding theme of Paul’s discourse in 1.Corinthians, chapters 8 and 10, is that of setting a righteous example for the young in the faith and taking care not to cause them to fail because of one’s superior knowledge or understanding, which someone new in the faith may not be mature enough to accept.

PROPHECIES FOR THE FUTURE

"And it shall come to pass in that day, says Jehovah, I will remove your horses out of your midst, and I will destroy your chariots. And I will remove the cities of your land, and pull down your fortifications. And I will remove witchcraft out of your hand, and you shall have no fortune-tellers. I will also remove your carved images, and your pillars from your midst. And you shall no more worship the work of your hands. And I shall pluck your shrines out of your midst; and I will destroy your cities. And I will execute vengeance in anger and in fury on the nations, such as they have not heard" (Mic.5:10-15 Para.). See also Isa.17:7-8; Jer.17:1-4.
There is no doubt that Christ will totally eliminate all traces of false religious systems when he returns to rule the earth. Therefore, it seems inappropriate for the ambassadors of Christ to willfully sit in the camp of the enemy, which represent a way of life opposed to the Father and his way of life. It seems that it would be especially disappointing to the Father that his children would attempt to worship him in a place he finds repugnant and will eventually destroy.

**PAUL ON MARS' HILL**

Some believe that, when the apostle Paul spoke to the men of Athens on Mars' Hill (Acts 17:22-25), he was meeting with them in their place of worship; therefore, they believe this shows that it is acceptable to worship the Father in a place dedicated to other religions and gods. However, the following analysis shows this belief to be without merit.

Mars' Hill was a Greek Areopague, which was a place of public meetings where the council of Athens would often meet to discuss official matters. It was not a place of continual pagan worship, as some might believe. Paul did not conduct a formal worship service for the Father's elect at this place; he was merely revealing the true God to a group of people who happened to be there when he was.

Throughout the scriptures, there are many references to acceptable places for the Father's elect to worship him. However, within these references, there is not one scripture which sanctions the worship of the Father within the confines of a place dedicated to another religion or god.

Some of the elect reason that, because people of false religious systems do not know they are worshiping false gods and are just deceived, it is acceptable to worship the Father in their place of worship. And some reason that, because some people of false religious systems have dedicated their property or place of worship to the God of Israel even though they do not know who he is, it is not wrong to worship the Father in that place.

Whether or not people know they are worshiping a false god or state that they have dedicated the use of the property to the God of Israel, it does not remove the fact that the place is where false religion is practiced and a false god is worshiped. The apostle Paul wrote, "For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold [suppress] the truth in unrighteousness" (Rom.1:18 KJV).

When choosing a place to worship God the Father, a person should carefully consider how he feels about false religious systems and carefully note the instructions to ancient Israel and the early church about being separate from this evil world and its false religious practices.
"Do not be unequally yoked with unbelievers: for what fellowship has righteousness with unrighteousness? and what communion has light with darkness? And what agreement has Christ with Belial? Or what part has he that believes with an infidel? And what agreement has the temple of God [the Father's elect] with idols [false religion]? For you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, 'I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people. Therefore come out from among them, and be separate, says the Lord, do not touch the unclean thing; and I will receive you" (2.Cor.6:14-17 Para.).

The English word unclean in verse 17 is translated from the Greek word akathartace, which means impure, demonic, or foul. The unclean thing Paul speaks of is the false religious systems of this world from which the Father's children should totally separate themselves.

ABHOR EVIL

"Let love be without dissimulation. abhor that which is evil; cleave to that which is good." (Rom.12:9 KJV)

The English words abhor and evil are translated from the Greek words apostoeho, which means detest, and ponagros, which means evil in effect or influence.

"Abstain from all appearance of evil" (1.Thes.5:22) is one of the things Paul lists that the Father's elect should be doing. This short phrase is extremely powerful; the Father's elect should not only be righteous but also shun all things that even appear to be evil.

"Pure religion and undefiled before God and father is this, to visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep yourself unspotted from the world" (Jms.1:27 KJV Para.).

Keeping oneself from being corrupted by this world includes separating oneself from this world's false religious systems and false gods.

SUMMARY

The Israelites were instructed to destroy and eliminate everything connected with the practice of false religion from the land God was giving them. They were instructed not to be complacent and tolerant of false religious systems or their practices. The scriptures show that, when the Kingdom of God is established on the earth, all false religious systems along with all of their places of worship will be completely purged from the earth.
A survey of the biblical record shows that God the Father and Jesus Christ are not in the least bit ecumenical in their view toward this world's religions and gods. The Father has only one worship system and condemns all others as being false. Those who advocate unity of all religions should read the Book of Revelation, which reveals that there are only two religious systems in the world: Satan's various false religions and the Sovereign God's true worship system.

Affordable and Convenient Places to Meet

Affordable, convenient, comfortable, and safe places to formally worship the Father are very difficult to find. However, the practice of the Father's true religion is not convenient, comfortable, or safe in this age. The Father's elect are limited in almost every endeavor they attempt in this evil world. To use monetary justification, convenience, and comfort as the foremost criteria or as an excuse to use the facilities of this world's religions seems to be missing the point of the many instructions in the Bible which require the Father's elect to separate themselves from false religious systems and false gods.

Questions to Consider

- Why would one who claims to worship and serve God the Father want to meet in a place dedicated to the worship of a false religion or a false god?
- Does it please the Father for his children to worship him surrounded by idols, paintings, and symbols which violate the first two of his Ten Commandments?

If false worship systems and false gods are thought of in the same way God the Father and Jesus Christ view them, it is easily understood that the Father's elect should assemble in a place pleasing to him.

By B. L. Cocherell
The apostle Paul introduces his first letter to the church at Corinth by acknowledging them as the Father's elect children who have the right to call upon the name of Jesus Christ. He also acknowledges that they are the recipients of spiritual gifts from the Father through Christ:

"To the church of God which is at Corinth, to them that are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints along with all who call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ in every place. Grace be to you, and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. I give thanks always to my God [God the Father] concerning the gift of the grace of God [God the Father] that is given to you in Christ Jesus; That in everything you were enriched in him, in all discourse and knowledge: Even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you: So as for you to be lacking in no gift, awaiting the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ" (1.Cor.1:2-7 KJV Para.).

In the New Testament, there are many references that show the process by which the Father's elect are able to communicate with him. There are also references which show how certain of the elect are to perform supernatural works and miracles through his spirit-power.

This chapter focuses on the meaning of the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ" and how it applies to communication with God the Father and the use of his spirit-power. Moreover, this chapter shows the importance of Christ's name to the Father's elect who live in the end of this age and why and how the power of the holy spirit is to be used by the elect through the authority of Christ.

**In the Name of Jesus**

What does the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ" mean? Why is it necessary to use a name when making requests of the Father, performing physical, spiritual, and supernatural acts in connection with the Father's elect, and preaching the gospel message? Is there some knowledge about the names of the Father and his Son that must be acquired in order to have one's prayers or requests to the Father granted? And is this knowledge necessary to access the power of the holy spirit in order to perform a physical or supernatural work?

The answers to all the above questions are important to all who have been called to salvation during this gospel age, because the answers have a direct impact on one's ability to secure immortal life in the Family and Kingdom of God. Moreover, the answers impact one's ability to perform various functions and responsibilities the Father may give one during this lifetime.
The technical definition of the word *name* in both the Hebrew and the Greek languages connotes a mark or the identification of a person or thing. However, many times the name of an individual mentioned in the Bible is used to express that person's authority, character, or reputation. It is also well known in biblical and rabbinical teachings that the phrase "in the name of" is used to connect the one having authority to the one from whom the authority comes, as well as to connect a teacher with the authority and respect of the teacher who taught him.

Just uttering the words "in the name of Jesus Christ", "by or through the authority of Jesus Christ", "on the behalf of Jesus Christ" or "in the name of the Father, the Son, and the holy spirit" has no power or meaning in and of itself. Moreover, these words have no power over anything, nor do they have the power to cause anything to occur in the physical or spirit realms, unless the person using these words is given authority and power by God the Father and Jesus Christ.

To speak in the name of the Father or Christ is to use one's authorization as their representative to speak on their behalf. It is one thing to just say the words "in the name of " or "on behalf of" the Father or Jesus Christ without understanding what these words were intended to mean and invoke, but it is another thing to understand the concept and power behind these words when they are spoken by one who has been authorized by God the Father and Jesus Christ to use the power of the holy spirit.

The various names of God the Father who is the Supreme Sovereign of all things and Jesus Christ who sits at his right hand as his Son and the elect's high priest are very powerful. This is not because the names themselves contain power or the languages in which these names are spoken are somehow holy. Their names have power because the authority and power comes from the two immortal beings whom the names describe and represent.

The expressions "in the name of", "by the name of", "through the authority of", and "on the behalf of" spoken before the name of the Father or Christ have the same conceptual meaning when used to invoke one's delegated authority and power as a child of God. These expressions can be used for the following purposes by the Father's elect:

- To communicate with the Father in order to fellowship with him.
- To share our thoughts with the Father or request something from him.
- To use spirit-power in order to influence the physical or spirit realms.
- To represent oneself as a servant of the Father and Christ.
- To show by whose authority physical, spiritual, or supernatural works are being performed.
Making the Distinction

When God's people or other people spoke of the true God in the biblical record, the true God was always differentiated from other gods by being referred as the God of Abraham, the God of the Hebrews, the God of Israel, the God of the Jews, or the God of gods. This was done so that there would be no doubt that the God being spoken of was a different God from false gods. See Gen.24:12; 28:13; Ex.3:18; 5:1; Deut.10:17.

There are many gods in this world, but there is only one who claims to be the Sovereign God of all things, and there is only one who claims to be the Sovereign God's firstborn Son and Savior of humanity. Therefore, the use of the official titles or name(s) of the Father and his Son when speaking of them or on their behalf or using an authorization which comes from them qualifies, defines, separates, and makes a distinction between God the Father and Jesus Christ and the false gods of this world.

When Jesus spoke of God or was asked whom he represented, by whose authority he taught the truth of God, or by whose authority he did supernatural works, he made sure the people knew that he was speaking of the Sovereign God of all things and that he was authorized to represent and speak for him and perform supernatural works by his spirit-power. Jesus spoke of his God as the Father, the true God, my God, and your God (Jn.20:17), which left no doubt that he represented a God who was superior to and different from the gods of this world.

When the apostles and others of the early church spoke of God, they defined whom they were speaking of and by whose authority they were preaching and performing supernatural works. Therefore, when the Father's elect speak of God, they should also make a clear distinction between God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the gods of this world. This basic truth must be emphasized when representing God the Father and Jesus Christ or when preaching the gospel message or performing any supernatural works through their authority.

WHAT IS THE FATHER'S NAME?

One of the primary reasons our Redeemer was sent to earth was to reveal the Father and his name to his chosen people. It is extremely important to understand that the Sovereign God of all things is not the Creator God whom the Israelites worshiped under the Mount Sinai covenant. The Sovereign God is the Father of Jesus Christ who was the Creator God whom the Israelites worshiped. Moreover, God the Father is the God whom Jesus said will be worshiped by all beings—physical or spirit. In order to truly understand who the Father is, one must first understand that the Father and the Son are two separate and distinct individuals in the God Family and that Jesus Christ is the Creator God who became the Father's physical son and his first son of his new creation.
God is a Family

"For this cause I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, Of whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named" (Eph.3:14-15 KJV).

Until a person comes to understand that there are two individual and separate God beings who comprise the God Family in heaven at this time, and that the relationship between the Sovereign God (God the Father) and the Creator God (Jesus Christ) is a father-son relationship, almost none of the Bible, including the phrase "in the name of Jesus Christ" can be clearly understood.

In reference to the Father's name, Jesus said the following:

"I have manifested your name to the men which you gave me out of the world: yours they were, and you gave them to me; and they have kept your word" (Jn.17:6 KJV Para.).

"O righteous Father, the world has not known you: but I have known you, and these have known that you have sent me. And I have declared to them your name, and will declare it: that the love wherewith you have loved me may be in them, and I in them" (Jn.17:25-26 KJV).

Jesus said that he revealed the Father's name to his disciples; therefore, it must be possible to discover what the Father's name is and what he wants to be called by those whom he has called to be his earthly children.

"And he [Jesus] went a little farther, and fell on his face, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if it be possible, let this cup pass from me: nevertheless not as I will, but as you will. . . He went away again the second time, and prayed, saying, O my Father, if this cup may not pass away from me, except I drink it, your will be done" (Matt.26:39-42 KJV).

"And it came to pass, that, as he [Jesus] was praying in a certain place, when he ceased, one of his disciples said to him, Lord, teach us to pray, as John also taught his disciples. And he said to them, When you pray, say, Our Father, Hallowed be your name. Your kingdom come" (Lk.11:1-2 KJV Para.). See also Matt.6:9-10.

It is clear that the Sovereign God of all that exists wants to be called Father by those whom he considers to be his children. Moreover, he is our Father, which is what his firstborn Son who is the Savior and Redeemer of humanity said to call him. The English word Father in these two texts is translated from the Greek word Pater, which is derived from a root word which means nourisher, protector, and upholder; and connotes fatherly care and someone who has absolute authority as a father.
WHAT IS OUR SAVIOR’S NAME?

"Therefore the Lord [the Creator God] himself shall give you a sign; Behold, a virgin shall conceive, and bear a son and shall call his name Immanuel [God is with us]" (Isa.7:14 KJV).

The prophet Isaiah said that the Savior would be named Immanuel. In a later prophecy he was inspired to reveal many other names for the Savior and Redeemer of humanity (Isa.9:6). Both Joseph and Mary were told to name the Messiah Jesus, and that he would be the Immanuel spoken of by the prophets (Matt.1:21-23; Lk.1:28-35).

Who Did Our Savior Say He Was?

"When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that you are John the Baptist: some, Elias; and others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets. He said to them, But whom do you say that I am? Simon Peter said, You are the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus said to him, You are blessed, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood have not revealed this to you, but my Father that is in heaven has revealed this to you" (Matt.16:13-17 Para.).

In the Book of Revelation, Jesus calls himself the Alpha and Omega. He is also called The Lamb, The King of kings and The Lord of lords. The scriptures clearly show that our Savior and Redeemer who is the Christ and God the Father's firstborn son has many names by which he is known.

God Has Many Names

Below are some of the many names and titles of God the Father and Jesus Christ, along with the meaning of these names, which show the true character of these two immortal beings:

**Hebrew/English Names**

Elohim ............... Mighty Ones
El ........................ A Mighty One
El-Elyon ............. Exalted One; Most High
El-Shaddai .......... Almighty God
El-Olam ............. God the Everlasting One
El-Roi ................ God Who Sees Me
El-Berith ............ God of the Covenant
El-Elohe Israel …God of Israel
Emmanuel ........... God With Us
Greek Names

Kuros ............. Supremacy
Theos ............. Lord, God, Deity
Logos ............. The Word

It is important to understand that the name of a person has no significance, meaning, or power in and of itself. A name serves only to identify a person or a thing. However, names and titles applied to God the Father and Christ help describe their individual attributes, character, and authority. When one studies the attributes and character of God the Father and Christ, it becomes clear that it is impossible for any one name or number of names to fully describe them.

Not all names of the Father or Christ are revealed in the biblical or historical record (Rev. 19:11-12) nor is it necessary at this time in history to have this information. If it were important, all of their names would have been preserved for our use. What is important is that we follow the spirit of the biblical instructions when we access God the Father and use the various delegations of authority and power we have been given through the name of Jesus Christ.

Phonetic Sounds of Names

Many people believe that some words have mystical powers, just as many of the ancients believed. Some people believe that the utterance of mystical sounds or the speaking of certain words in an ancient language, such as Egyptian, Greek, Hebrew, or Latin, have power to alter or influence things and beings in the physical and spirit realms.

Many people try to correctly pronounce one or more of the many Hebrew names of the Creator God, God the Father, and the Savior because they feel that, by doing this, they will somehow access God or his spirit-power. The problem with this belief is not with pronunciation; it is with the basic concept of this belief. Nowhere in the biblical record is there any support for the use of phonetic sounds in this manner. The correct pronunciation of any of the names of the Creator God, God the Father, or the Savior is of no benefit alone.

What we see in the New Testament is the delegation of authority and spirit-power to the elect in order for them to communicate with the Father, perform certain works for the benefit of the elect, and proclaim the Father's good news message to the world. It does not matter how one pronounces the name(s) of the Father and Christ, as long as it is done with the proper respect and honor for them. What does matter is having the authorization to communicate with the Father and Christ and to use the Father's spirit-power.
THE FATHER’S AUTHORITY

The Bible clearly shows that all existing authority and power resides in God the Father. It is through his authority and power that all things and beings, whether they are physical or spiritual, are able to exist and exert physical or spirit-power and influence:

"I [Jesus] said to you, I go away and come again to you. If you loved me you would rejoice, because I said, I go to the Father: for my Father is greater than I" (Jn.14:28 KJV Para.).

"Let every soul be subject to higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God [God the Father]; but the authorities that exist have been ordained by God [God the Father]" (Rom.13:1 Para.).

While Pilate was questioning Jesus, he asked, "Where do you come from? When Jesus did not respond to him, Pilate said, Why don't you speak to me? Don't you know that I have the authority to crucify you, and I have the authority to release you? Jesus answered and said, You would have no authority over me if it were not given to you from above [from the Father"] (Jn.19:9-11 Para.).

The Father's Kingdom

The apostle Paul was inspired to foretell the presentation of the earth and all righteous individuals to God the Father by Jesus Christ at the completion of the plan for the salvation of humanity. This prophecy clearly shows that God the Father is the Sovereign God who is in authority over all that exists:

"Then comes the end, when he [Jesus Christ] shall have delivered up the kingdom to God, even the Father; when he [Jesus Christ] shall have put down all rule and all authority and power. For he must reign, till he has put all enemies under his feet. The last enemy that shall be destroyed is death" (1.Cor.15:24-26 KJV).

Paul begins this prophecy with the statement: "Then comes the end." But the end of what? This end refers to the end of the physical existence as God the Father arrives to make the earth the focal point of his realm.

"For he [God the Father] has put all things under his [Jesus Christ's] feet. But when he says all things are put under him, it is manifest that he [the Father] is excepted, which did put all things under him [Christ]" (1.Cor.15:27 KJV).

Paul speaks of a time far into the future when all resistance to the Kingdom of God will have been overcome and Christ will rule as the Supreme Sovereign of the earth for his Father:

"And when all things shall be subdued to him [the Father], then shall the Son [Jesus Christ] also himself be subject to him [the Father] that put all things under him, that God [the Father] may be all in all" (1.Cor.15:28 KJV).
THE AUTHORITY OF JESUS CHRIST

"Then the eleven disciples went into Galilee, to the mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him they worshiped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and said to them, saying, All authority is given to me in heaven and in earth" (Matt.28:16-18 Para.).

The English word authority in verse 18 is translated from the Greek word exousia, which means ability to perform an action, and the right, authority, or commission conferred by a higher court. It denotes external power. The Father has delegated to Jesus Christ the authority and power over all the physical and spirit realms of existence in order for him to carry out the work he has been charged with throughout his Father's kingdom. Only the Sovereign Father is above Jesus Christ in authority and power, because the Father is the Sovereign in whom and from whom all authority and power resides and emanates.

The Father has given Jesus Christ all authority and power (1.Pet.3:22). But, does this mean that the Father is not involved in the decision making process concerning the salvation of humanity? It is clear that the Father has retained the right to chose those who will be called to salvation before Christ returns as conquering King (Jn.6:44, 65) and that Jesus Christ is under the authority of the Father (1.Cor.15:25-28).

Jesus is second in authority to God the Father and he is directly responsible to him for all things. The Father has authorized Christ full discretionary use of his spirit-power, but other physical and spirit-beings (good and evil) are limited in their use of his power. If this were not so, the Father's plan for his human creation could be frustrated and impeded.

Jesus Came in His Father's Name

"But I have a greater witness than John's, for the works that the Father has given me, that I should finish these works which I do, bear witness of me. And the Father who sent me has himself borne witness of me . . . I have come in the name of my Father, and you do not receive me . . . " (Jn.5:36-37, 43 Para.). See also Matt.21:9; 23:39; Mk.11:9-10; Lk.19:37-38.

"And Jesus was in the temple area walking in Solomon's Colonnade. The Jews gathered around him, saying, 'How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Christ tell us plainly. Jesus answered, I did tell you, but you do not believe. The miracles I do in my Father's name speak for me, but you do not believe because you are not my sheep" (Jn.10:23-25 NIV).

The Jews were continually questioning and challenging Jesus' authority to teach his heavenly Father's truth and to perform supernatural works; however, a few individuals did understand that his authority was delegated to him by a higher authority, one of which was a Roman centurion:
"When Jesus had entered Capernaum, a centurion came beseeching him, and said to him, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of palsy, and is greatly tormented. And Jesus said I will come and heal him. But the centurion said to him, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof. But only say the word and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man Go, and he goes; and to another, Come, and he comes; and to my servant, Do this, and he does it" (Matt.8:5-9 Para.).

The centurion understood that the power Jesus had did not come from him, but that Jesus was under the authority of a higher power and had been delegated the authority and power to heal and perform supernatural acts at his discretion:

"When Jesus heard this, he marveled, and said to them that followed him, Truly I say to you, in Israel I have not found such great faith as this in Israel. . . . And Jesus said to the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so shall it be done for you. And his servant was healed in the same hour" (Matt.8:10,13 Para.).

Jesus Christ did not come to earth representing himself and his own authority. He came by and with the authority of God the Father to represent him and his kingdom to the world:

"I can of my own self do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just; because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me" (Jn.5:30 KJV). See also verses 36-38.

The Kingdom of God is extremely organized and functions within a hierarchal structure. The Father who is the Supreme Sovereign over all that exists has delegated all authority to his son to perform his will throughout his kingdom, and his son has delegated some of his authority to his Father's earthly children.

ACCESS TO THE FATHER

Just uttering the words "in the name of Jesus Christ", "in Jesus' name", or "by the authority of Jesus Christ" alone do not grant authority or power to access the Father or his power, because these are not magical words. These words are only representations of the office and authority of Jesus Christ through which the elect are authorized to communicate with the Father.

In order to establish communications with the Father and use the power of his holy spirit, a person must be authorized to do so. This authorization is given by the Father to his earthly children through Jesus Christ, who is the Redeemer and Savior of humanity. It is through being called to salvation, having repented of sin, being washed free of sin by the sacrificial blood of Christ, and being transformed into one of the Father's children, that we are authorized to communicate with him and use his spirit-power.
Before Jesus Came

Before Jesus came to earth, most people did not know of the existence of God the Father and could only communicate with the Creator God who later became the Messiah. But after Jesus' death, resurrection, and return to heaven, those called to salvation during the gospel age were authorized to communicate directly with the Father:

"Truly, truly, I say to you, Whatsoever you shall ask the Father in my name, he will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in my name: ask, and you shall receive, that your joy may be full. . . . At that day you shall ask in my name: and I say not to you, that I will pray the Father for you: For the Father himself loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came out from God" (Jn.16:23-24, 26-27 KJV).

It is through the authority represented by the name of our Savior that we are allowed to have access to the Father. This is an extremely important point, because the Father will not hear our requests unless we approach him through the office of his Son. One must be authorized to communicate with the Father, and this authorization comes through our Savior.

All who are the brothers and sisters of Jesus Christ are authorized to speak with the Father as a child speaks to their parent. Because we are spiritual children, we are treated as family members with rights and privileges that are only afforded to members of the God family. This is why the apostle James said, "The effectual fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much" (Jms.5:16). As a firstborn, one has tremendous influence with the Father to affect people's lives and the course of history. This is another reason why it is extremely important to understand the awesome meaning of one's authorization to communicate with the Father and make requests of him as his child through the name and authority of Jesus Christ.

WHY COMMUNICATE WITH THE FATHER?

Communication with the Father is an extremely powerful and readily available tool for use in the spiritual growth and development of those called to salvation. The elect have free access to the Father and they can bring praise, needs, desires, frustrations, and other thoughts to him:

"You have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, that you should go and bring forth fruit, and that your fruit should remain: that whatsoever you shall ask of the Father in my name, he may give it to you" (Jn.15:16 KJV). See also Jn.16:23-26.

God the Father and Jesus Christ want the elect to use this tool of access and communication to grow toward spiritual maturity and perfection. For this powerful tool to be effective, one must be earnest and consistent in its use.
A Perfect High Priest

Under the first agreement with national Israel, the high priest was to act as a bridge between God and his people. Because the High Priest himself was under the death penalty, he was also in need of a perfect sacrifice to be offered to forgive his sins in order to remove his death penalty. Therefore, he and those he represented could never pass beyond the Creator God and into the presence of the Sovereign God, because he dwells in heaven and any human allowed to come into his presence must be totally sinless, holy, and righteous. Before the perfect sacrifice of Jesus Christ, no human could qualify to come into the Sovereign God's presence, because all were under the death penalty for the violation of his righteous law.

The writer to the Hebrews shows a change in the conditions of the original agreement with national Israel. This change gives the authority to the elect to go directly into the presence of God the Father without going to a physical priest and having him speak to God on their behalf, which was done under the first agreement with national Israel:

"If therefore perfection were by the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law,) what further need was there that another priest should rise after the order of Melchizedec, and not be called after the order of Aaron? For the priesthood, being changed, there is made of necessity a change also of the law. For he of whom these things are spoken pertains to another tribe, of which no man gave attendance at the altar. For it is evident that our Lord sprang out of Judah; of which tribe Moses spoke nothing concerning priesthood. And it is yet far more evident: for that after the similitude of Melchizedec there arises another priest, Who is made, not after the law of a carnal commandment, but after the power of an endless life" (Heb.7:11-16 KJV).

"Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he has consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh; And having a high priest over the house of God" (Heb.10:19-21 KJV).

A Spiritual High Priest

Because Jesus Christ is now the high priest who sits at the right hand of God the Father in heaven and because of Christ's sacrifice and the new agreement, the Father's children can now communicate directly with him.

Help in Time of Need

Our Lord and Savior understands our human weaknesses, because he was human. Jesus who was the Creator God experienced life as a human. He fully understands human nature and why humans do the things they do. He can intercede on our behalf because he has first-hand knowledge of what it is like to be a human being. He knows how weak the flesh is
and he can tell the Father who has never been human how difficult it is to dwell in the flesh. This makes it possible for the Father to understand us, have mercy on us, and forgive our sins:

"Seeing that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like we are, yet he was without sin. Therefore; let us go boldly before the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.4:14-16 Para.). See also Heb.2:14-18; 9:7-25.

"My little children, these things write I to you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is a propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1.Jn.2:1-2 KJV).

"Who dares accuse us whom God has chosen for his own? Will God? No! He is the one who has forgiven us and given us right-standing with himself. Who then will condemn us? Will Christ? No! For he is the one who died for us and came back to life again for us and is sitting at the place of highest honor next to God, pleading for us there in heaven" (Rom.8:33-34 LBP).

"Wherefore he is able also to save them to the uttermost that come to God [the Father] by him [Jesus Christ], seeing he ever lives to make intercession for them" (Heb.7:25 KJV). See Eph.2:18.

"For there is one God, and one mediator between God and men, the man Christ Jesus" (1.Tim.2:5 KJV).

Because Jesus Christ offered his perfect life as the final and supreme sacrifice for the sins of humanity, there is no longer a need for animal sacrifice for sin. However, there is still a need for the forgiveness of sin when it is committed.

Through Jesus Christ's perfect sacrifice the Father has provided a much simpler and easier method by which his people can establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with him. God the Father allows his children to communicate with him anytime they want through the name (i.e., the authority) of Jesus Christ their high priest.

It is important to understand and consider the awesome privilege one has in going to the Father in prayer. Although the Father has made a provision to occasionally be attentive to the prayers of those whom he has not called to salvation during this age and will sometimes grant their requests through some mechanism he has not disclosed in scripture (through Christ, angels, or some other method), it is clear that the only humans that he personally gives an audience to are those whom he has personally called to salvation through the blood of Jesus Christ (Jn.6:44,65).
THE PREREQUISITES

Although the Father's children may speak to him through the authority of Jesus Christ or use some other authorization through the office and authority of Jesus Christ, there are prerequisites that a person must fulfill before speaking to him or using any authorization. Some of these prerequisites are true belief in him and his son, having faith and works, and doing things according to his will.

Belief

"These things I have written to you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that you may know that you have eternal life, and that you may believe on the name of the Son of God" (1.Jn.5:13 KJV).

John says that a person must believe on the name of Christ in order to have eternal life. Understanding what John is saying is the key to knowing how to make a powerful request to the Father, how to have confidence that he hears our request, and how to perform supernatural works through the power of the holy spirit.

"Truly, truly, I say to you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to my Father. And whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask anything in my name, I will do it" (Jn.14:12-14 KJV).

Although Jesus' promise of being able to do greater works than he did during his earthly ministry can obviously be fulfilled by all who become immortal spirit-beings in the Family and Kingdom of God, this promise will also be honored during the end of this age in order for the elect to proclaim the Father's message to the world just before Jesus returns.

In order to be able to do greater works than Jesus Christ, a person must first believe on Jesus Christ. Moreover, when one makes a request of the Father, one must make the request in the name of Jesus (i.e., by the authorization of Jesus).

The word translated into the English words believe (1.Jn.5:13) and believes (Jn.14:12-14) are from the Greek word pisteou, which means to be persuaded, to give credit, to have confidence in, to really trust, or to believe. In the above scriptures, the words believe and believes mean to have confidence and trust which is based on Christ and his ability to perform what he says.

Believing entails more than just an acknowledgment of the existence of the Father and Christ. Many people acknowledge that the Father and Christ exist. Even evil spirits believe God exists (Jms.2:19). However, few people believe to the point that they are willing to seek the Father's will in their lives and follow his teachings. In order for the Father's children to have a request granted by him or to be able to use any spirit-power that one may be delegated, one must first truly believe and be making a serious attempt to seek the Father's will in their life.
Faith and Works

"Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, 'Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat heartily,' and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless" (Jms.2:14-17 LBP).

It is not enough to just have faith, because faith without works is no faith at all; it is lifeless and useless. However, a person should not try to prove their faith by doing works. True faith itself produces good works, because it is the fruit of God's spirit being manifested in one's life:

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom.2:13 KJV).

"Without faith it is impossible to please him: for whoever comes to God must believe that he is, and that he rewards those that diligently seek him" (Heb.11:6 Para.). See also Matt.9:27-29.

In order for anyone to prove their faith in the promises of God the Father and Jesus Christ, that person must put forth an effort to make and carry out righteous decisions and diligently seek the Father's will in whatever situation they find themselves.

According To His Will

Another important ingredient in the formula of asking and receiving from the Father is that of asking according to his will:

"And this is the confidence that we have in him [the Father], that, if we ask any thing according to his will, he hears us: And if he hears us, whatsoever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1.Jn.5:14-15 KJV). See also Matt.7:7-11; 21:22.

Even if we ask for something with total belief in God the Father and we are in total obedience to him, we may not receive what we have asked, because it is not within his will for us or his plan for humanity. However, if we have fulfilled the prerequisites he has placed on us when asking something of him and it is according to his will, we will receive it:

"See then that you walk circumspeetly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Wherefore be you not unwise, but understanding what the will of the Lord is" (Eph.5:15-17 KJV). See Col.1:7-10.
MAKING REQUESTS OF THE FATHER

Because the Father wants us to communicate with him in order for him to forgive our sins, fulfill our wants and needs, and help us fulfill our responsibilities to him, there are a number of important things to be aware of when communicating with him. When going before the Father and requesting that he hear us, it is always good to remember that it is an awesome privilege to be able to come before him, because not everyone on earth has this privilege.

Proper use of the Authority to Communicate

The biblical record contains many references and instructions about how to properly communicate with the Father. These instructions should be carefully considered because they were written for our benefit:

"But when you pray, go away by yourself, all alone, and shut the door behind you and pray to your Father secretly, and your Father, who knows your secrets, will reward you. Don't recite the same prayer over and over as the heathen do, who think prayers are answered only by repeating them again and again. Remember, your Father knows exactly what you need even before you ask him" (Matt.6:6-8 LBP). See also Isa.41:17; 58:9; 65:24; Matt.6:25-33; Lk.11:2-13.

"After this manner therefore pray you: Our Father which is in heaven, hallowed be your name" (Matt.6:9 KJV).

"And he said to them, When you pray, say: Our Father, hallowed be your name, Your kingdom come" (Lk.11:2 NIV).

Because the Father is extremely concerned for those whom he has called to salvation, he has provided a way for us to clearly communicate our thoughts, emotions, desires, frustrations, or needs to him in order to help us to succeed in our quest for salvation and to fulfill the responsibilities he has given to us as his children:

"Likewise the spirit also joins in to help our weakness. For we do not know what we should pray for as we should: but the spirit pleads our case for our groans that cannot be uttered. But the one searching the hearts knows what is the mind of the spirit because it intercedes for the elect according to God" (Rom.8:26-27 Para.).

Truly, a person does not always know exactly what they need or how to express their emotions, thoughts, desires, or needs. One of the functions of the indwelling of the holy spirit is to act as an information gathering and communication system between a person and the God Family. This function allows the Father and Christ to be aware of the innermost emotions, thoughts, desires, and needs of those called to salvation:
"A man's conscience [spirit] is the Lord's searchlight exposing his hidden motives" (Pro.20:27 LBP). The King James translation renders this scripture: "The spirit of man is the candle of the Lord, searching all the inward parts of the belly."

Because the spirit communicates one's true physical and spiritual condition to the Father and Christ, the Father's children can always have the assurance that, even before they ask anything of the Father, he already knows what is needed.

**Who Fulfills our Requests of the Father**

Some scriptures tell us that it is the Father who fulfills our request of him, and others say that it is Christ who fulfills our requests of the Father. Although there seems to be a contradiction as to who fulfills requests made of the Father, there is no contradiction because Jesus Christ is the administrator of the Father's plan for humanity and is charged with the care and protection of the Father's children on earth:

"And whatever you shall ask in my name, that will I do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son" (Jn.14:13 KJV).

"But the time is coming, when I shall not speak to you in proverbs, but I will speak clearly about the Father. That day you shall ask in my name: I am not saying to you, that I will ask the Father for you: Because the Father loves you, because you have loved me, and have believed that I came from him. I came from the Father into the world: and I will leave this world, and go to the Father" (Jn.16:25-28 Para.).

"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened" (Matt.7:7-8 KJV).

The authorization to communicate with the Father is given to each person called to salvation during this gospel age. This authorization should be used often if one is serious about their opportunity to have immortality in the Kingdom of God. The first step in receiving anything from the Father is to ask for it. Without making a request, one cannot expect to receive anything.

The Father is more than willing to give his children attributes, qualities, and power to help them succeed. It is his desire to give us the spiritual nourishment and the tools needed to help us grow toward spiritual maturity and perform his will in our life. The Father knows that we need spiritual knowledge, understanding, discernment, wisdom, faith and many other attributes, qualities and powers of the spirit; however, he requires that we be sincere in our asking, and that we make the effort to seek and ask for these things.
The Father Hears Our Prayers

Jesus Christ who was the Creator God of the covenant with ancient Israel inspired the following to be written about God's devotion to his children and the access we have to him and his Father through prayer:

"Call upon me, and I will answer you, and show you great and mighty things, which you do not know" (Jer.33:3 KJV Para.).

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are opened to their prayers..." (1.Pet.3:12 KJV). See also Psa.34:15; Dan.10:12; Mk.11:24; Jn.16:24; Rev.5:8; 8:3-4.

A Powerful Tool

Prayer is an extremely powerful and readily available tool for use in our daily life. Prayer is our communication link with our heavenly Father which is granted through Christ's authority (i.e., his name). In order to use this powerful tool effectively, we must be sincere and consistent in its use.

While our Father is listening to us, we can praise him and thank him for the many blessings he gives us and speak to him about our needs, desires, frustrations, and thoughts for him to consider and take action on.

Summary

The expressions "in the name of", "by the name of", "through the authority of", and "on the behalf of" spoken before or after the name(s) of the Father or Christ have the same conceptual meaning when used to invoke one's delegated authority and power as one of the Father's earthly children. These expressions of authority can be used for the following purposes by the Father's elect:

- To communicate with the Father in order to fellowship, share our thoughts, give thanks, and make requests.
- To use spirit-power in order to influence the physical or spirit realms.
- To represent oneself as a servant of the Father and Christ to other people.
- To show by whose authority physical, spiritual, or supernatural works are being performed.

By B. L. Cocherell

b8w14
Delegated Authority and Power

The Father’s children have been given the authority to communicate with him and petition him with requests. And some of his children have the authority and responsibility to use his spirit-power to perform works for him. Because of this, it is important for his earthly children to clearly understand how the delegation of authority and spirit-power is administered by the Father.

The ancient Roman empire provides us with a good example of how delegated authority and power works. Whenever a person acted as an ambassador of the Roman Empire, they had the full authority and power of the empire to support any action they took or decision they made. A Roman ambassador’s words were law. When he spoke, it was as if the Roman Empire spoke.

Roman citizens were feared throughout the Empire, because they carried the authority of Rome with them. When Paul was arrested at Jerusalem and informed his captors of his Roman citizenship, they became extremely fearful because, as a citizen of Rome, Paul represented Rome and carried the full force of the Roman empire behind him. And the penalty for harming a Roman citizen was death.

When Jesus was sent by his Father, he was sent with authority and power. Jesus sent his disciples and those of the early church to preach his Father’s message with certain authorities and powers. Today, the Father’s elect are also sent with certain authorities and powers. When God the Father or Jesus Christ authorize a person to represent them to the elect or to the world, that person is given the necessary authority and power to carry out their function and responsibility.

To understand what it means to use the authorizations of spirit-power granted to the elect by the Father through Christ, as well as the results obtained through the use of one’s authority, it is necessary to review several accounts showing people being delegated authority and power by Jesus Christ and how they used this power over the physical and spirit realms.

The Disciples and the Seventy

Early in the ministry of Jesus, he taught the message of the Kingdom of God to twelve men who were chosen to be with him throughout his ministry and he sent them to teach the same message that he taught them. He also taught seventy other men and also sent them to teach the same message.
The Disciples

"Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases. And he sent them to preach the kingdom of God, and to heal the sick" (Lk.9:1-2 KJV).

See also Mk.6:7.

Jesus gave these twelve men authority and power over evil spirits and physical illness. Other scriptures show that these twelve were given other authorizations and powers, some of which they were told not to use at that point in time (Lk.9:51-56).

The Seventy

"After these things Jesus appointed seventy others also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, where he would go. . . . heal the sick that are there, and say to them, The kingdom of God is come near to you" (Lk.10:1,9 KJV Para.).

Jesus sent these seventy out to heal people and perform miracles in his name (on his behalf) as they preached the good news of the Kingdom of God.

"And the seventy returned again with joy, saying, Lord, even the devils are subject to us through your name . . .. Behold, I give to you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy: and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Lk.10:17, 19 KJV).

From their accounts, we can learn the following about the authorizations and powers given to the men Jesus sent out to proclaim the Kingdom of God:

- These men were sent forth to represent Jesus and the Sovereign God's kingdom.
- They were delegated authority and power to heal the sick on his behalf.
- They were given authority and power over evil spirits, harmful serpents, scorpions, and their enemies.
- Their authority and power was given to them by Jesus Christ who was sent as a representative of God the Father and his kingdom.

Discretionary use of Authority and Power

The authorizations and powers Jesus gave to certain individuals during his earthly ministry could be used at their discretion. These individuals did not have to ask Jesus each time they wanted to exercise their authority and power. This same discretion was given to those of the early church and is given to the Father's elect who live during the end of the age just before Christ returns.
Signs, Wonders, and Miracles

Jesus Christ had tremendous power at his disposal. He not only used this power at his discretion but also authorized others to use this same power. The following are several of his authorizations of power from his heavenly Father:

- Power to heal the sick and raise the dead (Lk.7:20-23; Acts 5:16)
- Power to control evil spirits (Matt.17:14-18; Mk.16:17)
- Power to manipulate natural laws (Matt.8:23-27; 14:25)
- Power to create physical things (Matt.14:15-21; Jn.2:1-11)
- Power to destroy the physical existence (Matt.21:18-22; Lk.9:54)
- Power to bring curses (Matt.21:18-22; Acts 13:9-12)
- Power to give and take life (Jn.17:2; Acts 5:3-10)
- Power to enlist angelic help (Matt.26:53; Acts 12:5-7)

Greater Power To Come

"Truly, truly, I say to you, He that believes on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go to the Father. And whatever you shall ask in my name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you shall ask any thing in my name, I will do it" (Jn.14:12-14 KJV).

"And these signs shall follow them that be lieve; In my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new languages; They shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:17-18 KJV).

Few realize the awesome power that Jesus had placed at the disposal of the early church in order for them to fulfill their commission to proclaim the Father's good news message. There are at least 21 distinct authorizations of physical and spirit-power noted in the New Testament which were given to the organized and unified Body of Christ.

As powerful as the apostolic era of the church was, the Father's elect did not do a greater work than Jesus. They did perform many great acts and miracles as a powerful witness. However, the historical record shows that they did not do a greater work than Jesus.

Before the end of this age, Jesus Christ will again authorize and empower his Father's elect to perform a great work. The power that the Father's elect will be authorized to use is almost unimaginable and will fulfill Jesus' prophecy about a greater work recorded in John 14:12-14:

"And I will pour out my spirit on a servant and on my women servants in those days. And I will give signs in the heavens and in the earth, blood, and fire, and columns of smoke. The sun shall be turned to darkness, and the moon to blood, before the coming of the great and awesome day of the Lord" (Joel 2:29-31 KJV Para.).
The prophecies show that, before Jesus returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, the dynamic power of the holy spirit will again be manifested through the Father's elect. During the time of the end of human rule, many of the elect will have the supernatural authorizations Jesus and the early church had and more. There will be those who will be filled with tremendous spirit-power with which they can defy and manipulate the laws of the physical universe. No human or evil spirit will be able to stop them from performing their task to proclaim the entire gospel message, teach the Father's truth, and announce the good news of the coming Kingdom of God.

The reason Christ said that the elect would do greater works than he did (Jn.14:12-14) is because their warning, witness, and mission involves the entire world. Therefore, they will require great knowledge, understanding, and power to proclaim the Father's message and warn a sinful and rebellious world that it is about to meet its Creator.

The Prophet Habakkuk

"Behold you [the various tribes of Israel] among the heathen, and regard, and wonder marvelously: for I will work a work in your days, you will not believe, though it were told you" (Hab.1:5 KJV).

The apostle Paul issued a prophetic warning to those of his day and the future in regard to Habakkuk's prophecy:

"Beware therefore, lest that come upon you, which is spoken of in the prophets; Behold, you despisers, and wonder, and perish: for I work a work in your days, a work which you shall in no wise believe, though a man declare it to you" (Acts 13:40-41 KJV).

Ambassadors of the Kingdom

The Father's elect are sent forth into the world as Christ's ambassadors to offer the Father's reconciliation of people to himself (2.Cor. 5:17-20). As ambassadors of Christ, the elect are also representatives of the Father and his Family and Kingdom. Because the elect are ambassadors, they are authorized to speak on behalf of the Father and Christ. Some of the elect are authorized to use whatever spirit-power necessary for them to carry out their responsibilities as ambassadors while they proclaim the Father's offer of reconciliation through his good news message.

"Therefore you go, and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all the things I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matt.28:19-20 KJV Para.).

Heavenly Citizenship

"But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ" (Phil.3:20 NIV).
"If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I [Jesus] have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you" (Jn.15:19 KJV).

Each person God the Father calls to salvation and makes a member of his family and a citizen of his heavenly kingdom is given certain functions and responsibilities to perform. Therefore, the Father gives to individual members the authorizations, privileges, and powers necessary to fulfill their call to salvation during this gospel age. The following are some of these authorizations, privileges, and powers:

- Authority to communicate with God the Father (Heb.4:14-16; 10:19-21) and Christ (Rom.8:33-34)
- Authority to request forgiveness of sins (1 Jn.1:9; 5:16)
- Authority to request things of the Father (Jn.15:16; 16:23-26)
- Authority over evil spirits (Mk.16:17; Acts 16:16-18)
- Authority over the physical realm (Matt.21:18-21; Lk.9:54)
- Authority to heal through prayer and ritual (Jms.5:14-15)
- Authority to heal the unconverted (Mk.16:18; Acts 3:1-6; 5:12-15)
- Authority to govern the church under Christ (Acts 15:1-32; 1 Cor.5:1-7; 2 Thes.3:6)
- Authority to proclaim the gospel (Matt.28:19-20; Mk.16:15; Acts 1:8)
- Authority over life and death (Acts 5:1-15; 1 Cor.5:3-5; Rev.11:3-5)
- Authority to resurrect the dead (Acts 9:36-42; 20:6-10)
- Authority to issue a curse (Acts 13:8-11)
- Authority to administer the baptismal ritual and the laying on of hands for the receiving of the holy spirit (Matt.28:19-20)

Although there are obviously a number of authorizations and powers only given to the elect's spiritual leaders, there are also many authorizations and powers given to others of the elect (both men and women) in order to benefit the Father's elect and to perform the work of the church.

**WHO IS AUTHORIZED BY JESUS CHRIST?**

There are many in this age who use the name of Jesus in their ministry. The problem is to determine the difference between those whom Christ has sent to do a work for him, those whom Satan has sent to mislead people, and those who think that Christ has sent them but have actually sent themselves.
Many times, it is difficult to determine if a person is using spirit-power under the authority of God the Father and Jesus Christ or one of their servants, if they are using it by the authority of evil spirits, or if they have just discovered how to use it by some other method. The reason for this difficulty is that God the Father is the source of all authority and physical and spirit-power.

"Let every soul be subject to higher authorities, for there is no authority except from God [the Father]; but the authorities that exist have been ordained by God [the Father]" (Rom.13:1 Para.).

Because God the Father is the source of all power and authority, power cannot be evil by itself. All physical or spirit-power can be either used for constructive or destructive, righteous or unrighteous, or good or evil purposes, depending on the motivation of those who use it. Therefore, the only way to determine the motivation of an individual who is using this power is to evaluate their work by comparing the end result of their work to God's word, which defines good and evil.

**Sent by Whose Authority?**

During the time of Jesus' ministry, there were many who used supernatural power to perform great works and control or influence evil spirits. As the disciples went about proclaiming the Kingdom of God they became aware of an individual who was not associated with them but was casting evil spirits out of people and claiming that his authority to do this came from Jesus. Because the disciples believed that a person must be a part of their group and must be authorized by Jesus to do this, they forbade him to do it:

"And John said, Teacher, we saw someone who does not follow us casting out demons in your name, and we forbid him, because he does not follow us. But Jesus said, do not forbid him. For there is no one who shall do a work of power in my name, yet be able to speak evil of me quickly. For who is not against us is for us" (Mk.9:38-40 Para.).

Although there is obviously more to this story than what Mark records, there are a number of things we can assume were true of this individual who was casting out evil spirits using the name of Jesus:

1. Because he was saying that he was doing these things "in the name of Jesus", he thought he was authorized to do them. Whether or not Jesus had actually authorized him is not recorded, although it is possible Jesus did authorize him.

2. Jesus said this person was not against him or his disciples; therefore, we can assume that this man was not teaching things contrary to God's laws, precepts, and principles, which would disqualify him from representing Jesus and what he was teaching.
3. Jesus did not condemn this individual; instead, he told his disciples to leave him alone because he was not causing them any harm. By saying this, Jesus neither gives his approval or disapproval of this person's actions.

**Religious Deception**

"Take heed [beware] that no man deceive you. For many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ [I am the Christ]; and shall deceive many [the majority of people]" (Matt.24:4-5). See also Mk.13:5-6; Lk.21:8.

Jesus Christ warned his disciples to be on guard against false teachings which would be taught in his name. The Bible also reveals that Satan the Devil and his ministers have counterfeited the Father's worship system with a perverted version. This powerful spirit-being known as the Devil or Satan, along with other evil spirits, are actively deceiving the entire world politically, philosophically, and religiously:

"That old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceives the whole world . . ." (Rev.12:9 Para.).

"But I fear, lest by any means, as the serpent beguiled [deceived] Eve through his subtlety [i.e.,craftiness], so your minds should be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ. For if he that comes [and is] preaching another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if you receive another spirit [an evil lying spirit], which you have not received, or another gospel, which you have not accepted . . ." (2.Cor.11:3-4 KJV).

"For such are false apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into the apostles of Christ. And no marvel; for Satan himself is transformed into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers also be transformed as ministers of righteousness; whose end shall be according to their works" (2.Cor.11:13-15 KJV).

Much of what people consider to be the Father's truth today is the same basic lie that Satan's ministers have been teaching for centuries.

**The Seven Brothers**

"And certain of the wandering Jewish exorcist, decided to use the name of the Lord Jesus in attempting to help those having evil spirits, saying, We exorcize you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. And there were seven sons of Sceva, a Jewish chief priest, doing this. But the evil spirit said to them, I know Jesus, and I comprehend Paul, but who are you? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them; and overcoming them, he was strong against them, so they fled out of the house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:13-16 Para.).
This is an extremely serious warning to anyone who is not of the Father's elect, but attempts to use the name of Jesus in dealing with evil spirits. In verses 13-16, the evil spirit recognized the authority of Jesus and Paul and knew these seven were not authorized power over it. This is why it said it did not know them.

**Today**

There is no doubt that some people today perform many awesome and extraordinary natural and supernatural works and claim that they are doing these works in the name of, or on the behalf of Jesus Christ; however, Jesus said that many would come in his name (appropriating his name) and would deceive many (Matt.24:4-5; Mk.13:5-6). It does not matter if a person intentionally or unintentional deceives another person, the end result is the same.

**Sincerity**

There are many sincere people who honestly believe they are serving Christ through their efforts to preach and teach the Bible or the performance of physical and supernatural works. However, sincerity is not a test of righteousness or of an authorization to do a work for the Father and Christ. Sincerity is just an indication of how dedicated a person is to what they are doing. If a sincere person who is not one of the elect attempts to use the Father's spirit-power through the name of Christ without being authorized, there are a number of things that could happen:

1. Nothing.
2. An evil spirit might perform the act through its power in order to perpetrate a deception.
3. The sincere person may become possessed by an evil spirit.
4. Because of their own natural power or knowledge, the person may cause events to transpire outside the normal course of events.

Many people today think they are doing the Father's will because of physical works and manifestations of supernatural power. However, the scriptures show that, unless a person is called by the Father, is transformed into one of his earthly children, and practice his laws, precepts, and principles, they are not one of his children.

"Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven. Many shall say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name? and in your name cast out devils? and in your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work lawlessness" (Matt.7:21-23 KJV). See also Lk.21:8.
Many great works are done in the name of Jesus; however, this does not mean that Jesus has sent those who do these works. Each individual the Father has called to salvation during this age of the church is warned to test the spirits and determine for themselves if the source of the teaching or supernatural works is good or evil.

"Beloved, believe not every spirit, but try the spirits to see if they are of God: Because many false prophets are in the world" (1.Jn.4:1 KJV Para.)

"Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but are in reality wolves. By their fruits you shall know them. Do men gather grapes of thorns, or figs from thistles? So every good tree produces good fruits; but the corrupt tree produces evil fruits. A good tree cannot produce evil fruits, nor a corrupt tree produce good fruit. Every tree that does not produce good fruits is to be cut down and thrown into the fire. Then surely by their fruits you shall know them" (Matt.7:15-20 KJV Para.).

**THE USE OF AUTHORITY AND POWER**

In order to understand how to use an authorization of spirit-power, it helps to understand the following things:

1. God the Father is the source of all physical or spirit-power and energy and he has all authority and control over it.
2. The holy spirit is not a person, it is something that consists of energy and power through which God the Father creates, energizes, sustains, and influences all that exists.
3. Spirit-power is neither good nor evil in and of itself; it is raw energy which can be made to perform in many ways to create, energize, sustain, influence, and perform any function that the Father has authorized. Spirit-power is similar to knowledge in that it is neither good or evil. Knowledge is an inanimate thing and incapable of any action of its own. It is what an individual does with the knowledge they possess that results in good or evil. As with knowledge, the end result of using the Father's spirit-power is determined by the user and not by the spirit-power.

**Supernatural Works**

People tend to categorize supernatural acts as either spectacular or not so spectacular, but in reality the Father's spirit-power and how it functions is awesome and beyond human comprehension. Supernatural acts cause things to happen which would not happen in the normal course of events. Supernatural events are the disruption of the physical realm through the use of a source of power from outside this physical realm of existence. This is the power that God the Father and Jesus Christ authorize the elect to use as they seek to accomplish the goals which have been set for them in this lifetime.
Examples

There are many examples in the biblical record of people and spirit-beings using spirit-power to perform supernatural acts. In order to explain how to access, control, and use the various attributes, qualities, functions, and powers of the holy spirit that the Father gives to his children, it is necessary to review a few examples of how this power has been used in the past.

The Priesthood

Under the first agreement with national Israel, the Creator authorized the priesthood to perform certain responsibilities for him in relation to his chosen people and his worship system:

"For the Lord your God has chosen him [Aaron] out of all your tribes, to stand to minister in the name of the Lord, him and his sons forever" (Deut.18:5 KJV Para.).

"And the priests the sons of Levi shall come near; for them the Lord your God has chosen to minister to him, and to bless in the name of the Lord; and by their word shall every controversy and every stroke be tried" (Deut.21:5 KJV). See also Num.5:17-31. 1.Chron. 16:2.

Beside being God's representatives, the priests were authorized to use his spirit-power to bless or to curse individuals on his behalf. When a priest used this authorization, the blessing or the curse was accomplished by spirit-power.

The Prophet Elisha

"And the men of the city said to Elisha, Behold, now, the site of the city is good, as my lord sees, but the waters are bad; and the ground causes barrenness. And he said, bring a new dish to me, and put salt in it. And they took it to him. And he went out to the source of the waters and threw the salt in it and said, so says the Lord, I have given healing to these waters; there shall not be death and sterility there any more. And the waters were healed to this day, according to the words spoken by Elisha" (2.Kgs.2:19-22 Para.).

This may not seem to be as spectacular an event as the parting of the Red Sea by Moses or Elisha's resurrection of the Shunammite woman's dead child. However, this is also an authorization of power which was used to benefit people by God's servant. Through the ministry of Jesus, the disciples, and the early church, the power of God was used to benefit people by acts of mercy and to further God's plan for humanity.
"And he [Elisha] went up to Bethel. And as he was going along the highway. And young boys came out from the city and mocked him, and said to him, Go up bald head! Go up bald head! And he turned and saw them, and declared them vile in the name of the Lord. Then two bears came out of the forest and maul’d forty-two of the boys" (2.Kgs.2:23-24 Para.).

Elisha's condemnation of these young boys resulted in their death. Power over life and death has been and will continue to be given to some of God's servants in order to show people that they should respect those who serve God and are authorized to use his power. See 2.Kgs.1:9-14; Acts 5:1-14; Rev.11:4-5.

Authorization to Use Angels

When Jesus was being arrested, he indicated that, if he had not wanted to be arrested, he could have asked the Father for more than twelve legions of angels to come to his aid. Roman legions consisted of 6,000 men, so Jesus was saying that he could have called for more than 72,000 angels to assist him.

The prophet Elisha also had access to a great number of angels to help him in time of need (2.Kgs.6:15-17). Moreover, the Father's elect during the gospel age of salvation also have this authority (Heb.1:13-14). Although angelic help must be asked for in some situations, this help is authorized for certain individuals to use when the need arises.

The Fig Tree and the Mountain

"Now in the morning as he returned to the city, he was hungry. And when he saw a fig tree he went over to it and found nothing on it but leaves, and said to it, Let no fruit grow on you from this time forward. And presently the fig tree withered away. And when the disciples saw this they marveled, saying, How soon is the fig tree withered away! Jesus said to them, Truly, truly I say to you, If you have the faith, and do not doubt, you shall not only do this which is done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, remove and be cast into the sea, it shall be done" (Matt.21:18-21 Para.).

This scripture shows that, once a person has an authorization of power, it can be used at their discretion.

Fire From Heaven

As Jesus traveled toward Jerusalem, he sent people ahead to a Samaritan village to make preparations for his coming. However, the villagers did not want him to pass through their village because they understood that he was on his way to Jerusalem:

"And when James and John heard this they said, Lord, would you have us command fire out of heaven, and consume these people, even as Elijah did?" (Lk.9:54). See 2.Kgs.1:9-14.
These two men had the power to destroy the villagers with fire by using their authority over the physical elements of the universe. They knew they had the power to do it, but were unsure if it was the will of Jesus.

These are a few of the many examples of the awesome power the Father has authorized some people to use in order to accomplish the goals set for them.

**Activate and Use Spirit-Power**

There are a number of things one must understand and consider in order to activate and use delegated authority and power.

1. The name of the Creator God was committed to Israel as a sacred trust. The misuse of the name(s) of God the Father or our Savior is strictly forbidden. Therefore, one should treat the name of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and their authorizations of spirit-power with the proper respect in order not to be found guilty of blasphemy.

   "You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain" (Ex.20:7 KJV). See also Deut.5:11.

2. There is a difference between asking the Father for something and using his delegated authority and power through the office and authority of Jesus Christ in order to influence, control, or cause an event to happen in the physical or spirit realms. One must realize that to issue a command in the name of Jesus Christ is to access the Father's spirit-power and activate one's authorization to command and control this awesome power.

3. One must be authorized to use the power of the holy spirit. When a person has been authorized by the Father through Christ to use a certain attribute, quality, function, or power of the holy spirit, it can be used at his or her discretion.

**Authorizations of Spirit-Power**

There are many different attributes, qualities, authorizations, and powers which the Father gives through his holy spirit. Not everyone receives all of them (1.Cor.12:1-12), but each of the Father's elect is given what they need in order to successfully perform their calling and obtain salvation. See 1.Cor.13:1-13.
Are You Authorized?

It is clear from the scriptures that some of the elect are given specialized gifts and authorizations for the purpose of performing certain functions, responsibilities, and tasks for the benefit of their brothers and sisters in the faith, or to perform the work of the church in proclaiming the Father's good news message. Moreover, if a person has a specialized authorization, such as those of a prophet, evangelist, elder, or the discernment of spirits, healing, casting out evil spirits, or performing other supernatural acts, that person is expected to use these authorizations for their intended purpose. Therefore, if a person has an authorization they must know they have it in order to use it. But, how does a person know they have a specialized gift or authorization from the Father and Jesus Christ?

How Do You Know?

Although the scriptures do not reveal exactly how each person is made aware that they have been given a specialized authorization, it is clear that those who are given these authorizations know that they have them.

Moses was told by the Creator God himself (Ex.4:1-21); Elisha the prophet was told by Elijah the prophet (1.Kgs.19:1-21); Christ told his disciples (Mk.3:14-15; Matt.28:19-20); Christ told Paul and Ananias in a vision (Acts 9:1-18); and Paul told Timothy (2.Tim.1:6-7). God has revealed his will to his people through angels, dreams, the holy spirit, visions, and even a voice out of the air. Regardless of what method is used to show a person that they have been given special authority or power, the person will know they have been given this authority and power and will know why it has been given to them.

Detailed Instructions

Other than the biblical examples about the use of the holy spirit with prayer and study, there are few detailed instructions about how to use authorizations and spirit-powers given by the Father through Christ. Obviously, these are useless without knowing how to use them; therefore, it seems logical that Christ will make sure any person who needs to know how to use the authorizations, abilities, and powers they are given will receive this knowledge in order for them to perform their specific function or task.

Much information can be gleaned about how to use authorizations and spirit-powers given by the Father through Christ from the many examples of their use in the biblical record. Therefore, it behooves anyone who desires to serve the Father and Christ in a more powerful way to study these examples. See 1.Cor.12:4-31.

By B. L. Cocherell
INTRODUCTION

After being plagued many years with prostate swelling, which I could not cure with my knowledge of natural healing methods, I opted to have surgery which seemed to cure the problem. But, the surgery only masked the underlying cause of the problem and eventually the swelling returned along with intermittent prostate bleeding. Fearing that this was a life threatening problem and not having any success finding a cure with traditional medicine, I ask a friend and fellow elder to anoint me with oil and pray for healing. Although I fulfilled what I thought to be the instructions of the apostle James (Jms.5:14-15), I was not healed. However, with the use of prescription medication over a period of time, the bleeding stopped, leaving the swelling to intermittently return and subside.

Do I believe God heals? Yes, I do. I believe without reservation that the God I worship and serve is all powerful, compassionate, and will fulfill his promise to heal his earthly children. I have personally seen and participated in the instantaneous healing of several individuals and have been healed of serious physical problems a number of times myself. So, why was I not healed of the prostate problem after following what I thought were the apostle James’ instructions?

This question began to bother me for a couple of reasons. First, I had noticed for many years that some people were healed when attempting to follow the apostle James’ instructions and some were not. Second, someone asked me why so many of the elect suffer from chronic and terminal illnesses, but I had no answer.

In order to answer these questions and come to an understanding of divine healing within and outside of the congregations of the elect, I made this study. Hopefully, you will find this study as worthwhile to you as it has been to me in coming to a greater appreciation of our heavenly Father's love and concern for us and the rest of humanity.

Historically, there have been two distinct purposes served by the act of healing: 1) Compassion or evangelism; and 2) To benefit the elect.

It is important to understand the distinction between the process of restoring health to the unconverted and the process of praying for the elect who are ill and anointing with oil by elders within the Father's earthly family of king-priests.
Healing of the unconverted is an act of mercy and compassion, which sometimes accompanies the proclaiming of the Father's good news message and his coming kingdom. Healing within the church is for the benefit of the elect.

This study covers the following topics in a progressive sequence in order to remove some misconceptions about healing within the congregations of the elect and lay a foundation for an understanding of the apostle James' instructions for the Sovereign Father's earthly children to follow when requesting healing:

- The Blood Covenant
- Procedures and Rituals
- Seven Questions and Answers About Healing
- Healing During Christ's Ministry
- The Holy Incense and Prayer
- Laying on of Hands
- Anointing Oil
- The Olive Tree and Olive Oil
- James 5:14-20—Procedure and Ritual

Each of these topics contain valuable information which is necessary to understand why God allows supernatural healing, the instructions for healing, the methods to be performed for healing, the rituals which are a necessary part of the healing process, and how and when healing can be expected after a person requests healing according to the instructions given by the apostle James.
Throughout history, the act of confirming an agreement between parties with blood documents the agreement as binding on the parties as long as they live. Blood covenants are not to be taken lightly, because they are the most binding of all agreements.

To show the importance of following the apostles James' instructions on healing within the congregations of the elect, it is necessary to make a short review of the blood covenant the Creator God made with national Israel and the agreement God the Father makes with those he calls to salvation during the gospel age.

The Covenant with Israel

In Exodus, chapter 24, the Creator God met with Moses and gave him the terms and conditions of the agreement he was offering the Israelites:

"And he said to Moses, Come up to the Lord, you, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu, and seventy of the elders of Israel; and you worship afar off. And Moses alone shall come near the Lord: but they shall not come near; neither shall the people go up with him. And Moses came and told the people all the words of the Lord, and all the judgments: and all the people answered with one voice, and said, All the words which the Lord has said we will do" (Ex.24:1-3 KJV Para.).

After hearing the terms and conditions of the agreement which the Creator God offered to make with them, the Israelites agreed to its terms and conditions. Moses then wrote the things God had said to him in a book, built an altar for sacrifice, set up 12 stone pillars, and offered sacrifices:

"And Moses wrote all the words of the Lord, and rose up early in the morning, and built an altar under the hill, and twelve pillars, according to the twelve tribes of Israel. And he sent young men of the children of Israel, which offered burnt offerings, and sacrificed peace offerings of oxen to the Lord" (Ex.24:4-5 KJV Para.).

After the sacrifices had been offered, Moses took blood from the sacrifices and sprinkled it on the altar, the people, and the book which contained the agreement, thus establishing and sealing the agreement with blood:

"And Moses took half of the blood, and put it in basins; and half of the blood he sprinkled on the altar. And he took the book of the covenant, and read in the audience of the people: and they said, All that the Lord has said will we do, and be obedient. And Moses took the blood, and sprinkled it on the people, and said, Behold the blood of the covenant, which the Lord has made with you concerning all these words" (Ex.24:6-8 KJV). See also Heb.9:19-20 for more details about this event.

THE BLOOD COVENANT
The agreement made with the Israelites was irrevocable while all of its terms and conditions were honored. The Creator God and the Israelites were bound by this agreement in perpetuity. However, history reveals that the Israelites broke this agreement many times and eventually lost the benefits promised to them under its terms and conditions.

Note:

In the biblical text, the Hebrew word beriyth is used to described all covenants mentioned before the advent of Christ. Beriyth can mean a treaty, an alliance of friendship between individuals, a pledge or an agreement containing an obligation of performance which is sealed by a sign or a sacrifice.

The original agreement the Creator God made with the tribes of Israel was sealed with the blood of a sacrificial animal. The promise of a new agreement after the advent of the Messiah was also to be a beriyth (Jer.31:31-34). This new agreement was made and sealed with the sacrificial blood of Christ. See Heb.9:1-28; 10:28-29.

The sprinkling of sacrificial animal blood on the Book of the Covenant and on the Israelites was prophetic and symbolic of Christ's sacrificial blood which is applied to a person who repents of their sins, asks for forgiveness of these sins, and promises to live in obedience to the Sovereign God.

The New Covenant

The writer to the Hebrews explained the problem with the Israelites and the first agreement which necessitated making a new agreement in order to fulfill the Sovereign God's plan for his human creation:

"But now has he [Christ] obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises. For if that first covenant had been faultless, then should no place have been sought for the second. For finding fault with them, he says, Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day when I took them by the hand to lead them out of the land of Egypt; because they continued not in my covenant, and I regarded them not, says the Lord" (Heb.8: 6-9 KJV).

The two basic problems with the first agreement were that the people did not have the inherent ability to continually honor the agreement and the agreement lacked the means through which sin could be forgiven.

Therefore, a new agreement was promised which would solve these two problems:
"For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord; I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts: and I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people: And they shall not teach every man his neighbor, and every man his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least to the greatest. For I will be merciful to their unrighteousness, and their sins and their iniquities will I remember no more. In that he says, A new covenant, he has made the first old. Now that which decays and waxes old is ready to vanish away" (Heb.8:10-13 KJV). See also Jer.31:31-34.

The first agreement made with national Israel is dead. Any provisions of this dead agreement which are not relevant to the new agreement to be established with national Israel after Christ returns will not be in the new agreement.

In order to eliminate any confusion as to the type of an agreement the Sovereign Father has made with those of his new creation, the writer to the Hebrews reviews the establishment of the first blood covenant with national Israel:

"For a testament [i.e., a will] is of force after men are dead: otherwise it is of no strength at all while the testator lives. Whereupon neither the first testament [i.e., agreement/covenant] was dedicated without blood. For when Moses had spoken every precept to all the people according to the law, he took the blood of calves and of goats, with water, and scarlet wool, and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book, and all the people, Saying, This is the blood of the testament which God has enjoined to you" (Heb.9:17-20 KJV).

The first agreement with national Israel was acknowledged as binding with blood, water, scarlet wool, and hyssop. The writer further explains that the tabernacle and its furnishings were also sprinkled with sacrificial blood, which is a cleansing agent within God's worship system. Moreover, without a blood sacrifice, the violation of God's law cannot be expiated:

"Moreover he sprinkled with blood both the tabernacle, and all the vessels of the ministry. And almost all things are by the law purged with blood; and without shedding of blood is no remission" (Heb.9: 21-22 KJV).

In Hebrews, chapter 10, the writer explains that the sprinkling of the blood on the tabernacle and its furnishings not only cleansed them of impurity and sets them apart for a holy purpose but also causes a state of holiness to be bestowed on these objects:
"For by one offering he has perfected forever them that are sanctified [i.e., made holy]. Whereof the holy spirit also is a witness to us: for after that he had said before, This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb.10:14-18 KJV).

It is through the application of Christ's sacrificial blood being applied to a person that the Sovereign God forgives a person's sins, establishes a blood covenant with them, and sets them apart for a sacred purpose.

In Hebrews, chapter 12, the writer explains that Christ is the mediator of the new agreement and that it is the sprinkling of his sacrificial blood which establishes this agreement between a person and the Sovereign God:

"To the general assembly and church of the firstborn, which are written in heaven, and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling, that speaks better things than that of Abel. See that you refuse not him that speaks. For if they escaped not who refused him that spake on earth, much more shall not we escape, if we turn away from him that speaks from heaven" (Heb.12:23-25 KJV). See also 1.Pet.1:1-4.

In Hebrews, chapter 13, the writer explains that the blood covenant made between the Sovereign Father and those of his new creation is a perpetual agreement:

"Now the God of peace, that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb.13:20-21 KJV).

A New Blood Covenant

During the last Passover Christ observed with his disciples, he stated the following about his sacrificial blood establishing the new agreement and being the atonement for sin:

"For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission of sins" (Matt.26:28 KJV). See also Mk.14:23-24; Lk.22:20.

The English word testament in verse 28 is translated from the Greek word diatheke, which means properly, a disposition, i.e., a contract (especially) a will.
The new agreement contains forgiveness of sin, which is only possible through the application of Christ's sacrificial blood. Once a person repents of their violation of God's law, asks for forgiveness of their sins, and has the sacrificial blood of Christ applied to them, that person has made an irreparable blood covenant with the Sovereign Father:

"Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the strangers scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, Elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, through sanctification of the Spirit, to obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ: Grace to you, and peace, be multiplied" (1.Pet.1: 1-2 KJV).

The English word obedience in verse 2 is translated from the Greek word hupakoe, which means by implication, compliance or submission.

Each person who has been sprinkled with Christ's blood, cleansed of their past sins, and sealed with the holy spirit (Eph.1:13; 4:30) has made a blood covenant with their heavenly Father and has promised to obey whatever he asks of them.

Under the terms and conditions of the blood covenant, the Sovereign Father's earthly children are allowed to communicate with him through the authority of Christ (Heb.4:12-16) and make requests for many things, including the healing of a disability or illness.

The apostle John wrote the following about Christ interceding to the Father for us and the conditions under which a request of him must be made before it will be granted:

"My little children, these things write I to you, that you sin not. And if any man sin, we have an advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the righteous: And he is the propitiation for our sins: and not for ours only, but also for the sins of the whole world" (1.Jn.2:1-2 KJV). See also Rom.5:8-10; Eph.1:6-8.

Forgiveness of sin is one of the important stipulations in the agreement between the elect and their heavenly Father which is addressed in the apostle James' instructions about healing of disabilities and illnesses within congregations that have an active eldership.

If we expect our heavenly Father to hear us and grant a request we make to him, we must ask according to his will (1.Jn.5:14-15 KJV). His will in how to request healing of disabilities and illnesses for those who have access to elders within his earthly family of king-priests is to follow the instructions given by the apostle James. Therefore, it is important to understand and follow the letter and the spirit of these instructions.
PROCEDURES AND RITUALS

From the beginning of the Creator God's interaction with mankind, the biblical record shows specific procedures, rituals, and other acts that were performed in order to worship and serve him.

Although few details are given about the procedures and rituals required before the great flood and the establishment of national Israel, it is clear from the Book of Genesis that these rituals and procedures were understood by those who worshiped and served God (Gen.4:1-7; 8:20-21; 22:1-13).

Just before the Israelite's exodus from Egypt, they were instructed to follow clearly defined procedures and rituals regarding the sacrificial lamb in order to be spared from being killed by the death angel as he passed through the land of Egypt (Ex.12:1-14). Subsequently, national Israel was required to perform an amended version of these same procedures and rituals annually in order to remain in a covenant relationship with the Creator God.

Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy contain many instructions to the Israelites which included many procedures and rituals pertaining to sacrifices, purification, sickness, enquiring of the Creator, determining adulterous behavior, the priesthood's attire and behavior, and the anointing of objects and people. These procedures and rituals were to be performed in the minutest detail.

It is important to clearly understand that all of the procedures and rituals the Creator required to be performed before and after the great flood were law; each had meaning and it was necessary for each to be performed correctly in order to effect the desired result.

The following are two accounts of healing, before the advent of Christ, in which a specific procedure and ritual were to be followed to effect the healing of a sickness.

Naaman

Naaman who was the captain of the Syrian army came to the prophet Elisha's home asking to be healed of leprosy. Elisha sent his servant to tell him to wash seven times in the Jordan river and then he would be healed. When Naaman performed this ritual, he was healed of leprosy (2.Kgs. 5:1-27). This account reveals the following:

• Healing can be performed by a prophet who is authorized to perform supernatural works without laying hands on an individual or anointing with oil.
• The person who requests healing must follow the prophet's instructions in order to receive healing.
• Healing is a gift for which no payment of any kind is required and no payment is to be received by the one performing the healing.

**Hezekiah**

The Creator sent the prophet Isaiah to King Hezekiah to tell him to set his house in order because he would die. After King Hezekiah beseeched God to heal him, the Creator sent Isaiah to tell him that he heard his prayer and he would live. Isaiah then instructed Hezekiah's servants to take a lump of figs and place it on the king's boil, after which he recovered (2.Kgs.20:1-7). This account reveals the following:

• God is merciful and hears a righteous person's request for healing.
• Although healing is promised, a person must follow the instructions given to them by God's representative.

**During Christ' Ministry**

During Christ' ministry, he performed certain physical acts in the course of healing individuals. He also gave some individuals instructions to follow before their healing would take effect. Moreover, he gave the apostles authority to set in place certain guidelines, procedures, and rituals to be followed by the elect in order to obtain healing. See Lk.22:17-19; Jn.13:1-17; Matt.18:15-20.

**Law and Ritual**

The apostle Paul wrote the following to the Galatians about the sacrificial law and its rituals which the Creator God required to be performed by the Israelites:

"The law was our schoolmaster to bring us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. But after that faith is come, we are no longer under a schoolmaster" (Gal.3:24-25 KJV).

The sacrificial worship system with its many rituals was the instrument used to bring an understanding of the necessity, purpose, and meaning of the sacrifice of Christ. It is through this understanding that a person has faith in the sacrifice of Christ for the forgiveness of their sins.

Although animal sacrifice is not required during the gospel age of salvation, the performance of a ritual is required in order to form an agreement with the Sovereign God, maintain a covenant relationship with him, and obtain healing within the congregations of his earthly children which have an attending eldership.

**The Covenant Ritual**

Those who desire to make an eternal agreement with the Sovereign God to have their sins forgiven and become a member of his family must do so through the redemptive process and its rituals.
On the first festival of Pentecost, after the death and resurrection of Christ, the apostle Peter preached the gospel message to a great assembly of people:

"Now when they heard this, they were pricked in their heart, and said to Peter and to the rest of the apostles, Men and brethren, what shall we do? Then Peter said to them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and you shall receive the gift of the holy spirit" (Acts 2:37-38 KJV).

Peter explained the three-step process and the rituals which must be performed to enter into a covenant relationship with the Sovereign God: Repent; Be baptized; Receive the holy spirit. Details about how to perform these procedures and rituals are set forth in the biblical record and must be followed; otherwise, no covenant relationship will be established.

Some might feel the rituals of baptism with water and laying on of hands are not necessary to receive the holy spirit. However, while it is true that on special occasions God gave the holy spirit without baptism with water or the laying on of hands (See Matt.3:13-16; Acts 2:1-4), there is no promise from God that he will ever make these exceptions again.

It is clear that the apostles felt it necessary to baptize individuals in water and to lay hands on them in order for them to receive the holy spirit. Therefore, it is obvious that repentance, baptism in water, and the laying on of hands are necessary parts of this covenant ritual in order for a person to receive the holy spirit.

The Gospel Age Passover

Observance of the Passover is an example of a three part ritual, which is required to be performed once a year by those who desire to maintain their covenant relationships with God the Father.

During the last Passover that Jesus observed with his disciples, he revealed the symbolic meaning of the bread and wine and instructed his disciples to perform these same symbolic rituals in remembrance of him:

"And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave to them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me" (Lk.22:19 KJV).

