

The Believer's Future

Hope that Inspires

PROLOGUE

“And now these remain faith, hope and love.” (1 Cor. 13:13a)

What will my future be? If I could only predict the future, what would I do first? Is it possible to change the future? What lies ahead for me and those I love? Will my troubles ever end? If heaven is so much better why does my immediate future have to be in this world of trouble, hardship, and suffering? Is the future worth living for? Questions like these have been asked by the human race ever since paradise was lost.

Fortune tellers and those who claim to have insights into the future have risen to acclaim, wealth, and/or prominence in every human society in every age of man. Nearly every religion and belief system has had people among their members who have made claims about the future. The prophecies of the Oracle of Delphi, the Mains' priests, Parashar, Daniel, John the Revelator, Rasputin, and Nostradamus are studied centuries after they were claimed.

Modern media has capitalized on mankind's unquenchable desire to know about the future. Movies that deal with the future like *Armageddon*, *Independence Day*, *Mad Max*, *2012*, and many more have been box office hits even though most portray a dismal future for mankind. Novels concerning the future (most based on the Bible) like *The Left Behind Series* have been read by millions. TV series concerning the future of mankind have also been widely viewed. Shows like *Star Trek*, *Babylon Five*, and *Battlestar Galactica* have made millions of dollars mostly because of mankind's thirst for a view into the future, even if it is a possible future.

Recent generations have had people bond together around a fervent belief of the future. William Miller in the 1830s and 1840s gained a great following in North America because he had predicted the future using the Bible as his reference. His many followers became known as the Millerites. Millerites became disappointed when Miller's first and second predictions of Jesus second coming proved wrong. Miller, although proven wrong, expanded the still popular Advent Movement, a belief system based on predictions of a period of the future known as the tribulation. His graphs and charts detailing the future of man are used by many to this day.

The public phenomenon of predicting the future has occurred more frequently in recent years. Many with predictions of a scary future have acted in violence against themselves, others, or both. Jim Jones and his predictions of the future led many US citizens to South America and eventually mass suicide in 1978. The Subway Sarin Incident in Japan in 1995 was orchestrated by Asahara, a self acclaimed christ who outlined a doomsday prophecy, which included a Third World War. In 1997, thirty-nine followers of Heaven's Gate died in a mass suicide in California believing their future resided in a spaceship that was circling the earth. Some modern militia groups in the US cite the coming of the Antichrist as a reason to build up an arsenal and resist the government. Some Muslims have committed acts of violence with a desire to change the future.

The desire to know what will happen has always been in mankind's mind. The desire to know and/or change the future has grown beyond a simple curiosity; it is growing in intensity and fervor. Why is this so? Because mankind has always wanted something better. We eagerly

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desire a positive glimpse and hope in our future. We know that we are not what we should be and could be. We hope that perhaps the mess that we have gotten ourselves into or perhaps the mess that seems to have been thrust on us will be fixed and removed. We hope for a better future, and if we lose that hope often we take our own life and sometimes other's lives.

Jesus' disciples also have a desire to know the future. We hope for a better future, a perfect future. Yet sometimes we lose sight of the future God has planned for us and/or we wonder how much better it will be. What is a true Christ follower's future going to be like? Do we have something to hope for? Does our hope for the future shape our daily emotions, thoughts, and actions?

The Bible states in 1 Cor. 13:13, "And now these remain faith, hope and love." The modern believer can understand how faith and love will remain. Many of Jesus' followers can recite other Bible verses that refer to faith and love. But what of hope? What do we hope for? What hope do modern Jesus' disciples have for the future?

If the average attendee of a Bible teaching church were asked, "Do you have hope in your future? What does your future look like?" How would they answer? How would you answer? Most would give the following vague answer, "I'll be in heaven with Christ and other believers." Ask them to clarify and they would probably be at a loss for words.

Why is it that most Jesus' disciples know of the events of the seven years of tribulation even though they believe they won't experience it, and yet know so little about what God has planned for those who believe in him? And why doesn't that hope seem to inspire most believers in their day to day life? Why do a growing number of people have no or little hope for a positive future?

This book is a treatise of what the Lord God says in the Bible concerning Jesus' believer's future so that we may be encouraged and strengthened; so that we may have hope for the future. (Ecc. 8:1-8)

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CHAPTER 1 - THE BRIDEGROOM AND THE BRIDE

Jesus [Y'shua is His Hebrew/Aramaic name, meaning "salvation" (Matt. 1:21)] is the all important link in the future, the past, and the present. "For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy." (Rev. 19:10b) Without Jesus time and life within it would cease to exist. (John 17:3) Jesus is as important to his believers as sugar is to lemonade on a hot sticky day. Jesus is important to those who do not believe in him too. Yet, to them he is like the lemon in lemonade on a cold winter's morning. Whether you believe in Jesus or not, you will have to drink the future of which Jesus is not only the center, but is also the designer and conductor.

In order to get a good understanding of who Jesus is and why he is the future of the human race one needs to look into the past. (Titus 1:2, Heb. 13:20)

LOVE BETRAYED

God created the first man and woman with the plan that he would be in a loving relationship with them forever. He loved them as a bridegroom loves his bride and as a father loves a child. His love for them is shown in the way he created them, with intimacy and tender care. Genesis 2:7 states, "The Lord God ["YHVH Elōhîm" in Hebrew] formed the man from the dust of the ground and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life, and the man became a living being." God personally touched man, breathing into his nostrils the breath of life when he created him. God formed Eve with his own hands by taking a rib from Adam. (Gen 2:22) No other act of creation is listed as being this close and personal. The fact that God stated, "Let us make man in our image, in our likeness" (Gen. 1:26) displays that he intended to lovingly interact with his creation, Adam and Eve.

God in love provided the perfect place for Adam and Eve to live, a beautiful garden. Genesis 2:8-9 states, "Now the Lord God had planted a garden in the east, in Eden; and there he put the man he had formed. And the Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground--trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil."

God in understanding gave Adam and Eve easy and meaningful work that they enjoyed. (Gen 1:28) He provided food that tasted great and was pleasing to the eye. The garden he put them in had no threat, nothing imperfect, nothing toxic, nothing unpleasant, nothing uncomfortable, nothing displeasing, and everything right. All of creation was very good in the eye of the perfect one, God. (Gen 1:31)

God the most holy, wise, funny, entertaining, pleasing, beautiful, enjoyable, gentle, good, kind, loving, graceful, mysterious, powerful, and peaceful physically spent time with them in the perfect place to live and work. He interacted with them in love. (Gen. 2:19) He met all their needs.

God who owns everything gave earth's rule to Adam and Eve. Genesis 1:28 states, "God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.

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Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

God who walked and talked with the first man and woman was Jesus. (John 1:1-5 & 14, 1 Cor. 8:6, Col. 1:16, Heb. 1:2, 2:10) Jesus gave them freedom to do what they wanted and was very pleased with them. Jesus loved Adam and Eve as a bridegroom loves his bride. He loves in ways much deeper than can be imagined for he alone loves as creator. (Isa. 40:28, 43:15-21)

Meaningful and edifying love is reciprocal. Love reciprocated is a dynamic vibrant powerful experience. God gave a way for Adam and Eve to return his love. He told Adam to not eat from one of two trees in the center of the garden, implying doing so would betray his love. Adam and Eve could eat from the tree of life for doing so would enable their bodies to live forever. However, they could not eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He told them that if they were to eat from the second tree, leaving the loving relationship that they enjoyed with him and each other, it would not be good for them. He told them that without him they would die. (Gen. 2:16-17)

Adam and Eve did eat the forbidden fruit and experienced what God had warned them about. Life outside of his love was misery upon misery. (Hos. 5:15, Rom. 3:16) They knew that they had made a mistake and were ashamed. Genesis 3:9-10 states, "But the Lord God called to the man, "Where are you?" He answered, "I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid." They betrayed their lover. (John 3:19-20)

Even though the first of the human race betrayed their Bridegroom's love, the Bridegroom still loved them. He did not leave them without hope. He gave them a visible illustration that he loved them and how he was planning on mending the relationship that they had broken. God, who appeared to Adam and Even in the flesh in the garden, killed a lamb and gave them its skin to cover their shame. (Gen. 3:21) He told Satan, Eve's seed would crush his head. (Gen. 3:15)

After providing them with an illustration of hope, God made Adam and Eve leave the garden he had prepared for them, cutting them off from their meeting place with him and the tree of life. (Gen. 3:22-24) Adam and Even treasured the hope that God was going to restore their relationship with him and each other, and return them to the garden and the tree of life.

Adam and Eve lived out their remaining years on earth holding onto the hope that God gave them, restored relationship and paradise. They believed that God was working to restore the love relationship with him; the one they chose not to live. They believed and hoped that God would correct all the consequences of their wrong choice. They knew from God's illustration that the restored love relationship that they now longed for involved the death and pure blood of an innocent lamb.

Like Adam and Eve, the believer's hope revolves around God's restoration work. We believe and hope that we will eventually be completely restored to him and the paradise that God had planned for us from the beginning. When a person truly has this hope in their heart, they are inspired to live by faith no matter what life circumstance they may be encountering.

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God worked on restoring the lost love relationship throughout the ages that followed mankind's first and continual sin. God worked to fulfill his promise even after Adam and Eve physically died. God is still working on restoration to this day. (John 5:17) God's work of restoration from our current perspective is taking a long time. Yet from the eternal life perspective and hope it is not taking much time at all. (Acts 3:27, 2 Peter 3:8-9)

My grandmother crocheted beautiful afghans for those she loved. One day she told me that she was going to create one for me. That day we went to a store to buy the yarn. She allowed me to choose the yarn's colors and size. When she paid the cashier I could only imagine what her present to me might look like for I had seen afghans that she had created for my relatives. The same day we bought the yarn, she began the work. Day after day she sat in a rocking chair and stitched with a rocking rhythm. The project took a long time to finish, much longer than I expected. Day after day I watched it grow in length and beauty; first one line, then two. Lines turned into a pattern. The pattern was repeated when another color was added. With the use of many colors new patterns of beauty emerged. Finally, after several months, Grandma Pohlman finished my afghan. It was more beautiful than I had originally imagined. To this day when I wrap the soft warm afghan around me I remember and appreciate my grandmother's act of love.

Similar to my grandmother, God has been working meticulously throughout time, working on the restoration afghan of love. When he is finished with his work and presents it to his beloved, they will be able to appreciate it for eternity.

RESTORING LOST LOVE

A detailed study of the past would reveal how Jesus, the bridegroom was working on mending the lost love relationship with his bride and the results of that lost love. Since the first sin God was wooing his bride back to him. (2 Cor. 5:18-20) We could look at his wooing by studying Noah, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses, Joshua, David, Esther, and the nation Israel. However, the one place we need to look at more than the rest is the fulfillment of the promise of hope God made to Adam and Eve and kept repeating to those who believed and hoped in him. God said through Isaiah, "The Lord himself will give you a sign: The virgin will be with child and will give birth to a son, and will call him Immanuel. He will eat curds and honey when he knows enough to reject the wrong and choose the right." (Isaiah 7:14-15, Matt. 1:23) God sent Immanuel Jesus around two thousand years ago as the fulfillment of his promise. Jesus is God who willingly came to us to restore us. (John 1:1, 14, 18, 8:58, 10:30, 14:9, Heb. 1:3, 2 Co. 4:4, Col. 1:15-16) He is the Son of God and the innocent Lamb of God sent to save his bride. (John 1:29, 36)

John the Baptist stated when he saw Jesus, "The bride belongs to the bridegroom. The friend who attends the bridegroom waits and listens for him, and is full of joy when he hears the bridegroom's voice. That joy is mine, and it is now complete." (John 3:29-30) John stated that he was the friend who attended the bridegroom, Jesus, who came for the sake of his bride.

God came to the human race in the flesh as Immanuel, a baby who became the innocent Lamb of God. (Gen. 22:8, Ex. 12:1-12, 21-30, John 1:29, 36, Rev. 19:7, 21:9) The baby Jesus grew up and paid the price of betrayed love and sin by taking the punishment his bride should have received. Jesus' act of love was no small thing considering just who he is. (Heb. 2:9)

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Jesus is the imaginative and powerful creator God. (John 1:1-5, 14) Everything but he was created and he created all. He created heaven and earth. He created all the angels. He created time, matter, and space. The entire vast universe he created. Every galaxy he started and sustains. Every star he ignited and sustains. Every atom and all that makes up an atom he brought into being and sustains. Every plant and animal Jesus created and sustains.

Jesus has no beginning and will have no end. He is all powerful and nothing has more power than he. If he were to will it, it would happen. Nothing and no one can stop him from doing what he desires and all he desires is right and good. Jesus is omnipotent.

Jesus is omnipresent. He is in all creation. He exists outside of space and within space. No matter where one would go, Jesus would be there. He exists outside of time and within time.

Jesus is adored and worshipped by all heaven. All heaven acknowledges his glory and beauty. There is nothing that has more glory than he. There is nothing that is more beautiful than he. Countless angels sing his praises nonstop. He is loved by many. Even Jesus' enemies acknowledge his greatness. (James 2:19)

Yet Jesus willingly left all his glory and honor and became a flesh and blood human baby. (Col. 2:9, Heb. 2:14-15) Jesus accepted being, "a little lower than the angels" (Heb. 2:9) the status of mankind. He refrained from his power so that his bride could be rescued and restored to perfection. God the Father impregnated the virgin Mary through the Holy Spirit so that Jesus could be the Son of God through his seed and the Son of Man through her flesh.

From the beginning Jesus' decision of humility brought him suffering and sorrow. (Isa. 53:3) He was born to a poor family in a poor occupied country. (Luke 2:24, Lev. 12:8) When he was still an infant the king of the land he lived in tried to kill him. (Matt. 2:16) His family had to leave their relatives and their land so he wouldn't be killed. (Matt. 2:13)

Jesus' mission of good will was misunderstood and he was rejected. When he didn't live up to people's expectations they tried to kill him, not just once, but many times. (Mark 6:3, 11:18, John 5:18, 8:59, 10:31) At times he was told to leave the land he was in. (Matt. 8:32) Public and religious leaders maligned his name. (Matt. 12:24, Mark 3:30, John 5:16) They ridiculed him and wanted him dead throughout his ministry of restoration. Without reason many misunderstood and hated him. (Matt. 3:31-35, John 6:66) Eventually he was arrested and killed even though all he ever did was help people and went around doing good. (Acts 2:22)

Jesus, the bridegroom, became the Lamb of God that shed his pure blood so that the sins of Adam and Eve's race could be done away with and so they would be restored. (Rom. 5:9) Jesus, God who created and then walked and talked with Adam and Eve, suffered and then died on the cross to restore their relationship with him. Jesus willful act of receiving humiliation, pain, suffering, and death displays just how far God needed to go to restore a relationship with his people, his bride. (Phil. 2:8) The drastic act was needed because sin is so heinous. (Rom. 1:18, 21, 28, 32)

Jesus told his Heavenly Father just before he allowed himself to be arrested, tried, and killed, "Not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:32) He was then betrayed by a close friend and

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chosen apostle. (Luke 22:47) Guards arrested and hit him. His other friends deserted him and denied knowing him. (Luke 22:57) His family members abandoned him. Jesus was all alone when the guards took him to be judged.

Jesus was jailed, beaten, and scourged. A whip made of short leather straps that were impregnated with bone and sharp pieces of metal was lashed onto his body thirty-nine times. His pure blood and pieces of flesh that were ripped from his side splattered on the ground. A crown of thorns was thrust into his head as streams of pure blood and sweat ran down his head. A robe was placed on him and he was given a stick that was made to be a staff while evil men ridiculed him. They spit on him, mocked him, and beat him. (Luke 22:47-71)

Rulers who were corrupt and selfish stood in evil judgment of Jesus, an innocent man. He was given a mock trial. False accusations concerning his words and actions were given with fervor. No one spoke in his favor. (Matt. 26:59, Luke 23:1-23)

Jesus was condemned and despised by a crowd of people. They accepted a known criminal over him, demanding that Jesus be put to death. (Luke 23:25) He was publicly humiliated by being forced to carry a heavy beam through the city streets. People laughed at him and taunted him. Pilate, one of his judges, had a notice prepared and fastened to the cross. It read: "JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS." (John 19:19)

During Jesus' punishment of crucifixion soldiers drove nails into his hand and feet. They dislocated his joints as they attached him to a coarse wooden cross. Naked, Jesus was put up high on the cross so all could see his condemned state. Bored and greedy men gambled for his clothes. (Mark 15:24) People mocked him the whole time he hung on the cross. When Jesus asked for water they offered him a foul drink. (John 19:29)

Jesus was misunderstood even while being crucified. Those who killed him did not know who he was. They did not know of his desire to do the right thing for his bride. They did not know of his love. They did not know what he was doing for them. Yet he said, "Father forgive them, for they know not what they are doing," while being crucified. (Luke 23:34)

Jesus, the Son of God and the Son of Man took his bride's sins upon his body. The sin he accepted became unacceptable to God, his Father. His Father rejected him in his shame. (Matt. 27:46, Mark 15:34) Jesus had received the curse his bride was supposed to receive. (Gal. 3:13) With sin removed we have access to God. This good news "is the power of God for the salvation of everyone who believes: first for the Jew, then for the Gentile." (Rom. 1:16)

Jesus willingly went from the highest point to the lowest point because he loved and wanted to be with his bride. He died for his bride. His physical body stopped functioning so his bride's body could be cleansed, restored, and revived. (Isa. 53) His dead body was maligned so his bride could be corrected. Those overseeing his crucifixion drove a shaft into his side to ensure that his body had stopped functioning. The white and red blood cells in his heart separated and poured out of his heart when the shaft sliced through his body. (John 19:35) The separation only happens when the blood stops flowing for one is heavier than the other, so they separate. His

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body was buried and lay in a grave for three days so his bride's body could be raised from the grave. (Rom. 7:4, 8:11)

Jesus is the perfect sacrifice because he alone is of the seed of God. His blood alone in the entire human race is and was pure. As Paul says he is the second (last) Adam. (1 Cor. 15:22, 45) Leviticus 17:11-12a states, "For the life of a creature is in the blood, and I have given it to you to make atonement for yourselves on the altar; it is the blood that makes atonement for one's life." Hebrews 9:22b states, "...without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness."

In his book, *The Chemistry of the Blood*, M. R. DeHann, M.D. explains the origin of blood: "The blood which flows in an unborn babe's arteries and veins is not derived from the mother but is produced within the body of the fetus... It is only after the sperm has entered the ovum and a fetus begins to develop that blood appears. As a very simple illustration of this, think of the egg of a hen. An unfertilized egg is simply an ovum on a much larger scale than the human ovum. You may incubate this unfertilized hen's egg, but it will never develop. It will dry up completely but no chick will result. But let that egg be fertilized by the introduction of the male sperm and incubation will bring to light the presence of life in an embryo. After a few hours it visibly develops. In a little while red streaks occur, denoting the presence of blood... According to scientists... from the time of conception to the time of birth... not ONE SINGLE DROP OF BLOOD ever passes from mother to child... The mother contributes no blood at all."

Jesus' pure blood was not conveyed by his mother, the daughter of sinful Adam. Rather, it was conveyed by the pure seed of his Heavenly Father!

Centrioles are supplied by the father's sperm. A centriole is the center of a centrosome and is a minute protoplasmic body. Plasma is the fluid part of blood and protoplasm is organized living matter, the fluid complex of the living nucleus that is often designated the physical basis of life. The basis of life is in the father's protoplasmic seed: a seed made of fluid and plasma – water and blood. Jesus came by just such a seed. John tells us there is "one who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ" (1 John 5:6) John also tells us that when Jesus died he saw the blood and water come out of Jesus side separately, thus marking his death. (Source, *In Search of Israel* by Batya Wootten.)

Through his act of love Jesus' bride was cleansed of sin by his pure blood. (Rom. 4:25) Thus, Jesus was able to reestablish the lost love relationship with his bride. God and anyone in the human race who wants it can have a relationship again. As a symbol of this, when Jesus died on the cross, the curtain that separated the most holy of holies from the place where priests could stand in the temple in Jerusalem was torn in two. (Matt. 27:51) The curtain was the symbol of sin separating God from his people. With Jesus' death for his bride, sin was removed and thus no longer would Jesus be separated from his bride. (Col. 1:19-21)

JESUS PROMISE TO HIS BRIDE

Jesus physically rose from the dead on the third day because death could not keep its hold on an innocent person. (Acts 2:24) His act of righteousness for the sake of his bride was honored by God when his dead body was brought back to life. Jesus appeared to his disciples in a

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physical body on more than one occasion. Not only did Jesus rise from the dead, but when he ascended to heaven his body was changed into a new glorified resurrection body. After a few months with his people on this earth Jesus ascended into heaven and received his resurrection body of glory. (Acts 1:9, 2:33, 5:31, 7:55, Rom. 8:34, Col. 3:1, Heb. 1:13, 10:12, 12:2)

Before Jesus physically left this earth he made several promises concerning the future, including his bride's future. Jesus promised his bride he would return for her. John 14:1-4 records Jesus saying, "Do not let your hearts be troubled. Trust in God; trust also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. You know the way to the place where I am going." He is recorded in other places as promising to come for those who put their hope in him; Matt. 25:31, 24:30, 24:43, 26:64, Mark 8:38, Luke 13:35, and John 16:22.