"After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1.Cor.11:25 KJV).

After eating the Passover meal and explaining the symbols of the bread and wine, Jesus washed all his disciple's feet (with the exception of Judas who had left to betray Jesus) and he told them that they should also do what he had done to them:
"So after he had washed their feet, and had taken his garments, and was set down again, he said to them, Know you what I have done to you? You call me Master and Lord: and you say well; for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Master, have washed your feet; you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (Jn.13:12-15 KJV).

Jesus says that what he did is an example for them to follow in their relationship with each other, and it must be done on subsequent Passovers. See Matt.28:19-20; 1.Pet.2:21.

The performance of the foot washing ritual is so important to those whom the Father calls to salvation that John was inspired to record that anyone who refuses to perform the foot washing ritual as a part of the new Passover observance will forfeit their salvation (Jn.13:6-15), which comes through Christ, and will be excluded from participation in what Christ is doing on earth.

Healing Within the Congregations

Using the authority given to him by Christ and his authority as the chief apostle of the council of elders in Jerusalem, James instituted the law pertaining to healing within congregations of the elect, which included procedures and rituals that must be followed by the elect to effect a healing of the body and the spirit:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jms.5:14-15 KJV).

Although no specific details were given with this law, there is enough information in the biblical record about each aspect of this procedure and ritual to determine how to apply it to effect a healing.

SUMMARY

Many rituals were required to be performed during the first covenant with national Israel. Jesus performed several rituals when healing people and he required his twelve disciples and the seventy other men to ritually anoint people as part of the healing process. So, it should not come as a surprise that the Father's elect are also required to perform certain rituals during this gospel age of salvation.

Under the sacrificial system of worship which the Creator gave to national Israel, was it necessary for the priests to perform every minute detail of the rituals and sacrifices in order to obtain a desired result? The answer is yes, absolutely. The scriptures clearly show that the Creator required the priests to carefully pay attention to every detail and to do so with the understanding that it was pleasing to the Creator and that they and the people of Israel would be blessed for their diligence.
The biblical record shows that the prophet Elisha required Naaman to perform a ritual washing in the Jordan river before he would be healed of leprosy, and Isaiah required Hezekiah's servants to place a lump of figs on him before he would be healed. When these men followed the instructions they were given, they were healed. But, would they have been healed if they had refused to follow the prophets' instructions. The answer is absolutely not.

The apostle James gave instructions to the elect which must be followed in order to receive physical healing during the gospel age of salvation. Our Savior said the Father is more than willing to give good things to those who ask him (Matt.7:11) and that we should make our requests to our Father through his authority (Jn.16:23-27). Moreover, the apostle James wrote that, when we request something from our heavenly Father, we should ask with the faith that what we ask will be given to us (Jms.1:5-8). Here we see that both faith and works are required to obtained what is requested.

**Faith and Works**

During the gospel age of salvation, we understand that our heavenly Father and our Savior are not interested in us doing works just for the sake of works alone. Their interest is that we learn the spiritual lessons which works performed with a righteous attitude teach. We also understand we are to practice both the letter and the spirit of God's laws which apply to us in order to please our Father and our Savior and to grow in godly character.

James' instructions must be followed within a congregation of the elect with an active eldership in order to effect a healing of the body and the spirit. These instructions are established in heaven as binding on the elect and must be practiced in the letter and the spirit of the ordinance with the faith that our heavenly Father will honor our request for healing.

The apostle James wrote the following about faith and works:

"What does it profit, my brethren, though someone says they have faith, and does not have works? can faith save them? If a brother or sister be naked, and destitute of daily food, And one of you say to them, Depart in peace, be you warmed and filled; notwithstanding you do not give them those things which are needful to the body: what does it profit? Even so faith, if it does not have works, is dead, being alone" (Jms.2:14-17 KJV Para.).

"Yes, someone may say, You have faith, and I have works: show me your faith without your works, and I will show you my faith by my works. You believe that there is one God; you do well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But will you know, O vain one, that faith without works is dead? " (Jms.2:18-20 KJV Para.).
"Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son on the altar? You see how faith combined with his works, and by works was faith made perfect?" (Jms.2:21-22 KJV Para.).

"And the scripture was fulfilled which says, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed to him for righteousness: and he was called the friend of God. You see then how that by works a person is justified, and not by faith only. Likewise also was not Rahab the harlot justified by works, when she had received the messengers, and had sent them out another way? For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is also dead" (Jms.2:23-26 KJV Para.).

The procedure and ritual set forth by the apostle James for healing within a congregation with a spirit-filled eldership require both faith and works in order to receive the promised healing.

Requesting prayer and anointing by one of the elect and the elder's performance of the healing ritual are both acts of faith and works which please our heavenly Father and our Savior.
SEVEN QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

The following are seven questions I feel are necessary to ask and answer in order to eliminate some confusion and misunderstanding about the healing process as it applies to the elect and the unconverted.

Questions:

1. Why is a healing ritual necessary within a congregation with an active eldership?
2. Who within the congregations of the Sovereign Father's earthly family has the authority to perform the healing ritual as instructed by the apostle James?
3. Is it permissible to apply the apostles James' instructions for healing to unconverted family members?
4. Is it permissible for a non-elder to request their heavenly Father to heal themselves or to heal someone else and expect their request to be granted without following the apostle James' instructions to call for an elder and request healing?
5. Is the practice of using a cloth anointed with oil in a healing ritual authorized in the biblical record, and does the oil placed on a cloth represent the holy spirit as some believe?
6. What was Paul's thorn in the flesh and does it have anything to do with whether or not a person is healed when anointed for healing by an elder?
7. Does the biblical record support the belief that the supernatural healing of a person's disability or illness is provided through the beaten, bruised, and lacerated body of Christ at the hands of the Roman solders?
1. THE HEALING RITUAL

Q. Why is a healing ritual necessary within a congregation with an active eldership?

A. The answer to this question can only be understood in the context of holiness and the necessity to maintain a state of holiness in order to interact with our heavenly Father and receive the benefits promised in the biblical record.

God is Holy

The Sovereign God and his firstborn son Jesus Christ are holy spirit-beings whose very nature and being requires all things which come into close contact with them to be of the same quality of existence.

The word holy expresses a state of existence, an attitude, and a behavior which is in harmony with God's character. A person who has the indwelling of the holy spirit is holy and derives this quality of existence from their heavenly Father through the power of his holy spirit. It is this holy quality of existence (i.e., holiness) which differentiates God the Father's earthly children from the rest of humanity.

The apostles Peter and Paul wrote the following to the elect about the requirement to be holy:

"But as he which has called you is holy, so you be holy in all your behavior: Because it is written, You be holy; for I am holy" (1.Pet.1:15-16 KJV Para.). See also Lev.11:44-45, 19:1-2.

The instruction to be holy is not a suggestion. Being holy and maintaining holiness is a requirement for anyone who is serious about their salvation. Maintaining a state of holiness requires the diligent practice of what you understand concerning a holy attitude and behavior. Moreover, when you become aware that you have violated the laws, percepts, and principles of holiness, you must request forgiveness of this violation in order to restore and maintain a harmonious relationship with your heavenly Father and your Savior. See Jms.4:17: 1.Jn.3:7.

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, to the saints which are at Ephesus, and to the faithful in Christ Jesus: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love" (Eph.1:1-4 KJV).
The biblical record shows that a peaceful and harmonious relationship between God the Father, Jesus Christ, and the Father's chosen ones is established through the power of the Father's holy spirit. Notice that the elect were chosen in Christ before this physical existence to be holy and blameless. To be holy and blameless is to be found in compliance with God's laws, precepts, and principles. The biblical record also shows that holiness must be diligently maintained by a person in order for them to continue to be blameless (i.e., sinless).

**Law and Holiness**

The Sovereign God is a god of law and there are certain laws that govern the interaction between him, his firstborn son Christ, his heavenly realm, his earthly children, and this physical realm.

Moses was given many instructions, procedures, and rituals to be followed by the Israelites. Some of these had symbolic and prophetic meaning. But, some were necessary in order to purify the tabernacle and its contents, the priesthood, and the nation of Israel in order to obtain and maintain a holy state of existence so that the Creator God, in his spirit presence, could dwell in the tabernacle and the priesthood could perform their duties within the tabernacle.

The Creator God continually warned the Israelites about the sacredness of his earthly holy place and the punishment they would bring on themselves if they did not keep from polluting it. A person who has the indwelling of the holy spirit is a temple of their heavenly Father on earth during this gospel age of salvation; therefore, they must also maintain a holy state of existence. See 1.Cor.3:16-17, 6:19-20.

**A Fatal Mistake**

As a warning of what happens to people who fail to conform to the laws governing holiness, the Creator inspired Moses to record the deaths of Nadab and Abihu, which was the result of their failure to pay attention to the laws of purity (i.e., holiness).

Nadab and Abihu disregarded the Creator's instructions to keep all physical contamination out of his presence and brought unholy fire within the confines of the tabernacle. This was a serious violation of the law concerning purity and the tabernacle. By placing impure fire in their censers, they defiled themselves, as well as their censers, which made them unholy and unfit to minister before God:

"And Nadab and Abihu, the sons of Aaron, each took his censor, and put fire in them; and they put incense on it and brought strange fire before the Lord, which he had not commanded them. And fire went out before the Lord and consumed them; and they died before the Lord" (Lev.10:1-2 Para.). See also Lev.10:8-10.
This blatant violation of the law of purity brought a swift and fatal response from the presence of God. The law was very clear on this subject. All physical things (people or inanimate objects) that came into the presence of God while he was in his spirit-form within the tabernacle had to be kept in a condition of physical and ceremonial purity.

The death of Nadab and Abihu is an example of what happens to those whom God has set apart for a holy purpose who fail to respect his laws concerning holiness and the performance of the procedures and rituals required to remain holy and maintain the purity of his holy place.

The consequences for defiling the tabernacle were clearly detailed in the covenant the Creator God made with national Israel. The consequences for a person with the indwelling of the holy spirit defiling their heavenly Father's earthly temple is also clearly detailed in the biblical record. See 1.Cor.3:16-17, 6:18-20; 2.Cor.6:15-17.

A person with the indwelling of the holy spirit who understands the instructions for healing given by the apostle James and refuses to follow these instruction will not be immediately killed by fire, as were Nadab and Abihu. However, this person may not receive the healing they desire if they do not follow the procedures and rituals as instructed.

 Forgiveness of Sin

The following is the apostle John's understanding of a person's proclivity to knowingly or unknowingly violate God's law, which compromises a person's holiness.

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us:" (1.Jn.1:5-10 KJV).

What does the forgiveness of sin and holiness have to do with the apostle James' instructions about healing? Forgiveness of sin is a requirement in order to first become holy and is also a requirement in order to maintain a holy state of existence.

Any violation of God's law adversely impacts a person's holy state. James’ comment about sin being forgiven in the context of his instructions for healing, speaks to the possibility that the person requesting healing has violated God's law—knowingly or unknowingly:
"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise them up; and even if sins are committed, they shall be forgiven. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much" (Jms.5:15-16 KJV Para).

"Elijah was a person subject to like passions as we are and prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (Jms.5:16-18 KJV Para.).

Because maintaining one's holiness should be a primary concern of a person with the indwelling of the holy spirit, the forgiveness of sin and the healing of a disability or illness is included in the apostles James' instructions to the elect. Forgiveness of sin restores a person's spiritual health and physical healing restores a person's physical health.

2. THE AUTHORITY TO HEAL

Q. Who within the congregations of the Sovereign Father's earthly family has the authority to perform the healing ritual as instructed by the apostle James?

A. The short answer is that all men who have been ordained as elders within the Father's earthly family of king-priests have this authority. However, a more complete explanation is needed in order to understand how this authorization applies when following the apostle James' instructions for healing within the congregations of the elect.

The Church Era

While preparing the disciples for the work they were to do after his death and resurrection, Jesus gave clear instructions about how to perform fasting (Matt.6:16-18), the process that must be followed to resolve interpersonal and spiritual problems within the church (Matt. 18:1-20), as well as many other instructions to be followed by believers. Additionally, he gave the apostles authority to set in place certain guidelines, rituals, and procedures to be followed in order to obtain a desired result.

Matthew twice recorded that Jesus gave the apostles discretionary authority to impose sanctions, penalties, rules, and laws within the church during the gospel age of salvation with the understanding that what was to be administered must conform to what was already established in the heavenly realm as a body of law governing the elect.
"And Jesus answered and said to him, Blessed are you, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood has not revealed it to you, but my Father which is in heaven. And I say also to you, That you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give to you the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven" (Matt.16:17-19 KJV Para.).

"Truly I say to you [the disciples], Whatever you shall bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatever you shall loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, That if two of you shall agree on earth as touching any thing that they shall ask, it shall be done for them of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt.18:18-19 KJV Para.).

The Apostle James' Authority

The apostles used the discretionary authority Jesus gave them many times to impose sanctions, penalties, rules, and laws within the church. James who was Jesus' brother (Gal.1:19) and head of the Jerusalem council of elders (Acts 15:1-22) used his authority to institute a ritual to be performed within congregations of the elect in order to effect a healing of the body and the spirit:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jms.5:14-15 KJV).

These instructions show that the elders of the early church were to intercede through the authority of Jesus Christ to God the Father on the behalf of the elect. When these instructions were followed, the sick person was healed.

Note:

All of the examples of healing in the New Testament reveal that the supernatural healing of individuals happened quickly, were instantaneous after a command was given to heal, or came after a person followed the instructions given to them by the individual performing the healing.

Power, Protection, and Abilities

After his resurrection, Jesus promised the remaining eleven disciples that those who believed his message would have certain supernatural power, protection, and abilities:
"And these signs shall follow those who believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with languages new to them; They shall cast away serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:17-18 KJV Para.).

This statement of facts tells us that supernatural abilities will be evident among believers. Believers will be able to cast out evil spirits, speak languages new to them, be protected against poisonous snakes and liquids, and heal every type of illness, disability, and spiritual or mental disorder through the laying on of their hands.

Although these promises are in the context of proclaiming the gospel message and accepting those who believe into the Sovereign Father's earthly family of believers, Jesus did not restrict the ability to heal to men in the ministry nor did he place restrictions on who can be healed through the laying on of hands.

Therefore, it seems logical that a man endowed with the gift of healing (1.Cor.12:9) can lay hands on the elect and the unconverted in order to perform healing. Additionally, it seems logical for an elder with the indwelling of the holy spirit to practice the laying on of hands, especially when anointing and praying for one of the elect requesting healing.

**Gifts of the Spirit**

There are at least 21 supernatural gifts of the spirit recorded in the New Testament which are given in order for the elect to carry out various functions and responsibilities during the gospel age of salvation. The following are some of the gifts of the spirit:

"Now there are a variety of gifts, but the same spirit. And there are differences of administrations, but the same Lord. And there are a variety of operations, but it is the same God which works all in all. But the manifestation of the spirit is given to every one to profit nevertheless. For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another various languages; to another the interpretation of languages: But all these work in one, which is the same spirit, distributing to everyone individually as purposed" (1.Cor.12:4-11 KJV Para.).

The English word gift in Paul's comments about these abilities given through the holy spirit is translated from the Greek word charisma, which is derived from the Greek word charizomai, which means to grant as a favor. Charisma, in the context of verses 4 through 11, means endowments.
Although some of the supernatural abilities are clearly intended for individuals occupying positions of service within the Father's earthly family, it is important to note that many of these abilities are made available to all family members regardless of position of service or gender.

The authorizations and powers that a member of the body of Christ is blessed with are not for one's personal aggrandizement or entertainment. These spiritual gifts are for the performing of the work of the church and the edification and enrichment of the Father's elect who are being prepared to serve humanity through the Family and Government of God.

It is important to understand that not every member has the same authorizations or supernatural abilities. The Father knows the strengths and weakness of each person he calls to salvation and gives gifts of the spirit according to the needs, functions, and responsibilities within his family.

All elders within congregations of the elect do not have the gift of healing, but they have the authority and the responsibility to perform the healing ritual as noted in the apostle James' instructions when requested and within the bounds of reason. Moreover, not all elders have the kind of faith necessary in order to be assured that their prayer will result in the healing of the person being anointed. Therefore, healing is not entirely dependant on an elder's faith, but on the faithful performance of the healing ritual and the promise of healing through its faithful performance.

Some might think a person does not have supernatural gifts of the spirit unless they are able to work great miracles, heal the sick, or foretell the future. However, these are only the more visible and spectacular acts which can be performed through the power of the holy spirit. They only seem more important, because they are more visible and dynamic in presentation; however, they are not the most important. See 1.Cor. chaps. 12-14.

When an elder or any other man within the body of the elect is given the authority and power to heal disabilities, illnesses, and spiritual or mental disorders, that power is absolute and is only limited by that person's decision to heal or not. The authority to perform the ritual of healing in accordance with the instructions of the apostle James is clearly a function of elders within a congregation of the elect.

3. UNCONVERTED FAMILY MEMBERS

Q. Is it permissible to apply the apostles James' instructions for healing to unconverted family members?

A. The answer is no, the following explains why.
While giving instructions and guidelines for marriage, the apostle Paul addresses the situation where only one spouse in the marriage is converted. In these instructions, Paul reveals three basic facts about the sacred status of unconverted individuals within this family situation. These facts concern the unbelieving mate being sanctified and being afforded an opportunity for salvation and the children being made holy:

"And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, let her not leave him. Because the unbelieving husband has been sanctified because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified because of her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, if you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, if you will save your wife?" (1.Cor.7:13-16 Para.).

The first clue to understanding what Paul is saying to a believing spouse is that being sanctified and being holy are two completely different things. The English word sanctified in verse 14 is translated from the Greek word hagiazō, which means purify or consecrate. The English word holy in verse 14 is translated from the Greek word hagios, which means sacred, pure, blameless, holy, or saint.

There is a clear difference between the unconverted mate and the unconverted children. The unconverted mate is sanctified but not holy, and the children are holy but not sanctified. These scriptures show two different degrees of the sacred realm being administered. The unconverted mate is purified or consecrated to a sacred use, but the children are placed in a sacred state of existence. For a more detailed understanding of the spiritual status of the elect's unconverted family members, see chapter 18: The Holy Ones and God's Law.

All unconverted people are sinners, which includes a spouse's unconverted mate and unconverted children. Because these individuals are unconverted, they are outside the covenant relationship between the converted spouse and God the Father. Therefore, the apostle James' instructions for healing within the congregations does not apply to them, because they do not have the indwelling of the holy spirit. The context of the apostles James' instruction for healing is clearly directed toward individuals with the indwelling of the holy spirit.

No instructions or guidelines for anointing unconverted people or the elect's unconverted family members can be found in the biblical record after the establishment of the early church. However, after Jesus gave the command to his disciples to preach the good news message to all people, he gave the following promises to those who would believe their message:
"And these signs shall follow those who believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with languages new to them; They shall cast away serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:17-18 KJV Para.).

These promises of supernatural protection and the power to heal the sick were not limited to the eleven disciples whom Jesus commanded to preach the gospel message (Mk.16:14-16); these promises were also for those who truly believe the message Jesus brought from his heavenly Father.

The gifts of the spirit which are given to the Father's elect include the ability to heal disabilities and illnesses (See 1.Cor.12:1-30). Therefore, it seems appropriate for those who have this power and authority to use it for the benefit of the elect's unconverted family members and others when requested.

4. HEALING WITHOUT AN ELDER

Q. Is it permissible for a non-elder to request their heavenly Father to heal themselves or to ask healing for someone else and expect their request to be granted without following the apostle James' instructions to call for an elder to request the healing?

A. The answer is yes. There are many circumstances which make it impossible to contact an elder in order to follow James' instructions, such as emergencies and situations involving the unconverted where it is logical, merciful, and prudent to beseech our heavenly Father for another person's healing. In these situations, a person can and should go directly to their heavenly Father through the authority of Christ, request healing, and expect a positive answer.

It is abundantly clear from many scriptures that our heavenly Father will hear a righteous person and respond positively to their requests:

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb.4:14-16 KJV).

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are open to their prayers: but the face of the Lord is against them that do evil" (1.Pet.3:12 KJV). See also Psa.34:15.

"And this is the confidence that we have in him, that, if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us: And if we know that he hears us, whatever we ask, we know that we have the petitions that we desired of him" (1.Jn.5:14-15 KJV). See also Matt.7:7-11; Lk.11:5-13.

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Healing by a Non-elder

A brother in Christ who is not an elder, but has the gift of healing in order to perform the work of an evangelist, a teacher of the Faith, a prophet, or some other function or responsibility could be asked to perform a healing for one of the elect when no ordained elder is available to perform the healing ritual. However, this man cannot perform the healing ritual established by the Apostle James, because it must be performed by an ordained elder.

If asked, a brother in Christ with the gift of healing also has the discretion to use his authority to heal the elects' unconverted family members or some other unconverted person.

5. THE ANOINTED CLOTH

During this gospel age of salvation, some congregations practice the sending of a cloth anointed with oil, which has been prayed over, to individuals requesting healing. Those who practice this ritual believe that their authority for this practice is found in the special miracles performed by the apostle Paul and that the oil represents the holy spirit.

Q. Is the practice of using a cloth anointed with oil in a healing ritual authorized in the biblical record and does the oil placed on these cloths represent the holy spirit, as some believe?

A. The short answers to both questions is no. However, more detailed answers are necessary in order to explain why some people are healed and some are not through the use of an anointed cloth.

Paul's Special Miracles

"And God wrought special miracles by the hands of Paul: So that from his body were brought to the sick handkerchiefs or aprons, and the diseases departed from them, and the evil spirits went out of them" (Acts 19:11-12 KJV).

The English word handkerchiefs is translated from the Greek word soudarion; a sudarium (of Latin origin), which means a sweat-cloth, i.e., a towel for wiping the perspiration from the face or binding the face of a corpse. The English word aprons is translated from the Greek word simikinthion (of Latin origin), which basically means a narrow covering.

The account of Paul healing the sick and casting out evil spirits through the use of a cloth or apron sent from him does not tell us if this method of healing was to be applied within or outside the congregations. However, if cloths were used within congregations, it seems logical that, whenever the aprons and cloths were sent, there was no elder available to cast out demons or perform the healing ritual as set forth by the apostle James. Otherwise, there would have been no need for these special miracles. Moreover, there is no mention of Paul anointing a cloth or apron with oil. What is clear is that this was a special authorization given to the apostle Paul.

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Although not recorded in the biblical record, it is obvious that Paul would have also sent along instructions detailing what to do and say surrounding the use and disposal of the cloth. In the case of the removal of an evil spirit, it seems logical that Paul delegated authority to cast out evil spirits to the one who was to perform this task on his behalf through the use of the cloth or apron.

This account does not reveal whether or not the people who received healing or the removal of evil spirits were of the elect or not. However, we know that the holy spirit and evil spirits are not compatible; therefore, it would seem that the evil spirits were removed from individuals without the indwelling of the holy spirit.

This particular miracle performed by the apostle Paul reveals the following important information relevant to this study:

• No authorization is granted or indicated in Acts 19:11-12 for elders today to use an anointed cloth to effect a healing.
• The biblical record shows that only Paul was authorized to use spirit-power in this way to perform miracles.
• Perhaps these objects were needed to transmit spirit-power or to initiate the flow of spirit-energy needed to perform the miracle. Or perhaps they were symbolic of the miracle which would follow their application.

The Holy Spirit and Oil

Q. Is there proof in the biblical record that oil is symbolic of the holy spirit as some believe?

A. The belief that oil represents the holy spirit cannot be substantiated in the biblical record. This belief is an assumption based on interpretations and comparisons of the sacrificial law, anointing by prophets, and other scriptures containing references to oil, none of which shows oil being symbolic of the holy spirit. However, some biblical references do show that it is necessary for an oil to be used in order to effect a result through the power of the holy spirit. See the section: "The Olive Tree and Olive Oil" for potential meanings of the anointing oil.

Inconsistent Results

Although no authority can be found in the biblical record for the practice of anointing a cloth with oil, praying over it, and then sending it to a person to effect the healing of a disability or illness, the fact is that this practice has been honored by God the Father. People who have received an anointed cloth have been healed of disabilities and illnesses.
My personal knowledge and experience of this practice shows inconsistent results. Sometimes the person requesting the anointed cloth would get an immediate positive result after making the request, even before receiving it. And sometimes the requestor would get a positive result immediately after receiving the cloth. While others would not be healed, would slowly recover, would continue in a chronic condition for an extended time, or would die.

Why are the results of using an anointed cloth inconsistent and why do some people receive healing through this practice while others do not? The following four points are my understanding and opinions as to why there are inconsistent results from the use of an anointed cloth:

1. A promise of healing through the application of an anointed cloth cannot be found in the Bible. Therefore, regardless of one's belief in the validity of this method of healing, our heavenly Father is not obligated to heal a person through this method.

2. Our heavenly Father and our Savior know what is best for us in every situation. They know whether or not healing through the application of an anointed cloth will serve to strengthen our spiritual character or help us to obtain our goal of salvation.

3. Our heavenly Father and our Savior understand we are many centuries removed from the laws given to national Israel and the laws given to the early church and that much knowledge has been lost to us. Therefore, they take our ignorance into consideration when deciding whether or not to heal through the application of an anointed cloth.

4. Our heavenly Father and our Savior have a love for us that is beyond our comprehension; they know us better than we know ourselves and show great compassion and mercy to us, even in our ignorance. Therefore, it seems to me that whether or not a person is healed through the application of an anointed cloth is predicated on what is best for the individual.

Although many times our heavenly Father makes an allowance for our ignorance, when we come to understand a certain aspect of his law and the way of life he has prescribed for us to follow, we must then diligently practice what we have come to understand in order to receive a blessing in this area of our life. And so it is with the instructions given by the apostle James concerning the method through which the elect within congregations with an active eldership are to be healed of their disabilities and illnesses.
6. PAUL'S THORN IN THE FLESH

Q. What was Paul's thorn in the flesh and does it have anything to do with whether or not a person is healed when anointed for healing by an elder?

A. The thorn in Paul's side was not an illness or disability as commonly believed, and it has nothing to do with the healing of the sick.

This section provides a detailed explanation of what the thorn in Paul's flesh was, why he was allowed to be continually troubled by it, and why some people are not always healed.

Not Healed or Partially Healed

When asked why a person is not completely healed after being anointed and prayed over by an elder or after receiving an anointed cloth, many will answer that the person has been given a trial which they must endure in order to build spiritual character. To justify this reasoning, a reference is often made to Paul's letter in which he wrote about the thorn in his flesh:

"There was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure. For this thing I besought the Lord three times, that it might depart from me. And he said to me, My grace is sufficient for you: for my strength is made perfect in weakness" (2.Cor.12:7-9 KJV Para.).

Some think Paul's thorn in the flesh was poor eyesight; others think it was a disability, a chronic illness, or some sort of temptation put to him in order for him to build spiritual character. When we review the many things that Paul continually experienced and suffered during his ministry, it seems highly unlikely that any of these things were the "thorn" to which Paul referred.

The apostle Paul experienced a tremendous amount of mental and physical suffering as he went about preaching the gospel. He was imprisoned several times, received thirty-nine lashes five times from the Jews, was stoned once, shipwrecked, adrift in the sea a day and a night, constantly harassed by individuals who opposed what he taught, and in constant danger from the Jews, foreigners, and false brethren who sought to harm him. He also suffered sadness, sleepless nights, constant pain from old injuries, suffered hunger and thirst, and even went without clothing. As if this were not enough suffering, Paul had the care of many churches and their many problems to deal with. See 2.Cor.11:16-28.

Paul was subject to the same laws as the rest of the elect. James' instruction for healing within the congregations of the elect is all inclusive; it does NOT say, "Is there any sick among you (except the apostle Paul) let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jms.5:14).
Paul wrote his letter to the Corinthians while visiting the churches in Macedonia before going on to Corinth. If he were in need of healing, he could have asked the elders who traveled with him or those in Macedonia to pray over him and anoint him. If he had an actual thorn in his flesh, he would have pulled it out. So, what was this "thorn" and why wouldn't the Father remove it?

Whatever the problem the apostle Paul described as a thorn in the flesh, we can be sure it was not a sickness or a disability which prevented him from performing his ministry. The biblical record seems to indicate that Paul was not a healthy person and dealt with much physical pain due to the many beatings and other mental and physical abuses he endured during his ministry.

Additionally, Paul writes that the cause of the thorn in his side is a messenger from Satan which God has allowed to bother him. Therefore, we can assume with some degree of confidence that Paul was speaking metaphorically about the thorn in his flesh and that the problem was not physical.

Although Paul did not clearly define what this thorn was in his letter, it does not mean we cannot discover what it was or at least make a logical assumption based on an analysis of the Greek text, along with his other letters and other things recorded about his life.

There is little recorded about Paul's background, but we know that he was a Pharisee and the son of a Pharisee. He was taught by Gamaliel and was well versed in all aspects of God's law. Paul was a Roman citizen and was highly respected and authorized by the high priest and members of the Sanhedrin to persecute the early church before his encounter with Jesus.

From Paul's letters, it is easily understood that he was an extremely intelligent, compassionate, loving, and a pragmatic individual with a strong personality. Paul clearly understood his own strengths and weaknesses and the importance of the task which Jesus gave him to perform.

Without reviewing what Paul wrote in 2.Corinthians, chapters 10 and 11, it is impossible to understand the context in which the "thorn in his flesh" is written. Therefore, I suggest that you carefully review these chapters before proceeding.

In the first 4 verses of 2.Corinthians, chapter 12, Paul writes of a man who is given an exceptional understanding of spiritual things:

"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago, (whether in the body, I cannot tell; or whether out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) such an one caught up to the third heaven. And I knew such a man, (whether in the body, or out of the body, I cannot tell: God knows;) How that he was caught up into paradise, and heard unspeakable words, which it is not lawful for a man to utter" (2.Cor.12:1-4 KJV).
Because Paul tells us he was taught by Christ himself, there can be little doubt that Paul is referring to himself in these verses. See Gal.1:11-18; 1.Cor.11:23.

"Of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in my infirmities" (2.Cor.12:5 KJV).

The English word infirmities used throughout the King James version of Paul’s letter is translated from the Greek word astheneia, which means weak or weakness. This is the first clue to discovering what the "thorn" in Paul’s side was.

Astheneia is seldom used to indicate a disability or illness, but many times it speaks to the whole of a person as being weak in mind or body. The word astheneia is markedly different in meaning from the Greek word arrhostos, which means to be physically weak; it is also different from the Greek word astheneo which is used to indicate a disability or illness.

A more accurate translation of verse 5 would be: "I will boast about a man like that, but I will not boast about myself, except about my weaknesses" (2.Cor.12:5 NIV).

In verse 5, Paul says he has weaknesses, but what are the weaknesses to which he refers? Verses 6 and 7 reveal Paul’s weaknesses:

"Even if I should choose to boast, I would not be a fool, because I would be speaking the truth. But I refrain, so no one will think more of me than is warranted by what I do or say" (2.Cor.12:6 NIV).

In verse 6, Paul essentially says that he will not boast about what has been revealed to him to avoid having people think more highly of him than they should or idolizing him.

In verse 7, Paul explains that the reason a messenger from Satan is allowed to trouble him is to keep him from being conceited.

"And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of the revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure" (2.Cor.12:7 KJV).

The English phrase "I should be exalted above measure", which is repeated twice in verse 7, is translated from the Greek word huperairomai, which means to raise oneself over, i.e., (figuratively) to become haughty. Given the meaning of the Greek word huperairomai in verse 7, perhaps a more accurate translation of this verse would be:

"To keep me from becoming conceited because of these surpassingly great revelations, there was given me a thorn in my flesh, a messenger of Satan, to torment me, lest I become conceited" (2.Cor.12:7 NIV).

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It is easily understood how a person with superior intellect and knowledge who has discretionary supernatural power and is placed in a position of great authority and responsibility could begin to think more highly of themselves than they should.

In verses 8 and 9, Paul writes that he asked three times to be rid of this problem, but the answer was always no, because the problem existed for his benefit:

"Three times I pleaded with the Lord to take it away from me. But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness. Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong" (2.Cor.12:8-10 NIV).

Verse 10 reveals that the things being allowed to trouble Paul without relief are insults, hardships, persecutions, and other difficulties, not a disability or a sickness.

The meanings of the Greek words used in verse 10 reveal that the things being allowed to trouble Paul without relief were insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties, none of which describe a disability or a sickness. Instead, they describe things which can cause a person to be emotionally agitated, distressed, disappointed, and frustrated.

One of the most difficult things for an intelligent, knowledgeable, and talented person to deal with are people who are opinionated, argumentative, and ignorant of the facts about what they are debating. This is especially true when it comes to dealing with people who are opposed to biblical truth, are enemies of our Father and our Savior, and for whatever reason attempt to discredit those who teach truth.

Paul had the authority to heal people, resist evil spirits, cast out demons, and perform other supernatural works, but he could not prevent individuals influenced by an evil spirit (a messenger from Satan) or evil individuals, such as Alexander the coppersmith and those he refers to as dogs, evil workers, and the Jews, from causing him trouble as he preached the gospel. Moreover, he could not stop the chief priests and other religious leaders of the Jews from attempting to kill him. See 2.Tim.4: 13-14; Phil.3:1-2; Acts 23:12-14.

It seems that a problem Paul continually experienced (i.e., the metaphoric thorn in his flesh) consisted of being harassed by individuals who challenged his teaching and were arrogant and opinionated about their religious beliefs, some of whom were being influenced by an evil spirit to interfere with Paul's ministry.

Whatever Paul's thorn in the flesh was has no bearing on whether or not a person is healed after being prayed over and anointed with oil as instructed by the apostle James.
Although it is true that we dare not attempt to dictate to our Father what he should or should not do, when we request healing through the performance of the healing ritual, it is a respectful request for our heavenly Father to honor and fulfill the promise of healing made by the apostle James through the authorization of our Savior.

7. HEALED BY HIS STRIPES

Many assume the references in the New Testament to Christ's beaten, bruised, and lacerated body at the hands of the Roman soldiers are connected with the promise of healing a person's disability or illness. But, does this assumption fit the reason the Creator God came to earth, became human, and allowed himself to be tortured at the hands of Roman soldiers?

In order to understand what is actually promised through Christ's abused body and his sacrificial blood, an analysis must first be made of the prophecy in Isaiah 6:8-13 and its fulfillment recorded in Matthew 13:11-17, and then an analysis of Isaiah chapter 53, which records the Sovereign God's prophetic promise of a future redemption of mankind.

A Coded Message Sent

The fact that Christ's abused body is connected with the forgiveness of a person's violation of God's law and not with the promise of healing can be shown in the prophecy recorded by Isaiah about a person being sent to earth with a coded message to prevent the majority of people from understanding it and being converted and healed, as well as Christ saying that he was fulfilling this prophecy during his ministry.

Isaiah's Prophetic Vision

After seeing a vision of the Sovereign God sitting on his heavenly throne and the six winged seraphim that serve him, Isaiah hears him say the following, which begins a prophecy about Christ's ministry and events surrounding the end of human rule on earth:

"Also I heard the voice of the Lord, saying, Whom shall I send, and who will go for us? Then said I, Here am I; send me" (Isa.6: 8 KJV).

When verse 8 is understood in the context of what Jesus said when his disciples asked him why he spoke in parables, it reveals that the person who volunteers to go is the Creator God who came to earth as Christ and brought the Sovereign God's message about his kingdom and his offer of salvation.

"And he said, Go, and tell this people, Hear you indeed, but understand not; and see you indeed, but perceive not. Make the heart of this people fat, and make their ears heavy, and shut their eyes; lest they see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and understand with their heart, and convert, and be healed" (Isa.6: 9-10 KJV).
The English word *convert* in verse 10 is translated from the Hebrew word *shuwb*; a primitive root, which in this context means *to turn back* or *to return*.

Throughout the Book of Isaiah, the Creator continually reprimands his chosen people for turning away from him and rejecting the laws he gave them to follow. The Creator warns that the Israelites will be punished before Israel as a national entity will be given an opportunity to truly understand the purpose for their existence, turn to the Sovereign God, and participate in a new and different covenant relationship. See Jer.31:31-34. It is in the prophetic context of hiding this information that the word *shuwb* is used.

The English word *healed* in verse 10 is translated from the Hebrew word *rapha*; a primary root, which means *to mend* (by stitching), i.e., (figuratively) *to cure*:

It was national Israel's failure to obey God and correctly practice his law which forced him to cancel his agreement with them. The mending of the relationship between God and national Israel and the rest of humanity requires the setting aside of the penalty for violating God's law.

The message delivered by Christ from the Sovereign God is about the Kingdom of God and how to enter into it as a spirit-being. This message contains information about Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of sin and how to establish and maintain a harmonious relationship with the Sovereign God. This is the information that Christ delivered during his earthly ministry in a coded message which could not be understood by the majority of the people who heard it.

Isaiah wanted to know how much time would pass before people would be allowed to have the knowledge which would allow them to be cured of the penalty for violating God's law:

"Then said I, Lord, how long? And he answered, Until the cities be wasted without inhabitant, and the houses without man, and the land be utterly desolate, And the Lord has removed men far away, and there be a great forsaking in the midst of the land. But yet in it shall be a tenth, and it shall return, and shall be eaten: as a teil tree, and as an oak, whose substance is in the m, when they cast their leaves: so the holy seed shall be the substance thereof" (Isa.6: 11-13 KJV).

A comparison of verses 11 through 13 with other prophecies reveals that it is only after Christ intervenes in human affairs, rains destruction on the earth, and returns to establish God's government on earth that national Israel and the rest of humanity as a whole will be given an understanding of the gospel message, which explains how to be released from the penalty imposed for the violation of God's law.
Christ Hides Understanding

Matthew records that one day Jesus' disciples asked him why he spoke to people in parables? Jesus' answer reveals that, in order to fulfill the prophecy recorded by the prophet Isaiah, he must speak to the people in parables, thus hiding an understanding of his heavenly Father's message about his kingdom and forgiveness of sin:

"He answered and said to them, Because it is given to you to know the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, but to them it is not given. For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him shall be taken away even that he has. Therefore, I speak to them in parables: because they seeing see not; and hearing they hear not, neither do they understand'.

"And in them is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah, which says, By hearing you shall hear, and shall not understand; and seeing you shall see, and shall not perceive: For this people's heart is waxed gross, and their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes they have closed; lest at any time they should see with their eyes, and hear with their ears, and should understand with their heart, and should be converted; and I should heal them" (Matt.13:11-15 KJV Para.).

The English phrase should be converted in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word epistrepho, which means to revert i.e., return to (literally, figuratively, or morally):

The thing that the Jews of Christ's time needed was not physical healing, but a spiritual one. The things to which they needed to return were true obedience to God and his law. However, this could only be accomplished through an understanding of the Sovereign God's coded message delivered by Christ and heartfelt repentance.

The English phrase I should heal in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word iaomai, which is a primary verb meaning to cure (literally or figuratively).

Jesus healed many people of disabilities and illnesses during his ministry. So, the healing of a person's illness or disability is not what is meant in verse 15 by the use of the Greek word iaomai.

It is the penalty for the violation of God's law for which a cure is needed. So, it is an understanding of the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven, which included Jesus' mission to sacrifice himself as payment for the penalty of sin, that he kept secret from everyone but his disciples during his earthly ministry:

"But blessed are your eyes, for they see: and your ears, for they hear. For truly I say to you, That many prophets and righteous men have desired to see those things which you see, and have not seen them; and to hear those things which you hear, and have not heard them" (Matt.13:16-17 KJV).
Isaiah Chapter 53

Isaiah, chapter 53 is an overview of the arrival of the Creator God on earth as the Messiah, his life experience, his mission on earth, and what he accomplished by coming to earth in human form. This chapter also contains foundational information which helps us understand the connection between what is written in the New Testament about Christ's body and the healing of the spirit.

"Who has believed our report? and to whom is the arm of the Lord revealed? For he shall grow up before him as a tender plant, and as a root out of a dry ground: he has no form nor comeliness; and when we shall see him, there is no beauty that we should desire him" (Isa.53:1-2 KJV).

Verses 1-2 reveal that the Sovereign God would send the Creator God to earth divested of his immortality to experience life in the flesh, appearing as an ordinary human.

"He is despised and rejected of men; a man of sorrows, and acquainted with suffering: and we hid as it were our faces from him; he was despised, and we did not regard him" (Isa.53:3 KJV Para.).

Verse 3 reveals that Christ would understand people's suffering and experience sorrow, and that people would have contempt for him and reject him as a person. This verse also reveals that people would not believe him and dismiss him as the Sovereign God's messenger.

"Surely he has borne our griefs, and carried our sorrows: yet we did esteem him stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa.53:4 KJV).

In verse 4, the English word griefs is translated from the Greek word choliy, which can mean a malady (i.e., a disease or an ailment). The English word sorrows is translated from the Greek word mak'ob, which can mean anguish or affliction.

It is assumed by most who read verse 4 in the King James version of the Bible that the word griefs is referring to a human emotion; however, a more correct translation of verse 4 is as follows:

"Surely he has borne our infirmities and our anguish: He has put them on himself; but we regarded him as one stricken, smitten of God, and afflicted" (Isa.53:4 Para.).

There is no doubt that, because Jesus was fully human, he would experience the full range of human emotions (Heb.2:14-18; 4:14-16; 5:7-10), which included an understanding of the human suffering and emotional distress that comes with a major disability or illness. This understanding and his heart-felt compassion for people with sicknesses and disabilities is one of the reasons he healed so many people as he went about proclaiming his heavenly Father's good news message. See Matt.4:23; 10:1.
After Matthew records that Jesus healed Peter's wife's mother of a fever, he writes the following and refers to Jesus' healing of the people brought to him that evening as the fulfillment of the prophecy in Isaiah 53:4:

"When the even was come, they brought to him many that were possessed with devils: and he cast out the spirits with his word, and healed all that were sick: That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Esaias [Isaiah] the prophet, saying, Himself took our infirmities, and bare our sicknesses" (Matt.8:16-17 KJV).

Although many people assume that verse 17 refers to the application of healing for the elect after Jesus' death and resurrection, the Greek language of verse 17 clearly shows that Jesus' ongoing healing of people during his ministry was in fact the fulfillment of the prophecy recorded in Isaiah 53:4.

Reading Isaiah 53:5 in the King James version of the Bible, many may assume that the phrase with his stripes we are healed refers to the healing of our physical body; however, this assumption neither conforms to the context of this prophecy nor the fundamental reason for the Creator God being sent to earth as a human:

"But he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities: the chastisement of our peace was upon him; and with his stripes we are healed" (Isa.53:5 KJV).

In order to more clearly understand what is prophesied in Isaiah 53:5, the following three questions must be asked and answered:

1. **What does he was wounded for our transgressions, he was bruised for our iniquities mean?**

   The English word **wounded** is translated from the Hebrew word **chalal** which means to wound (fatally), to bore, i.e., (by implication) to wound, to dissolve. The English word **bruised** is translated from the Hebrew word **daka**, which means to crumble or to bruise. Both of these words foretell the physical torture Jesus would endure which would culminate in his death as the sacrifice for our sins.

   The English words **transgressions** and **iniquities** are translated from the Hebrew words **pesha** and **avon**, which respectively mean a **revolt** and **perversity**, i.e., **moral evil**.

   The use of the words **pesha** and **avon** reveal that the reason Christ suffered scourging at the hands of the Roman solders and his being stabbed in the side by a Roman soldier while being crucified was part of his atonement for our violation of God's law (i.e., our sins).

   It was the human sickness of sin (i.e., the violation of God's law) for which Christ would receive a torturous beating that tore and bruised his flesh to the point that he was unrecognizable as a man. See Isa.52: 10-15.
2. What does *the chastisement of our peace was upon him* mean?

The English word *chastisement* is translated from the Hebrew word *muwcär*, which is derived from the word *yacar*, which means to chastise, literally (with blows) or figuratively (with words); hence, to instruct. Although the word *muwcär* can mean to chastize, it can also figuratively mean reproof, warning, instruction, or restraint.

Clearly the physical abuse Christ suffered was undeserved. However, it was necessary in order for him to totally understand the depths of mental and physical pain that some humans endure. Enduring this abuse was a part of his sacrifice which paid the penalty for our violations of God's law so that peace could be established between God the Father and humans.

This undeserved abuse of Christ's body can also be understood as instruction, because this undeserved abuse of an innocent person clearly reveals the price of our forgiveness from the Father.

The English word *peace* is translated from the Hebrew word *shalom*, which is derived from the root word *shalam*, which means to be safe. Shalom in the context of verse 5 simply means to be at peace.

The scriptures clearly show that, after Adam and Eve ate the forbidden fruit, each person came under the death penalty for their violation of God's law. The scriptures also show that permanent harmony and peace between the Sovereign God and mankind could not be established through the rituals and animal sacrifices of the temple system of worship given to national Israel. See Heb.9:1-28; 10:1-6.

Christ's perfect selfless sacrifice, which included allowing his body to be abused and his life to be extinguished, paid the penalty for the sins of all mankind, because his life was worth more than all human life. Moreover, it is through his perfect sacrifice that a peaceful and harmonious relationship can now be established between a person and the Sovereign God.

3. What does *with his stripes we are healed* mean?

The English word *healed* in Isaiah 53:5 is translated from the Hebrew word *rapha*, which means to mend (by stitching), i.e., (figuratively) to cure. The context of verse 5 concerns the forgiveness of sin though Christ's sacrifice and the establishment of peace between the Sovereign God and mankind, not the healing of the physical body. The Living Bible Paraphrased has a more accurate conceptual translation of verse 5:

"But he was wounded and bruised for our sins. He was beaten that we might have peace; he was lashed and we were healed!" (Isa. 53:5 TLB).

The beating Jesus suffered at the hands of the Roman soldiers was undeserved, because he had not committed a crime worthy of such punishment.
It is because of the torturous beating Jesus suffered and the pouring out of his life blood that you and I can be spiritually healed (i.e., have our sins removed) and have the peace of mind which comes as a result of knowing that our sins are forgiven through his perfect sacrifice. See Jn.14:27; Rom.8:6; Phil.4:7.

The healing that was to come through Christ's abused body and sacrificial blood is the healing of a person's spirit corrupted by their violation of God's law. The application of Christ's abused body and sacrificial blood removes the barrier of sin and heals the breach between a person and the Sovereign God, which allows for a peaceful and harmonious relationship to exist between a person, the Sovereign God, and Christ.

**Behold the Lamb of God**

As John the Baptist was proclaiming the soon coming of the Messiah and baptizing those who were repentant, he saw Jesus coming and said:

"Behold the Lamb of God which takes away the sin of the world" (Jn.1:29 KJV). See also Jn.1:36.

As we review the scriptures which speak of Christ's abused body and his sacrificial blood, it is important to remember that the primary reason Christ came to earth was to redeem and save humanity from the death penalty which is the result of violating God's law.

Isaiah 53:6-8 continues to show Christ's sacrifice in the context of the selfless sacrifice of his perfect life as a substitute for all mankind's violation of the Sovereign God's law:

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: he is brought as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearsers is dumb, so he opens not his mouth. He was taken from prison and from judgment: and who shall declare his generation? for he was cut off out of the land of the living: for the transgression of my people was he stricken" (Isa.53:6-8 KJV).

The English word *stricken* in verse 8 is translated from the Hebrew word *nega*, which means *a blow* and is derived from a root word meaning *to touch*, i.e., *lay the hand upon* (for any purpose), by implication, *to reach* (figuratively, *to arrive, acquire*); violently, *to strike* (*punish, defeat, destroy*).

The use of the word *nega* in verse 8 clearly reveals the Savior would be beaten as a part of the process of sacrificing himself in order to reconcile mankind to the Sovereign God.
Verses 9-11 give further proof that the context of Isaiah 53 is an overview of the Sovereign God's effort to establish a peaceful and harmonious relationship between himself and mankind through the perfect, selfless and sinless sacrifice of Christ:

"And he made his grave with the wicked, and with the rich in his death; because he had done no violence, neither was any deceit in his mouth. Yet it pleased the Lord to bruise him; he has put him to grief: when you shall make his soul an offering for sin, he shall see his seed, he shall prolong his days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in his hand. He shall see of the travail of his soul, and shall be satisfied: by his knowledge shall my righteous servant justify many; for he shall bear their iniquities" (Isa.53:9-11 KJV).

The English word iniquities in verse 11 is translated from the Hebrew word avon, which means evil in this context. The context of verses 9-11 clearly reveals that Jesus was being physically abused and sacrificed as an atonement for our sins.

Verse 12 reveals that Christ would pay the penalty for the sins of all mankind. Nowhere in this prophecy is the healing of physical ailments mentioned or implied. This prophecy is about the redemption of mankind through Christ's life and his selfless sacrifice.

"Therefore will I divide him a portion with the great, and he shall divide the spoil with the strong; because he has poured out his soul to death: and he was numbered with the transgressors; and he bare the sin of many, and made intercession for the transgressors" (Isa. 53:12 KJV).

**BY WHOSE STRIPES YOU WERE HEALED**

After understanding that the context of Isaiah, chapter 53 is prophetic of Christ's life experience and his selfless sacrifice to provide a method through which the Sovereign God can forgive a person's sins and declare them innocent, the next step is to gain a clear understanding of the New Testament scriptures which some people assume have to do with the beating of Jesus in the context of a person being healed of a disability or an illness.

Many assume when the apostle Peter wrote, "Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live to righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed" (1.Pet.2:24), he was not only explaining that it was through Jesus' death our sins are forgiven but also that his abused and disfigured body at the hands of the Roman solders symbolized his taking our disabilities and illnesses on himself. Because many assume this is what Peter meant, they assume the healing of their sicknesses and disabilities is also accomplished through the acknowledgment of this symbolism in their prayer for healing.

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In order to determine what Peter actually meant when he wrote, "by whose stripes you were healed," we need to examine this statement in the context of 1.Peter, chapter 2 in which he reminds the elect of many things of importance to their awesome calling, which includes being subject to civil authorities and physical masters (as in the case of slaves or indentured servants).

Beginning in verse 18, Peter writes the following about being subject to a master and the attitude a person should have toward suffering wrongfully. It is in this context that Christ's sacrifice for our sins is noted and the words by whose stripes you were healed are used in verse 24.

"Servants, be subject to your masters with all fear; not only to the good and gentle, but also to the froward. For this is thank-worthy, if a man for conscience toward God endure grief, suffering wrongfully. For what glory is it, if, when you be buffetted for your faults, you shall take it patiently? but if, when you do well, and suffer for it, you take it patiently, this is acceptable with God" (1.Pet.2:18-20 KJV).

In verse 21, Peter explains that Christ's example shows us the elect should patiently endure abuse for behaving righteously:

"For even hereto were you called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow his steps" (1.Pet. 2:21 KJV).

In verses 22-24, Peter explains that, although Christ was righteous, when he was wrongly accused and physically abused, he accepted both without protesting. He instead relied on God to justify his words and deeds and willingly died for our sins:

"Who did no sin, neither was guile found in his mouth: Who, when he was reviled, reviled not again; when he suffered, he threatened not; but committed himself to him that judges righteously: Who his own self bare our sins in his own body on the tree, that we, being dead to sins, should live to righteousness: by whose stripes you were healed" (1.Pet.2:22-24 KJV).

It is in the context of Christ being wrongfully accused, physically abused, and suffering death to pay the penalty for our sins that Peter's statement by whose stripes you were healed is made. But, does Christ's beaten, bruised, and lacerated body and his sacrificial blood heal us physically or spiritually?

The English phrase you were healed in verse 24 is translated from the Greek word iaoimai, which means to cure. The use of the Greek word iaoimai instead of the Greek word therapeuo, which specifically means to relieve disease, reveals that Peter is not referring to an illnesses which is cured by the abuse of Christ's body; he is referring to the penalty of sin that is cured (i.e., removed).
The context of 1.Peter 2:24 is about Christ sacrificing himself in order for us to be granted forgiveness for our sins, not the healing of our physical bodies. The tortuous beating he received at the hands of the Roman soldiers and his blood which was spilled on the ground as he died atoned for our sin and provided the method through which our heavenly Father removes our sin (i.e., cures our spiritual sickness in order for us to be found innocent of our violation of his righteous law).

NOT DISCERNING THE LORD'S BODY

Many also assume that the apostle Paul's admonition and exhortation to the saints at Corinth about the proper way to observe the Passover and the Festival of Unleavened Bread has to do with Christ's abused body and his life blood being connected with the promise of healing a person's disability or illness.

The Corinthians

In order to understand what Paul wrote to the Corinthians about being unworthy and discerning the Lord's body, it is important to understand something about the people whom God the Father called out of the city of Corinth to become members of his earthly family of king-priests.

The congregation at Corinth seems to have been a group of Christians with many problems. Both of Paul's letters to them contain strong correction. His first letter was almost totally devoted to correcting their sinful behavior.

No other congregation was corrected on as many points as the one at Corinth, which should be evidence of the spiritual character and maturity of these people. This is not to say that they were not of the Father's elect; they absolutely were. However, they had major problems in understanding how to conduct themselves; they were truly babes in the faith. See 1.Cor.3:1-2.

Paul reprimanded the Corinthians about envy, strife, division of opinions, jealousies, immorality, incest, lawsuits, drunkenness, conceit, lack of Christian love, carnal mindedness, desecration of the body (i.e., the temple of God), intellectual vanity, misuse of spiritual gifts, and disorderly and shameful conduct in and out of church meetings.

The picture Paul paints of the Corinthian Church is of people who were dying spiritually and allowing evil, instead of good, to rule in their lives. Far from being a perfect example of spiritual maturity, those at Corinth were an example of how not to live a righteous life. Therefore, Paul's overall message to those at Corinth was a call to repentance.

Historical Corinth

There is not much historical information about the church at Corinth other than Paul's letters. However, what is known gives us an insight into the potential problems of being a Christian in that society.
Corinth was the capital of Achaia in 57 A.D. and was a major export/import center between Asia and Europe at the crossroads of a major trade route. The city was very wealthy and its inhabitants were notorious for their licentious lifestyle. The city's reputation was so bad that it became a metaphor for immorality in the proverbs of some foreign languages. Moreover, it was immortalized by Latin poets. The term "to Corinthianize" became a part of the Greek vocabulary and meant "to live in drunken immoral debauchery."

The religions of the city's many diverse inhabitants who came to ply their trades in this prosperous area were practiced there. The bulk of the inhabitants were Italian freemen, Greeks, Jews, and people from the cities of Levant. Out of this city of wealth, immorality, and pagan religions, God the Father called a cross section of its citizens to become his children. When one considers their environment and cultural background, it is no small wonder these people had great difficulty growing toward spiritual maturity.

Paul's admonition to the Corinthians about the symbolic bread and wine of the Passover makes little sense without first understanding that these elect had already been taught the meaning and purpose of the bread and wine. We know this because the symbolic and prophetic fulfillment of the Passover is an intrinsic part of the plan of salvation for humanity.

Any ignorance of the meaning of the Passover which these elect had was not due to being ignorant of its importance, but was due to their lack of spiritual maturity.

Note:

Because Paul is speaking of the deep, spiritual meaning and purpose of the bread, wine, body, and blood of Christ, what Paul wrote to the Corinthians cannot be understood today unless a person first understands what Paul taught about Jesus as the Passover Lamb, Redeemer, and Savior of humanity.

The explanation that follows is only a general overview of what Paul was trying to convey to the Corinthians, so it should be followed up with study and meditation on the meaning and purpose of the symbols Paul speaks of in his admonition and exhortation.

Perversion of the Passover

Paul writes that the Corinthians are incorrectly calling the Passover the Lord's supper and he condemns their perversion of the observance with a festive meal and shameful, drunken, and disorderly conduct:

"When you come together into one place, it is not to eat the Lord's supper. For each one takes his own supper: first in the eating; and one is hungry, and another is drunk. For do you not have houses to eat, and to drink? or do you despise the Church of God, and shame those who do not have? What do I say to you? shall I praise you for this? I do not Praise" (1.Cor.11:20-22 KJV Para.).
After condemning their behavior and improper practice of the Passover observance, Paul reminds them that the things he had taught them about the Passover observance were from Christ, and then he repeats some of what he had taught:

"For I have received of the Lord that which also I delivered to you that the Lord Jesus the same night in which he was betrayed took bread: And when he had given thanks, he broke it, and said, Take, eat: this is my body, which is broken for you: this do in remembrance of me. After the same manner also he took the cup, when he had supped, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood: this do you, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of me" (1.Cor.11:23-25 KJV).

From what Paul writes in verses 23-25, we can assume the Corinthians were showing a lack of respect for Christ's sacrifice by improperly practicing the Passover rituals of unleavened bread and wine, which symbolize Christ's abused body and his sacrificial blood.

Note:

Jesus became the fulfillment of the symbolic sacrificial Passover lamb which did not have its bones broken, but was roasted whole (Ex.12:1-10); therefore, it is important to mention that the word broken in verse 24 of the KJV translation is not in the Textus Receptus and is not found in Jesus' description of his body and blood at his last Passover with his disciples (Matt.26:26-28; Mk.14:22-24; Lk.22:19-20). Jesus' body was abused by the Roman soldiers and his side pieced by a spear, but his bones were not broken. See Jn.19:30-37.

The Warning

Because of the Corinthians' improper observance of the Passover and their lack of respect for the symbolism of the bread and wine, Paul issues the following extremely serious warning:

"Wherefore whoever shall eat this bread, and drink this cup of the Lord, unworthy, shall be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread, and drink of that cup. For he that eats and drinks unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself; not discerning the Lord's body" (1.Cor.11:27-29 KJV Para.).

Unworthy and Guilty

Remember, Paul was writing to the Sovereign Father's earthly children who had repented of their sins, been baptized, and transformed into sons of God through the power of the Father's holy spirit. Paul did not say that the Corinthians had no right to observe the Passover, or that they were spiritually unfit to observe it. Therefore, how could they be unworthy to partake of these symbolic rituals and what does it mean to partake of the bread and wine unworthily and be guilty of both?
Paul said that those who do not take the bread and wine correctly are guilty of a violation, which he also said will result in the payment of a very serious penalty by the violator.

The English word *unworthy* in verse 27 is translated from the Greek word *anaxios*, which means *irreverently* and is derived from a similar word meaning *unfit*. Clearly, the use of the word *anaxios* does not refer to a person being unfit to observe the Passover, because only a person who has the indwelling of the holy spirit is worthy to observe the Passover. The Greek word *anaxios* in this context speaks to a person's disrespectful attitude and behavior concerning the symbols of Christ's body and blood.

The English word *guilty* in verse 27 is translated from the Greek word *enochos*, which means *liable to* (a condition, penalty or imputation). Verse 27 shows that a person's disrespect of the symbols of Christ's body and blood bring with it a penalty to be paid.

**A Personal Evaluation**

In verse 28, Paul writes that a person must perform a personal evaluation before observing the Passover. This evaluation is for the purpose of meditating on the meaning of the Passover in order to reveal one's attitude and level of respect for Christ and the symbols which represent his sacrifice.

**Damnation and Discerning**

The English word *damnation* in verse 29 is translated from the Greek word *krima*, which means *a decision* (the function or the effect, for or against crime) and is derived from the word *krino*, which means properly, *to distinguish*, i.e., *decide* (mentally or judicially); by implication, *to try, condemn, punish*.

Paul explained that the result of partaking of the bread and wine while being out of harmony with the meaning and purpose of the Passover observance and its symbols places a person in a state of self-imposed condemnation.

Being out of harmony with the meaning and purpose of the body and blood of Christ puts a person in opposition to God's will for their life, and puts them in a position of being condemned for their lack of a righteous attitude and behavior. Therefore, it is extremely important to perform a serious personal evaluation before observing the Passover and to correct one's course, if necessary.

But, what does Paul mean by "not discerning the Lord's body?" What does this have to do with damnation, personal evaluation, and partaking of the bread and wine unworthily? Discerning the Lord's body means to fully consider the importance of what Christ did by coming to earth and living in human form. Jesus was no ordinary human and what he did while in human form was no ordinary act.
Paul's use of the words *anaxios*, *enochos*, and *krima* in verses 27-29 reveals that the context of these verses has to do with a person's disrespect of the symbols of Christ's body and blood and that this disrespect results in a person bringing on themselves a penalty which leads to the second death, from which there is no return, if the attitude and behavior is not corrected.

Before becoming a human, Jesus was an immortal spirit-being possessing the highest form of existence: life that springs forth from itself, never dying or decaying. This immortal being who was not subject to death emptied himself of his glory, power, and immortality to become a mortal man and sacrifice himself as an atonement for the sins of mankind:

"But now in these days he has spoken to us through his Son to whom he has given everything, and through whom he made the world and everything there is. God's Son shines out with God's glory, and all that God's Son is and does marks him as God. He regulated the universe by the mighty power of his command. He is the one who died to cleanse us and clear our record of all sin, and then sat down in the highest honor beside the great God of heaven" (Heb.1:2-3 LBP).

**Weak, Sickly, and Asleep**

Paul told the Corinthians the reason many of them were weak, sickly, and asleep was because of their current attitude, behavior, and practice of observing the Passover.

"For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep" (1.Cor.11:30 KJV).

Some people believe Paul was describing a condition of physical illness and some believe he was describing a physical illness that caused some to die. But, was Paul speaking of physical sickness or death as many believe or was he speaking of a spiritual condition? In order to determine the condition to which Paul was referring in verse 30, we must review the Greek words from which these three words were translated.

The English words *weak*, *sickly*, and *sleep* in verse 30 are translated from the Greek words *astheneis*, *arhosto*, and *komesis*. *Astheneis* means *impotent* or *sick* and is derived from a word which means *without strength*. *Arhosto* means *infirm* or *sick*. *Komesis* means *sleeping*, i.e., (by implication) *repose* and is derived from a word meaning *to put to sleep*, i.e., (passively or reflexively) *to slumber*.

If only the Greek words *astheneis* and *arhosto* had been used in verse 30 to describe the condition of many of the elect at Corinth, it would be clear that Paul was describing a physical illness; however, the Greek word *komesis* is included in his description, which means *to be asleep or to repose*. 

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The Greek words associated with death are *apollumi*, which means *to destroy fully* or *to perish*; *apogenomenos*, which means *to be deceased*; *apothnesko*, which means *to die off*; *muwth*, which means *to die or to kill*; *nekros*, which means *to be dead*; and *sunapothnesko*, which means *to decease*.

The use of the Greek word *komesis*, which describes a person being asleep or in a restful state, clearly reveals that Paul did not mean the people he referred to were physically sick, dying, or dead.

When attempting to understand the condition Paul is describing in verse 30, one must keep in mind that what is written in 1 Corinthians 11:17-34 is in the context of Christ's sacrifice for the forgiveness of a person's sins, and that Paul was reprimanding the elect at Corinth for their wrong attitude, behavior, and practice of the Passover observance.

Many of the elect in Corinth were weak, sick, and asleep spiritually because they had not discerned the importance of Christ allowing his body to be abused and his life blood to be spilled for them. They had forgotten or neglected to contemplate the enormity of what Christ had done when he sacrificed his body and blood for them.

The weakness, sickness, and sleep that many in the Corinthian congregation were experiencing had nothing to do with their physical health or the healing of physical ailments, but had everything to do with spiritual health, which is the reason Paul put so much emphasis on character flaws in his letter to them.

**SUMMARY**

The Creator God who made all that exists for the Sovereign God voluntarily gave up his immortality to come to earth in the person of Jesus to live a sinless life as an example for us to follow.

As a human, Jesus experienced life with a strong, vibrant, and healthy body without any physical imperfection. Jesus lived in perfect obedience to his heavenly Father's law and overcame intense mental and emotional pressure, as well as the physical pain and agony of a torturous beating and crucifixion. He did all this in order to qualify as a perfect physical and spiritual sacrifice to atone for our sins and save us from eternal death. See 1 Cor. 6:19-20; 7:23. Jesus was the prophetic Passover lamb without blemish.

Christ came to save us from the penalty of death brought on by our violation of God's law; he did not come to become the method through which we could have our physical disabilities and illnesses healed.

We are healed by the abuse of Christ's body (as recorded by the prophet Isaiah and the apostle Peter), not from physical disabilities or illnesses, but from the sickness and effects of sin which prevent an eternal, peaceful, and harmonious relationship with the Sovereign God.
HEALING DURING CHRIST'S MINISTRY

During Christ's ministry, he healed hundreds, or perhaps thousands of people of various disabilities and illnesses. Some individuals asked him to heal them, some were healed when other people asked him to heal on their behalf, and some were healed without asking, when Jesus saw their condition and had compassion on them.

The following review of some of the accounts of Christ healing individuals and his authorization of the twelve disciples and the seventy other men to heal is important to understanding the various aspects of healing individuals during this gospel age of salvation. These accounts give insight into Christ's approach to healing individuals and provide examples for those who are called in how to fulfill their ministry to the elect and heal people as they proclaim the Sovereign Father's good news message.

All Illnesses and Disabilities Healed

As Jesus traveled about teaching the true meaning of the scriptures and proclaiming the good news of the Kingdom of God, he healed people of all kinds of illnesses and disabilities, none of which were beyond his authority and ability to heal. See Matt:8:16; 9:35; 12:9-16; 14:14.

"And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people" (Matt.4:23 KJV).

The English words sickness and disease in verse 23 are translated from the Greek words nosos and malakia respectfully. Nosos can mean a malady (rarely figuratively, of moral disability). Malakia means softness, i.e., enervation and is derived from malakos, which means soft, i.e., fine (clothing); figuratively a catamite. The ancient usage of the word catamite indicated a pubescent boy who was the intimate companion of a young man in ancient Rome, usually in a pederastic friendship.

The Greek words nosos and malakia in the phrase "sickness and all manner of disease" seem to indicated that Christ's authority and power to heal all sickness including the healing of mental conditions manifested by immoral behavior, such as a perverse sexual orientation.

"And his fame went throughout all Syria: and they brought to him all sick people that were taken with divers diseases and torments, and those which were possessed with devils, and those which were lunatick, and those that had the palsy: and he healed them" (Matt.4:24 KJV).
In verse 24, the English words *diseases* and *torments* are translated from the Greek words *nosos*, which can mean a *malady* (rarely figuratively, of *moral disability*) and *basanos*, which means *a touchstone*, i.e., (by analogy) *torture*. The Greek words *nosos* and *basanos* together indicate an illness that is extremely painful.

In verse 24, the English words *lunatick* and *palsy* are translated from the Greek words *seleniazomai*, which means to be *moon-struck*, i.e., *crazy* and *paralutikos*, which basically means *paralytic*.

Verse 24 also tells us that Jesus released people from the control of evil spirits and the mental and physical problems caused by such control.

Evil spirits are often the cause of mental or physical illness and often torment people they possess. See Mk.5:1-8; 9:17-27; Lk.13:10-16. Clearly, not all insanity is the effect of demonic possession, but is the result of many other natural causes, such as birth defects, physical injury, chemical imbalance, traumatic emotional experience, and more. Regardless of the cause, Jesus had the authority and ability to cure all forms of mental disorders.

**The Withered Hand**

Mark and Luke record that a man with a withered hand was in a crowd of people listening to Jesus, and when Jesus asked him to extend his hand it was instantly healed:

"And he entered again into the synagogue; and there was a man there which had a withered hand" (Mk.3:1 KJV).

The English word *withered* is translated from the Greek word *xeraino*, which by implication means *to shrivel*. *Xeraino* is derived from the word *xeros*, which means *to desiccate*.

This individual did not have use of his hand because the muscles were atrophied and shriveled making his hand useless.

"And they watched him, whether he would heal him on the Sabbath day: that they might accuse him. And he said to the man which had the withered hand, Stand forth. And he said to them, Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath days, or to do evil? to save life, or to kill? But they held their peace. And when he had looked round about on them with anger, being grieved for the hardness of their hearts, he said to the man, Stretch forth your hand. And he stretched it out: and his hand was restored whole as the other" (Mk.3:2-5 KJV). See also Lk.6:6-11.
This account gives no indication that the man believed Jesus could heal him, but he did as Jesus asked and extended his hand. This account also reveals that Jesus did not touch the man or say anything else to him in order to effect the healing. Jesus' intent was to heal the man's hand in order to show that it was lawful to do good works on the Sabbath, so Jesus healed him even though he didn't ask for healing.

At the Pool of Bethesda

After one of the feasts of the Jews, Jesus went to Jerusalem where he healed a man who had an ailment which left him so weak that he had trouble walking. In this account, Jesus was at the pool of Bethesda where there were many people who needed healing. Jesus could have healed any of them, but he chose one individual in order to teach a lesson about doing good on the Sabbath and the result of violating God's law:

"After this there was a feast of the Jews; and Jesus went up to Jerusalem. Now there is at Jerusalem by the sheep market a pool, which is called in the Hebrew tongue Bethesda, having five porches. In these lay a great multitude of impotent folk, of blind, halt, withered, waiting for the moving of the water. . . . And a certain man was there, which had an infirmity thirty and eight years. When Jesus saw him lie, and knew that he had been now a long time in that case, he said to him, Will you be made whole? The impotent man answered him, Sir, I have no man, when the water is troubled, to put me into the pool: but while I am coming, another steps down before me" (Jn.5:1-3; 5-7 KJV).

Jesus did not ask the man if he wanted him to heal him; he simply asked if he wanted to be made whole:

"Jesus said to him, Rise, take up your bed, and walk. And immediately the man was made whole, and took up his bed, and walked: and on the same day was the Sabbath" (Jn.5:8-9 KJV).

In order to effect the healing, it was not necessary for Jesus to say or do anything other than tell the man to get up and walk. As soon as Jesus told the man to get up and walk, the man felt a change in his body and knew that he was healed, so he got up, took his bed, and walked away.

"The Jews therefore said to him that was cured, It is the Sabbath day: it is not lawful for you to carry your bed. He answered, He that made me whole, the same said to me, Take up your bed, and walk. Then they asked him, What man said to you, Take up your bed, and walk? And he that was healed did not know who it was: for Jesus quietly slipped away, a multitude being in that place" (Jn.5:10-13 KJV Para.).

The spiritual leaders of the Jews had perverted God's law with their own restrictive rules and traditions. One of these rules concerned how much effort a person could expend on the Sabbath without violating the Sabbath. Therefore, they accused the man of violating the Sabbath and wanted to know who told him to work on the Sabbath.
"Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, Behold, you are made whole: sin no more, lest a worse thing come to you. The man departed, and told the Jews that it was Jesus, which had made him whole" (Jn.5:14-15 KJV).

The English word sin in verse 14 is translated from the Greek word hamartano, which means to miss the mark (and to not share in the prize), i.e., (figuratively) to err, especially (morally) to sin.

Whatever this man had done to cause or increase his disability, it was a violation of God's law; therefore, Jesus warned him to not repeat this behavior so that he would not find himself in a worse condition than before he was healed. This tells us that some disabilities and illnesses are caused or made worse by a person's violation of some aspect of God's law.

Blind Man At Bethsaida

Mark records the following account of Jesus healing a blind man at Bethsaida. Many assume that, when Jesus attempted to restore this man's sight, he failed in his first attempt and had to lay hands on him a second time in order to totally restore his eyesight. But, is this what happened or is there a more logical explanation of this account?

"And he came to Bethsaida; and they brought a blind man to him, and implored him to touch him. And he took the blind man by the hand, and led him out of the town; and when he had spit on his eyes, and put his hands on him, he asked him what he could see. And he looked up, and said, I see people as trees, walking. After that he again put his hands on his eyes, and he looked: and he was restored, and saw everyone clearly" (Mk.8:22-25 KJV Para.).

The English word blind throughout the New Testament is translated from the Greek word tuphlos, which means opaque (as if smoky). Although tuphos can mean a total loss of sight, it can also mean a partial loss of sight, as well as an allegorical, intellectual, moral, or spiritual blindness. Knowing that the Greek word tuphos has many meanings helps in determining why Jesus did what he did.

Although there could be other explanations as to why Jesus put his hands on the man's eyes twice. It makes no sense that Jesus had to try a second time to heal the man's eyesight. What makes more sense is that Jesus stood in front of the man, spit on his eyes, rubbed them to unstick the eyelids, and asked him what he saw to determine the degree of blindness. Moreover, Jesus had absolute faith in his authority and power to heal all manner of physical disabilities and illnesses. Additionally, he had healed many blind individuals before this man was brought to him.

Sins Forgiven

The following is an account of a paralytic man being healed, in which the violation of God's law was a contributing factor to the man's disability.

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"And, behold, men brought in a bed a man which was taken with a palsy: and they sought means to bring him in, and to lay him before him" (Lk.5:18 KJV).

The English word palsy is translated from the Greek word paraluo, which means to loosen beside, i.e., relax (perfect passive participle, paralyzed or enfeebled). This man's disability made him weak and prevented him from walking.

"And when they could not find by what way they might bring him in because of the multitude, they went upon the housetop, and let him down through the tiling with his couch into the midst before Jesus. And when he saw their faith, he said to him, Man, your sins are forgiven you" (Lk.5:19-20 KJV).

These individuals knew Jesus could heal, so they used extraordinary measures to place a paralyzed man before him. When Jesus saw the faith of these individuals, he did not tell the man he was healed; instead, he simply said, "your sins are forgiven you."

The English word sins in verse 20 is translated from the Greek word hamartia, which means sin, i.e., a violation of God's law.

"And the scribes and the Pharisees began to reason, saying, Who is this which speaks blasphemies? Who can forgive sins, but God alone?" (Lk.5:21 KJV).

In order to understand why the Pharisees believed Jesus was speaking blasphemy, one must first understand that the English word forgive is translated from the Greek word aphiemi, which means to send forth. Jesus did not forgive this man's sins, he temporally set them aside, which is entirely different from forgiving them.

Under the agreement between the Creator God and national Israel, sins could not be forgiven. Violations of God's law could only be temporally set aside, because animal sacrifice could not effect the forgiveness of sin (Heb.9:1-28; 10:1-39).

The Pharisees did not know of the Sovereign God's existence and they did not believe that Jesus was the Messiah who was the Creator God in the flesh; therefore, in their thinking Jesus was attempting to usurp the authority of the Creator God who was the only one who could temporally set sin aside.

Although not noted by Luke, it seems these Pharisees understood this man's condition was the result of some violation of God's law; otherwise, Jesus would not have mentioned the setting aside of sin.
"But when Jesus perceived their thoughts, he answering said to them, What reason you in your hearts? Whether is easier, to say, Your sins be forgiven you; or to say, Rise up and walk? But that you may know that the Son of man has power upon earth to forgive sins [set sins aside]. (he said to the sick of the palsy,) I say to you, Arise, and take up your couch, and go into your house. And immediately he rose up before them, and took up that whereon he lay, and departed to his own house, glorifying God." (Lk.5:22-25 KJV).

The accounts in John and Luke about paralytic individuals being healed and the mention of a violation of God's law are important to consider when an analysis is made of the apostle James' instructions to those of the early church concerning the healing of sickness in which he mentions the forgiveness of sin. See Jms.5:14-16,

The Centurion's Servant

When Jesus was in Capernaum, he was asked to heal the servant of a centurion:

"And when Jesus was entered into Capernaum, there came to him a centurion, beseeching him, And saying, Lord, my servant lies at home sick of the palsy; grievously tormentested. And Jesus said to him, I will come and heal him. The centurion answered and said, Lord, I am not worthy that you should come under my roof: but speak the word only, and my servant shall be healed. For I am a man under authority, having soldiers under me: and I say to this man, Go, and he goes; and to another. Come, and he comes and to my servant, Do this, and he does it" (Matt.8:5-9 KJV).

Although Jesus was willing to go with the centurion to heal his servant, the centurion being a man of authority himself clearly understood the power that Jesus could wield and knew that it was only necessary for Jesus to exercise his authority and his servant would be healed.