Jesus constantly promised his return not only to his bride, but to others as well. "The high priest said to him, 'I charge you under oath by the living God: Tell us if you are the Christ, the Son of God.' 'Yes, it is as you say,' Jesus replied. 'But I say to all of you: In the future you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Mighty One and coming on the clouds of heaven.'" (Matt. 26:63-64)

Jesus' bride hopes in and longs for his loving return. Jesus is his bride's future. Just before Jesus ascended into heaven the angels told his disciples, "Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven." (Acts 1:11) The hope of Jesus' bride, the true believer, is that Jesus is coming back for them. (Matt. 12:21)

The importance of the hope of Jesus' return to his bride is established by the frequency, extent, and intensity of their recording it in the Bible. It is mentioned in all but four books of the New Testament. One out of every thirty verses in the Bible mentions this subject. There are 318 references to it in 216 chapters in the New Testament. One-twentieth of the entire New Testament deals with this subject. Jesus' return was predicted by most of the Old Testament writers: Moses (Deut. 33:2), Job (Job 19:25); David (Ps. 102:16) Isaiah (Isa. 59:20); Jeremiah (Jer. 23:5); Daniel (Dan. 7:13); Zechariah (Zech. 14:4); and many others. All the apostles in their preaching spoke of it; Peter (Acts 3:20-21, 1 Pet. 1:7, 13), Paul (Rom. 8:23, 1 Thes. 4:15-17), John (1 Jn. 3:28, 3:2) James (Jas. 5:7-9), and Jude (Jude 14-15). In the Old Testament, for every one mentioning his first coming, four mention his second coming. Jesus' return is the core hope of the bride.

The book of (Solomon) Song of Songs is the story of the bride waiting for the bridegroom. It is a dim reflection of Jesus' bride waiting for Jesus' return. Song of Songs 2:8 states, "Listen! My lover! Look! Here he comes, leaping across the mountains, bounding over the hills." 4:9 states, "You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride; you have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes." 6:9-10 records, "Where has your lover gone, most beautiful of women? Which way did your lover turn, that we may look for him with you?" "My lover has gone down to his garden, to the beds of spices, to browse in the gardens and to gather lilies. I am my lover's and my lover is mine; he browses among the lilies."

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Jesus is not on this earth now, but will come again for his bride. When he does he will not come in weakness as he did when he came as a baby. When Jesus comes he will come in strength, glory, honor, and majesty. He will be in his glorious resurrection body. Revelation 1:12-18 states John the apostle saw, "someone 'like a son of man,' dressed in a robe reaching down to his feet and with a golden sash around his chest. His head and hair were white like wool, as white as snow, and his eyes were like blazing fire. His feet were like bronze glowing in a furnace, and his voice was like the sound of rushing waters. In his right hand he held seven stars, and out of his mouth came a sharp double-edged sword. His face was like the sun shining in all its brilliance. When I saw him, I fell at his feet as though dead. Then he placed his right hand on me and said: "Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and behold I am alive forever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades."

JESUS' BRIDE

Jesus' death took away the sins of his bride and thus they are as pure as light. Jesus says they are the light of the world. (Matt. 5:14, 1 Co. 6:11) Who is Jesus' bride? Billy Graham wrote in his book Approaching Hoofbeats, "Christ sees Himself and His church as lovers. The Old Testament is full of ardent expressions describing God's relationship with His people. The church is the bride of Christ in the New Testament terms." Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles wrote to the Corinthians, "I am jealous for you with a godly jealousy. I promised you to one husband, to Christ, so that I might present you as a pure virgin to him." (2 Cor. 11:2)

Jesus loves his bride. Yet, not all will be his bride. The free will to receive Jesus' love or betray it as Adam and Eve did is inherited by their children. Everyone that has ever been born has been given the option to accept Jesus as bridegroom or reject him. Who is the bride of Jesus? The bride of Jesus is those who want to be his bride and receive his love. (John 1:10-13)

Most, however, do not want to be Jesus' bride. They are people of the kingdom of the world as it is now. (1 Cor. 5:10, Eph. 2:2, Col. 2:8, 20-23) Their thoughts are on themselves, their things, people's opinions of them, and their place in this world. They pile sin upon themselves, making themselves more and more impure. Some are masked with false religion and powerless faith. (2 Tim. 3:1-5) They are referred to as the people of Babylon. (Rev. 17:5) An angel declares in Revelation 18:23 telling us of a future time for these people, "The light of a lamp will never shine in you (Babylon) again. The voice of bridegroom and bride will never be heard in you again. Your merchants were the world's great men. By your magic spell all the nations were led astray." A day is coming when the light of God's truth and his people will no longer be with them. Those who do not want to be Jesus' bride are people who accept a hopeless existence.

Several of Jesus' parables describe the future of those who reject his love. Those who reject his love by not having faith in him will not be cleansed of their sin. With sin still a part of them they will be cast in a place where God, his love, and the presence of his bride will not be. (Matt. 3:11, 5:22, 18:8, 25: 41, Jude 7, Rev. 20:14)

Jesus' bride consists of true believers from every nation in this current age, the age of preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God, and true believers in ages past, especially descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Israel). (Eph. 3:6) When Jesus saw a gentile (gôy

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in Hebrew) have great faith in him, he was astonished and said to those following him, "I tell you the truth, I have not found anyone in Israel with such great faith. I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven. But the subjects of the kingdom will be thrown outside, into the darkness, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 8:10-12) Israelites had an extra ordinary chance to be Jesus' bride in the past age. He made a everlasting covenant with them. (Gen. 17:7, 13, 19, 1 Chron. 16:7, Ps. 105:10, Ez. 16:60, 2 Sam. 23:5, Is. 55:3, Ez. 37:25) Some of them accepted, but most rejected his invitation. Now all, especially gentiles have an extraordinary chance to be Jesus' eternal bride. (Is. 24:5, 61:8, Jer. 32:40, 50:5, Heb. 13:20) Some accept, but most reject. (Rom. 11:25, 15:7-13)

Jesus' bride consists of true believers who live in the world as a light shining into the world of darkness. (Matt. 5:14-16) They brag about their bridegroom to others still in the darkness of Babylon. They tell of Jesus' selfless love for them as ambassadors of his kingdom. (2 Cor. 5:20) They tell of his honor and grace. The streets, alleys, and country roads echo with the praises of their bridegroom. They invite others to accept his invitation to become his bride. Jesus' bride is those who understand him, accept him, love him, and invite others to join them as his bride. (Acts 1:8)

The future of Jesus' bride is glorious. John the Revelator wrote of the bride, "Then I heard what sounded like a great multitude, like the roar of rushing waters and like loud peals of thunder, shouting: "Hallelujah! For our Lord God Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and be glad and give him glory! For the wedding of the Lamb has come, and his bride has made herself ready. Fine linen, bright and clean, was given her to wear." (Fine linen stands for the righteous acts of the saints.) Then the angel said to me, "Write: 'Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding supper of the Lamb!'" And he added, "These are the true words of God." (Rev. 19:6-9) Jesus' bride accepts him in their heart and action. They stop sinning against God and start living the way God meant for mankind to live. They are saints who do what is true, honorable, and loving. They live by the Spirit of Jesus. They do all they can to please him.

The future of Jesus' bride is glorious. The Bible's last two chapters state the future of Jesus' bride. "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God." (Rev. 21:9-10) "Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life." (Rev. 21:27) "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." (Rev. 22:12-17)

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Jesus has great things planned for his bride's future. He promised that he will come for us. Until he keeps his promised return we have to patiently wait for him in faith, enduring the facts of living in this cursed world. (Gen. 3:17) Matthew records, "Then John's disciples came and asked him, "How is it that we and the Pharisees fast, but your disciples do not fast?" Jesus answered, "How can the guests of the bridegroom mourn while he is with them? The time will come when the bridegroom will be taken from them; then they will fast." (Matt. 9:14-15)

What does it mean for the bride to wait for his return? Jesus explained it with parables. For example he said, "At that time the kingdom of heaven will be like ten virgins who took their lamps and went out to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were foolish and five were wise. The foolish ones took their lamps but did not take any oil with them. The wise, however, took oil in jars along with their lamps. The bridegroom was a long time in coming, and they all became drowsy and fell asleep. At midnight the cry rang out: 'Here's the bridegroom! Come out to meet him!' Then all the virgins woke up and trimmed their lamps. The foolish ones said to the wise, 'Give us some of your oil; our lamps are going out.' 'No,' they replied, 'there may not be enough for both us and you. Instead, go to those who sell oil and buy some for yourselves.' But while they were on their way to buy the oil, the bridegroom arrived. The virgins who were ready went in with him to the wedding banquet. And the door was shut. Later the others also came. 'Sir! Sir!' they said. 'Open the door for us!' But he replied, 'I tell you the truth, I don't know you.' Therefore keep watch, because you do not know the day or the hour." (Matt. 25:1-13)

What did Jesus mean by telling his bride to keep our lamps full of oil? He meant that we should be full of the Holy Spirit. One is full of the Holy Spirit if they live by the Holy Spirit. How can this be done? Keep ourselves pure with prayer, fasting, Bible reading, study, and memorization, repentance and active faith in hope and love. (Rom. 8:13, Gal. 5:16, 25, 1 John 3:24)

THE KING AND HIS FUTURE QUEEN

Jesus is not just any bridegroom and his bride is not just an average bride. Jesus is The King of kings (John 18:36-37) and his bride will be his queen, made pure by her bridegroom's love. Psalms 45:4-15 states concerning Jesus, "In your majesty ride forth victoriously in behalf of truth, humility and righteousness; let your right hand display awesome deeds. Let your sharp arrows pierce the hearts of the king's enemies; let the nations fall beneath your feet. Your throne, O God, will last forever and ever; a scepter of justice will be the scepter of your kingdom. You love righteousness and hate wickedness; therefore God, your God, has set you above your companions by anointing you with the oil of joy. All your robes are fragrant with myrrh and aloes and cassia; from palaces adorned with ivory the music of the strings makes you glad. Daughters of kings are among your honored women; at your right hand is the royal bride in gold of Ophir. Listen, O daughter, consider and give ear: Forget your people and your father's house. The king is enthralled by your beauty; honor him, for he is your lord. The Daughter of Tyre will come with a gift, men of wealth will seek your favor. All glorious is the princess within [her chamber]; her gown is interwoven with gold. In embroidered garments she is led to the king; her virgin companions follow her and are brought to you. They are led in with joy and gladness; they enter the palace of the king."

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Jesus is the King of all; Jew and Gentile. Romans 15:12-13 states, "And again, Isaiah says, 'The Root of Jesse will spring up, one who will arise to rule over the nations; the Gentiles will hope in him.' May the God of hope fill you with all joy and peace as you trust in him, so that you may overflow with hope by the power of the Holy Spirit." Jesse is the father of David, the boy who became the second king of Israel. David is Jesus' ancestor. Jesus is of kingly descent. Jesus is no ordinary king for he will rule over the nations, Jew and Gentile. Jesus full rule is not experienced now because most do not accept his rule. However, someday his full rule will be experienced. Jesus' bride, both Jew and Gentile, hope in his eventual world rule.

Jesus' kingship is stated in many places and ways in the Bible. For example, Christ appears five hundred and one times in the New Testament, each time referring only to Jesus. Christ refers to Jesus' kingship. Today many people believe that Jesus' sir name is Christ. It is not. People having sir names only started a few hundred years ago. Before that people had only one word for a name. However, sometimes when referring to a person, people would say that he was the son of someone. For example, James was called the son of Zebedee to distinguish him from James the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:2-3). In other cases a person's title and/or position was added to their name (i.e. King Herod, Tiberius Caesar, etc.). These practices did not mean that those men had sir names (although in some cultures centuries later this did happen). Thus, it is the same with Jesus.

Christ is not Jesus' sir name; it is his title. "Christ" refers to Jesus' kingly position. Christ is a Greek word with the same meaning as the Hebrew word Messiah. Jesus being the Messiah refers to his kingly lineage stemming back to King David and at the same time looks to his future reigning as King of Israel and the world. When the Bible states Jesus is the Messiah; that is the Christ, it means that Jesus is the King, God's anointed one.

Throughout human history only two types of people were anointed with oil; kings and priests. (Ex. 29:29, 40:15, Lev. 7:36, 1 Sa. 2:10, 35, 10:1, 15:17, 15:13) Oil poured over their head was a symbol of the Holy Spirit coming over them. Jesus, the Christ, is God's special anointed one. (Ps. 2:2, Dan. 9:25) Jesus was anointed by God with the Holy Spirit as king and priest. (Luke 4:16-24, Acts 10:38)

JESUS, PROPHET KING

Jesus is the King and yet more than a king. He is the prophet king. A prophet is a person who God specially appoints as messenger of his word to the masses. God did not speak directly to his people Israel. Instead he appointed people to be the go between, a messenger of his word, a prophet. Jesus is the greatest of the prophets because he was God's prophet king.

Hebrews 1:1-4 states, "In the past God spoke to our forefathers through the prophets at many times and in various ways, but in these last days he has spoken to us by his Son, whom he appointed heir of all things, and through whom he made the universe. The Son is the radiance of God's glory and the exact representation of his being, sustaining all things by his powerful word. After he had provided purification for sins, he sat down at the right hand of the Majesty in heaven. So he became as much superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is superior

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to theirs." Jesus, being prophet king is great news to his bride because it means he intercedes to God the Father on behalf of his bride. (Rom. 8:34)

The magi who came to worship the newly born king of the Jews knew that the baby Jesus was more than a king. (Matt. 2:2) They knew he was a prophet king for their offering to him consisted not only of gold, the gift to a king. They also offered myrrh and incense, the gifts to a prophet, one destined to the service of God on behalf of God's people. (Matt. 2:11) Myrrh and frankincense in the Bible were prescribed for holy incense mixtures used by priests and prophets. (Ex. 30:22-25, 31 & 34)

JESUS, PRIEST KING

Jesus is more than the prophet king; he is also the priest king. A prophet gives messages from God to God's people. A priest represented God's people by bringing their messages and needs to God, offering sacrifices that would purify the people so that God could hear their messages and thus bless his people. (Heb. 5:1, 8:3)

Hebrews 2:14-18 states, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death. For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham's descendants. For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way, in order that he might become a merciful and faithful high priest in service to God, and that he might make atonement for the sins of the people. Because he himself suffered when he was tempted, he is able to help those who are being tempted."

Hebrews 4:14-16 continued, "Therefore, since we have a great high priest who has gone through the heavens, Jesus the Son of God, let us hold firmly to the faith we profess. For we do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathize with our weaknesses, but we have one who has been tempted in every way, just as we are--yet was without sin. Let us then approach the throne of grace with confidence, so that we may receive mercy and find grace to help us in our time of need."

Hebrews 9:11-12 states, "When Christ came as high priest of the good things that are already here, he went through the greater and more perfect tabernacle that is not man-made, that is to say, not a part of this creation. He did not enter by means of the blood of goats and calves; but he entered the Most Holy Place once for all by his own blood, having obtained eternal redemption." He was able to go into heaven to do this because he was God's one and only son.

We should be glad and grateful that our bridegroom and king is also prophet and priest. He alone gives direct access to God. Jesus himself stated, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14:6)

"Therefore, brothers, since we have confidence to enter the Most Holy Place by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way opened for us through the curtain, that is, his body, and since we have a great priest over the house of God, let us draw near to God with a sincere heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled to cleanse us from a guilty conscience and having our bodies washed with pure water. Let us hold unswervingly to the hope we profess, for

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he who promised is faithful. And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. Let us not give up meeting together, as some are in the habit of doing, but let us encourage one another--and all the more as you see the Day approaching." (Heb. 10:19-25)

Many rich and powerful men and women are working to set up a worldwide kingdom at the cost of many innocent and helpless people. People, either knowingly or unknowingly, that are ruled by this kingdom of Satan bring injustice and pain to others and themselves as the cost of the new world order. They see the subjects of Jesus' kingdom at odds with their plans so they hate and persecute them; even though most don't understand why they act as they do. The psalmist asked, "Why do the nations conspire and the peoples plot in vain? The kings of the earth take their stand and the rulers gather together against the Lord and against his Anointed One. 'Let us break their chains,' they say, 'and throw off their fetters.' The One enthroned in heaven laughs; the Lord scoffs at them. Then he rebukes them in his anger and terrifies them in his wrath, saying, 'I have installed my king.'" God promises Jesus, the Holy One, "I will make the nations your inheritance, the ends of the earth your possession. You will rule them with an iron scepter; you will dash them to pieces like pottery." God warns, "Therefore, you kings, be wise; be warned, you rulers of the earth. Serve the Lord with fear and rejoice with trembling. Kiss the Son, lest he be angry and you be destroyed in your way, for his wrath can flare up in a moment." God promises, "Blessed are all who take refuge in him." (Ps. 2:8-12)

God has promised the earth to His Son, Jesus Christ and someday it will be his to completely rule. He will bring an end to all the misery and all that causes misery. This is his bride's hope.

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CHAPTER 2 - THE KINGDOM OF GOD

THE KINGDOM

Jesus is the Majestic Prophet Priest King. His kingdom is the Kingdom of God. The Kingdom of God should be no small topic for those who belong to it. The phrase "the Kingdom of God" and "the Kingdom of Heaven" is repeated almost three hundred times in both Old and New Testaments. It is referred to 1,845 times in the Old Testament. Many of Jesus' parables concern the Kingdom of God. Jesus stated that he "preached the good news of the Kingdom of God" from town to town. (Luke 4:43, 8:1, 9:11) Jesus sent out his disciples to preach about the Kingdom of God. (Luke 9:1) Jesus often told people, "The Kingdom of God is near you," or at least something similar to it. (Matt. 12:28, Mark 1:15, Mark 12:34, Luke 10:9, 11, 20) When the disciples asked Jesus how to pray, the second subject (after honoring God our Father) he told them to pray for was The Kingdom of God. "Thy kingdom come," he taught his disciples to pray, "Your will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

The question is often raised, or at least should be raised; what is Jesus asking us to pray about? What was Jesus referring to when he spoke of the Kingdom of God? Is it a real place? Is it in this world? Is it the church (congregation of Jesus)? Is it in heaven or is it heaven itself? Is it something yet to come? Is it some mystical realm in another dimension? Will it be on the moon or some other planet in a galaxy far away? Is it the same as the Kingdom of Heaven? Sadly most today including many modern Christian's have either no idea or the wrong idea of the Kingdom of God (aka Kingdom of Heaven) because most, including modern believers seldom take time to think about the Kingdom of God let alone talk about it and study what the Bible has to say about it.

The definition of the Kingdom of God is simple and complex. The simplicity of it is that any kingdom is where a king has complete and unquestionable control and authority. Still, those of us under modern day governments cannot have a complete understanding of this type of kingship. Most modern day governments allow its citizens to have freedom to own land and a home and freedom to choose where we will live and what we will do. This is not so with kingdoms of the past and even some kingdoms today.

An example from human history can give us some understanding of unquestionable control and authority. England's past, before the Parliament was established, was a kingdom where the king or queen of England ruled unquestionably. England's king owned all the land; including everything and everyone in it. The king granted people to live in areas where he chose them to live. His citizens were not allowed to leave his land unless he gave them permission. To do so would mean certain punishment and sometimes death. Similarly, the Kingdom of God, simply put, is where Jesus rules unquestionably; where he owns everything and everyone, because that is what his subjects want. God does not force his rule on anyone; it is our choice.

The complexity of the definition of the Kingdom of God is because of two basic differences between Jesus' kingdom and man's kingdoms. First, the kingdoms of men and women are limited by the fact that their kings could not be one in satisfying love with the souls and spirits of their citizens. Jesus on the other hand is bound to his bride in spirit. Paul wrote, "After all, no

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one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church-- for we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a profound mystery--but I am talking about Christ and the church." (Eph. 5:29-32)

Jesus is currently away from his bride and yet is one with his bride through the Holy Spirit. He told his disciples during the last supper, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Counselor to be with you forever – the Spirit of truth. The world cannot accept him because it neither sees him nor knows him. But you know him, for he lives in you and will be in you. I do not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my Father, and you are in me, and I am in you." (John 13:20) John 20:22 records Jesus after his death and resurrection, "breathing on them (his disciples) saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit."" A few days later, after his ascension the Spirit came with wind and fire. (Acts 2:1-4, 38-39) Jesus is united in Spirit with his bride. (John 14:16-17, 20)

Everyone who receives Jesus as their king in this age is given the Holy Spirit, the Counselor, the promised gift. John 14:25-27 records Jesus saying, "All this I have spoken while still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, will teach you all things and will remind you of everything I have said to you. Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid." The Holy Spirit's work in this age is to teach and remind us of our King's words.