"When Jesus heard it, he marveled, and said to them that followed, Truly I say to you, I have not found so great faith, no, not in Israel. And I say to you, That many shall come from the east and west, and shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. But the children of the kingdom shall be cast out into outer darkness: there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth. And Jesus said to the centurion, Go your way; and as you have believed, so be it done to you. And his servant was healed in the same hour" (Matt.8:10-13 KJV). See also Matt.15:21-28.

This account shows that the centurion was absolutely convinced Jesus had the authority to heal, which made it unnecessary for Jesus to go to the centurion's home to heal his servant. This also gave Jesus an opportunity to teach that a person who exercises faith when requesting another person's healing can effect the healing of that person through the authority of Christ.
The Nobleman's Son

The healing of a nobleman's son again reveals that it was not necessary for Jesus to be physically present to effect the healing of an individual. This event also shows that the belief of the person requesting the healing is a major factor in another person receiving the healing requested:

"So Jesus came again into Cana of Galilee, where he made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman, whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus was come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to him, and besought him that he would come down, and heal his son: for he was at the point of death. Then said Jesus to him, Except you see signs and wonders, you will not believe" (Jn.4:46-48 KJV).

The English word believe in verse 48 is translated from the Greek word pisteuo, which in this context means to place one's trust in. For many people, their trust in God and his word is tied to physical acts and they will not trust God unless they see physical evidence.

"The nobleman said to him, Sir, come down ere my child die. Jesus said to him, Go your way; your son lives. And the man believed the word that Jesus had spoken to him, and he went his way" (Jn.4:49-50 KJV).

Jesus did not need to go to the man's house in order to heal his son, because he had already determined in his mind to heal him and had commanded the healing to take place.

"And as he was now going down, his servants met him, and told him, saying, Your son lives. Then inquired he of them the hour when he began to amend. And they said to him, Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him. So the father knew that it was at the same hour, in the which Jesus said to him, Your son lives and he believed, and his whole house" (Jn.4:51-53 KJV).

A Blind Man Washes at the Pool of Siloam

After leaving the temple grounds where he had been in a heated discussion with some Pharisees and other Jews, Jesus saw a blind man and had compassion toward him, so he decided to heal him to show the goodness of God and that he was doing a work for his heavenly Father:

"And as Jesus passed by, he saw a man which was blind from his birth. And his disciples asked him, saying, Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind? Jesus answered, Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents: but that the works of God should be made manifest in him" (Jn.9:1-3 KJV).
Because Jesus' disciples understood that some disabilities were the result of a parent's violation of certain aspects of God's law, they concluded that the man's blindness was the result of sin. But, this was not the cause, according to Jesus.

"I must work the works of him that sent me, while it is day: the night comes, when no man can work. As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world. When he had thus spoken, he spat on the ground, and made clay of the spittle, and he anointed the eyes of the blind man with the clay" (Jn.9:4-6 KJV).

The English word anointed in verse 6 is translated from the Greek word epichrio, which means to smear over. Clearly, the spit and dirt from which Jesus made the mud that he applied to the man's eyes had no therapeutic or ritualistic value. So why did Jesus do this when he could just as easily have used his power to instantly remove the cause of the man's blindness? Verse 7 reveals the reason for the smearing of mud on the man's eyes through Jesus' instructions for him to wash his eyes in the pool of Siloam:

"And said to him, Go, wash in the pool of Siloam, (which is by interpretation, Sent.) He went his way therefore, and washed, and came seeing" (Jn.9:7 KJV).

The instruction to wash in the pool of Siloam seems to be for the following reasons:

• By following Jesus instructions, the blind man showed that he believed he would receive his sight when he washed his eyes in the pool of Siloam.

• Because the man was blind, he would need help to find the pool of Siloam; therefore, his healing would be a witness to those who guided him to the pool and watched his blindness removed as he washed the mud from his eyes.

• After the man received his eyesight, the rest of the narrative in John, chapter 9, shows that this healing was proof to the man, those who knew him, and to everyone else that Jesus was sent from God and was the Messiah. This healing was also a powerful witness to the Pharisees who rejected Jesus as the Messiah.

On another occasion, Jesus spit on a man's eyes and laid his hands on him twice to restore his sight (Mk.8:22-26). In this account, Jesus performed two physical acts during the process of healing this individual. Because Jesus had the power to heal this man without a physical act, it seems that these two physical acts may have been performed as encouragement to the man expecting to be healed or perhaps as a symbolic gesture of the healing to follow.
Matthew also records that two blind men followed Jesus begging him to heal them. When Jesus asked if they believed he could heal them, they said that they did, so Jesus touched their eyes and told them it would be according to their faith, and they received their sight. In this account, belief in the authority and power of Jesus to heal was required before healing would be granted (Matt.9:27-30). See also Matt.20:30-34.

The Deaf and Speech Impaired

Jesus healed many people who were deaf, mute, or speech impaired. In the following account, some compassionate individuals take matters into their own hands by bringing a man who was deaf and could hardly speak to Jesus and, asking him to heal the man:

"And again, departing from the coasts of Tyre and Sidon, he came to the sea of Galilee, through the midst of the coasts of Decapolis. And they bring to him one that was deaf, and had an impediment in his speech; and they beseech him to put his hand upon him. And he took him aside from the multitude, and put his fingers into his ears, and he spit, and touched his tongue; And looking up to heaven, he sighed, and said to him, Ephphatha, that is, Be opened. And straightway his ears were opened, and the string of his tongue was loosed, and he spake plain" (Mk.7:31-35 KJV).

A Lack of Belief

Mark records that, early in Jesus ministry, he went to the area of Galilee where he had grown up, but he could not perform any great works there with the exception of laying hands on a few sick people in the process of healing them. Why is it that Jesus could not do more mighty works in Galilee among those who knew him and what does this account have to do with the process of healing the sick?

"And he went out from there, and came to his own country; and his disciples followed him. And when the Sabbath day was come, he began to teach in the synagogue: and many hearing him were astonished, saying, From where has this man these things? and what wisdom is this which is given to him, that even such mighty works are wrought by his hands? Is not this the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James, and Joses, and of Juda, and Simon? and are not his sisters here with us? And they were offended by him. But Jesus said to them, A prophet is not without honor, but in his own country, and among his own relatives, and in his own house. And he could there do no mighty work, save that he laid his hands upon a few sick folk, and healed them. And he marveled because of their unbelief. And he went round about the villages, teaching" (Mk.6:1-6 KJV Para.).

The English word few in verse 5 is translated from the Greek word oligos, which means puny (in extent, degree, number, duration or value); especially neuter (adverbial) somewhat.

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It seems that, because these people had known Jesus and his family for many years, they had difficulty believing Jesus was anything other than a carpenter's son—just an ordinary person. Therefore, it seems their lack of belief in him as a representative from the Sovereign God prevented Jesus from doing greater works in Galilee.

Mark's record of Jesus' trip to Galilee is important because it not only reveals that belief is a component in the process of doing great beneficial works among people but also that people who do not respect a true servant of God can limit that servant's ability to benefit them in word and deed.

**Belief and Transference of Spiritual Energy**

As Jesus was on his way with his disciples to heal the daughter of Jairus, a director of synagogue services, many people began to follow them. In this crowd of people was a woman who had tremendous faith in Jesus' power to heal:

"And a certain woman, which had an issue of blood for twelve years and had suffered many things of many physicians, and had spent all that she had, and was no better off, but rather grew worse. When she heard of Jesus, she came in the crowd behind him, and touched his garment. For she said to herself, If I can only touch his clothes, I shall be whole. And straightway the source of her blood dried up; and she felt in her body that she was healed of that plague. And Jesus, was immediately aware that virtue had gone out of him, turned around in the crowd, and said, Who touched my clothes? And his disciples said to him, You see all these crowding around you, and you ask, Who touched me?" (Mk.5:25-31 KJV Para.).

The disciple's question to Jesus was logical, because people were bumping into him and touching him as he walked along. But what was it that Jesus knew which was not apparent to his disciples?

The English word virtue in verse 30 is translated from the Greek word *dunamis*, which is derived from a word meaning force. *Dunamis* means miraculous power (usually by implication, a miracle itself).

It was Jesus' awareness that supernatural power had been transferred through him to someone else that caused him to ask who had touched him. The transference of spirit-power from one person to another is a much different sensation from the tactile touch of a finger or one body brushing against another.

"And he looked round about to see her that had done this thing. But the woman fearing and trembling, knowing what was done in her, came and fell down before him, and told him all the truth. And he said to her, Daughter, your faith has made you whole; go in peace, and be whole of your plague" (Mk.5:32-34 KJV). See also Lk.8: 43-48.

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This event plus the account in Luke 6:17-19 of Jesus healing a great number people that came to him from Judea, Jerusalem, and the coastal areas of Tyre and Sidon show that there is a transfer of spirit-energy from or through one person to another during the healing process, as well as that faith is a major component in the process of healing and it can initiate supernatural healing.

Summary

The many accounts in the New Testament of Jesus healing people of various disabilities and illnesses reveal that no disability or illness is beyond supernatural healing through the power of the holy spirit.

Although Jesus sometimes performed a physical act when healing people, he also allowed a person's belief and faith to initiate healing.

The following list summarizes some of the physical acts Jesus did or did not perform as he healed people. The list also summarizes the aspect of belief and faith as it relates to healing:

- He put his hands on people.
- He spit on people's eyes or spit on the ground.
- He applied spit and dirt to a person's eyes.
- He touched the person's infirmity.
- He spoke a command to effect a healing.
- He spoke no audible command for healing, but just said the person was healed.
- He gave instructions to be followed before a healing would occur.

In the examples of Jesus healing individuals, no specific pattern, ritual, or method is established. Instead, what we see is Jesus using the method which fit the circumstance in which healing was to be performed. All the examples of Jesus healing individuals show that the healing was instantaneous or happened soon after a command was given to heal, or occurred after the person followed instructions to perform a certain act.

We are not told everything that Jesus did or did not do as he went about healing people and proclaiming the Kingdom of God. But, we are told enough so that we can know and understand that healing people is not only an act of compassion but also a major part of any powerful ministry proclaiming the Kingdom of God.
THE HOLY INCENSE AND PRAYER

This section will discuss various accounts showing the prophetic and symbolic meaning and usage of incense during significant rituals, which have profound meaning for the elect who practice the apostles James' instructions for the healing of disabilities and illnesses during this gospel age of salvation.

Within the tabernacle there was a golden altar of incense that stood before the curtain which separated the holy of holies from the rest of the sanctuary. On this altar, a holy incense was to burn continually. The prophetic and symbolic meaning of making and burning the holy incense was an important part of the worship of the Creator and is rich with meaning for the elect during this gospel age of salvation.

King David understood the symbolic meaning of the continual offering of incense in the tabernacle and that this fragrance was very pleasing to his Creator; he wanted his prayers to be as pleasing to the Creator as the holy incense and the evening sacrifice:

"Lord, I cry to you: make haste to me; give ear to my voice, when I cry to you. Let my prayer be set forth before you as incense; and the lifting up of my hands as the evening sacrifice" (Psa.141:1-2 KJV).

Likewise, the incense which is currently being burnt before the thrones of God the Father and our Savior is an important act of worship and has a prophetic, symbolic, and literal meaning as it relates to the prayers of the elect. See Rev.8:1-4.

The biblical record shows that our heavenly Father and our Savior derive great pleasure from answering our prayers; therefore, a review of the holy incense burnt on the altar of incense in the tabernacle/temple and the incense burnt on the heavenly altar is relevant to an understanding of the apostle James' instruction to anoint the sick and pray over them (Jms.5:14-15).

Instructions to Moses

In Exodus 30, verses 1-5, Moses is given instructions concerning how to construct the altar of incense. In verse 6, he is told to place the altar of incense in front of the curtain, which the ark of the covenant was behind. In verses 7-8, Aaron is instructed to place new incense on the altar of incense every morning and evening and that the incense was to burn continually before the Lord.

"And Aaron shall burn thereon sweet incense every morning: when he dresses the lamps, he shall burn incense upon it. And when Aaron lights the lamps at even, he shall burn incense upon it, a perpetual incense before the Lord throughout your generations" (Ex.30:7-8 KJV).
Verse 9 limits the use of the altar of incense to specific rituals, which indicates that this altar, the incense burnt on it, and the rituals which must be performed on and before it are unique in function and meaning:

"You shall offer no strange incense thereon, nor burnt sacrifice, nor meat offering; neither shall you pour drink offering thereon" (Ex. 30:9 KJV).

Verse 10 refers to making atonement for the altar of incense on the Day of Atonement when all the sins of Israel were to be set aside in order for the Creator's presence to remain in the tabernacle for another year:

"And Aaron shall make an atonement upon the horns of it once in a year with the blood of the sin offering of atonements: once in the year shall he make atonement upon it throughout your generations: it is most holy to the Lord" (Ex.30:10 KJV).

The conceptual meaning of atonement (Heb. kippurim) contains both the method by which something is done and the result of doing it. When an atonement was made through the sacrificial system (the method), the breach between God and man was healed (i.e., sin was set aside). God and man were then in harmony (the result). Therefore, the sacrifice of animals as an atonement for sin was required to restore and maintain a harmonious relationship with God.

In Exodus 30:34-35, the Creator instructs Moses to prepare the incense to be used in the tabernacle:

"And the Lord said to Moses, Take to you sweet spices, stacte, and onycha, and galbanum; these sweet spices with pure frankincense: of each shall there be a like weight: And you shall make it a perfume, a confection after the art of the apothecary, tempered together, pure and holy" (Ex.30:34-35 KJV). See also Ex.37:29.

The English words perfume and confection are translated from the Hebrew words qetoreth and roqach, which respectively mean a fumigation and an aromatic. The use of these two Hebrew words reveal that the purpose for making this compound is for it to be burnt as an incense.

The materials and their amounts are specified, but the formula for blending these materials is not revealed. However, the instruction to make the incense after the art of the apothecary tells us that this incense was to be carefully prepared using a specific blending process. Verse 35 reveals that this aromatic incense was unique in composition and that once made, it either became holy due to its formulation or the quality/essence of holiness was bestowed on it by the Creator.

Verse 36 is further proof that this incense is sacred just like all things which were a part of the tabernacle and the sacrificial worship system given to national Israel:

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"And you shall beat some of it very small, and put of it before the testimony in the tabernacle of the congregation, where I will meet with you: it shall be to you most holy" (Ex.30:36 KJV).

The English phrase very small in verse 36 is translated from the Hebrew word daqaq, which means to crush or crumble. The reason for crushing some of the incense into a powder and storing it before the testimony is explained in the rituals of the Day of Atonement.

The English words most and holy in verse 36 are both translated from the same Hebrew word qodesh, which means a sacred place or thing. The phrase most holy (i.e., sacred, sacred/holy, holy) is used to describe and stress the sacredness and importance of the things contained in the tabernacle, which included the altar of incense.

"And as for the perfume which you shall make, you shall not make to yourselves according to the composition thereof: it shall be to you holy for the Lord. Whosoever shall make like to that, to smell thereto, shall even be cut off from his people" (Ex.30:37-38 KJV).

This holy incense was only to be used in worship of God. Verse 38 warns that anyone who makes an incense like it will be severely punished.

There are many opinions as to exactly what was to happen to a person who made an incense similar to the holy incense and when this punishment was to be carried out. However, what is clear is that this is an extremely serious warning: the English phrase cut off in verse 38 is translated from the Hebrew word karath, which in this context means cut (off, down or asunder); by implication, to destroy.

KORAH AND THE LEVITES

Numbers, chapter 16 contains the account of Korah and a number of other Levites who were attempting to usurp the authority of Moses, Aaron, and Aaron's male descendants whom the Creator had chosen to be priests from among the Levites.

These challengers either procured an incense or made an incense in violation of the Creator's command not to make any incense like the one he had instructed Moses to make for use in the tabernacle (Ex.30:37-38). The death of these men is a serious warning to individuals who attempt to take to themselves positions of authority that God has not granted to them or violate his instructions not to make and burn an incense similar to the holy incense. See also Num.16:36-40; 2.Chron.29:1-11.
SINS OF IGNORANCE

When the high priest, a ruler of the people, an individual, or the people as a whole became aware that they had sinned in ignorance, a sin offering was to be made so that they could be placed back into a harmonious relationship with the Creator. Some of the blood from this offering was put on the horns of the altar of incense and sprinkled before the curtain, which separated the holy of holies from the rest of the sanctuary.

Because the high priest was to offer the sacrifice for the sin of ignorance, if he had also committed the same sin through ignorance, he had to first offer a sin offering for himself, before making the required offerings for other people:

"If the priest that is anointed do sin according to the sin of the people; then let him bring for his sin, which he has sinned, a young bullock without blemish to the Lord for a sin offering. And he shall bring the bullock to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation before the Lord; and shall lay his hand upon the bullock's head, and kill the bullock before the Lord" (Lev.4:3-4 KJV).

"And the priest that is anointed shall take of the bullock's blood, and bring it to the tabernacle of the congregation: And the priest shall dip his finger in the blood, and sprinkle of the blood seven times before the Lord, even before the veil of the sanctuary. And he shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar of sweet incense before the Lord, that is in the tabernacle of the congregation: and shall pour all the blood of the bullock at the bottom of the altar of the burnt offering, which is at the door of the tabernacle of the congregation" (Lev.4:5-7 KJV).

This sprinkling of the blood before the curtain seven times indicated that atonement for the sin had been accomplished through a sacrifice. The placing of the blood of atonement on the horns of the altar of incense seems to be symbolic of requesting that the atonement be honored. Therefore, the sin of ignorance was completely atoned for through sacrifice and prayer.

Verses 16 through 18 show the sacrificial blood which was to atone for the people's sins of ignorance was also being put on the horns of the altar of incense and sprinkled before the curtain which separated the holy of holies from the rest of the sanctuary.

"And the priest that is anointed shall bring of the bullock's blood to the tabernacle of the congregation: And the priest shall dip his finger in some of the blood, and sprinkle it seven times before the Lord, even before the veil. And he shall put some of the blood upon the horns of the altar [i.e., the altar of incense] which is before the Lord, that is in the tabernacle of the congregation . . . " (Lev.4:16-18 KJV).
Sins of Ignorance in this Age

Sins of ignorance are also a problem in this age. We are many centuries removed from the giving of the law to Israel and the teachings of Christ and the apostles, which has resulted in the loss of much knowledge and understanding about how to practice a truly righteous lifestyle.

The apostle John wrote the following about the cleansing effect of Christ's blood and the willingness of the Father to forgive all our violations of his law, precepts, and principles, which can also be applied to sins of ignorance:

"This then is the message which we have heard of him, and declare to you, that God is light, and in him is no darkness at all. If we say that we have fellowship with him, and walk in darkness, we lie, and do not the truth: But if we walk in the light, as he is in the light, we have fellowship one with another, and the blood of Jesus Christ his Son cleanses us from all sin" (1.Jn.1:5-7 KJV).

The English word sin in verse 7 is translated from the Greek word hamartia, derived from the word hamartano, which means to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize), i.e., (figuratively) to err, especially (morally) to sin. Hamartia in the simplest terms means a violation of God's law.

"If we say that we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us" (1.Jn.1:8-10 KJV).

The English word sinned in verse 10 is translated from the Greek word hamartano, which means to miss the mark (and so not share in the prize), i.e., (figuratively) to err, especially (morally) to sin.

Yes, the Father considers his earthly children to be sinless, because their past and future sins are covered by Christ's blood and they have his holy spirit dwelling within them. However, just because the Father considers us sinless; it does not mean that we are always in perfect obedience to the way of life he has prescribed for us to follow.

Verse 15 of James' instructions for healing within a congregation speaks to the forgiveness of sins. Verse 16 speaks to confessing one's sins. Therefore, it seems logical that the forgiveness of known sins and sins committed in ignorance would also be requested during the healing ritual.

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise them up: and even if sins are committed, they shall be forgiven. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much" (Jms.5:15-16 KJV Para.).
Because being forgiven for the violation of God's law is an aspect of the healing ritual mandated for the elect, elders and people requesting anointing should consider what the apostle Paul wrote to the evangelist Timothy in the light of forgiveness of sin before beginning the healing ritual:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, throughly furnished to all good works" (2.Tim.3:16-17 KJV). See also Rom.15:4.

THE DAY OF ATONEMENT

Once a year on the Day of Atonement, the high priest was to make an atonement on the altar of incense with the blood of the sin offerings before going behind the curtain which separated the holy of holies and the mercy seat from the rest of the sanctuary. This was to be performed as a part the rituals required in order to have all the sins of Israel set aside so that the Creator's presence would dwell with Israel another year.

The mercy seat was where the Creator appeared in a cloud to speak with Moses (Ex.25:17-22; Num.7:89) and where he would appear in a cloud to the high priest once a year (Lev.16:1-2).

Before the high priest could go behind the curtain which separated the sanctuary from the holy of holies containing the ark of the covenant with the mercy seat on it, he had to offer a sin offering for himself and his household:

"And Aaron shall bring the bullock of the sin offering, which is for himself, and shall make an atonement for himself, and for his house, and shall kill the bullock of the sin offering which is for himself" (Lev.16:11 KJV).

After offering a sacrifice for himself and his household and before going behind the curtain to sprinkle the blood of the bullock on and before the mercy seat, the high priest was to take a large amount of holy incense which had been crushed into a powder and stored in front of the curtain separating the holies of holies from the rest of the sanctuary and put it into his censer:

"And he shall take a censer full of burning coals of fire from off the altar before the Lord, and his hands full of sweet incense beaten small, and bring it within the veil: And he shall put the incense on the fire before the Lord, that the cloud of the incense may cover the mercy seat that is upon the testimony, so that he does not die" (Lev. 16:12-13 KJV Para.).

The English phrase beaten small in Leviticus 16:12 is translated from the Hebrew word dak, which means crushed, i.e., (by implication) small or thin, a very little thing.
The crushing of the incense into very a very fine powder seems to be prophetic and symbolic of thoughtfully composing detailed prayers before presenting them to our heavenly Father, rather than just giving an overview of what we are asking for or want to speak about.

The potential for the high priest dying if he went behind the curtain where the Creator would appear above the mercy seat was very real. The burning of a large amount of powdered incense quickly formed a dense cloud in which the high priest stood while sprinkling the sacrificial blood of atonement. The cloud of incense prevented the high priest from seeing the Creator in his glorified form above the mercy seat (Lev.16:1-2) which would have caused his death (Ex.33:18-23). Additionally, the cloud of holy incense hid any imperfection in the high priest and any unintended failure by him to perform a small detail of the required sacrifices and rituals before he entered behind the curtain.

The English phrase mercy seat in Leviticus 16:13 is translated from the Hebrew word kapporeth, which means a lid (used only to describe the cover of the ark of the covenant). Kapporeth is derived from the root word kaphar, which figuratively means to expiate, condone, to placate or cancel.

The kapporeth represented the Creator's heavenly throne where mercy could be obtained. The kapporeth in the holy of holies seems also to be prophetic and symbolic of the Sovereign Father's throne to which the elect go to praise him, thank him, and speak with him about many things, including requesting forgiveness of sin and healing of a disability or illness.

The high priest offering the proper sacrifice and being without sin before entering the holy of holies seems to be prophetic and symbolic of Christ as the sinless high priest of the elect going before the Sovereign Father with our prayers to intercede on our behalf:

"Who shall lay any thing to the charge of God's elect? It is God that justifies. Who is he that condemns? It is Christ that died, yes rather, that is risen again, who is even at the right hand of God, who also makes intercession for us" (Rom.8:33-34 KJV). See also Heb.7:14-25.

Leviticus 16:16-17 reveal that the high priest was the only person allowed in the sanctuary during these rituals. His going into the sanctuary alone to perform these rituals seems to be symbolic of Christ who is the only one authorized to go before the Sovereign Father to intercede on our behalf and request forgiveness of our sins:

"And he shall make an atonement for the holy place, because of the uncleanness of the children of Israel, and because of their transgressions in all their sins: and so shall he do for the tabernacle of the congregation, that remains among them in the midst of their uncleanness. And there shall be no man in the tabernacle of the congregation when he goes in to make an atonement in the holy
place, until he come out, and have made an atonement for himself, and for his household, and for all the congregation of Israel” (Lev. 16:16-17 KJV).

Before leaving the sanctuary to place the sins of Israel on the head of a live goat and send it away from the camp of Israel, the high priest had to sprinkle the blood of atonement.

"And he shall go out to the altar [altar of incense] that is before the Lord, and make an atonement for it; and shall take of the blood of the bullock, and of the blood of the goat, and put it upon the horns of the altar round about. And he shall sprinkle of the blood upon it with his finger seven times, and cleanse it, and hallow it from the uncleanness of the children of Israel” (Lev. 16:18-19 KJV).

The blood of atonement is to be sprinkled before the curtain seven times which indicates spiritual perfection and bringing to and end (i.e., the sacrificial atonement for the sins of Israel had been totally accomplished through sacrifice and prayer).

The High Priest's Atonement

Before the high priest could offer an atonement for known sins and sins of ignorance of others and before he could offer sacrifices for the sins of Israel on the Day of Atonement, he first had to atone for his own sins. But, Jesus was sinless, so he could sacrifice his life for us as an atonement for our past and future sins. When we deviate from the path of righteousness, we need to request the Father's forgiveness through Christ's sacrifice (1.Jn.1:5-10; 2:1-2; 4:9-10) which is why we are given the opportunity have all sins removed during the healing ritual as set forth by James.

The elect are all priest-kings in their heavenly Father's earthly family and have several priestly functions and responsibilities to perform within his family. Therefore, it follows that elders who are fulfilling their priestly function for a fellow priest-king who requests anointing should first ask forgiveness for their known sins and their sins committed in ignorance before they perform the healing ritual.

REPRESENTATIONS OF THE HEAVENLY

The writer to the Hebrews wrote that the Creator instructed Moses to construct everything associated with the tabernacle according to the directions that he would give him, because these things were representations of what is in heaven. The writer also wrote that the priesthood and the offerings were expressions of the heavenly worship system:

"Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum: We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens; A minister of the sanctuary, and of the true tabernacle, which the Lord pitched, and not man. For every high priest is ordained to offer gifts and sacrifices: wherefore it is of necessity that this man have somewhat also to offer. For if he were..."
on earth, he should not be a priest, seeing that there are priests that offer gifts according to the law: Who serve to the example and shadow of heavenly things, as Moses was admonished of God when he was about to make the tabernacle: for, See, says he, that you make all things according to the pattern showed to you in the mount. But now has he obtained a more excellent ministry, by how much also he is the mediator of a better covenant, which was established upon better promises” (Heb.8:1-6 KJV).

INCENSE AND PRAYERS OF THE SAINTS

The Book of Revelation, chapters 5 and 8 reveal the meaning of the continual burning of holy incense in the tabernacle before the holies of holies as it relates to the prayers of the saints, before and after the advent of Christ.

In Revelation 5:1-7, the apostle John sees the Sovereign God sitting on his throne holding a book with seven seals and Christ taking the book from his right hand, after which John sees twenty-four elders showing their respect to Christ:

"And when he had taken the book, the four beasts and four and twenty elders fell down before the Lamb, having every one of them harps, and golden vials full of odors, which are the prayers of saints" (Rev.5:8 KJV).

The English word vials in verse 8 is translated from the Greek word phiale, which means a broad shallow cup. The English word odors is translated from the Greek word thumiama, which means an aroma, (i.e., fragrant powder burnt in religious service; by implication, the burning itself).

The English word prayers in verse 8 is translated from the Greek word proseuche, which is derived from the Greek word proseuchomai, which means to pray to God, (i.e., supplicate, worship). Proseuche basically means prayers of worship.

The English word saints in verse 8 is translated from a Greek word hagios, which means sacred (physically pure, morally blameless or religious, ceremonially consecrated).

This prophetic vision shows the twenty-four elders holding golden dishes containing a fragrant burning incense, which is described as being the prayers of sacred individuals.

But, why are our prayers offered before Christ? The answer is that Christ is our high priest and he intercedes on our behalf to our heavenly Father (Rom.8:33-34), which is why Jesus said to make our request to our heavenly Father in his name (i.e., his authority).
The Heavenly Altar

Revelation 8:1-4 reveals that the altar of incense and the continual burning of incense before the holies of holies in the tabernacle were representations of a heavenly altar on which incense and the prayers of the saints are offered to the Sovereign Father as he sits on his throne:

"And when he had opened the seventh seal, there was silence in heaven about the space of half an hour. And I saw the seven angels which stood before God; and to them were given seven trumpets. And another angel came and stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and there was given to him much incense, that he should offer it with the prayers of all saints upon the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense, which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended up before God [God the Father] out of the angel's hand" (Rev.8:1-4 KJV).

The mingling of the incense with the prayers of the saints ascending before the Sovereign Father as an offering shows that the prayers of the saints are very pleasing to him and that our conversations with him are extremely important to him and to us.

Because our prayers are very pleasing to our heavenly Father and are being offered to him as a pleasing aroma, the writer to the Hebrews gives the following advice, which should be taken seriously and applied when following the apostle James' instructions about requesting healing of our illnesses and disabilities, as well as any other time we communicate with our heavenly Father:

"Seeing then that we have a great high priest, that is passed into the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold fast our profession. For we have not an high priest which cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities; but was in all points tempted like as we are, yet without sin. Let us therefore come boldly to the throne of grace, that we may obtain mercy, and find grace to help in time of need" (Heb. 4:14-16 KJV).

The English word mercy in verse 16 is translated from the Greek word eleos, which means compassion (human or divine).

THE HOUR OF PRAYER

Nothing is recorded in the biblical record requiring or advocating prayer during the replenishment of incense on the golden altar of incense. However, during the temple period, the morning incense was offered between the application of sacrificial blood to the altar of burnt offerings and the trimming of the lamps. The afternoon incense was offered between the burning of the sacrificial animal and the drink offering (Mishnah, Yoma 3:4;5). The evening replenishment of the incense was finished around 3 p.m. This is also the time period mentioned in the New Testament when people would customarily come to the temple to pray.
Luke records that many people were praying outside the temple while the priest Zacharias was replenishing the incense on the altar of incense. This is when the angel appeared to Zacharias and told him that he would father John:

"And it came to pass, that while he [Zacharias] executed the priest's office before God in the order of his course, According to the custom of the priest's office, his lot was to burn incense when he went into the temple of the Lord. And the whole multitude of the people were praying without at the time of incense" (Lk.1:8-10 KJV).

This account means nothing by itself, but when it is compared with other events that occurred during the replenishing of the incense in the temple, we see a pattern of significant events emerge which are all connected to this time.

**Christ's Crucifixion**

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record that the final stages of Jesus' crucifixion occurred before 3 p.m. and that he called out to his heavenly Father and died around 3 p.m., which is when the incense replenishment ritual was being completed:

"Now from the sixth hour [noon] there was darkness over all the land to the ninth hour [3 p.m.]. And about the ninth hour Jesus cried with a loud voice, saying, Eli, Eli, lama sabachthani? that is to say, My God, my God, why have you forsaken me? . . . Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the spirit" (Matt.27:45-46, 50 KJV). See also Mk.15:33-37; Psa.22:1-2.

"And it was about the sixth hour [noon], and there was a darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour [noon to 3 p.m.]. And the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was rent in the midst. And when Jesus had cried with a loud voice, he said, Father, into your hands I commend my spirit: and having said this, he gave up the spirit" (Lk.23:44-46 KJV).

It seems more than a coincidence that the symbolic and literal meaning of the holy incense is prayers of the righteous ascending to God and that Jesus' last prayer to his heavenly Father as a human happened during the replenishment of the holy incense in the temple.

**Peter Heals a Man**

The Book of Acts records that Peter and John went to the temple around 3 p.m. at which time the priest was replenishing the incense on the altar of incense:
"Now Peter and John went to the temple at the hour of prayer, about the ninth hour [3 p.m.]. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that came to the temple; who seeing Peter and John about to go into the temple asked an alms. Then Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold I have none; but such as I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise and walk" (Acts 3:1-6 KJV Para.).

Our heavenly Father has great concern for humanity and is aware of people's suffering when they are sick, injured, or otherwise in physical or mental distress. Here, Peter shows godly mercy and compassion to this man during the hour of prayer.

**Peter and the Centurion**

Acts, chapter 10 records the centurion Cornelius praying about 3 p.m., which is about the time the incense on the altar of incense was being replenished. At this time, Cornelius was visited in a vision by an angel who told him that his prayers and his kindness to others were noted by God and that he was to send for Peter. The following day Peter received a vision of unclean animals and was told to eat them and not to think of that which God had cleansed as unclean.

These events resulted in Peter understanding that God the Father was not a respecter of persons and that he was not only calling Abraham's decedents to salvation but also non-Israelites. Additionally, Cornelius, his relatives, and friends received the holy spirit and became the first among non-Israelites to become members of God the Father's earthly family of king-priests.

The events recorded in the New Testament, which happened during the replenishment of the holy incense on the altar of incense at the time customarily called the hour of prayer, accentuate the importance of our communication with our heavenly Father. Moreover, these events show that maintaining continual communication with our Father is extremely important and that many benefits are derived through this communication.

**The House of Prayer**

The prophet Isaiah records the following which speaks of those who live in obedience to God's law and please him with their life being rewarded with an everlasting name and an eternal residence in his heavenly house. God's house is to be known as a house of prayer:
"For this says the Lord to the eunuchs that keep my Sabbaths, and choose the things that please me, and take hold of my covenant; Even to them will I give in my house and within my walls a place and a name better than of sons and of daughters: I will give them an everlasting name, that shall not be cut off. Also the sons of the stranger, that join themselves to the Lord, to serve him, and to love the name of the Lord, to be his servants, every one that keeps the Sabbath from polluting it, and taketh hold of my covenant; Even them will I bring to my holy mountain, and make them joyful in my house of prayer [i.e., his heavenly temple]: their burnt offerings and their sacrifices shall be accepted upon mine altar; for mine house shall be called an house of prayer for all people" (Isa.56:4-7 KJV).

The English word prayer in verse 7 is translated from the Hebrew word _tephillah_, which means _intercession, supplication_; by implication, _a hymn_.

This prophecy also reveals that the Sovereign Father's heavenly temple is a place where intercessory prayers are heard by him and praise and song are presented to him. See also Jer.33:10-11; Rev.8:1-4; 14:3.

**During Christ's Lifetime**

Matthew, Mark, and Luke all record Jesus throwing the merchants out of the temple area and stating that God's house was to be known as a house of prayer:

"And Jesus went into the temple of God, and cast them all out that sold and bought at the temple, and overthrew the tables of the moneychangers, and the seats of them that sold doves, And said to them, It is written, My house shall be called the house of prayer; but you have made it a den of thieves" (Matt. 21:12-13 KJV Para.). See also Mk.11:17; Lk.19:46.

The English phrase of prayer in verse 13 is translated from the Greek word _proseuche_, which means _prayer (worship);_ by implication, _an oratory (chapel)._ 

Jesus' statement about God's house (i.e., his temple) being a place of prayer, clearly reveals that the Sovereign God's temple is a place where continual communication with him is to take place.

Continual prayers to the Creator God were symbolized by the continual burning of incense on the altar of incense in the tabernacle and the temple. In the Book of Revelation, continual prayers of the saints are symbolically presented with incense by the 24 prophetic elders before our Savior to be conveyed by him to our heavenly Father. Additionally, the prayers of the elect are offered at the heavenly altar and mixed with incense to rise before God the Father as a pleasing odor.
When reviewing the prophetic and symbolic meaning of the holy incense which burnt continually in the tabernacle and subsequently in the temple in Jerusalem, it is important to clearly understand that the apostle Paul wrote much about the fact that the Sovereign Father's earthly children are also his personal temples on earth (1 Cor.3:16-17; 6:19-20).

Sacrifice of Praise

The writer to the Hebrews wrote the following about a sacrificial altar to which the elect have access, but the Levitical priesthood are not allowed to partake of what is offered on it:

"We have an altar, whereof they [the levitical priesthood] have no right to eat which serve the tabernacle. For the bodies of those beasts, whose blood is brought into the sanctuary by the high priest for sin, are burned without the camp. Wherefore Jesus also, that he might sanctify the people with his own blood, suffered without the gate" (Heb.13:10-12 KJV).

The Levitical priesthood could eat portions of some offerings made to the Creator. The eating of portions of sin and the peace offering (also called the fellowship offering) were symbolic of eating at God's table. See Lev.3:1-17; 6:1-18. The altar at which we sacrifice is before our Father in heaven. The sacrifices we offer promote a harmonious relationship with our heavenly Father. In verses 13 through 16, the writer to the Hebrews says the following about coming before our heavenly Father and offering a sacrifice of praise through Christ:

"Let us go forth therefore to him [our heavenly Father] without the camp, bearing his [Christ's] reproach. For here have we no continuing city, but we seek one to come. By him [Christ] therefore let us offer the sacrifice of praise to God [the Father] continually, that is, the fruit of our lips giving thanks to his name" (Heb.13:13-15 KJV).

The English word praise in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word ainesis, which is derived from aineo and means to praise (God). Ainesis is only used once in the New Testament and refers to the act of praising and specifically speaks to an offering of gratitude.

The English phrase giving thanks in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word homologeo, which means a covenant or acknowledgment. Homologeo in the context of verse 15 speaks to acknowledging the Father's authority in our lives.

In order to offer a sacrifice to God the Father, a person must first have a sacrifice to offer, a place to bring the sacrifice, an altar on which to perform the sacrifice, and a high priest to offer the sacrifice for them. There is only one place a person can offer praise and gratitude to their heavenly Father and make requests to him—the altar of incense at his heavenly throne (Rev.8:1-4).
During this gospel age of salvation, the elect are the Sovereign Father's earthly temples on earth (i.e., his houses of prayer on earth (1.Cor.3:16-17; 6:19)) from which we offer our praise and gratitude and make requests to him.

**Incense and Prayer**

The holy incense offered in the tabernacle and the temple at Jerusalem was symbolic of the prayers of the righteous ascending to the Creator God and were prophetic of the elect's prayers to their heavenly Father and the pleasure he derives from this communication with him.

The continual offerings we are to make to our heavenly Father to show our respect for him are praise, songs of praise, acknowledgment of his sovereignty, gratitude, good works, and the practice of a righteous lifestyle. There are many scriptures instructing us to communicate often with our heavenly Father, which is extremely important to maintaining a harmonious relationship with him as we work out our salvation. The following are several of the apostle Paul's comments about prayer which show the importance of this aspect of our relationship with our heavenly Father:

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

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality" (Rom.12:10-13 KJV).

"For this cause also thank we God without ceasing, because, when you received the word of God which you heard of us, you received it not as the word of men, but as it is in truth, the word of God, which effectually works also in you that believe" (1.Thess.2:13 KJV).

"See that none render evil for evil to any man; but ever follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men. Rejoice evermore. Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you" (1.Thess.5:15-18 KJV).

"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of thy tears, that I may be filled with joy" (2.Tim.1:2-4 KJV).
Without continual, heart-felt prayer to our heavenly Father, nothing positive will be accomplished in our lives or the work we are given to perform during this gospel age of salvation.

So, what do the holy incense which was to be offered continually, the events which occurred during the hour of prayer at the temple, and our physical bodies being our heavenly Father's temples have to do with James' instructions about healing?

Our heavenly Father is extremely interested in our well-being as his earthly children. He is more than willing to heal us of our disabilities and sicknesses if we communicate our needs to him in accordance with his will (1.Jn.5:13-15). And his will is that we ask for healing in compliance with the apostle James' instructions if we are in a congregation with an active, spirit-filled eldership.
LAYING ON OF HANDS

Biblical accounts show that anciently, during Christ's ministry and during the time of the early church, the laying on of hands was done for many different reasons. Some of these reasons are noted in the following list:

- Bestowing a supernatural ability
- Change in the physical or spiritual condition of an object or a person
- Ordination to an office, function, or responsibility
- Evidence of an authorization to use the power of the holy spirit
- A point of contact through which spirit-energy flows

This section will explore various accounts and aspects of the act of laying on hands in order to show that this important practice has profound meaning, is a medium through which the power of the holy spirit flows, and is an important act to be performed during this gospel age of salvation.

Doctrine of laying on of hands

After the writer to the Hebrews acknowledges the validity of Christ as the high priest of the Sovereign Father's earthly children and reprimands these Hebrews for their lack of skill in the use of the foundational knowledge about righteousness, he makes the following statement:

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

The English phrase of the doctrine in verse 2 is translated from the Greek word didache, which means instruction.

The writer urges these Hebrews to go forward in knowledge and understanding from foundational teachings, which include the instruction of laying on hands. This tells us that the practice of laying on hands was firmly established as a foundational teaching in the early church. Therefore, its symbolism and practical application should be clearly understood and practiced by the elect today.

Although it is not specifically mentioned in James' instructions for healing within the congregations of the elect, when the many biblical accounts of laying on hands are reviewed and an analysis of the Greek words used in James' instructions is made, there is a strong indication that this act is applicable within the healing ritual.
Commission to Believers

Shortly after Jesus was resurrected, he first appeared to Mary Magdalene, and then to two individuals as they were walking to the village of Emmaus. After this, he met with the remaining eleven disciples and gave them what is commonly called the great commission as recorded by Matthew and Mark:

"Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, into a mountain where Jesus had appointed them. And when they saw him, they worshiped him: but some doubted. And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. You go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of this age" (Matt.28:16-20 KJV Para.).

The English phrase to observe in verse 20 is translated from the Greek word tereo derived from the Greek word teros, which means a watch. Tereo means to guard (from loss or injury; properly, by keeping the eye upon). The use of the word tereo in verse 20 seems to indicate a guarded maintenance of the things Jesus told his disciples to teach, which includes what he said regarding healing.

These Signs Will Follow Them That Believe

Both Matthew and Mark record that the disciples were to go throughout the earth proclaiming the good news message Jesus brought from his heavenly Father and to induct repentant individuals into his Father's earthly family. But only Mark records Jesus stating certain supernatural signs would be evident among true believers:

"You go into all the world, and preach the good news to everyone. Those who believe and are baptized will be saved. But those who refuse to believe will be condemned. "And these signs shall follow those who believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with languages new to them; They shall cast away serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:15-18 KJV Para.).

Jesus makes a statement of fact about supernatural abilities which will be evident among true believers who will have the authority and power to cast out evil spirits, speak languages which they did not previously know how to speak, have protection against poisonous snakes and liquids, and heal every type of physical or spiritual disability, illness, and mental disorder though laying their hands on the affected individuals.
Although Jesus promised these supernatural abilities in the context of proclaiming the gospel message and accepting those who believe into the Father's earthly family of believers, he did not place restrictions on who can be healed through the laying on of hands. Therefore, it seems logical that healing through the laying on of hands can be applied to the elect, as well as the unconverted.

**Before Christ**

The following accounts before the advent of Christ show the importance of the ritual of laying on hands in order to effect a result.

**Jacob**

The patriarch Jacob laid his hands on Joseph's sons, Ephraim and Manasseh, and bestowed his name and the names of Abraham and Isaac on them in order to pass on to them and their descendants the birth-right and the prophetic promises of national greatness which the Creator made to him:

"And Israel [i.e., Jacob] stretched out his right hand, and laid it on Ephraim's head, who was the younger, and his left hand on Manasseh's head, guiding his hands wittingly; for Manasseh was the firstborn. And he blessed Joseph, and said, God, before whom my fathers Abraham and Isaac did walk, the God which fed me all my life long to this day, The Angel which redeemed me from all evil, bless the lads; and let my name be named on them, and the name of my fathers Abraham and Isaac; and let them grow into a multitude in the midst of the earth" (Gen.48:14-16 KJV).

Although the laying on of Jacob's hands was symbolic of the prophetic blessings being bestowed, it actually passed the birth-right promises to Ephraim, Manasseh, and their descendants, which historical records show produced physical blessings for their descendants.

**Sacrifices**

Throughout the Book of Leviticus, we see hands being laid upon the heads of sacrificial animals for the purpose of symbolically setting them apart for a scared purpose and conferring a condition of holiness to them so that they can be used to atone for sin or be presented to God as a peace offering.

During the rituals on the Day of Atonement, Israel's high priest symbolically placed all the sins of national Israel on the head of a live goat which was sent away from the Israelite's camp carrying these sins (Lev.16:20-22). This ritual resulted in the removal of these sins which defiled the Israelites and their encampment. Moreover, the removal of these sins made it possible for the Creator's presence to dwell in the tabernacle for another year.
Moses and Joshua

The Creator told Moses to lay his hand on Joshua in order to bestow his honor and authority on him so he could lead Israel.

"And the Lord said to Moses, Take you Joshua the son of Nun, a man in whom is the spirit, and lay your hand on him: And set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation; and give him a charge in their sight. And you shall put some of your honor on him, that all the congregation of the children of Israel may be obedient" (Num.27:18-20 KJV).

The English word honor in verse 20 is translated from the Hebrew word howd; from an unused root meaning grandeur (i.e., an imposing form and appearance). The use of the word howd indicates that, along with Joshua being charged with the responsibility to lead Israel, he would have his physical appearance changed.

When Moses returned from Mount Sinai with the second set of tablets on which the law was written, his physical appearance was different from other men (Ex.34:29-35). This is the appearance given to Joshua through the laying on of Moses' hand as he was given his new responsibilities:

"And Moses did as the Lord commanded him: and he took Joshua, and set him before Eleazar the priest, and before all the congregation: And he laid his hands upon him, and gave him a charge, as the Lord commanded by the hand of Moses" (Num.27:22-23 KJV).

In addition to his appearance being supernaturally changed when Moses laid his hands on him, Joshua was given the ability to make wise decisions in order to lead and govern the Israelites:

"And Moses was an hundred and twenty years old when he died: his eye was not dim, nor his natural force abated. And the children of Israel wept for Moses in the plains of Moab thirty days: so the days of weeping and mourning for Moses were ended. And Joshua the son of Nun was full of the spirit of wisdom; for Moses had laid his hands upon him: and the children of Israel hearkened to him, and did as the Lord commanded Moses. And there arose not a prophet since in Israel like to Moses, whom the Lord knew face to face" (Deut.34:7-10 KJV).

Executions

The laying on of hands was also performed to invoke and carry out the death sentence on individuals guilty of blasphemy and other capital crimes:

"And the Israelitish woman's son blasphemed the name of the Lord, and cursed. And they brought him to Moses: (and his mother's name was Shelomith, the daughter of Dibri, of the tribe of Dan;) And they put him in ward, that the mind of the Lord might be shown them."
And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Bring forth him that has cursed without the camp; and let all that heard him lay their hands upon his head, and let all the congregation stone him" (Lev.24: 11-14 KJV).

"At the mouth of two witnesses, or three witnesses, shall he that is worthy of death be put to death; but at the mouth of one witness he shall not be put to death. The hands of the witnesses shall be first upon him to put him to death, and afterward the hands of all the people. So you shall put the evil away from among you" (Deut.17: 6-7 KJV).

**Levites to Serve God**

"Take the Levites from among the children of Israel, and cleanse them. And this shall you do to them, to cleanse them: Sprinkle water of purifying on them, and let them shave all their flesh, and let them wash their clothes, and so make themselves clean. Then let them take a young bullock with his meat offering, even fine flour mingled with oil, and another young bullock shall you take for a sin offering. And you shall bring the Levites before the tabernacle of the congregation: and you shall gather the whole assembly of the children of Israel together: And you shall bring the Levites before the Lord: and the children of Israel shall put their hands on the Levites: And Aaron shall offer the Levites before the Lord for an offering of the children of Israel, that they may execute the service of the Lord" (Num.8:6-11 KJV).

Before the advent of Christ, there are many accounts of the ritual of laying on hands, which show it to be a symbolic acknowledgment of a person's position of responsibility and service and the dedication of an animal and its elevation to a holy condition so it could be sacrificed or otherwise used in the temple service. Additionally, the laying on of hands was symbolic of invoking a death sentence on a person who was to be punished for a capital crime.

The performance of this ritual was the means through which a transfer of blessings from one person to another was performed, something or someone was elevated to a holy condition, and a change was made in a person's characteristics or mental ability.

**Healing Before Christ**

Before the advent of Christ, the laying on of hands was performed for many different and important reasons, none of which the biblical record shows as being performed to effect the healing of individuals.

The following two accounts show that the laying on of hands was not necessary during the days of the prophets Elisha and Isaiah to effect healing. But, sometimes certain instructions were given for individuals to follow before their healing would take effect.
Naaman, who was the captain of the Syrian army came to the prophet Elisha's home asking to be healed of his leprosy. Elisha sent his servant to tell Naaman to wash in the Jordan river seven times and he would be healed. When Naaman performed this ritual, he was healed of his leprosy (2.Kgs.5:1-27).

The Creator sent the prophet Isaiah to King Hezekiah to inform him that he must set his house in order because he would die. After King Hezekiah beseeched God to heal him, the Creator sent Isaiah back to tell Hezekiah that he had heard his prayer and would let him live. Isaiah instructed Hezekiah's servants to take a lump of figs and lay it on the king's boil, after which he recovered (2.Kgs.20:1-7).

**During Christ's Ministry**

The many accounts in the New Testament of Jesus healing people reveal that no disability or illness is beyond supernatural healing through the power of the holy spirit and no specific method or ritual was necessary in order for Jesus to effect the healing of various physical disabilities, illnesses, or spiritual and mental disorders.

All of the examples of Jesus healing individuals reveal that people were healed instantaneously after a command was given to heal, or after a person followed instructions to perform a certain act.

During Christ's ministry, he would sometimes lay his hands on individuals as a part of the process of healing various afflictions (Mk.6:1-6; Lk.4:40). Jesus also laid his hands on little children as he blessed them (Matt.19:13-15; Mk.10:13-16). However, there are many accounts of Jesus healing people without touching them with his hands. Although Jesus did on occasion lay his hands on individuals or touch them in the process of healing them, he did not find it necessary to do this in every case. Sometimes, he just commanded a healing to occur or said it had been done according to a person's faith in his ability to heal them. See Mk.3:1-15; Lk.5:18-25; Jn.5:1-15.

No account in the New Testament shows Jesus' disciples performing the ritual of laying on hands to effect a healing during his ministry. But, it is likely that they did, because Jesus did. The disciples also anointed individuals with oil and healed them as they went about proclaiming the Kingdom of God.

**During the Early Church**

There are many accounts in the New Testament where hands were laid on individuals for various reasons. The following are several accounts which show the ritual as a symbolic acknowledgment that a person is being placed in a position of responsibility and service. These accounts document that the ritual of laying on hands accomplishes a tangible and perceivable result in the physical realm.
In Samaria

On one occasion, many individuals were baptized after hearing the preaching of Philip, but they did not receive the holy spirit until after the apostles Peter and John came and put their hands on them. It is important to note that Peter and John first requested the Father to give his spirit to these individuals before they put their hands on them:

"Now when the apostles which were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent to them Peter and John: Who, when they were come down, prayed for them, that they might receive the holy spirit: (For as yet he was fallen upon none of them: only they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus.) Then laid they their hands on them, and they received the holy spirit" (Acts 8:14-17 KJV). See also Acts 19:1-6.

Verses 18 and 19 of this account show it was through a request to the Sovereign Father and the ritual of laying on hands that these individuals received the holy spirit and were transformed into the Father's earthly children.

"And when Simon saw that through laying on of the apostles' hands the holy spirit was given, he offered them money, Saying, Give me also this power, that on whoever I lay hands, he may receive the holy spirit" (Acts 8:18-19 KJV).

The English word power in verse 19 is translated from the Greek word exousia, which means force (i.e., the power to cause an action). Simon the sorcerer recognized the effect of laying hands on individuals and wanted the ability to use this supernatural power.

Saul

After Saul who became the apostle Paul encountered Jesus near Damascus and was rendered blind, he saw a vision of a man named Ananias coming to him and laying his hands on him. A short time after this vision, Ananias entered the house where Saul was and told him Jesus had sent him and why he was sent. Then, Ananias put his hands on Saul and he received his sight and was filled with the holy spirit:

"In Damascus there was a disciple named Ananias. The Lord called to him in a vision, "Ananias!" "Yes, Lord," he answered. The Lord told him, "Go to the house of Judas on Straight Street and ask for a man from Tarsus named Saul, for he is praying. In a vision he has seen a man named Ananias come and place his hands on him to restore his sight" (Acts 9:10-12 NIV).

Jesus tells Ananias in a vision to go to Saul who had been given a vision of him restoring his sight through the laying on of hands (Acts 9:13-16). Although Ananias was extremely apprehensive because of what he had heard about Saul's persecution of the elect, he knew that the person in the vision was Christ, so he went to Saul:
"Then Ananias went to the house and entered it. Placing his hands on Saul, he said, "Brother Saul, the Lord Jesus, who appeared to you on the road as you were coming here has sent me so that you may see again and be filled with the holy spirit." Immediately, something like scales fell from Saul's eyes, and he could see again. He got up and was baptized, and after taking some food, he regained his strength. Saul spent several days with the disciples in Damascus" (Acts 9:17-19 NIV).

Because of the importance of the mission Saul had been selected to perform in proclaiming the good news message, Christ personally instructed both Saul and Ananias in order to facilitate God's plan to offer salvation to non-Israelites. Through the laying on of Ananias' hands, Saul's eyesight was restored and he received the holy spirit.

Ministering to Widows

As the early church grew, it became apparent there was a need for someone to care for the physical needs of the widows among them. As a result of this need, men were chosen by the membership of the early church and ordained by the apostles to perform this duty:

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration. Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables. Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the holy spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the holy spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they [the Apostles] had prayed, they laid their hands on them" (Acts 6:1-6 KJV).

The apostles laying their hands on these seven men was not just a symbolic gesture. The function and responsibility to care for the physical needs of the widows was now assigned to them and established in heaven through the laying on of hands. See Matt.18:18-19.

Barnabas and Saul

As Saul and other men who ministered in Antioch were fasting, Christ, through the holy spirit, gave an instruction to send Barnabas and Saul (i.e., Paul) to proclaim the gospel to the Gentiles:
"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers; as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the holy spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work whereto I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away" (Acts 13:1-3 KJV).

We are not told what these men's prayers entailed, but it can be assumed that some of the things they requested were supernatural power, protection, and wisdom to be granted to Barnabas and Saul as they went about proclaiming the gospel. It would seem the only reason for laying hands on Barnabas and Saul would be to acknowledge their function of proclaiming the gospel message to the Gentiles and to bestow the supernatural powers and protection on them as requested in prayer.

Elders

As the early church grew, there was a need for men to teach and guide congregations of the elect in the Father's truth and to carry out other functions and responsibilities of the church. The New Testament shows men being ordained as elders and the granting of the authority to ordain other elders being passed from elder to elder through the laying on of hands.

In 1.Tim.3:1-13, Paul lists for Timothy the qualifications a man must have before being ordained an elder, and later he tells him to be careful who he selects and ordains as an elder to minister to the elect:

"I charge you before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels, that you observe these things without preferring one before another, doing nothing by partiality. Lay hands suddenly on no man, neither be partaker of other men's sins: keep yourself pure" (1.Tim.5:21-22 KJV).

The apostle Paul charged Titus the Greek, who himself was an elder, with the responsibility to ordain other men to a similar office within the church as he went about proclaiming the gospel and establishing congregations of believers:

"To Titus, my own son after the common faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ our Savior. For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you" (Titus 1:4-5 KJV).

Supernatural Abilities

In Paul's letters to Timothy, he mentions supernatural abilities given to Timothy through the laying on of hands. Although we are not told what these were, it can be assumed these abilities were necessary in order for Timothy to carry out his function as an elder and an evangelist:
"Command and teach these things. Don't let anyone look down on you because you are young, but set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity. Until I come, devote yourself to the public reading of scripture, to preaching and to teaching. Do not neglect your gift, which was given you through a prophetic message when the body of elders laid their hands on you" (1.Tim.4:11-14 NIV).

"Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, according to the promise of life which is in Christ Jesus, To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day; Greatly desiring to see you, being mindful of your tears, that I may be filled with joy; When I call to remembrance the unfeigned faith that is in you, which dwelt first in your grandmother Lois, and your mother Eunice; and I am persuaded that in you also. Wherefore I put you in remembrance that you stir up the gift of God, which is in you by the putting on of my hands" (2.Tim.1:1-6 KJV).

The English word gift in Paul's comments to Timothy about the supernatural ability given to him through the laying on of hands is translated from the Greek word charisma, which is derived from the Greek word charizomai, which means to grant as a favor. Charisma in the context of verse 6 means an endowment.

Although the scriptures show supernatural abilities given to some individuals without the laying on of hands, before and after the advent of Christ, the biblical record also shows that, during the existence of the early church, some of these abilities were transmitted to individuals through the hands of the apostles and other elders. Therefore, it is logical to assume that this practice can be continued when applicable during this present age of the church.

Proclaiming the Gospel

Although the following accounts of healing are in the context of proclaiming the gospel message, they show that the decision to employ the laying on of hands to effect a healing is dependent on the circumstances in which healing is performed.

Paul at Melita

After being shipwrecked, and stranded on Melita, the apostle Paul had laid his hands on the father of Publius in order to heal him. After this he healed many other people while on the island:
"And when they were escaped, then they knew that the island was called Melita. . . . In the same quarters were possessions of the chief man of the island, whose name was Publius; who received us, and courteously lodged us three days. And it came to pass, that the father of Publius lay sick of a fever and of a bloody flux: to whom Paul entered in, and prayed, and laid his hands on him, and healed him. So when this was done, others also, which had diseases in the island, came, and were healed" (Acts 28:1, 7-9 KJV).

As an act of compassion, Paul heals Publius' father through the laying on of his hands. This account shows that Paul understood he was authorized by Christ to use this ritual to heal unconverted people as he carried out his responsibility to proclaim the gospel message. See Mk.16:18.

Not all people who were healed by the apostles had hands laid on them. Paul healed a man who had been crippled from birth by just telling him to get up and walk. And he sent cloths he had handled to people to effect the healing of sicknesses and the casting out of evil spirits. See Acts14:8-10; 19:11-12.

There are many scriptures which show the apostles healing people as acts of mercy and compassion while going about fulfilling their commission to proclaim the Father's good news message and establish congregations of believers wherever they went. The scriptures clearly show that, when healing people, those doing the healing did so through discretionary use of their authorization to heal.

The following example of Peter healing a lame man also reveals that, when a person is given supernatural power to heal, it is not necessary for them to lay hands on an individual to effect a healing.

**Peter Heals a Lame Man**

In the following account, Peter uses his delegated power and authority over the physical laws of this world to heal a man who had been lame from birth:

"Now Peter and John went up together into the temple at the hour of prayer, being the ninth hour. And a certain man lame from his mother's womb was carried, whom they laid daily at the gate of the temple which is called Beautiful, to ask alms of them that entered into the temple; . . . Peter, fastening his eyes upon him with John, said, Look on us. And he gave heed to them, expecting to receive something from them. Then Peter said, Silver and gold I have none; but such as I have I give you: In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise and walk" (Acts 3:1-2, 4-6 KJV). See also Acts 3:16.
Before performing this act of mercy, Peter said, "Such as I have I give you," which makes it very clear that Peter had the power to heal at his discretion. When Peter said, "In the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth rise and walk," he was not only announcing by whose authority he was removing this man's paralysis and making him whole but also commanding the act of healing to be performed through the authority and power that he had been delegated through the office of Jesus Christ.

After issuing this command in the name of Jesus, Peter confidently reached down, took the man's hand, and begin to lift him to his feet. Instantly, the man was healed of his paralysis and had enough strength to stand, walk, and leap up and down. See Acts 3:7-8.

By Whose Authority?

While being questioned by the high priest and other religious leaders of the Jews about his authority to heal the lame man, Peter told them he received his authority and power to perform this healing through Jesus Christ who was also the Savior of humanity:

"If we be examined of the good deed done to this man, by what means he is made whole; Be it known to you all, and to all people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom God raised from the dead, even by him does this man stand here before you whole. This is the stone which was set at nought of you builders, which is become the head of the corner. Neither is there salvation in any other: for there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved" (Acts 4:9-12 KJV). Read both chapters 3 and 4 of Acts for more details.

This and other accounts of the apostles healing people reveal that it is not necessary for a person who has the authority to heal to touch a person, lay hands on them, or anoint them with oil in order to effect a healing. It also tells us that only faith is required in certain instances for healing to take place.

Because of a lack of understanding in today's world about God the Father and his Son Jesus Christ, a man who is authorized to heal, just as the apostles Peter and Paul were, should clearly explain who it is that has given him the authority to heal. This makes it clear to those who are healed and those who are aware of the healing that all credit, praise, and honor for any healing performed by them belongs to God the Father and that the one performing the healing is doing so through the authority delegated to them by Christ.

Signs and Wonders

The New Testament record tells us very little about everything the apostles did with the tremendous supernatural power which they had been given in order to proclaim the gospel message, but the following two accounts indicate that what they did was much more than healing people:
"And by the hands of the apostles were many signs and wonders wrought among the people" (Acts 5:12 KJV).

"And it came to pass in Iconium, that they went both together into the synagogue of the Jews, and so spake, that a great multitude both of the Jews and also of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles, and made their minds evil affected against the brethren. Long time therefore abode they speaking boldly in the Lord, which gave testimony unto the word of his grace, and granted signs and wonders to be done by their hands" (Acts 14:1-3 KJV).

Some might assume that the reference to hands in these two accounts is metaphorical and does not mean that the apostles used their hands in performing supernatural acts. However, there are many accounts in the biblical record which show a single hand or both hands together as instruments used to exercise supernatural power in order to initiate and accomplish tangible, perceivable results in the physical realm.

**Hands**

One or both hands are often used in the biblical record to visually symbolize an action or an event that is to occur; however, the use of one or both hands is many times more than just symbolism. There are many biblical accounts showing supernatural power being exercised and projected into the physical realm through hands.

When Amalek came to fight with Israel at Rephidim, Moses told Joshua to choose men to fight them and that he would stand on a hill holding the rod God had given him. When Moses held his hands up, the Israelites prevailed and when he lowered his hands because of fatigue, Amalek prevailed. Therefore, Aaron and Hur brought a large rock for Moses to sit on and then each of them held up one of Moses' hands until Amalek was defeated. See Ex.17:8-14.

Although the raising and lowering of Moses' hands was visually symbolic, it was much more than symbolism. This act demonstrates that supernatural power can be accessed and projected through the hands of a man authorized to use this power to effect a tangible outcome in the physical realm. See also 2.Kgs.13:14-20.

In many English translations of the biblical text, the word translated as hands from the Masoretic and the Textus Receptus is very seldom a plural word in the original text. This understanding becomes important when determining how to perform supernatural acts like the apostles did, as well as how to perform the healing ritual as instructed by James.

There are many scriptures which show the right hand position in relationship to the Sovereign God and the Creator God who became Christ as being a position of authority and power. Additionally, there are many scriptures which show authority and power being wielded through the right hand.
When Jacob put his hands on the heads of Ephraim and Manasseh, he put his right hand on Ephraim who was to receive the greater blessing (Gen.48:11-21). In the song of Moses, God's right hand is noted as the hand through which his power is expressed to accomplish his will in the physical realm (Ex.15:6-12). The Psalms show that God saves and does marvelous works through his right hand (Psa.17:7; 98:1; 108:5-6).

**Healing the Elect**

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jms.5:14 KJV).

James' instruction for the healing of the elect within a congregation with an active eldership does not clearly specify that the elders are to lay hands on the person who requests healing and is anointed with oil, so is laying on hands necessary while performing this healing ritual?

In order to answer this question, it is important to remember that Jesus promised believers would have the ability to lay hands on the sick in order to effect healing (Mk.16:18). Additionally, the use of the Greek word *epi*, which can be translated as *over* or *upon* in the phrase *let them pray over him* indicates that the prayer can be performed while laying hands on the individual.

Knowing these things and understanding that practice of laying on hands was the method through which the power of the holy spirit was exercised before the advent of Christ, during the ministry of Christ, and during the early church indicates that the laying on of hands during the performance of James' instructions is a necessary part of the ritual and should be practiced today.

Although the laying on of hands during the healing ritual mandated by the apostle James is symbolic of the healing to follow, this act is much more than symbolism. The person upon whom the elder's hands are laid is being brought before the Father for special consideration. The healing power of the holy spirit is to flow to the person being healed. Moreover, laying on hands demonstrates belief and faith in the promise Christ made to those of his Father's earthly family:

"And these signs shall follow those who believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with languages new to them; They shall cast away serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:17-18 KJV Para).
ANointing with oil is mentioned over 170 times throughout the biblical narrative. Anointing was performed before the great flood, during the lives of Israel's patriarchs, during national Israel's establishment and subsequent history, during Christ's ministry, and during the early church.

There are two types of anointing oil shown in the biblical record: an anointing oil which is holy and one which is not. Both of these are shown to be necessary in the process of achieving a specific result.

It is important to review some of the biblical accounts of people and things that were anointed before the advent of Christ, in order to understand the reason Christ instructed his twelve disciples and the seventy other men he sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God to anoint people while healing them. Understanding why Christ gave the instruction to anoint those being healed reveals why the apostle James said to anoint the sick as a part of the healing ritual:

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jms.5:14-15 KJV).

This section will touch on various accounts and aspects of anointing with oil and show that anointing with oil is not a meaningless ritual, but has profound meaning and is an important ritual as it relates to the elect during this gospel age of salvation. Additionally, this section will show that the anointing oil is a medium through which the power of the holy spirit flows to cause an effect in the physical realm.

Methuselah Anointed King

No biblical account of anointing individuals or objects is recorded before the great flood; however, the Book of Jasher which is mentioned in the Bible as a historical record does record that, after Enoch died, all the kings of the earth took Enoch's son Methuselah and anointed him to rule over them in his father's place:

"And all the days that Enoch lived upon earth, were three hundred and sixty-five years. And when Enoch had ascended into heaven, all the kings of the earth rose and took Methuselah his son and anointed him, and they caused him to reign over them in the place of his father" (Jasher 4:1-2).

Methuselah being anointed king reveals that anointing individuals in order to establish them in a position of authority and power was a common practice before the great flood.
Jacob Anoints A Stone

Genesis, chapter 28 contains the account of Isaac sending his son Jacob to his brother-in-law Laban to marry one of his daughters. During the journey, Jacob dreams of a ladder reaching into heaven upon which God's angels are ascending and descending. In the dream, Jacob sees the Creator God standing above the ladder telling him that he is going to give the land on which he is lying to him and his descendants. The Creator then promises many other blessings to him, his descendants, and all people through his descendants.

The narrative tells us that, after Jacob's dream, he rose early in the morning, poured oil on top of the stone on which he laid his head that night and called that place Bethel (i.e., the house of God):

"And Jacob awoke out of his sleep, and he said, Surely the Lord is in this place; and I knew it not. And he was afraid, and said, How dreadful is this place! this is none other but the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven. And Jacob rose up early in the morning, and took the stone that he had put for his pillow, and set it up for a pillar, and poured oil on the top of it. And he called the name of that place Bethel: but the name of that city was called Luz at the first. And Jacob vowed a vow, saying, If God will be with me, and will keep me in this way that I go, and will give me bread to eat, and raiment to put on, So that I come again to my father's house in peace; then shall the Lord be my God: And this stone, which I have set for a pillar, shall be God's house: and of all that you shall give me I will surely give the tenth to you" (Gen.28:16-22 KJV Para.).

This record does not tell us anything about the composition of the oil Jacob poured on the stone or why he had this oil with him. It only tells us he performed this ritual, named the place Bethel, made a vow, and set up a stone as a memorial to mark the place where the Creator spoke with him.

The second account of Jacob anointing a stone with oil is in Genesis 35:1-15. In this account, the Creator sends Jacob to Bethel to build an altar. God appears to Jacob, speaks to him, and restates the promises he previously made while Jacob was on his journey to Laben (See Genesis chapter 28). In verses 14-15 of this second account, Jacob pours a drink offering and oil on a stone and calls the place Bethel.

The accounts in Genesis, chapters 28 and 35 indicate that a worship system dedicated to the Creator existed at that time, specific rituals were practiced, and Jacob was in the habit of making offerings to God and having oil with him in order to perform an anointing ritual.

The pouring of a drink offering and oil on the stone was a significant act, which established a memorial of an event and sealed a commitment to perform certain acts.
There are many beliefs, opinions, speculations, and traditions about the source and composition of the anointing oil used by individuals before the great flood and by the patriarchs of Israel; however, no credible documentation can be found to verify the source or composition of these oils.

Whatever these oils were, their source, or how they were prepared is not relevant to the practice of anointing for healing within the congregations of the elect during this gospel age; otherwise, this information would be documented in the biblical record. However, the fact that an anointing ritual was practiced anciently among God's chosen people establishes that anointing for healing as set forth by the apostle James is a continuance of an acceptable practice.

THE HOLY ANOINTING OIL

In preparation to establish national Israel as a holy nation, Moses was given many instructions, some of which concerned the preparation of oils and fragrances to be used in God's worship system and in service to him.

Some of these oils and fragrances were to be used to establish the tabernacle as a holy place and men from the tribe of Levi as a priesthood, as well as to perform certain rituals within and outside of the tabernacle:

"Oil for the light, spices for anointing oil, and for sweet incense, Onyx stones, and stones to be set in the ephod, and in the breastplate. And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex.25:6-8 KJV).

Although the King James translation of verse 6 is not an accurate translation of the Masoretic text, it does accurately convey that the Israelites were to supply oils to be used for a sacred purpose. The spices, the oils, and the amount of each which was to used in the preparation of the holy anointing oil is revealed in Exodus 30:22-24:

"Moreover the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Take you also to you principal spices, of pure myrrh five hundred shekels, and of sweet cinnamon half so much, even two hundred and fifty shekels, and of sweet calamus two hundred and fifty shekels, And of cassia five hundred shekels, after the shekel of the sanctuary, and of oil olive an hin" (Ex.30:22-24 KJV).

Although the ingredients and their amounts are specified, the formula for blending these materials is not revealed; however, the instruction to make the holy anointing oil after the art of the apothecary tells us that this oil was to be carefully prepared using a specific blending process:

"And you shall make it an oil of holy ointment, an ointment compound after the art of the apothecary: it shall be an holy anointing oil" (Ex.30:25 KJV). See also Ex.37:29.
The first instance of the English word *ointment* in verse 25 is translated from the Hebrew word *mishchah*, derived from the Hebrew word *mashach*, which means *to rub with oil*, i.e., *to anoint*; by implication, *to consecrate*; also *to paint*. This tells us that this oil is to be used in ritual anointing.

The second instance of the English word *ointment* in verse 25 is translated from the Hebrew word *roqach*, which means an *aromatic*. This tells us that the oil is to have an aromatic aroma, but does not tell us what it smelled like. The English word *oil* in verse 25 is translated from the Hebrew word *sheme*, which can mean *grease*, especially liquid (as from the olive, often perfumed); figuratively, *richness*:

The wording of verse 25 reveals that this aromatic anointing oil was unique in composition and that, once made, it either became holy due to its formulation or the quality/essence of holiness was bestowed on it by the Creator.

Exodus 30:31-32 reveals that the holy anointing oil was to be kept from generation to generation and it was not to be applied to a person's body:

"And you shall speak to the children of Israel, saying, This shall be an holy anointing oil to me throughout your generations. Upon man's flesh shall it not be poured, neither shall you make any other like it, after the composition of it: it is holy, and it shall be holy to you" (Ex.30:31-32 KJV).

The holy anointing oil was only prepared one time by Moses. It was never to be prepared again by anyone as noted in Exodus 30:33. Because this oil was only to be made once and was to be kept from generation to generation it would never go rancid, always remain fresh, and replenish itself in its container as it was used.

The English words *man's* and *flesh* in verse 32 are translated from the Hebrew words *adam* and *basar*. In the context of verse 32, the word *adam* means *a human being* (i.e., an individual or mankind). *Basar* can also mean *the body of a person* or *the body's genitalia*.

The prohibition against applying the holy anointing oil to a person's flesh does not mean that this oil cannot be applied to a person; otherwise, the oil would be of no use for anointing people and would contradict the Creator's instructions to anoint Aaron and the priesthood with it. See Ex.29:7,21; 30:30. The holy oil is only to be applied to individuals authorized to receive it and in the manner and for the purpose specified by the Creator.

Verse 33 warns that any person who makes an oil using the ingredients revealed to Moses or applies the holy anointing oil to a person who is not authorized to receive it will be severely punished:
"Whosoever compounds any like it, or whosoever puts any of it upon a stranger, shall even be cut off from his people" (Ex.30:33 KJV).

There are many opinions as to exactly what was to happen to a person who made an oil similar to the holy anointing oil and when this punishment was to be carried out. What is clear, however, is that this is an extremely serious warning—the English phrase cut off is translated from the Hebrew word karath, which in this context means to cut (off, down or asunder); by implication, to destroy.

God's Property

The scriptures clearly show that everything holy belongs to God. The holy anointing oil which the Creator required Moses to prepare did not belong to the Israelites; this oil was God's property. It was to be stored in the tabernacle under the care of the priesthood (Num.4:16) and was to be used in the manner and for the purpose that he decreed.

Psalm 89 shows the oil used to anoint David as being holy and in a prophecy against Jerusalem, the Creator reprimands its inhabitants for misusing the things he had given them and using his holy anointing oil to worship false gods (Ezk.16:18). The Creator also reprimanded the Houses of Israel and Judah for sacrificing their children to false gods and placing his holy oil and holy incense before these gods (Ezk.23:37-41). See also Ezk.16:1-20.

The scriptures clearly show that, when a holy person or a holy thing belongs to God, a high degree of respect and care must be shown to that which is holy in order to not defile that which is holy, lest one suffer serious consequences.

People and Things to Anoint

The Creator told Moses to take blood from the altar and the holy anointing oil and sprinkle them on Aaron and his sons, their clothing which was to be used in their priestly service, the tabernacle, and everything to be used in the tabernacle. The following are a few of the many instructions given to Moses about what to anoint with the holy oil and the effect of this anointing:

"And you shall take of the blood that is upon the altar, and of the anointing oil, and sprinkle it upon Aaron, and upon his garments, and upon his sons, and upon the garments of his sons with him: and he shall be hallowed, and his garments, and his sons, and his sons' garments with him" (Ex.29:21 KJV). See also Lev.8:30.

The biblical record shows that the Sovereign God, the Creator God who became Christ, and their loyal spirit-servants are holy. Moreover, the scriptures also tell us that a person or a thing which is to interact with the God family must also be holy; therefore, the blood from the altar and the anointing oil were holy.
The English phrase *shall be hallowed* in verse 21 is translated from the Hebrew word *qadash*; a primitive root, *to be* (causatively, make, pronounce or observe as) *clean* (ceremonially or morally). The use of the word *qadash* in verse 21 tells us that the sprinkling of the holy blood and the holy anointing oil on Aaron, his sons, and their clothing was not just a symbolic act.

The sprinkling of the blood and oil were the agents used to cleanse these men and their clothing of all physical impurity and to bestow a holy quality of existence to these men and their clothing, thus making them and their clothing acceptable to serve the Creator as priests in the tabernacle. Moreover, the holy blood symbolized setting their sin aside and the establishment of a blood covenant between the Creator, Aaron as high priest, and Aaron’s sons who were to officiate as priests. See Ex.40: 15.

Although Christ’s holy sacrificial blood is not mentioned in the apostle James’ healing instructions, the symbolic and real cleansing effect of Christ’s blood can easily be understood and appreciated in the context of forgiveness of sin in verses 15 and 16 of this healing ritual:

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise them up: and even if sins are committed, they shall be forgiven. Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much" (Jms.5:15-16 KJV Para.).

**Cleansing for Holy Use**

The Hebrew word *qadash*, which means *to be clean* is often translated into English as *hallow, sanctify,* and *sanctified*. The use of the word *qadash* in these scriptures documents the cleansing effect of the holy anointing oil when applied to objects as noted in the following instructions:

"And you shall take the anointing oil, and anoint the tabernacle, and all that is therein, and shall hallow [Heb. *qadash*] it, and all the vessels thereof; and it shall be holy. And you shall anoint the altar of the burnt offering, and all his vessels, and sanctify [Heb. *qadash*] the altar: and it shall be an altar most holy. And you shall anoint the laver and his foot, and sanctify [Heb. *qadash*] it" (Ex.40:9-11 KJV).