The Holy Spirit brings satisfaction to Jesus' bride. (Rom. 8) The fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. (Gal. 5:22-26) In prior ages only a few received the Spirit of God from time to time. In this age all believers receive the Spirit. (Acts 2:16-21, 1 Cor. 6:19, Eph. 1:13) Yet the measure of the Holy Spirit given in this age is small compared to the measure given when we leave this age.

Imagine you're in a hot sandy dry desert. All you know of and have been given to cool off and refresh in is a shower of cool water that you can access any time. It cleanses and strengthens you. You drink from it and your body and soul are soothed. You enjoy the shower and thank God for it because it enables you to get through the desert's torturous heat. Then one day you are introduced and given complete and unending access to a large pool of fresh clear cool water and around the pool is an oasis that stretches to the horizon. Suddenly the desert becomes a very enjoyable playground full of unending laughter and joy. The measure of the Spirit given in this life is like the shower. The measure of the Spirit given in our future is like the pool. (Rom. 8:18-26, Joel 2:28-32, Acts 2:13-21)

Romans 5:1-5 states, "Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have gained access by faith into this grace in which we now stand. And we rejoice in the hope of the glory of God. Not only so, but we also rejoice in our sufferings, because we know that suffering produces perseverance; perseverance, character; and character, hope. And hope does not disappoint us, because God has poured out his love into our hearts by the Holy Spirit, whom he has given us."

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Second, the complexity of the definition of the Kingdom of God for us also exists because the kingdoms of men have always been ruled by sinful people whose love, protection, and control are limited and constantly flexed in and out of existence. Thus, kingdoms of men eventually have had their citizens' rebel and break away from what became an unjust rule. For example England's King George III's rule became unjust in his thirteen North American colonies so his citizens in those colonies broke away from his rule and formed a new nation. The same happened in India and other areas of the kingdom of England. Thus, the shortcoming of man's kingdoms is that they are ruled by sinful people whose love, protection, and control are limited.

The Kingdom of God, in sharp contrast is ruled by a loving, righteous, and powerful protector; Jesus, the anointed one, the Messiah, the Christ. Romans 8:28-39 states, "And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers. And those he predestined, he also called; those he called, he also justified; those he justified, he also glorified. What, then, shall we say in response to this? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son, but gave him up for us all--how will he not also, along with him, graciously give us all things? Who will bring any charge against those whom God has chosen? It is God who justifies. Who is he that condemns? Christ Jesus, who died--more than that, who was raised to life--is at the right hand of God and is also interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall trouble or hardship or persecution or famine or nakedness or danger or sword? As it is written: "For your sake we face death all day long; we are considered as sheep to be slaughtered." No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord."

J. Dwight Pentecost in this book *Things to Come* distinguishes between four Biblical uses of the term Kingdom of Heaven; God's universal kingdom, a spiritual kingdom, the millennial Davidic kingdom, and the mystery form of the kingdom (in Matthew 13). He wrote, "a) The spiritual kingdom, which is closely related with God's universal kingdom, is composed of the elect of all the ages, who have experienced a new birth by the power of the Holy Spirit. This kingdom cannot be entered apart from such a new birth. [He continues with a long list of support verses.] b) The millennial kingdom is declared to be a literal, earthy kingdom over which Christ rules from David's throne in fulfillment of the Davidic covenant. c) The mystery form of the kingdom (in Matthew 13) brings us a concept entirely distinct from the preceding two. That God was going to establish a kingdom on the earth was no mystery. [He continues with the history of man's continual rejection of God's sovereignty.] The mystery was the fact that when the One in whom this program was to be realized was publically presented He would be rejected and an age would fall between His rejection and the fulfillment of God's purpose of sovereignty at His second advent. The mystery form of the kingdom, then, has reference to the age between two advents of Christ. The mysteries of the kingdom of heaven describe the conditions that prevail on the earth in that interim while the king is absent. These mysteries thus relate this present age to the eternal purpose of God in regard to His kingdom... this mystery form of the kingdom is composed of saved and unsaved alike (wheat and tares, good and bad fish)."

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Citizens of modern day governments can overcome the two complexities of the definition of the kingdom of God and obtain a better understanding of what Jesus is referring to when he talks of his kingdom by examining the past, present, and future.

NOT A PAST OR PRESENT NATION

No kingdom of men past or present has been or is now the Kingdom of God. The closest nation to even have been remotely like the Kingdom of God were the Israelites just after they were led out of Egypt to Mt. Sinai, then through the desert and across the Jordan River into the Promised Land up to the time of Israel's kings, Saul the first and David the second.

God had chosen the Israelites as his own people; a kingdom of priests he called them. God was acting on unconditional promises (covenants) he made to their ancestor Abraham (Gen. 12:1-3, 13:14-17, 17:2-6, 22:18, Gal. 3:16) a man who looked forward to the King and the Kingdom of God (John 8:56) and passed down to Isaac and Jacob (Israel).

God led the Israelite and other people (Ex. 12:37-38) out of slavery in Egypt to the Promised Land for he wanted them to be his nation. Before entering the Promised Land he brought them to Mount Sinai. Exodus 19:3-6 records, "Then Moses went up to God, and the Lord called to him from the mountain and said, "This is what you are to say to the house of Jacob and what you are to tell the people of Israel: 'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. Now if you obey me fully and keep my covenant, then out of all nations you will be my treasured possession. Although the whole earth is mine, you will be for me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.' These are the words you are to speak to the Israelites." This is called the Mosaic covenant and is different from the unconditional covenant with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob.

God called those he brought out of Egypt to Mount Sinai his bride. Later Jeremiah was told, "Go and proclaim in the hearing of Jerusalem: 'I remember the devotion of your youth, how as a bride you loved me and followed me through the desert, through a land not sown.'" (Jer. 2:2) See Jeremiah 3:11-18 for the future of this bride.

God wanted to start his rule of Israel with the people he led out of Egypt. That did not happen for that generation rejected his leadership. (Heb. 3:7-19) They wanted to go back to the rule of Pharaoh, the king of Egypt. (Num. 11:18) So God waited until the first generation died off. When they were all gone God led their children across the Jordan River as their king and as Joshua their leading judge. This began the time in Israel's history that is referred to as the time of Judges. Israel did not have a king during this time for God was their king.

Despite this unique chance in human history none of Israel's generations during the time of Judges fulfilled God's desire for them to become and live as the nation of God. They were no different than the generation God led out of Egypt. Eventually each generation sinned and became aware that they, God's chosen nation, had not become the people God desired them to be. After all that God had done for them and promised them, they continually rejected his leadership as their king one generation after another. (Acts 7:30-53)

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Israel rejecting God's leadership by doing evil in the eyes of the Lord is the reoccurring theme of the books of Judges. (2:11, 3:7 & 12, 4:1, 6:1, 10:6, 13:1) At the end of the time of Judges, 1 Samuel 8:4-9 records this fact, "So all the elders of Israel gathered together and came to Samuel at Ramah. They said to him (Samuel), "You are old, and your sons do not walk in your ways; now appoint a king to lead us, such as all the other nations have." But when they said, "Give us a king to lead us," this displeased Samuel; so he prayed to the Lord. And the Lord told him: "Listen to all that the people are saying to you; it is not you they have rejected, but they have rejected me as their king. As they have done from the day I brought them up out of Egypt until this day, forsaking me and serving other gods, so they are doing to you. Now listen to them; but warn them solemnly and let them know what the king who will reign over them will do."

The time of Judges for Israel ended and the time of Kings began. The closest of God's direct rule of a people in all of human history ended during Samuel's lifetime. The Israelites wanted a new form of government, with a man as their king. This drew them farther from being the Kingdom of God. The new form of government did not make the Israelites the Kingdom of God for as God himself told Samuel, "They have rejected me as their king."

The kingdom ruled by their first king, Saul; established by their second king, David; and split after the third king, Solomon, died, ended after many years when God sent the Israelites, the northern kingdom, into Assyrian captivity and Judea, the southern kingdom, into Babylon captivity. The kingdom of Israel, though it lasted 464 years never became the Kingdom of God. (Ps. 89) The southern kingdom was reestablished. However, when the King of Israel, Jesus, came most rejected him. (Acts 2:23) The Israelite people were never the Kingdom of God, because like the king of England, the subjects' hearts did not belong to God who wanted to be their king. Yet, even during this time there were some Israelites whose hearts accepted and believed in the coming Messiah. They waited for their true king to come and thus became members of the Kingdom of God, for them a kingdom yet to be established. (Is. 9:6-7, Jer. 23:5-6, 30:8-9, 33:14-17, 20-21, Ez. 37:24-25, Dan. 7:13-14, etc.)

Israel rejecting God's unquestionable sovereignty is the same as any other nation, social group, organization, religious group, sect, and church. They have not and none still are not the Kingdom of God because all the members are not completely and unquestionable under Jesus' control and authority. They all eventually reject the sovereignty of God.

I recently heard a great preacher state, "I am going to start a book that is titled, 'Where two or three are gathered, eventually things will get messed up.'" Why is everything that we do in this current world eventually messed up, even if our intent is good? It happens because the current weak state of mankind makes us susceptible to fall to the temptation of sin and because the curse of sin is still in this world. (Jer. 17:9, Eccl. 9:3b, Ps. 51:5) Even those who are cleansed and have been given the Holy Spirit can sin because they remain in a weak body still subjected to the curse. This state is true for all in this world, even those who are Jesus' bride. (Gen 3:17-19, Rev. 22:3)

Yes, even Jesus' bride who is currently in this fallen world, whose sins have been forgiven and who are the light of the world, are currently weak and thus can fall to the temptation of sin. (Phil.

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3:12-14, James 3:1-2) Jesus told his twelve disciples after he washed their feet during the last supper, "A person who has had a bath needs only to wash his feet; his whole body is clean. And you are clean." (John 13:10) Jesus' bride is cleansed by the river of his blood poured out when he was punished for our sins; when we first accepted him as our bridegroom. Even though this fact is true, we are still in weak bodies that can sin and thus we need our feet washed. We have a way out of temptation and sometimes take it, but not always. (1 Cor. 10:13)

Paul, the apostle wrote, "So I find this law at work: when I want to do good, evil is right there with me. For in my inner being I delight in God's law; but I see another law at work in the members of my body, waging war against the law of my mind and making me a prisoner of the law of sin at work within my members. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body of death? Thanks be to God - through Jesus Christ our Lord." (Rom. 7:21-25) Paul's body, like ours is weak and thus susceptible to falling into sin. When he did sin he turned to his King for forgiveness and cleansing. Paul continued, "You, however, are controlled not by the sinful nature but by the Spirit, if the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, he does not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, your body is dead because of sin, yet your spirit is alive because of righteousness. And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you." (Rom. 8:9-11)

Galatians 5:17 also states the conflict between our physical body with its sinful nature and the Spirit of God living in us. "For the sinful nature desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the sinful nature. They are in conflict with each other, so that you do not do what you want."