Verses 9-11 show that the tabernacle and everything contained in it were to be anointed with the holy oil for the purpose of cleansing them for holy use.

"And you shall bring Aaron and his sons to the door of the tabernacle of the congregation and wash them with water" (Ex.40: 12 KJV). See also Ex.29:4.
In preparation to have the blood from the altar and the holy anointing oil applied to them, it was necessary for Aaron and his sons to wash themselves. The washing was symbolic of a cleansing before being anointed with the holy oil which bestowed a holy state of existence on them.

Perhaps this cleaning is also prophetic and symbolic of the washing away of sin in the baptismal waters before one receives the holy spirit through which one is made holy and is transformed into one of the Sovereign Father's earthly children.

"And you shall put on Aaron the holy garments, and anoint him, and sanctify him; that he may minister to me in the priest's office. And you shall bring his sons, and clothe them with coats: And you shall anoint them, as you did anoint their father, that they may minister to me in the priest's office: for their anointing shall surely be an everlasting priesthood throughout their generations" (Ex.40:13-15 KJV).

According to verse 15, the anointing of Aaron's descendants established them as a priesthood as long as Israelites exist on earth and there is a nation and a temple in which to officiate and practice the sacrificial system. See Jer.33:17-22, Ezk.44:14-16.

Anointing Oil Poured

The first biblical record of an anointing oil being poured on anything is in book of Genesis where Jacob pours oil on a stone in order to establish a memorial of an event and seal a commitment to perform certain acts. (See Gen.28:16-22: 35:1-15). The following references of the high priests and kings having oil poured on their heads during the anointing ritual came after Jacob poured oil on the stone.

The High Priest

"And Moses took the anointing oil, and anointed the tabernacle and all that was therein, and sanctified them. And he sprinkled thereof upon the altar seven times, and anointed the altar and all his vessels, both the laver and his foot, to sanctify them. And he poured of the anointing oil upon Aaron's head, and anointed him, to sanctify him" (Lev.8:10-12 KJV). See also Lev.21:10-12.

King David reveals there was a large quantity of the holy anointing oil poured on Aaron during the anointing ritual in which a holy state was bestowed on him and he was established as high priest:

"Behold, how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity! It is like the precious ointment on the head, that ran down on the beard, even Aaron's beard: that went down to the skirts of his garments; As the dew of Hermon, and as the dew that descended upon the mountains of Zion: for there the Lord commanded the blessing, even life for evermore" (Psa.133:1-3 KJV).
The Book of Numbers contains the law pertaining to the cities of refuge to which a person who killed someone accidentally could escape and be safe from those who sought to kill them as an act of revenge. This account seems to indicate that each high priest that came after Aaron should also be anointed with the holy anointing oil:

"But if he thrust him suddenly without enmity, or have cast upon him any thing without laying of wait, Or with any stone, wherewith a man may die, seeing him not, and cast it upon him, that he die, and was not his enemy, neither sought his harm: Then the congregation shall judge between the slayer and the revenger of blood according to these judgments: And the congregation shall deliver the slayer out of the hand of the revenger of blood, and the congregation shall restore him to the city of his refuge, whither he was fled: and he shall abide in it to the death of the high priest, which was anointed with the holy oil" (Num.35:22-25 KJV).

Kings Anointed

The kingship and its sanctification was to be passed from generation to generation without anointing each successive king, unless the Creator determined to change the lineage of the kings. This happened when Saul was rejected as king and David was then anointed king. It also happened when the rightful successor to the throne was in question, as in the case of David's sons Solomon and Adonijah. See 1.Kings, chapters 1 and 2.

The biblical record shows that anointing oil was poured on the heads of four Israelitish kings in order to establish their authority and position of rulership. Although oil was poured on the heads of all these individuals, the same type of oil was not used in every case. The holy anointing oil was used in some cases, whereas an oil which was not considered holy was used in other cases. This seems to indicate that the kings anointed with the holy oil were selected and established for a sacred purpose, but the kings anointed with the non-holy oil were selected for a profane purpose.

Saul Anointed King

The biblical narrative reveals that Saul who was of the tribe of Benjamin understood the prophecy foretelling that the monarchy of national Israel would perpetually come from the tribe of Judah (Gen. 49:10); therefore, he did not want to be anointed king over Israel. Although Saul did not want to be king, God chose him to temporality fill this position. Because Samuel also understood this prophecy, he anointed Saul from a vial of oil (1.Sam.10:1), which was different from the horn of oil used to anoint David and Solomon:

"Then Samuel took a vial of oil, and poured it upon his head, and kissed him, and said, Is it not because the Lord has anointed you to be captain over his inheritance?" (1.Sam.10:1 KJV).
The English words vial and oil are translated from the Hebrew words pak and shemen, which respectively mean a flask and liquid (especially from the olive, often perfumed).

David Anointed King

The biblical record reveals that David was of the tribe of Judah through which all the legitimate kings of Israel were to come. Therefore, when Samuel was told to anoint David as Saul's replacement, he was told to use a different anointing oil from the one used to anoint Saul:

"And the Lord said to Samuel, How long will you mourn for Saul, seeing I have rejected him from reigning over Israel? fill your horn with oil, and go, I will send you to Jesse the Bethlehemite: for I have provided me a king among his sons" (1.Sam.16:1 KJV).

Here, the English word horn is translated from the Hebrew word qeren, which is a derivative of qaran; which means to push or gore. Qeren means a horn; by implication, a flask resembling an elephant's tooth/tusk. The use of the word qeren also indicates that the container and the oil used to anoint David were different from what was used to anoint Saul.

"Then Samuel took the horn [Hebrew, qeren] of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward. So Samuel rose up, and went to Ramah" (1.Sam.16:13 KJV).

Emphases on the horn of oil in 1.Samuel shows a distinction between the oil used to anoint Saul and the one used to anoint David. Moreover, the Creator God inspired the writer of Psalm 89 to record that he had anointed David with his holy oil, which confirms that Saul and David were anointed with different oils:

"I have found David my servant; with holy oil I have anointed him: With whom my hand shall be established: my arm also shall strengthen him" (Psa.89:20-21 KJV Para.).

Solomon Anointed King

Near the end of David's life, he called Zadok the priest, Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada and gave them instructions about the transfer of his kingship to Solomon. See 1.Kgs.1:28-40.

Although Solomon was not entitled to the throne as a firstborn son, the Creator had chosen him to succeed David and rule Israel. See 1.Kgs.1:11-17; 1.Chron.28:1-6. Therefore, it was necessary to anoint Solomon with the holy anointing oil to show that this change in Israel's dynastic lineage to rule Israel was decreed by the Creator:
"So Zadok the priest, and Nathan the prophet, and Benaiah the son of Jehoiada, and the Cherethites, and the Pelethites, went down, and caused Solomon to ride upon king David's mule, and brought him to Gihon. And Zadok the priest took an horn of oil out of the tabernacle, and anointed Solomon. And they blew the trumpet; and all the people said, God save king Solomon" (1.Kgs.1:38-39 KJV).

The mention of Zadok taking the horn of oil out of the tabernacle further documents that this oil was the holy anointing oil which was to be kept from generation to generation and used in the manner and for purposes designated by the Creator. This is the same holy oil Moses prepared, the same oil with which he anointed Aaron as high priest, and the same oil with which Samuel anointed David.

Hazael and Jehu Anointed Kings

The Creator told the prophet Elijah to anoint Hazael to be king over Syria and Jehu to be king over the house of Israel (both for the purpose of removing King Ahab and his lineage as rulers of Israel). Additionally, Elijah was to anoint Elisha as his replacement (1.Kgs.19:15-17).

After Elijah's departure in a chariot of fire (2.Kgs.2:1-15), Elisha subsequently carried out the Creator's instructions to Elijah when he met with Hazael (2.Kgs.8:7-15) and sent a son of the prophets to anoint Jehu. In this account, the prophet's son poured oil on the head of Jehu from a vial of oil (as was done to Saul), but not from the horn of holy oil stored in the tabernacle.

"And Elisha the prophet called one of the children of the prophets, and said to him, Gird up your loins, and take this box of oil in thine hand, and go to Ramoth-gilead: And when you come there, look out there Jehu the son of Jehoshaphat the son of Nimshi, and go in, and make him arise up from among his brethren, and carry him to an inner chamber; Then take the box of oil [Heb. pak shemen - a vial of oil] and pour it on his head, and say, This says the Lord, I have anointed you king over Israel" (2.Kgs.9:1-3 KJV).

Pouring the Oil

The following are two facts to keep in mind when applying anointing oil to the elect for healing as instructed by the apostle James:

1. A large quantity of the holy anointing oil was poured on the head of Aaron to anoint him as high priest.
2. The method for anointing the high priests and kings was to pour the oil on the head.

The pouring of a large amount of anointing oil on the heads of the high priests and the kings of Israel rather than sprinkling or dabbing it on, seems to indicate that the spiritual or physical attribute, office, function, or responsibility given to these individuals is given to them without limitations.
Comments and Assumptions:

The biblical record shows the Sovereign God to be a god of law and that certain laws exist which govern the interaction between the physical and spirit realms that must be adhered to in order to accomplish a specific result.

Although there are many symbolic reasons for anointing with oil, the primary reason, other than symbolism, for this ritual seems to concern a law which makes it possible within specific circumstances to initiate an action in the spirit realm to accomplish a specific result in the physical realm.

The following are several symbolic meanings and tangible results obtained through anointing with oil before the advent of Christ:

- Separating the common from the profane and elevating that which is anointed with holy oil to the sphere of the sacred (Ex.40:9-11).
- Establishing and confirming a person to a position of authority and power as a high priest or king (Lev.8:10-12, 1.Sam.16:1, 10-13).
- Establishing a person or thing for a holy purpose (Ex.29:21; 40:9-13).
- Establishing a perpetual agreement (Ex.40:13-15).

When the holy anointing oil was applied to a person or an object for the purpose of conferring a holy state of existence, it seems logical that contact with the holy oil was the medium and the point of transfer through which the holy condition was initiated and perfected.

It also seems clear from the scriptures that, when a person was anointed with the holy anointing oil for the purpose of appointing them to a sacred position of authority, function, or responsibility, that person was given certain abilities necessary for them to carry out their duties. See Deut.17,8-11; 1.Sam.16:13; 1.Kgs.4:29-34.

ANointing of the Holy Spirit

Before a person is anointed with the holy spirit, they are just like any other human. But, when a person receives this anointing, he or she is transformed into a new and different person. See Rom.8:5-14; 2.Cor.5:17; Heb.12:22-24.

The anointing of the holy spirit is an extremely important life changing event for each person God the Father accepts and transforms into one of his earthly children. However, there is much confusion as to exactly what this anointing means and what it does for a person.
The words *anointed* and *anointing* in English translations of the Textus Receptus of the New Testament which refer to Christ and the Father's earthy children being anointed or having an anointing of the holy spirit are translated from the Greek word *chrio*, which means *to smear or rub with oil*, i.e., (by implication) *to consecrate/ordain* to an office or religious service.

Before a person is authorized to use the holy spirit's power and its various functions, they must first establish a covenant relationship with God the Father. This relationship is established through receiving the holy spirit from him, which transforms and consecrates/ordains a person into their new life as one of his earthly children.

**Jesus Anointed with the Holy Spirit**

The anointing of Jesus was much different from being anointed with the holy oil by a prophet or priest of national Israel. During the gospel age, which began with the birth of Jesus, the Father himself anoints individuals in order to confer to them a holy state of existence and appoint them to a sacred position of authority, function, and responsibility.

Luke records that, one Sabbath when Jesus was reading from the scroll in the synagogue at Nazareth, he said the following about his heavenly Father's spirit being on him, his being anointed (i.e., consecrated/ordained) to preach the gospel, and other reasons he was sent to earth:

"The spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he has sent me to heal the broken-hearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, To preach the acceptable year of the Lord. And he closed the book, and he gave it again to the minister, and sat down. And the eyes of all them that were in the synagogue were fastened on him. And he began to say to them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears" (Lk.4:18-21 KJV). See also Isa.61:1-3.

After being questioned by the high priest and others about who gave them the power to work miracles and the authority to preach the things they did, Peter and John met with several of the elect and told them what had happened. After this, they all spoke of King David's prophetic psalm, which discusses the Sovereign God consecrating/ordaining his son Jesus to his ministry of reconciliation (2.Cor.5:17-19; Heb.2:16-17):
"And when they heard that, they lifted up their voice to God with one accord, and said, Lord, you are God, which has made heaven, and earth, and the sea, and all that in them is: Who by the mouth of your servant David has said, Why did the heathen rage, and the people imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers were gathered together against the Lord, and against his Christ. For of a truth against your holy child Jesus, whom you have anointed, both Herod, and Pontius Pilate, with the Gentiles, and the people of Israel, were gathered together, For to do whatever your hand and your counsel determined before to be done" (Acts 4:24-28 KJV Para.). See also Psa.2:1-2: 83:1-5.

While the apostle Peter was speaking to the centurion Cornelius, he said the following about Christ being anointed with the holy spirit and with power:

"Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that fears him, and works righteousness, is accepted with him. The word which God sent to the children of Israel, preaching peace by Jesus Christ: (he is Lord of all:) That word, I say, you know, which was published throughout all Judea, and began from Galilee, after the baptism which John preached; How God [God the Father] anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the holy spirit and with power: who went about doing good, and healing all that were oppressed of the devil; for God was with him" (Acts 10:34-38 KJV). See also Jn.3:34.

Through the application of his holy spirit, the Sovereign Father conferred to Jesus sonship on earth and in his kingdom, the authority and responsibility to preach his good news message, and power to do all manner of supernatural works.

The Sovereign Father's anointing of Jesus through the power of his holy spirit not only ordained him to his sacred task but also conferred to him all of the spiritual qualities and power necessary for him to carry out his task and remain holy.

The Elect Anointed and Sealed

Some people believe that the holy anointing oil has been found, while other people believe it may still be hidden somewhere on earth. Whether or not this oil has been found or is still hidden, the original purpose for this oil has past. Moreover, the existence of a holy anointing oil is not necessary for the carrying out of the functions and responsibilities of the elect during the gospel age of salvation; otherwise, a holy oil would be available for use.
In order to show why it is not necessary for there to be a holy anointing oil in the possession of the elders within the Father's earthly family during the gospel age, it must be understood that the agreement the Sovereign Father makes with his earthly children is different in many ways from the one the Creator God made with national Israel.

Under the agreement with national Israel, there was a need for a holy anointing oil to confer a holy state of existence on people and objects in order to allow interaction between the Creator and the Israelites on an ongoing basis.

Under the agreement the Sovereign Father makes with his earthly children, a holy anointing oil is not necessary, because the Father's holy spirit contains the very essence of his being and the power through which he makes, sustains, and controls all things that exist. Additionally, the Father himself anoints (i.e., imparts) his holy spirit and its attributes directly to an individual, just as he did to Christ, thereby making the elect holy and removing the necessity for the existence of a holy anointing oil.

According to the apostle Paul, the Sovereign Father himself anoints the elect to establish them in Christ. Moreover, the Father places his personal seal on each of those he anoints with his holy spirit:

"Now he which establishes us with you in Christ, and has anointed us, is God [i.e., the Sovereign God]; Who has also sealed us, and given the earnest of the spirit in our hearts" (2.Cor.1:21-22 KJV). See also Eph.1:11-14.

"Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the holy spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption" (Eph.4:29-30 KJV).

The apostle John wrote the following about the Father's anointing remaining an intrinsic part of a person and that this anointing of the holy spirit gives a person the ability to learn things pertaining to his realm of existence:

"These things have I written to you concerning them that seduce you. But the anointing which you have received of him abides in you, and you need not that any man teach you: but as the same anointing teaches you of all things, and is truth, and is no lie, and even as it has taught you, you shall abide in him" (1.Jn.2:26-27 KJV). See also Jn.14:25-26; 16:12-14.
The following are several things that take place the instant the Sovereign Father anoints a person with his holy spirit:

- An eternal agreement is made between the Sovereign Father and the recipient of his holy spirit (Heb.13:20-21).
- The recipient of the holy spirit is transformed into a new and holy creation as one of the Father's earthly children (2.Cor.5:17; Gal.6:15; Eph.4:24).
- The recipient of the holy spirit is given the spirit of power, love, and a sound mind [i.e., self-control] (2.Tim.1:6-7).
- The Father's law is placed within the recipient's mind, thereby making it an integral part of their thought process (Heb.8:1-12: Jer.31:33).

**A Holy People**

During this gospel age, the conditions under which the application of the holy anointing oil was necessary anciently does not exist. The Sovereign Father's earthly children neither have a need for an oil through which a holy state of existence is conferred nor a need to be established as a king or a priest, because they are already holy. Notice what the apostle Peter writes about the holy condition of the Sovereign Father's earthly children:

"Therefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby: If in fact you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices, acceptable to God by Jesus Christ" (1.Pet.2:1-5 KJV Para).

"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a purchased people; that you should shew forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1.Pet.2:9-10 KJV Para.). See also Rev.5:1-10.

The Sovereign Father's earthly children are a royal priesthood who are holy. Moreover, they are his earthly temples in which his spirit resides (1.Cor.3:16-17). Therefore, they do not need a specially formulated holy anointing oil in order to consecrate, dedicate, or establish them or anything closely associated with them as holy. Moreover, a holy anointing oil is not necessary for them to demonstrate their authority or fulfill their functions and responsibilities as a king-priest in the Father's earthly family.
The anointing oil to be used for the performance of the healing ritual within a congregation of believers is holy by virtue of it being used for a holy purpose by the Father's earthly priesthood.

SUMMARY

The biblical record shows that both kings and priests were anointed with oil. All members of the Father's earthly family of believers are kings and priests (i.e., a royal line of priests) See 1.Pet.2:9; Rev.1:4-6; 5:6-10. Because the eldership are also kings and priests, they are authorized to anoint the elect with oil through the authority of Christ as set forth by the apostle James (Jms.5:14). Moreover, the elect are authorized to have anointing oil applied to them by virtue of their also being kings and priests.

The holy anointing oil was applied to a person or an object for the purpose of conferring a holy state of existence. Therefore, it seems logical that the oil is a point of contact and the medium through which a holy condition is initiated and perfected. Moreover, it also seems logical that, when an elder anoints one of the elect who has requested healing, this act provides the conduit through which the power of the holy spirit flows to effect the healing.

How much anointing oil is to be applied when anointing a person for healing and what method should be used to apply the oil? The biblical accounts show a large amount of oil being poured on the head of the person being anointed; therefore, pouring a large amount of anointing oil on the person requesting healing would follow the biblical examples.

No account is recorded of Jesus anointing individuals with oil. Moreover, it is not specifically stated in the scriptures that Jesus instructed his disciples to anoint individuals with oil for healing. However, it is apparent that he did instruct them to do this, because this is what these men did as they went about proclaiming the Kingdom of God and healing people:

"And he called to him the twelve, and began to send them forth by two and two; and gave them power over unclean spirits; . . . And they went out, and preached that men should repent. And they cast out many devils, and anointed with oil many that were sick, and healed them" (Mk.6:7;12-13 KJV). See also Matt.10:1,5-8; Lk.9:1-6; 10:1-17.

The English words anointed and oil in verse 13 are translated from the Greek words aleipho and elaion, which respectively mean to oil (perfume) and olive oil.

The biblical record reveals few details about what Jesus told his disciples to do concerning the church before and after his death and resurrection. Perhaps Jesus instructed these men to continue the anointing ritual for healing within his Father's earthly family of believers, but not for those outside his family of believers.
What is clear is that no biblical account shows the apostles or other elders of the early church anointing anyone with oil other than the elect, as set forth by the apostle James. Whether or not Jesus gave an instruction to anoint the elect as a part of a healing ritual, this ritual was mandated by the apostle James and is to be observed by the elect.

**Why Anoint with Oil?**

Why did the apostle James instruct the elders to pray over the elect and to anoint them with oil? Just because James said to do it would be enough of an answer if we were living during the apostles lifetime, because we would know what they knew. However, we are centuries removed from that time and must search for an answer to this question if we want to obey with understanding.

In order to gain insight into why James included anointing with oil in his instructions, we must revisit one of the logical reasons that Jesus instructed his twelve disciples and the seventy other men to anoint people when they healed them.

As Jesus went about proclaiming the Kingdom of God, he told people that his heavenly Father had sent him with this message (i.e., he was the Sovereign God's personal representative). Therefore, there was a need for him to validate his claim. See Jn.6:34-40; 7:29-33;12:44-50.

The prophets and the high priests of Israel were the only ones authorized by the Creator to anoint individuals with oil. The biblical record shows prophets delegated authority to other men to anoint on their behalf. Therefore, Jesus instructing the men he sent to proclaim the Kingdom of God to anoint people in the process of healing them was evidence that he had been sent from the Sovereign God and had the authority to delegate his authority just like the prophets of Israel who were the Creator's earthly representatives.

James was Jesus' brother (Gal.1:19) and the head of the Jerusalem council of elders (Acts 15:1-22) with the authority to issue binding mandates for the eldership and the elect to follow. His instruction validated his and the eldership's authority to represent God the Father and Jesus Christ to the elect.

**Liquids Used for a Holy Purpose**

Blood, oil, water, and wine are four liquids which the biblical record shows as being used for a sacred purpose in worshiping and serving God. Moreover, these liquids are shown as elements through which God symbolically reveals his plan for mankind and through which supernatural works are manifested.
Although there are many symbolic meanings and tangible results obtained through the ritual use of an anointing oil recorded in the Bible, the following which pertain to anointing the sick as instructed by the apostle James:

- The ritual is a confirmation of the Father's commitment to heal a person who faithfully follows the apostle James' instructions for healing and believes they will be healed.
- The anointing oil is a medium through which the cleansing and healing power of the holy spirit is conferred to the person requesting healing.

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jms.5:14-15 KJV).
THE OLIVE TREE AND OLIVE OIL

The healing ritual set forth by the apostle James requires an anointing oil. However, no description is given as to the type of oil used by the elders of the early church. Moreover, if the anointing oil was a special blend of oils as was the holy anointing oil used by the priesthood and the prophets of ancient Israel, no details are given in the New Testament concerning how to formulate this oil. These facts leave us with the question of what oil is acceptable to use when anointing the sick as instructed by the apostle James?

Because all 10 references to oil in the New Testament are translated from the Greek word elaión, which means olive oil, many believe that olive oil is the oil to be used to anoint the sick. Although these 10 references seem to prove that the oil used was olive oil, it may not be proof, because the Greek word elaión was also used in a wider sense during Christ's time to denote any oil or fatty fluid.

In order to determine if olive oil is acceptable to use for anointing as instructed by the apostle James, a few facts about the olive tree and the oil derived from its fruit will be noted and several biblical accounts in which the olive tree and olive oil are mentioned will be reviewed.

The Olive Tree, Fruit, and Oil

Olive trees are evergreen trees and retain their dying leaves until new leaves are produced to replace them. The tree is drought, disease, and fire-resistant, and can live for many centuries. If the tree is destroyed, but the root system is still intact, the tree is capable of regenerating. Therefore, the olive tree is considered to have an eternal quality and its oil is considered sacred by many cultures. Moreover, research seems to support the health-giving benefits of olives, olive oil, and the use of olive leaves as a medicinal tea.

In the Bible, there are over two hundred references to the olive tree, its fruit, or the oil derived from its fruit being associated with God's worship system, service to God, righteous individuals, prophecies about future events, blessings for obedience to God, or curses for disobedience.

Peace and New Life

After the great flood destroyed all but eight people on earth, Noah released a dove (symbolic of peace) to determine if the flood waters had receded. The second time he sent out the dove, it brought back an olive leaf, which is symbolic of peace and new life, as conformation that the flood waters were receding. See Gen. 8:1-11.
Anointing and Light

The Creator required Moses to use pure olive oil in the formulation of the holy anointing oil (Ex.30:22-25), which was to be used to bestow a holy state of existence, to establish men to a sacred position of authority, function, and responsibility, as well as to impart the necessary abilities for individuals to carry out their assignment.

The Israelites were required to provide a continuous supply of pure olive oil as fuel to be burnt in the lamps used to light the tabernacle. See Ex.27:20-21; Lev.24:1-4. With the correct wick, pure olive oil burns without fumes, odor, smoke, or soot. And about 2 ounces of pure olive oil will burn about 12 hours, which is just one of the several reasons it was an excellent choice for lighting the sanctuary.

Ritual Cleansing, the Number 8, and Olive oil

Leviticus 14:1-32 details a complex and lengthy cleansing ritual which was to be completed at the tabernacle before a person who was cured of leprosy could re-enter the Israelite community.

On the eighth day after a priest had determined that a person was free of leprosy, the individual was to begin and complete the process of ritual cleansing.

As with all things set forth in the biblical record, there is much more meaning to what is recorded than the obvious literal meaning of the words used. Besides their numerical value, numbers are many times used to convey a conceptual or a symbolic meaning, and so it is with the number eight. One of the meanings of the number eight is a new beginning.

The new beginning for the former leper was the completion of the ritual cleansing when he or she was allowed to again actively participate as a member of the Israelite community.

After presenting olive oil and the required sacrifice before the Creator for his acceptance, the olive oil and the sacrifice became holy and therefore could be used to complete the purification ritual for the former leper.

The blood of the sacrifice and the olive oil were applied to the tip of the right ear, right thumb, and right big toe of the person being cleansed. Additionally, the olive oil was offered with the sacrifice, sprinkled seven times before God, and poured on the head of the person being cleansed.

Although no explanation is given as to the cause of the leprosy, the sacrifices offered as a part of this ritual cleansing were considered sin offerings. All sin offerings were performed to set aside known sins and sins committed in ignorance, thereby restoring a harmonious relationship with God.

The following explains what seems to be a correlation between the cleansing ritual of the former leper and being anointed with oil for healing as instructed by the apostle James.
All sin requiring the death penalty must be atoned for through a blood sacrifice. We know that all sacrifices for sin under the Creator's covenant with ancient Israel were symbolic and prophetic of Christ's sacrificial life blood, which was to pay the penalty for the sins of humans. We also know it is through Christ's sacrificial blood that forgiveness of sin is obtained as a result of following the healing ritual set forth by James (Jms.5:15).

The olive oil used in the former leper's cleansing ritual only became holy after it was presented for the Creator's acceptance. An oil used by elders of the Father's earthly priesthood would logically also become holy when used in accordance with James' instructions, because elders and the elect they serve are holy individuals, as well as the Sovereign Father's holy temples on earth. Therefore, any anointing oil used by an elder in a healing ritual must also be holy in order to fulfill its purpose.

The completion of the cleansing ritual on the eighth day was a new beginning for the former leper as he or she reentered the Israelite community. A person healed of their illness and forgiven of their sins through the healing ritual set forth by James also has a new beginning in which to live a healthy, sin-free life.

**Blessings and Curses**

There are many prophecies which speak of the olive tree, its fruit, and its oil being part of the many blessings provided by God for righteous behavior. Additionally, there are also many prophecies which show that being without the benefits of the olive tree is one of the curses which accompanies God's punishment for unrighteous behavior.

**Blessings**

Enoch who is noted in the biblical record as a righteousness man foretold a tremendous increase in food production from the soil after Christ returns. This prophecy indicates that olives will continue to produce oil even after being pressed ten times. See Enoch 10:17-20. The Book of Enoch, translation by George H. Schodde, Ph.D.

An abundance of olive trees and olive oil were among the many blessings of natural resources which were in the land the Creator gave to the Israelites:

"And it shall be, when the Lord your God shall have brought you into the land which he sware to your fathers, to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, to give you great and goodly cities, which you did not build, And houses full of all good things, which you did not fill, and wells dug, which you did not dig, vineyards and olive trees, which you did not plant; when you shall have eaten and are full; Then beware lest you forget the Lord, which brought you forth out of the land of Egypt, from the house of bondage" (Deut.6:10-12 KJV Para.).
"For the Lord your God brings you into a good land, a land of brooks of water, of fountains and depths that spring out of valleys and hills; A land of wheat, and barley, and vines, and fig trees, and pomegranates; a land of oil olive, and honey; A land wherein you shall eat bread without scarceness, you shall not lack any thing in it; a land whose stones are iron, and out of whose hills you may dig copper" (Deut.8:7-9 KJV Para.).

The Psalmist writes the following prophetic promise to parents who respect God and practice his law and to their children and their descendants who will live during Christ's reign on earth:

"Blessed is every one that fears the Lord; that walks in his ways. For you shall eat the labor of your hands: happy shall you be, and it shall be well with you. Your wife shall be as a fruitful vine by the sides of your house: your children like olive plants round about your table. Behold, that this shall the man be blessed that fears the Lord" (Psa.128:1-4 KJV).

The English word plants in the phrase your children like olive plants is translated from the Hebrew word shethiyyl, which means a sprig (as if transplanted), i.e., that which rises out of a parent plant. Therefore, if the children are symbolic of olive sprigs, their righteous parents are symbolic of olive trees.

Curses

One of the many curses the Creator promised to bring on the Israelites if they refused to keep their agreement with him and obey his instructions was non-productive olives trees, which would result in being without olive oil with which to anoint their bodies:

"You shall plant vineyards, and dress them, but shall neither drink of the wine, nor gather the grapes; for the worms shall eat them. You shall have olive trees throughout all your coasts, but you shall not anoint yourself with the oil; for your olive shall cast his fruit" (Deut.28:39-40 KJV).

It is well known that olive oil provides many nutritional, cosmetic, and medicinal benefits, among which are its usage to maintain skin suppleness, to heal abrasions, and to soothe the burning and drying effects of sun and water.

The prophet Jeremiah recorded the destruction of the house of Israel and the house of Judah, which the Creator originally established as a single nation. In this prophecy, the Creator expressed his original love and respect for his chosen people by calling them a green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit:
"The Lord called your name, A green olive tree, fair, and of goodly fruit: with the noise of a great tumult he has kindled fire upon it, and the branches of it are broken. For the Lord of hosts, that planted you, has pronounced evil against you, for the evil of the house of Israel and of the house of Judah, which they have done against themselves to provoke me to anger in offering incense to Baal" (Jer.11:16-17 KJV).

In a lengthy reprimand to the Samaritans (prophetically the national entities of the scattered ten tribes of the house of Israel) and a warning that they are about to experience the wrath of their maker, the Creator says the following about the blessings he has taken away, among which are the olive trees:

"I have smitten you with blasting and mildew: when your gardens and your vineyards and your fig trees and your olive trees increased, the palmer-worm devoured them: yet have you not returned to me, says the Lord" (Amos 4:9 KJV). See Amos 4:1-13.

**King David**

King David knew he had been anointed to govern Israel according to God's law and that the oil produced from the fruit of the olive tree was essential to maintaining God's worship system and the Creator's presence in the tabernacle. He also understood that the olive tree and its oil symbolized the quality of holiness and service to God, hence his analogy of himself as a green olive tree:

"But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God: I trust in the mercy of God for ever and ever. I will praise you forever, because you have done it: and I will wait on your name; for it is good before your saints" (Psa.52:8-9 KJV).

The English word *green* is from the Hebrew word *ra-anan*, which means to be green; verdant; (by analogy), new; (figuratively), prosperous. The English words *olive tree* is from the Hebrew word *zayith*, which means an olive (as yielding illuminating oil), the tree, the branch or the berry.

**Solomon's Temple**

A large amount of olive wood was used in the construction of Solomon's temple. The doorposts for the temple entrance were made of olive wood and the doors, doorposts, and lintels for entrance into the holy of holies were also made of olive wood. The use of olive wood in the construction of these items and the extensive use of olive wood to panel the walls adjacent to these two doors indicates a high regard for the symbolism of the olive tree in worship and service to God. Additionally, the two cherubim, which were overlaid with gold and stood in the holy of holies were made of olive wood. See 1.Kgs.6:23-35.
Two Prophetic Olive Trees

The prophet Zechariah records many interesting things about the time shortly before Christ returns, one of which reveals the identity of the two men who will become the two witnesses spoken of in Revelation, chapter 11.

Although no totally accurate translation of Zechariah, chapter 4 is available to quote, verses 1-5 and 11-14 of this prophecy describe two men as olive trees standing to the right and left of the Lord of the earth while dispensing a golden fluid (i.e., oil used in cooking and lamps) from themselves.

Because these men are described as olive trees, and the context of verses 1-5 and verses 11-14 describes lamps which give light, it seems logical to assume that the oil these men dispense is symbolic of God's truth which gives spiritual enlightenment.

Note:

In the Book of Revelation, these two men are shown to be two dynamic and powerful men who will proclaim God the Father's good news message from Jerusalem a few years before Christ returns to establish his Father's Kingdom and rule on earth:

"And I will give to my two witnesses, and they will prophesy for 1,260 days, clothed in sackcloth. These are the two olive trees and the two lamp-stands before the Lord of the earth" (Rev.11:3-4 Para.).

Trees are often symbolic of men, people as a group, and nations. Additionally, olive trees are sometimes symbolic of righteousness and that which endures; therefore, it seems logical these two olive trees represent two righteous men from which spiritual enlightenment comes. Although olive oil is not specifically noted in Zech.4:1-14 and Rev.11:3-4, it is certainly implied as a symbolic source of spiritual enlightenment.

Israel, the Olive Tree

Hosea records a prophecy in which the Creator urges the Israelites to repent and return to him because they will not find safety in the armies of the modern day Assyrians. Verses 4 through 6 of this prophecy speaks to a time after Christ returns, in which the Israelites who have been brought back to their land of inheritance are described as a beautiful olive tree nourished by God:
"I will heal their backsliding. I will love them freely: for my anger is turned away from him. I will be as the dew to Israel: he shall grow as the lily, and cast forth his roots as Lebanon. His branches shall spread, and his beauty shall be as the olive tree, and his smell as Lebanon" (Hos.14:4-6 KJV). See Hos.4:1-9 for the entire prophecy.

Israelites and Non-Israelites

Under the Creator's agreement with ancient Israel, all Israelites and proselytes who diligently practiced God's law were offered salvation, but other national entities were not offered this same agreement. However, after Christ sacrificed his life to pay the penalty for the sins of all humans, all people, irrespective of nationality, are offered salvation through a new agreement with better terms and conditions. See Jer.31:31-34.

When the apostle Paul wrote to the non-Israelites at Rome about obedience to God and their salvation, he explained that the Israelites were spiritually blinded because of their sins and had lost their agreement with God, which resulted in their being cut off from God and the source of spiritual enlightenment. See Jer.3:1-8.

After explaining that God had not broken his promises to the Israelites and that, although they were temporally denied the things promised to them, they would nonetheless eventually receive what was promised. Paul then wrote the following using the olive tree, its branches, and its root stock as an analogy to explain how non-Israelites can now have a covenant relationship with God the Father and obtain salvation:

"For if the first-fruit [Christ] be holy, the lump [i.e., swelling in the bark] is also holy: and if the root be holy, so are the branches. And if some of the branches [Israelites] be broken off, and you [non-Israelites], being a wild olive tree, were grafted in among them, and with them partake of the root and fatness of the olive tree" (Rom.11:16-17 KJV).

Paul refers to the olive tree and its roots as being holy; therefore, the Israelite and the non-Israelite are also holy and of equal status in their heavenly Father's earthly family.

The English word fatness in verse 17 is translated from the Greek word πιοτες, which implies the idea of plumpness, (by implication) richness or oiliness. The use of the word πιοτες and the fact that non-Israelite elect are a part of the Father's earthly family along with Israelites tells the non-Israelites that both now partake of the same source of spiritual nourishment (i.e., the olive tree roots) through which spiritual enlightenment and benefits are derived.

"Do not boast over those branches [Israelites]. If you do, consider this: You do not support the root, but the root supports you. You will say then, "Branches were broken off so that I could be grafted in." Granted. But they were broken off because of unbelief; and you
stand by faith. Do not be arrogant, but be afraid. For if God did not spare the natural branches, he will not spare you either” (Rom.11:18-21 NIV).

Paul explains that non-Israelites should not feel superior to Israelites, because it was God's agreement with the Israelites and the loss of that agreement which allowed them to have an opportunity for salvation.

"Behold therefore the goodness and severity of God: on them which fell, severity; but toward you, goodness, if you continue in his goodness: otherwise you also shall be cut off. And they also, if they abide not still in unbelief, shall be grafted in: for God is able to graft them in again" (Rom.11:22-23 KJV).

The new agreement which offers better terms and conditions still requires obedience to God in order to maintain a harmonious relationship with him and obtain salvation:

"For if you were cut out of the olive tree which is wild by nature, and were grafted contrary to nature into a good olive tree: how much more shall these [Israelites], which be the natural branches, be grafted into their own olive tree? For I would not, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own conceits: that blindness in part is happened to Israel, until the fulness of the Gentiles be come in" (Rom.11:24-25 KJV).

Paul understood the symbolism of the olive tree to God's plan for the salvation of all people; therefore, he used this symbolism to teach the non-Israelites a valuable lesson about obtaining salvation and maintaining righteousness.

Oil of Gladness

The writer to Hebrews wrote the following about Christ being anointed by his heavenly Father with the oil of great joy to a position above all others who participate in his kingdom:

"But to the Son [Christ] he says, Your throne, O God, is for ever and ever: a scepter of righteousness is the scepter of your kingdom. You have loved righteousness, and hated law breaking; therefore God [God the Father], even your God, has anointed you with the oil of great joy above your fellows. And, You, Lord, in the beginning have laid the foundation of the earth; and the heavens are the works of your hands" (Heb.1:8-10 KJV Para.).

CONCLUSIONS

With few exceptions, all sacrifices and offerings required by God during the existence of the tabernacle and the temple were accompanied with olive oil. Additionally, the prophet Ezekiel recorded that, after Christ returns and a new temple is established, sacrifices offered at this temple will also be accompanied with olive oil.
The olive tree, its fruit, and the oil derived from its fruit are used throughout the biblical record to convey much symbolism and many spiritual concepts related to worship and service to God, righteous individuals, prophecies about future events, blessings for obedience to God, and curses for disobedience. But, does this prove that olive oil is the oil which must be used by elders today to anoint the sick. The answer is no, because symbolism, concepts, and reality are different things.

All 10 references to oil in the New Testament are translated from the Greek word elaion, which means olive oil. This includes the word oil in James’ instructions to anoint the sick with oil in the ritual for healing and the forgiveness of sin.

But, do these ten references prove that olive oil was the oil used by Christ's disciples to anoint the sick as they went about proclaiming the Kingdom of God? Was the oil used by the elders of the early church to anoint the sick olive oil? Although these 10 references seem to prove that the oil used was olive oil, it may not be proof, because, the Greek word elaion was also used in a wider sense during this time period to denote any oil or fatty fluid.

Nothing presented in this section absolutely proves that olive oil was used by the elders of the early church as an anointing oil in the healing ritual as set forth by the apostle James.

What should be crystal clear is that elders within the Father's earthly family today do not need a specially formulated oil with which to anoint. If it were necessary, it would be well documented in the biblical record or would otherwise be available for use.

It is important to remember that the elders and the elect they serve are holy individuals and both are also the Sovereign Father's holy temples on earth. Therefore, the anointing oil used in the sacred healing ritual set forth by the apostle James will be holy by virtue of its being used to fulfill a holy purpose for and by a holy people. But, is it acceptable to use olive oil to anoint the sick as set forth by the apostle James? The following are the strongest indications that the use of olive oil is acceptable:

- Holy anointing oil contained olive oil.
- Past sacrifices and offerings were accompanied by olive oil.
- Future sacrifices will be accompanied by olive oil.
- Olive oil was an essential part of a former leper's cleansing ritual from physical defilement and for the atonement of both known sins and sins committed in ignorance.
Our heavenly Father is extremely interested in our well being. He is more than willing to heal us of our disabilities and sicknesses. Moreover, it is abundantly clear from many scriptures that he hears a righteous person's request to him and will respond positively to them if their request conforms with his will for them. His will concerning healing for the elect who are fortunate enough to be in a congregation with an active spirit-filled eldership is for them to ask for healing in compliance with the apostle James' instructions.

A casual reading of the apostle James' instructions about how to effect a healing among the Sovereign Father's elect within a congregation seem simple and direct; however, a casual reading will not reveal some of the more subtle and important aspects of these instructions.

Within these instructions are many profound spiritual concepts and principles which should be understood by both the individual requesting healing and the elders performing the ritual in order to fulfill the letter and spirit of this ritual and to be assured that the promise of healing the body and the spirit, through the performance of this ritual, will happen.

These instructions show that the elders of the early church were authorized by Jesus Christ to intercede on the behalf of the Father's elect to claim the promise of healing. When James' instructions were followed during the existence of the early church, the person with a disability or sickness was returned to health.

THE HEALING ORDINANCE

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord: And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jms.5:14-15 KJV).

It is important to understand that the healing ritual is only to be performed for those with the indwelling of the holy spirit. All others are excluded from this healing ritual if it is known that they are unconverted. Individuals not of the elect, including family members of the elect, may be prayed for by the elect, elders, or men with the gift of healing, as noted in examples of healing for evangelism by the apostles. It should also be understood that the healing ritual set forth by the apostle James is entirely separate from the gift of healing, which is used in the process of evangelism.
It is also important to understand that, when a person requests prayer and anointing by the elders, they are making a request for the promise of healing under the terms and conditions set forth by the apostle James to be granted by their heavenly Father.

The following are the basic steps necessary in order to comply with the apostle James' instructions:

**Degree of Sickness**

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jms.5:14).

Nothing is indicated in verse 14 as to the degree of sickness a person must be suffering before requesting healing. But, it seems logical for a disability or sickness to be a concern, it would be deadly, extremely debilitating or seriously interfering with one's normal functioning.

The English word *sick* in verse 14 is translated from the Greek word *astheneo*, which is derived from the word *asthenes*, which means *without strength*. *Astheneo* means to be feeble (in any sense). Therefore, a disability or illness, which severely impairs a person's normal functions are both indicated in verse 14. Additionally, examples of supernatural healing during and after the advent of Christ show that these healings were not limited to illnesses but also included physical disabilities.

**Call for the Elders**

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jms.5:14).

It is the responsibility of the individual who has the illness or disability to determine if the problem requires supernatural healing. If so, that person must personally request prayer and anointing or have someone else make the request on their behalf if they are unable to do so for a legitimate reason.

The English word *elders* is translated from the Greek word *presbuteros*, which can mean elderly, older, or a senior (specifically, an Israelite Sanhedrist, also figuratively, a member of the celestial council). In verse 14, the word *presbuteros* is in the singular tense and refers specifically to any man who serves as a spiritual leader among the elect (i.e., the ministry), not just an older man within the congregation or a man who has the gift of healing, unless he is also a minister.
Although the English phrase *let them pray* implies more than one elder, these words are translated from the Greek word *proseuchomai*, which in essence means *to pray to God*, i.e., *supplicate* or *worship*. The word *proseuchomai* does not imply more than one elder; therefore, one elder is sufficient to perform the healing ritual. However, Jesus sent his disciples and the seventy other men in groups of two as they proclaimed the Kingdom of God and in the process healed people and cast out evil spirits (Mk.6:7, 12-13; Lk.10:1-17). Therefore, in this age of the church, it seems appropriate and prudent for more than one elder to participate in the healing ritual when possible and practical.

**Laying on of Hands**

Because the laying on of hands is not mentioned in James' instructions, some may feel that it is not necessary for hands to be laid on the head of the individual requesting healing. This assumption would have merit if it were not for the following two things: 1) The English word *over* in verse 14 is translated from the Greek word *epi*, which is a primary preposition; properly meaning *superimposition*, which can also mean *upon*; 2) Jesus' promise for healing through the laying on of hands recorded in Mark 16:17-18:

"And these signs shall follow those who believe; In my name shall they cast out devils; they shall speak with languages new to them; They shall cast away serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover" (Mk.16:17-18 KJV Para).

In verse 18, the English phrase *they shall lay* and the word *hands* are translated from the Greek words *epitithemi* and *cheir* respectively. *Epitithemi* means *to impose* and *cheir* means *the hand* (literally or figuratively *power*). Moreover, the English word *on* is translated from the Greek word *epi*, which means *superimposition* (i.e., *upon*).

The Greek word *epi* in James 5, verse 14 would be more accurately translated as *upon* or *on* rather than *over*. Additionally, the writer to the Hebrews mentions the laying on of hands as a foundational teaching of the early church (Heb.6:1-3). Also, biblical examples before, during, and after the advent of Christ show that many supernatural works were performed through the hands of righteous men. Although the laying on of hands is not mentioned in James 5:14, it is clearly an important part of the healing ritual, which demonstrates the authority of the eldership.

**Anointing With Oil**

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jms.5:14).

The English word *anointing* is translated from the Greek word, *aleipho*, derived from *liparos*, derived from *lipos* (*grease*); *fat*, i.e., (figuratively) *sumptuous: oil*. *Aleipho* as used in verse 14 means *to oil*. 331
The English phrase *with oil* is translated from the Greek word *elaion*, which is derived from the Greek word *elaia*, which means *an olive* (the tree or the fruit). Although *elaion* can mean *olive oil*, it was also used in a wider sense during this time period to denote any oil or fatty fluid.

The strongest indications that olive oil is an acceptable oil with which to anoint the sick as set forth by the apostle James are the facts that:

- Holy anointing oil contained olive oil.
- Past sacrifices and offerings were accompanied by olive oil.
- Future sacrifices will be accompanied by olive oil.
- Olive oil was an essential part of a former leper's cleansing ritual from physical defilement and for the atonement of both known sins and sins committed in ignorance.

No instruction is given in verse 14 as to how to apply the anointing oil or how much oil to apply. However, biblical accounts show a large amount of oil being poured on the head of the person being anointed; therefore, pouring a large amount of anointing oil on the person being anointed would follow the biblical examples.

**The Name of The Lord**

"Is any sick among you? let him call for the elders of the church; and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord" (Jms.5:14).

As one of our heavenly Father's children, we are to communicate with him through the authority delegated to us by our Savior who governs his Father's earthly family. It is also through Christ's name (i.e., his authority) that we are to make our desires and requests known to our Father (Jn.14:12-14; 16:23-27). Moreover, it is through Christ's authority that men who have been given specific functions and responsibilities are to perform them. Therefore, the *Lord* in James 5:14 is Christ.

In the name of Jesus Christ, by or through the authority of Jesus are not magical phrases which in and of themselves have power in the physical or spirit realms of existence. These or similar phrases are used by a person to express their authority to exercise whatever responsibility, task, or function delegated to them.

It is through an elder's authority delegated to him from the Father to Christ, from Christ to the apostle James, and from James to the eldership that a true minister serving the elect has the authority to perform the healing ritual, request that the Father heal one of the elect, and anoint the elect with oil to confirm and seal the promise of healing.

**Three Promises**

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jms.5:15).
Within verse 15 are the following three promises: 1) The promise that the prayer of faith will deliver the individual from their present condition; 2) The promise that the Father will elevate the individual from their present condition; 3) The promise that the Father will forgive the individual's sins.

In order to gain a clear understanding of what is promised, it is necessary to review the Greek meaning of several words in verse 15.

The English word prayer is translated from the Greek word euche, which in the context of verse 15, means a desire expressed as a petition to God. The English phrase of faith is translated from the Greek word pists, which in the context of verse 15, means credence; or conviction of a truth.

The prayer of faith is an elder's belief that the healing will happen as promised once the ritual is performed. If an elder does not have absolute confidence that healing will follow the completion of the healing ritual, then the elder's prayer is a request for the Father to heal at his discretion, not a request for healing as promised by the apostle James.

Although it is true that we dare not attempt to dictate to our Father what he should or should not do. The request for healing is a respectful request for our Father to honor and fulfill the promise of healing made by the apostle James through the performance of the healing ritual.

All true elders have the authority to perform the healing ritual. However, not all elders have the kind of faith necessary to be assured that their prayer will result in the healing of the person being prayed for and anointed with oil.

Therefore, healing is not entirely dependent on an elder's faith, but on the faithful performance of the healing ritual, and the one requesting the healing having faith that the promise of healing will be honored through their obedience.

The English phrase shall save is translated from the Greek word sozo, which means to save, (i.e., to deliver from). The word sozo tells us that the elect will be delivered from their present condition, but it does not describe the condition from which they will be delivered.

The English word sick in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word kamno; a primary verb; properly meaning, to toil, i.e., (by implication) to tire (figuratively, faint, or sicken). It is different in meaning from the word sick (Greek astheneo) in verse 14, which describes any disability or illness. The word kamno reinforces the promise of healing any serious condition in need of correction, including being extremely tired and worn out from life's endeavors.

The English word Lord in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word kurios, which means supreme in authority, i.e., (as noun) controller. The Lord who will authorize the healing is the Father, because it is to him the request for healing is made.
The English phrase *shall raise* is translated from the Greek word *egeiro*, which means to rouse or awaken. In the context of verse 15, *egeiro* conceptually means to cause a person to come out of an unhealthy condition and into a healthy condition. Being raised by the Father in the context of verse 15 can also be a reference to being resurrected to immortal and eternal life.

**Forgiveness of Sin**

"And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jms.5:15).

The fact that forgiveness of sin is promised in verse 15 reveals that the whole person, both physical and spiritual, may need to be restored to health through this healing ritual. Moreover, the inclusion of the forgiveness of sin may well be a prerequisite for healing because of what is said in verse 16 about confessing one's faults.

The English phrase *and if* in verse 15 is translated from the Greek word *kan*, which can mean *and*, *(or even)* *if*. The use of the word *kan* indicates the possibility that the person requesting healing is guilty of a violation of God's law and that this violation will be forgiven as a result of the healing ritual; otherwise, there would be no reason for James to mention the forgiveness of sin.

James does not describe a specific violation of God's law; therefore, the sin to be forgiven could be a violation known to the person requesting healing for which they have not repented or asked forgiveness or the violation could be an unknown sin committed in ignorance.

Because the violation of God's law being forgiven is a result of the healing, both the person requesting healing and the elder(s) should carefully consider their spiritual condition before the healing ritual is performed. Moreover, it would be prudent for each to ask for forgiveness of any known or unknown sin before the healing ritual is performed. Doing this places the person requesting healing and the elder(s) in a harmonious relationship with the Father and Christ.

Some might feel the recommendation for the elder(s) to request forgiveness of sins prior to performing the healing ritual is unnecessary; however, consider that all scripture is for the edification of the elect (Rom.15:4; 2.Tim.3:16). As a part of the worship system given to national Israel, the high priest was required to offer an atoning sacrifice for himself before offering an atoning sacrifice and performing rituals for the sins of others. Therefore, it seems appropriate for an elder who is going to perform a ritual which includes the forgiveness of another person's sins to also have their known and unknown sin forgiven in order to be guiltless in their heavenly Father's eyes before performing the healing ritual for someone else. See 1.Jn.1:5-10.
Forgiveness of a physical violation of God's law which has caused a disability or illness restores a person to physical health. The forgiveness of a spiritual violation of God's law restores a person to spiritual health. When all sin is forgiven the totality of a person is restored to a harmonious relationship with their heavenly Father and their Savior.

Confess Faults

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much" (Jms.5:16 KJV Para.).

Although verse 16 is not a part of the physical performance of the healing ritual, what James writes is nonetheless important and should not to be taken lightly. It is not only our physical health with which we should be concerned but also our spiritual health, which includes the forgiveness of sin, the working out our salvation, and our performance as a member of our heavenly Father's earthly family of king-priests.

The English word confess in verse 16 is translated from the Greek word exomologeo, which means to acknowledge or fully agree.

The English word faults in verse 16 is translated from the Greek word paraptoma, which means (an unintentional) error or (a willful) transgression.

The use of the words exomologeo and paraptoma together reveal what is to be acknowledged and discussed is clearly known to be a deviation from the path of righteousness, which must be resolved in order to move forward in working out one's salvation; otherwise, there would be no need to discuss it with a brother or sister in the faith.

Confessing one's faults (i.e., failure to adhere to a righteous lifestyle), to a trusted member within the Father's family allows for discussion which may help in solving the problem and preventing its recurrence. Additionally, doing this gives an opportunity for the other person to fulfill their obligation to express godly love, concern, and empathy, and to fulfill their priestly duty to request the Father's help for their brother or sister in need. See Gal.6:1-2; 1.Jn.5:16.

Pray One for Another

After instructing us to acknowledge our faults to a brother or sister in the faith, James says, "pray one for another, that you may be healed."

James' instruction to pray for one another is not something new which he instituted for the elect to perform. Petitioning the Father for one another's well being is just one of the many responsibilities and duties of a king-priest in the Father's earthly family which is an expression of godly love and character.
After explaining to the elect at Ephesus that they were engaged in spiritual warfare, the type of spiritual amour which should be put on, and the spiritual weapons to be possessed and used in this warfare, the apostle Paul writes:

"Praying always with all worship and petition in the Spirit, and watching therefore with all perseverance and petition for all saints" (Eph.6:18 Para).

The apostle John writes the following about requesting the Father to forgive a member of his earthly family whose behavior is outside the bounds of proper conduct for a righteous person:

"If any man see his brother sin a sin which is not to death, he shall ask, and he shall give him life for them that sin not to death. There is a sin to death: I do not say that he shall pray for it. All unrighteousness is sin: and there is a sin not to death" (1.Jn.5: 16-17 KJV).

John says that we should request our heavenly Father to forgive a family member who has done something which violates righteous concepts and principles, but does not require the death penalty. Intercession for this type of sin is an exhibition of true love and concern for one's brothers and sisters in the faith. Moreover, as a member of our Father's earthly family and priesthood, it is our responsibility and duty to make requests to him for other family member's needs.

The Prayer of the Righteous

"Confess your faults one to another, and pray one for another, that you may be healed. The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much" (Jms.5:16 KJV Para.).

The English phrase you may be healed in verse 16 is translated from the Greek word iaomai, which means to cure. The use of the word iaomai instead of the Greek word therapeuo, which specifically means to relieve disease when referring to healing, indicates that the request for healing can be either for a physical or spiritual deviation from the path of righteousness. However, even if James was referring to only a physical disability or illness, it is still our duty, as well as an expression of godly love and character to show empathy and concern for our brother or sister and request that they be made whole.

The translators of the King James version of the Bible inserted the words the and man into verse 16; they are not in the Textus Receptus. By doing this, the translators gave the impression that what James wrote was specific to men and conveys the thought that verse 16 is linked to verses 14 and 15.

Additionally, the two English words effectual and fervent are both translated from the Greek word energeo, which means (to be) active or efficient.
The second half of verse 16 would be more accurately translated into English as "Active prayer of the righteous is very productive."

Whether male or female, a righteous person's prayer has power, because a righteous person has the ear of their heavenly Father and Christ their savior, high priest, and elder brother. See Jn.9:31; 1.Jn.5:14-15; Heb.4:12-16.

In concluding his comments about the effectiveness of requests made to the Father with the confidence that the request will be granted, James writes the following:

"Elijah was a man just like us. He prayed earnestly that it would not rain, and it did not rain on the land for three and a half years. Again he prayed, and the heavens gave rain, and the earth produced its crops. My brothers, if one of you should wander from the truth and someone should bring him back, remember this: Whoever turns a sinner from the error of his way will save him from death and cover over a multitude of sins" (Jms.5:17-20 NIV).

THE RITUAL SEQUENCE

It is important to note that James' instruction specifically says to pray over the person and then anoint with oil in that order. It does not say to first anoint with oil, then pray. Some might feel it is unimportant which is performed first; however, the sequence in which the various parts of the ritual are performed is important. All rituals performed by the priesthood of ancient Israel were to be performed in a specific sequence in order to obtain the desired result. It is no different when performing the healing ritual set forth by the apostle James.

Although the laying on of hands and anointing with oil are symbolic of the healing to follow, these two acts indicate much more in the healing ritual. The person upon whom the elders' hands are laid is being brought before the Father for special consideration, and the healing power of the holy spirit is to flow upon this person. Moreover, the laying on of hands and the anointing of the person with oil confirms and seals the promise of healing from the Father. Additionally, the laying on of hands and the anointing with oil are two witnesses that the healing will happen.

The Ritual and Process

The following are suggestions for the performance of the healing ritual as set forth by the apostles James:

• An introductory prayer in which healing is requested for the person while laying hands on the person requesting healing.
• Anointing the person with oil to seal the request and promise of healing.
• Offering a prayer of gratitude for the healing to follow.
The Process

1. It is the responsibility of the person with the illness or disability to determine if the problem requires supernatural healing. If so, that person must personally request prayer and anointing or have someone else make the request on their behalf if they are unable to do so.

2. At the first opportunity, the elder(s) should perform the healing ritual.

   While discussing the person's illness or disability, the aspect of sin being forgiven as a part of the healing ritual should be mentioned in order to give the person an opportunity to ask forgiveness from the Father and discuss any problem which needs to be addressed and resolved before or during the request to the Father for healing.

   If circumstances delay the performance of the healing ritual, and the person's situation is extremely serious or life threatening, the contacted elder should pray for the person's healing as soon as possible and also contact other elders and members of the congregation in order for them to also intercede to the Father for the person's healing.

   If the person is healed before the healing ritual can be performed, no healing ritual needs to be performed. However, a prayer of gratitude should be offered by the person who was healed and all others who had been asked to intercede to the Father for the individual.

3. Before entering the location where the healing ritual is to be performed, the elder(s) should purge the location of all evil spirits and evil influence and forbid any evil interference with the healing ritual.

4. After discussing the illness or disability with the person requesting healing all elders present should lay their hands on the person's head. One elder should request the healing audibly. The other elder(s) may also request the healing silently or audibly and agree with what has been said.

   The following is a suggested format for the request to the Father:

   "Heavenly Father: We come before you through the authority of your firstborn son, our savior and high priest as instructed by the apostle James to claim the promise of healing for (the elect's name) who is suffering from (the sickness or disability) and ask you to restore (the elect's name) to health and to forgive any violation of your law."

   The request to the Father should be as brief or as detailed as necessary in order to convey the proper respect and honor to the Father and to cover all the necessary information about the person's sickness or disability.
5. After the request for healing is made, the officiating elder should pour
the anointing oil on the top of the head of the person requesting
healing or on their forehead near the hair line if the person being
anointed is lying down. This completes the performance of the ritual
as I understand it.

Prayer of Gratitude

6. After the pouring of the anointing oil on the person, it seems
appropriate for the officiating elder to offer a prayer of gratitude to
our heavenly Father, which should include praise to him and thank-
fulness for the privilege of coming before his throne to claim the
promise of healing for the individual in need of healing.

The following is a suggested format for the prayer of gratitude:

"Great and almighty Father, Sovereign of all that is or ever will be:
We have performed the instructions of the apostle James to the best of
our knowledge and ability. Thank you for this opportunity to come
before you to request healing of body and spirit. Thank you for your
concern for our health and well being. Thank you for your compassion
and mercy in allowing us to claim your promise of healing through the
authority of your Son, our Savior."

Timing

All of the examples of supernatural healing in the New Testament
reveal that healing of individuals happened quickly, were instantaneous
after a command was given to heal, or healing came after a person
followed instructions to perform a certain act given by the individual
performing the healing. However, it is the Father's prerogative to
determine the moment in which the healing takes effect and the type of
healing performed.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

Although there are many questions which can be asked about the
healing ritual, its performance, and the results from its performance or
lack thereof, the following are several questions I feel are the most
relevant and should be answered.

1. What if the person prayed over and anointed is not one of the elect?

No promise of healing is given to the unconverted through the
performance of this ritual. Our heavenly Father is not obligated to heal a
person who is not of the elect; therefore, healing may or may not be
granted.

In the past, some unconverted people have been healed after being
prayed over and anointed by and elder, while others have not. I assume
this will continue until Christ returns for reasons only known by the
Father and our Savior.
2. What if the healing ritual is not performed correctly?

Although the promise of healing is through the correct performance of the healing ritual set forth by the apostle James, our heavenly Father and our Savior understand that we are many centuries removed from the laws given to national Israel and the laws given to the early church. They know that much knowledge has been lost to us; therefore, they take our ignorance into consideration.

Before conducting this study, I anointed individuals without the understanding I now have about the proper procedure and some were healed. I have also known of people being healed who were prayed for and anointed by ministers who did not follow the procedure as instructed by James or who were ministers of dubious character. This tells me that our heavenly Father is extremely companionate and merciful and looks past our human failures and on the heart and attitude of those who are attempting to follow, to the best of their knowledge and ability, what they believe to be his will.

3. What if the elder who performs the healing ritual is unconverted, lacks the faith necessary to offer a prayer of faith, or is otherwise not qualified to perform the ritual? Is the healing ritual valid and will healing be forthcoming?

It is a fact that we live in an age in which there are unconverted and unqualified elders within congregations of the elect, just as there were in the final days of the early church. Additionally, elders and other members of the church have varying degrees of faith. Because an elder is to pray for healing through Christ's authority, it follows that this man must be one of the elect in order for his prayer to be heard by God the Father. However, this does not mean the person requesting healing will not be healed.

Healing is not entirely dependant on an elder's qualifications or his faith; otherwise, a person could never with absolute confidence request that an elder pray over them and anoint them with oil believing they will be healed.

In such a situation, the answer depends on the Father's willingness to look past the qualifications and faith of the elder performing the healing ritual and look to the faith of the person requesting healing through their obedience to James' instruction.

4. What if a person is not healed or only healed of one condition, but not another? The following are possible answers to this question:

- If a person is not healed, it is possible the person is not one of the elect.
- If a person is not healed of all their sicknesses or disabilities, perhaps not every problem was specifically addressed during the request for healing or total healing was not requested.
• There is also the possibility that the person requesting the healing has physical or spiritual issues that need to be addressed and have prevented any healing or total healing. In such a case, the person requesting healing should perform a personal evaluation and take the necessary steps to resolve any unresolved issues before requesting the healing ritual be performed again to resolve the remaining condition(s).

5. What if a person dies after being prayed over and anointed in compliance to James' instructions?

If a person's condition does not improve after the healing ritual is performed, the following are possible reasons for the lack of healing:

• The person is not one of the elect.
• They had little or no faith in the promise of healing.
• All humans must die once. See Heb.9:27; Gen.3:19; Ecc.9:5; 12:1-7.

Healing through the ritual set forth by the apostle James is primarily predicated on faith: "And the prayer of faith shall save the sick, and the Lord shall raise him up; and if he have committed sins, they shall be forgiven him" (Jms.5:15 KJV). This can mean that someone with little or no faith will not be healed.

"This is the confidence we have in making requests of the Father. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us, we know that he will give us what we request of him" (1.Jn.5:14-15 Para).

Although one of the elect might die after the healing ritual is performed, the promise of healing and forgiveness of sin to the elect is absolute. A careful study of the apostle James' instructions and the result of following these instructions reveals that healing is not limited to the physical realm.

In the context of James 5:15, the promise of healing also includes being raised from the dead. Therefore, being allowed to die physically just means healing comes after death. A righteous person who is resurrected is healed of all physical sickness and disabilities and raised to a life in which they will never again experience physical sickness, disability, or death. See 1.Cor.15:35-58.

Our heavenly Father and our Savior have a love for us that is beyond our comprehension; they know us better than we know ourselves and show great compassion and mercy to us, even in our ignorance. Therefore, it seems to me that whether or not a person is healed to live another day physically or dies to await their resurrection to immortal life is predicated on what is best for the individual.
For the righteous, physical death is not the end of their life; it is something which must happen before being transformed into an immortal spirit-being in God the Father's heavenly family.

The death of a righteous person is no small thing to our heavenly Father and our Savior.

"Precious in the sight of the Lord is the death of his saints" (Psa. 116:15 KJV). See also Pro.14:32.

"Here is the patience of the saints: here are they that keep the commandments of God, and the faith of Jesus. And I heard a voice from heaven saying to me, Write, Blessed are the dead which die in the Lord from henceforth: Yes, says the Spirit, that they may rest from their labors; and their works do follow them." (Rev.14:12-13 KJV). See also Rev.20:6; 22:14.

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At some point in the timelessness of eternity, the Sovereign God embarked upon the greatest and grandest of all his creations; he began the process of creating beings just like himself (Phil.3:21; 1.Jn.3:2). It is his intent to bring these beings into his family as his sons and to share with them all he has created and all that he will ever create throughout eternity.

Moreover, it is his intent to grant his sons the same life essence he possesses, which is the highest form of life—immortality on the divine plane of existence (i.e., life that springs forth from itself and is not dependent on any other source to sustain it because it is self-sustaining). See 1.Cor.15:51-54; Rom.2:7; 2.Tim.1:9-10; 1.Pet.4:6; Rev.20:6.

Although it is the Sovereign Father's intent to increase his heavenly family, he will not bestow immortality upon a person or allow a person entry into his heavenly realm until he has absolute confidence in their commitment and loyalty to him and his way of life. Therefore, he has set in place a process through which each potential spirit-son must demonstrate their commitment and loyalty. During this process, each potential spirit-son must develop righteous character. See Lev.19:1-2; 1.Pet.1-16.

The process of proving one's commitment and loyalty to the Father and his way of life begins in earnest the moment the Father adopts a person into his earthly family and continues until he is absolutely sure of a person's commitment and loyalty to him and his way of life.

Questions That Need To Be Answered

In this present phase of the Sovereign Father's plan for the salvation of his human creation, many within his earthly family not only have to combat the human side of their nature and the evil of the world around them but also the evil which permeates many congregations of his elect. Many are perplexed by the doctrinal chaos and disunity which should not exist among the Father's chosen ones. Many feel if the root cause of these problems were known, they could be eliminated or at least minimized. In their quest for a solution to these problems, many have asked themselves some or all of the following questions:
• Why is God the Father's earthly family not a single unified organization?
• Why are we lacking powerful and dynamic leaders among the elect?
• Why are the twenty-one plus supernatural gifts noted in the New Testament not being manifested in a major way by the elect?
• Is the root cause of doctrinal chaos and lack of unity poor leadership, rebellious members, some external force, world conditions, or something entirely different?

If you have asked yourself some or all of these questions, carefully study this entire chapter and you will find that the cause of the problems which exist among the elect is something surprisingly basic which can be corrected with a small amount of effort from each of us.

Believe it or not, the root cause of problems within the Father's earthly family during this age is not from any outside source; it is from a purely internal source. That source is each and every member of the Father's earthly family. You and I are the collective cause of most of the problems within the Father's family and we are also the solution.

If the biblical concepts of discipleship and stewardship were clearly understood and diligently practiced during this age, most of the problems within the Father's family would be reduced to the point of being easily managed.

If You Truly Believe

If you truly believe that the Sovereign Father's invitation to become a member of his earthly and heavenly family of king-priests is worthy of your total attention and commitment, and that all other priorities, concerns, and endeavors are insignificant in comparison to the opportunity to be an immortal member of the Family of God, then understanding the significance of discipleship and stewardship is vitally important to you.

The reason it is vitally important to understand discipleship and stewardship is that these are the basic elements of the process that has been set in place during this age through which each person the Father calls to salvation can demonstrate their commitment and loyalty to him and his way of life.

The following study examines the process of discipleship and stewardship as practiced by the early church.
DISCIPLESHIP

At the beginning of Christ's ministry, he chose twelve men to be his disciples and close companions to help him proclaim the coming Kingdom of God. He also chose seventy others and commissioned them to proclaim the same message. It is important to note that each of the men Jesus chose had the ability to learn what he had to teach them and to perform the task set before them. All that these men needed was to be taught what to proclaim, to be given the tools with which to carry out their task, and to be sent forth to fulfill their task. See Matt.10:1-8; Lk.10:1-24.

Christ did not choose a few thousand or a few hundred men, put them through years of preparation, pick the twelve who were the most qualified for more intense instruction, and then send the seventy lesser qualified out to prepare people for his arrival and to proclaim his Father's good news message. He chose these eighty two men, because they had the ability to perform the task that they would be given to perform. The same is true of everyone whom the Father calls to salvation during this age. All that is necessary for one to succeed is to be taught what is expected of them and how to successfully perform what is expected, to be given the tools with which to carry out the task, and to be sent forth to fulfill the task. See Isa.48:17; 2.Pet.1:10;1.Thes.5:9.

The Commission

After his death and resurrection, Jesus met with his disciples and told them, "I have been given all authority in heaven and earth. Therefore go and make disciples in all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the holy spirit, and then teach these new disciples to obey all the commands I have given you; and be sure of this, that I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matt.28:18-20 TLB Para.).

Most people view the commission Jesus gave his disciples only as marching orders to proclaim the good news message in order to convert people throughout the world to the Sovereign Father's truth and way of truth in order for them to be saved from eternal death and have eternal life. However, is this the totality of what Christ meant or is there much more to the making of disciples?

Understanding The Commission

The commission given to the disciples and, by extension, to all whom the Sovereign Father calls to become a part of his earthly family of king-priests has the following two basic parts:

• The first part is to proclaim the Father's good news message to the world and to perform the rituals that facilitate the transformation of a person who believes this message into one of the Father's earthly children.
The second part is to teach these individuals the truth and way of truth in order to help them grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Father and his son, live a righteous life, come to know the deep things of God, and enter the Father's kingdom as an immortal spirit-being.

Although both parts of Christ's commission to the elect are simple and direct, in the centuries since this commission was given, the elect have had great difficulty with the second part which deals with discipleship and stewardship within the Father's family.

What Is a Disciple?

Over time, the pragmatic meaning of the Greek word for disciple has taken on a completely different meaning in the minds of most who profess to follow the teachings of the Bible.

Although some modern dictionaries get close to defining a disciple as a student, most only define a disciple as a follower of Christ or one who follows a teacher. Therefore, the interpretation of the Greek word for disciple and the true essence of a disciple of Christ is left to the interpretation of each individual.

The English word *disciples* in Matthew 28:18-20 is translated from the Greek word *matheteuo*, which means intransitively *to become a pupil* and transitively *to make pupils*, or *to enroll as a scholar* (i.e., a student).

As a group, the Father's earthly children are identified 26 times in the Book of Acts by the Greek word *matheteuo* (i.e., a pupil/student) and individually the elect are identified as *mathetes* and *mathetria*, which mean respectively, *a learner* and *a female pupil*.

A disciple is simply a person who is being educated in a certain discipline. For one who is a disciple of Christ, that discipline is the Father's truth and way of truth.

Discipleship is the process through which the Father's adopted children are taught his truth, his way of truth, the rules of conduct for the members of his family, and the philosophy behind these rules that make them holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12). It is through one's voluntary proactive compliance to his truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct that one becomes a viable and beneficial member within his family of king-priests.

The English word *teach* in Matthew 28:20 is translated from the Greek word *didasko*, which is a prolonged (causative) form of a primary verb *daoo, to learn or to teach* (in the same broad application). *Didasko* simply means to hold discourse with others in order to instruct them.
Because Jesus gave an instruction to enroll students from every nation to be taught the truth and way of truth, it seems logical that, if these students are to be taught, there would be an organizational system and a curriculum in place to facilitate their education. This is exactly what we see within the early church. We see an educational system in place; whereby, a newly enrolled student is taught and guided through the educational process by the holy spirit and by more spiritually mature individuals within a community of students, student scholars, and stewards of truth and the way of truth.

From the many references that identify the Father's earthly family and nation of king-priests as students who are being taught the Father's truth and way of truth, it is clearly important to understand what is to be taught and what a student's responsibilities are while being taught.

What does the average person know about being a responsible student of the Father's truth and way of truth before and after baptism? Sadly, in most cases not much. After baptism, few are taught what it actually means to be a responsible student or how to fulfill this aspect of one's spiritual development. Most are left to determine this for themselves, which sometimes leads many away from the path of righteousness and down a path that leads to spiritual destruction.

THE EARLY CHURCH

In order to gain a clear understanding of the importance of being a perpetual student of truth and a steward in the Father's family, it is necessary to know something about how and why the early church was modeled after the structure of ancient Israel. The following are some of the things the Bible tells us about the organizational structure of national Israel, the Father's holy nation of earthly children, and the reasons for their existence:

Ancient Israel

- The organizational structure of national Israel in the wilderness and in the promised land was a theocracy.
- Ancient Israel was to be a nation of holy people who were to present themselves as an example of God's truth and way of truth to the nations of the world.
- The organizational structure of Israel fractured and eventually disappeared after God granted their request for a king to govern them.

The Early Church

- The organizational structure established by Christ for his Father's holy nation of king-priests on earth is a theocracy.
- The Father's children are a nation of holy people who are to present themselves as an example of his truth and way of truth and proclaim his good news message and his coming kingdom to the nations of the world.
The organizational structure of the early church fractured and eventually disappeared when its members failed to continue in the "Faith Once Delivered" (Jude 1:3).

Within both of these organizational structures, there were teachers, students, and stewards of God's laws, precepts, and principles for the purpose of perpetuating the organizational structure and the perfecting of the knowledge, the understanding, and the practice of the truth and the way of truth among a holy people in order for them to carry out the purpose for their existence.

The Creator told the Israelites that he would teach them his statutes and judgments, so they could continue to live and to possess the land he would give them (See Deut.4:1-5). He instructed them to diligently teach his ways to their children throughout their generations (See Deut.6:1-9). He taught them his civil law, his dietary law, and his law of worship, and he instructed them to observe his festivals in order to learn to have great respect for him (See Deut.14:21-24). He forewarned any future king of Israel that he must write a copy of the law and review it throughout his life, so he would learn to have great respect for God (See Deut.17:19).

The ancient Israelites were to be perpetual students of God's truth and the way of truth as noted in many texts that speak of this learning process. In this respect, it is no different for the Father's holy nation of king-priests today. The Father's earthly children are also to be perpetual students and stewards of truth and the way of truth.

Although there are similarities between the educational process of the physical nation of ancient Israel and the Father's elect, which are a physical and a spiritual nation, there is a great difference between the educational goals set for ancient Israel and the Father's elect children. The Father's children are to learn both the letter and the spirit of his law and his plan for the salvation of humanity. And they are to proclaim his message to the world as a witness. Moreover, they are to learn what it means to be holy as he is holy and practice his truth and way of truth in order to become spiritually mature and enter his heavenly kingdom as immortal spirit-beings.

The entire educational process for the Father's family and nation of king-priests is to take place under the tutelage of their elder brother who is also their Savior, High Priest, and head of the Father's earthly family. Moreover, this educational process was established to function as a self-governing and self-perpetuating entity.
Feed My Sheep

In his account of the third time that Christ met with his disciples after his death and resurrection, John says that Christ asked Peter three times if he truly loved him and that, if he did, he should feed his sheep (Jn.21:4-17). In this account, there are two Greek words translated into the English word *feed*. The first is *bosko*, which means *to pasture*. By extension, it means *to fodder*, or *to graze*. The second is *poimaino*, which means *to tend as a shepherd*.

The meanings of the two Greek words *bosko* and *poimaino* help to make the meaning of Christ's allegorical instruction to Peter understandable. Peter was to shepherd those of the Father's family whom he had placed under Christ's stewardship. This shepherding not only included care and protection as a diligent, caring, and conscientious shepherd, but also the feeding of spiritual nourishment to the Father's children in order to facilitate their spiritual growth.

Christ's allegorical instruction for Peter to feed his sheep clearly shows the necessity for an educational system within the church to teach all elements of the Father's truth and way of truth to his earthly children.

Because the Father's holy family and nation of king-priests is a self-governing entity with an educational process that is to be self-perpetuating, all of its members must participate in the process or there will be doctrinal chaos, a lack of unity, a nebulous concept of what the Father expects from each individual, and a general lack of spirit-power, which is exactly the condition that exists among the congregations and scattered members of the Father's earthly family during this age.

Organizational Structure

According to the apostle Paul, the following was the basic organizational structure of the early church:

"Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular. And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healing, helps, governments, diversities of languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? Have all the gifts of healing? do all speak other languages? do all interpret? But earnestly desire the best gifts..." (1.Cor.12:27-31 KJV Para.).

In Ephesians, chapter four, Paul gives us more insight into the structure of the early church and clearly explains the purpose and work of the church and the reason for its educational system:
"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers; For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in 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 fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies, according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love" (Eph.4:11-16 KJV).

Three of the primary reasons for this organizational structure are "The perfecting of the saints, the work of the ministry, and the building of the body of Christ (i.e., the Father's earthly family)." None of these things can be accomplished in a major way without the teaching, the learning, and the practicing of the Father's truth, his way of truth, and the rules of conduct for members of his family on an ongoing basis by students who clearly understand the goals of the educational process and the result of practicing what is learned.

The apostle Paul clearly revealed to the Corinthians and Ephesians that, besides the other functions and responsibilities within the church, there were teachers of truth and the way of truth. Clearly, there would be no need for teachers if all members of the Father's family knew everything that there was to know about the Father, the Savior, and the truth and way of truth.

The Early Church and Today

Shortly after the death and resurrection of Jesus Christ, we find a dynamic evangelizing church spreading The Father's truth throughout the world. However, as dynamic as this church was, it virtually disappeared from history after the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D. From 70 to 120 A.D., there was very little recorded about the Father's true church. When historians began to write about the church again, they wrote of a dramatically different church from the one that embraced the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles. Today, we find churches that call themselves followers of Christ, yet the vast majority do not even faintly resemble the early church.

Why did the early church disappear? The simple truth is that those of the early church failed to continue to be diligent and responsible students and stewards of the Father's truth and way of truth. This failure of the students and stewards caused the failure of the educational system to be perpetuated within the early church, which has led to the continual fulfillment of the following prophecy:
"My people are destroyed for a lack of knowledge: because you have rejected knowledge, I will also reject you, that you shall not serve me as priest. Because you have forgotten your God's law, I will also forget your children" (Hos.4:6 Para.).

The scriptures clearly show that all who are a part of the Father's earthly family of king-priests are being groomed for positions of leadership within his heavenly family; therefore, it should come as no surprise that an educational system was set in place in the early church to educate the Father's children for their positions of rulership and service in his heavenly kingdom. See Matt.5:3-5,19:27-30; 1.Cor.6:1-5; 2.Tim.2:12; Rev.2:26-29, 5:1-10.

Why is there no common formal educational system set in place within all the congregations of the Father's children to facilitate their education in his truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct for the members of his family? Could the reason be a lack of being taught individual and collective ownership of true discipleship and stewardship within the Father's family?

Why is it important to be educated in the Father's truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct, and the philosophy behind this truth and these rules? It is important because this knowledge and understanding will help you understand how to fulfill your functions and responsibilities within the Father's family and in your spiritual walk. The following are things a disciple and a steward of the truth should know, understand, and do:

- Know the solutions to some of the spiritually life threatening situations that exist today.
- Improve your chances to participate in the first resurrection and enter the Kingdom of God.
- Become a more powerful and effective member of the Father's royal family and holy nation.
- Understand why doctrinal confusion and organizational disunity exists within the Father's royal family.
- Recognize your spiritual enemies and know how to deal with them through the Father's holy spirit.
- Know how to fulfill your responsibility to do a personal and a collective work for the Father and his Son.
- Have and act upon the knowledge and understanding that will absolutely guarantee that you escape God's wrath.

The apostle Paul also foretold a time when the Father's earthly children would reject his truth and way of truth:

"For the time will come when they [the elect] will not accept sound teaching... And they shall not pay attention to the truth, and shall turn it away, and shall be turned instead to fables" (2.Tim.4:3-4 Para.).
Many who fellowshipped in the congregations of the early church would not accept sound teaching. They sought out teachers who would teach things that were pleasing to them and things that did not require their obedience to the Father's laws, precepts, and principles. In order to deceive the gullible and the spiritually lazy, these teachers replaced truth with error and taught mysticism and other philosophies that appeal to human nature.

The answers to the perplexing questions concerning the demise and disappearance of the early church are only answered in part by the warnings of Jesus and the apostles. Additional answers are found hidden in the prophecy of Zechariah. Matthew, Mark, and John all record Jesus quoting Zechariah's prophecy, which foretold the scattering of Jesus' disciples after his death:

"All you shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd and the sheep shall be scattered abroad" (Matt.26:31 KJV). See also Mk.14:27; Jn.16:32.

This is an extremely important prophecy because the rest of the prophecy, which Jesus did not quote, allows us to understand why the apostolic church ceased to function and exist as a powerful entity:

"Awake, O sword, against my shepherd [Jesus], and against the man that is my fellow, says the Lord of hosts: smite the shepherd, and the sheep [the disciples] shall be scattered: and I will turn my hand upon [against] the little ones [the Father's elect children]" (Zech.13:7 KJV).

The little ones mentioned here are the Father's elect, which are noted in many scriptures as being little ones (See Matt.8:12, 18:3-10, 19:13-14; Mk.9:42). Why would the Lord of hosts turn against the little ones? And why did Jesus omit this portion of the prophecy?

The reason for the rejection of the little ones is that they would reject the "Faith Once Delivered" and cease to be zealous students and stewards of truth. The reason Jesus did not quote the rest of Zechariah's prophecy is that it was a different prophecy, which would be fulfilled at a different time. Zechariah's prophecy begins its fulfillment during the apostolic church age and will continue until shortly before Christ's return.

Along with the demise and disappearance of the early church and its central governing structure, its educational system is also fractured and splintered into the haphazard system we see today. During the centuries that followed the early churches' demise, individuals and congregations were influenced by many counterfeits of the Father's truth and way of truth. Moreover, much of what is taught as truth today is false and was not taught or practiced by the early church.
One of the aspects and beliefs of pseudo-Christianity that is pervasive within congregations of the Father's children is that disciples and stewards are people that have been baptized, received the holy spirit, financially support the church, and assemble with others of like mind, fellowship with them, and listen to sermons.

One individual aptly sums up the basic philosophy taught within many congregations of the Father's children during this age in the following four words: pray, pay, stay, and obey.

Although many see nothing wrong with this philosophy, it is not what Christ meant when he said, "Go and enroll students in all the nations."
The biblical definition of what it means to be a student of truth and a steward within the Sovereign Father's earthly family of king-priests is much more than what has been commonly taught for decades within the various congregations of the Father's elect.

The reason for a lack of the vital knowledge and understanding of the meaning of discipleship and stewardship is that the educational system of the early church has been replaced with that of false Christianity and its concept of discipleship and stewardship. The only way for the true meaning of discipleship and stewardship to be reestablished within the Father's earthly family is to institute the biblically based educational and organizational system of the early church along with all of the laws that governed this system.

**Knowledge and Understanding**

You are not given perfect knowledge and understanding of the Father's laws, precepts, and principles and the mysteries that are hidden within the Bible at the instant you receive the holy spirit. You must be educated in the things of the spirit, and this educational process takes time and effort. This is one of the reasons that the apostle Paul instructed the evangelist Timothy to "Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2.Tim.2:15 NKJV). See also 1.Thes.4:10-12.

One who is newly adopted into the Father's family is not expected to immediately know and understand everything contained within the Bible. Moreover, you are not expected to know everything about the Father and his Son during this lifetime. However, it is the Father's will that we grow in spiritual knowledge and understanding in order for us to fulfill the goals he has for us individually and collectively.

Did the early church study what is commonly called the New Testament today? The answer is no. They did not have these writings in the format in which we have them today. The early church studied the law, the prophets, and the writings set forth prior to the advent of Christ, as well as the writings of the apostles as they were made available to them. See Acts 1:20, 7:42, 15:13-31, 24:14, 28:23; 2.Tim.3:13-17.
You must diligently study the entire Bible if you are to have a depth of knowledge and understanding about the Sovereign Father and our Savior, the Father's plan of salvation for humanity, what it means to be a student of truth, what it means to be a steward in the Father's family, and how to gain his approval as a steward in his earthly family.

King Solomon, to whom God gave great knowledge and wisdom, gave the following advice to a righteous person:

"The heart of him that has understanding seeks knowledge: but the mouth of fools feeds on foolishness" (Pro.15:14 KJV).

"The heart of the righteous studies how to answer: but the mouth of the wicked pours out evil things" (Pro.15:28 KJV).

"The heart of the prudent gets knowledge: and the ear of the wise seeks knowledge" (Pro.18:15 KJV). See also Pro.4:5-7,16:16; Psa.119:103-105.

Solomon's observations on this subject are worthy of careful consideration. Solomon also gave the following advice about trusting one's own intellect in spiritual matters:

"Trust in the Lord with all your heart; do not rely on your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge him, and he shall direct your paths. Do not be wise in your own eyes: fear the Lord, and depart from evil" (Pro.3:5-7 Para.).

If we rely on our own intellect to provide knowledge and understanding into the Father's truth, way of truth, and his hidden mysteries, we will fail miserably. The prophet Isaiah recorded this about the great difference between God's thoughts and ways and ours:

"For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways, and my thoughts than your thoughts" (Isa.55:8-9 Para.).

Our thoughts are not always in harmony with our Heavenly Father's, simply because we are still subject to the human perspective and thought process. Our Father's thoughts are from his perspective; therefore, his thoughts are so far above our own that we cannot begin to comprehend the difference until we begin to think like him.

How are we to overcome the obstacle of our human perspective and thought process in order to think like the Father, live in harmony with his ways, and fulfill our functions and responsibilities within his earthly family? In order to do this, we must diligently seek to be educated in his thoughts and his ways and practice them to the best of our ability (Heb.5:14). Only then will we begin to know what and how he thinks, the greatness of his plan for us and humanity, and how to become a responsible and profitable steward in his family.
PERSONAL RESPONSIBILITY

The apostle Peter gave this important instruction to those who are to learn and practice truth and the way of truth:

"Therefore, rid yourselves of all malice and all deceit, hypocrisy, envy, and slander of every kind. Like newborn babies, crave pure spiritual milk, so that by it you may grow up in your salvation, now that you have tasted that the Lord is good." (1.Pet.2:1-3 NIV).

Just as a mother's milk gives an infant certain protection from disease and sustains its rapid development during its first few months of life, pure spiritual nourishment contained in the Father's truth helps his earthly children grow spiritually. Moreover, pure spiritual milk not only nourishes and sustains you in the early stages of your spiritual development but also helps you grow into and maintain spiritual maturity.

Add These Things

After the apostle Peter's greeting in his second letter, he said this about things that must be added to one's spiritual make-up:

"Diligently add to your faith virtue; to virtue knowledge; to knowledge temperance; to temperance patience; to patience godliness; to godliness brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness charity. For if these things be in you, and abound, they make you that you shall neither be barren nor unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ" (2.Pet.1:5-8).

You cannot add to what you do not already possess. You cannot come to understand the essence of these godly attributes if they are not clearly explained to you.

Of all of the causes of doctrinal chaos and lack of unity among the congregations and scattered members of the Father's earthly family during this age, the single most damaging is the lack of a clearly defined and structured educational system to guide a newly adopted son from spiritual infancy to spiritual maturity.

A major cause of a dysfunctional educational system within the scattered congregations of the elect is that many who lead the Father's children are not seeking to improve their spiritual knowledge, add to it, or perfect the basic truths that they currently understand. Because these spiritual leaders hesitate to venture into areas of study that are challenging or uncomfortable and do not attempt to broaden their knowledge of the things of God, most of those they teach and serve also stand still in their spiritual growth. They just hold on to what they have and do not add to or perfect their spiritual knowledge.
Going over and over the same basic knowledge that one has already learned does have its advantages. However, if this is all that is taught, it does little to expand one's knowledge of the Father's truth and way of truth and limits growth in the grace and the knowledge of the Father and his Son.

Regardless of whether or not one has the opportunity to be taught by a knowledgeable spirit-filled teacher within the Father's earthly family, each person is personally responsible to extend the boundaries of their spiritual education in order to grow in spiritual maturity and to equip themselves to fully carry out their personal responsibilities and functions within the Father's extended family.

In many of Paul's letters, he spoke of the necessity for a person to become educated in the things pertaining to one's calling. To the Colossians and Philippians, he said the following:

"For this cause we also, since the day we heard it, do not cease to pray for you, and to desire that you might be filled with the knowledge of his will in all wisdom and spiritual understanding; That you might walk worthy of the Lord to all pleasing, being fruitful in every good work, and increasing in the knowledge of God" (Col.1:9-10 KJV).

"And this I pray, that your love may abound yet more and more in knowledge and in all judgment; That you may approve things that are excellent; that you may be sincere and without offence till the day of Christ" (Phil.1:8-9 KJV).

Notice that all of the godly qualities and knowledge that Peter and Paul mention must be learned, some of which take more effort to learn than others. The only way that a person can follow these instructions is to be a willing, dedicated, responsible, and teachable student of the Father's truth and way of truth. Notice also that some of the reasons for being educated in these things is to have the intellectual tools to help you live and perfect a righteous lifestyle and be able to perform good works.

THE FUNDAMENTAL ISSUE

The fundamental issue that each person who is called to salvation during this age must come to grips with is whether or not to perform the Father's will in their life to the best of their ability and put forth a diligent effort to hold the old nature in check.

When all is said and done, the tests and trials of this life are over, and you stand before the Father and his Son to be judged for what you have done with the opportunity that you were given, the fundamental issue that will determine whether or not you are granted immortal life along with rewards and positions of authority in the Kingdom of God will be how you have performed the Father's will during your physical life.
What does knowing the Father's will and performing it have to do with discipleship and stewardship? It has everything to do with being a student of truth and a steward of your functions and responsibilities in the Father's earthly family, because you cannot adequately fulfill either without knowing the Father's will for your life.

**THE FATHER'S WILL**

Jesus said that he came to do the will of his heavenly Father and to be an example of how to please him. If you want to know and understand the Father's will and how to please him, you must first look to the Father's teachings through Christ and the apostles:

"All who listen to my instructions and follow them are wise, like a man who builds his house on solid rock. Though the rain comes in torrents, and the floods rise and the storm winds beat against his house, it won't collapse, for it is built on a rock. But those who hear my instructions and ignore them are foolish, like a man who builds his house on the sand. For when the rains and floods come, and storm winds beat against his house, it will fall with a mighty crash" (Matt.7:24-27 LBP). See also 1.Jn.2:5-6; Phil.2:5; 1.Tim.6:17-19; 2.Pet.3:18.

"I, of myself can do nothing: as I hear, I judge: and my judgment is just: because I seek not my own will, but the will of the Father who has sent me" (Jn.5:30 KJV Para.). See also Jn.6:38.

The scriptures clearly show that the Father's will (i.e., his purpose) for his earthly children is no secret, and it can and must be known and understood if one is to grow toward spiritual maturity.

How do you determine and understand the Father's will well enough to be able to set the correct course throughout your life, and how do you gain the knowledge and understanding which is necessary in order to be able make correct spiritual decisions?

Ancient Israel relied on the priests and the prophets to reveal the Creator God's will to them, but during this age, there is no central authority on earth governing and clearly and concisely teaching the Sovereign Father's truth to his family of king-priests who are scattered throughout the nations. Because of this current situation, you must rely on the written word of God and the guidance from the holy spirit to reveal the Father's will to you. See Jn.14:26.

**Be Wise**

The apostle Paul cautioned the Ephesians, "Do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph.5:17 Para.).

How important is it to know, understand, and do the Father's will in your life?
Knowing, understanding, and doing the Father's will is important to being a productive and beneficial member and citizen within the Father's earthly family and holy nation of king-priests.

The apostle Paul said to the Ephesians concerning doing the Father's will, "As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received" (Eph.4:1 NIV). See also Col.1:9-10; 1.Thes.2:12; 2.Thes.1:11; Rev.3:4.

To know, understand, and do the Father's will is vitally important to your salvation, because if you do not do what you know and understand to be the Father's will for your life, you are not truly a member of the Father's family in mind and spirit. Concerning his Father's will, Jesus said, "Whoever does the will of God, that person is my brother, and my sister, and mother" (Mk.3:35 KJV).

The following warning of Jesus clearly shows the result of not knowing, understanding, and doing the Father's will in your life to the best your ability:

"Not everyone that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the Kingdom of Heaven; but he that does the will of the Father which is in heaven. Many will say to me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in your name, and in your name cast out devils and in your name done many wonderful works? But, I will say to them, I never knew you: depart from me, you that work lawlessness" (Matt.7:21-23 KJV Para.). See also Rom.12:2.

These are people who sincerely thought they were living in obedience to God and were worthy of eternal life. However, the path that they chose was actually in opposition to God's way of life. Although these people have done great works, they have missed the mark and their efforts have been in vain, because they have been practicing lawlessness. They have either never been on the path of righteousness or they have veered off of it and onto a path that has led them away from God.

Because it is the Father's will that we live in harmony with his laws, it should be obvious that to avoid the violation of these laws you must first be educated in what is lawful and what is not. This is one of the reasons the educational system was instituted within the Father's earthly family and one of the reasons that you must be a perpetual student of truth.

Jesus said that only those who do the Father's will can be granted entry into his Father's heavenly realm, family, and kingdom. Therefore, it is essential to know what the Father's will is and how to perform it in regard to being a student of his truth and a steward of the functions and responsibilities that he has assigned you as a member of his earthly family.
You must be doing the Father's will to the extent of your understanding of his will; otherwise, you are a worker of lawlessness, which is rebellion against his will. Anyone in rebellion against God will have their life terminated in the Lake of Fire. This is the second death from which there is no return.

In the end of this age, there will be many of the Father's children who truly know the Father's will concerning their lives, but for some reason they will refuse to do what they know they should do. To these unfaithful servants Jesus gives the following warning:

"And that servant, who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself, and did not perform according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes" (Lk.12:47 para.).

These are individuals who talk the talk of righteousness, but do not walk the walk of a truly righteous person who is interested in learning truth and the way of truth in order to practice it.

When the warnings in Matthew 7:21-23 and Luke 12:47 are viewed in the context of being a student of the Father's truth and way of truth, your stewardship, your functions and responsibilities within the Father's family, and the punishment of the six churches mentioned in the Book of Revelation, the seriousness of knowing, understanding, and performing the Father's will to the best of your ability should motivate you to action. See Revelation, chapters 2 and 3.

**GOD'S WILL CAN BE KNOWN**

If we do not know the Father's will, we cannot be expected to do what he wants us to do; therefore, he gives us an understanding of his will. Moreover, it does not take much study into the Bible to know and understand what he wants us to do with our lives here on earth.

Just as the ancient Israelites were able to know and understand the Creator's God's will through the study of his written word, the Father's earthly children are also able to know and understand his will this way. Although the Sovereign Father has intentionally hidden much of his awesome purpose from most people, his will for his earthly children is made known to them if they make a diligent effort to search for it.

The apostle Paul said the following about your ability to know and understand what the Father's will is for you:

"See that you walk circumspectly, not as fools, but as wise, Redeeming the time, because the days are evil. Therefore, you do not be unwise, but understand what the will of the Lord is" (Eph.5:15-17 Para.) See also Col.1:7-10.
"Therefore, don't you be conformed to this world: but you be trans-\nformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you can prove what is \nthat good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom. 12:2 \nKJV Para.). See also Dan.12:4,10; Eph.1:9-11; 1.Pet.1:12; 1.Jn. \n2:17.

Yes. The Father's will can be known and understood by those whom \nhe has called to salvation, because knowing and understanding his will is \na part of one's calling. Each person whom the Father has called to \nsalvation during this age must know and prove what his will is for their \nlife. Concerning God's will, King David said, "Teach me to do your will: \nfor you are my God: Your spirit is good; lead me into the land of \nrighteousness" (Psa.143:10 KJV).

David understood that he had to be taught to do God's will, and that he \nhad to be led by the Creator God—the teacher—in order to know how to \nbe righteous.

In order to be mentally equipped to serve and please the Father, you \nmust be a diligent student of his truth and way of truth so that you will \nknow what he expects of you and how to accomplish what is expected.

Because knowing and understanding the Father's will is vitally \nimportant to those he calls to salvation, he has provided two easily \nunderstood methods through which his children can receive help to gain \nthis knowledge and understanding. These two methods are commun-
icating with him and studying and meditating on his truth and way of truth \nthat is contained in the Bible.

THOSE WHO DO NOT BELIEVE

Mark records the following much overlooked and misunderstood \nwarning given by Christ along with the instruction to proclaim the \nGospel and enroll students in the truth and way of truth:

"You go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. \nHe that has faith and is baptized shall be saved; but he that does not \nbelieve shall be damned" (Mk.16:15-16 Para).

Many view this warning as meant only for those who dismiss the \ngood news message when they hear it. Although there is much truth to \nthis viewpoint, there is a serious warning here for those who initially \nhave faith in the message, accept the opportunity of salvation, receive the \ndwelling of the holy spirit, and then do not follow through with their \ncommitment to the Father.

Being a member of the Father's family and a pupil of Christ is much \nmore than just simple belief. True belief includes a lifetime commitment \nto fulfilling the functions and responsibilities of your calling. A major \npart of this commitment is becoming conversant with the Father's truth, \nhis way of truth, and his rules of conduct for members of his family, and \nthen diligently performing your responsibility as a member of the \nFather's earthly family.
BEING A DEDICATED AND RESPONSIBLE STUDENT

Being a Follower of Christ

Being a follower of Christ and a student of truth goes far beyond a profession of faith, asking forgiveness of your sins, being immersed in water, and receiving the holy spirit. These things are just the prerequisites to becoming a follower of Christ and a student of truth as a member of the Father's earthly family. Being a follower of Christ and a student of truth does not stop at baptism.

Receiving the indwelling of the holy spirit and being adopted into the Father's earthly family is only the beginning of a journey through life that will bring you to the point of spiritual perfection and being transformed into an immortal spirit-being in the Father's Heavenly Kingdom and Family.

Beyond the point of adoption into the Father's family is the ongoing process of spiritual growth and the fulfilling of your functions and responsibilities within the Father's earthly family. See Rom.12:1-2; 2.Tim.2:15; 2.Pet.3:17-18.

There seem to be at least three phases of being a student of truth that must operate concurrently throughout one's physical life.

- The first phase is the beginning of one's tenure as a student in which the Father's foundational laws, precepts, and principles are being learned and put into practice.
- The second phase is that of an apprentice student whose task is to put into practice and perfect what is being learned through practical application over time.
- The third phase seems to be that of a student teacher who is still learning, but is able to educate others in what he/she has learned.

Christ Pleased His Father

Matthew records that, when Jesus was baptized, a voice from the sky said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3:17). And at the mount of transfiguration, a voice out of the cloud said, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased; you listen to him" (Matt. 17:5).

The apostle John records the following single most important reason that the Sovereign Father was pleased with his earthly son:

"When you have lifted up the Son of man, then you shall know that I am he, and that I do nothing of myself; but as my Father has taught me, I speak these things. And he that sent me is with me: the Father has not left me alone; for I do always those things that please him" (Jn.8:28-29 KJV).
Why was the Father pleased with his son? It was because his son lived in harmony with his laws, precepts, and principles and did the things that were expected of him as a son.

Clearly, it is impossible to please the Father unless you live in harmony with his truth and his way of truth and perform the functions and responsibilities that he has called you to perform. However, it is impossible for you to do what he expects if you do not know and understand his laws, precepts, and principles. This is the reason that one of the functions of the holy spirit is the teaching of truth (Jn.14:25-26; 16:12-15). It is also the reason why one of the more important functions and responsibilities in the Father's earthly family is to be a teacher and instructor in the Father's truth and way of truth (1.Cor.12:28-29).

If we want the Father to be pleased with us, we must do the things that please him. We must not only learn his laws, precepts, and principles but also perfect them in our life and perform the functions and responsibilities of our calling.

If you are serious about pleasing the Father and moving forward in your spiritual life, you must be a willing, dedicated, responsible, and teachable student of the Father's truth and way of truth. Being a willing, dedicated, and responsible student is much more than just acquiring knowledge for the sake of knowledge alone. Having perception and being aware of the meaning of a fact, an event, or a set of circumstances is something very different from understanding. Academic knowledge of the Bible is important, but understanding the meaning of this knowledge is much more important.

In his second letter to Timothy, Paul speaks of individuals who have a form of godliness but are far from being godly. Paul said that these individuals are continually acquiring knowledge but are never able to come to the knowledge of the truth (2.Tim.3:1-10). The point is that knowledge for knowledge's sake alone is not profitable to one seeking to gain spiritual insight into the Father's mind-set.

In his letter to the elect at Rome, the apostle Paul urged them to present themselves as a living sacrifice which was acceptable to God. This was a logical act of worship for them. He also urged them not to copy the lifestyles of their time but to be transformed by the renovation of their mind in order for them to prove the good, acceptable, and perfect will of God (Rom.12:1-2).

The only way that Paul's instructions to the elect at Rome can be followed is through putting forth the time and effort in thoughtful study of the Father's truth and way of truth and asking the Father to grant you understanding of his truth in order to serve him and be the kind of person he wants you to be.
GROW IN GRACE AND KNOWLEDGE

In the apostle Peter's opening and closing statements of his second letter, he makes the following statement concerning grace and knowledge:

"Grace and peace be multiplied to you through the knowledge of God, and of Jesus our Lord" (2.Pet.1:2). At the end of this letter, Peter gives the following instruction: "But grow in grace, and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. . ." (2.Pet.3:18).

There are a number of fundamental concepts in what Peter said in the beginning and ending of his letter that are extremely important to being a dedicated, responsible, and teachable student of truth and the way of truth.

In order to gain a partial understanding of why Peter spoke of grace and knowledge in verses 2 and 18 and what it means to our responsibility as a student of truth and the way of truth, we need to examine the meanings of some of the Greek words in Peter's greeting and his instruction at the end of his letter.

The English word grace in verses 2 and 18 is translated from the Greek word charis, which can mean that which affords joy, pleasure, delight, sweetness, charm, loveliness, grace of speech, good-will, loving-kindness, favor, and what is due to grace. This word can also mean the spiritual condition of one governed by the power of divine influence, divine influence upon the heart, the reflection of divine influence in one's life, and a token or a proof of grace.

A key to understanding the meaning of charis in verse 2 and 18 is that, in verse 2, charis is to be plethuno (i.e., multiplied) and in verse 18 charis is to be auzano (increased). In both verses, charis is to be enlarged through knowledge and insight into the Father and Christ.

Regardless of the nuance of its usage in the scriptures, all charis (all grace) that is bestowed upon us or becomes a part of our character has its origin with our Heavenly Father and his son our Savior. See 2.Jn.3; Rom.1:7-9; 1.Cor.1:3; 1.Tim.1:2; Tit.1:4.

The primary purpose for the educational system within the Father's family is to teach his children his truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct that we must practice in order to acquire the attitude, behavior, and character that he and his son have. Therefore, it makes perfect sense that Peter would open and close his letter of encouragement and warnings with the instruction to grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ.
In a conversation with the Pharisees Jesus said, "You neither know me, nor my Father: if you had known me, you should have also known my Father" (Jn.8:13-19). And in a conversation with his disciples about his going back to his Heavenly Father and his death and resurrection, Jesus explained to them that, if they would have had an intimate knowledge of him, they would have known what the Father was like, because he was a reflection of his Father. See John 14:1-11.

It is through having an intimate knowledge and understanding of Christ's attitude, behavior, character, and teachings that we are able to know what the Father is like, because Christ is a reflection of his Heavenly Father. Therefore, it seems that the apostle Peter used the word charis to indicate the increase of divine influence that should be reflected in our life.

The increase of a godly attitude, behavior, and character in your life are the result of allowing the Father, his son, and the holy spirit to influence your life. It is also evident that, in order to become more like our Father and our Savior, we must cultivate these godly qualities to increase them in our lives.

An important point to note is that Peter says grace must be multiplied and increased through the knowledge of the Father and Jesus our Lord (verses 2 and 18). This is important because it reinforces the necessity to be a willing, dedicated, responsible, and teachable student in order to learn and practice the attitude, behavior, and character of the Father and Christ.

**Have The Mind of Christ**

In his letter to the Philippians, the apostle Paul said in reference to their attitude and behavior during their journey through the experience of life, "Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ" (Phil.2:5).

How can you think like Christ if you do not have an intimate knowledge of his life and his teachings? The answer is that you cannot.

Foremost in the minds of the apostles was the need for their brothers and sisters in the faith to have spiritual knowledge and a clear understanding of the necessity to become a spiritually mature member of the Father's family in order for them to fulfill his purpose for calling them to salvation during that age.

Almost the totality of the writings of the apostles is centered around encouraging and urging their brothers and sisters in the faith to become educated in the things that will help them conform to and practice a holy lifestyle while developing a godly attitude, behavior, and character though acquiring godly knowledge and understanding.
SPIRITUAL GROWTH THROUGH EDUCATION

Over the centuries, the many tools that the Father has provided to facilitate spiritual growth within his family have mostly fallen into disuse by the majority of his elect. There are over twenty-one separate authorizations and responsibilities given through the holy spirit by God the Father and administered to his earthly children through Jesus Christ for the edification of the Father's family and the performance of its work. See Rom.12:3-8; 1.Cor.12:8-10, 28-30; Eph.4:11-14.

A lack of a true understanding of what it means to be a student of truth and a steward within the Father's earthly family has made it virtually impossible for the gifts of the spirit to be accessed or used in a major way within the Father's family. This lack of understanding has resulted in doctrinal chaos, the lack of unity, and the general lack of spirit-power that exists among the congregations and scattered members of the Father's family during this age.

In order to eliminate this doctrinal chaos, lack of unity, and lack of spirit-power, each member of the Father's family must truly come to understand that they are required to be a student of truth and a steward of their function and responsibility within the Father's family.

There is no excuse for one whom the Father has called to salvation to not fulfill their obligation and opportunity to become educated in the discipline of holiness, successfully live a righteous lifestyle, and obtain immortality. The apostle Peter says the following to all who have been called to salvation:

"Therefore, gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the favor that is brought to you by the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, do not pattern yourselves after the ignorance of your former desires. But as he who has called you is holy, so you be holy in all manner of behavior; Because it is written, You be holy; because I am holy" (1.Pet.1:13-16 Para.).

The instruction is clear; those who are members of the Father's family must be holy as he is holy. The only way you can be holy as he is holy and practice a holy lifestyle is to first know and understand what it means to be holy. In order to acquire this spiritual knowledge and understanding, you must be a willing, dedicated, responsible, and teachable student of the Father's truth and way of truth.

In this age, there are many books one can use in order to gain an academic knowledge of what is written in the Bible. However, understanding the meaning of what is written in the Bible for the Father's children can only be acquired through the gifts of the spirit and the exercise of the teaching function of the holy spirit.
One of the gifts of the spirit that each person is provided at the moment they receive the Father's holy spirit is self-control: "God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of self-control" (2.Tim.1:7 KJV Para.). A person with godly self-control is better able to learn, understand, and apply the things which are being taught to them through the guidance of the holy spirit.

The Father would not have called you to salvation if he had not had confidence that you would be able to succeed when given the tools for success. Each person who receives the holy spirit also receives the tools with which to be successful. Therefore, success is assured if these tools are used for their intended purpose.

The Holy Spirit

A short review of Jesus' and the apostles' teachings show that the indwelling of the holy spirit is capable of imparting knowledge, discernment, wisdom, and understanding to the Father's elect children. However, if you rarely study and meditate on God's word or rarely communicate with the Father through prayer, these attributes that are necessary to fulfill your calling cannot be acquired and their benefits cannot be realized.

Before his death and resurrection, Jesus told his closest students and companions these things about the spirit of truth that would come to teach them:

"But when the Father sends the Comforter instead of me—and by the Comforter I mean the holy spirit—he [it] will teach you much, as well as remind you of everything I myself have told you" (Jn.14:26 LBP).

"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when the spirit of truth, is come, it will guide you into all truth: for it shall not speak of itself; but whatever it shall hear, that shall it speak..." (Jn.16:12-13 KJV Para.). See also 1.Cor.2:11, 1.Pet.1:12.

Why would Christ's followers need to be taught something more than what he taught them while he was with them? The answer is that they needed to know and understand more in order to have the knowledge and understanding necessary to perfect a godly attitude, behavior, and character, and to have the spiritual resources required to fulfill their calling and purpose for existence.

The importance of being taught the Father's truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct, and the practice of these things within his family should be self-evident. Without being instructed in these things and gaining insight into the attitude, behavior, and character of our Heavenly Father and his firstborn son, no progress can be made toward the goal of spiritual perfection and maturity. Moreover, these things must be learned and internalized in order for the truth, the way of truth, our Heavenly
Father, and our Savior to be represented correctly in our lives and to other people.

The holy spirit is a teacher and reminder of the things taught by Christ while he was human, as well as the things he taught as the Creator God. As the teaching function of the holy spirit is accessed and exercised, it conveys knowledge and understanding of the Father's truth, his way of truth, and the attitude, behavior, and characteristics that he and his firstborn son have as a part of their being.

Paul also confirms that the Father's holy spirit has the power to transfer spiritual knowledge to his earthly children:

"It has been written, Eye has not seen, and ear has not heard, nor has it risen up in the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for those that love him. But God revealed them to us by his spirit, for the spirit searches all things, even the depths of God. For who among men knows the things of a man, except the spirit of man within him? So also no one has known the things of God except the spirit of God" (1.Cor.2:9-11 Para.).

Notice that this transfer of knowledge and understanding is possible because each of the elect has been given the Father's holy spirit and the essence of Christ's mind as a part of their mental make-up.

"Now we have not received the spirit of the world, but the spirit which is of God; so that we can know the things that are freely given to us from God. Which things we also speak, that are not the words that man's wisdom teaches, but which the holy spirit teaches; comparing spiritual things with spiritual. However, the natural man does not receive the things of God's spirit; because, to the natural man they are foolishness. Neither can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned. But he that is spiritual can discern all things, yet he himself cannot be understood by the natural man. Moreover, who has known the mind of the Lord, that he may instruct him? But we have the mind of Christ" (1.Cor.2: 12-16 Para.).

Clearly, the Father and Christ speak to us through the Bible and the holy spirit that resides within us; therefore, we should diligently study the Bible and ask for spiritual enlightenment so that we can know and understand the Father's will in order to do what pleases him.

It should be the goal of each individual to become conversant in the truth and way of truth in order to understand the deep meanings of the mysteries of God, to have a strong spiritual foundation, to know and understand our functions and responsibilities within the Father's family, and to be able to explain our hope of salvation to others. Why? Because this is what we are instructed to do as a member of the Father's family in order to fulfill the purpose of our calling.
Spiritual Growth

Although each newly converted person becomes Christ's pupil at baptism, the process of being taught spiritual laws, concepts, and principles cannot begin in earnest until you have surrendered every aspect of your life to the Father and understand that you have been called to participate whole-heartedly as an integral part of his family. Moreover, if you refuse to advance as a student of truth, you become unfruitful and can become an impediment to the progress of other family members.

A child of God cannot remain static in their spiritual growth for very long. You either go forward toward spiritual maturity and the fulfillment of the functions and responsibilities for which you are called during this age or you regress toward your old behavior. See Jesus' admonition to the Ephesians and Laodiceans in Revelation 2:5-6 and 3:15-19.

Prerequisites For Knowledge and Understanding

The following are some of the prerequisites for the acquisition of spiritual knowledge and understanding that the scriptures clearly show as necessary:

- You must be seeking to know and understand the Father's will for your life.
- You must ask for knowledge, understanding, and wisdom.
- You must study the Father's truth and way of truth.
- You must be in obedience to the Father and his way of life.

If you fail to do these things, you will not gain spiritual knowledge and understanding. Other things that can cause a lack of knowledge and understanding are quenching the power of the holy spirit, rebelling against God, or allowing something or someone to take priority in your life above your commitment to the Father.

Paul exhorted the Thessalonians to do the things that would promote spiritual growth and warned them not to restrain or suppress the power of the holy spirit in their life. See 1 Thes.4:1-12; Lk.19:12-26; Lk.17:7-10:

"Pray without ceasing. In every thing give thanks: for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus concerning you. Quench not the spirit..." (1 Thes.5:17-19 KJV).

If you become lazy and refuse to put forth the effort to pray, show gratitude to the Father, study, meditate, and yield your life to the Father, the power of the holy spirit becomes weak and useless within you. When this happens, you are in danger of losing the power of the spirit in your life. If this is not corrected, it will result in eternal death. However, when you exercise the holy spirit in a positive manner, you can grow spiritually and become a productive member in the Father's family.
A Beginning and Progress

Unless you become the best student of the truth and the way of truth you can be, there is little likelihood that you will make much progress in the knowledge and understanding of things of the spirit or fulfill the functions and responsibilities for which you were called to perform as a member of the Father’s family.

THE PROCESS

It is a given that those who proclaim the Father's good news message as evangelists, must clearly know and understand what they are talking about.

It is also a given that those who occupy an official function or responsibility of service to their brothers and sisters within the Father’s family must be well versed and practiced in the Father's truth and way of truth before being allowed to fulfill an official position of service. See 1 Tim.3:1-16.

But, where do these individuals obtain the knowledge, understanding, and wisdom necessary to fulfill their functions and responsibilities within the church? They learn these things through the process of being willing, dedicated, and teachable students of truth.

The simple truth is that no one can learn the Father's will for their life or become conversant with his laws, precepts, and principles by osmosis. You cannot do what you are not equipped to do! If you desire to please the Father with your life and become a beneficial member of his family, you must put forth the time and effort to be a dedicated and responsible student of his truth and way of truth.

COMMITMENT

To those who are truly serious about their calling, Jesus leaves no doubt as to the type of commitment that must be made in order to truly follow his teachings as a student of truth:

"Anyone who comes to me must love me more than he does his own father, mother, wife, children, brothers, or sisters, and yes, even more than his own life; otherwise he cannot be my pupil [Greek: disciple]. And no one can be my pupil who does not bear his own cross and follow me. . . whoever of you that will not forsake everything he has, cannot be my pupil" (Lk.14:26-27,33 Para.).

Seek the Kingdom of God First

"Don't be anxious, saying, What shall we eat? or, What shall we drink? or, how will we be clothed? (For after all these things do the Gentiles seek,) for your heavenly Father knows that you need all of these things. But seek you first the Kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be supplied to you. Don't be anxious about tomorrow; because, tomorrow will take care of itself. . ." (Matt.6:31-34 KJV Para.).
Those who are serious about their calling should not be overly concerned with the things of this life; they should be concerned about the things that will last forever.

The apostle Paul told Timothy that anyone who is serious about doing a work for the Father cannot become overly involved with the cares of this physical life; therefore, you must be single-minded in your service to the Father. True discipleship and stewardship requires a total commitment to the Sovereign Father, Jesus Christ, and your calling:

"No one serving as a soldier gets entangled with the affairs of this life, so that he can please the one whom he serves and those who compete in athletic events must follow the rules or they will be disqualified and not win the prize" (2.Tim.2: 4-5 Para.).

SUMMARY

Every one of the Father's children is a disciple (i.e., a student) of his truth and way of truth. Some are in the beginning phases of their spiritual education, some are more advanced students, and some have advanced enough in their spiritual growth and maturity to become teachers of God's truth while continuing their responsibility as a student. Regardless of what level of spiritual maturity you have attained or what function or responsibility you perform as a member of the Father's family, you are to remain a student of the truth and the way of truth throughout your life.

Being a perpetual student of the Father's truth and way of truth is a lifestyle with a purpose. It is an active participation in a process of growing in favor with the Father, learning his truth and way of truth, and applying what is learned in your daily life. Discipleship is a dynamic activity; it is not static.

As true disciples with whom the Father has placed tremendous spiritual resources, we should be willing to learn and grow in grace and in the knowledge of God the Father and Jesus Christ (1.Pet.1:2; 2.Pet.3:18). Moreover, a disciple should trust in their ability to successfully overcome the obstacles of this present life and become an immortal spirit-being in the Father's heavenly kingdom.

STUDENTS OF TRUTH

In chapters, four, five, and six of Paul's letter to the elect at Ephesus, he speaks of the Father's collective earthly family and how it should work together to accomplish the purpose for its existence. Paul also explains that the Father's elect should not think and behave like people without God's spirit. Moreover, he says that the elect should set aside the attitudes and behaviors of their past life that were in opposition to righteousness; instead, they should think and behave in a godly manner. See also Col.3:1-25, 4:1-6.
It is the transforming of your former thought process, attitude, and behavior into that which is godly that most of the commentary and instruction in the New Testament deals with. This process of transformation cannot be ignored if you desire to enter into the Father's heavenly kingdom as an immortal spirit-being. This process as shown throughout the Bible involves being both a student and steward of the Father's truth and way of truth within his earthly family of king-priests.

If you are truly serious about your salvation and being a viable productive member of the Father's earthly family, being educated in the Father's truth and way of truth and performing your role as a steward in his family are vital to your spiritual success.

Although this study explains the meaning of discipleship and stewardship and the importance of fulfilling these responsibilities within the Father's family, the following questions need to be answered in order to fulfill these responsibilities:

- How do you become educated in the Father's truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct for his family?
- What are the first subjects that you should study and apply in your life?
- How do you fulfill your personal obligation as a steward within the Father's family?

GOALS

Setting goals to become educated in the Father's truth and to become a productive steward in his family are obviously necessary if you are to progress spiritually. But, setting goals and accomplishing them are two very different things. It should also be obvious that, in order to make any progress toward accomplishing these goals, you must have an action plan. Without an action plan, little or no progress will be made toward accomplishing your goals. The following are some suggestions as to how to produce a personal action plan for spiritual success.

1. Let the Father know through prayer (and fasting if you feel the need) that you are serious about knowing and understanding his will for your life, growing in grace and in the knowledge of him, his son, his truth, and his way of truth, and serving him to the best of your ability. Ask the Father to provide you with spiritual knowledge, understanding, discernment, and gifts of the spirit that are necessary for you to fulfill his purpose for your life.

Will the Father hear and answer this type of commitment and request? Absolutely, he will. While speaking to a multitude of people, Jesus said the following about the Father's willingness to give good things to his children:
"Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you: For every one that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened. Or what man is there of you, whom if his son ask bread, will he give him a stone? Or if he ask a fish, will he give him a serpent? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more shall your Father which is in heaven give good things to them that ask him?" (Matt. 7:7-11 KJV). See also Jn. 14:14, 15:7; Heb. 4:16; Jms. 3:16-18; Phil. 2:12-13.

In this example, Jesus reveals a major key that will help unlock the great truths to be found in the Bible. A person must not only desire to have spiritual knowledge and understanding but also go to the Father and ask to be given this knowledge and understanding, and then diligently seek it by making a sincere effort to study and meditate on his words:

"Blessed are they which hunger and thirst after righteousness; for they shall be filled" (Matt. 5:6 Para.). See also Psa. 119:33-40; Jer. 10:23-24.

The Father is more than willing to give knowledge and understanding of the things that will benefit those he has called to salvation. It is his desire to give us the spiritual nourishment that is necessary for spiritual growth. See 1.Pet. 2:2.

2. Define your goals. What is the ultimate goal that the Father has for each individual he calls during this age of salvation? The Father's goal is for each individual he calls to become a member of his heavenly family and kingdom as an immortal spirit-being. Therefore, your primary goal should be the same (See 1.Cor. 15:35-54; Rev. 21:5-7). All other goals are merely an extension of this primary goal and should serve to accomplish it.

3. Develop a personal action plan for success and then put this plan into action. The following are three important reasons that you must develop a personal action plan for success:

• It is evident that during this age, no central authority exists on earth governing the Sovereign Father's family of king-priests scattered throughout the nations or teaching them his truth and way of truth clearly and concisely.

• There are many who teach within the congregations of the elect who are unqualified to teach truth for one reason or another. See Matt. 7:15, 24:11, 24; 2.Pet. 2:1-3; 1.Jn. 4:1.

• Each individual the Father calls to salvation is totally responsible for their own spiritual success or failure. See Phil. 2:12-16; Eph. 4:21-24; Rom. 12:1-2, 14:10-12; 2.Cor. 5:10.
THE INSTRUCTION MANUAL

The Bible is the instruction manual for those who have been called to salvation and it contains all of the knowledge and understanding necessary in order for you to grow spiritually and succeed in the performance of your functions and responsibilities within the Father's earthly family. Therefore, before providing some tips on how to develop a personal plan for spiritual success, there are some important issues and concepts that need to be clarified concerning the Bible and its study.

Bible Contradictions

The first thing to firmly fix in your mind prior to studying the Bible is that God's written word is truth and there are no contradictions in what he has caused to be written.

Jesus said of God's word, "Your word is truth" (Jn.17:17) and "The scripture cannot be broken" (Jn.10:35). God inspired the Bible to be written and it is impossible for God to lie (Heb.6:18; Tit.1:2); therefore, God's word will always be true (Rom.3:4).

The problem with seemingly contradictory scriptures is never with what God has inspired to be written; it is always with people's perspective or understanding of what has been written or with how it has been translated or interpreted from the original writing.

Consider this for a moment: If God is a God of truth who cannot lie and he has said that he inspired and instructed his prophets, servants, and apostles to record all that is his sacred word, there cannot be any errors, lies, or contradictions in his originally inspired written word.

Solving Contradictions

Seemingly unsolvable scriptural contradictions are normally the product of one or more of the following:

- An error in translation from the original language.
- An error in the interpretation of the original language.
- Insufficient research on the subject.
- Translated from an erroneous or incomplete copy of the original text.

Because the above conditions may exist, doctrine should never be established by using vague or difficult to understand scriptures. All major teachings of the Bible, such as those concerning God and his plan of salvation, are easily understood and set forth in clear concise statements that prove their validity to anyone whom God is calling to salvation.
Textual Errors

A major error that should be avoided when studying the Bible and related documents is the belief that the more ancient a manuscript or a document is, the more accurate it is. This is a very dangerous assumption to make. Just because a document is ancient, does not make it accurate. The test of accuracy is the test of truth and the continuity of truth. If an ancient writing does not conform to proven biblical truth and departs from the overall theme and continuity of the Bible, it should not be used to establish doctrine.

Because no original writings of the scriptures are available and centuries have passed since their writing, all modern translations and interpretations of the original text contain some error due to one or more of the following:

- Additions or omissions due to private interpretation
- Justification by translators for false teaching
- Lack of attention to detail
- Lack of the correct linguistic information
- Poor scholarship

Truth Will Endure

God has promised that his truth will never be lost. Although there may be copy errors or translation errors of the original writings, the truth and the will of God can still be found and understood by those to whom he chooses to reveal it. See Jer.33:3; Lk.11:9-13; Jn.14:26; 16:12-13; 1.Cor.2:9-16.

The Bible Interprets Itself

Trying to justify preconceived ideas and beliefs are a major obstacle to gaining a correct understanding of any biblical subject. The proper approach to understanding the Bible should be an unbiased attempt to understand what is truly written and not what a person thinks is written. However, this is very difficult to do because of the vast amount of false teaching about God and the Bible today.

Because of the way the Bible has been written, it will interpret itself if you are willing to collect all of the relevant facts and references and let the holy spirit guide your mind into truth.

Precept upon Precept

Those who think that the Bible sometimes contradicts itself have failed to understand that the Bible is a complex book, which must be studied as a whole if its mysteries are to be understood.
One of the most fascinating and inspiring aspects of the Bible's construction is the way various subjects are interwoven throughout its pages. Because of this, it is sometimes necessary to collect all of the references to a subject before you can begin to understand what is being taught:

"For precept must be upon precept, precept upon precept; line upon line, line upon line; here a little, and there a little" (Isa.28:10 KJV).

See also Isa.28:9-13.

Continuity of Truth

There is a continuity of truth throughout the entire Bible which is very helpful in separating truth from error. Each specific teaching or doctrine of the Bible will conform to the overall theme and purpose of the entire Bible. If any teaching or doctrine is found to be in conflict with another, one or both of the teachings may be based upon false assumptions or incorrectly understood scriptures.

Acquiring Knowledge and Understanding

Many feel that a person must be highly educated or very intelligent to understand the Bible, but this is not true. All those whom the Father calls to salvation can understand what he has caused to be written for their inspiration, correction, and edification. Because the Father wants his children to succeed in their calling and to perform his will in their lives, he has provided a way for them to learn and understand his truth.

Among the many promises Jesus makes to those who believe in him, is that he will send the holy spirit as a teacher to guide them into truth. See Jn.14:26; 16:12-13.

One way that the holy spirit carries out teaching and guiding is through the written word of God. The acquisition of truth, spiritual knowledge, and understanding with the help of the holy spirit requires effort on the part of the one being called to study the Bible and related information.

Whom Shall God Teach?

"Whom shall he teach knowledge? and whom shall he make to understand doctrine? them that are weaned from the milk, and drawn from the breasts" (Isa.28:9).

Just as there is a physical growth process from infancy to adulthood, there is a spiritual growth process in the acquisition of spiritual knowledge and understanding. The more you learn and the more you practice what you have learned, the more spiritually mature you become and the more spiritual knowledge and understanding God can reveal to you. See Isa.66:1-2.
STUDY FOR SPIRITUAL GROWTH

If you only study the Bible for information, very little understanding that is profitable for spiritual growth will be gained. However, your studies will become spiritually profitable if you study the Bible in order to do the following things:

• Understand the Father's plan for humanity
• Know the Father's will in your life
• Learn what the Father expects of you
• Grow toward spiritual maturity
• Serve the Father and his children
• Understand how to fulfill your particular calling

If you study the Bible for these reasons, the Father will honor your request for him to reveal the mysteries of the Bible that will benefit you and others with whom you come into contact.

Prerequisites and Requirements

The Bible itself reveals the prerequisites and requirements that are necessary to be successful in its study. The following are some of the major things that you must do in order to acquire more knowledge and a deeper understanding of God the Father, Jesus Christ, and their awesome plan for humanity:

• Ask the Father for spiritual knowledge and understanding.
• Have a serious desire to understand the things of God and study with an open mind.
• Make what is learned a part of your life.
• Meditate on God's law in order to improve spiritual understanding.
• Remember and practice the things which are already understood to be the truth of God.
• Remove obstacles to learning by putting away improper attitudes and behavior.
• Study to grow spiritually, to serve others, and to fulfill your calling.

Remove Obstacles to Learning

The Apostle Peter lists some of the things that hamper spiritual growth which should be replaced with a desire to understand God's truth and way of truth:

"Wherefore laying aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speaking, as newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby" (1.Pet.2:1-2 Para.).
In order to gain understanding into the more difficult things of God, you must be practicing the basic truths of God in your life:


**Meditate on God's Word**

"Blessed is the man that walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the way of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful. But his delight is in the law of the Lord; and in his law does he meditate day and night" (Psa.1:1-2 KJV). See also Psa.119:115-148; 1.Tim. 4:12-16.

There are tremendous blessings for those who perform the will of God in their life. The person who is being blessed loves God and his law (i.e., God's way of life) and is constantly thinking about both.

**Prove all Things**

"Test all things; and hold fast that which is good" (1.Thes.5:21 Para.). See also Rom.12:2.

This statement is in the context of a person doing the Father's will in their life. Paul refers to the testing or examining of what you are doing in your life and comparing it against the righteous standards of behavior that the Father has established. Notice that Paul says to "Hold fast that which is good." You can only know what is good if you understand the word of God. Therefore, you must study the Bible in order to fulfill Paul's instruction.

The kind of true enduring belief that the Father desires for his children to have is based in the knowledge and understanding of him and his ways. The only place this kind of knowledge and understanding is available is in the Bible.

The Bible was written to be understood. It is not a book of theory, philosophy, or meaningless stories. It is a logical factual presentation of the things that God wants his children to know, understand, and practice.

**PLAN FOR SUCCESS**

An action plan containing goals for spiritual success is a valuable tool that can help you maintain focus on your goals to grow in the Father's truth and to perform your stewardship within his family. The following are some tips on how to develop a personal plan for spiritual success, some important subjects to make a part of your study plan, and some important attitudes and behaviors to cultivate as you learn and practice the Father's truth and way of truth.
1. Write your plan in a binder, hard bound book, spreadsheet, or some other format in order to more easily store, access, review, and edit it.

2. Make a list of topics categories, and sub-topics to study and things to accomplish, such as attitudes and behaviors that need to be cultivated and become a part of your character, as well as unrighteous attitudes and behaviors that need to be discarded. The items in this list should be clearly defined and simply stated.

3. If you are creating a paper-based plan leave enough space under each item in your list or place each item on a separate piece of paper in order for you to keep your notes and comments close to each item.

4. Prioritize your list and check off items as you complete them.

5. Make your action plan a flexible tool that you can modify periodically to fit your needs.

6. Review your plan often in order to check your progress and add or edit items to maintain focus on your goals.

THE STUDY PLAN

Regardless of how you structure your action plan for learning and understanding the Father's truth and will for your life, a high priority should be given to reading the entire Bible from cover to cover at least once.

There are many translations of the Bible and each has its own particular strengths and weaknesses. Some help clarify difficult scriptures and concepts, while others do the opposite—they introduce heretical teachings. Because there is no totally accurate translation of the original text, the admonition of Paul to Timothy becomes very important to those who are serious about building a strong, spiritual foundation based upon the word of God:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2.Tim.2:15 NKJV).

No Original Text Available

When reading the Bible, it is important to remember that no original copies of the biblical text are available for use by scholars or the general public. What exist today are copies of the originals and translations of these copies, which would seem to make it impossible to prove the validity of the biblical record. However, the author of the Bible has hidden many undeniable proofs within the biblical text which reveal that what has been recorded is his word. Those who diligently study the Bible will find this proof which is overlooked by the casual reader.
The King James Version

The King James Authorized version of the Bible, written in early modern English in 1611, was translated from the Masoretic text and the Received text. From the historical evidence and the continuity of truth that is revealed through both the Masoretic text and the Received text, it appears that both of these are reference works through which God is conveying his truth and his will today.

Because of the King James versions' archaic language, it is helpful to have some modern translations along with Greek and Hebrew dictionaries in order to help clarify difficult passages. The New International Version and the Living Bible can sometimes be helpful in translating concepts that are difficult to understand because of the language of the King James version. You may also find it helpful to purchase a narrated version of the Bible to listen to while reading, while traveling, or while being unoccupied with other endeavors.

Topical Studies

Many people take one scripture (sometimes out of context) and build an entire teaching around it. However, the Prophet Isaiah tells us that God's truth is scattered throughout his written word (Isa.28:9-13) and that these truths, concepts, and principles are built upon each other. Therefore, it seems logical that you must perform a search of the entire Bible in order to gain a thorough understanding of a subject. Personally, I have found that topical studies are the best way to understand the teachings contained in the Bible.

GOD'S LAW

A short review of the first five books of the Bible clearly reveal that God is a God of law. The agreement with the twelve tribes of national Israel contains 613 to 759 plus statutes, judgements, and commandments, depending on who is doing the counting. The special agreement that the Sovereign Father has with his earthly family of king-priests also contains laws and instructions that govern their relationship with him, their relationship with brothers and sisters in his holy family, and with other people.

A study of the law with the goal of understanding both the letter and the spirit of the law will give insight into the minds of the Sovereign Father and our Savior, their character, attitude, and behavior. Moreover, these laws reveal how one who is attempting to live a holy lifestyle should think and behave.

Love Toward God

The first laws given to national Israel were the Ten Commandments. Matthew and Mark both record that Christ said the whole law was held together by just two commandments—love for God and love for neighbor:
"You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second is similar to it, You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets" (Matt.22:37-40 KJV). See also Mk.12:28-34.

If you truly have love and respect for your heavenly Father, you will want to please him with your life by following Jesus' example of a righteous life. The Father said of Christ at his baptism, "This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3:17).

The scriptures show us that love and respect for the Father are expressed through one's attitude and behavior toward him and obedience and respect for the law he has set in place to govern the lives of his children. Regarding his behavior toward the Father, Jesus said, "For I do always those things that please him" (Jn.8:29).

Concerning the expression of godly love, the apostle John said, "By this we know that we love the children of God, when we love God, and keep his commandments. For this is the love of God, that we keep his commandments: and his commandments are not grievous" (1.Jn.5:2-3).

All of God's law for mankind hinge on the two basic themes of love for God and love for neighbor, but there are many overlapping concepts and principles contained within this body of law which explain and expound upon these two basic themes.

ATTITUDES AND BEHAVIORS

The scriptures instruct the Father's children to subdue and keep in check their old nature which is in opposition to the holy nature imparted through the indwelling of the holy spirit. See Rom.6:6-12; Eph.4:21-24; Col.3:9-10.

The apostles Peter and Paul list a number of righteous attitudes and behaviors that need to be cultivated and become a part of your character and a number unrighteous attitudes and behaviors that need to be discarded. Many of these attitudes and behaviors are noted in the following scriptures and are worthy of careful study: 1.Pet.2:1; Rom.13:11-14; 1.Cor.13:11; Eph.4:21-32; Col.3:3-15.

Cultivate charity, forgiveness, honesty, humility, kindness, long-suffering, meekness, mercy, peace, tenderheartedness, and truthfulness.

Discard anger, bitterness, blasphemy, drunkenness, envy, evil desires, extortion, filthy speech, fornication, guile, hypocrisy, idolatry, inordinate affection, lying, malice, rioting, theft, uncleanness, and wrath.

Added to the list of attitudes and behaviors to be discarded are things that are clearly in opposition to a righteous lifestyle, such as some personal associations, habits, hobbies, as well as religious holidays, festivals, and celebrations that belong to this world's religions. See 1.Pet.1:15-16; Deut.12:30-32; Jer.10:1-15.
Rules of Conduct

Although it is important to become conversant with all aspects of the Father's truth, there are some basic rules of conduct that apply within his family which need to be clearly understood and practiced if you are to grow spiritually and become a viable and beneficial member of his family. These rules of conduct and the philosophy behind them are set forth in the Bible as the standards of acceptable and unacceptable attitudes and behaviors for all members of the Father's family.

Each of these rules are clearly spelled out in many scriptures and should be among the first things you learn and make a part of your lifestyle as a member of the Father's earthly family. Without knowing and understanding these rules of conduct, it is virtually impossible to be a good steward of the functions and responsibilities that you have been called to perform. Moreover, these rules also reveal how to express love (i.e., an outgoing concern) for family members and produce peace and harmony within the family. The apostle John said the following about walking in truth (i.e., following the Father's rules for your life) and the rule to love one another within the family:

"I rejoiced greatly that I found of your children walking in truth, as we have received a commandment from the Father. And now I beseech you, lady, not as though I wrote a new commandment to you, but that which we had from the beginning, that we love one another. And this is love, that we walk after his commandments. This is the commandment, That, as you have heard from the beginning, you should walk in it. . . . Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another" (1.Jn.4-6 KJV).

Although some of the rules of conduct are clearly intended to be applied to individuals occupying positions of service within the family or are gender specific, most apply in principle to all family members, regardless of position of service or gender. The following are some of these rules of conduct with which each member should be conversant and practice as a part of their stewardship within the family:

General Rules:

• Attitude and behavior toward doctrinally deceptive individuals (2.Jn.2:4-11)
• Commandment keeping (1.Jn.5:1-3)
• Compassion (1.Pet.3:8; 1.Jn.3:17-18)
• Forbearance and forgiveness (Matt.5:23-24; Lk.17:3-4; Eph.4:32; Col.3:13)
• Honor/Respect/Value other people: (Eph.6:2; 1.Tim.5:3; 1.Pet.2:17, 3:7)
• Love for each family member (Rom.12:9-10; 1.Pet.4:7-8; 1.Jn.4:21)
• Patience (Eph.4:2)
• Reconciliation (Matt.5:21-24)
Older Men:

Be circumspect and honorable, have self control, be incorruptible in the faith, benevolent, and consistent (Titus 2:2).

Young Men:

Be sound-minded, a model of virtuous works reflecting righteousness, have integrity, be dignified, and have speech that cannot be condemned (Titus 2:6-7).

Older Women:

Be circumspect and honorable, have self control, be incorruptible in the faith, benevolent and consistent, have holy behavior, shun evil behavior, drink wine in moderation, and be a teacher of righteousness (Titus 2:3-4).

Servants (voluntary or indentured):

Be subordinate/obedient to your master, make an effort to please your master, do not be argumentative, and be an example of your Saviors instructions (Titus 2:9-10; Col.3:22).

Husband and Wife Relationships:

- Sexual relations (1.Cor.7:3-5)
- Unconverted spouse (1.Cor.7:12-16)
- Submission, love, and honor (Eph.5:22-25; Col.3:18-19; 1.Pet.3:1-7)
- Divorce (Matt.5:32, 19:9; Lk.16:18)

Young, Married Women:

Be discreet, morally beyond reproach, maternal, affectionate and subordinate to one's husband, and modest in dress and appearance (Titus 2:4-5; 1.Pet.3:1-3).

Speech:

- Do not attack another person's character (Titus 3:2).
- Avoid absurd questions about genealogies, as well as arguments and controversy about God's law (Titus 3:9).
- Shun profane babbling (2.Tim.2:16).
- Do not utter foul speech (Eph.4:29; 1.Pet.3:10).

Official Capacity:

The following scriptures contain a number of rules that apply to those who serve within the family in an official capacity. See 1.Cor.4:1-2; 1.Tim.3:1-11, 5:1-3; 2.Tim.2:24-25; 1.Pet.5:1-6; Titus 1:5-10.
Judicial System:

The Judicial system for resolving personal and collective problems within the Father's earthly family is clearly set forth in Matthew, chapter 18 and should be studied and understood. In this chapter, Christ sets forth a step-by-step procedure that each member should follow in order to resolve problems within the collective church. The following is a short list of judicial rules of conduct and instructions concerning how to deal with specific situations within the Father's family:

- Accusation, rebuke, and sanction of an elder (1.Tim.5:19-21)
- Conflict resolution (1.Cor.6:1-9)
- Rebuke and forgiveness (Lk.17:3-4; Matt.18:15, 18-22)
- Punishment (Matt.18:17; 1.Tim.5:20)
- How to treat a heretic after failure to heed two reprimands (Titus 3:10)
- Withdraw from the disorderly brethren (Rom.16:17-18; 1.Cor.5:9-11; 2.Thes.3:6, 14-15; 1.Tim.6:5)

Due Diligence As A Student

As previously stated in this study, the simple truth is that no one can learn the Father's will for their life or become conversant with his laws, precepts, and principles by osmosis. Learning and practicing the Father's truth and way of truth takes time and effort.

If you are serious about being educated in the Father's truth and way of truth, it is your responsibility to do one or both of the following: 1) Seek out spiritual leaders whom you believe are teaching truth and study their teachings as they relate to biblical topics; 2) Design your own course of study without a spiritual leader or teacher.

Regardless of what method of study you choose to pursue, it is your responsibility as a student of truth to put forth a diligent effort to determine whether or not what is being taught or studied conforms to the Father's truth and way of truth as contained in the Bible. See 2.Tim.2:15-16; Phil.2:12-13; Heb.11:6.

STEWARDSHIP

There is a tremendous misconception during this age of the church that only the ministry and those in official positions of service to the collective church are stewards of the church. This misconception has for generations effectively neutralized the Father's family as a powerful and effective instrument of Christ in proclaiming the Father's plan of salvation to humanity, proclaiming his soon coming kingdom to the world, and preparing a people to rule the world with him after his return.

What is a steward and what is stewardship? Who are the stewards and what is the function of stewardship within the Sovereign Father's earthly family of king-priests?
The English word *steward* as used in the New Testament is translated from the Greek words *epitropos* and *oikonomos* and their various derivatives. Depending on the context in which they are used, these words can mean either a *commissioner* or a *steward*:

**A Commissioner**

- A domestic manager or guardian
- The management of a household, lands, or an estate and its affairs, specifically, the administration, management, or oversight of another person's property.
- One who has the care and tutelage of children
- One to whose care or honor anything has been entrusted, an overseer, (i.e., an employee in that capacity). By extension, a fiscal agent, treasurer of household affairs; especially a manager or a superintendent.

Although there are many nuances to the meaning of stewardship and the aspects of stewardship within the Father's earthly family, the basic function of a steward and stewardship is to care for another person's affairs or possessions with which one has been entrusted.

The Father's children are his possessions, which he has given in trust to his firstborn son to oversee while teaching his truth and way of truth to them and administering his work on earth through them. See Eph.1: 15-23, 5:23; Col.1:16-18.

Under the stewardship of Christ, the Father has entrusted his children with stewardship over his truth and way of truth, which his children are to learn and practice to the best of their ability while administering their individual skills, talents, gifts of the spirit, and functions and responsibilities within his family as king-priests. See 1.Pet.4:1-11.

**A Steward**

A steward within the Father's family is simply a student of his truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct for his earthly family. A steward in the Father's family is responsible for practicing and perfecting what is being learned in the context of fulfilling their personal functions and responsibilities within his family. See Eph.4:11-16.

Stewardship is the most difficult and the most rewarding phase of discipleship. Stewardship within the Father's earthly family of king-priests requires you to be proactive in administering your personal skills, talents, gifts of the spirit, and your functions and responsibilities within the Father's earthly family.

Stewardship is the process through which the Father's adopted children perfect a holy attitude, holy behavior, and holy character (1.Pet.1:13-16) while exercising his purpose for them through diligent and active participation in the affairs of his earthly family. See 2.Tim.4: 16-17; Jms.3:13; 2.Pet.3:10-14.
Being a proactive steward requires you to make and carry out personal decisions predicated on your education in the Father's truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct for members of his earthly family of king-priests.

It is through voluntary, active involvement in the affairs of the Father's earthly family as a steward of his truth, his way of truth, and the practice and enforcement of his rules of conduct within his family of king-priests that you can truly grow spiritually and become a viable, productive, and beneficial member within his family.

Each member of the Father's earthly family is bought and paid for with the blood of Christ. Therefore, each member is obliged to be a trustworthy steward of their own mind and body, because they belong to the Father by right of purchase:

"What? Don't you know that your body is the temple of the holy spirit which is in you, which you have of God, and you are not your own? For you are bought with a price: therefore honor God in your body, and in your spirit, which are God's" (1.Cor.6:19-20 Para.).

"For one that is called in the Lord, being a slave, is the Lord's freeman: likewise also one that is called, being free, is Christ's slave. You are bought with a price; do not be the slaves of men" (1.Cor.7:22-23 Para.).

**Stewardship Begins**

Stewardship within the Sovereign Father's earthly family begins the instant you receive the indwelling of the holy spirit. From this point forward the things that come under your stewardship continue to increase as your spiritual knowledge, understanding, and gifts of the spirit are increased. Likewise, the things that you are responsible to increase in value for the Father also increase in number.

The simple fact is that everyone who is adopted into the Father's family of earthly king-priests is a steward within his family.

All who are called to participate in the first resurrection are expected to perform certain tasks and fulfill certain responsibilities for their Heavenly Father while living in the flesh. However, few realize this important fact and therefore most are ill prepared for their role as a steward within the Father's family. This situation exists because of a lack of education in the Father's truth, his way of truth, and a steward's functions and responsibilities within his family.

**PROFITABLE AND UNPROFITABLE STEWARDS**

In the parable about the events that will precede his return, Jesus explains the need for each steward in the Father's earthly family to be actively working to increase the value of what has been entrusted to them.
It is no accident that Matthew records the parable of the unprofitable servant after the parable of the Ten Virgins, which tells us that we should always be prepared to meet Christ at his coming.

Matthew 25:14-30

"It will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to his ability..." (vs.14-15 NIV).

When Jesus returns, each steward within the Father's earthly family must give an account of what they have done with what has been placed in their trust (2.Cor.5:10). The faithful stewards are the ones who increase the value of what was placed with them. These individuals receive a reward that is representative of their efforts (vs.20-23). However, some individuals will not try to increase what is entrusted to them:

"Then the man who had received the one talent came. Master, he said, I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you" (vs.24-25 NIV).

Notice what happens to the person who does nothing with the opportunities that come their way and the spiritual blessings and gifts that are given to them to increase in value:

"His master replied, You wicked, lazy servant! You knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed [i.e., You understood what I was doing and yet you did nothing]. You should have at least put my money in the hands of an investor, then I would have received my money back with some interest added to it ... Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents ... And throw that worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (vs.26, 28-30 NIV Para.).

There are many important lessons that can be learned from what is said to this unprofitable individual:

1. When the Father calls a person to salvation, that person has enough personal attributes to be spiritually successful and secure salvation with the help of the holy spirit dwelling in them; otherwise, that person would not have been called.

2. At the proper time, each person is given additional attributes according to their potential to produce value for the Father. See Rom.12:3-8; 1.Cor.12:8-10, 28-30; Eph.4:11-16.
3. Although each individual may have different opportunities attributes, skills, talents, and spiritual gifts to work with, each person is required to add to the value of what they have.

4. The parable clearly shows that, if a person feels inadequate or is unable because of some valid reason to do an individual work by themselves, he or she should find a way to place their skills, talents, or spiritual gifts under the direction of someone who is more able to use them to produce a positive result for the Master.

5. The parable implies that, if a person will make an effort to accomplish something of worth for the Master, they will receive a reward for that effort.

6. Unprofitable individuals will not be punished because of a feeling of inadequacy or because of being unable to increase that which they were to increase; the punishment is the result of doing nothing.

7. The reward that the unprofitable person should have received for being a faithful steward will be given to those individuals who seize opportunity and are willing to extend themselves and make an effort to increase what they were given.

**Personal Works:**

While reprimanding the Corinthians for their cliquish attitude and behavior, the apostle Paul speaks to a person’s personal work as a member of the Father's family. Paul explains that your work will be tested for its worth. If the work does not endure the test of fire, there will be no reward for the effort. But if the work endures (i.e., has benefit to the Father), there will be a reward. Regardless of the worth of your work, you will still gain immortal life if you do indeed put forth an effort to do a work for the Father. See 1.Cor.3:1-15.

When Paul's reprimand is viewed along with the parable of the talents (Matt.25:14-30), it becomes crystal clear that each member of the Father's family is expected to put forth an effort to do something beneficial for him.

Clearly, each member of the Father's family must increase their personal worth for the benefit of the Father, and each member must help to increase the overall value of the entire family through fulfilling their functions and responsibilities within his family.

You are to accomplish something of value for the Father to claim as his own. If you do nothing with what is given to you, you are considered unprofitable and will not be granted immortality. See Matt.25:14-30; Lk.19:12-27; 2.Corr.5:10; Rev.22:12.
THE FAITHFUL AND UNFAITHFUL STEWARDS

Many of the parables that Jesus spoke are clearly set in the context of stewardship in the Father's family at the end of the age. These parables consistently show rewards for faithful and consistent performance of one's calling and punishment for failure to perform the Father's will in one's life. The context of the parable of the faithful and unfaithful steward in Luke 12:42-48 is no different and leaves no doubt as to the outcome of these two opposite attitudes and behaviors:

Jesus says, "Who is that faithful and wise steward whom his Lord shall make ruler over his household? . . . Blessed is that servant whom his Lord [Jesus Christ] when he comes shall find so doing. The Lord shall make him ruler over all he has" (Lk.12:42-44 Para.).

Here, Jesus gives the keys to understanding what is required in order to be a faithful and wise steward who is blessed at his coming. These keys that will help to secure your place in the first resurrection are faithfulness, wisdom, and perseverance in your walk with God.

A Warning

"But if the servant [the elect] says in his heart, the Lord delays his coming [which all ten of the virgins did] and they begin to beat their fellow servants, and they eat and drink and get drunk. The Lord will come in the day when he is not looking for him, . . . and the Lord will cut him apart and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers" (Lk.12:45-46 Para.).

If you become lazy in your calling; neglect your responsibility to grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Father and the Son; neglect diligently to carry out your functions and responsibilities as a steward of the things the Father has entrusted to you; or become abusive to others within the Father's family, you are in serious danger of losing your salvation.

These types of attitudes and behaviors occurred during the first age of the church and can easily be found within the Father's earthly family during this age. Being cut apart and being seen as an unbeliever alludes to the punishment of the second death from which there is no return.

"That servant who knew his lord's will, and did not prepare, neither did his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But if he did not know [i.e., was ignorant], and did things worthy of stripes he shall be beaten with few. For to whom much is given much is required. . . ." (Lk.12:47-48 Para.).

The context of verses 47 and 48 concerns the difference between knowing and not knowing what your responsibilities are before God the Father and Jesus Christ. If you know the Father's will and know what is expected of you, but do not faithfully do it, you will be severely punished by Jesus Christ.
A person who is ignorant of what is required, will receive a lighter punishment, but not because he or she is guiltless, but because he or she is not guilty of blatant and willful rebellion. Instead, that person is guilty of being lazy and faithless in pursuit of the Father's will in their life. See also Revelation, chapters 2 and 3.

The point in verses 47 and 48 is that the more you know about the Father's will for your life, the greater the opportunity to grow spiritually, the greater the opportunity to serve the Father and his family, and the greater the requirement to do what you know is his will in a thoughtful and diligent manner. Whether you have a great or a small amount of skill, talent, spiritual gifts, or spiritual knowledge and understanding, you are expected to diligently seek and perform the Father's will in your life.

**Diligence**

The following observations by William Barclay concisely state the necessity for those who believe they are followers of the God of the Bible to diligently seek and perform the Father's will in their life.

In The Daily Study Bible Series, The Gospel of Mark, Barclay says, "No man can tell the day or hour when eternity will invade time and the summons will come. We would like him to find us with our work completed. If we really know what Christianity means we will know that there is no part of life when the master is away. We are working and living forever in our great task master's eyes. There is nothing so fatal as to feel that we have plenty of time" (pp.167-168).

In The Daily Study Bible Series, Gospel of Matthew Volume II, Barclay observes, "The parable has two universal meanings, it warns us that there are certain things which cannot be obtained at the last minute. It is far too late for a student to be preparing when the day of the examination is come. It is too late for a man to acquire a skill or character if he does not already possess it. It warns us there are certain things which cannot be borrowed. A man cannot borrow a relationship with God, he must possess it for himself. We cannot always be living on a spiritual capital which others have amassed" (pp.320-321).

**THE PARABLE OF THE SEEDS**

Jesus spoke the parable of the sown seeds to a large crowd and ended it with this warning: "who has ears let him hear" (Matt.13:4-9). This means that those who understand must pay attention.

Who are those who have ears to hear in this age? They are those who have the holy spirit dwelling in them. These are the ones who have the ability to understand the things of the spirit. See 1.Cor.2:9-16; Jn.14:26,16:12-13.

The following is a summary of the parable of the seeds:
Within the Father’s earthly family, there are three basic categories of people:

- Those who **Go Backwards**: These individuals endure for a while, but allow the things of the world to become more important than the pursuit of righteousness and revert to their former lifestyle.
- Those who **Stand still**: These individuals stand still spiritually because they are spiritually lazy, lethargic, and lukewarm. These have little or no desire to grow in grace and knowledge or actively fulfill the functions and responsibilities which they were called to perform.
- Those who **Go forward**: These individuals understand that they are expected to do the Father’s will in their life and use the physical and spiritual gifts that he gives them to produce something of value for him. These individuals are willing, dedicated, teachable, and responsible students of truth and the way of truth, they grow in grace and in the knowledge of the Father and his Son, and they are a reflection of the Father’s influence in their life. These are spiritually successful stewards who are doing the Father’s will in their life.

**A DANGEROUS ATTITUDE**

Of all the seven groupings of the Father’s earthly children directly spoken to by Jesus Christ, those having the Laodicean attitude are the most pointedly reprimanded and condemned by him:

"To the angel [messenger] of the church of the Laodiceans write: These things says the Amen [Jesus Christ], the faithful and true witness, the beginning of the creation of God; I know your works, that you are neither cold nor hot: I wished that you were either cold or hot. So, because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I am about to vomit you out of my mouth" (Rev.3:14-16 Para.).

These are stewards in the Father’s family who are neither faithful nor unbelieving; rather, they are completely indifferent. Their indifference and lack of commitment to the truth and the way of truth is sickening to Jesus. These individuals are so self-satisfied that they think everything is fine and that they are doing great works. They view themselves as the recipients of great spiritual understanding, but they have practically none.