Through God's miraculous changing of travel plans while I was writing this book, I ended up taking a two hour cab ride from Columbia, SC to Greenville, SC. The midnight cab ride led to a long discussion with the cab driver, a man of faith. I shared with him the main points of this book. When I got to this part he disagreed with the fact that believers can sin. He believed that once a person receives the Holy Spirit it is impossible to sin and he had a different take on the above verses. We agreed to consider each other's words on our own, so that I could continue the discussion of the main points of this book. One thing I would like to say to him now is, "If the Holy Spirit led the apostles to write letters to Jesus' people, why did he continually encourage them not to sin in those letters if they could not sin?"

Another point is to be made on the subject that the bride of Jesus, though purified by his blood and blessed with the indwelling of the Holy Spirit can sin. Billy Graham in his book *World Aflame* wrote on the subject. After sections titled "Holy Spirit" and "Strength to Resist Temptation" is the section "The New Man Not Perfect". He writes, "There is one problem that Christians face immediately upon conversion. Some people get the idea that they become perfect right away, and then they find themselves tempted, in conflict, and even on occasion yielding to temptation... It is true that the Christian possess a new nature, but the old nature is still there. It is now up to us, day by day, to yield to the reign and control of the new nature, which is dominated by Christ. Because we are a new creation for whom all old things have passed away and all things have become new, we no longer practice sin. We may fall into sin, but we hate it."

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John, the apostle wrote a letter to Jesus' bride speaking of the possible need to turn to their bridegroom for forgiveness of a sin. He states, "If we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness. If we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives. My dear children, I write this to you so that you will not sin. But if anybody does sin, we have one who speaks to the Father in our defense--Jesus Christ, the Righteous One. He is the atoning sacrifice for our sins, and not only for ours but also for the sins of the whole world." (1 John 1:8-2:2)

So to this present time there has not been a kingdom, nation, group, religion, sect, or church that can truly call itself solely the Kingdom of God. And yet the Kingdom of God exists and is growing as Jesus taught. What does this mean for Jesus' bride and future queen? Jesus, the Bridegroom and King, is not finished with the restoration of his bride. He has restored their spirits by taking away the stain of sin; making them a new creation. He's given them a born again spirit. (John 3:1-21) But while in this world they have a cursed decaying body and live in a cursed decaying world. These two things are yet to be restored. This too is the bride's hope.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD MISUNDERSTOOD

Jesus, the King, repeatedly taught the nature of his kingdom, the Kingdom of God. He did so because no one truly understood the full nature of his kingdom. Even though some hoped in the coming of God's King and kingdom, they too did not understand its nature. (In part this was because most prophecies concerning Jesus' two comings are right next to each other.)

Before, during, and after Israel fell, many Israelites hoped in the Kingdom of God, even though most did not fully understand what it would be like and when it would come about. They did understand and believe correctly that God would someday send them the Deliverer, the promised Messiah, the true King of God's people. Those who accepted God's rule waited for the King generation after generation; through exile, captivity, return to the Promised Land, the forming of a new Jewish nation, occupation and rule from foreign kingdoms, and empty promises from worldly false messiahs. Most wanted him to free Israel from foreign influences.

Before and at the beginning of the exiles of Israel and Judea, God sent prophets to not only remind his people of the King's coming, but also tell them just when and how the King would come. After the exile Daniel, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Zechariah, and Malachi were God's instruments of hope to the people of the Kingdom of God. Zechariah 9:9 records, "Rejoice greatly, O Daughter of Zion! Shout Daughter of Jerusalem! See, your king comes to you, righteous and having salvation, gentle and riding on a donkey, on a colt, the foal of a donkey." This was fulfilled when Jesus entered Jerusalem just before he was arrested and crucified. (Matt. 21:4-5) Daniel 4:3 states, "How great are his signs, how mighty his wonders! His kingdom is an eternal kingdom; his dominion endures from generation to generation." Daniel also records in 7:27, "Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." The last is yet to be fulfilled.

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By the time that John the Baptist began his ministry six hundred years had passed since the fall of the kingdoms of Israel and Judea and the beginning of their exile. Still, when John began his ministry, whether true believers or not, many Jews' main hope was for God to send the Deliverer, a King who would establish the Kingdom of God. Whether true believers or not most Jews believed the Kingdom of God would be here on the earth and centered in Israel, with Jerusalem the capital city, and populated by mostly if not all Israelites. They believed that the Messiah would drive out foreign occupiers and destroy all of Israel's enemies. This can be seen very clearly in the Dead Sea Scrolls which were written shortly before, during, and shortly after Jesus' ministry. Many scrolls were discovered between 1947 and 1956 in eleven caves in and around the ruins of the ancient settlement of Khirbet Qumran on the northwest shore of the Dead Sea in the West Bank of Jerusalem. Yet when the King of Israel, Jesus the Messiah, came they rejected him. (John 19:15)

The misunderstanding of the coming Kingdom of God stems from a misunderstanding of the nature of The Kingdom of God. Jesus worked to change people's misconception by teaching about the true nature of the Kingdom of God. Luke 16:16-17 records Jesus saying, "The Law and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the Kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." They were not forcing their way into a new land nor forcing out the Romans. Instead, their hearts were accepting the King's rule.

Even though Jesus ritually taught about his kingdom people had a hard time understanding him. Even the closest of Jesus' followers did not readily release themselves of the old false ideas and accept and understand what Jesus meant.

The twelve specially picked apostles from the first time they met Jesus believed that he was the Messiah. John 1:40 states, "Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, was one of the two who heard what John had said (concerning Jesus) and who had followed Jesus. The first thing Andrew did was to find his brother Simon and tell him, 'We have found the Messiah' (that is, the Christ)." 1:45 records, "Philip found Nathanael and told him, 'We have found the one Moses wrote about in the Law, and about whom the prophets also wrote – Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.'" Verse 49 continues, "Then Nathanael declared, 'Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel.'" The disciples believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the promised King. And yet for most of the three and a half years of the Messiah's ministry they did not understand the nature of his kingdom. Instead, they held onto the same misplaced ideas about the nature of God's kingdom.

What did Jesus' apostles believe for most of his ministry? They believed basically the same as the writers of the Dead Sea Scrolls except they believed that it would be Jesus who would establish his realm in Jerusalem by defeating Israel's enemies, namely Rome, and form a new kingdom of Israel. Because of this belief they often argued among themselves who would be first in his cabinet. The mother of the disciples James and John even boldly asked Jesus for them to sit on his right and left when he established his kingdom here on this earth.

Matthew 20:20-28 states, "Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Jesus with her sons and, kneeling down, asked a favor of him. 'What is it you want?' he asked. She said, 'Grant that one of these two sons of mine may sit at your right and the other at your left in your kingdom.'"

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"You don't know what you are asking," Jesus said to them. "Can you drink the cup I am going to drink?" "We can," they answered. Jesus said to them, "You will indeed drink from my cup, but to sit at my right or left is not for me to grant. These places belong to those for whom they have been prepared by my Father." When the ten heard about this, they were indignant with the two brothers. Jesus called them together and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be your slave-- just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

The apostles, if they were truly listening, could have learned several things from Jesus' response. First, Jesus did not deny that he was a king, the promised King, the Messiah. Second, his kingdom would not be like the kingdoms of this world. Third, there would be a hierarchy in his kingdom based on the amount of service in this life. Fourth, the people of his kingdom do not live like the people of this world's kingdom. Were the disciples truly listening? Did they understand the correct nature of the Kingdom of God? No; they kept arguing among themselves. Even at the last supper they refused to serve each other by washing each other's feet. (John 13)

Only after Jesus rose from the dead through continued teaching on his kingdom did his disciples begin to understand the nature of the Kingdom of God. Acts 1:3 states, "After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the Kingdom of God."

Jesus' handpicked apostles were not the only people who came to believe that Jesus was God's promised King during his earthly ministry. Like the apostles they too didn't understand all he had to say. Mark 15:43 states that Joseph of Arimathea was a prominent member of the Jewish Council. He came to believe that Jesus was the Messiah. Joseph asked Pilate for Jesus' body after Jesus died and helped bury it. Mark 15:43 states that Joseph "was himself waiting for the Kingdom of God." Joseph and a few of his fellow members of the Jewish Council knew that the Kingdom of God was yet to come and Jesus was its King. Like the apostles later they began understanding what this meant.

John the Baptist also did not understand the full nature of Jesus' kingdom. He was a man of priestly descent and a prophet. (Luke 1:5-25) He believed that Jesus was the Messiah, the King of God to come. After John was jailed and just before he was murdered, John heard of Jesus' ministry and in part wondered why it was so different than his ministry had been. He sent his disciples to Jesus to have them ask him, "Are you the one who was to come, or should we expect someone else?" (Matt. 11:2-3) Jesus indirect answer was, "Yes, I am the one to come." After John's disciples left Jesus stated, "I tell you, among those born of women there is no one greater than John; yet the one who is least in the Kingdom of God is greater than he."

Many more came to believe that Jesus is the King because he told them he was. To the Samaritan woman who stated, "I know that Messiah (called Christ) is coming. When he comes, he will explain everything to us," Jesus declared, "I who speak to you am he." (John 4:25-26) She believed and led those in her town to him. (John 4:42)

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Many more could have believed when they too heard Jesus state that he was the Promised King to come and even told them of the nature of his kingdom. To Pilate Jesus stated, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jews. But now my kingdom is from another place." (John 18:36) In Matthew 12:28 Jesus is recorded telling a crowd that contained Pharisees, "But if I drive out demons by the Spirit of God, then the Kingdom of God has come upon you."

Like Jesus' apostles, Joseph of Arimathea, the Samaritan woman, and John the Baptist most of Jesus' disciples will admit that Jesus is the King of God's kingdom. And like them many today really don't understand the exact nature of the Kingdom of God, the King, and his Bride. God does not want his bride to be ignorant and worse uninterested in their King and his Kingdom. He not only wants them to believe with their heart. He also wants his bride to understand with their minds. Jesus, who repeatedly taught about his kingdom when he walked on this earth many centuries ago, still wants us to learn of the nature and future of his bride and his kingdom.