Jesus says to those of the Laodicean attitude:

"Because you say, I am rich; and have need of nothing, and do not know that you are wretched, and miserable and poor and blind and naked. I advise you to buy from me gold having been refined in the fire by me, that you may be rich; and white garments, that you may be clothed, and your shame and nakedness may not be revealed. And anoint your eyes with eye-salve, that you may see" (Rev.3:17-18 Para.).
Here, we see a people who are so apathetic and lazy because of their perceived knowledge and spirituality that they are in danger of being cast away from God. They are self-deceived into thinking that they are spiritually rich; however, they are spiritually poor. Christ is giving them their last opportunity to repent and become zealous for God. If these people will hear and heed what he is saying, he will again establish fellowship with them. If not, they will be cast into the Lake of Fire with the unrepentant wicked. These individuals are clearly in danger of falling into the category of the unprofitable steward noted in Matthew, chapter 25, verses 24-30.

Their indifference has left them self-deluded and they do not realize they are spiritually poor, miserable, wretched, blind, and naked. Those who lead such a people and do not repent themselves are in deep trouble. These individuals have no real commitment to spiritual growth and they feel secure as long as they associate with a particular group of people. This kind of attitude leads to indifference and complacency, which will result in intense trials in the hope of awaking them to their need of genuine repentance and the performance of their commitment to the Father:

"As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Be zealous then, and repent. Behold I stand at the door and knock; If any one hears my voice and opens the door, I will go in to him, and I will dine with him and he with me" (Rev.3:19-20 Para.).

The kind of rebuke that Jesus speaks of here is a severe rebuke that compels a person to see the error of their ways. Christ is showing, in an extremely strong way that some of the elect who are in this decadent condition can expect extremely severe trials that come directly from him.

He says he is at the door knocking (Rev.3:19-20), hoping these wayward children will let him back into their hearts and minds. But he will not force his way into their lives. These individuals have to make a decision to repent of their nauseating quality of being spiritually lukewarm, self-satisfied, complacent, and in need of nothing.

FAILURE TO BE RESPONSIBLE

The writer to the Hebrews gave the following reprimand to those of the Father's family who should have graduated past the beginning phases of their spiritual education and into the more advanced student-teacher function and responsibility:

"By this time you ought to be teaching others, however, you need someone to again teach you the things which are the first principles of the words of God. You have become as infants in need of milk, and not of solid food. Everyone who drinks only milk is unskilled in the word of righteousness and is an infant. Solid food is for those who have matured through having their senses exercised to discern both good and evil" (Heb.5:12-14 Para.).
The English word *ought* in verse 12 is translated from the Greek word *opheilo*, which is a word that conveys the idea of accruing or to owe. Figuratively, it means *to be under an obligation*. Whoever these Hebrews were, they were not fulfilling one of the reasons for their being called to salvation during that age.

These individuals could not understand anything further about the Father, Christ, the truth, and way of truth. Because these individuals were lazy in their pursuit of spiritual knowledge, they were going backward instead of forward in their spiritual understanding. They were losing sight of the Father's vision and goal for their lives and the rest of humanity.

Why were they not fulfilling this responsibility? There are only two logical answers to this question. These individuals were either not mentally capable of instructing others in the Father's truth and way of truth or they were too lazy to spend the time and effort that is necessary to become well versed in the Father's truth and way of truth. Because the scriptures tell us that the Father has given the spirit of a sound mind (i.e., a mind capable of discipline and self-control) to those who are his and has given the holy spirit to lead one into truth, it must have been that they were simply lazy. 2 Tim.1:7; Jn.16:13.

The English word *teach* in verse 12 is translated from the Greek word *didaskalos*, which means *an instructor* and is used in a number of scriptures in reference to the apostles and those who taught among the elect. See 1 Cor.12:28; 1 Tim.2:7; 2 Tim.1:11, 4:3.

These individuals are in spiritual jeopardy because they have not advanced past the first learning phase of their spiritual walk and have allowed the things they did learn to slip away.

**Teaching**

The importance of teaching is self-evident. Without being instructed in the Father's truth, way of truth, and rules of conduct for his earthly family, no progress can be made toward the goal of spiritual perfection, and the Father's truth and way of truth cannot be represented correctly.

The function of teaching within the church carries with it the responsibility to make sure that what one teaches is truth, because if what one teaches is not correct or not thoroughly explained, it has the potential to adversely affect a person's life and spiritual growth. This is why the apostle James said, "*My brothers, Not many of you should be teachers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more severely*" (Jms.3:1 Para.).
It should be obvious that new students of truth are not equipped to teach what they do not yet fully know or understand. However, a more advanced student who is conversant with the foundational elements of the truth and the way of truth should be able to explain basic concepts and principles to others. This type of knowledge falls well within what the apostle Peter said about sanctifying the Lord God in our hearts and always being ready to explain the reason that we have a hope of salvation (See 1.Pet.3:15-17).

Three things are necessary in order to fulfill the teaching function:

1. A teacher must know and understand the subject that is to be taught.
2. A teacher must be able to present the subject to be taught in an understandable fashion.
3. A teacher must have students who are willing to be taught.

Before a person can assume the function of teaching within the Father's family, that person must clearly know and understand what is to be taught. The understanding of what to teach comes through the process of learning and experiencing the truth and the way of truth and growing in grace and in the knowledge of the Father and his Son, our Savior. As a person grows in knowledge and understanding, they will naturally be able to explain what they know to another person.

The reprimand by the writer to the Hebrews can easily apply to other functions and responsibilities that are to be performed within the Father's earthly family. Many other functions and responsibilities also require a depth of knowledge, understanding, and wisdom in the Father's truth and way of truth before a person can adequately fulfill them. Therefore, being a willing, diligent, and teachable student of truth is a prerequisite to fulfilling your functions and responsibilities. You cannot do what you are not equipped to do!

**Not a Novice**

The apostle Paul told Timothy there are many prerequisites that must be in place before a person who desires to serve his brothers and sisters in the faith as a bishop (an overseer) can take on this responsibility. See 1.Tim. 3:1-13.

Although it is neither necessary nor possible for everyone to fulfill every function and responsibility within the Father's family, there comes a time when you should be able to make the transition from a novice to a mature steward in order to adequately fulfill your functions and responsibilities within the family.
The goal of each student of truth should be to grow in grace and in the knowledge of our Father and our Savior in order to more effectively carry out their particular functions and responsibilities within the family. This type of growth is only possible through yielding to the Father's will for one's life and through diligent prayerful study and meditation on his laws, precepts, and principles, as well as the fulfilling of one's current functions and responsibilities in his earthly family to the best of one's ability.

FAITH, WORKS, AND STEWARDSHIP

The scriptures clearly reveal that there are two kinds of faith: faith that is belief and faith that is power. Both types of faith have a positive result within a person's life and within the Father's family to the furtherance of his purpose for his family and the work he has given it to do.

In order to successfully exercise faith that is true belief, there are two actions that must be taken:

1. You must truly believe in the promises of God the Father and Jesus Christ.
2. You must exercise this belief by doing what you know to be the Father's will in your life.

Although the Father and Christ are extremely concerned about our well-being and have great pleasure in fulfilling their promise to help us in our efforts toward spiritual maturity and perfection, they expect us to exercise faith and works as a part of our stewardship functions and responsibilities within the family.

The apostle James was inspired to record the following about the subject of faith and works:

"Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat heartily," and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do good to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless" (Jms.2:14-17 LBP). Please read and study the entire second chapter of James.

You will be judged by what you do, as well as what you believe. It is very important to understand what James is saying about works. James says it takes physical effort as well as the correct attitude to fulfill God's laws, precepts, and principles in your life.
It is not enough just to have faith that is belief, because belief without works is no belief at all; it is dead and useless. However, you should not try to prove your faith by doing works; true faith produces good works itself, because it is the fruit of God's spirit being manifested in your life.

True faith that is belief and righteous works come from an internal desire to do what is right and good, not from a desire to prove something to another person. True faith and good works are the natural result of yielding to the influence of the holy spirit, being a dedicated and responsible student of the Father's truth and way of truth, and being a good steward of the functions and responsibilities that he has assigned you as a member of his earthly family.

A Doer of the Word

Stewardship has to do with being proactive in administering your personal skills, talents, gifts of the spirit and your functions and responsibilities within the Father's earthly family. This is why the apostle James emphasized the need for faith together with works:

"But you be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone hears the word, and does not do it, he is like to a man looking at his face in a mirror. Because he looks at himself and departs, and right away forgets what kind of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, he is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this man shall be blessed because of his work" (Jms.1:22-25 Para.).

This analogy pictures the following two categories of the elect:

1. The person who truly understands their calling and what is required of them but does nothing about it soon forgets their awesome opportunity and responsibility as member of the Father's family of king-priests.

2. The person who truly understands their awesome calling and what is required of them and does what they know they should be doing in order to be blessed for their effort.

Your attitude toward your calling determines which of these two categories you are in. In James' analogy, self-deception seems to be the result of truly understanding the Father's will for one's life, but believing that it is not necessary to practice his will.

In order to avoid being self-deceived, you must truly know the Father's will and diligently practice what you know to be his will for your life.

It is important to understand that James sets this instructional analogy within the context of an active pursuit of a righteous lifestyle and the various attitudes, behaviors, trials, temptations, problems, and situations that commonly occur as you work out your salvation.
Lip Service

While speaking to those at Rome about the law (in the context of all that is set forth as a way of life for those who truly believe and follow the teachings of the Sovereign God), the apostle Paul states a principle that will help you bring the Father's vision and goal for your life and salvation into focus:

"For not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified" (Rom.2:13 KJV).

Many people hear the law (i.e., the truth and the way of truth), but just hearing does not translate into a positive result in a person's life. Paul explains that a person is justified (made righteous) by what one does, as well as what one believes. It is the application of truth that brings a positive result in one's life.

Learning the Father's truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct for his earthly family is meaningless unless what is learned is put into practice in such a way that it furthers the Sovereign Father's purpose for one's calling and one's existence as a member of his family.

The failure of the majority of the Father's children to diligently apply his truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct for his earthly family as a function of their stewardship is a root cause of the doctrinal chaos and the lack of unity within his family during this age.

Rules of Conduct

Once the rules of conduct that govern the Father's earthly family are taught, learned, and diligently practiced, internal problems within the family can be easily managed. Teaching, learning, and diligently practicing these rules of conduct enable a congregation to do the following:

- Expose an errant member's attitudes and behaviors regardless of their function or responsibility within the family. See Gal.2:11-21; 2.Tim.3:1-9; 2.Thes.3:6-12; Titus 3:9-11; 2.Jn.6-11.
- Provide quick and just resolution to attitudinal and behavioral problems. See Matt.8:15-17; 1.Cor.5:11-13; Rom.16:17; 1.Tim.6:1-5.

UNITY OF PURPOSE

It is clear that the Father's holy nation and family of king-priests on earth was originally conceived and established to function as a team to accomplish its task. Those called to be students and stewards within his holy nation and family are intended to be loving and caring individuals who, while proclaiming his good news message, are to exhibit the holy lifestyle taught to them as an example to the world.
During this age, there is no central authority on earth governing the Sovereign Father's family scattered throughout the nations, and there is no central authority clearly and concisely teaching the Father's truth and way of truth to his scattered children. However, his family and nation does exist.

The task given to his family to proclaim his message and educate his newly adopted children has not changed. The requirements for living a righteous lifestyle and being a willing, dedicated, responsible, and teachable student of truth and the way of truth has not changed. Moreover, the requirement to be a faithful and profitable steward of the functions and responsibilities with which one is entrusted has not changed. So what has changed?

The only thing that has changed is the perception of what it means to be a dedicated, diligent, teachable student of truth and a profitable steward in the Father's earthly family of king-priests.

Paul explained to the Corinthians that all members of the Father's earthly family have an important function and responsibility within the family and are vital to its success.

**Distribution of Power and a Unified Body**

"Now God gives many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same holy spirit which is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are his. The spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church" (1.Cor.12:4-7 LPB).

Paul says that different authorizations, gifts, and powers are given for the benefit of the entire family:

"For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of languages; To another the interpretation of languages" (1.Cor.12:8-10 KJV).

There are two very important things to learn about spiritual authorizations and powers from these three verses:

1. Not everyone is given the same authorization or power.
2. It is one spirit through which these authorizations and powers flow.
Distribution of Power

The distribution of spiritual gifts within the family is for the purpose of unifying the body into a single powerful and effective force in order to accomplish the Father's goals for its existence:

"But the one and same spirit works all these things, distributing separately to each as he wills. For as the body is one, and has many members, But all the members of the one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For also we all were baptized by one spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, even all were given to drink into one spirit" (1.Cor.12:11-13 Para.).

What seems to escape many of the Father's children during this age is that the Father's family is a single entity within which each individual member has stewardship over important functions and responsibilities that must be performed for the benefit of the entire family and its collective work.

A Unified Body

"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot says, because I am not the hand, I am not a part of the body. Is this true? And if the ear says, because I am not the eye, I am not a part of the body. Is this true? If the whole body were an eye, how could it hear? If the whole were an ear, How could it smell? But God has set each and every member in the body as it has pleased him" (1.Cor.12:14-18 Para.).

If the body was only one part, how could it be a body? But, the body is made up of many differing parts, yet, it is one body. The eye cannot say to the hand, I do not need you, nor the head to the feet, I do not need you." (1.Cor.12:19-21 Para.).

If each member of the Father's family is necessary for it to function properly and perform its collective responsibility, why is it not functioning as a unified entity during this age?

The answer to this question is simple. The family as a whole is dysfunctional in this age, because few of its members know and understand what it means to be a student of the truth and the way of truth and a steward of their individual and collective functions and responsibilities. Moreover, most of those who do know and understand these things are not practicing them or fulfilling their personal and collective functions and responsibilities in a diligent and expeditious manner. See Revelation, chapters 2 and 3—"he that has an ear, let him hear what the spirit says to the called ones."

Paul completes his reprimand and instruction to the Corinthians with the following facts and an appeal for them to put aside their pettiness concerning who has the greater gift, who holds the greater position of honor, and who is the more important member of the family:
"The parts of the body, which seem to be weak and less important and are extremely necessary. And those parts of the body, which we feel less worthwhile we pay more attention; therefore, these parts become more important in relation to the other parts of the body. Moreover, the other parts need less attention. Therefore, God has assembled the body, so that the seeming less important parts will receive greater attention in order to eliminate division in the body and so that each member receives the same care. And if one member suffers, all the members suffer with it; or one member receives honor, all the members rejoice with that member. Now you are the body of Christ as individual members" (1.Cor.12:22-27 Para.).

For a great work to be accomplished during this age, individuals who are dedicated, responsible, and teachable students and stewards of the truth and way of truth who have unity of thought and purpose must come together. The apostle Paul gave this advice to the church regarding unity of purpose and spirit:

"Live in harmony with one another. Do not be proud, but be willing to associate with people of low position. Do not be conceited" (Rom.12:16 NIV).

"Now I beseech you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you; but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment" (1.Cor.1:10 KJV). See also Eph.4:1-13; 1.Pet.4:1-2.

Although Paul spoke to the Corinthians specifically concerning the stewardship of the ministry, his instruction clearly applies to all members in the Father's family, because all have stewardship over their particular functions and responsibilities within his family.

"Let a man so account of us, as of the servants of Christ, and stewards of the mysteries of God. Moreover it is required in stewards, that a man be found faithful" (1.Cor.4:1-2 KJV).

JUDGEMENT AND REWARDS

The Father promises immortal life to all who live a righteous lifestyle during this age; however, the authority, the office, and the glory that you will receive in the Father's heavenly family and kingdom are predicated on how you carry out your stewardship of the skills, talents, gifts of the spirit, and functions and responsibilities with which you are entrusted. See Dan.12:3; Matt.25:14-30; 2.Cor.9:6-10.
**Judgement**

Because judgement and rewards are predicated on what you do with the skills, talents, gifts of the spirit, and the functions and responsibilities with which you are entrusted. It is extremely important for you to seek to know what these are, and then diligently use them to the best of your ability for the benefit of the Father, his family, and your spiritual growth.

The following scriptures reinforce the fact that each person who has been made a part of the Father's holy nation and royal family on earth is required to do works:

"For we all must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what we did, whether good or bad" (2.Cor.5:10 Para.).

Make no mistake. There will be a judgement of the Father's elect and all of humanity.

For the faithful elect, this judgement will be at the first resurrection because of a life filled with learning the Father's truth and way of truth, practicing this truth, and being a profitable trustworthy steward in his family. See Matt.25:32-40.

For the rebellious, unprofitable steward within the Father's family, there will be the resurrection to death from which there is no return because of a life filled with evil works or a life of no works at all as noted in Matthew 25:14-30. See also Matt.25:41-46; Lk.19:12-27.

Because Jesus is head of the church and the administrator of the Father's kingdom, he will judge the quality of each person's works for the Father:

"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it has been written, I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue confess to God. So then each one of us will give account concerning himself to God" (Rom.14:10-12 KJV Para.). See also 2.Cor.5:10.

Each of the Father's children must give an account of their life and the works that they have or have not done.

**Rewards**

For those who have been given the opportunity to participate in the first resurrection, the rewards that can be received for diligent service to the Father and Jesus Christ are awesome and far above any offered to those who come after them. See 1.Cor.2:9; Jms.2:5; Heb.11:35.

The apostles John and Paul recorded the following concerning attitudes, behaviors, and rewards for spiritual work during this age of salvation:
"And he said to me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev.22:10-12 KJV). See also Rom.2:7; Matt.19:16-17; Lk.10:25-27; 18:18-20.

"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1.Cor.15:52-58 KJV). See also Heb.6:10.

COMMENTS

A Student and Steward of Truth

Being a student and steward of the Father's truth and way of truth is not an optional commitment within the Father's earthly family and holy nation; being a student and steward is mandatory.

When you become a part of the Father's earthly family, you automatically become a student and steward of truth and are to participate in a lifelong process of learning, practicing, and perfecting the concepts and principles of this truth under the tutelage of Christ and through the teaching and guidance of the holy spirit dwelling within you.

Moreover, as you begin to mature spiritually, you must begin to assume the functions and responsibilities that you have been called to perform as a member of the Father's family. It is at this point that the educational process and the practice of being a profitable steward within the Father's family has mostly broken down during this age of the church.

Since the demise of the early church, the teachings of Christ and the apostles concerning stewardship have been watered down and have given way to many of the teachings of counterfeit Christianity. Because of this, most of the spiritual leaders among the elect have assumed many of the functions and responsibilities that clearly belong to each individual member of the Father's family. The removal of these functions and responsibilities from their rightful owners has robbed many family members not only of opportunities to grow spiritually but also of potential opportunities to serve the Father, their fellow king-priests, and of the potential rewards for this service.
For most of the Father's family, the lack of understanding true discipleship and the lack of performance of true stewardship has existed for many centuries. Although the solution to this problem is simple, few are willing to implement it for various reasons that are in opposition to the letter and spirit of the Father's truth and way of truth. The reality is that the solution will not be implemented throughout the Father's entire family; however, it can be implemented and exercised on a personal level in the minds, hearts, and actions of those who truly understand their responsibility to be a willing and dedicated student and steward of the Father's truth and way of truth.

**ACTIVE STEWARDSHIP**

Because your performance as a steward within the Father's family will determine your eternal destiny, it is important to again state the following:

- The basic function of a steward is to care for another person's affairs or possessions with which the steward is entrusted.
- Under the stewardship of Christ, the Father has entrusted his children with stewardship over his truth and way of truth, which they are to learn and practice to the best of their ability while administering their individual skills, talents, gifts of the spirit, and functions and responsibilities within his family as king-priests. See 1.Pet.4:1-11.
- A steward within the Father's family is a student of the Father's truth, his way of truth, and his rules of conduct for his earthly family and is responsible for practicing and perfecting what is being learned. See Eph.4:11-16.

**Functions and Responsibilities**

There are clearly functions and responsibilities of stewardship that belong to those in official positions of service within the Father's family, such as the ministry, teachers, prophets, and individuals assigned to assist widows. However, these individuals are not the only ones within the Father's family who are obligated to be stewards. Stewardship is a function and a responsibility assigned to each member of the Father's family. This is noted in many of Christ's parables and the teachings of the apostles.

The question is not whether or not all members in the Father's family of earthly king-priest are stewards, because all members are stewards. The question is what are the specific functions and responsibilities of a steward within the Father's family? In order to answer this question a person must diligently search and study the scriptures to know and understand these functions and responsibilities and their application within the family.
Clearly, in order to perform certain stewardship functions and responsibilities, a person must be an active participant in a local congregation of the elect. However, the performance of many functions and responsibilities of stewardship within the Father's family do not require being a member of a local congregation.

The following is a short list of some of the many stewardship functions and responsibilities that apply to each member within the Father's earthly family of king-priests:

**Active Stewardship**

- Administration of your natural skills, talents, and spiritual gifts (Eph.4:1-16; 1.Cor.14:12)
- Function as an active team member within the Father's family (Eph.4:16)
- Understand your opportunity of salvation (2.Cor.5:9-10; Phil.2:12)
- Being a righteous example to the ungodly (Matt.5:14-16; Eph.5:8; 2.Pet.1:19)
- Being responsible for your discipleship (2.Tim.2:15; Titus 3:14; Rom.14:11-12)
- Being responsible for your spirit and spiritual growth (2.Tim.2:15; 1.Pet.3:18)
- Working out your salvation (Phil.2:12; 1.Thes.5:21)
- Taking responsibility for the conduct and teaching of your children (1.Tim.3:4,12; Prov.22:6)
- Serving family members (Gal.5:13-14)
- Practicing God's law (1.Jn.2:4; 3:24, 5:3)
- Preserving knowledge and understanding of the truth (Heb.4:14, 10:23; Rev.2:25, 3:3)
- Submitting to authority (1.Pet.3:1; Heb.13:17; Titus 3:1)
- Sharing and be hospitable (Rom.12:13; 1.Pet.4:9)
- Visiting the sick and remaining pure (Jms.1:27)

**Problem Resolution**

It is obvious from the many problems within the various congregations of the Father's family that few see the benefit or the urgency in handling ministerial, interpersonal, or collective problems in accordance with the Judicial system set forth by Christ and the apostles. However, problem resolution is an important function and responsibility of each member of the Father's family.
The cure for problems within the Father's family is amazingly simple—the cure is adhering to the Father's rules of conduct for his family members. However, few are willing to implement the cure because of peer pressure, a misguided sense of loyalty or duty, or the fear of loss of friends, fellowship, or position in the church. All of these are the wrong reasons for not carrying out one's stewardship concerning problem solving within the Father's family.

Rebuke, conflict resolution, or punishment of an errant Family member are mostly unpleasant experiences; nonetheless, these are functions and responsibilities of each steward in the Father's family. When problem resolution is administered correctly, it yields the fruit of righteousness.

Priestly Functions Within the Father's Family

- Helping resolve personal problems (Gal.6:1-2)
- Interceding to the Father on behalf of all family members (Eph.6:18; Jms.5:16)
- Interceding to the Father on behalf of an errant family member (1.Jn.5:14-17; Jms.5:16)
- Reprimanding and forgiving (Lk.17:3-4)
- Practicing the sacrifice of ministerial support (Phil.4:16-18)
- Practicing the sacrifice of praise (Heb.13:15-16)
- Serving and sacrificing (Rom.12:1-2)

DUE DILIGENCE AS A STEWARD

Your basic responsibility as a steward is to manage everything that the Father has given into your care, whether physical possessions, skills, talents, and gifts of the spirit, or a position of service within his family.

Each steward is required to use what they have been given in order to increase their personal worth to the Father and accomplish something of value for him to claim as his own when they give an account of their life's work. See Matt.25:14-30; 2.Cor.5:10.

A person who is serious about their salvation will make an effort to become educated in the various aspects of stewardship within the Father's family, and then actively perform the functions and responsibilities that apply to them to the best of their ability.

SUMMARY

Although discipleship and stewardship are different in execution, one is dependent on the other because neither can fulfill the purpose for which it was designed without the other. Moreover, both discipleship and stewardship must be performed simultaneously in order for one to be a viable and productive member of the Father's family.
Discipleship is learning the Father's truth and way of truth and stewardship is practicing what one has learned. Discipleship and stewardship within the Father's family is to be a cooperative effort, not a competition to see who can obtain the highest position of honor and prominence within the family. Discipleship and stewardship should be performed to help build the family into a more spiritually mature entity in order to perform the work for which it was established.

The importance of discipleship and stewardship goes to the very core of one's relationship with God the Father, his son our Savior, one's brothers and sisters in the faith, and the work of the church. Clearly, if you are serious about your eternal destiny, you should pay careful attention to the many instructions concerning your discipleship and stewardship within the Father's family.

The writer to the Hebrews said the following about the awesome opportunity offered to those called to salvation during this age:

"But to which of the angels said he at any time, Sit on my right hand, until I make your enemies your footstool? Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation? Therefore, we ought to give the more earnest heed to the things which we have heard, lest at any time we should let them slip. For if the word spoken by angels was steadfast, and every transgression and disobedience received a just recompense of reward; How shall we escape, if we neglect so great salvation; which at the first began to be spoken by the Lord, and was confirmed to us by them that heard him [i.e., Christ] . . ." (Heb.1:13-14; 2:1-3 KJV).

The Decision Is Yours

The decision of whether or not to become a willing, dedicated, responsible, and teachable student of truth and a faithful steward of the skills, talents, gifts of the spirit, and functions and responsibilities with which you have been entrusted belongs to you alone.

You must decide what to do with the awesome opportunity to become an immortal spirit-being within the Father's family and kingdom, because our heavenly Father and Jesus Christ will not decide for you. Each individual can either quit, stand still, or go forward in their relationship with the Sovereign Father and their Savior. This decision is ours alone. Whether we succeed or fail is entirely our responsibility. Our eternal destiny is totally in our control. Regarding each individual's responsibility to choose, the Creator God told ancient Israel:

"See, I have set before you this day life and good, and death and evil; In that I command you this day to love the Lord your God, to walk in his ways, and to keep his commandments and his statutes and his judgments, that you may live and multiply: and the Lord your God shall bless you in the land where you go to possess" (Deut.30:15-16).
The Creator God gave ancient Israel a choice between life or death, just as the Sovereign Father is giving the same choice to those he calls to salvation during this age. This is why Paul said the following to the elect at Philippi:

"Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do his good pleasure"  (Phil.2:12-13 KJV). See also 1.Cor.10:13; Gal.6:3-10.

The instruction to "work out your own salvation" means that you must manage your life in such a way that it conforms to God's laws, precepts, and principles. To do this, you must expend a sincere and diligent effort to learn the Father's truth and way of truth and diligently practice it within your life. Only when you sincerely seek to learn, understand, and live according to the Father's laws, precepts, and principles and respect, love, obey, and please him can he work his will and purpose in your life.

Whether or not you are fortunate enough to have fellowship with other members of the Father's family, it is your responsibility to contribute to the success of his earthly family of king-priests through being educated in his truth and way of truth and being the best steward within his family that you can.

The Father and his son, our Savior, have committed themselves and their tremendous resources to helping us succeed and obtain the goal of salvation. In order to succeed, all one has to do is put forth an honest effort. See Matt.6:25-34; Heb.13:5-6; Jn.14:12-14; Rom.14:11-12; Phil.2:12.

Because God the Father and Jesus Christ want us to succeed, they have given us a manual for success—the Bible. All we have to do is study that manual, take to heart what is recorded in it, and diligently apply what is learned in our life. If we do this, success is guaranteed.

By B. L. Cocherell
All people must make decisions about their attitude, behavior, and life, but only the Sovereign Father's earthly children must make daily decisions that affect their eternal existence. These everyday decisions concern their personal attitude and behavior toward their heavenly Father, their Savior, and other people.

Every choice, thought, and action of each child of God is being weighed against the empirical laws and standards that the Father has set in place to govern the attitudes and behaviors of those who are a part of his sacred realm.

There is no dispute among historians that the Father's elect of the first century closely followed the worship system that the Jews followed and conducted their lives in compliance with most of the laws contained in the Torah. However, as the centuries passed and the teachings of the early church faded and then disappeared, there arose many differences of opinion among those whom the Father called to worship and serve him in regard to what was expected of them in attitude, behavior, and physical and spiritual compliance to his laws, precepts, and principles.

Today, there is much controversy and confusion over how to worship and serve the Sovereign Father and his son and how to live a holy lifestyle; therefore, many of the elect resort to emotion to determine their individual beliefs on the subject.

Will the Father accept any form of worship and service to him as long as one is sincerely trying to please him or does he expect his people to worship and serve him and conduct their lives in a very specific manner?

The answers to these basic questions are easily found and are not confusing if a person is willing to search the scriptures and allow the holy spirit to guide them into all truth. See Jn.16:13.

Although the edict of Acts 15 shows us that the method for being justified is different under the gospel age agreement from what it is under the agreement with national Israel, many of the rules concerning how to live a holy lifestyle today are the same as they were in ancient Israel. Moreover, each member in the Father's holy family and nation of kings and priests is an ambassador who represents the Kingdom of God on earth.

God's law sets forth very strict guidelines for human behavior along with a promise of peace, happiness, and prosperity for those who follow it. But, exactly what God's law is and how it should be followed has been greatly argued since the days of Christ.
Today, the world is filled with hatred, murder, violence, wars, lying, cheating, and sexual perversion and promiscuity, yet most professing Christians claim that they are not required to practice God's law. Moreover, many theologians proclaim that Christians no longer need to practice the laws that were given to ancient Israel, because the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is the end of the law and has released Christians from any obligation to practice it.

Is this true? Did the laws of God cease to exist with the death and resurrection of Christ? What, if anything, do the laws that were given to ancient Israel have to do with being holy or the practice of a pious life? What does the Bible say about these vitally important subjects? This chapter shows what the Bible teaches about the importance of God's law in regard to being holy and practicing a pious life.

**BECOME HOLY**

While instructing the nation of Israel on how they should live their lives as his kingdom of priests and his holy nation, the Creator God told them to be holy because he was holy (Lev.11:44-45). The apostle Peter repeated this same instruction to the Sovereign Father's holy nation of kings, priests, and ambassadors (1.Pet.2:9-10). See also 1.Pet.1:13-16.

The word *holy* sounds very spiritual and for most people it is an undefinable concept. Most people probably believe that this word means *to be sacred, good, or godly*. These definitions may be accurate but they do not give a detailed explanation of what it means to be holy or what it means to practice a holy lifestyle.

Because the instruction to be holy as God is holy is given to all who serve God, it is important to understand what it means to be holy and practice a holy lifestyle. Being holy and practicing holiness are not just abstract thoughts; they are something tangible that can be understood if one is willing to search the scriptures. Otherwise, the instruction "to be holy as God is holy" would not have been given.

Being holy as God is holy not only requires one to clearly understand what the condition of being holy is but also to understand and practice the laws that govern being holy.

In order to fully explain this vitally important subject, this study answers the following important questions about being holy and practicing holiness:

- What is it that defines what is holy and what is unholy?
- What is it that makes God, a thing, or person holy?
- How does a person become holy?
- How do you know if you are holy?
- How can a holy person be recognized?
- What is holiness and how does one practice holiness?
This chapter explains the reasons God gave his law to humanity and it differentiates being holy under the Creator God's covenant with national Israel from being holy under God the Father's agreement with those he calls to participate in the first resurrection under the gospel age agreement.

HEBREW AND GREEK WORDS

In order to understand exactly what it means to be holy and what the practice of holiness is and is not under the gospel age agreement, it is important to have a basic understanding of the Hebrew and Greek words used in the biblical record to define this sacred state of existence. The following are summary definitions of Hebrew and Greek words that express a state of holy existence before and after the advent of the Messiah.

The following are Hebrew words for the various states of being sanctified and being holy.

qadash:

Qadash means to be hallowed, holy, sanctified, to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, and dedicate. Qadash is a denominative verb, which connotes a state of being that belongs to the realm of the sacred. The word qadash is derived from the root qdsh, which itself is derived from qd, which means cut. Although it is difficult to support from the limited use of qdsh in its singular form, the use of the word qadash in many scriptures seems to have the sense of something being separate, divided or apart from in order to delineate the realm of the sacred from that which is common or profane. Thus, qadash is a state of being that is separate and distinct from the common or profane.

qodesh:

Qodesh means a condition of being apart or being separate from, holiness, sacredness, hallowed, or holy. The noun qodesh connotes the concept of a condition of holiness (i.e., the basic nature of that which belongs to the realm of the sacred and is distinct from the common or profane).

qadosh:

Qadosh means holy, holy one, or saint. The adjective qadosh suggests something that is intrinsically sacred or something that has been admitted to the realm of the sacred by divine decree, lawful ritual, or dedication to God. Qadosh connotes that which is distinct from the common or profane.
hasid:

Hasid means holy one, godly or saint. It is derived from the word hesed, which means kindness, mercy, love, and loyalty; these are all characteristic of God. The Hebrew word hasid connotes someone who has the characteristics of God and is loyal to God.

The following are Greek words for the various states of being sanctified and being holy.

hagios:

Hagios means sacred, physically pure, morally blameless, consecrated, holy, or saint. The word hagios suggests that which is intrinsically sacred in the same sense as the Hebrew word qadash connotes a state of being that belongs to the realm of the sacred (i.e., something that is separate and distinct from the common or profane).

hagiasmos:

Hagiasmos denotes a state of purity in the physical sense.

dikaiosune:

Dikaiosune in its simplest definition means justification and pertains to being in compliance with God's law (i.e., being blameless). However, the definition of dikaiosune is much more complex when used in combination with holiness.

hagiosune:

Hagiosune means the quality of holiness.

aletheia hosioetes:

Aletheia hosioetes means to be living a truly pious life (i.e., holiness, a life in compliance with God's law).

The words holy, holy one, and holiness as used before and after the advent of the Messiah are different ways of expressing a condition of existence that is separate from the natural world and is in harmony with the attitude, behavior, and character of God and the dimension of existence that God inhabits.

DEGREES OF BEING HOLY

There are many different Hebrew and Greek words used in the scriptures to describe the condition of being sanctified and being holy. The meanings of these words are tied to the context in which they are used. When these words are understood in context it is clear that there are different degrees of being holy.
All people and things set apart to serve God are considered holy. However, not all people and things are equal in their holy status (i.e., some people and things are more holy or less holy than others). Moreover, the holy status of people and things is shown throughout the Bible to fall into the two following categories:

- There is the degree to which someone or something is more holy or less holy with the spirit-power of God expressed on or within, which demands that one show reverence and respect for that which is holy (e.g., The High Priest, the Temple, the Holy of Holies, and the Ark of the Covenant).
- There is the degree to which someone or something is more holy or less holy in the cultic sense (i.e., great devotion to a person, idea, or thing, formal religious veneration, worship as a system of religious beliefs and ritual), which demands that one show reverence and respect for that which is holy (e.g., God's name, God's law, the Sabbath, and the office of the High Priest).

Without understanding that there are different degrees of being sanctified and being holy one cannot understand the instructions given in the biblical record concerning these physical and spiritual conditions or why these conditions are dependant on and inseparable from obedience to God's physical and spiritual laws. The following are examples of the varying degrees of being sanctified and being holy:

**Holy Ground**

When Moses first encountered the Creator God at the burning bush, he was told to remove his shoes because the ground he was standing on was holy and that he was not to come any closer to God's presence in the bush (Ex. 3:1-6):

"And Moses said, I will now turn aside, and see this great sight, why the bush is not burnt. And when the Lord saw that he turned aside to see, God called to him out of the midst of the bush, and said, Moses, Moses. And he said, Here am I. And he said, Draw not nigh hither: put off your shoes from off your feet, for the place whereon you stand is holy [qodesh] ground" (Ex. 3:3-5 KJV). See also Josh. 5:13-15.

The English word **holy** in verse 5 is translated from the Hebrew word **qodesh**, which means a condition of being apart or being separate from, holiness, sacredness, hallowed, holy. The noun **qodesh** connotes the concept of a condition of holiness (i.e., the basic nature of that which belongs to the realm of the sacred and is distinct from the common or profane).
The very earth surrounding the burning bush was holy, but what was it that made this place different from any other place on earth? This place was different because it had been set aside for holy use. Although the ground where Moses stood was holy, the ground was not as holy as the burning bush where God's spirit-presence resided while he spoke to Moses.

In the account of Moses and the burning bush, there are two distinct expressions of being holy. Although both the ground and the burning bush were considered holy, one place was more holy than the other. The ground where Moses stood was holy to a lesser degree, because it could be stood on if respected as holy (Moses took off his shoes as a sign of respect). The burning bush was holy to a higher degree; Moses could not approach it because of God's spirit-presence residing there while he spoke to Moses.

Our God is Holy

"Exalt you the Lord our God, and worship at his footstool; for he is holy [qadosh]. Moses and Aaron among his priests, and Samuel among them that call on his name; they called on the Lord, and he answered them. He spoke to them in the cloudy pillar: they kept his testimonies, and the ordinance that he gave them. You answered them, O Lord our God: you were a God that forgave them, though you took vengeance of their inventions. Exalt the Lord our God, and worship at his holy hill; for the Lord our God is holy [qodesh]" (Psa.99:5-9 KJV).

We know that God is holy because he says he is (Lev.11:44-45) and we know that no one can look upon the face of God in his glorified form and live (Ex.33:20). We also know that Jacob wrestled with God and saw his face (Gen.32:24-30) and that Abraham not only talked with God but ate a meal with him (Gen.18:1-33), as did Moses and seventy of the elders of Israel (Ex.24:9-11). But, how could these men interact with the Creator God whose very presence in his glorified state destroys the physical existence? How can these seemingly contradictory events be reconciled?

God was still holy when he walked on earth among men; however, the degree to which his holy-presence (i.e., the spirit-power of his presence) expressed itself in the physical world was dramatically reduced in order to protect the physical existence from destruction. The degree to which something is holy and the degree of spirit-power (energy from the sacred realm) that a holy being expresses at a given time is apparently controlled to fit a particular set of circumstances.

The power of the Creator God's presence was controlled when Jacob wrestled with him, when Abraham shared a meal with him, and when Moses and the seventy elders met with him and ate with him on the mountain. These events are evidence that God who is holy can and does control the energy produced by his holy state of existence.
Holy Objects

The power of God's holy presence can be expressed to different degrees in objects depending on the object's function. The deaths of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu, which was caused by their bringing an unholy thing into the tabernacle (Lev.10:1-2) and the deaths of 50,070 men of Beth-shemesh, which was caused by their looking into the ark of the covenant (1.Sam.6:19), show that these holy objects had a high degree of spirit-energy residing on and within them.

Holy objects, such as the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant must be shown a high degree of respect and honor because of their most holy condition and high degree of God's spirit-power and presence. To defile or show disrespect for these types of holy objects in a physical way results in death. See Lev.22:1-3.

The establishing of boundaries around Mount Sinai to protect the people and their animals while God's presence was there (Ex.19:23) is an example of something being set apart for a holy use without having divine energy imparted to it.

Holy Concepts and Principles

There are many scriptures that speak of holy concepts and principles; these are not tangible objects, but such concepts and principles are nonetheless holy. The scriptures contain laws that have concepts and principles that go beyond physical obedience; they speak to holy concepts and principles which must be considered along with their physical practice. These laws must be shown great respect and honor because they are a part of God's worship system.

"And he said to me, Son of man, the place of my throne, and the place of the soles of my feet, where I will dwell in the midst of the children of Israel for ever, and my holy name, shall the house of Israel no more defile . . . " (Ezk.43:7 KJV). See also Ex.20:7; Lev.20:3; 22:31-33.

"You shall not take the name of the Lord your God in vain; for the Lord will not hold him guiltless that takes his name in vain" (Ex.20:7 KJV).

God's name is holy because his name defines his sacred being and character and must be respected and honored. Moreover, to not respect and honor his name shows contempt for God himself.
"And you shall hallow the fiftieth year, and proclaim liberty throughout all the land to all the inhabitants thereof: it shall be a jubilee to you: and you shall return every man to his possession, and you shall return every man to his family. A jubilee shall that fiftieth year be to you: you shall not sow, neither reap that which grows of itself in it, nor gather the grapes in it of your vine undressed. For it is the jubilee; it shall be holy to you: you shall eat the increase thereof out of the field" (Lev.25:10-12 KJV).

This law pertains to a whole year that is holy. Not only must certain physical things be done during this year but also respect and honor must be given because this time is holy and set aside for a holy purpose.

The prophet Ezekiel recorded the following about the age after Christ's return when the Levitical priesthood would again teach God's ways:

"And they shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezk.44:23 KJV).

Ezekiel's prophecy about the priesthood teaching the difference between the holy and profane speaks to every aspect of the law. This includes teaching the concepts and principles about being holy.

The apostle Paul said, "The law is holy, and the commandment holy, and just, and good" (Rom.7:12 KJV). We know that to violate God's holy law results in the death of the violator (Rom.6:23; 1.Jn.3:4). God's law is holy in both the physical and the cultic sense and therefore must be shown reverence and respect as a sacred thing.

The apostle Paul's encounter with the High Priest and his acknowledgment of the High Priest's person and office as being holy (Acts 23:1-5) shows the respect and honor due to a holy person and his office.

Sanctified for Holy Use

The verb qadash is frequently used to describe the condition of sanctification that is caused through lawful ritual. Whether they be people, objects, or animals, all things that God directly sanctifies or allows to be sanctified (i.e., consecrated, set apart for his sacred use) are considered to be in a holy state of being and are governed by a specific law that applies to their function, responsibility, use, and degree of holiness.

Certain articles associated with the tabernacle and sacrificial system of worship were consecrated to God and were recognized as being most holy (Ex.29:21, 37; 30:29), and anything or anyone that touched these holy articles became holy through association (Ex.29:37; 30:29; Lev. 6:18, 27); however, this does not necessarily mean that all sanctified people, objects, or animals are holy in the sense of having spirit-energy present on or within them.
There were many things God considered holy in ancient Israel, such as the whole nation of Israel (Num.16:1-3), Aaron's priestly clothing (Ex.28:2-4; 29:29), the Levitical priests and their clothing (Lev.8:30), the tithe of the land (Lev.27:30), the sacrifices and offerings (Ex.29:34; Lev.6:15-18; Num.6:20), the Nazarite (Num.6:1-8), the water of jealously (Num.5:17-29), certain firstborn animals (Num.18:17), and the holy prophets (Lk.1:70; Acts 3:21; 1.Pet.1:21). All of these were holy, but not all were holy to the same degree. All did not have the same degree of divine energy as the Creator God, the tabernacle, the holy of holies, and the ark of the covenant. Many things that are holy have no inherent spirit-energy present. Such things are holy from the aspect of belonging to the sphere of the sacred in the sense that they are part of worship and obedience to God.

Being sanctified for a holy purpose and being holy are in reality two completely different things, and the power of God's presence and his spirit-energy can be expressed to different degrees in people and in objects depending on the function, responsibility, or use of what is sanctified or holy. Being sanctified and being holy are not just a physical or just a spiritual status; both sacred conditions can be expressed to different degrees in both dimensions of existence.

THE HOLY ONE OF ISRAEL

The primary problem most people have in defining and understanding the sacred state of being holy and what constitutes the practice of holiness is understanding what kind of a being God is and what kind of character he has. Because the scriptures say that God created man in his own image, most people think of mankind as having personality traits similar to God; this may be true in some small sense; however, the scriptures tell us that mankind in its present state does not resemble God in attitude, behavior, or character. In a lamentation and prophecy about the tribe of Ephraim God says, "I am God, and not man; the Holy One [the qadosh] in the midst of you" (Hos.11:9).

In Hosea 11:9 God is called the qadosh. Unlike humans, God is intrinsically holy; he is a superior being who lives in a superior dimension of existence. God is distinct from mankind in that God is a spirit-being with a value system that is intrinsically holy, but mankind's value system is intrinsically unholy:

"And God saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually." (Gen.6:5 KJV).

Although the natural tendency of mankind is bent toward evil attitudes, behaviors, and character, it is God's fervent desire that mankind adopt his value system and become holy as he is holy and receive the benefits of practicing his holy way of life:
"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever! (Deut.5:29 NIV).

The Creator God's title "The Holy One of Israel" is mentioned many times in the context of national Israel's failure to pay attention to his instructions concerning how to live a holy life. Israel's constant rebellion shows the stark contrast between holy thought, character, and behavior and the natural human condition.

"This is a rebellious people, deceitful sons, unwilling to listen to the Lord's law. They say to the seers, See no more visions! and to the prophets, Do not give us more visions of what is right! Tell us pleasant things, prophesy illusions. Leave this way, turn from this path, and stop talking about the Holy One [the qadosh] of Israel! Therefore, this is what the Holy One of Israel says: Because you have rejected this message, relied on oppression and perversity; this lawlessness will become like a high wall for you, cracked and bulging, that collapses suddenly, in an instant" (Isa.30:9-13 NIV). See also 2.Kg.19:22; Isa.1:4; 17:1; 48:17.

This prophecy about the tribes of Israel shows that there is an absolute separation between the holy and unholy; the two are not comparable and are absolutely separate in action and outcome.

**GOD'S COVENANT WITH ANCIENT ISRAEL**

Israel was the nation God chose to begin his redemptive work to the world. They were to be an example of his way of life that brings abundant happiness, prosperity, and eternal life to those who faithfully practice it. However, in order for national Israel to fulfill their purpose as God's representatives on earth, they had to become holy as he is holy and learn his way of life.

**Chosen to be Holy**

"For you are an holy [qadosh] people to the Lord your God: the Lord your God has chosen you to be a special people to himself, above all people that are on the face of the earth. The Lord did not set his love on you, nor choose you, because you were more in number than any people; for you were the fewest of all people: But because the Lord loved you, and because he would keep the oath which he had sworn to your fathers, has the Lord brought you out with a mighty hand, and redeemed you out of the house of bondmen, from the hand of Pharaoh king of Egypt" (Deut.7:6-8 KJV). See also Isa.43:1-3.

The Israelites were not offered the awesome privilege and opportunity to become a kingdom of priests and a holy nation because of their numbers or physical or mental abilities. This great privilege and opportunity was bestowed on them because of a promise that God had made to the patriarch Abraham.
"Now therefore, if you will obey my voice indeed, and keep my covenant, then you shall be a peculiar treasure to me above all people: for all the earth is mine: And you shall be to me a kingdom of priests, and a holy [qadosh] nation" (Ex. 19:5-6 KJV).

The English word holy in verse 6 is the Hebrew word qadosh, which means holy, holy one, or saint. This shows that the Israelites are to be admitted to the realm of the sacred and become sacred by divine decree.

The Creator God's promise to make the Israelites a kingdom of priests and a holy nation has two conditions: their obedience to whatever he tells them to do and their keeping of the agreement that he would make with them. Only then would they become his kingdom of priests and his nation of holy ones.

**Be Holy, for I Am Holy**

In Leviticus, chapter 11, God told Moses and Aaron to speak to the whole nation of Israel and tell them which animals they could and could not eat. In the middle of this instruction, God said the following about why they had to follow these rules:

"You shall not make yourselves abominable with any creeping thing that creeps, neither shall you make yourselves unclean with them, that you should be defiled thereby. For I am the Lord your God: you shall therefore sanctify [qadash] yourselves, and you shall be holy [qadosh]; for I am holy: neither shall you defile yourselves with any manner of creeping thing that creeps on the earth. For I am the Lord that brought you out of the land of Egypt, to be your God: you shall therefore be holy, for I am holy" (Lev. 11:43-45).

In verse 44, the Israelites are told to sanctify themselves and be holy because God is holy. The English word sanctify is translated from the Hebrew word qadash, which means to be hallowed, holy, sanctified, to consecrate, sanctify, prepare, or dedicate. Qadash is a denominative verb which connotes a state of being that belongs to the realm of the sacred.

What seems clear from the use of the Hebrew word qadash is that the Israelites were to abandon their Egyptian lifestyle and enter God's sacred realm through practicing the holy lifestyle that he set forth in his law.

In verses 44 and 45, the Hebrew word qadosh is used to express what God is and what the Israelites were to become. God is qadosh; he is intrinsically sacred and holy and is superior to mankind in quality of existence, but the Israelites were to become qadosh (i.e., that which has been admitted to the realm of the sacred by divine decree or lawful ritual or dedication). The Israelites were to become as God is, but to a lesser degree, because mankind is physical but God is spirit. The Israelites were to be holy and distinct from the common or profane.
The Creator God would make the Israelites a kingdom of priests and a holy nation (Ex.19:5-6), and he told them that they must be holy—they were commanded to practice holiness: "you shall be holy."

"And you shall be holy [qodesh] men to me: neither shall you eat any flesh that is torn of beasts in the field; you shall cast it to the dogs" (Ex.22:31 KJV).

The Israelites were to be holy and refrain from eating that which was determined to be unholy (i.e., not fit for human consumption). They were to comply with this law so that their sacred nature of existence would not be contaminated, which would have caused them to be removed from the realm of the sacred.

Leviticus, chapter 11, verses 45 and 47 show that eating certain animals will defile a holy person, which is the reason that God gave the laws concerning the animals that can and cannot be eaten:

"For I am the Lord that brought you out of Egypt, to be your God; therefore, you shall be holy [qadosh], for I am holy [qadosh]. This is the law of the beasts, and of the fowl, and of every living creature that moves in the waters, and of every creature that creeps on the earth: To make a difference between the unclean and the clean, and between the beast that may be eaten and the beast that may not be eaten" (Lev.11:45-47 KJV) See also Lev.7:19-27.

The Israelites were to be a holy people because God had separated them from among the peoples of earth in order for them to be his kingdom of priests and his holy nation, which would represent him and his way of life to all other people on earth:

"And you shall be holy [qadosh] to me: for I the Lord am holy [qadosh], and have severed you from other people, that you should be mine" (Lev.20:26 KJV).

The Sovereign God and the Creator God are revealed as the personification of all that is good. God is totally good in every aspect of being, which is the opposite of that which is evil. Just as the Creator God called national Israel to become a holy people, God the Father calls men and women today to become holy as he and his son are holy.

The Sovereign God had the Creator God make mankind appear similar in physical appearance to their own image: "Let us make man in our image, after our likeness...So God created man in his own image, in the image of God created he him; male and female created he them" (Gen.1:26-27 KJV). Moreover, God intended for mankind to acquire a god-like attitude, behavior, and character, which is why a system of law and worship was developed for them to practice. God's law and system of worship made it possible for the Israelites to model their attitude, behavior, and character after his and to fellowship with him, learn his plan for the salvation of humanity, and practice a holy lifestyle.
The Sabbath is Holy

"And he said to them, This is that which the Lord has said, Tomorrow is the rest of the holy [qodesh] Sabbath to the Lord: bake that which you will bake today, and boil that you will boil; and that which remains over lay up for you to be kept until the morning" (Ex.16:23 KJV).

"Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy [qadash]" (Ex.20:8 KJV).

"And the Lord spoke to Moses, saying, Speak to the children of Israel, and say to them, Concerning the feasts of the Lord, which you shall proclaim to be holy [qodesh] convocations, even these are my feasts. Six days shall work be done: but the seventh day is the Sabbath of rest, an holy convocation; you shall do no work therein: it is the Sabbath of the Lord in all your dwellings. These are the feasts of the Lord, even holy [qodesh] convocations, which you shall proclaim in their seasons" (Lev.23:1-4 KJV). See also Lev. 23:5-37.

What is it that makes the Sabbath and the commanded convocations extremely holy? We are told in Genesis 2:1-3 that the Sabbath was created as holy time; therefore, it is God who makes the Sabbath and the commanded convocations holy:

"Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it: because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made" (Gen.2:1-3 KJV).

Here, we see the weekly cycle being established. The first six days are noted as work days and the seventh day is defined as a day of cessation from labor (i.e., a Sabbath).

In verses 2 and 3, the words blessed and sanctified hold a vital key to understanding how God the Father and Jesus Christ view the Sabbath.

The English word blessed is the Hebrew word barak, which means to kneel, to praise, or to salute. This verb seems to connote to confer abundant and effective life (longevity). To bless, as used in Genesis 2:2-3, means to imbue with power for success, prosperity, and longevity.

The English word sanctified comes from the Hebrew word qadash, which means to be hallowed or holy, to consecrate, to prepare, or to dedicate. The verb qadash connotes the state of something belonging to the realm of the sacred. Thus, the Sabbath is different from and outside of that which is common or profane.
The divine act of blessing and sanctifying this day was not merely a pronouncement; it was the creation of a specific period of time for a divine purpose. This period of time has a divine attribute as a part of its existence—the Sabbath is holy; therefore, the Sabbath has a unique relationship with God.

Because the Sabbath is holy, God set rules for its observance. These rules not only serve as guides for Sabbath observance but also serve as reminders that the Sabbath must not be treated as an ordinary work day because it is holy time that must be respected. See Ex.16:23; 20:8-11; Isa.58:13-14.

"You shall keep the Sabbath because it is holy [qodesh] to you: everyone that defiles it shall surely be put to death: for whoever does any work on the Sabbath, that soul shall be cut off from among his people. Six days may work be done; but in the seventh is the Sabbath of cessation, holy [qodesh] to the Lord: whoever does any work in the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death" (Ex.31:14-15 Para.).

Under the law, the death penalty was only administered to those who had committed a capital crime for which there was no atoning sacrifice. The defilement of things that were considered most holy fell into the category of capital crimes and required that the violator be put to death. The Sabbath is considered most holy and carries the death penalty for willful violation.

It is apparent that the seventh day of the week is very different from the other six days. It is a holy span of time created and set apart from normal time for the benefit of humanity. See Mk.2:27.

Because God is supreme in authority and power and is Sovereign over all that exists, he has the authority and the power to make something holy. Although the Sabbath is the only space of time that was created holy, all of the commanded convocations are holy by divine decree (See Lev.23:1-44). Therefore, they belong to the realm of the sacred and must be honored as something holy.

The Holy Ones

The people whom God has chosen to be his are called holy ones because they belong to him and are holy by divine decree, lawful ritual, and dedication. These holy ones are to sing praise to him as a show of gratitude and an acknowledgment of who he is. They must also acknowledge that he is the essence and reflection of all that is holy and all that being holy represents:

"Sing to the Lord, O you saints [hasid] of his, and give thanks at the remembrance of his holiness" (Psa.30:4 KJV). See also Psa.97:12.
"For the Lord loves judgment, and forsakes not his saints [hasid]; they are preserved for ever: but the seed of the wicked shall be cut off" (Psa.37:28 KJV).

The English word saints in Psalm 30:4 and 37:28 is translated from the Hebrew word hasid, which means holy one. The Messiah is spoken of as hasid (Psa.16:10); Aaron is call a hasid (Deut.33:8); and King David spoke of himself as a hasid (Psa.89:19).

For most Israelites, being holy was purely a physical condition, but for a few individuals being holy was both physical and spiritual; in that, these individuals not only observed the letter of the law with a willing heart, but also studied and meditated on the law and delighted in its goodness. These individuals were considered by God to be circumcised in their heart (Deut.10:14-16; 30:1-6; Jer.4:1-4). King David was a person who was circumcised in his heart, which is indicated in a number of his Psalms that applaud the greatness of God and his law:

"Blessed are you, O Lord: teach me your statutes. With my lips have I declared all the judgments of your mouth. I have rejoiced in the way of your testimonies, as much as in all riches. I will meditate in your precepts, and have respect to your ways. I will delight myself in your statutes: I will not forget your word" (Psa.119:12-16 KJV).

"And take not the word of truth utterly out of my mouth; for I have hoped in your judgments. So shall I keep your law continually for ever and ever. And I will walk at liberty: for I seek your precepts. I will speak of your testimonies also before kings, and will not be ashamed. And I will delight myself in your commandments, which I have loved. My hands also will I lift up to your commandments, which I have loved; and I will meditate in your statutes" (Psa.119:43-48 KJV).

The hasid is not an ordinary person. A hasid is a person who is separated from the world of the common and profane and is set aside by God to fulfill his purpose for their existence. A hasid is a person who is practicing a pious life in conformity to God's laws, precepts, and principles.

The Priests Were Holy

"And the Lord said to Moses, Speak to the priests the sons of Aaron, and say to them. . . He shall not defile himself, being a chief man among his people, to profane himself. . . . They shall be holy to their God, and not profane the name of their God: for the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and the bread of their God, they do offer: therefore they shall be holy. They shall not take a wife that is a whore, or profane; neither shall they take a woman put away from her husband: for he is holy to his God. You shall sanctify him therefore; for he offers the bread of your God: he shall be holy to you: for I the Lord, which sanctify you, am holy" (Lev.21:1, 4, 6-8 KJV).
The priesthood were given additional instructions concerning their lifestyle because of their contact with the most holy things of the tabernacle. Because of their office and responsibilities the degree to which the priesthood were to be holy was higher than that of the general population. This requirement for the spiritual leaders of Israel to have and maintain a higher degree of holiness than the general population of God's people is also carried over to gospel age agreement between the Father and his elect children. See 1.Cor.4:1-2; 1.Tim.3:1-7; 2.Tim.2:24-25; Titus 1:7, 2:15.

Not only were the priests holy but also were to teach the Israelites proper attitudes and behaviors so that they would know what to do in order to practice a holy lifestyle. See Lev.10:9-11; Deut.33:7-10.

The Priest's Garments Were Holy

In the Books of Exodus and Leviticus, there are several detailed instructions concerning the making, the wearing, and the care that must be given to the garments to be worn by the high priest and the rest of the priesthood. It is important to understand that these garments were sanctified as holy, were to be worn while serving God, and were not to be worn outside of the tabernacle. The following are two warnings given to Aaron and the priesthood about the wearing of these holy garments:

"Make pomegranates of blue, purple and scarlet yarn around the hem of the robe, with gold bells between them. The gold bells and the pomegranates are to alternate around the hem of the robe. Aaron must wear it when he ministers. The sound of the bells will be heard when he enters the Holy Place before the Lord and when he comes out, so that he will not die" (Ex.28:33-35 NIV).

"Make tunics, sashes and headbands for Aaron's sons, to give them dignity and honor. After you put these clothes on your brother Aaron and his sons, anoint and ordain them. Consecrate them so they may serve me as priests. "Make linen undergarments as a covering for the body, reaching from the waist to the thigh. Aaron and his sons must wear them whenever they enter the Tent of Meeting or approach the altar to minister in the Holy Place, so that they will not incur guilt and die. "This is to be a lasting ordinance for Aaron and his descendants" (Ex.28:40-43 NIV). See also Ezk. 44:18.

Notice that Aaron had to wear the garment with the bells on its hem when he entered and left the holy place. Aaron and his sons all had to wear the proper holy garments as they served in the tabernacle. If they failed to do this, they would die.

The Temple Is Holy

The temple where God's spirit resided and where he was to be worshiped were described as qodesh, (i.e., a place of special sacredness where God's presence could be found):
"Hang the curtain from the clasps and place the ark of the Testimony behind the curtain. The curtain will separate the Holy Place from the Most Holy Place. Put the atonement cover on the ark of the Testimony in the Most Holy Place" (Ex.26:33-34 NIV).

The inner room of the temple is called the most holy place, because it was where the Creator God's holy presence was most intense. It was also where, once a year on the Day of Atonement, the Creator God would appear in his spirit-presence to speak with the high priest of Israel. Lev.16:2; Heb.9:6-8.

Although the tabernacle was extremely holy, within the most holy place (i.e., the holy of holies) there is even a higher degree of God's spirit-presence expressed. Here again we see different degrees of the condition of being holy expressed.

King David knew that God's presence resided in his sacred temple and that this was where he could be approached and spoken to:

"But as for me, I will come into your house in the multitude of your mercy: and in your fear will I worship toward your holy temple" (Psa.5:7 KJV).

The temple and all things that were used in it or came into it were holy (i.e., they were made holy by divine decree or by lawful ritual):

"And of the blue, and purple, and scarlet, they made cloths of service, to do service in the holy place, and made the holy garments for Aaron; as the Lord commanded Moses" (Ex.39:1 KJV).

"Seven days you shall make an atonement for the altar, and sanctify it; and it shall be an altar most holy: whatsoever touches the altar shall be holy" (Ex.29:37 KJV).

It is important to understand that all the things in the tabernacle were very holy and had to be treated with a high degree of respect. These holy things could only be touched by other holy things or by a priest who was also holy and authorized to touch them. The only exception to this rule was the ark of the covenant which could not be touched by anyone. Any infraction of this rule was punishable by death (See Lev.10:1-10). See also Lev.6:18, 25-29.

"And when Aaron and his sons have made an end of covering the sanctuary, and all the vessels of the sanctuary, as the camp is to set forward; after that, the sons of Kohath shall come to bear it: but they shall not touch any holy thing, lest they die. These things are the burden of the sons of Kohath in the tabernacle of the congregation" (Num.4:15 KJV).
The instruction concerning the moving of the tabernacle shows that, because of the holy nature of its various elements, each was to be very carefully packaged by the priesthood and then transported by people who were specifically chosen and authorized for this task. Again, we see that some holy things are more holy than others.

The Holy Sacrifices

"Aaron shall take a handful, of the grain offering flour, and of the oil, and the frankincense which is on the meat offering, and burn it on the altar for a sweet smell with the memorial portion to the Lord. And the remainder shall Aaron and his sons eat with unleavened bread in the holy place; in the court of the tabernacle of the congregation they shall eat it. It shall not be baked with leaven. I have given it to them for their portion of my offerings made by fire; it is most holy, as is the sin offering, and as the trespass offering. All the males among the children of Aaron shall eat of it. It shall be a statute for ever in your generations concerning the offerings of the Lord made by fire: every one that touches them shall be holy" (Lev.6:15-18 KJV).

Here, we see three different words used to define different degrees of the sacred, holy state of existence (e.g., a place in the tabernacle, the offering, and the priest who may touch the offering).

Things Dedicated to God

In Numbers 16:6-39, the censers of the Korahites were regarded as holy because they had been devoted to God; the censers had entered the realm of the sacred through a lawful ritual (v17). The dedication of the censers created a condition of inviolable holiness that could not allow for their being treated as common. See also Lev.27:9-10.

"But nothing that a man owns and devotes to the Lord—whether man or animal or family land—may be sold or redeemed; everything so devoted is most holy to the Lord" (Lev.27:28 NIV).

Once a thing, an animal, or a person is dedicated to God through lawful ritual, the deed is done; it can never return to the common or profane, because it is holy and forever belongs to God to do with as he chooses. See Lev.27:29;33; 1.Sam.1:1-28.

The Holy and the Common

The deaths of Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu caused by their bringing an unholy thing into the tabernacle (Lev.10:1-2), the deaths of 50,070 men of Beth-shemesh caused by their looking into the ark of the covenant (1.Sam.6:19), and the death of Uzzah, which occurred when he touched the ark of the covenant (2.Sam.6:1-7), are examples of what happens when people violate the strict laws concerning holiness.
The accounts about Nadab and Abihu and the ark of the covenant speak to the extreme danger of violating the laws of holiness and the need to recognize and maintain a difference between the holy and the common and the profane.

Aaron and his sons were prohibited from drinking any type of alcoholic beverage when they served in the temple. This prohibition was necessary so that they would not inadvertently pollute the holy nature of the temple and die. They were always to be keenly aware of the difference between the sacred, the common, and the profane. Moreover, they were to teach this difference to the Israelites:

"You [Aaron] and your sons [the priests] are not to drink wine or other fermented drink whenever you go into the Tent of Meeting, or you will die. This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses" (Lev. 10:9-11 NIV). See also Num.18:30-32.

GOD’S LAW AND BEING HOLY

Since the demise of the early church, the Father’s children and many other people have wondered why the Creator God required the Israelites to practice many seemingly unnecessary and unimportant rituals and laws and what some of these physical laws have to do with one’s salvation or the building of spiritual character. What benefit do these laws bestow on those who practice them? The answer is that these laws are the basis for being holy and practicing holiness. Moreover, these laws define the holy attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics holy people must have in order to live and maintain a holy lifestyle.

Clearly, when the Creator God said to the Israelites, “You shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy,” he did not expect them to become holy as he is holy in a spirit realm of existence (i.e., become a spirit-being and live on earth as a spirit-being). If the Israelites were to actually become as God, they would have to become totally spirit. Moreover, there were no instructions given to the Israelites concerning how to enter into the spirit realm of existence during their lifetime; therefore, becoming holy for the Israelites had to do with their physical existence and the way they were to conduct their lives in the physical world as a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. See Ex.19:5-6.

The Key

The Key to understanding how the Israelites were to be holy in a physical sense is understanding that the law God gave to the Israelites set forth the rules and standards for being holy. The only concepts and principles in the entire Bible that explain the condition of being holy and the practice of holiness before and after the advent of the Messiah are contained in God’s law. Therefore, being holy and being righteous are
inexorably bound to God's law, because it is God's law that sets forth the rules and standards for being holy.

God has set the rules and standards by which all that is holy is to be measured. Any deviation or violation from these rules and standards is in opposition to the nature of God who is a holy spirit-being. Therefore, a thing or a person who is not in harmony with God's law cannot have an intimate interaction with God. See Lev.10:1-9; 16:1-2; Num.3:3-4; 26:61.

The law explains what is holy and what is unholy. It explains the attitude, behavior, and character that a holy person must have in order to remain holy. The law gives detailed instructions about how to acquire the divine attributes and behaviors of holiness and how to practice them. The command to be holy as God is holy is always given in the context with a list of God's laws or in an instruction urging compliance with God's law as noted in 1.Peter 1:13-16. It is very important to carefully consider the context in which the instruction to be holy as God is holy is always found, because it tells us that it is God's law that instructs us in how to be holy and how to maintain the holy state of existence.

The Law Is Perfect

"The law of the Lord is perfect, reviving [i.e., restoring] the soul. The statutes of the Lord are trustworthy, making wise the simple. The precepts of the Lord are right, giving joy to the heart. The commands of the Lord are radiant, giving light to the eyes. The fear of the Lord is pure, enduring forever. The ordinances of the Lord are sure and altogether righteous. They are more precious than gold, than much pure gold; they are sweeter than honey, than honey from the comb. By them is your servant warned; in keeping them there is great reward" (Psa.19:7-11 NIV).

When Adam and Eve were created, the original intent was for them and their descendants to live a holy life in harmony with God; however, this did not happen and humanity found themselves in opposition to God and the way that would ensure a happy productive life. With the giving of the law of sacrifice to Adam and Eve came the understanding of how to restore harmony between God and mankind, and with the giving of further understanding of God's law came the understanding of how to maintain a holy life.

King David understood that it was a combination of God's law and the presence of God's holy spirit that gave one the knowledge and strength to overcome the lusts and desires of the flesh. Moreover, David knew that it was God's holy spirit that restored him to a sacred, holy state of existence:
"Hide your face from my sins; and blot out all mine lawlessness. Create in me a clean heart, O God; and renew a right spirit within me. Cast me not away from your presence; and take not your holy spirit from me. Restore to me the joy of your salvation; and uphold me with your free spirit" (Psa.51:9-12 KJV Para.).

Moses to Instruct Israel in the Law

In Leviticus, chapter 19, Moses is told to speak to the whole nation of Israel and give them a list of instructions that they must follow. Notice that the first thing they must do is to become a holy people:

"And the Lord spake to Moses, saying, Speak to all the congregation of the children of Israel, and say to them, You shall be holy (qadosh): for I the Lord your God am holy (qadosh)" (Lev.19:1-2 KJV).

Here, we see the Hebrew word qadosh, which means holy, holy one, or saint, applied to both the Israelites and to the Creator God. In order for the Israelites to be holy (i.e., to be a part of the sacred realm of existence), they must have certain attitudes and characteristics and behave in a certain way.

Also in this list are the laws concerning respect for one's parents, the observance of the Sabbath, and the prohibition against worshiping idols. Clearly, it is the law that reveals what holy behavior is and it is the law that sets forth the rules and standards for being holy:

"Each of you must respect his mother and father, and you must observe my Sabbaths. I am the Lord your God. Do not turn to idols or make gods of cast metal for yourselves. I am the Lord your God" (Lev.19:3-4 NIV).

The Great Things of The Law

In the lamentation and prophecy about the tribe of Ephraim, God says, "I will write the great things of my law for him ... " (Hos.8:12 Para.).

What are the great things of God's law? These great things are the rules and instructions about how to enter into and maintain one's standing in God's sacred realm of existence through the practice of holiness. This is the same law that the apostle Paul was inspired to call holy, righteous, and good (Rom.7:12) and the same law that the Israelites were to practice as a holy people.

"Sanctify (qadash) yourselves therefore, and be you holy (qadosh): for I am the Lord your God. And you shall keep my statutes, and do them: I am the Lord which sanctify (qadash) you" (Lev.20:7-8 KJV). See also Num.15:40; Deut.26:18-19.

Because God chose the Israelites for his holy purpose, they were to separate themselves from the common and profane and be a holy people who practiced his law:

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"The Lord shall establish you as a holy people to himself, as he has sworn to you, if you shall keep the commandments of the Lord your God, and walk in his ways" (Deut.28:9 KJV).

It is through understanding and practicing these great things of the law that the Israelites would be blessed above all nations on earth. See Deut.26:16-19; 28:1-2.

**God's Law of Holiness**

In order to understand what the Creator God meant when he said to the Israelites "You shall be holy: for I the Lord your God am holy," one must study God's law. It is the law that shows the differences between a holy and an unholy state of existence and between holy and unholy attitudes, behaviors, and character. It is the law that sets the rules and standards for what is holy and unholy. Therefore, one must look to the law in order to know what is holy, how to become holy, and how to practice a holy lifestyle.

 Clearly, God does not have to alter his attitude, behavior, or character to become holy, because he is intrinsically holy; he is perfection in every aspect of his being. God's character is perfect, his knowledge and understanding is perfect, and his love is perfect. There is nothing imperfect about God. He is the standard of perfection for everything that exists and it is to this holy standard which everything that exists is measured against. Accordingly, the Israelites were to conform their attitude, behavior, character, and lifestyle to God's holy standard which is defined and explained in the law he gave them to live by.

In this dimension of existence, there are laws that function automatically to regulate and maintain our physical existence. The willful violation of these physical laws result in death, disaster, and destruction. In exactly the same way, all of God's laws function automatically to regulate and maintain his spirit realm of existence. These laws that determine who and what is holy or unholy and whether or not one's behavior is holy or unholy are empirical and function automatically. In order for one who has been made holy to maintain their holy condition of existence, these laws must be understood and practiced.

"You [Aaron] and your sons . . . . This is a lasting ordinance for the generations to come. You must distinguish between the holy and the common, between the unclean and the clean, and you must teach the Israelites all the decrees the Lord has given them through Moses" (Lev.10:9-11 NIV). See also Num.18:30-32.

The various laws that God gave to the Israelites were given in order to teach them how to recognize the difference between the holy and unholy. Obedience to the law would teach them how to become established as a holy people through the practice of righteous concepts and principles and how to maintain their holy existence as human beings.
A Reminder of The Law

The Israelites were told to wear fringes on their clothes with a ribbon of blue in it and to affix God's law to the doorframes of their houses and gateways as a reminder that, in order to be and remain holy, they must conform to these laws and practice them in their daily lives:

"Speak to the children of Israel, and tell them to make fringes on the borders of their clothes throughout their generations, and that they put on the fringe a ribbon of blue: And it shall be for you to look at and remember all the Lord's commandments and do them; so that you will not seek after the desires of your heart and your own eyes after which you usually go astray That you remember, to do all my commandments, and be holy [qadosh] to your God" (Num.15:38-40 Para.).

"And it shall come to pass, if you carefully pay attention to my law which I command you this day, to love the Lord your God, and serve him with all your heart and being. Then I will send rain on your land in all the proper seasons, so that you have grain, new wine and oil. I will provide grass for your cattle, and you will eat and be satisfied. Pay attention, do not be deceived and turn aside and worship and serve other gods, because my anger will burn against you, and I will shut the heavens and it will not rain and the ground will yield no produce, and you will perish quickly from the good land I will give you. Fix these words of mine in your hearts and minds; tie them as symbols on your hands and let them be in the foremost part of your mind that you may always keep them in view. Teach them to your children, talking about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates" (Deut. 11:13-20 Para.).

The Law Has Benefits

"Come near me and listen to this: "From the first announcement I have not spoken in secret; at the time it happens, I am there." And now the Sovereign Lord has sent me, with his Spirit. This is what the Lord says—your Redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am the Lord your God, who teaches you what is best for you, who directs you in the way you should go. If only you had paid attention to my commands, your peace would have been like a river, your righteousness like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been like the sand, your children like its numberless grains; their name would never be cut off nor destroyed from before me" (Isa.48:16-19 NIV). See also Deut.30:15-20.
There is nothing bad, evil, or wrong about God's laws. His laws do not cause pain or suffering. Instead, they are designed to bring peace, happiness, and prosperity. For every effect there is a cause. All of the evil, pain, and suffering in this world is the effect of people breaking God's laws.

God created the law for our benefit. It was designed to bring us happiness, joy, and prosperity. The Israelites were not willing to accept these laws as an expression of God's love; instead, they rebelled in their hearts, minds, and attitudes:

"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" (Deut.5:29 NIV).

Most people view God's law as archaic and of little value in today's world. Few people understand that, for the short time that God's laws were diligently practiced by the nation of Israel, the Israelites were one of the world's greatest military and economic powers, possessing tremendous wealth and prosperity.

**JESUS CHRIST AND THE LAW**

Is it true that Jesus Christ's obedience to God's law did away with all the laws that were given to humanity after the disobedience of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden? Is it true that Christians should no longer be concerned with the laws, precepts, and principles that were specifically given to national Israel?

Matthew 5:17 is the scripture that is most quoted when attempting to prove that Jesus did away with the Law. However, Jesus himself said, "Do not think that I have come to abolish the Law or the Prophets; I have not come to abolish them but to fulfill them" (Matt.5:17 NIV).

Many theologians and professing Christian leaders believe that, in fulfilling God's law, Jesus did away with it. Does this belief make any sense? How could Jesus not destroy God's Law and still destroy it? In order to prove that this scripture does not say that the law has been done away with, it is important to research the original language of the text.

The English word *abolish* in verse 17 is translated from the Greek word *kataluoo*, which means *tear down, demolish, do away with, abolish, annul, or make invalid*. Jesus said that we should not even think that he would abolish or destroy the law! Yet, how many millions of professing Christians actually believe he destroyed the law?

The English word *fulfill* in verse 17 is translated from the Greek word *elaruoo*, which means *fill to the full, to complete, to make full, to fulfill by doing*. It is impossible to fill something up and empty and destroy it at the same time.
When studying the Bible, it is necessary to read scriptures in context which helps to give the complete meaning to whatever subject is being studied. The rest of what Jesus says about the law in Matthew 5:18-19 further demonstrates that he did not destroy or do away with the law:

"I tell you the truth, until heaven and earth disappear, not the smaller letter, not the least stroke of a pen, will by any means disappear from the Law until everything is accomplished" (v18).

Is heaven and earth still here? Yes! Has everything in God's Word been fulfilled? No! Is the Law of God still in effect? Yes! Jesus says it is!

Notice what Jesus says about breaking God's law:

"Anyone who breaks one of the least of these commandments and teaches others to do the same will be called least [Greek: 'less than nothing'] in the kingdom of heaven, but whoever practices and teaches these commandments will be called great in the kingdom of heaven" (v19).

Jesus did not say that some who break the law will be in the kingdom of God in a lessor position, he said that those who break the law will be spoken of as worthless. The scriptures clearly show that no one who breaks God's law will enter God's heavenly kingdom. See Rom.6:23; Rev.21:10-27; 22:14-15.

Jesus Magnified the Law

What did Jesus mean when he said that he came to fulfill the law and the prophets (Matt.5:17)? The prophets spoke of the Messiah's coming to give his life for the salvation of humanity. Jesus clearly fulfilled these prophecies about the Messiah along with the prophecy concerning God's law recorded in the Book of Isaiah:

"The Lord is well pleased for his righteousness sake; he will magnify the law, and make it honorable" (Isa.42:21 KJV).

The English word magnify is translated from a Hebrew word that literally means to make great or cause to be great. This is exactly what Jesus Christ did to fill the law to its fullest. He magnified the Law by showing how good and beneficial it is.

The Creator God who became the Messiah gave God's law (i.e., the Sovereign Father's law, which includes the Ten Commandments) to the patriarchs and national Israel. When he gave these laws, he fully intended for them to be kept in the letter of the law, and the spirit of the law as people came to understand the precepts and principles contained in them. In return, those who kept the law would be blessed with tremendous physical blessings. See Deut.28.

"Oh, that their hearts would be inclined to fear me and keep all my commands always, so that it might go well with them and their children forever!" (Deut.5:29 NIV).
Although the Israelites understood the physical basis for keeping the law, few comprehend the spiritual intent and meaning of God's law because they failed to study it and meditate on it.

A part of the plan of God for the salvation of humanity called for Jesus Christ to come and explain the spiritual intent and meaning of God's law. This is precisely what he did and it is recorded in Matthew, chapters 5, 6, and 7, and Luke, chapter 6. All of the teachings of Jesus Christ about God's law bring its full spiritual meaning and intent into focus.

**Eternal Life**

The question of eternal life is on the minds of many people today, just as it was on the minds of people during Jesus' day. A young man asked Jesus about this very subject:

"Now a man came up to Jesus and asked, "Teacher, what good thing must I do to get eternal life?" "Why do you ask me about what is good?" Jesus replied. "There is only One who is good. If you want to enter life, obey the commandments" (Matt.19:16-17 NIV).

If Jesus had come to abolish the law, why did he tell this young man to keep the law? Jesus told the young man in no uncertain terms that, if he expected to receive eternal life, he must keep the commandments.

**Vain Worship**

Jesus was neither the soft-spoken person most people have imagined nor an insipid and feeble personality, which is falsely depicted in so many artist's depictions of him (hanging pictures and setting up idols of Jesus actually violates the second commandment against idolatry). On the contrary, Jesus was a dynamic, powerful, personality who spoke the truth without reservation. Jesus spoke openly to the Pharisees and Scribes (the religious leaders of his day) who were in opposition to his teachings:

"Isaiah was right when he prophesied about you hypocrites; as it is written: 'These people honor me with their lips, but their hearts are far from me. They worship me in vain; their teachings are but rules taught by men.' You have let go of the commands of God and are holding on to the traditions of men. And he said to them: "You have a fine way of setting aside the commands of God in order to observe your own traditions!" (Mk.7:6-9 NIV).

Jesus emphatically argued that people are hypocrites if they reject the law of God and claim to worship him! Jesus says that if we love him and his God (i.e., the Sovereign Father) we will keep his law:
"Whoever has my commands and obeys them, he is the one who loves me. He who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love him and show myself to him. . . Jesus replied, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me" (Jn.14:21, 23-24).

Consider also how Jesus says that we can remain in his love: "If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love [remain and live in], just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love" (Jn.15:10 NIV). This shows that we are commanded by Jesus Christ to follow his example. This was understood and taught by the apostle Peter: "To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps" (1.Pet.2:21 NIV).

The apostle John wrote a stinging rebuke to those who say they know Jesus Christ and claim to follow him but do not keep the commandments: "The man who says, I know him [Jesus Christ] but does not do what he commands is a liar, and the truth is not in him" (1.Jn.2:4 NIV). The Book of Revelation shows that liars will not be in the Kingdom of God, but will be burned up in the Lake of Fire. See Rev.21:8, 27; 22:15.

**Follow Christ's Example To Be Holy**

What kind of lifestyle would God follow if he came to earth to live? What kind of example would he set for us to follow? What kind of attitudes and behaviors would he exhibit? These answers are found in a review of Jesus Christ's life and his practice of God's law. Jesus practiced all of God's laws that were applicable to his life. He practiced them because these laws define what is holy and unholy, reveal how to become holy, give instruction in how to practice a holy lifestyle, and explain how to maintain one's holiness.

Jesus the Christ was the Creator God before he came to earth to save humanity. In order to save himself from the second death and become the Savior of humanity, he had to be holy and perfectly practice a life of holiness.

Notice what the Sovereign Father said about Jesus at his baptism:

"And Jesus, when he was baptized, went up straightway out of the water: and, lo, the heavens were opened to him, and he saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove, and lighting on him: And lo a voice from heaven, saying, This is my beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Matt.3:16-17 KJV). See also Matt.12:18; Mk.1:11.

Why was God the Father pleased with Jesus? He was pleased with him because Jesus perfectly understood and practiced his law up to this point in his life.
During Christ's ministry, we again see the Sovereign Father voicing his further approval of Jesus' lifestyle and teachings:

"After six days Jesus took with him Peter, James and John the brother of James, and led them up a high mountain by themselves. There he was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and his clothes became as white as the light. Just then there appeared before them Moses and Elijah, talking with Jesus. Peter said to Jesus, Lord, it is good for us to be here. If you wish, I will put up three shelters—one for you, one for Moses and one for Elijah. While he was still speaking, a bright cloud enveloped them, and a voice from the cloud said, This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased. Listen to him!" (Matt.17:1-5 NIV). See also 2.Pet.1:15-18.

The Father was pleased with Jesus because he was living in compliance to the law of holiness and was fulfilling the purpose for which he was sent to earth—to reveal the existence of the Sovereign God and his plan for humanity and to explain and magnify his holy law. See Isa. 42:21; Matt.5:17.

The parable of the talents clearly shows that the Father will also be very pleased with people who practice the way of holiness and do as they are instructed:

"His Lord said to him, Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord" (Matt.25:23 KJV).

The Commission

After Christ's death and resurrection, he met with his disciples and gave them the following commission:

"And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, All power is given to me in heaven and in earth. You go, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the world. Amen" (Matt.28:18-20 KJV).

What did Jesus teach that must also be taught by those who follow him? Jesus taught about the Sovereign God, his plan for humanity, and his holy law, which is what those who follow Christ must also be teaching.

Jesus conformed to and practiced God's law and his way of holiness in attitude, behavior, and character under the agreement that he had made with national Israel while he was the Creator God. The reason Jesus Christ is our Savior and our Redeemer is that he was found to comply in attitude, behavior, and character to God's law which is the standard for a holy and a righteous lifestyle.
If the Sovereign Father were to come to live on earth as a physical being, he would practice all of the laws written in the Bible that define holiness in the flesh. We know that this is the lifestyle he would practice because the Creator God came to earth to live as a human being and he did obey all of the laws written in the Bible that define and govern who and what is holy and how to maintain a holy state of existence. See Heb.5:1-10.

The Savior of humanity is the perfect example of a holy person living in the flesh. Moreover, he is the perfect example of a person who practiced holiness, because he practiced the law perfectly.

Be Honest

An honest look at the teachings of Jesus Christ and the apostles leaves no doubt that, if we want to follow God's way of life, we must practice and teach God's law!

It is beyond the scope of this study to detail all the various ways that people reject and disobey God's laws; however, it is clear from the biblical perspective that most of humanity is either unknowingly or knowingly rejecting and disobeying God's laws:

"The sinful mind is hostile to God. It does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those controlled by the sinful nature cannot please God" (Rom.8:7-8 NIV). See also Jer.17:9.

If we say that God's laws are no longer in effect, we disagree with God the Father and Jesus Christ, which means that we do not want them in our lives.

Should the Father's children practice his law? The answer found in the Bible is that you cannot be a child of God or be holy unless you practice God's laws.

THE FATHER'S HOLY NATION

Because of a promise that he had made to the patriarch Abraham, the Creator God chose national Israel and called them out of spiritual darkness to be his personal representatives on earth, a nation of priests, and examples and teachers of God's holy way to the rest of humanity.

Today, it is the Sovereign Father who chooses individuals from among all nations to become his personal representatives on earth. These individuals are to become members of his holy family as firstborn sons of his new creation and participate in his holy nation as kings, priests, and ambassadors. Each of these individuals is a temple through which they worship and serve the Father under the administration of his Son Jesus Christ. These individuals are spiritual Jews and comprise the spiritual Israel of God. See Rom.2:29; Gal.6:16.
"But you are a chosen generation, a royal priesthood, an holy nation, a peculiar people; that you should show forth the praises of him who has called you out of darkness into his marvelous light: Which in time past were not a people, but are now the people of God: which had not obtained mercy, but now have obtained mercy" (1.Pet.2:9-10 KJV). See also 2.Cor.5:18-20; Rev.1:6; 5:10.

The Sovereign Father's call of individuals to participate in his holy nation has similarities to the Creator God's call of national Israel, and there are many parallels that can be drawn between these two callings. However, there are major differences between them and major differences in how a person becomes holy and practices holiness during the gospel age of salvation.

**Chosen to Be Holy**

Before the foundation of the earth, the Sovereign God determined that certain individuals would exist and be called to salvation at a particular time in his plan. And these people would become holy in attitude, behavior, character, and quality of existence:

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all spiritual blessings in heavenly places in Christ: According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will" (Eph.1:3-5 KJV).

The English word *holy* in verse 4 is translated from the Greek word *hagios*, which means *sacred*, *physically pure*, *morally blameless*, *consecrated*, *holy* or *saint*. The word *hagios* connotes someone or something that is intrinsically sacred in the same sense as the Hebrew word *qadash* connotes a state of being that belongs to the realm of the sacred (i.e., something that is separate and distinct from the common or profane).

The phrase *without blame* is translated from the Greek word *amomos*, which means *blameless*, *moral perfection* and connotes perfect piety.

Paul reveals to the Ephesians that God had predetermined and decreed that everyone who would participate in his special calling would be holy in their state of being and express perfect piety in attitude, behavior, and character. The Father's holy people are to imitate his attitude, behavior, and character just as the Israelites were to imitate the Creator God's holiness. Today, during the gospel age of salvation, it is just as important for the Sovereign Father's children to be holy as it was for national Israel to be holy under their covenant with the Creator God.

"For God has not given us the spirit of fear; but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind [i.e., self-control]. Be not you therefore ashamed of the testimony of our Lord, nor of me his prisoner: but be you partaker of the afflictions of the gospel
according to the power of God; Who has saved us, and called us with an holy [hagios] calling, not according to our works, but according to his own purpose and grace, which was given us in Christ Jesus before the world began” (2.Tim.1:7-9 KJV).

Called to Purity

In his instruction to the Thessalonians, Paul stresses the point that it is the Father's will that those he calls to become his children abstain from sexual sins. They should remain physically pure because they were called to a life of purity and they are rejecting the Father who has given them his spirit if they neglect to remain physically pure:

"For this is the will of God, even your sanctification, that you should abstain from fornication: That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honor; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God: That no man go beyond and defraud his brother in any matter: because that the Lord is the avenger of all such, as we also have forewarned you and testified. For God has not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness. He therefore that despises, despises not man, but God, who has also given to us his holy spirit" (1.Thes.4:3-8 KJV).

The English words sanctification in verse 4 and holiness in verse 7 are both translated from the Greek word hagiasmos, which means a state of purity in the physical sense.

Under the gospel age agreement, spiritual purity replaces physical ritual and physical purity related to worship to a degree but not entirely. There are many physical rituals and laws related to worship that have been carried over from the covenant with ancient Israel. These rituals and laws either partially or totally apply to the elect. For example, the law of marriage, the dietary laws, the Sabbath, the Festivals, and the Passover are all laws that must still be honored and practiced as they apply to one's pious lifestyle.

Be Holy, Because I Am Holy

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, being sober, perfectly hope in the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ: As obedient children, not in ignorance fashioning yourselves after your former lusts, but according to the Holy One who has called you to also become holy in all conduct. Because it has been written, Be holy; because I am holy” (1.Pet.1:13-16 KJV Para.). See Lev.11:45; 19:1-2; 20:26.

Here, we see that the Sovereign Father's holy nation of kings, priests, and ambassadors must also be holy, just as the Israelites were to be holy. The Father's holy nation is also to practice godly attitudes, behaviors, and characteristics and separate themselves from the common and profane.
Purchased With Blood

The nation of Israel belonged to the Creator God by right of his covenant with them and the patriarchs; however, the Sovereign Father's children are his because he has purchased them with the sacrificial blood of his firstborn son. With the advent of the Messiah, a new and superior method by which a person could be made holy and be maintained in a holy state of existence was established and introduced to humanity:

"Forasmuch as you know that you were not redeemed with corruptible things, as silver and gold, from your vain conversation received by tradition from your fathers: But with the precious blood of Christ, as of a lamb without blemish and without spot" (1.Pet. 1:18-19 KJV).

The Process of Becoming a Holy One

The nation of Israel was made holy through decree and ritual, but the Sons of the Father's new creation are made holy through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ and the ritual of baptism and the laying on of hands to receive the holy spirit.

On the Day of Pentecost, the apostle Peter revealed that Jesus whom the Jews had crucified was indeed the Messiah and there was now a way to have one's sins forgiven and to be saved from eternal death:

"When the people heard this, they were cut to the heart and said to Peter and the other apostles, "Brothers, what shall we do?" Peter replied, "Repent and be baptized, every one of you, in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins. And you will receive the gift of the holy spirit. The promise is for you and your children and for all who are far off—for all whom the Lord our God will call." With many other words he warned them; and he pleaded with them, "Save yourselves from this corrupt generation" (Acts 2:37-40 NIV).

A person becomes holy through the redemptive process and is transformed from the realm of the common and profane to the realm of the holy by the Sovereign Father's decree and power. This redemptive process begins with the Father's call to salvation and progresses through the following steps:

- True repentance.
- The Father's forgiveness of one's sins through the sacrificial blood of Jesus Christ.
- The sacred ritual of baptism.
- The sacred ritual of the laying on of hands for receiving the indwelling of the holy spirit.
- The transformation into a holy individual through the Father's spirit-power.
Notice that the first step toward being holy after the Father opens one's mind to his truth is repentance. The scriptures clearly show that repentance requires one to change one's lifestyle and begin to obey God's laws. This requirement is exactly the same today as it was for national Israel. One cannot become holy unless one is willing to obey and practice God's law.

Baptism is not only a symbolic representation of death, burial, and resurrection to a new life in Christ but also a physical and spiritual reality. Notice how Paul reminds the elect at Rome of their baptism and sinless condition before God when he exhorts them to live a sinless life:

"What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin, that grace may abound? God forbid. How shall we, that are dead to sin, live any longer therein? Know you not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death?" (Rom.6:1-3 KJV).

As a person descends beneath the baptismal water which symbolizes a grave, their old life symbolically dies and is buried:

"Therefore we are buried with him by baptism to death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life" (Rom.6:4 KJV).

When a person is raised out of the water, they are symbolically and in fact raised to a new life. And upon receiving the spirit of God the transition is complete; a person is transformed from the original human creation into a new and different being. The old person with only the spirit of man ceases to exist, and a new person who has the spirit of God dwelling within them is born. See 2.Cor.5:17; Rom.6:1-18.

The Father's Children Are Holy

Although a child of God still appears to be human, a transformation has taken place that makes a person who has received the holy spirit different from other humans. That person has been converted into a son of God with the genetic imprint of the God family. Although a child of God is not yet an immortal spirit-being, a person with God's spirit dwelling within them is certainly a member of the Father's spiritual family. Moreover, at some time in the future, all of the Father's earthly children will shed their bodies of flesh and receive an immortal spirit-body. See 1.Cor.15:51-54; 1.Thes.4:13-17; Rev.20:6.

The Father's children are not only physically holy as the Israelites were but also intrinsically holy as the Father and his firstborn son Jesus Christ. Holiness is imparted during the gospel age of salvation by the Sovereign Father to those whom he calls to be holy and obey his law of holiness. See 1.Pet.1:13-16; Eph.1:3-5; 2.Tim.1:7-9; 1.Thes.4:3-8.
God the Father is extremely interested in his children being holy. When mankind was created, they were created in God's image. Moreover, he intended that mankind be patterned after himself in attitude, behavior, and character, which is why a system of worship was developed that would make it possible for his people to be in constant contact with him in order to be taught holy attitude, behavior, and character. The Father's elect children are called to become examples of his holiness (i.e., to be holy as he is holy), which is accomplished through placing his spirit within them and instructing them in how to live and maintain a holy lifestyle.

Both the apostle Paul and the writer to the Hebrews said that people under the gospel age agreement with God the Father are indeed intrinsically holy as partakers of the heavenly calling. This calling offers the awesome privilege of being given the Father's holy spirit, being given immortal life as a spirit-being in the Father's divine family, and the opportunity to serve him as a king, priest, and ambassador on earth:

"I charge you by the Lord that this epistle be read to all the holy (hagios) brethren" (1.Thes.5:27 KJV).

"Wherefore, holy (hagios) brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus" (Heb.3:1 KJV).

Make no mistake, those who have the holy spirit dwelling within them are different from other humans, because they participate in the Father's divine realm of existence—they are holy beings.

Maintaining One's Holiness

"Being then made free from sin, you became the servants of righteousness. I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanliness and to iniquity unto iniquity; even so now yield your members servants to righteousness unto holiness. For when you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness" (Rom.6:18-20 KJV). See also 1.Thes.4:2-4.

Here, Paul says that being free from sin means being free from the penalty imposed for the violation of God's law. Under the first agreement with national Israel, the only way to be free from the penalty of sin was to have the penalty temporarily set aside through an atoning sacrifice. Under the gospel age agreement, Jesus Christ is the atoning sacrifice that permanently removes the penalty for the violation of God's law.

The English word righteousness in Romans 6:18-20 is translated from the Greek word dikaiosune, which means justification. It pertains to being in compliance with God's law (i.e., being blameless). However, the definition of dikaiosune is much more complex when used in combination with holiness.
The condition, the pursuit, and the practice of holiness cannot be completely separated from an atonement for the violation of God's law, because the result of atonement is righteousness (i.e., being in harmony with God's law) and the pursuit and practice of holiness requires one to be in harmony with God's law. Moreover, the condition, the pursuit, and the practice of holiness for the Father's children requires the indwelling of the Father's personal spirit, his holy spirit, and Christ's spirit, as well as their application in one's life.

In a letter to the Ephesians, Paul reminds them that they must not live sinful lives like people who are in spiritual darkness and separated from God, because they have been taught a different lifestyle through Christ:

"This I say therefore, and testify in the Lord, that you henceforth walk not as other Gentiles walk, in the vanity of their mind. Having the understanding darkened, being alienated from the life of God through the ignorance that is in them, because of the blindness of their heart: Who being past feeling have given themselves over to lasciviousness, to work all uncleanness with greediness. But you have not so learned Christ; If so be that you have heard him, and have been taught by him, as the truth is in Jesus: That you put off concerning the former conversation the old man, which is corrupt according to the deceitful lusts; And be renewed in the spirit of your mind; And that you put on the new man, which after God is created in righteousness and true holiness" (Eph.4:17-24).

It is important to remember that Paul was speaking to a people who have been transformed from human beings who had only the spirit of man into a new, holy creation that had the spirit of God. The Ephesians were not human like other people; they were holy with the divine nature of God within them. Therefore, they had to totally put away their old corrupt ways and live the holy life that they were created to live. When Paul said that they were to live in true holiness (Greek: aletheia hosiotes), he meant that they were to be living a truly pious life—a life in compliance with God's law.

The Father's elect who are his holy nation of kings, priests, ambassadors and temples on earth are held to the highest standards of ethical, moral, and spiritual behavior. The elect must conform to the Father's standards which are holy, not to mankind's standards which are unholy:

"Wherefore putting away lying, speak every man truth with his neighbor: for we are members one of another. Be you angry, and sin not: Let not the sun go down on your wrath: Neither give place to the devil. Let him that stole steal no more: but rather let him labor, working with his hands the thing which is good, that he may have to give to him that needs. Let no corrupt communication proceed out of your mouth, but that which is good to the use of edifying, that it may minister grace to the hearers. And grieve not the holy Spirit of God, whereby you are sealed to the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, and wrath, and anger, and clamor, and evil speaking, be
put away from you, with all malice: And be you kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake has forgiven you" (Eph.4:25-32 KJV).

Notice that all of the things Paul told the Ephesians to stop doing are violations of God's law, and all the things that they were to do are characteristics of godly behavior. Paul showed the Ephesians the difference between what is unlawful (unholy) and what is lawful (holy) in thought, attitude, and behavior. Moreover, he told them that, because they were holy creatures, they were to pursue only that which is holy.

In his letter to the Thessalonians, Paul expresses his desire for their continued spiritual growth so that they would be firmly established in the practice of holy behavior at the day of Christ's return.

"Now God himself and our Father, and our Lord Jesus Christ, direct our way to you. And the Lord make you to increase and abound in love one toward another, and toward all men, even as we do toward you: To the end he may establish your hearts unblameable in holiness [hagiosune] before God, even our Father, at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all his saints" (1.Thes. 3:11-13 KJV).

The English word holiness in verse 13 is translated from the Greek word hagiosune, which means the quality of holiness.

Paul wrote to Titus about certain types of behavior as being holy or unholy, and that elder women and spiritual leaders among the elect must exhibit holy behavior:

"But speak you the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness [hagiasmos], not false accusers, not given to much wine, but teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Titus 2:1-5 KJV).

The English word holiness in verse 3 is translated from the Greek word hagiasmos which means the state of purity.

"For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre: But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy [hosios], temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gainsayers" (Titus 1:7-9 KJV).
The English word *holy* in verse 8 is translated from the Greek word *hosios*, which means *intrinsic* or *divine character*. From this and other examples in this study, it is evident that a holy person has a state of being which is different from other humans on earth.

Just as the priesthood of Israel was held to a higher standard of holy behavior than the congregation of Israel, those who are the spiritual leaders among the Father's elect children are held to a higher standard of holy behavior. The teachers of God's law and way of life are held to the highest standard of holy behavior because they are to set the example of a pious lifestyle for others to follow.

**Garments of the Holy Ones**

The priests of ancient Israel were always to be properly clothed with holy garments when serving the Creator God in his temple. Any priest who failed to wear the proper garment when entering into the tabernacle and any priest who failed to remain properly clothed while serving in the tabernacle would die for their violation of the law regarding the holy state of existence within the tabernacle.

Why was it so important for God's priests to be properly clothed? It was important as a show of respect, reverence, and honor to God and as a continual reminder to them of who they were and whom they were serving.

The foundational elements of the law concerning being properly clothed while serving in the temple is a part of the gospel age agreement between God the Father and his royal priesthood who serve him in his temple today. His priests must always be properly clothed in the holy garments of their office which he has provided for them to wear in this life and in their lives after the resurrection to immortal life.

The major difference in the law concerning priestly clothing during the gospel age of salvation and under the covenant with national Israel is that, under the gospel age agreement, it applies in a spiritual context instead of a physical context.

Because the elect are in a spiritual battle against the forces of evil, Paul instructs the Ephesians to always wear the spiritual armor that has been given to them. A very important part of a warrior priest's armor is the breastplate of righteousness, which protects the heart:

"Finally, my brethren, be strong in the Lord, and in the power of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the wiles of the devil. For we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places. Wherefore take to you the whole armor of God, that you may be able to withstand in the evil day, and having done all, to stand. Stand therefore, having your loins girt about with truth, and having on the breastplate of righteousness; And your feet shod with the
preparation of the gospel of peace; Above all, taking the shield of faith, wherewith you shall be able to quench all the fiery darts of the wicked. And take the helmet of salvation, and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God" (Eph.6:10-17 KJV).

In Peter's instructions to the elders, he says to be clothed with humility, which is a godly attitude and a major part of practicing holiness:

"Likewise, you younger, submit yourselves to the elder. Yes, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and giveth grace to the humble" (1.Pet.5:5 KJV). See also 2.Cor.6:1-9.

While speaking of those who are called to participate in the first resurrection, Jesus revealed that, when someone is invited to participate in this awesome opportunity, they must heed the invitation and appear before the Sovereign God in the holy garments he provides for this occasion.

Matthew 22:2-14 NIV

"The kingdom of heaven is like a king who prepared a wedding banquet for his son. He sent his servants to those who had been invited to the banquet to tell them to come, but they refused to come' (vs.2-3).

"Then he sent some more servants and said, 'Tell those who have been invited that I have prepared my dinner: My oxen and fattened cattle have been butchered, and everything is ready. Come to the wedding banquet.' "But they paid no attention and went off, one to his field, another to his business' (vs.4-5).

"The rest seized his servants, mistreated them and killed them. The king was enraged. He sent his army and destroyed those murderers and burned their city. "Then he said to his servants, 'The wedding banquet is ready, but those I invited did not deserve to come. Go to the street corners and invite to the banquet anyone you find.' So the servants went out into the streets and gathered all the people they could find, both good and bad, and the wedding hall was filled with guests. "But when the king came in to see the guests, he noticed a man there who was not wearing wedding clothes. 'Friend,' he asked, 'how did you get in here without wedding clothes?' The man was speechless. "Then the king told the attendants, 'Tie him hand and foot, and throw him outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.' "For many are invited, but few are chosen" (vs.6-14).

This parable along with the following scriptures about the garments of the saints reveal that it is extremely important to be properly dressed spiritually in holy garments in order to appear before God who is holy:
"You have a few names even in Sardis which have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with me in white: for they are worthy" (Rev.3:4 KJV).

"Behold, I come as a thief. Blessed is he that watches, and keeps his garments, lest he walk naked, and they see his shame" (Rev.16:15 KJV). See also Zech.3:3-5; 1.Pet.5:5-9.

"Let us be glad and rejoice, and give honor to him: for the marriage of the Lamb is come, and his wife has made herself ready. And to her was granted that she should be arrayed in fine linen, clean and white: for the fine linen is the righteousness of saints" (Rev.19:7-8 KJV).

The Temple is Holy

"Don't you know that you are the temple of God, and that the spirit of God dwells in you? If any man defile the temple of God, God shall destroy him; because God's temple is holy [hagios] and you are his temple" (1.Cor.3:16-17 Para.). See Lev.10:1-10.

Here, Paul reprimands the elect at Corinth for their lack of understanding about the sanctity of their bodies which are the Sovereign Father's personal temples on earth where his spirit, his holy spirit, and Christ's spirit reside. See 1.Jn.3:24; Acts 5:32; Gal.4:4-6.

Under the first agreement with national Israel, the Israelites were to be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation; therefore, all the people, the priesthood, the temple, the altar, and everything associated with them were to be holy, because God who is holy was to dwell among them:

"And let them make me a sanctuary; that I may dwell among them" (Ex.25:8 KJV). See also Ex.29:43-45; 26:11-16; Deut.23:10-14.

Within the temple, the priesthood practiced holy rituals and acts of holiness. And from the temple, the priesthood taught the people God's laws which are the rules and standards for being holy and maintaining a holy lifestyle. See Ex.29:36-46; Lev.10:10-11;19:2; Deut. 23:14.

When The Messiah returns as King of kings and Lord of lords, he will dwell in Israel in order to teach the way of holiness from the temple:

"But in the last days it shall come to pass, that the mountain of the house of the Lord shall be established in the top of the mountains [above all governments], and it shall be exalted above the hills [above all nations]; and people shall flow to it. And many nations shall come, and say, Come, and let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, and to the house of the God of Jacob [the Creator God, Jesus Christ]; and he will teach us of his ways, and we will walk in his paths: for the law shall go forth of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem" (Mic.4:1-2 KJV). See also Isa.9:6-7.
Under the gospel age agreement that the Father has with his children, his personal spirit, his holy spirit, and the spirit of Christ dwell within them:

"But you are not in the flesh, but in the spirit, if so be that God's spirit dwells in you. Now if any man have not the spirit of Christ, he is none of his" (Rom.8:9 KJV).

"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them, and walk in them; and I will be their God, and they shall be my people" (2.Cor.6:16 KJV).

Today, the situation is similar to the one that existed when the Creator God dwelled in the sanctuary in national Israel. However, now it is the Father's priests who are his holy temples, perform acts of holiness, and practice and teach his law, which contains the rules and standards for being holy and remaining holy.

The priests Nadab and Abihu and many others were killed because they violated the strict laws of holy behavior concerning the holy temple and the holy things pertaining to it. See Lev.10:1-2; 1.Sam.6:19; 2.Sam. 6:1-7.

"Haven't you yet learned that your body is the home of the holy spirit God gave you, and that he lives within you? Your own body does not belong to you. For God has bought you with a great price. So use every part of your body to give glory back to God, because he owns it" (1.Cor.6:19-20 LPB).

The great price paid to redeem humanity was the death of Jesus Christ who was the Creator God before he emptied himself of his immortality and became human.

Many people do not realize that God has not changed; he still requires all things and all people that he owns by divine decree and right of covenant to be and to remain holy (i.e., free of all sin and impurity). See Mal.3:6; Heb.9:22-28.

"And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? for you are the temple of the living God; as God has said, I will dwell in them and walk in them; and I will be their God and they shall be my people. Wherefore come out from among them, and be you separate, says the Lord, and touch not the unclean thing; and I will receive you. And will be a Father to you, and you shall be my sons and daughters, says the Lord Almighty" (2.Cor.6:16-18 KJV).

Under the gospel age agreement, the defilement of the Father's temple occurs in the same way it did under the first covenant with national Israel. It occurs through willful disobedience of God's law or careless neglect of his law. See Isa.66:17-18; 1.Cor.3:16-17; 6:15-20; Tit.1:15-16.
The Father's holy spirit resides within his children who are also his personal temples on earth just like the Creator God's spirit-presence resided within the tabernacle and the temple in Israel. Because the Father will not allow his spirit to inhabit an impure place, a physical and a spiritual change occurs during baptism. In the baptismal water, the Father purifies the physical body through his spirit-power so that his holy spirit (his spirit-presence) can dwell within the repentant believer's physical body. See 1.Tim.5:22; Tit.1:15-16; Heb.10:14-22, 1.Pet.1:22; 1.Jn.3:1-3; 4:4.

In order to maintain a holy state of existence, one must become separate from that which is by nature unholy, common, and profane. However this is not easy; it takes mental and physical effort to maintain a separation from the things that would contaminate one's holiness. One must make an effort to resist unholy (sinful) thoughts and unholy actions. In some instances, one must avoid an association with certain circumstances and individuals that could negatively impact one's holy lifestyle.

"For through Jesus we both have access by one spirit to the Father. Therefore, you are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellow-citizens with the saints [i.e., the hagios, the pure or the blameless ones], and of the household of God; And are built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the corner-stone; In whom all the building fitted together grows into a holy temple in the Lord: In whom you also are built together into a dwelling-place of God in the spirit" (Eph.2:18-22 Para.).

The writings of the apostles leave no doubt that the physical body of a holy one is a temple where the spirit-presence of God dwells—a holy one is the Sovereign God's sacred temple on earth.

**The Holy Sacrifices and Prayers**

All lawful sacrifices to the Creator God under the first agreement with national Israel were considered holy and so are all lawful sacrifices offered to the Sovereign Father under the gospel age agreement. In fact, holy sacrifices are demanded by the Father from his children just as the Creator God demanded holy sacrifice from the Israelites.

Although the sacrifices under the gospel age agreement are spiritual in nature, they are still holy and are offered for the same primary reasons that they were required of ancient Israel. There are physical and spiritual lessons pertaining to holiness to be learned through sacrifice. The following are a number of instructions to the Father's elect that show the importance of making spiritual sacrifices:

"Therefore, lay aside all malice, and all guile, and hypocrisies, and envies, and all evil speech As newborn babes, desire the sincere milk of the word, that you may grow thereby: If so be you have tasted that the Lord is gracious. To whom coming, as to a living stone, disallowed indeed of men, but chosen of God, and precious, You also, as lively stones, are built up a spiritual house, an holy
The writer to the Hebrews confirms that the acknowledgment of the Father's awesome greatness to him by his children through the office of Jesus Christ as their high priest is considered by him to be a pleasing sacrifice:

"For here we do not have a continuing city [earthly Jerusalem], but we seek the city to come [heavenly Jerusalem]. Then through him [Jesus] let us always offer up a vocal sacrifice of praise to God the Father by confessing his name" (Heb.13:14-15 Para.).

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And when he had taken the scroll, the four beasts and twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb [Jesus Christ], having every one of them harps, and golden bowls full of incenses, which are the prayers of saints" (Rev.5:7-8 KJV Para.).
"And another angel stood at the altar, having a golden censer; and he was given much incense, that he should add it to the prayers of all saints on the golden altar which was before the throne. And the smoke of the incense which came with the prayers of the saints, ascended before God out of the angel's hand" (Rev. 8:3-4 KJV Para.). See also Rev. 5:8.

**Things Dedicated to God**

Shortly after the beginning of the early church, Ananias and Sapphira (a married couple) dedicated all the money they had received from a land sale to God. Because this money was dedicated to God it was considered holy and it belonged to God. However, Ananias and Sapphira violated the law of holiness by first stealing a part of what they had dedicated to God and then lying about the price of the land. This violation of the law resulted in their deaths:

"Now a man named Ananias, together with his wife Sapphira, also sold a piece of property. With his wife's full knowledge he kept back part of the money for himself, but brought the rest and put it at the apostles' feet. Then Peter said, "Ananias, how is it that Satan has so filled your heart that you have lied to the Holy Spirit and have kept for yourself some of the money you received for the land? Didn't it belong to you before it was sold? And after it was sold, wasn't the money at your disposal? What made you think of doing such a thing? You have not lied to men but to God." When Ananias heard this, he fell down and died. And great fear seized all who heard what had happened. Then the young men came forward, wrapped up his body, and carried him out and buried him. About three hours later his wife came in, not knowing what had happened. Peter asked her, "Tell me, is this the price you and Ananias got for the land?" "Yes," she said, "that is the price." Peter said to her, "How could you agree to test the Spirit of the Lord? Look! The feet of the men who buried your husband are at the door, and they will carry you out also." At that moment she fell down at his feet and died. Then the young men came in and, finding her dead, carried her out and buried her beside her husband. Great fear seized the whole church and all who heard about these events" (Acts 5:1-11 NIV).

Understanding the concept of transferring something to God's use, whether it is an object or a person, through a divine decree, a lawful ritual, or a dedication is very important to the Father's elect children. It is important for God's children to know that, once God takes possession of an object or a person and that object or person enters into his divine, sacred realm of the holy, the laws that govern all that is holy apply to it. Because the Father's elect are his holy possession, they can never return to the common or profane without forfeiting their salvation. See also Lk. 9:62; 2.Pet. 2:1-22.
Holy objects are not merely dedicated to a use; they are dedicated to serve a godly purpose instead of a common purpose. Therefore, they are symbolic of that which is good and pure as opposed to that which is common and profane. Holy objects are to remain holy.

The word of God cautions all who are holy to carefully consider the extreme importance of adhering to the laws of holiness and maintaining holy objects in a holy condition.

**The Family and the Holy Condition**

While giving instructions and guidelines about marriage, the apostle Paul addresses the situation where only one spouse in the marriage is a child of God. In these instructions, Paul reveals three basic understandings about the sacred status of unconverted individuals within a family where this condition exists. These understandings concern the unbelieving mate being sanctified, the children being made holy, and an opportunity for salvation being given to an unconverted mate:

"And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, let her not leave him. Because the unbelieving husband has been sanctified (hagiazo) because of his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified (hagiazo) because of her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy (hagios). But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, if you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, if you will save your wife?" (1.Cor.7:13-16 Para.).

The first clue to understanding what Paul said to the believing spouse is that being sanctified and being holy are two completely different things:

- The English word sanctified is translated from the Greek word hagiazo, which means purify, or consecrate.
- The English word holy is translated from the Greek word hagios, which means sacred, pure, blameless, holy, or saint.

There is a clear difference between the unconverted mate and the unconverted children in the eyes of God. The unconverted mate is sanctified but not holy, and the children are holy but not sanctified. These scriptures show two different degrees of the sacred realm being administered. The unconverted mate is purified or consecrated to a sacred use, but the children are placed in a sacred state of existence.

**Sanctified and Holy**

The following are two important questions that need to be answered about a converted person's unconverted spouse and a converted person's unconverted children:
1. How can an unconverted spouse be sanctified and an unconverted child be made holy?

2. Are the unconverted spouse's sanctified status and the unconverted children's holy status the same quality as the converted spouse or parent(s) sanctified and holy status?

To answer these questions, one must clearly understand that all unconverted people are sinners, which includes the unconverted spouse of an elect person and a converted parent's unconverted children. One must also understand that, because the unconverted spouse and the unconverted children are sinners, they live outside the specific agreement for salvation that a converted person has with the Sovereign Father.

Under the first covenant with national Israel, sins were never removed or forgiven; sins were only covered from God's view. Each year on the Day of Atonement, all of the accumulated sins of Israel were symbolically placed on the head of a live goat and symbolically sent away from God's sight. Although the Israelites were a holy people, they were sinners and under the death penalty for their sins because they did not have a perfect sacrifice that could be given to pay for their sins.

The ancient nation of Israel was a nation of sinners who were under the death penalty for their sins; however, they were a sanctified (i.e., set apart for a holy purpose) and holy people through divine decree, lawful ritual, and dedication to God. The Israelites were a physical people who were physically sanctified and holy, whereas the Father's elect children have been transformed into a new creation unlike any other on earth and are both physically and spiritually sanctified and holy.

Under the gospel age agreement, the Father's elect children are purged of sin in order to become sanctified and holy and are kept in a sanctified and holy condition through the following process:


2. The sacrificial blood of Christ covers and removes one's sins which results in one being perpetually blameless before the Father (i.e., not under the penalty of the law). See Rom.6:1-16; Gal.5:1-18).

3. The indwelling of God's spirit through which the Father's elect are kept in a state of physical and spiritual purity. See Eph.4:30; 2.Cor.1:20-22; Jude 1:24-25.
Because no justification (i.e., forgiveness of sin) is required for an unbelieving mate to be sanctified or the unconverted children to be made holy, it is clear that neither the unbelieving mate nor the unconverted children noted by Paul are of the Father's new creation. Yet, one is sanctified and the other made holy by divine decree. Neither are intrinsically holy like the believing mate, because neither the unconverted mate nor the unconverted children have been transformed into a new creature through the process of justification under the gospel age agreement. Therefore, the sanctification of the unconverted mate and the holy condition of the unconverted children are different in quality and degree from that of the converted spouse.

The Father has shown special favor to the unconverted spouse and unconverted children of a converted person and made an allowance in his plan for the unconverted spouse to be physically sanctified and unconverted children to be made physically holy like it was under the first covenant with national Israel.

The unconverted spouse’s sanctified status and the unconverted children’s holy status is only a physical condition and not a physical and spiritual condition which it is with the Father’s elect children.

The Unconverted Mate

The only explanation Paul gives for the unconverted mate being sanctified is so that the children will not be unclean. Therefore, the meaning of the word unclean is the key to understanding the kind of holiness and the degree of holiness that the children possess.

The English word unclean in 1.Chiphians 7:14 is translated from the Greek word akathartos, which is associated with a group of words that pertain to physical, moral, and cultic defilement and cleansing. Akathartos has to do with physical, cultic, and moral impurity which are all closely related.

The scriptures show that, under the gospel age agreement, spiritual impurity and defilement can only be removed through the process of conversion, which renders one totally sinless. Moreover, there is only one method by which the process of conversion into a sinless person can be performed under the gospel age agreement. Therefore, it is logical to conclude that, when Paul uses the word akathartos in verse 14 to denote an unclean condition in reference to the children, he is referring to a physical state of existence, not a spiritual state of existence.

What Paul said about unconverted children being unclean in the physical state and the unbelieving mate being sanctified for the sake of the children becomes clear when viewed in the context of the temple system of worship that God prescribed for national Israel, the Father's heavenly temple system of worship, and the Father's temple system of worship on earth during the gospel age.
Remember that all things closely associated with the temple system of worship in ancient Israel were to be ceremonially purified and that nothing unclean was allowed to enter into the temple. Once a person or a thing was accepted for use in the temple, that person or thing was holy and had to be respected as such. Moreover, it seems logical that, because the temple system of worship for ancient Israel was patterned after the heavenly temple system of worship (Heb.8:1-5; 9:19-23), the same logic concerning the clean and unclean applies today under the Father's temple system of worship on earth (2.Cor.6:17; Eph.5:5).

Because it is physical purity which is the issue in verse 14, it seems that one other reason for the purification or consecration of the unconverted spouse has to do with the physical relationship between the husband and wife. The scriptures tell us that a husband and wife are one flesh (Gen.2:24; Eph.5:31-33) and that the flesh can be contaminated by that which is physically impure (i.e., unclean); therefore, the physical relationship must be kept physically pure in order to keep the mate who is a holy temple of God from being defiled. See also Lev.7:19-21; 2.Cor.6:16-13.

The Unconverted Children

The Greek word for children in 1.Cor.7:14 is teknon, which is taken from the Greek root tiko. It means to produce (from a seed, as a mother, a plant, the earth) to bear, be born, or bring forth. Therefore, it seems that the unconverted children Paul refers to are the offspring produced from a union between a converted and an unconverted spouse. If this is the case, it would reinforce the logic behind the necessity to change the physical state of the unconverted spouse from unclean to clean in order to guarantee that the children from the union would be holy. The law of holiness shows that nothing unclean can enter into or issue forth from a temple of God and all things that issue forth from a holy being must be holy.

Although no scriptural proof has been found so far, it may also be true that, if children exist before a parent is converted, children of such a parent are made holy by divine decree at the time of the parent's conversion.

The Children's Holy Status

Because children of the elect are considered holy, there are a number of things concerning this holy status that need to be considered in order to determine the kind and the degree of their holy condition:
1. The children Paul speaks of in verse 14 are unconverted and without the spirit of God dwelling within them. If they were true believers with God's spirit dwelling within them, Paul's explanation of their holy state would not be necessary. Therefore, three of the meanings of the Greek word *hagios* (i.e., pure, blameless, and saint) in reference to the children being holy do not apply, which means only the other two meanings of the Greek word *hagios* (i.e., sacred and holy) can apply to the children. Also, the Greek word *anemos*, which means blameless and moral perfection and connotes perfect piety, is never used in reference to the elect's unconverted children.

2. With the understanding that there are different degrees of being sanctified and being holy, one can determine the holy status of the children noted in verse 14 by reviewing the following two categories in which the holy state exists:

   - There is the degree to which someone or something is more holy or less holy with the spirit-power of God expressed on or within it, which demands that one show reverence and respect for that which is holy (e.g., The Temple, the Holy of Holies, the Ark of the Covenant, and the High Priest).
   - There is the degree to which someone or something is more holy or less holy in the cultic sense (i.e., formal religious veneration, worship as a system of religious beliefs and ritual, great devotion to a person, idea, or thing), which demands that one show reverence and respect for that which is holy (e.g., God's name, God's law, the Sabbath and the office of the High Priest).

Because unconverted children of a holy person do not have the holy spirit residing within them, they cannot have the holy status granted to them; they can only have the holy status placed upon them.

Although it is not a perfect analogy, the following review of how Israelite children initially received their holy status does serve to illustrate how children of the elect also receive their holy status.

It was God's original intent for the nation of Israel to be a holy sacred nation (Ex.19:5-6) comprised of holy individuals through which all nations would be blessed. When children were born into an Israelite family, they were also born into the national covenant; therefore, the children received their holy status and covenant relationship with the Creator God through birthright.

It is important at this point to note that the gospel age agreement between God the Father and his children is not a national agreement; it is an agreement between two individuals which can only be entered into and maintained through the performance of very specific terms and conditions on the part of the individual with whom the Father has chosen to enter into an agreement.
Paul said that children of a converted person are holy; therefore, it is probable that children of the elect receive their holy status as a birthright, just as the Israelite children received their holy status. However, because unconverted children do not have the spirit of God dwelling within them, they are not intrinsically holy like their converted parent(s). Therefore, it seems logical that the children's holy status is only physical as was the holy status of all Israelites under the national agreement with the Creator God.

Under the covenant with ancient Israel, foreigners living within the nation of Israel who gave themselves to the service and worship of the Creator God were to be treated with fairness and respect and were afforded many of the same benefits and privileges as the Israelites; thereby, they also became beneficiaries of the blessings that were bestowed on Israel (Lev.19:33-34; Deut.10:17-19).

All citizens of national Israel received benefits from being a holy people, but not all citizens were allowed to participate in every aspect of its civil government or the sacrificial system of worship. Although all citizens of national Israel could participate in the sacrificial system of worship, only a few individuals were authorized specific functions and responsibilities for performing sacrifice and ritual at the temple and each of these individuals were limited by their function and responsibility in the degree of access they had to the temple and the Creator God.

Although children of the elect have holy status and are under the care and protection of the Father's holy nation and receive many benefits from having this sacred status, they are neither intrinsically holy like their parent(s) nor temples wherein the spirit of God dwells, because they are not of the new creation. Moreover, they are not citizens of the Father's spiritual nation and are therefore limited in their ability to participate in things of a spiritual nature, because the degree and quality of their holy condition is different from that of their holy parent(s).

Children's Conditional Holy Status

The holy status of the unconverted children of the elect and its maintenance is conditional and inexorably tied to their parents' holy status and its maintenance. In order to understand why this is so, we need to review the foundational elements of the covenant relationship between the Creator God and national Israel and the gospel age agreement between God the Father and his elect children.

The Creator God offered to make national Israel a kingdom of priests and a holy nation if they would obey his voice and keep his covenant. The Israelites agreed to this arrangement (Ex.19:4-8) and as long as the Israelites adhered to the terms and conditions of the agreement, the covenant remained in force and the Israelites and their children were holy. However, if they broke their agreement and did not move to restore a harmonious relationship between themselves and the Creator God as provided in the terms and conditions of the agreement, the agreement
would be terminated and the Israelites and their children would no longer be a kingdom of priests or a holy nation.

The Creator God used the covenant relationship between a husband and a wife as an analogy for the relationship between himself and national Israel (Isa.54:4-8; Jer.3:20). Because of national Israel's (i.e., the Houses of Israel and Judah) adultery and whoredom with false religion and their flagrant violation of the terms and conditions of their covenant with God, he divorced Israel and terminated his agreement with them (Jer.3:8;11:10-11,17; 31:32). Today, Israel is not a kingdom of priests or a holy nation, because there is no agreement in force between them and the Creator God. At this time, national Israel has no means through which to acquire or maintain a holy status like they did under their first agreement with the Creator God.

During the gospel age of salvation, God the Father offers an opportunity to individuals to become kings and priests in his royal family and holy nation under certain terms and conditions. As long as individuals adhere to these terms and conditions, their agreement with the Father remains in force. But, if the individual breaks their agreement with the Father and does not move to restore a harmonious relationship with him as provided under the terms and conditions of the agreement, the agreement and their holy status is terminated (Matt.12: 32; Rom. 6:23; Tit.3:10-11; Heb.10:26-31).

Because the holy status of the elect's children is predicated on the holy status of the parent(s), when the parent's holy status is terminated the unconverted children's holy status is also terminated and they no longer receive the benefits which resulted from the parents' holy status. See Deut.5:9-10; Hos.4:6.

The Opportunity

It seems that a unique opportunity for salvation under the gospel age agreement is granted to an unconverted individual married to one of the Father's elect children. It is beyond the scope of this study to analyze this opportunity in detail, but it does seem that this opportunity only exists for some individuals during this age in this particular situation (this may also include the unconverted children. See Acts 2:39).

"But if the unbeliever leaves, let him do so. A believing man or woman is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. How do you know, wife, if you will save your husband? Or, how do you know, husband, if you will save your wife?" (1.Cor.7:15-16 Para.).
HOLINESS: A RECOGNIZABLE QUALITY

Is there something that can be observed, heard, seen, or touched in this physical dimension that will reveal if a person is holy or practices holiness, or is practicing holiness just an abstract religious concept with no real substance? The condition of being holy and the true practice of holiness are clearly recognizable. There are many ways to determine if a person is truly holy and is practicing holiness according to the Bible's definition of being holy and practicing holiness. The following scriptural examples show how the physical and spiritual condition of being holy and the practice of holiness can be recognized by people and by spirit-beings.

The New Covenant

The focal point of the new covenant with national Israel is the placing of God's law within the innermost parts of one's being. The reason that the law needs to be a part of a person's very being is because it is the law that teaches a person what holy attitudes, behaviors, and character are and how to practice the way of holiness:

"Behold, the days come, says the Lord, that I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah: Not according to the covenant that I made with their fathers in the day that I took them by the hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; which my covenant they brake, although I was an husband to them, says the Lord: But this shall be the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel; After those days, says the Lord, I will put my law in their inward parts, and write it in their hearts; and will be their God, and they shall be my people" (Jer.31:31-33 KJV).

"This is the covenant I will make with the house of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people" (Heb.8:10 NIV).

"This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord, I will put my laws into their hearts, and in their minds will I write them; And their sins and iniquities will I remember no more. Now where remission of these is, there is no more offering for sin" (Heb.10:16-18 KJV).

Because people who lived before and during the first covenant with national Israel did not have the law of God as a part of their mental and spiritual make-up, they found it very difficult to maintain their holy status and obey and worship God as he originally intended. It is for this reason that God formed a new agreement, which included a provision that would change what was wrong with people by placing his laws in their minds and spirits.
God has only one set of laws that show people how to be holy, how to behave toward each other, and how they should worship him. Therefore, the law being spoken of in Jeremiah, chapter 31 and Hebrews, chapter 10 is the same law that he gave to the nation of Israel as a part of the first agreement with them. This is the law that he will write in the hearts and minds of people under the new agreement with national Israel and that is a part of the agreement with the Father's earthly children during the gospel age of salvation. In other words, God will write these laws in the innermost part of one's mind; thereby, he will make the law a part of one's thinking process.

This is how we are truly reconciled to God the Father. There is a change of mind, which is called conversion. One is converted from a hostile, sinning, evil-minded person into a loving, law-abiding, person who does the will of God. After conversion, one becomes holy and is no longer an enemy of God! Therefore, one indication that a person is holy is the practice of God's law.

**Known by Their Fruits**

Both Jesus and Paul reveal how one holy person can recognize another holy person when they are given enough time to evaluate a person's attitude, behavior, and character:

"A good tree cannot bring forth evil fruit, neither can a corrupt tree bring forth good fruit. Every tree that brings not forth good fruit is cut down, and cast into the fire. Wherefore by their fruits you shall know them. Not every one that says to me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that does the will of my Father which is in heaven" (Matt.7:18-21 KJV). See also Matt.12:33; Lk.6:43-44.

Throughout the Bible, good trees and good fruit are associated with people who are in conformity with God's law, while bad trees and bad fruit are associated with people who are living in opposition to God's law.

"When you were the servants of sin, you were free from righteousness. What fruit resulted from doing those things that you are now ashamed of doing? The end result of doing those things is death. But you are free from sin, and become servants of God, now you have the fruit of your holiness, which will result is everlasting life. For the wages of sin is death; but God's gift is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord" (Rom.6:20-23 Para.).

Why is the fruit of righteousness eternal life and the wages of sin death? The reason is that "The law is holy, and the commandment is holy, righteous and good" (Rom.7:12) and "All your [God's] commandments are righteousness" (Psa.119:172), but sin is the violation of God's holy law. The sacred state of righteousness and the practice of holiness are inexorably tied to obedience to God's law which results in eternal life. See Matt.19:16-20.
"The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law" and "The fruit of the Spirit is in all goodness and righteousness and truth" (Gal.5:23-25; Eph.5:9).

"This know also, that in the last days perilous times shall come. For men shall be lovers of their own selves, covetous, boasters, proud, blasphemers, disobedient to parents, unthankful, haughty, Without natural affection, truce breakers, false accusers, incontinent, fierce, despisers of those that are good, Traitors, heady, high-minded, lovers of pleasures more than lovers of God; Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away" (2.Tim.3:1-5).

Jesus Christ was just like the Sovereign Father and reflected his attitude, behavior, and character. A holy one is instructed to imitate these characteristics; therefore, one indication that a person is holy is that the person is following Jesus Christ's example and instructions about the practice of holiness and has godly characteristics—one fruit of the spirit is holiness.

Clearly, a person who is consistently out of step with God's way of life and refuses to conform to the basic laws of holiness is not a holy person.

Marked For Recognition

A holy individual who has the spirit of God dwelling within them and practices holiness is recognizable to beings who inhabit the spirit realm. The following accounts show that spirit-beings can easily recognize a person who is holy.

The prophet Ezekiel was given a vision showing that God's patience with national Israel will come to an end and that he will no longer sit quietly by while the houses of Israel and Judah and their civil and religious leaders commit their abominations and idolatry before him. In this vision, Ezekiel sees a spirit-being with an inkhorn being sent to mark for protection against God's wrath many of the elect who inhabit Jerusalem:

"Cause them that have charge over the city [Jerusalem] to draw near, even every man with his destroying weapon in his hand. And, behold, six men came . . . and one man among them was clothed with linen, with a writer's inkhorn by his side . . . . And he called to the man clothed with linen, which had the writer's inkhorn by his side; And the Lord said to him, Go through the midst of the city, through the midst of Jerusalem, and set a mark on the foreheads of the men that sigh and that cry for all the abominations that be done in the midst thereof. Slay utterly old and young, both maids, and little children, and women: but come not near any man on whom is the mark; and begin at my sanctuary" (Ezk.9:1-6 KJV).
How does the spirit-being with the inkhorn know who is worthy to receive the mark of protection? He could have a list of these people, another spirit-being could point them out to him, or perhaps there is something that emanates from a holy person that distinguishes them from other people. From the following accounts it seems that a spirit-being can distinguish a holy person from an unholy person by something emanating from a holy person which can only be perceived by a spirit-being.

The three following accounts show that spirit-beings easily recognize the difference between a person who is holy and one who is not:

"And in the synagogue there was a man, which had a spirit of an unclean devil, and cried out with a loud voice, Saying, Let us alone; what have we to do with you, you Jesus of Nazareth? art you come to destroy us? I know you who you art; the Holy One of God. And Jesus rebuked him, saying, Hold your peace, and come out of him. And when the devil had thrown him in the midst, he came out of him, and hurt him not" (Lk.4:33-35 KJV).

"And it came to pass, as we went to prayer, a certain damsel possessed with a spirit of divination met us, which brought her masters much gain by soothsaying: The same followed Paul and us, and cried, saying, These men are the servants of the most high God, which shew to us the way of salvation" (Acts 16:16-17 KJV).

"Then certain of the vagabond Jews, exorcists, took on them to call over them which had evil spirits the name of the Lord Jesus, saying, We adjure you by Jesus whom Paul preaches. And there were seven sons of one Sceva, a Jew, and chief of the priests, which did so. And the evil spirit answered and said, Jesus I know, and Paul I know; but who are you? And the man in whom the evil spirit was leaped on them, and overcame them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded" (Acts 19:13-16 KJV).

Yes, a holy person can be recognized; however, it is obvious from what we find in the scriptures that the only ones who can truly recognize if someone is holy and is practicing holiness are people who themselves are holy and understand the rules and standards for being holy, as well as spirit-beings who know the difference between the holy and the unholy.

SUMMARY

National Israel

The Creator God's covenant with national Israel required that all Israelites imitate his attitude, behavior, and character (You shall be holy, because I am holy) and maintain this sacred holy state of existence in order to receive benefits under the national covenant. Therefore, God revealed to the Israelites the laws which govern the holy state of existence and he instructed them in the practice of these laws in order for them to be holy and remain holy.
The laws of holiness given to the Israelites governed every aspect of their lives. Every circumstance was addressed either by a specific law, a concept, or a principle within the law. Therefore, when a holy state of existence was established through God's decree, lawful ritual, or dedication to God, the holy condition was to be maintained through adherence to the laws of holiness.

If a person violated the law of holiness and that violation was serious, the violator was to be put to death. The death of those who polluted the tabernacle and the ark of the covenant and the failure of national Israel to maintain a holy state of existence even after repeated warnings for them to be holy clearly show the importance of understanding how to become holy and how to maintain a holy lifestyle. See Lev.10:10-11.

If a person or a thing was defiled and the law allowed for the holy state to be reestablished, it could be reestablished through one or more of the following: The repentance of the violator, the removal of the defiling element, the proper sacrifice, and a purification ritual.

Among the Israelites, certain objects and animals were transformed from the natural realm to a holy existence to varying degrees depending on function, responsibility, or use. This was done through God's decree, lawful ritual, or dedication to God. The mental transformation from the natural state to the holy state came about for national Israel through a desire and willingness to obey God's instructions. God defined this desire and willingness to obey him as being circumcised in the heart. See Deut.10:16; 30:6.

God's instructions to the Israelites concerning being holy shows us that being holy and being unholy are not compatible states of existence, and that the physical must be transformed into the holy in order to safely interact with God's sacred realm of existence. Moreover, there are tremendous benefits for those who maintain a holy state of existence.

Spiritual Israel

Although those whom the Father calls to salvation during the gospel age have an agreement that is different from the one ancient Israel had with the Creator God, this agreement still requires the Sovereign Father's earthly children to be holy as he is holy:

"Therefore gird up the loins of your mind, being sober, perfectly hope in the grace being brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ. As obedient children, not in ignorance fashioning yourselves after your former lusts, but according to the Holy One who has called you also become holy in all conduct. Because it has been written, Be holy; because I am holy" (1.Pet.1:13-16 KJV Para.).
The Sovereign Father's earthly children are his holy nation of kings who are waiting to rule in his kingdom. They are his holy nation of priests who offer him holy sacrifice through his holy temple in which the holy spirit resides. And they are his ambassadors who are to represent him and his way of life to humanity.

Although the Father's children are intrinsically holy because they have his spirit dwelling within them, they are still required to perfect and maintain their holiness through practicing a holy lifestyle:

"For God has not called us to uncleanness, but to holiness" (1.Thes. 4:7 KJV).

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2.Cor.7:1 KJV).

"Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Heb.12:14 KJV).

"I speak after the manner of men because of the infirmity of your flesh: for as you have yielded your members servants to uncleanness and unto iniquity to iniquity: even so now yield your members servants unto righteousness unto holiness" (Rom.6:19 KJV).

In order to live a holy life and imitate god-like attitudes and behaviors, a person must know and understand God's law, because it is the law that defines and governs the sacred, holy state of existence. It is impossible to imitate god-like behavior unless one knows what it is and how to practice it. This is one of the reasons why the scriptures say to study the law and meditate on God's law. It is through the study of the law and meditation on it that one comes to understand God and why he is holy, righteous, and superior to all that he has caused to come into existence. Notice what King David and the apostle Paul said about the law and its importance in one's life:

"O how love I your law! it is my meditation all the day. You through your commandments hast made me wiser than mine enemies: for they are ever with me. I have more understanding than all my teachers: for your testimonies are my meditation. I understand more than the ancients, because I keep your precepts" (Psa.119: 97-100 KJV).

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2.Tim.2:15 NKJV).
Tremendous Blessings

Those who truly follow God's laws, precepts, and principles during the gospel age of salvation will be blessed beyond comprehension, because they are among the first of humanity to be given the opportunity to be holy as God is holy in the spiritual sense:

"Blessed are the undefiled in the way, who walk in the law of the Lord. Blessed are they that keep his testimonies, and that seek him with the whole heart. They also do no iniquity: they walk in his ways" (Psa.119:1-3 KJV).

There are awesome rewards for those who diligently pursue a holy lifestyle in obedience to God's law and successfully maintain their sacred state of holiness:

"Having therefore these promises, dearly beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from all filthiness of the flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2.Cor.7:1 KJV).

"Blessed and holy [hagios] is he that has part in the first resurrection: on such the second death has no power, but they shall be priests of God and of Christ, and shall reign with him a thousand years" (Rev.20:6 KJV).

"And he said to me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy (hagios), let him be holy (hagiazo) still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last. Blessed are they that do his commandments, that they may have right to the tree of life, and may enter in through the gates into the city. For without are dogs, and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loves and makes a lie" (Rev.22:10-15 KJV).

The English word holy in Revelation 20:6 and 22:11 is translated from the Greek word hagios, which means sacred, pure, blameless, holy or saint. The English phrase be holy in Revelation 20:11 is translated from the Greek word hagiazo, which means purify or consecrate.

All of these holy, righteous individuals are to be blessed, because after they were made holy through the process of repentance and baptism, they continued to practice God's law of holiness.
THE FUTURE

Isaiah records that, after Christ's return and the government of God is established in Jerusalem, all the residence of the city will be called holy. It seems that the reason these people will be called holy is because they will be practicing the laws of holiness:

"In that day shall the branch of the Lord be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the earth shall be excellent and comely for them that are escaped of Israel. And it shall come to pass, that he that is left in Zion, and he that remains in Jerusalem, shall be called holy, even every one that is written among the living in Jerusalem: When the Lord shall have washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion, and shall have purged the blood of Jerusalem from the midst thereof by the spirit of judgment, and by the spirit of burning. And the Lord will create on every dwelling place of mount Zion, and on her assemblies, a cloud and smoke by day, and the shining of a flaming fire by night: for on all the glory shall be a defense" (Isa.4:2-5 KJV).

The prophet Ezekiel was inspired to record that the priests who administer the temple system after the return of Christ will teach the same things concerning holiness that were taught to ancient Israel, the early church, and the elect at the end of the age:

"And they [the Priests] shall teach my people the difference between the holy and profane, and cause them to discern between the unclean and the clean" (Ezk.44:23 KJV). See also Lev.10:9-11; 11:46-47.

There is a heavy penalty to be paid by anyone who has had holiness placed within them and then contaminates their holy state and neglects to repent and ask for forgiveness for their violation of the law of holiness:

"Therefore as the fire devours the stubble, and the flame consumes the chaff, so their root shall be as rottenness, and their blossom shall go up as dust: because they have cast away the law of the Lord of hosts, and despised the word of the Holy One of Israel" (Isa.5:24 KJV).

A Physical and Spiritual Reality

The Sovereign Father and his firstborn son Jesus Christ are holy; they are spirit-beings who inhabit a dimension of existence which is ruled by perfect law. For God the Father's holy children, holiness is a physical and spiritual reality that derives its sacred quality of existence from God the Father through the power of his holy spirit. It is this sacred quality of existence that separates the Father's earthly children from the rest of humanity and allows them to interact with the Father's heavenly realm.
What does it mean to be holy during the gospel age of salvation?:

• One is intrinsically holy with God's holy spirit dwelling within them.
• One is not human as others are human, but is a holy creation.
• One is a member of the Sovereign Father's holy family and holy nation.
• One must practice the laws of holiness which are applicable to one's life.

All who desire to become an immortal spirit-being, inherit the Kingdom of God, and reap the awesome rewards that are promised for being holy must remain holy, love God with all their being, and obey his laws of holiness:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him" (1.Cor.2:9 KJV).

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The writers of the New Testament have much to say about the personal and collective works of those who are called to salvation and become a part of the Father's holy nation of ambassadors, kings, and priests. The writers carefully explain what the personal and collective works are which the elect should be engaged in and provide many examples of the attitude which must accompany these works and the effort to be expended in doing them.

When a person is called to salvation and makes a commitment to follow the Father's way of life, they have also committed to do good works. However, some individuals feel that, once a person is baptized and has received the holy spirit, all that is required of them is to have faith in the Father's promise to grant them eternal and immortal life. Although having faith is a major part of our relationship with the Father, we must also diligently seek him:

"Without faith it is impossible to please the Father, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he is, and that he rewards those who diligently seek him" (Heb.11:6 Para.).

Diligently seeking the Father means many things, such as getting to know him, building and maintaining a harmonious relationship with him, and trying to understand and do his will in our lives. The scriptures tell us that a major part of the Father's will for us is that we do good works, which will determine our reward at Christ's return (Matt.16:24-27; Rev.22:12). Moreover, Christ warns those who do nothing with what they are given to work with that they will not be granted entry into his Father's heavenly family and kingdom. See Matt.25:14-30; Lk.19:12-26.

The apostle James addresses the false assumption that faith alone will save us and he summarizes what true faith is and what we must do to prove to the Father and Jesus Christ that we truly have the kind of faith which results in our being worthy to enter the Kingdom of God:

"Dear brothers, what's the use of saying that you have faith and are Christians if you aren't proving it by helping others? Will that kind of faith save anyone? If you have a friend who is in need of food and clothing, and you say to him, "Well, good-bye and God bless you; stay warm and eat heartily," and then don't give him clothes or food, what good does that do? So you see, it isn't enough just to have faith. You must also do well to prove that you have it. Faith that doesn't show itself by good works is no faith at all—it is dead and useless" (Jms.2:14-24 LBP).
What the apostle James wrote about doing good works is extremely important, because if your faith is dead, so is your claim to salvation.

The apostle Paul wrote the following about the elect who see no need to do good works:

"Don't you realize how patient he is being with you? Or don't you care? Can you see that he has been waiting all this time without punishing you, to give you time to turn from your sin? His kindness is meant to lead you to repentance. But no, you won't listen; and so you are saving up terrible punishment for yourselves because of your stubbornness in refusing to turn from your sin; for there is going to come a day of wrath when God will be the just judge of all the world. He will give each one whatever his deeds deserve" (Rom. 2:4-6 LBP).

Paul introduces his reprimand to those who refuse to do the Father's will in their life by telling them that his patience is not to be viewed as acceptance of their lifestyle, but as an opportunity to do the right thing.

Although the Father has great patience with those he has called to salvation, those who continue to refuse to do what they know is his will are making a terrible mistake, because each individual will be judged according to their works—whether good or bad.

"He will give eternal life to those who patiently do the will of God, seeking for the unseen glory and honor and eternal life that he offers. But he will terribly punish those who fight against the truth of God and walk in evil ways—God's anger will be poured out on them. There will be sorrow and suffering for Jews and Gentiles alike who keep on sinning. But there will be glory and honor and peace from God for all who obey him, whether they are Jews or Gentiles. For God treats everyone the same" (Rom.2:7-11 LBP).

A major part of doing the Father's will is doing good works which involve collective and personal responsibilities within his holy nation and royal family on earth. However, if you do not truly understand your personal responsibilities within the Father's family or what the Father considers good works, you cannot effectively participate in his work on earth. Moreover, if you do not know what he considers good works, how can you please him and learn the lessons of doing good works?

This chapter provides an overview of the work the Father has begun on earth which Christ was sent to complete. This chapter also reveals what the biblical record defines as good works along with details about how to do the personal and collective work the Father expects you to be doing under the guidance of Christ as you work out your salvation.
THE FATHER'S WORK ON EARTH

Because Jesus healed a man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, the Jews accused him of breaking the Sabbath. To this accusation Jesus answered, "My Father continues to work, and I also work" (Jn.5:17 Para.).

Jesus clearly said that his heavenly Father was actively engaged in doing a work and that he was also doing a work. But what was the Father's work and is he still doing this work today?

The Father's Work

The biblical record shows that, before the foundation of the world, the Sovereign God determined that those whom he would create and call to salvation during this gospel age would become holy and blameless through the sacrifice of his firstborn son Jesus Christ, so that they could be adopted into his family as his spirit-sons:

"According as he has chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: having predestined us to the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will... in whom also we have obtained an inheritance, being predestined according to the purpose of him who works all things after the counsel of his own will, for us to be the praise of his glory, the ones who first trusted in Christ" (Eph.1:4-5, 11-12 KJV Para.). See also 2.Tim.1:8-10.

Verses 11 and 12 tell us the Father predetermined that certain individuals would come into existence to perform a work for him. The predestination the apostle Paul speaks of in verses 11 and 12 has nothing to do with a person's decision of whether or not to repent. It has everything to do with the Father's predetermined plan (i.e., his will and purpose) for the salvation of specific individuals at a specific point in human history and the salvation of humanity as a whole.

The Father's Creation

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph.2:10 KJV).

If you are one of the Father's elect children, you are his work that he created in Jesus Christ and your purpose for being created is to do a work for him.

The Father Began a Work in Us

"Paul and Timothy, the servants of Jesus Christ, to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons: Grace be to you, and peace, from God our Father, and from the Lord Jesus Christ. I thank my God upon every remembrance of you, Always in every prayer of mine for you all making request with joy, For your fellowship in the gospel from the first day until now; Being
confident of this very thing, that he which has begun a good work in you will do it until the day of Jesus Christ: Even as it is fit for me to think this of you all, because I have you in my heart; inasmuch as both in my bonds, and in the defense and confirmation of the gospel, you all are partakers of my grace" (Phil.1:1-7 KJV). See also Job 14:14-15; 1.Cor.15:52-58.

The Father began his work in us when he predestined some of us to come into existence before the foundation of the world in order to be called to salvation during this age. He also predetermined that, because of circumstance, some of us would have an opportunity to be in the first resurrection along with those who were predestined for a special purpose before the foundation of the world.

Paul also notes that the Father's elect children are a work in progress which will be finished at the coming of Jesus Christ when they will be transformed into spirit-beings and enter the Father's heavenly family and kingdom.

The Bible clearly shows that the Father's primary purpose for creating humanity is to increase his family and kingdom through the transformation of humans into his spirit-sons with whom he will share all he has:

"But rather you seek the kingdom of God; and all these things shall be added to you. Don't be afraid, little flock; because it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk.12:31-32 KJV Para.).

A major part of the Father's work on earth concerns calling individuals to salvation and then guiding, teaching, nurturing, and protecting them so that they can successfully fulfill the purpose for their calling and enter his family and kingdom:

"For it is God which works in you both to will and to do of his good pleasure" (Phil.2:13 KJV).

"Now the God of peace [God the Father], that brought again from the dead our Lord Jesus, that great shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, Make you perfect in every good work to do his will, working in you that which is well-pleasing in his sight, through Jesus Christ; to whom be glory for ever and ever. Amen" (Heb.13:20-21 KJV).

**Called According to a Purpose**

"But we know that all things work together for good to those who love God, and for those who are called according to a purpose. For whom he foreknew, he predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brethren. Moreover those he predestined, he also called: and those he called, he also justified: and those he justified, he also glorified" (Rom.8:28-30 Para.). See also Jms.1:18.
Each person to whom the Father presents the opportunity for salvation during this age is called to perform a function and responsibility within his holy nation and royal family.

**JESUS' WORK**

When the Jews asked Jesus about healing the man at the pool of Bethesda on the Sabbath, Jesus said to them, "My Father continues to work, and I also work" (Jn.5:17 Para.).

The Jews continually asked Jesus who he was, who gave him the authority to teach about God, and who gave him the power to work miracles, because they neither knew God the Father existed nor that the Father had sent Jesus to do a work for him:

"But I have a greater witness than that of John: for the works which the Father has given me to finish, the same works that I do, bear witness of me, that the Father has sent me. And the Father himself, which has sent me, has borne witness of me. You have neither heard his voice at any time, nor seen his shape. And you have not his word abiding in you: for whom he has sent, him you believe not... I am come in my Father's name, and you receive me not: if another shall come in his own name, him you will receive. How can you believe, which receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only? Do not think that I will accuse you to the Father: there is one that accuses you, even Moses in whom you trust" (Jn.5:36-45 KJV).

Jesus' whole ministry was about doing the things his Father sent him to accomplish on his behalf. As Jesus went about proclaiming the good news of salvation and the kingdom of God, he also performed many beneficial miracles for people, such as healing the sick, raising the dead, and feeding thousands who came to hear him speak.

Because Jesus had supernaturally produced food to feed a great number of people, some of them thought the work of God was just a physical work and wanted to continue to be given free food. To this line of thinking, Jesus said the following:

"Don't labor for food which perishes, but for that food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of man shall give to you: for him has God the Father sealed. Then they asked him, What shall we do, that we might work the works of God? Jesus answered, This is the work of God, that you believe on him whom he has sent" (Jn.6:27-29 Para.) See also Jn.10:32-38; Jms.2:14-24.

Jesus explained to these people that miraculous works were not the goal of his work, but these works had the more important purpose of bringing people to the point that they would believe what he was telling them about the Father and himself and the method by which they could gain eternal life.
Christ Continues His Work

Although Jesus completed the work the Father gave him to do during his physical life, he is still doing a work for the Father today. Part of this work concerns the oversight of the Father's family on earth, the preparation of positions of authority and service for the elect in the Father's Kingdom, and the preparation for a greater work at the end of this age.

"For the husband is the head of the wife, even as Christ is the head of the church: and he is the savior of the body. Therefore as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in every thing" (Eph.5:23-24 KJV). See Eph.1:22-23; Col.1:18.

Christ Establishes Positions of Authority

"Let not your heart be troubled: you believe in God, believe also in me. In my Father's house are many mansions [i.e., offices or positions of authority]: if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to myself; that where I am, there you may be also" (Jn.14:1-3 KJV).

Christ Has a Future Work

"For the Lord will execute his sentence quickly on the earth and finish his work by cutting it short. And Isaiah said, Except the Lord of Armies had left us some descendants, we would have become like Sodom, and Gomorrha" (Rom.9:28-29 Para.). See also Isa.1:9; 10:20-25; 54:7-8; Acts 13:38-41.

"And I saw heaven opened, and behold a white horse; and he that sat on him was called Faithful and True, and in righteousness he does judge and make war. His eyes were as a flame of fire, and on his head were many crowns; and he had a name written, that no man knew, but he himself. And he was clothed with a vesture dipped in blood: and his name is called The Word of God. And the armies which were in heaven followed him upon white horses, clothed in fine linen, white and clean. And out of his mouth goes a sharp sword, that with it he should smite the nations: and he shall rule them with a rod of iron: and he treads the winepress of the fierceness and wrath of Almighty God. And he has on his vesture and on his thigh a name written, King of Kings, And Lord of Lord" (Rev.19:11-16 KJV).

THE HARVEST OF HUMANITY

God the Father and Jesus Christ are doing a work on earth which will result in humans being transformed into spirit-beings and made a part of the Father's heavenly family and kingdom. This work is often called the harvest.
The first harvest of humanity consists of righteous individuals called to salvation before and after the advent of Christ who are worthy to participate in the first resurrection at the end of this age. The second and third groups of humans to be harvested into the Father's family and kingdom will be those who live during and after the millennial reign of Jesus Christ.

Jesus is the first human to successfully be transformed into a son of God the Father and enter into his heavenly family and kingdom as a god-being:

"But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the first-fruits of them that slept. For since by man came death, by man came also the resurrection of the dead. For as in Adam all die, even so in Christ shall all be made alive. But every man in his own order: Christ the first-fruits; afterward they that are Christ's at his coming" (1.Cor.15:20-23 KJV).

Paul wrote that, at Christ's return, those who are his followers will also make the transition into a spirit life-form as the first of the Father's harvest. The apostles James and John recorded that those who participate in the first resurrection are considered first-fruits of the harvest of humanity. See Jms.1:16-18; Rev.14:1-4.

Labors in His Field

A major part of the personal and collective work of the Father's earthly children consists of being laborers (1.Cor.3:5-9) to help gather those whom he calls into their fellowship (Acts 2:47). This is a part of the continuing work that Jesus commanded the apostles and those who would come after them to do until his return:

"Therefore you go and teach all nations, baptizing them into the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the holy spirit: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age. Amen" (Matt. 28:19-20 Pará.).

The assignment Jesus gave to his followers to proclaim the gospel is often called the Great Commission. The apostles and the early church preached the good news message with great power through personal and public evangelism. Although the primary responsibility for preaching the gospel fell to the apostles and those specifically chosen and sent to evangelize, this responsibility was not theirs alone; it was and still is a task to be shared by all of the elect. All who believe the gospel message and have accepted its terms and conditions for salvation must participate in proclaiming the Father's message. See 1.Cor.12:1-31.
What is the Message?

Jesus told his disciples to teach the things he had taught. These things to be taught not only referred to the things Jesus taught during his earthly ministry in human form but also the things he taught Israel as the Creator God before he became flesh. Please read Jn.1:1-11; Eph.3:9; 2.Tim. 3:16.

"And he said to them, You go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believes and is baptized shall be saved; and he that does not believe shall be damned" (Mk.16:15-16 Para.).

All who hear the Father’s good news message are held responsible for their response to this message. Moreover, all who hear the message with understanding and truly believe its message and then act upon it in a positive manner will be spared from eternal death. However, those who hear with understanding and turn their back on the opportunity presented to them will suffer the second death from which there is no return.

The Harvest is Ready

"Don't you say, Isn't it still four months until the harvest? behold, I say to you, Lift up your eyes, and look at the fields; because they are ready to harvest. And he that reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit to life eternal: that both he that sows and he that reaps may rejoice together. And herein is that saying true, One sows, and another reaps. I sent you to reap that on which you have contributed no labor: other men labored, and you are entered into their labors" (Jn.4:35-38 Para.).