THE KINGDOM OF GOD IS WHERE JESUS RULES

The Kingdom of God is where King Jesus rules completely and unquestionably. (John 14:15-24) The bride of the Kingdom of God thinks about him, loves him, and lives to enjoy him and fulfill his will. Luke 17:20-21 records, "Once, having been asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The Kingdom of God does not come with your careful observation, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the Kingdom of God is within you." Jesus transfers people from being subjects of the worldly kingdom to subjects of God's kingdom. The transformation starts in the heart, the mind, and will continue until one whole being is changed. (Rom. 12:2) Paul calls it circumcision of the heart. (Rom. 2:29) Colossians 1:13-14 states, "For he has rescued us from the dominion of darkness and brought us into the kingdom of the Son he loves, in whom we have redemption, the forgiveness of sins."

Mark 10:13-15 states, "People were bringing little children to Jesus to have him touch them, but the disciples rebuked them. When Jesus saw this, he was indignant. He said to them, "Let the little children come to me, and do not hinder them, for the Kingdom of God belongs to such as these. I tell you the truth, anyone who will not receive the Kingdom of God like a little child will never enter it." The Kingdom of God is where Jesus rules the humble repentant heart.

People who are subjects to this world's kingdoms have their minds and hearts set on this world. They do all they can to build up a stockpile of goods for themselves. A famous bumper sticker reads, "The one with the most toys wins." After Jesus told the parables concerning the Kingdom of God (seeds parable), he finished with, "The secret of the Kingdom of God has been given to you. But to those on the outside everything is said in parables so that, 'they may be ever seeing but never perceiving, and ever hearing but never understanding; otherwise they might turn and be forgiven!'" (Mark 4:11-12) A person whose heart is set on this world will not be given the secrets of Jesus' kingdom. If a heart willingly is transformed, Jesus will reveal his truths to it.

This world is fading away, a shadow of what God made, tainted by sin, decay, and curse. It will pass away and no one can take it with them when they die. That is why Jesus said, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves

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break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, *in my kingdom*, where moth and rust do not destroy and where thieves do not break in and steal. (Matt. 6:19, I've added "in my kingdom.") Jesus' kingdom lasts forever because it is first and foremost treasures of the redeemed heart. (1 Cor. 13:13a)

Chapter 13 of Matthew records seven of Jesus' parables concerning the Kingdom of Heaven. Mark chapter 4 also has some of them. A few facts are understood from Jesus' parables in Matthew 13; the Kingdom of God starts with the preaching of the good news (sowing of the Word), the Kingdom of God can grow in hearts of different quality and character though only one is true, the people of the Kingdom of God produce fruit, there is opposition to the Kingdom of God from the world and the flesh and the devil, the people of the Kingdom of God have to make daily choices, the people of the Kingdom of God are in this world among the people of this world's kingdom (false imitations), the people of the two kingdoms look the same with the exception of producing fruit, this world's kingdom will end and its people sorted out and cast out at the end of the age, the Kingdom of God will start small, grow to be large and continue on forever, and etc. Matthew 13 will be discussed again later.

NOT THE KINGDOM OF GOD

The people of this world's kingdom will not only lose everything they've collected, they will eventually lose their chance at being in Jesus' kingdom, while those in Jesus' kingdom will gain even more. Jesus said, "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." (Matt. 13:41-43) He also said, "This is how it will be at the end of the age. The angels will come and separate the wicked from the righteous and throw them into the fiery furnace, where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth." (Matt. 13:49-51)

Who are the people of the Kingdom of God? Anyone can enter the Kingdom of God if they come to the King with faith, the right attitude, perspective, and maintain these to the end of their life. Matthew 19:23-24 records Jesus saying to his disciples, "I tell you the truth, it is hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven. Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God. You cannot love both God and money." The rich man who Jesus said this about had a chance to enter Jesus' kingdom, but because he loved the things in this world's kingdom he walked away from a chance to enter Jesus' kingdom. He foolishly wanted to keep a lesser thing for a greater thing mainly because he did not truly believe in what Jesus was saying. Thus, through greed Satan took the seed of Jesus' word from his heart.

The religious leaders of Jesus' day studied and memorized the Bible and kept a strict life regimen. Their lifestyle led many to idolize them. It gave them power, wealth, and possessions. These things the religious leaders loved. (Luke 20:46) These things are a part of the world's kingdom. So when the religious leader's true King came, they rejected him. Matthew 21:31-32 records Jesus telling them, "I tell you the truth, the tax collectors and the prostitutes are entering the Kingdom of God ahead of you. For John (the Baptist) came to you to show you the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him, but the tax collectors and the prostitutes did. And

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even after you saw this, you did not repent and believe him." He continued in verses 43-44, "Therefore I tell you that the Kingdom of God will be taken away from you (Judea and her leaders) and given to a people who will produce its fruit. He who falls on this stone will be broken to pieces, but he on whom it falls will be crushed." God took the Kingdom away from disbelieving Jewish leaders and nation, and gave it to those among the gentiles who believe in and love the King. (Rom. 11:17-24) Those some Jews accepted Jesus as the king in the first century after Jesus' ascension, most of Jesus' bride has been from gentile nations.

THE BRIDE'S STATE IN THE CURRENT AGE

The riches of this world can pull anyone to it. The pull to this world's kingdom is relentless; every day, every hour, every second it pulls. At the same time, those belonging to this world's kingdom, persecute Jesus' bride. Jesus said, "All men will hate you because of me, but he who stands firm to the end will be saved," (Matt. 10:22) and "If the head of the household has been called Beelzebub, how much more the members of his household!" (Matt. 10:25) Those who belong to Jesus' kingdom are subject to pull and persecution. (John 15:20, 16:33, Phil. 1:29)

Jesus and the apostles told his bride to continually put their heart on guard. We can guard our heart if we hold his promises in our hearts. Luke 6:20-23 records Jesus saying, "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now, for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil, because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy, because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets."

Jesus' bride can also guard the heart if they keep themselves pure. Mark 9:47-48 records Jesus stating, "And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out. It is better for you to enter the Kingdom of God with one eye than to have two eyes and be thrown into hell, where 'their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched.' Everyone will be salted with fire." Purity is possible through the power of the Holy Spirit and renewal in Jesus. (2 Cor. 6:6, 1 Ti. 4:12, 5:2, Col. 3)

Why is this world's pull so powerful even to Jesus' bride? Jesus' bride has been chosen by him, forgiven, their sin has been removed, and he gave them the Holy Spirit. Why then are we affected by the pull of this world? Why must we be on guard? Because our transformation is not yet complete. We are still in a weak and decaying body and the world we live in is still under the curse. (Matt. 6:13, 26:41, Luke 11:4, 22:46, Phillip. 2:12) A.W. Tozer wrote in *Echoes from Eden*, "One of the great German poets of 200 years ago, von Goethe, summed it up for us all, when he wrote: 'I have never heard of a sin being committed without knowing full well that I had the seed of it within myself.' We are on the most blessed ground with our forgiving Savior when we dare to be honest, telling Him, 'O dear Lord, I have the potential of all those sins within me. I did not get them done but I have had the seed within me. Forgive me and cleanse me and keep me, for Thy glory!'" Romans 2:1b states, "...you who pass judgment do the same things."

The bride hopes is Jesus who will finish what he has started in us; that sin's seed and pulling power will completely be removed and we will resist as he did in the desert. (1 Cor. 10:13)

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THE ENDING OF THIS AGE

Jesus will come again to his world physically as the concurring king, the hope of true believers everywhere. At that time he will give his loved ones new physical and glorious resurrection bodies, the second step of Jesus' restoration work. When he comes again he will end the evil form of Babylonian type rule practiced by almost all nations today and begin his physical reign and government, the Kingdom of God on earth. This age will end and a new age will begin.

Many believe that Jesus' physical rule and his bride's transformation will happen very soon. Why? Matthew chapters 23 and 24 and Luke chapter 21 records Jesus prophesying Jerusalem's fall and the end of the current age. While doing so "he told them this parable: "Look at the fig tree and all the trees. When they sprout leaves, you can see for yourselves and know that summer is near. Even so, when you see these things happening, you know that the Kingdom of God is near." The Kingdom of God Jesus is referring to is not just Jesus' ruling in the hearts of his people as it is in this age. He's referring to the ending of this age with its Babylonian form of governments and the beginning of the new age with his form of government.

The fig tree and olive tree are often symbols of Israel and Judea in the Bible. (Hos. 9:10, Matt. 21:18-20, Mark 11:12-20, Luke 13:6-9, Rom. 11:13, 17-24, Ezek. 37:5-27, Jer. 11:16-17) Israel originally consisted of twelve tribes when they entered and conquered the land God promised them. Just after the reign of Solomon, David's son, the twelve tribes split into two nations; the northern and the southern kingdoms of Israel. (1 Kings 12) The northern kingdom consisted of ten tribes of Israel and was called Ephraim (Hos. 4:17, 5:3, 7:1), Samaria (Hos. 7:1, 8:5-6, 13:16), house of Joseph (1 Kings 11:28), and house of Israel (1 Kings 12:21, Jer. 31:31). The southern kingdom consisted of the other tribes of Israel and was called Judea. The two kingdoms grew to hate each other. (1 Kings 11, 12, 2 Chron. 10)

Assyria conquered the northern kingdom and brought them into captivity around 722 B.C. (2 Kings 17:7-23) Most never returned to the land God promised them. They lost their national identity. They intermarried with the other nations of the world. The ten tribes' DNA is scattered throughout the world. By Jesus' time the land of the northern tribes was called Samaria (Luke 17:11, John 4) and Galilee of the Gentiles (Matt 4:15). God divorced the northern kingdom, an unfaithful wife. (Jer. 3:6-8)

The southern kingdom was defeated by Babylon in 597 B.C. and taken into captivity in 587 B.C. (2 Chron. 36) Though they were an unfaithful wife, God did not divorce the southern kingdom. (Ps. 89:1-3, 28-37) Starting in 538 B.C. some began returning to the land God promised them. First they rebuilt the Temple, and then Jerusalem with Artaxerxes's decree in 445 B.C (Nem. 2:1-8). They often called themselves Israel although the reborn nation was only two and one half tribes of the original twelve tribes of Israel (Judea, Levi, and half the tribe of Benjamin). By Jesus' time they were an occupied nation whose leader was never Jewish. (Luke 3:1)

Jesus told his disciples that Judea would again fall. In 70 A.D., forty years after his death and resurrection, Judea ceased being a nation when the armies of Rome attacked and burned Jerusalem, Israel's capital city, tore down the Temple, the center of the Jewish religion, and devastated all the other towns and villages in Israel. The short Roman military campaign forced

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most Jews to quickly leave Israel's borders and scatter into many countries throughout the world. Most kept their national identity and longed to return to the land God promised them. For many years the land was uninhabited other than a few Gentile nomads and scattered peoples. (Luke 21:24)

Many Jews began returning to the land of Israel at the ending of World War I in 1918. From the beginning of the Jewish return to the Promised Land it has been a time of war and trouble. The amount of Jews returning rose dramatically when the Nazis and Soviets persecuted and murdered Jews before, during and shortly after World War II (1939-1945). By 1948 Jewish population amount and hearts were ready to be a nation again. Jews there proclaimed freedom from British rule and called their land Israel. Most see this as the fulfillment of Jesus' words concerning Israel the fig tree sprouting leaves.