Here, Jesus spoke to his disciples about the harvest of humanity and said that the harvest of his time was ready to be reaped. Many other scriptures show that this instruction to harvest people into the Father's family and kingdom is also meant for the elect who would be sent to the harvest after the demise and disappearance of the early church.

CALLED TO DO GOOD WORKS

It is important to understand that the awesome opportunity of being called to salvation during this age is a unique opportunity which must be made the primary focus of your life if you are to successfully obtain immortal life in the Father's heavenly family. Without understanding why you exist and why the Father has called you to salvation during this age, you cannot begin to fulfill the Father's expectations for your life.

Created to Good Works

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph.2:10 KJV).
Paul explains that those whom the Father has created in Christ were created to perform good works for him. The performance of these works actually begins when you accept his call to become his son and begin to change your life (i.e., the work of repentance - Acts 2:37-39; 5:32). After repentance, baptism, and receiving the holy spirit, the Father expects a person to continue to do good works for him throughout their life. Therefore, understanding the biblical teaching on this subject is essential for anyone who is serious about their salvation and responsibility to be a productive member within the Father's earthly family.

The following are a few of the many good works the Father expects a person to accomplish during their lifetime:

1. Work out your salvation under the guidance of the Father and Jesus Christ (Phil.2:12-13).
3. Grow toward spiritual maturity to help Jesus Christ rule the world (Rev.5:10).
6. Help serve the physical and spiritual needs of the Father's earthly family and do good to others (Gal.6:6-10).
7. Be a good example of a righteous lifestyle to those within and outside of the Father's family (Matt.5:16).

WARNINGS

There are many warnings for the elect to seriously consider who they are and what they have been called to do now and in the future. Many of these warnings concern the issue of doing personal and collective works.

Do Not be Lazy

"But that which bears thorns and briers is rejected, and is near to being cursed; whose end is to be burned. But, beloved, we expect better things of you, things that accompany salvation, even though we speak this way. For God is not unrighteous, he will not forget your work and labor of love, which you have shown toward his name, because you have served and continue to serve the elect. And we want all of you to show the same diligence and hope until the end: so that you will not be lazy, but following those who through faith and patience inherit the promises" (Heb.6:8-12 Para.).
If you are truly called of the Father and truly want to inherit the promises he has given to his children during this gospel age of salvation, you cannot afford to be apathetic or lazy toward the work you have been called to do.

The Number One Priority

Jesus gave two illustrations to show the importance of prioritizing your life so that you can fulfill your calling and enter the Kingdom of God:

"Listen carefully. Beware of an excessive desire for things of this world, because a person is more than their possessions. Then he said: A certain rich man's field produced a great crop, and he said to himself, I have so much in my barns that I don't have room to store it, so I'll tear down my barns and build larger ones in which to put all that I get. And I will stop working because I have more than enough to last me many years, and now I will just eat, drink and enjoy a leisure life. But God said to him, You fool, tonight you will die, now who will possess the things that you worked for? So is the person that stores treasure for himself and is not rich toward God" (Lk.12:15-21 Para.).

No one can take physical possessions into the Father's spiritual dimension of existence. The only things a child of God can take with them into the Father's spirit realm is the knowledge, understanding, and character acquired during this physical life. Doing good works for the Father is a major part of fulfilling his purpose for your life and it helps you to develop godly character which is necessary for entrance into the Father's kingdom:

"Then turning to his disciples he said, Don't have anxious thoughts about your life, or what you will eat or what clothing you will wear. Because life is more than food and clothing. . . The Father will clothe you. . . Don't make what you eat or drink your priority. Don't be anxious about these things, for these are the things that other people make their priorities in life: Your Father knows that you need these things. But rather seek the Kingdom of God and these things will be provided for you. Don't fear, little flock because it is the Father's pleasure to give you the kingdom" (Lk.12:22-32 Para.).

The Father wants to give you his kingdom; however, he can only do this if you will make the fulfilling of his purpose for your existence the first priority in your life. The scriptures clearly show that there is nothing else you can accomplish during this life that is more important than fulfilling the Father's purpose for your creation and existence.

The Seven Churches

The warnings to the seven ancient churches of Asia are unmistakably meant for the Father's elect children of today. These warnings should be viewed as an extremely serious matter, because how you view them will determine your eternal destiny.
The messages recorded in the Book of Revelation, chapters two and three are about the characteristics of the Father's children who exist in the end of the age. These messages contain serious reprimands and dire warnings of severe correction by Jesus Christ. Each of the seven messages ends with the following admonition:

"He who has an ear to hear, let him hear what the spirit says to the churches" (Rev.2:7).

It is a shame that, during this age of the church, most of those who have been called are forgetting or have already forgotten the awesome meaning of their calling and responsibilities to God the Father and Jesus Christ. Many are in a sad state of spiritual decay and in need of a dramatic change in attitude and behavior before the arrival of Jesus Christ.

The message in chapters two and three of Revelation shows the severity of correction which will be needed to awaken many of the elect to their extremely dangerous situation. It is clear from these warnings that only a few of the elect truly understand the seriousness of the times they live in and the things the Father and Christ require of them.

Most of the elect think everything is just fine, but, things are not just fine, which is why Jesus will pour out his wrath on all but one-seventh of the elect. Make no mistake, Jesus would much rather see those who need to repent do so without having to be corrected through trial and persecution. However, because Jesus loves us deeply, he will attempt to shake the apathetic, lazy, and sinful out of their sleep of death with strong persecution and trials in the hope that some will awaken to their terminal condition and repent before it is too late.

**The Servants and the Door-keeper**

At the end of Jesus' explanation of the events that will take place before his return, he gave the following warning to the Father's elect:

"But concerning the day and the hour, no one knows, not the angels, those in heaven, nor the Son, but the Father knows. Therefore, be careful; be awake and pray. Because you don't know when the time is. It is like a man who left his house and placed his servants in charge, assigned each work to do, and commanded the doorkeeper to keep watch. Therefore, watch. Because, you don't know if the master of the house will come back in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the cock, or in the morning: Lest he suddenly comes and finds you sleeping. What I say, I say to everyone, Watch" (Mk. 13:32-37 para.). See also Lk.12:37-48.

Each servant is given a task to do and the one who guards the entrance to the house must always be alert, because the master may come back at any time. Moreover, the master should find everyone in the household doing what is expected of them. Clearly, this parable is a warning directed at the Father's household who are servants on earth over whom Jesus Christ rules as the master of the house.
When one views this warning to watch in the context of the Father's elect, it becomes clear that, if you halfheartedly do the work you are called to do or just quit working (fall asleep spiritually), you will be in deep trouble with the Father and Jesus Christ.

**Increase What You Are Given**

In the parable about the events which will precede his return, Jesus explains the need for each of the Father's elect to be actively working to increase what they have been given to work with.

"Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour. It will be like a man going on a journey, who called his servants and entrusted his property to them. To one he gave five talents of money, to another two talents, and to another one talent, each according to their ability. . ." (Matt.25:13-15 NIV Para.).

When Jesus returns, each of us must give an account of what we have done with what we have been given. The faithful are the ones who increase the value of what they are given and receive a reward for their efforts (Matt.25:20-23). However, some will not try to increase what is entrusted to them:

"Then the man who had received the one talent came. 'Master', he said, I knew that you are a hard man, harvesting where you have not sown and gathering where you have not scattered seed. So I was afraid and went out and hid your talent in the ground. See, here is what belongs to you" (Matt.25:24-25 NIV).

The elect who do nothing with the opportunities that come their way and the physical and spiritual blessings and gifts they are given to work with are viewed as worthless servants:

"His master [Jesus] replied, You wicked, lazy servant! You knew that I harvest where I have not sown and gather where I have not scattered seed [i.e., You understood what I was doing and yet you did nothing]. You should have at least put my money in the hands of an investor, then I would have received my money back with some interest added to it. . . Take the talent from him and give it to the one who has the ten talents. . . And throw this worthless servant outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth" (Matt.25:26, 28-30 NIV Para.).

The following are many important lessons which can be learned from what is said to the unprofitable servant:

1. When the Father calls an individual to salvation, that person has enough personal attributes to be spiritually successful and secure salvation with the help of the holy spirit; otherwise, that person would have never been called.

2. At the proper time, each person is given something according to their potential with which to accomplish a work for the Father.
3. Although each individual may have different skills, talents, or supernatural abilities through the holy spirit, each person is required to add to the value of what they are given to work with.

4. The parable clearly shows that, if a person feels inadequate or is unable because of some valid reason to do an individual work by themselves, that person should find a way to place their skills, talents, or abilities under the direction of someone who is more able to use them to produce a positive result for the Master.

5. The parable infers that, if a person will make an effort to accomplish something of worth for the Master, they will receive a reward for that effort.

6. The unprofitable servant was not punished because of feeling inadequate or being unable to work; the punishment was the result of doing nothing positive with what was given.

7. The reward the unworthy servant should have received for faithful service will be given to those servants who seize opportunity and are willing to work and produce something of value for the Master.

These are the overall lessons of this parable:

- The Father and Jesus Christ expect each of the elect to grow in grace and knowledge and to produce spiritual fruit in their life.
- Each individual is to accomplish something of value for the Father to claim as his own when they give an account of their life's work.
- If a person becomes too fearful and lazy to accomplish something positive for the Father, they are not worthy to enter the Family and Kingdom of God.
- Each individual who is called to salvation must make an effort to use what they have been given and to increase their personal worth for the benefit of the Father.

It only takes a review of the other parables Jesus gave about the necessity to do a personal and collective work for the Father to understand that, if you do not heed these warnings, you will be in jeopardy of losing your rewards and salvation. See Matt.25:14-30; Lk.12:35-40.

**Be a Doer of the Word**

"But you be doers of the word, not hearers only, deceiving yourselves. For if anyone hears the word, and does not do it, they are like a man looking at his face in a mirror. Because he looks at himself and departs, and right away forgets what kind of man he was. But whoever looks into the perfect law of liberty, and continues in it, is not a forgetful hearer, but a doer of the work, this person shall be blessed because of their work" (Jms.1:22-25 Para.).
This analogy pictures the following two categories of the elect who start out truly understanding their calling and what is required of them:

1. The person who does nothing about fulfilling their calling will soon forget their awesome opportunity and responsibility as a child of God.

2. The person who does what they know they should be doing will be blessed for their effort.

Your mental condition determines which of these two categories you will be in. In this analogy, self-deception seems to be the result of truly understanding the Father's will but believing, for some erroneous reason, that it is unnecessary to practice his will in your life. To avoid becoming a worthless servant, it is imperative that you practice what you know to be your heavenly Father's will in your life once you truly understand what he expects of you.

It is important to understand that James sets this instructional analogy within the context of the active pursuit of a righteous life-style and the various attitudes, behaviors, trials, temptations, problems, and situations which commonly occur as you work out your salvation.

Throughout life, we are faced with many opportunities to make right or wrong decisions concerning living a righteous life-style. The first time a person makes a serious mistake after their conversion, they may recognize this as a sin due to a weakness in their life. If a person deals with it at that time and resolves to change, the problem will be overcome. But, if they compromise themselves again and again, each subsequent compromise becomes easier and easier until self-deception sets in and sin becomes acceptable.

It is the consistent compromising of the truth which a person truly understands that leads a person into self-deception and into forgetting who they are and their awesome opportunity and responsibility as a child of God. This is why it is not enough to just know that the Father requires you to do good works; you must also do good works in order to be righteous and maintain a harmonious relationship with the Father and Jesus Christ.

JUDGEMENT AND REWARDS FOR WORKS

Although all who live a righteous life will receive eternal life, the authority, office, and glory you will receive in the Father's heavenly family and kingdom for doing good works during this life will not only depend on the kind and amount of works you do but also on the attitude, effort, and diligence with which you have done these works.

Judgement

The following scriptures reinforce the fact that each person who has been made a part of the Father's holy nation and royal family on earth is required to do works:
"For we all must appear before the judgement seat of Christ, so that each one may receive the things done in the body, according to what we did, whether good or bad" (2.Cor.5:10 Para.).

Make no mistake, there will be a judgement of the Father's elect and all of humanity. For the elect, this judgement will either be at the first resurrection because of a life filled with good works or at the resurrection to death because of a life filled with evil works or no works at all (Matt. 25:14-30).

Because Jesus is head of the church and the administrator of the Father's kingdom, he will judge the quality of each person's works for the Father:

"But why do you judge your brother? Or why do you despise your brother? For all shall stand before the judgment seat of Christ. For it has been written, I live, says the Lord, every knee will bow to me, and every tongue confess to God. So then each one of us will give account concerning himself to God" (Rom.14:10-12 KJV Para.).

Each of the Father's children must give an account of their life and the works that they have or have not done. The apostle Peter said the following about the proper attitude and behavior that the Father expects of his children as they carry out their work for him:

"Wherefore gird up the loins of your mind, be sober, and hope to the end for the grace that is to be brought to you at the revelation of Jesus Christ; As obedient children, not fashioning yourselves according to the former lusts in your ignorance: But as he which has called you is holy, so be you holy in all manner of conversation; Because it is written, Be you holy; for I am holy. And if you call on the Father, who without respect of persons judges according to every man's work, pass the time of your sojourning here in fear" (1.Pet.1:13-17 KJV).

Rewards

For those who have been given the opportunity to participate in the first resurrection, the rewards that can be received for diligent service to the Father and Jesus Christ are awesome and far above any offered to those who come after them (See 1.Cor.2:9; Heb.11:35; Jms.2:5).

The apostle John recorded the following promise from Jesus Christ about attitudes, behaviors, and rewards for good work during this age of salvation.

"And he said to me, Seal not the sayings of the prophecy of this book: for the time is at hand. He that is unjust, let him be unjust still: and he which is filthy, let him be filthy still: and he that is righteous, let him be righteous still: and he that is holy, let him be holy still. And, behold, I come quickly; and my reward is with me, to give every man according as his work shall be" (Rev.22:10-12 KJV).
"In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is your sting? O grave, where is your victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord." (1.Cor.15:52-58 KJV). See also Heb.6:10.

FIRST THINGS FIRST

Remember that the Father’s first priority for his earthly work is to make sure that those whom he calls to salvation during this age successfully fulfill the primary purpose for their calling and enter his family and kingdom as his spirit-sons:

"And he said to me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to him that is thirsty of the fountain of the water of life freely. He that overcomes shall inherit all things; and I will be his God, and he shall be my son" (Rev.21:6-7 KJV).

All who truly repent and receive the spirit of adoption into the Father's family must do personal and collective works for him, but before a person can do this they must know and understand the Father's word and be practicing a righteous life-style:

"Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth" (2.Tim.2:15 NKJV).

"Wherefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling. For it is God which works in you both to will and to do his good pleasure'' (Phil.2:12-13 KJV). See also 1.Cor.10:13.

The instruction to work out your own salvation means that you must manage your life so it conforms to God's laws, precepts, and principles. To do this, you must expend much sincere and diligent effort to overcome temptations, trials, and tests and to make right decisions. Only when you sincerely seek to learn, understand, and live according to the Father's laws, precepts, and principles and to respect, love, obey, and please him can he work his will and purpose in your life.

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Preparation for Doing Good Works

Before anyone can do a work for God, they must first prepare to do this work. The apostle Paul gave Timothy the following basic outline for preparing to do good works:

"No one serving as a soldier gets entangled with the affairs of this life, so that he can please the one whom he serves and those who compete in athletic events must follow the rules or they will be disqualified and not win the prize" (2.Tim.2:4-5 Para.).

Paul tells Timothy that anyone who is serious about doing a work for the Father cannot involve themselves in the cares of this world; they must be single-minded in their service to the Father. A person who serves the Father must also adhere to the rules that the Father has given about serving him or that service will not be rewarded.

"Remind the elect of these things as a witness before the Lord, that they should not argue over unimportant things such as words and concepts, because nothing good can come from this. Be diligent to present yourself approved to God, a worker who does not need to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. But shun profane and idle babblings, for they will increase to more ungodliness" (2.Tim. 2:15-16 NKJV Para.). See also verses 23-26.

There are many things you can do to waste your time and effort. Becoming involved in things that are not important or productive to your salvation and the Father's work, such as arguments over unimportant doctrinal issues, which can draw you away from doing a work for the Father. To be prepared to deal with the important things of life and doctrinal issues in a godly way, you must diligently study the biblical record and meditate on what you find there.

Maintaining Focus

It seems that, over time, many who are called to salvation lose focus on the primary goal to which they have been called, which is doing good works and building and maintaining righteous character in preparation to enter the kingdom of God as an immortal god-being.

When the Father first opens a person's mind to his truth and way of truth, that person normally has an insatiable desire to learn and practice the things contained within it.

But with the passage of time, many individuals begin to lose focus on their primary goal and begin to focus on other things, such as jobs, hobbies, social activities, academic pursuits, and more. The list of things and activities that can cause a person to lose focus on their primary goal is endless. If a person does not make a conscious effort to maintain their focus, all of these things and more can take precedence in their life and slowly cause them to lose focus on what should be their primary goal.
Become Living Sacrifices

Paul encourages those who are sincere in their quest to serve and please the Father to verify his will in their life through presenting themselves as a living sacrifice to him:

"Therefore, brothers, I call on you through the mercies of God to present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy pleasing to God, which is your spiritual service. And do not be conformed to this world: but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, so that you may prove [prove through testing] what is the good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God" (Rom.12:1-2 Para.). See also Jms.1:5-8.

Although being a living sacrifice can consist of giving your time, effort, and physical goods for a righteous purpose, the kind of sacrifice Paul speaks of is spiritual in nature. This means that what is done as a sacrifice has eternal benefits. Sacrifices of this nature are considered most pleasing to the Father because they are a reflection of your attitude and good works.

Paul also says in verse 2 that you should avoid being conformed to this world, which means you should instead be conformed to God's ways. Conforming to God's ways requires a transformation from a worldly way of thinking to a righteous way of thinking. This kind of mental change can only be done through yielding to the righteous laws, precepts, principles, and concepts that the Father and his Son hold to be beneficial. The transformation and renewal of your mind toward doing the Father's will in your life takes a determined, conscious effort (works).

THE CHURCH AND ITS WORK

The collective work of the church must be a team effort. Within this collective work, one person's effort is no more important than another person's. Each individual must contribute to the overall goal of the church, which is to work in partnership under the supervision of Jesus Christ to fulfill our heavenly Father's purpose for creating humanity and calling us to salvation during this age:

"I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase. So then neither is he that plants any thing, neither he that waters; but God that gives the increase. Now he that plants and he that waters are one: and every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor. For we are laborers together with God: you are God's husbandry [i.e., fellow labors with God in his field], you are God's building. According to the grace of God which is given to me, as a wise master-builder, I have laid the foundation, and another builds thereon. But let every man take heed how he builds thereupon. For another foundation can no man lay than that is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1.Cor.3:6-11 KJV). See also Isa.28:16; Eph.2:19-22; 2.Tim.2:19; Heb.6:1.
Paul speaks of his function within the collective work of the church as analogous to one whom the Father has made a wise master craftsman who lays the foundation upon which others build. Furthermore, those who come to build on the spiritual foundation he established must do so with great care, because what he established is actually what Jesus Christ established.

**A Personal and a Collective Work**

While speaking to the Corinthians about the work of the ministry, the apostle Paul addresses personal and collective works for which you will be rewarded, but he cautions that you must be careful how you do your work:

"Now if anyone builds on this foundation gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, stubble; Everyone's work shall be apparent: for the day shall declare it, because it shall be revealed by fire; and the fire shall try everyone's work of what sort it is. If anyone's work endures which they have built thereupon, they shall receive a reward" (1.Cor.3:12-14 KJV Para.).

The foundation of God's truth is perfect and cannot be improved on; however, what a person builds on this foundation is determined by how proficient they are with God's truth and the diligence with which they build. The work each individual is required to do during this life will be tested for its quality which will determine the degree of reward each builder receives.

"If anyone's work is burned, they shall suffer loss: but they shall be saved; yet so as by fire" (1.Cor.3:15 KJV Para.).

The Father knows that, because of various circumstances and other reasons, some of his children will fail in their attempt to build something of spiritual worth above and beyond working out their own salvation. Although an individual may lose the rewards they could have received if their work had endured, because the Father loves them and is merciful, he will not cast them away. Instead, he will reward them with eternal and immortal life in his family and kingdom because they put forth effort in an attempt to build something of true spiritual value. See Rom.2:7; Matt. 19:16-17; Lk.10:25-27; 18:18-20.

It is the Father's purpose to give eternal life to everyone who accepts his offer of salvation through the sacrificial blood of his firstborn son Jesus Christ and makes a diligent effort to live according to his laws, precepts, and principles.

Along with all of the various abilities and attributes given through the holy spirit that are necessary for personal growth, there are also many different abilities, attributes, powers, and authorizations given to be used for the physical and spiritual functioning of the church, which includes the church's work of warning and witnessing to the world.
Attitudes and Behaviors

Among the things that concerned Paul about the Corinthians was their attitude of self-importance, vanity, and pride, and their lack of understanding the unity of purpose which is necessary to achieve collective spiritual growth and do the collective work of the church:

"But as to spiritual things, brothers, I do not wish you to be ignorant. You know that being led away you Gentiles were led to dumb idols. Therefore, I make known to you that no one speaking by the spirit of God says Jesus is a curse. And no one is able to say Jesus is Lord, except by the holy spirit" (1.Cor.12:1-3 Para.).

Here, Paul says that he does not want them to be ignorant about spiritual matters which include a broad spectrum of spiritual attitudes, behaviors, the use of spirit-power, and a true understanding of who Christ is.

Special Abilities

"Now God gives us many kinds of special abilities, but it is the same holy spirit which is the source of them all. There are different kinds of service to God, but it is the same Lord we are serving. There are many ways in which God works in our lives, but it is the same God who does the work in and through all of us who are his. The spirit displays God's power through each of us as a means of helping the entire church" (1.Cor.12:4-7 LBP).

Paul writes that different authorizations, gifts, and powers are given for the benefit of the entire Church:

"For to one is given by the spirit the word of wisdom; to another the word of knowledge by the same spirit; To another faith by the same spirit; to another the gifts of healing by the same spirit; To another the working of miracles; to another prophecy; to another discerning of spirits; to another divers kinds of languages; To another the interpretation of languages" (1.Cor.12:8-10 KJV).

There are two important things to learn about these spiritual authorizations and powers from verses 8-10:

1. Not everyone is given the same authorizations or powers.
2. It is one spirit through which these authorizations and powers flow.

"But the one and same spirit works all these things, distributing separately to each as he wills. For as the body is one, and has many members, But all the members of the one body, being many, are one body: so also is Christ. For also we all were baptized by one spirit into one body, whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free, even all were given to drink of one spirit" (1.Cor.12:11-13 Para.).
Today, the Father’s elect children are scattered throughout the world. Some associate with each other in congregations comprised of both converted and unconverted individuals, while some of the elect are without formal association with others of like mind and spirit. Although this is the current situation and no single unified collective body of Christ (i.e., the church) exists on earth at this time, all who truly have the Father’s spirit of adoption must serve him and the spiritual organism which is the collective Body of Christ (the church). True believers owe their allegiance and servitude to the Father, Jesus Christ, and the scattered elect.

A Unified Body

"For the body is not one member, but many. If the foot shall say, Because I am not the hand, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? And if the ear shall say, Because I am not the eye, I am not of the body; is it therefore not of the body? If the whole body were an eye, where were the hearing? If the whole were hearing, where were the smelling? But now has God set the members every one of them in the body, as it has pleased him" (1.Cor.12:14-18 KJV).

Paul stresses the point of unity and the necessity of the body (i.e., the church) to work together and use the various abilities, attributes, and powers the Father has given to the church to do a work for him. Whether you are a member of an association of the elect or alone in the world without fellowship with others of like mind and spirit, your duty to the Father is to be doing a work for him and serving your brothers and sisters in his family through whatever abilities, attributes, or powers you have been given to work with.

Each Member Has a Purpose

"And if they were all one member, where were the body? But now are they many members, yet but one body. And the eye cannot say to the hand, I have no need of you: nor again the head to the feet, I have no need of you" (1.Cor.12:19-21 KJV).

Paul rebuked those who thought their particular spiritual gift was superior to another member's:

"No, much more those members of the body, which seem to be more feeble, are necessary: And those members of the body, which we think to be less honorable, upon these we bestow more abundant honor; and our uncomely parts have more abundant comeliness" (1.Cor.12:22-23 KJV).

Our heavenly Father has specifically called and chosen each of us to perform a function and responsibility in the church (Jn.6:44,65). Each one of us is necessary and important to the functioning of his earthly family and the purpose for its existence; otherwise, he would not have called us at this time in his plan for humanity.
One Spiritual Body

"For our comely parts have no need: but God has tempered the body together, having given more abundant honor to that part which lacked: That there should be no schism [division] in the body; but that the members should have the same care one for another. And whether one member suffer, all the members suffer with it; or one member be honored, all the members rejoice with it. Now you are the body of Christ, and members in particular" (1.Cor.12:24-27 KJV). See also1.Cor.1:13-14.

Order of Relative Importance

"And God has set some in the church, first apostles, secondarily prophets, thirdly teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, governments, diversities of languages. Are all apostles? are all prophets? are all teachers? are all workers of miracles? have all the gifts of healing? do all speak with languages? do all interpret?" (1.Cor.12:28-30 KJV).

Paul's questions seem to be designed to emphasize the point that every member does not have the same abilities, attributes, or powers, but whatever gift given to each individual was given for the benefit of the entire church, and each member must use these authorizations for the good of all.

When the Father calls an individual to become one of his earthly children and a part of his work on earth, he gives as many authorizations to use his spirit-power as he deems necessary for the performance of this work and the perfection of the individual's godly character.

Each Member is Important

Authorizations of supernatural powers with which a member of the Father's earthly family is blessed are not for their own aggrandizement or entertainment. These abilities are for the performing of the work of the church and the edification and enrichment of the elect who are being prepared to teach and serve humanity after Christ establishes the Father's government on earth. See Eph.4:11-13.

It is important to understand that every member does not have the same authorization to use the various powers of the spirit. The Father knows the strengths and weaknesses of each person he calls to salvation, and he calls each for a specific purpose.

Some might think that someone does not have supernatural power unless they can work great miracles, heal the sick, or foretell the future. However, these are only the more visible and spectacular acts which can be done through the power of the Father's holy spirit. These only seem more important because they are more visible and dynamic in presentation, but they are not the most important.
Although Paul does not mention all the various abilities, powers, functions, and authorizations which can be manifested through the use of the holy spirit, his point is that all spirit-power given to the Father's elect must be used for its intended purpose.

SPIRITUAL LEADERS AND SERVANTS

"And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; and some, evangelists; and some, pastors and teachers: For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in 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 fulness of Christ: That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive; But speaking the truth in love, may grow up into him in all things, which is the head, even Christ: From whom the whole body fitly joined together and compacted by that which every joint supplies according to the effectual working in the measure of every part, makes increase of the body to the edifying of itself in love" (Eph.4:11-16 KJV).

The work of spiritual leadership is concerned with the following three primary functions and responsibilities within the collective church:

1. Perform the work of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness and a warning to humanity before Jesus Christ returns to rule the world.
2. Perform the work of preaching the Gospel of Salvation to those whom the Father wants to call to salvation during this age.
3. Guide and direct the church in a way to provide a positive atmosphere for spiritual growth toward unity of faith and purpose.

The Work of an Apostle

Although Paul was not one of the original 12 apostles chosen to begin the work of the early church, the Father specifically chose him to be an apostle to the Gentiles and to do a great work after the church was established. See Acts 9:1-15; 13:46-47.

"Am I not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not you my work in the Lord? If I be not an apostle to others, yet doubtless I am to you: for the seal of mine apostleship are you in the Lord. My answer to them that do examine me is this, Have we not power to eat and to drink? Have we not power to lead about a sister, a wife, as well as other apostles, and as the brethren of the Lord, and Cephas? Or I only and Barnabas, have not we power to forbear working?" (1.Cor.9:1-6 KJV).
Through the work of the apostles, the early church was established and events were set in motion that will affect all of humanity throughout the ages until the Father comes to earth to receive the kingdom from Christ (1.Cor.15:24-28). With the death of John and the disappearance of the early church, the need for apostles ceased. Moreover, there is no indication in the scriptures that this office will again be established before or after Christ's return to rule the earth.

The Work of a Bishop

The work of a bishop (i.e., pastor) is an extremely important responsibility within the congregations of God because this man must provide spiritual leadership for those under his care and protection just as a loving father and husband is to provide for his family:

"For this cause left I you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed you: If any be blameless, the husband of one wife, having faithful children not accused of riot or unruly. For a bishop must be blameless, as the steward of God; not self-willed, not soon angry, not given to wine, no striker, not given to filthy lucre; But a lover of hospitality, a lover of good men, sober, just, holy, temperate; Holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able by sound doctrine both to exhort and to convince the gain-sayers" (Titus 1:5-9 KJV).

In his letter to Timothy, Paul cautioned him to be careful to only appoint men as leaders and servants within the congregations who were able to serve the best interest of the Father's children:

"This is a true saying, If a man desires the office of a bishop, he desires a good work. A bishop must be blameless, the husband of one wife, vigilant, sensible, of good behavior, hospitable, apt at teaching. A bishop must not be a drunkard, or contentious, but must be patient, gentle and not argumentative, nor a lover of money; He must rule his household well, having his children in subjection with all reverence; (For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how can he care for the church of God?) A bishop cannot be novice, lest he becomes puffed up with pride and falls into the same condemnation as the devil. Moreover, he must have a good reputation among those who are not of the church; lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil" (1.Tim.3:1-7 Para).

At the time Peter wrote the following, there were attitude problems developing among some of the elders who regarded the eldership as a burden or just a regular job instead of an opportunity to serve their brothers and sisters in the faith:
"The elders which are among you I exhort, who am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ, and also a partaker of the glory that shall be revealed: Feed the flock of God which is among you, taking the oversight thereof, not by constraint, but willingly; not for filthy lucre, but of a ready mind" (1 Pet. 5:1-2 KJV).

Peter reminds the elders of the reason they were called to serve the elect, that the younger elders should respect the older ones who have served in humility, and that their service will be rewarded at the proper time:

"Neither as being lords over God's heritage, but being examples to the flock. And when the chief Shepherd shall appear, you shall receive a crown of glory that fades not away. Likewise, you younger [younger spiritually], submit yourselves to the elder. Yes, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resists the proud, and gives grace to the humble. humble yourselves therefore under the mighty hand of God, that he may exalt you in due time" (1 Pet. 5:3-6 KJV).

The spiritual leaders of the early church had broad discretionary authority and power with which to govern, guide, and serve those under their care and protection. Some today feel that a spiritual leader must only serve as a teacher, preacher, or in some physical capacity without the power or authority to enforce or take any corrective action upon those who are disobedient to the faith. Others feel that Jesus Christ authorized spiritual leaders to have absolute power and authority over the elect in every aspect of their lives.

Neither of these two extreme views of authority and power are correct. However, elders of the early church did have the authority to protect and reprimand the elect when it was necessary (See Acts 5:1-10; 8:9-24). After being reprimanded by an elder, it was the responsibility of the individual(s) within the church to respond in a positive way.

Today, it is the responsibility of the elect to protect and defend the faith and the faithful, because the church is one body. All the elect have a responsibility to work to benefit the Father's earthly family as a whole (See 1 Cor. 12:1-31; 2 Cor. 2:3-10). However, no one can work out another person's salvation or force another person into the Kingdom of God. Therefore, those whom Jesus selected as spiritual leaders were not given the authority to control every aspect of the lives of those under their care.

The Work of Prophets, Teachers, and Evangelists

The following accounts show that certain men of the early church were specifically called and given the responsibility to do the work of prophets, teachers, and evangelists:
"Now there were in the church that was at Antioch certain prophets and teachers: as Barnabas, and Simeon that was called Niger, and Lucius of Cyrene, and Manaen, which had been brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Saul [Paul]. As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the holy spirit said, Separate me Barnabas and Saul for the work where to I have called them. And when they had fasted and prayed, and laid their hands on them, they sent them away. So they, being sent forth by the holy spirit, departed to Seleucia; and from thence they sailed to Cyprus" (Acts 13:1-4 KJV) See also Acts 14:21-28.

"Not many of you should presume to be teachers, my brothers, because you know that we who teach will be judged more strictly" (Jms.3:1 NIV).

"But watch you in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, make full proof of your ministry" (2.Tim.4:5 KJV).

Paul writes that he and Timothy were doing a work for God, which included primarily an evangelistic effort and the establishment of congregations among the Gentile nations:

"For a great door and effectual is opened to me [Paul], and there are many adversaries. Now if Timothy comes, see that he may be with you without fear: for he works the work of the Lord, as I also do" (1.Cor.16:9-10 KJV).

The Work of a Deacon

Most who claim to follow Christ as a spiritual leader today quote Acts 6:1-7, Philippians 1:1, and 1.Timothy 3:8-13 to support their teaching that the early church had a position of authority and rulership described as that of a deacon within its organizational structure. However, this teaching is not valid. A careful study of the New Testament scriptures containing the Greek words diakoneo, diakonia, and diakonos, of which there are over a hundred, clearly shows that these words are tied to the actions of individuals; they do not describe a position of authority or the title of an office within the early church.

As the early church grew, it became apparent there was a need for someone to care for the physical needs of its widows. As a result of this need, men were chosen by the membership and sanctioned by the apostles to do this:

"And in those days, when the number of the disciples was multiplied, there arose a murmuring of the Grecians against the Hebrews, because their widows were neglected in the daily ministration (diakonia). Then the twelve called the multitude of the disciples to them, and said, It is not reason that we should leave the word of God, and serve tables (diakoneo) . Wherefore, brethren, look you out among you seven men of honest report, full of the holy spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business. But we will give ourselves continually to prayer, and to the ministry
(diakonia) of the word. And the saying pleased the whole multitude: and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolas a proselyte of Antioch: Whom they set before the apostles: and when they had prayed, they laid their hands on them. And the word of God increased. . ." (Acts 6:1-7 KJV)

Although these scriptures are used to justify the organizational office of a deacon, no such authority is found in them. In the strictest sense, these men were chosen by the elect to serve the needs of the widows in the church.

The Greek words diakoneo, diakonia, and diakonos from which the English words deacon anddeacons are derived connote one who is an attendant, one who waits upon another, a servant or one who runs errands.

The misconception about the alleged position of authority within the church denoted as the office of a deacon is mainly due to errors in interpretation and the mistranslation of Phil.1:1 and 1.Tim.3: 8-13 by the King James Bible translators.

"Paul and Timotheus, the servants of Jesus Christ to all the saints in Christ Jesus which are at Philippi, with the bishops and deacons (diakonos)" (Phil.1:1 KJV).

In this text, the Greek word diakonos is left untranslated to give the impression that both bishops and deacons are in positions of authority within the church. However, there is nothing in this text that would indicate that the diakonos were anything other than fellow ministers or fellow servants in the church.

"Likewise must the deacons (diakonos) be grave, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy of filthy lucre; Holding the mystery of the faith in a pure conscience. And let these also first be proved; then let them use the office of a deacon (diakoneo), being found blameless. Even so must their wives be grave, not slanderers, sober, faithful in all things. Let the deacons (diakonos) be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well. For they that have used the office of a deacon (diakoneo) well purchase to themselves a good degree, and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus" (1.Tim.3:8-13 KJV).

In verses 8 and 12, the Greek word diakonos is left untranslated by the King James translators to give the impression that the deacon is in a position of authority. If the translators had translated diakonos as servant, it would have clearly indicated that it was the bishop who was being called the husband in verse 12.
In verses 10 and 13, the King James translators replaced the word *diakonos* with the phrase "*the office of a deacon*" in an attempt to show that the Greek words *diakoneo* and *diakonos* connote an office of authority. However, without the insertion of the phrase "*the office of a deacon,*" which is not in the original text, the context of verses 10 through 13 does not support the presumption that the Greek words *diakoneo* and *diakonos* refer to anything other than the action of service by an individual who is a bishop.

When the scriptures containing the Greek words *diakoneo*, *diakonia*, and *diakonos* are considered in context, none of them supports the supposition that a position or office of authority entitled deacon existed within the early church. In the strictest sense, these three Greek words connote service rendered by individuals to individuals and the church as a whole. Moreover, the scriptures containing these three Greek words show that those who want to serve their brothers and sisters in the Father's royal family must have their priorities correct before the Father and Jesus Christ and be well versed and practiced in the truth and the faith to serve well.

**DOING A PERSONAL WORK**

The instructions within the New Testament clearly show that each of the elect has a function and a responsibility within the collective church, which is a spiritual organism composed of those called by the Father to salvation during this gospel age. The scriptures show also that each individual within this spiritual organism must do both a personal and a collective work for the Father under the direction of Jesus Christ who is the head of the church.

Today, the reality is that the Father's earthly children are scattered throughout the world. Some are organized into collective groups and some are separated from fellowship with their brothers and sisters in Christ. Given the circumstances of today, how do you satisfy your responsibility to do both a personal and a collective work?

Although it may be difficult, if not impossible, for some to associate with others of like mind and spirit, each of the elect can do personal works and participate in the collective work of the church under the direction of Jesus Christ. This is possible because all who are truly members of the Father's earthly family are connected by the bond of the holy spirit and are therefore connected to the collective work of the church.

**Doing Good Works**

The Father does not expect his children to relieve every case of poverty, neglect, abuse or other needs that cross their paths, simply because it is not possible. Jesus did not relieve all pain and suffering nor did he right every wrong when he walked the earth. He did what he could do with the available resources and within the bounds of the task his father had sent him to accomplish.
The Father expects no more or no less from those he has called to salvation during this age. Each of the elect must use their available resources to perform good works within the framework of their calling and responsibilities as an ambassador, a king, and a priest within the Father's royal family and holy nation.

In this section, we will explore some of the examples and instructions recorded in the New Testament which show how those of the early church fulfilled their responsibility to do personal and collective works and how we can also fulfill our responsibility to do good works.

Although the Father and Christ are concerned with all humanity, they are especially concerned about the elect who have been given the opportunity to become the first of humanity to obtain salvation and enter the Family of God. The Father and Christ want the elect to learn the lessons of compassion and true unselfish love for all people and especially for their brothers and sisters in the Father's earthly family:

"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. . ." (Rom.12: 10-16 KJV).

"As we have the opportunity, let us do good to all people and especially to those who are of the household of faith" (Gal.6:10 Para.).

The Sheep and the Goats

The parable of the sheep and the goats concerns the doing of good works for one's brothers and sisters within the Father's family and it shows that these good works are expected of one who is of the elect. Moreover, the doing of these good works is an integral part of being accounted worthy to enter the Kingdom of God:

**Sheep and Goats**

"But when I, the Messiah, shall come in my glory, and all the angels with me, then I shall sit on my throne of glory. And all the nations shall be gathered before me. And I will separate the people as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and place the sheep at my right hand, and the goats at my left" (Matt.25:31-33 LBP).

There are three different events mentioned here:

1. Jesus returns to the earth in his glory.
2. Jesus begins to rule on earth.
3. Jesus separates people into two distinct groups.
"Then I, the King, shall say to those at my right, 'Come, blessed of my Father, into the Kingdom prepared for you from the founding of the world. For I was hungry and you fed me; I was thirsty and you gave me water; I was a stranger and you invited me into your homes; naked and you clothed me; sick and in prison, and you visited me" (Matt.25:34-36 LBP).

This scripture shows the Father's righteous children being welcomed into his kingdom, which has been prepared for them. This great event will happen at the time of the first resurrection.

"Then I will turn to those on my left and say, 'Away with you, you cursed ones, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his demons. For I was hungry and you wouldn't feed me; thirsty, and you wouldn't give me anything to drink; a stranger, and you refused me hospitality; naked and you didn't clothe me; sick, and in prison, and you wouldn't visit me" (Matt.25:41-43 LBP).

Verse 41 and 43 show an event which will happen as Christ judges those who failed to do the good works they were instructed to do as members of his Father's earthly family.

"They also will answer, 'Lord, when did we see you hungry or thirsty or a stranger or needing clothes or sick or in prison, and did not help you?' He will reply, 'I tell you the truth, whatever you did not do for one of the least of these, you did not do for me.' Then they will go away to eternal punishment, but the righteous to eternal life" (Matt.25:44-46 NIV).

The primary reason for the punishment of these people is that they refuse to do good works, which is equal to refusing to help Christ. The criteria for remaining a sheep in the shepherd's flock is having godly love toward all people, which is evidenced through good works; therefore, the goats are those who understood God's truth and refused to live their lives accordingly. See also Matt.7:21-27; Rom.12:9-13.

An important part of doing a work for the Father is doing good works within the Father's earthly family, as well as for other people. If you consistently refuse to do good works when opportunities present themselves and you have the ability to do them, you may lose your salvation. Therefore, it is important to develop an attitude of service toward your brothers and sisters in the Father's family, as well as toward other people.

"Therefore to him that knows to do good, and does not do it, to him it is sin" (Jms.4:17 KJV).

The will of the Father and Jesus Christ, as it is recorded in the Bible, is for the elect to do good (live a righteous lifestyle) as a part of their spiritual growth process. Moreover, when a person knows what doing good means, they are required to put forth an effort to do good; otherwise, that person is in rebellion against the Father and Christ and rebellion is sin.
Serve One Another

"For, brethren, you have been called to liberty; only use not liberty for an occasion to the flesh, but by love serve one another" (Gal. 5:13 KJV).

Serving your brothers and sisters within the Father's household is multi-faceted and requires the diligent effort by each person to accomplish the common goals that the Father has set for his elect children. The following are some examples of the ways you can do good works and fulfill your responsibility to serve your brothers and sisters within the Father's household:

- Be a righteous example
- Show outgoing love
- Be compassionate and helpful
- Be generous
- Be encouraging
- Perform your responsibility as a priest
- Intervene on behalf of another person
- Pray

Be a Righteous Example

One of the best ways to serve your brothers and sisters is to be an example of how to live a righteous life and accomplish the goals that the Father and Christ have set for the elect. The following excerpts from letters written by the apostles are examples of the many instructions you will find to help you accomplish your responsibility to set a righteous example:

"This I say then, Walk in the spirit, and you shall not fulfill the lust of the flesh. For the flesh lusts against the spirit, and the spirit against the flesh: and these are contrary the one to the other: so that you cannot do the things that you would. But if you be led of the spirit, you are not under the law. Now the works of the flesh are manifest, which are these; Adultery, fornication, uncleanness, lasciviousness, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, variance, emulations, wrath, strife, sedition, heresies, Envying, murders, drunkenness, reveling, and such like: of the which I tell you before, as I have also told you in time past, that they which do such things shall not inherit the kingdom of God. But the fruit of the spirit is love, joy, peace, long-suffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law. And they that are Christ's have crucified the flesh with the affections and lusts. If we live in the spirit, let us also walk in the spirit. Let us not be desirous of vain glory, provoking one another, envying one another" (Gal. 5:16-26 KJV). See also 2.Tim.2:19-26.
"There is neither Greek nor Jew, circumcised or uncircumcised, Barbarian, Scythian, bond or free: but Christ is all, and in all. Therefore put on as the elect of God, holy and beloved, bowels of mercies, kindness, humbleness of mind, meekness, long-suffering; Forbearing one another, and forgiving one another, if anyone has a quarrel against their brother or sister: even as Christ forgave you, forgive them. And above all these things put on love, which is the bond of perfectness. And let the peace of God rule in your hearts, to you are called in one body; and be thankful. Let the word of Christ richly dwell in you in all wisdom; teaching and admonishing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing with grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Col.3:11-16 KJV). See also Rom.12:1-18.

Being a righteous example to others within the Father's household is a major responsibility which should not be taken lightly, because what you do can impact your brothers and sisters positively or negatively. While instructing the church at Corinth about the necessity of teamwork and proper concern for one another, the apostle Paul wrote the following:

"There should be no division within the body, because each member in the body should be equally concerned for all members. If one member of the body suffers, every member suffers, if any one member receives honor every member rejoices with it. Now you are the body of Christ and every one of you are a part of it" (1.Cor. 12:25-27 Para.).

In order to fulfill the responsibility of being a productive member of the Father's household, each family member must show the proper love and concern for each of the other family members. But, in order to do this, each member must endeavor to be a righteous example. When this happens, all members of the family can rejoice.

**Show Outgoing Love**

"Little children, yet a little while I am with you. You shall seek me: and as I said to the Jews, Where I go, you cannot come; so now I say to you. A new commandment I give to you, That you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this shall all men know that you are my disciples, if you have love one to another" (Jn.13:33-35 KJV).

The love Jesus speaks of is the kind of sacrificial love that he had for humanity; it is the kind of love that is seen through the Father's willingness to allow Jesus Christ to come to earth and give his life for humanity. This kind of love is selfless and is given with one's whole being for the benefit of another person. This is the kind of love that the Father's elect should have for one another.
"Be kindly affectioned one to another with brotherly love; in honor preferring one another; Not slothful in business; fervent in spirit; serving the Lord; Rejoicing in hope; patient in tribulation; continuing instant in prayer; Distributing to the necessity of saints; given to hospitality. Bless them which persecute you: bless, and curse not. Rejoice with them that do rejoice, and weep with them that weep. Be of the same mind one toward another. . ." (Rom.12: 10-16 KJV).

"Seeing you have purified your souls in obeying the truth through the Spirit to unfeigned love of the brethren, see that you love one another with a pure heart fervently" (1.Pet.1:22 KJV). See also 1.Jn.4:7-21.

Be Compassionate and Helpful

The apostle John writes that one way to know if you love God is if you are sacrificing your life (your time and effort) and sharing your material goods with those who are truly in need within the Father's household. John compares this kind of love shown through the sacrifice of one's time, energy, and material goods with the voluntary loving sacrifice of Jesus Christ:

"This is how we know that we love God. Jesus Christ laid down his life for us; therefore, we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. If anyone has material possessions and knows his brother is in need, and does not show compassion and help him, how can the love of God be dwelling in him? My little children, let us not just say we love our brothers, but show that we love them by our actions in deed and truth" (1.Jn.3:16-18 KJV Para.).

Be Generous

The biblical record clearly shows that generosity is one of the major character traits of God the Father and our Savior. Moreover, it is an attitude and behavior which is repeatedly spoken of as a desirable and righteous character trait:

"And do not forget to do good and share, for the Father is pleased with these kind of sacrifices" (Heb.13:16 Para.). See also 1.Tim 6:17-19.

God the Father and Jesus Christ are caring, giving, and sharing individuals; therefore, when you follow their example of willingly caring, giving, and sharing with other people, the Father considers the expression of these character traits as a pleasing sacrifice to him—a sacrifice of good works.

Although the Corinthians had many problems, they were generous and served as an example of a right attitude toward sharing our physical goods with those in need:
"There is no need for me to write to you about this service to the saints. For I know your eagerness to help. ... Remember this: Whoever sows sparingly will also reap also sparingly, and whoever sows generously will also reap generously. ... For God loves a cheerful giver. ..." (2.Cor.9:1-7 NIV) See also Pro.11:24-25; Phil.2:3-5.

The Giving of One's Substance

The apostle Paul compares the attitude of the elect at Philippi and the material goods they sent him with the pleasant smell of the voluntary peace offering offered at the temple and says that what they had done was especially pleasing to God the Father:

"You did well in sharing in my troubles. And you know, O Philippians, that in the beginning of the gospel, when I departed from Macedonia, not one church shared with me in giving, except you. Because you sent me what I needed twice while I was in Thessalonica. I'm not seeking a gift, from you, I seek to multiply fruit to your account. But I have more than enough things; I have been filled with the things that you sent to me by Epaphroditus. These things from you, are like an odor of a pleasant smell, an acceptable sacrifice, well pleasing to God" (Phil.4:14-18 Para.).

Compassion and Encouragement

"And finally, be of one mind, having compassion for each another, love as brethren, be tenderhearted, and courteous. Do not return evil for evil, or slander for slander: but on the contrary give a blessing; knowing that you were called to this that you should inherit a blessing. For he that desires to love life, and to see good days, let him restrain his tongue from speaking evil, and his lips from speaking guile: Let him shun evil, and do good; let him seek peace, and pursue it" (1.Pet.3:8-11 Para.).

Not all the elect are at the same place in their spiritual growth; therefore, one who is spiritually mature should have compassion on those who are not and deal with them as children in the faith, forgiving them for their errors and offering spiritual and physical support to them when they need it. This is the Father's path for those who are truly seeking the Kingdom of God.

"Continue to encourage each other to grow spiritually. And we appeal to you, to know them which labor among you, and rule over you in the Lord, and we caution you to respect them for what they do and be at peace among yourselves. Now we exhort you to warn those who are unruly, comfort the fainthearted, support the weak, be patient toward everyone. See that no one renders evil for evil to anyone. But, continue to follow that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all other people" (1.Thes.5:11-15 Para.).
"Pure religion and undefiled before God and the Father is this, To visit the fatherless and widows in their affliction, and to keep himself unspotted from the world" (Jms.1:27 KJV).

It is the duty of each of the elect to work toward the common good through encouraging one another, supporting those who are in leadership positions, and fostering an atmosphere of teamwork within the Father's family through mutual respect and attention to the things of the spirit.

**Responsibility as a Priest**

It was the responsibility of the Levitical priesthood to make the Israelites aware when they were violating God's law, so they could repent and seek atonement in order to have their sins covered and the barrier between themselves and God removed.

The elect are king-priests in their Father's earthly family; therefore; it is the responsibility of each family member to go to a brother or sister in the faith who has committed or is committing a sin or is behaving in a way which has the potential to cause them to lose their opportunity for salvation and show them the error of their ways in an attempt to restore them to the faith and save them from eternal death:

"Brethren, if anyone is overtaken in a fault, you that are spiritual, restore such a one in the spirit of meekness; considering yourself, lest you are tempted. You bear one another's burdens, and fulfill the law of Christ" (Gal.6:1-2 KJV Para). See Jn.13:34-35.

"Brethren, if any of you do err from the truth, and one convert him; Let him know, that he which converts the sinner from the error of his way shall save a soul from death, and shall hide a multitude of sins" (Jms.5:19-20 KJV).

If a brother or sister in the faith is made aware of their sin and they acknowledge it and repent of their error and reestablish a harmonious relationship with the Father and his Son, the one who made them aware of the sin has fulfilled their responsibility (their good work) as a priest in the Father's family and saved their brother or sister from eternal death.

**Intervention on Behalf of Another Person**

It was the responsibility of the Levitical priesthood to represent a sinner before the Creator God and offer sin offerings and peace offerings before him on behalf of the sinner in order to heal the breach between the sinner and God. During the gospel age of salvation, it is the responsibility of each member in the Father's family to care for the spiritual welfare of one another.

When you become aware that a brother or sister in the faith has committed or is committing a sin in ignorance that is not a capital sin, which requires the death penalty, you have the duty to go to the Father on behalf of the errant brother or sister to reconcile that person with the Father:
"If anyone sees a brother commit a sin which will not bring the death penalty, that one shall ask, and the Father shall give that person life who does not commit a sin worthy of death. There is a sin worthy of death. I'm not saying to pray for that one. All unrighteousness is sin; but there are sins that are not worthy of death" (1.Jn.5:16-17 Para.).

The intervention on behalf of your brother or sister in the faith under these circumstances shows your love and concern and automatically restores a harmonious relationship between the Father, Jesus Christ, and the errant brother or sister in the faith.

Not only does the Father require his children to intervene on behalf of one another in situations concerning sins not worthy of death but also to be concerned for people who are not of the brotherhood in regards to things that do not involve sin. The Father and Christ are concerned for all people and expect the elect to share this same concern and express the godly characteristics of concern, compassion, and love toward other people, as well as the elect:

"I exhort therefore, that, first of all, supplications, prayers, intercessions, and giving of thanks, be made for all men; For kings, and for all that are in authority; that we may lead a quiet and peaceable life in all godliness and honesty. For this is good and acceptable in the sight of God our Savior" (1.Tim.2:1-3 KJV).

Personal Prayer

Heartfelt communication with the Father is not only extremely beneficial to your relationship with God the Father and his Son but also an extremely powerful way to give help to the collective work of the church and to your brothers and sisters in the Father's family:

"Epaphras, who is one of you, a servant of Christ, salutes you, and is always persevering for you in prayers, that you will stand perfect and complete in the will of God" (Col.4:12 Para.).

"To Timothy, my dearly beloved son: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God the Father and Christ Jesus our Lord. I thank God, whom I serve from my forefathers with pure conscience, that without ceasing I have remembrance of you in my prayers night and day" (2.Tim.1:2-3 KJV). See 1.Thes.3:9-10.

Ask And It Shall Be Given

Luke and Matthew record the following promise about being granted a request made to the Father. It is difficult to understand and explain, because a casual reading of this promise seems to say that whatever a person requests from the Father will be given to them, but is that what this promise really says?:

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"And I say to you, ask and It shall be given you: seek and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you. For everyone that asks receives; and he that seeks finds; and to him that knocks it shall be opened" (Lk.11:9-10 Para.). See also Matt.7:7-8.

Immediately following the promise to give to those who ask, seek, and knock, both Luke and Matthew record Jesus saying the following:

"Is there a father who will give his son a stone, when his son asks for bread? or if he asks for a fish, will his father give him a serpent? Or if he shall ask an egg, will his father offer him a scorpion?" (Lk.11:11-12 Para.). See also Matt.7:9-10.

In Matthew's parallel account, he adds what Jesus said after what Luke records in verses 11-12. Although what Matthew adds seems to be another subject, it is not. This tells us the context in which we should make our requests to the Father:

"Therefore whatever things you want people to do to you, you do to them: for this is the law and the prophets. You enter in at the narrow gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leads to destruction, and many will go in there. Because narrow is the gate, and crowded is the way, which leads to life, and few will find it." (Matt.7:12-14 Para.).

What is recorded in Matthew 7:12 is often referred to as the Golden Rule, which all who are truly the Father's elect should practice. An important point to note about this rule is that it is mentioned in the context of making a request to the Father. Therefore, we can logically assume that if we expect to receive what we request from our heavenly Father, we must be striving to practice a righteous life.

Luke's record of this conversation between Jesus and his disciples tells us the following about what the Father is more than willing to give his earthly children:

"If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children: how much more shall your heavenly Father give the holy spirit to them that ask him?" (Lk.11:11-13; Matt.7:9-11 Para.).

Our Father is more than willing to give us spiritual abilities, power, and many other things for our spiritual development and success, as well as other things which are good for us.

Our Father wants to give us the spiritual nourishment and tools we need to help us grow spiritually and do his will in our life. He knows what we need spiritually and physically. Nevertheless, he requires us to show we are serious about our calling and request what we need from him, and then make a sincere effort to obtain the things we need spiritually and physically—ask, seek, and knock.
Jesus reveals three prerequisites which need to be performed before the Father will grant what is requested:

1. A person must make a request to the Father for what they desire. Although our heavenly Father already knows what we need spiritually and physically, he wants us to communicate our needs to him.

2. A person must put forth the effort to seek what they desire. The English word *seek* in Luke 11:9-10 is translated from the Greek word *zeteo*, which means *to seek* (literally or figuratively); specially, (by Hebraism) *to worship* (God).

   To seek in the context of making a request to the Father entails making your request in a worshipful and respectful attitude.

3. To knock is more than asking and seeking. The English word *knock*, as recorded in both Luke and Matthew, is translated from the Greek word *krouo*, which means *to rap*. This indicates a request should be made with serious effort. See Heb.4:12-16.

**According To His Will**

"This is the confidence we have in making requests of the Father. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us (hears whatever we ask), we know that he will give us what we request of him" (1.Jn.5:14-15 Para).

The prerequisite for receiving what we request from the Father is that we ask according to his will. Therefore, if we know his will in a matter before we ask, we are promised by the apostle John that we will be granted our request. But, what if we do not know his will in a certain situation? The logical answer is that, if we do not know his will in a situation, we seek to know and understand his will before asking. We can seek to understand his will through praying for guidance, searching the biblical record about the subject at hand, and meditating on what we find there.

Several of the many things which are the Father's will for us include growing in spiritual maturity and godly character, doing good works, living at peace with everyone, and proclaiming his good news message.

If after doing your due diligence in seeking to know and understand the Father's will in a situation and you still do not know what his will is, make your request explaining in detail why you want what you want from him and tell him that whatever he decides you will respectfully accept as his will.

When making a request in which you do not know the Father's will, it seems prudent to ask him to grant you an understanding of his will in the situation so that you can please him and have a more harmonious relationship with him.
The apostle Peter tells us that the Father always listens to the prayers of the righteous.

"For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous, and his ears are opened to their prayers." (1.Pet.3:12 KJV). See also Rev.5:8; 8:3-4.

The apostle James reveals the awesome power which can be unleashed through the fervent prayer of a righteous person who is serious about doing the will of God:

"The effectual fervent prayer of the righteous avails much. Elijah was a person subject to like passions as we are, and he prayed earnestly that it might not rain: and it did not rain on the earth for three years and six months. And he prayed again, and the heaven gave rain, and the earth brought forth her fruit" (Jms.5: 16-18 KJV Para.).

Anyone who wants to help their brothers and sisters in our Father's family and help in the collective work of the church can do so through requests to the Father. To do this, you need to set aside some time each day to request specific things of the Father. The following are several things beyond personal requests that you can ask of the Father:

- Physical and spiritual protection for your brothers and sisters in The Faith (Jn.17:9-15)
- Physical and spiritual needs of your brothers and sisters in The Faith (1.Thes.1:1-3; Col.1:7-11)
- Spiritual guidance, gifts, and inspiration for those who are performing the commission to preach the gospel of the Kingdom of God as a witness and a warning (Matt.28:19-20)
- Laborers for the harvest of humanity (Matt.9:38)

There are obviously many other things that can be requested which will benefit the elect, the collective work of the church, and your effort to perfect a righteous lifestyle and mature spiritually; however, this list can help form a foundation on which to build a larger list of things to request and for which to be grateful when your requests are granted.

The Works of Women

Since the demise of the early church and the advent of false, oppressive teachings about the role of women in the church, most women within the Father's earthly family have been treated as second class citizens. This tragic situation has caused many women to feel they have little opportunity to do personal works and contribute to the collective work of the church. However, from the number of accounts in the New Testament, it is clear that in the early church there were many dedicated women who did personal works of great value and made important contributions to the collective work of the church.
It is important to note that many gifts of the spirit are mentioned without reference to gender and can be used by either men or women in the performance of personal or collective works.

Paul mentions many women in his letters. His comments about some of these women shows that women had a significant role in serving the church membership and supporting its work and the work of the ministry. These accounts also show that men and women worked together to accomplish the goals of the church and its ministry through their personal and collective efforts.

**Philip's Daughters**

The daughters of Philip were mentioned as having the gift of prophecy in the same context as another prophet who brought a warning message from God to Paul:

"Paul and his group went to Caesarea: and entered the house of Philip the evangelist, which was one of the seven; and stayed with him. And Philip had four virgin daughters who foretold the future. And while we were there many days, the prophet Agabus came to us from Judaea" (Acts 21:8-10 Para.).

**Aquila and Priscilla**

Aquila and Priscilla were a married couple who helped Paul in his ministry and allowed the church to meet in their home. It is interesting that the husband Aquila is mentioned first in Paul's letter to the Corinthians and Priscilla is mentioned first in his letter to the Romans, which may indicate special recognition for her service to the church:

"The churches of Asia salute you. Aquila and Priscilla salute you much in the Lord, with the church that is in their house" (1.Cor.16:19 KJV). See also Rom.16:3.

**Phebe**

"I commend to you our sister Phebe who is a servant of the church at Cenchrea: Receive her in the Lord, as is worthy of saints, and assist her in whatever business she needs your help to do, because she has been my helper, as well as helping many others" (Rom.16:1-2 Para.).

Paul introduces Phebe as a prominent member of the church who should be received with the courtesy and respect due to a child of God. Paul had apparently sent her to Rome to accomplish some task for him and instructed the elect there to assist her in the things she had to do. This account shows that some women in the church were trusted with responsibilities which would affect the church and its ministry.
Tabitha, Euodias, and Syntyche

Tabitha who was raised from the dead by Peter was well known for her good works and the compassion she had shown toward the poor (Acts 9:36-39).

Paul records that Euodias and Syntyche were two women who worked with him as he proclaimed the gospel. Paul does not say exactly what they did but whatever they did he considered them an integral part of his evangelistic team (Phil.4:2-3).

The Work of a Widow

Paul’s instruction to Timothy about how widows should be treated within the church reveals some important principles about the responsibilities of the elect toward their needy relatives, as well as the personal good works that widows are expected to do:

"Give proper recognition to those widows who are really in need. But if a widow has children or grandchildren, these should learn first of all to put their religion into practice by caring for their own family and so repaying their parents and grand parents, for this is pleasing to God" (1.Tim.5:3-4 NIV).

If a widow with close relatives in the church is in need, her relatives must care for her needs if at all possible, because this is a good work which is pleasing to God.

"The widow who is really in need and left alone puts her hope in God and continues night and day to pray and to ask God for help. But the widow who lives for pleasure is dead even while she lives" (1.Tim.5:5-6 NIV). See also Lk.2:36-37.

Here are two types of widows—one has her priorities correct and is seeking the Father’s will in her life, and one is living for the pleasure of the moment and has forgotten her responsibilities as one of the elect.

"Give the people these instructions, too, so that no one may be open to blame. If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1.Tim.5:7-8 NIV).

Paul writes that those who fail to fulfill their responsibility of doing the good work of providing for close relatives in need deny the faith and are worse than unbelievers. Verse 16 tells us that, if either a man or a woman has relatives who are widows in the church and are truly in need, they must care for them and not leave it to the church to support them:

"If anyone who is a believer has widows in their family, let them help them so the church is not responsible for the relief of those who are not truly alone" (1.Tim.5:16 Para.).
Clearly, God expects those widows who can to make doing good works a priority in their life:

"No widow may be put on the list of widows unless she is over sixty, has been faithful to her husband, and is well known for her good deeds, such as bringing up children, showing hospitality, washing the feet of the saints, helping those in trouble and devoting herself to all kinds of good deeds" (1.Tim.5:9-10 NIV).

Older Women to Teach the Younger

"But speak you the things which become sound doctrine: That the aged men be sober minded, grave, temperate, sound in faith, in charity, in patience. The aged women likewise, that they be in behavior as becomes holiness, not false accusers, not given to much wine, teachers of good things; That they may teach the young women to be sober, to love their husbands, to love their children, To be discreet, chaste, keepers at home, good, obedient to their own husbands, that the word of God be not blasphemed" (Tit.2:1-5 KJV).

The responsibility of the older women to teach the younger women was very important in the early church, because this was a time when most women were denied a formal education and were mostly considered property. However, it was to be different within the church; women were to be treated as coheirs and fellow-laborers in the faith. Therefore, there was a need for the older, more experienced women to help the younger ones develop this new freedom with discretion, modesty, and moral behavior in order to set an example of a godly woman to the society around them. Today, there is still a need for the older more experienced women to teach the younger women many things which come with life experience and spiritual maturity.

Social Works

Although the scriptures clearly show that the elect must have concern and compassion for all people and do good works for all people as opportunities present themselves and our resources allow, the elect must not make the performing of good works toward those outside the church an attempt to save or reform the world through their own efforts, because this is the Father's prerogative (Jn.6:44; 65). Jesus did miracles and good works as acts of compassion to relieve human suffering and to reveal the Father, his good news message of salvation, and his coming kingdom. Moreover, he performed miracles and good works as a witness of his great power and concern for people. These are also the same reasons that the elect should do good works among those of the world:
"You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. Neither do men light a lamp, and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand; and it gives light to all that are in the house. Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven" (Matt.5:14-16 KJV). See also Phil.2:12-16.

**SUMMARY**

Whether you are associated with a congregation of the elect or living without contact with others of like mind and spirit, all of the Father's children must do good works for him. Paul's instruction to the Ephesians shows that the performance of a work for the Father under the direction of Jesus Christ is to be among a person's primary concerns during their physical life on earth:

"For we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to good works, which God has before ordained that we should walk in them" (Eph.2:10 KJV).

Everyone has neither the exact same opportunities to do a work for the Father nor does everyone have the same exact talents, skills, and gifts of the spirit available to do a work. However, everyone is expected to be enthusiastic about doing good works. It is not a question of whether or not to do good works; rather, it is a question of what to do with the resources you have available:

"The Father's grace [Jesus Christ] that brings salvation has appeared to all men, teaching us that we should deny ungodliness and worldly lusts and live a sober, righteous, and godly life in this present world; Looking for the blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Savior Jesus Christ who gave himself for us, so that he might redeem us from all lawlessness, and purify a special people for himself, who are zealous of good works" (Tit.2:11-14 KJV Para.).

**Personal Works**

When it comes to doing personal works, the work that should be your first priority is working out your salvation with the Father. To successfully work out your salvation with the Father, you must be consistent in communicating with him, in the study and meditation of his laws, principles, and precepts contained in his written word, and in the practice of a righteous lifestyle. When you make working out your salvation and your relationship with the Father your first priority, without exception, the result will be good works which will benefit yourself, other people, and the collective work of the church.
Collective Works

Today, there is the general misconception that, in order to participate in the collective work of the church, one must be a member of a congregation. Although it can be a wonderful and fulfilling experience to worship and serve the Father and Christ with others of like faith, in the final analysis, your walk with the Father and Christ is an extremely personal and individual matter. The scriptures clearly show that as long as a person is seeking to please God the Father and Jesus Christ and obtain eternal life in the Kingdom of God they can participate in the collective work of the church without having a physical association with others of like mind and spirit.

One should keep in mind that the Father's holy nation and family of ambassadors, kings, and priests on earth is a spiritual organism composed of those individuals who have his spirit dwelling within them, regardless of their formal association with others of like mind and spirit.

The various works you do for the Father above and beyond working out your salvation include the collective effort of the church to further the Father's work on earth of proclaiming his name, his good news message of salvation, and his soon coming kingdom, along with performing a witness of his way of life, which will bring peace, happiness, and prosperity if practiced.

Finding Good Works to Do

Unless you are given a specific work to do like those who are called to be prophets, teachers, and witnesses during the end of this age, each of the Father's children must search out their own good works to do within the following three categories: 1) personal works; 2) the collective work of the church; and 3) social works. The first place to begin this search is in the biblical record:

"All scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness: That the man of God may be perfect, thoroughly furnished to all good works" (2 Tim. 3:16-17 KJV).

Needs are everywhere and the person filled with the holy spirit sees them and works on them. A person who is merely trying to act like a Christian will only see the obvious and do what will be noticed by others.

When a person is prompted by faith and love, they do not have time to try to find good works to do because they are most likely too busy taking care of all the opportunities already available, many of which go unnoticed by those around them.

Paul's comments to the Thessalonians and the Galatians about their efforts to do good works should be an encouragement to any of the elect who are attempting to faithfully fulfill the Father's instructions to do good works for him.
"Therefore, brethren, stand fast, and hold the traditions which you have been taught, whether by word, or our epistle. Now our Lord Jesus Christ himself, and God, even our Father, which has loved us, and has given us everlasting consolation and good hope through grace, Comfort your hearts, and establish you in every good word and work" (2 Thes. 2:15-17 KJV).

Paul's words of caution and encouragement to the Galatians about the works a person does as a member of the Father's holy family on earth are as valid today as they were then:

"Don't be deceived; God is not mocked: for whatever a person sows, they will reap the same. A person who sows to their flesh shall reap the corruption of the flesh; but the one who sows to the spirit shall reap from the spirit everlasting life. And let's not get tired of doing good, because in due season we will reap, if we don't quit" (Gal.6:7-9 Para.).

**Doing Good Works Takes Planning**

Although opportunities to do good works may come to you, these opportunities may be of short duration; therefore, in order to continue in good works takes a certain amount of planning. See 1 Cor. 15:58.

The following are suggested steps for planning your good works:

Step 1: Analyze your present physical and spiritual condition, your physical and spiritual skills and talents, as well as the resources you have available with which to do works.

Step 2: List the things you can do with the resources you have available. Out of this list, you should be able to identify both the short and long term works you can do.

Step 3: List the things you would like to do, but for which you do not have the physical or spiritual skills, talents, or resources available. Out of this list, choose the things which are feasible if you can acquire the physical or spiritual skills, talents, and the resources to do these good works through your own efforts or with the help of others.

Step 4: Carefully prioritize works according to your physical or spiritual skills, talents, and the resources and time available in which to do these works.

Step 5: Plan how to do the work(s) you have chosen to do and begin.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren, be you steadfast, unmoveable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, forasmuch as you know that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1 Cor. 15:58 KJV).
Personal and Collective Works

The following is a list of things which are a part of a performing a personal work for the Father and Jesus Christ and participating in the collective work of the church:

• Work out your salvation
• Communicate with the Father
• Renew the mind through the power of the holy spirit
• Maintain your first love and zeal for God
• Study and meditate on God's words and ways
• Learn righteous attitudes and behaviors
• Develop godly character
• Be an example of righteousness
• Be hospitable
• Seize the opportunity to do good works
• Produce works according to your skills, talents, and resources
• Do good works that endure
• Be tolerant and forgiving
• Endure with patience
• Guide, teach, nurture, and protect others of the elect
• Share your material wealth with the needy, especially the elect
• Serve the physical and spiritual needs of the elect and others
• Labor in the harvest; help proclaim the gospel message

Rewards For Good Works

If you are truly a member of the Father's earthly family, it is your responsibility to seek to do good works, in order to develop righteous character and perform the task(s) for which you were called during this age. The Father will not force you to perform the responsibilities to which you are called; however, if you do, the promise that the apostle Paul was inspired to record will apply to you:

"But as it is written, Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man, the things which God has prepared for them that love him" (1.Cor.2:9 KJV).

The Most Important Work

The most important work you can do for the Father, Jesus Christ, yourself, and others is to strive to live a righteous life, which will result in your entry into the Father's heavenly kingdom. Once you have made this work your primary goal in life, you can expand your horizons to include other spiritual and physical works which will enhance your basic goal and make you a more profitable servant to the Father and Jesus Christ.

By B. L. Cochereell
MISSION STATEMENT

We sincerely hope that you have found these topical studies into the Bible intellectually challenging, spiritually enlightening, and beneficial.

For those wondering who authored this study, what the study's purpose is, or how to participate in this educational program, the following brief summary will give some insight into who we are and what we are trying to accomplish.

This Work

This work is a non-profit volunteer effort, there are no salaried writers, employees, or staff. The volunteers are engaged in an ongoing effort to discover, research, understand, and publish foundational truths that have been hidden in the Bible for centuries. We believe that, when these foundational truths are correctly understood and practiced, they will bring people happy, abundant, and productive lives with the promise of eternal life after physical death.

Our Goals

Our primary goal is to share our knowledge and understanding of the Sovereign God's plan and purpose for humanity with those who are interested in living according to his law, and not by the dictates and traditions of men. Our secondary goal is to proclaim the coming Kingdom of God as a warning and a witness to humanity before the Messiah returns to rule the earth.

If You Want To Know More

If you want to know more about us, the work we are doing, or how you can participate in our biblically based educational and research projects, contact us at: www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net
WHO IS GOD?
WHAT IS THE BIBLE AND ITS MESSAGE?

The identity of God is one of the greatest mysteries of the entire Bible. Without understanding who God is, it is impossible to understand the biblical record, the reason humans exist on earth, and the message that Jesus brought about how to enter the Kingdom of God as an immortal spirit-being.

People all over the world are searching for a way to live longer, healthier, and happier lives. The biblical record reveals that the purpose for your existence is to give you an opportunity to live forever in a place where no evil exists and where you will have a wonderful life filled with all that is good and enjoyable. This is the good news message that Jesus Christ brought from the Sovereign God.

This book reveals the true identity of the Sovereign God, the Creator God, and Jesus Christ. Additionally, this book unlocks many of the Bible's mysteries and secrets which explain God's awesome and wonderful plan for humanity.

BIBLICAL PROPHECIES PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

The Bible is full of prophecies which speak of unimaginable pain and suffering which Jesus Christ says he is going to pour out on humanity and many of the Father's elect children before he returns to establish the government of God on earth. But, why would the loving God who gave his life for humanity as the Messiah want to inflict the kind of pain, agony, and terror spoken of throughout the Bible as "The Wrath of God"?

If the wrath of God is inevitable, when will it come and what does God hope to accomplish through it? These and many other questions are answered in this in-depth study about the major events which will precede and be a part of the return of Christ and the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth.

This book also identifies several political alliances, people, and spirit-beings and their involvement before and during the fulfillment of the prophetic events at the end of this age.
THE GIFT OF IMMORTALITY

The magnitude of the opportunities and rewards that the Sovereign God offers to those he calls to salvation through repentance, baptism, and conversion is almost beyond comprehension; nevertheless, what is offered can be obtained by those who are willing to become obedient to God's way of life.

This book answers many questions about how to enter the Sovereign God's family and kingdom as an immortal spirit-being and what he expects of his children while they live in human form.

HUMAN LIFE
DEATH AND BEYOND

Is death the end of human existence? According to the Bible, the answer is, No! There are several major resurrections of the dead to physical life noted in the Bible in which an individual's eternal destiny is determined.

This book explains the four major resurrections mentioned in the Bible, who will be in each resurrection, and when each one will occur. This book answers many questions about heaven, hell, the state of the dead, immortality, predestination, reincarnation, and much more.

THE COMMANDED OBSERVANCES AND HOLY CONVOCATIONS
PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout human history anyone who wanted to worship the true God had to do so within the boundaries of strict rules set forth by God. The foundational elements of this worship system are shown through the sacrificial system and the commanded observances and holy convocations.

This two volume study answers many questions about the Sovereign God's plan for humanity, explains many of the literal and prophetic meanings of the various observances and convocations, and reveals a new dimension of understanding into God's plan for the salvation of humanity past, present, and future that has been hidden for many centuries.
BIBLICAL LAW PAST, PRESENT, AND FUTURE

Throughout much of Christian history there has been much confusion and misunderstanding as to what constitutes God's law and whether or not any or all of it applies to Christians today. This study gives some unique insights into the Sovereign God's purpose for humanity and shows how the first humans came under the authority of God's law, how the law applies to Christians today, how it will apply to humans after Christ returns, and how to have a harmonious relationship with the Sovereign God and Jesus Christ through the practice of God's law.

This book gives logical, concise, and meaningful answers to many questions concerning God's law and its application today.

OUR PLACE IN THE SPIRIT REALM

GODS • ANGELS • DEMONS

The spirit realm and the beings who inhabit it and interact with this physical realm are a reality which should not be casually dismissed as being unimportant to one's daily life.

The Bible contains much information that true Christians need to know about the Sovereign God, the Creator God, Jesus Christ, and other spirit-beings.

This book is a serious discussion about the reality of spirit-beings, the tremendous positive impact that some of these beings have had, are having, and will have in the future on mankind and the serious danger posed by some spirit-beings as they interact with humans and this physical dimension of time and space.

SYNAGOGUE OF SATAN AND DOCTRINES OF DEMONS

In the Book of Revelation, there is a cryptic reference to individuals Christ identifies as being of the synagogue of Satan. Additionally the apostle Paul warned the evangelist Timothy to beware of those who would depart from the faith and pay attention to seducing spirits and doctrines of demons. Is it possible that much of what is taught as biblical truth today is not truth, but a clever deception?

This book identifies the Synagogue of Satan and its members and documents a number of popular beliefs held by many professing Christians that are in reality teachings of evil spirits meant to prevent an understanding of true biblical precepts, principles, and laws which if practiced will lead to life everlasting.
BOOK ORDERS AND DONATION INFORMATION

5½" x 8½" soft cover copies of each book noted in the above list may be ordered from www.BibleResearch.org or www.Bible-Prophecy.net. Copies of each book and the topical studies contained in each book may be downloaded free of charge from the websites noted. This book or the ones noted in the above list can be ordered from the printer for mass distribution at cost plus shipping and handling.

Donations are gladly accepted to help defray the cost of our publishing, shipping, and the maintenance of our website.