Yet Jesus' prophecy goes beyond Jews (and all Israel) returning to the land of their forefathers and reestablishing an Israel nation. God's compassion is for people. Since the early 1970s many Jews have accepted Jesus as the Messiah. Not since Jesus established the church (when at that time the church was comprised of almost all Jews) has this happened. Surely this is more of a fulfillment of Jesus' words than Israel being established as a nation.

Jesus words concerning Israel being fulfilled stirs hope that the physical Kingdom of God on this earth is near. Our King's coming is near. We know that Jesus will soon come and establish his physical kingdom on this earth answering the believers' prayers, "Thy kingdom come; thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven." During the current age the King rules in the hearts of a few; in the soon to come age, the King will rule in heart and in physical form in his world wide government. The King's coming kingdom is his bride's hope.

THE KING AND QUEEN'S FUTURE STATE

Jesus gave his disciples glimpses of his and his bride's future. Mark 9:1 states, "And he said to them, "I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Kingdom of God come with power." Matthew 16:27-28 adds more, "For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father's glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what he has done. I tell you the truth, some who are standing here will not taste death before they see the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Six days after Jesus said this he took three of his disciples up a mountain where his body was transformed into a glorious body. "His clothes became dazzling white, whiter than anyone in the world could bleach them. And there appeared before them Elijah and Moses, who were talking with Jesus." (Mark 9:3) Matthew 17:2 adds, "His face shone like the sun." Then the Father told the three apostles that Jesus is his son. (Mark 9:7, Matt. 17:5) This is our first glimpse of the glorious future of Jesus and the glorious future of his bride and future queen (not the same as Babylon's claim to be the queen of heaven). This is the first glimpse of a resurrection body, for Jesus is the first to have one. That is why he is called the firstborn. (Rom. 8:29, Col. 1:15-18, Heb. 1:6, 11:29, 12:23, Rev. 1:5) Like him, Jesus' bride will have a resurrected body. Jesus' bride is not now as we will be for we will be changed. (1 Cor. 15:52)

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The apostle John in the late years of his life saw Jesus in his resurrected body. In Revelation 19:11-16 he recorded, "I saw heaven standing open and there before me was a white horse, whose rider is called Faithful and True. With justice he judges and makes war. His eyes are like blazing fire, and on his head are many crowns. He has a name written on him that no one knows but he himself. He is dressed in a robe dipped in blood, and his name is the Word of God (a term John used at the beginning of his gospel to refer to Jesus)." Then John saw Jesus' bride. He saw that, "the armies of heaven were following (Jesus), riding on white horses and dressed in fine linen, white and clean." Speaking again of Jesus, the King, John continued, "Out of his mouth comes a sharp sword with which to strike down the nations, 'He will rule them with an iron scepter. He treads the winepress of the fury of the wrath of God almighty. On his robe and on his thigh he has this name written: KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS.'" Revelations 1:12-16 is another place where John saw Jesus' glorious resurrection body.

Jesus as he was on the mountain and on the white horse was not the same as he was when he first rose from the dead. When Jesus rose from the dead he was in his physical body which had not yet been transformed into his glorious resurrection body.

Peter later wrote, "We did not follow cleverly invented stories when we told you about the power and coming of our Lord Jesus Christ, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty. For he received honor and glory from God the Father when the voice came to him from the Majestic Glory, saying, 'This is my Son, whom I love; with him I am well pleased.' We ourselves heard this voice that came from heaven when we were with him on the sacred mountain." (2 Peter 1:16-18)

Daniel looking into the future saw the glorified Jesus too. He wrote, "Thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took his seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of his head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing, coming out from before him. Thousands upon thousands attended him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before him. The court was seated, and the books were opened... In my vision at night I looked, and there before me was one like a son of man, coming with the clouds of heaven. He approached the Ancient of Days and was led into his presence. He was given authority, glory and sovereign power; all peoples, nations and men of every language worship him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion that will not pass away, and his kingdom is one that will never be destroyed... The saints of the Most High will receive the kingdom and will possess it forever – yes, for ever and ever." (Daniel 7:9-10, 13-14, 18) Daniel saw the future when Jesus would receive from God his Father, glory and honor.

RISING FROM THE DEAD AND RESURRECTED BODIES

Three days after his crucifixion Jesus rose from the dead. His body was not glorious and white like Daniel the prophet and John the apostle saw in his old age while writing the book of Revelation. When Jesus first rose he was in the same physical body that he had been since the Holy Spirit came on Mary and he was conceived in her womb. (Luke 1:35) His tomb was empty for the body he was crucified in was the body with which he walked out of the tomb. (John 20:1-9) This he told and proved to his disciples several times before he ascended to heaven. Jesus had the power to raise people from the dead in this way, including himself.

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During his three and a half years ministry Jesus gave proof of his power over death by bringing back to physical life people who had physically died. A synagogue ruler named Jairus had a twelve year old daughter who Jesus brought back to life. (Mark 5:21-43) Jesus commanded Lazarus, a man who had been dead and buried for four days, to come back to life (John 11) Jesus told Lazarus' sister just before he raised him from the dead, "I am the resurrection and the life. He who believes in me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and believes in me will never die." (John 11:25-26) He said the same in John 5:19-30.

Jesus' bride will die a physical death and will arise a physical resurrection because Jesus, the resurrected King, is the power of his bride's resurrection. Isaiah 26:19-21 states, "But your dead will live; their bodies will rise. You who dwell in the dust, wake up and shout for joy. Your dew is like the dew of the morning; the earth will give birth to her dead. Go, my people, enter your rooms and shut the doors behind you; hide yourselves for a little while until his wrath has passed by. See, the Lord is coming out of his dwelling to punish the people of the earth for their sins. The earth will disclose the bloodshed upon her; she will conceal her slain no longer."

How do we know that Jesus is the power of resurrection? Three days after Jesus was crucified he rose from the dead. When he left the tomb, "The tombs broke open and the bodies of many holy people who had died were raised to life. They came out of the tombs, and after Jesus' resurrection they went into the holy city and appeared to many people." (Matt. 27:52-53) Jesus' resurrection was so potent that other dead people also came out of the grave (Hades) to display his power.

Even the Old Testament has examples of dead bodies coming back to life by the power of God through his prophets. Ezekiel 37:1-14 records a field of dried bones receiving flesh and coming back to life. Through the prophet Elijah a woman received her son back from the dead. (1 Kings 17:17-24) All Israel knew that God could bring the dead back to life, though some did not believe what they read and heard. For the Jew (especially the Pharisees), Jesus bringing back to life those who were dead was quite possible. (Acts 4:2, 23:6-8, 24:21)

Jesus raising people from the dead was common knowledge among Jews by the time he was crucified. Even those who crucified him declared as he hung on the cross, "He saved others, but he can't save himself! He's the King of Israel! Let him come down now from the cross, and we will believe in him." (Matt. 27:42) Mark 15:31-32 records, "In the same way the chief priests and the teachers of the law mocked him among themselves. "He saved others," they said, "but he can't save himself! Let this Christ, this King of Israel, come down now from the cross, that we may see and believe." Those crucified with him also heaped insults on him." Luke 23:35-37 records, "The people stood watching, and the rulers even sneered at him. They said, "He saved others; let him save himself if he is the Christ of God, the Chosen One." The soldiers also came up and mocked him. They offered him wine vinegar and said, "If you are the king of the Jews, save yourself."

Jesus did save himself, but only after he had died to save his bride. After dying and being buried he reentered his dead body and walked out of his tomb. What was his body like? It was exactly like it had been. And so for forty days, between the feasts of Passover and Pentecost, Jesus walked on this earth in the same body he had since he was born in Bethlehem. (Acts 2:22-36)

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Jesus interacted with his disciples after he rose from the dead. Just after Jesus rose from the dead Mary Magdalene and the other Mary saw his empty tomb and ran from it out of excitement and/or confusion. When they were running, "suddenly Jesus met them. 'Greetings,' he said. They came to him, clasped his feet and worshiped him." (Matt. 28:9-10) Jesus told her, "Do not hold on to me, for I have not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them, 'I am returning to my Father and our Father, to my God and your God.'" (John 21:1) "Tell them to meet me in Galilee." (Matt. 28:10)

Luke records that after meeting Mary, the resurrected Jesus met two disciples who were on the road walking away from Jerusalem to Emmaus. They were kept from recognizing him at first. (Luke 24:16) He walked with them and taught them. (27) He also ate with them, breaking bread as he had done during the last supper. Only a physical body could do these things. "Then their eyes were opened and they recognized him, and he disappeared from their sight." (31) What does it mean that Jesus disappeared from their sight? Does it mean his body has special powers? Jesus' body didn't have special powers, on the contrary, Jesus had special powers. Jesus disappearing from their sight was no more or less a miracle than when he walked on water, calmed the storm, healed the sick, and cast out demons. Being God incarnate, Jesus had the same powers before and after his resurrection. It did not mean that his physical resurrected body was any different than the body he had since he was born as a baby.

Later, Jesus met the twelve by suddenly appearing with them while they were in a locked room. He told them, "Look at my hands and feet. It is I myself! Touch me and see; a ghost does not have flesh and bones, as you see I have." (Luke 24:39) He then ate in their presence. (Luke 24:42-43) Jesus was not a ghost and yet he appeared to them in a locked up room. This is no more or less a miracle than when he fed the four thousand and five thousand with a fish and a small amount of bread. Jesus was in the same body when he did all these miracles and after he rose from the dead.

Hebrews 2:14-15 states, "Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity so that by his death he might destroy him who holds the power of death--that is, the devil-- and free those who all their lives were held in slavery by their fear of death." Jesus' physical resurrection frees us from fearing death for we know that those who believe in Jesus can and will be raised from the dead. Thus, the risen Jesus gives his bride hope for the future.

Later, Jesus told his disciples while they were in Galilee, "All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me." (Matt. 28:18) The resurrected Jesus also cooked and ate with his disciples while in Galilee. (John 21:4-14) Even though Jesus has all authority, he was in the same body that cooked and ate. Just as before he died his body needed food, so after he rose from dead his body needed food.

Paul wrote to the Corinthians telling them, "that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, that he was buried, that he was raised on the third day according to the Scriptures, and that he appeared to Peter, and then to the Twelve. After that he appeared to more than five hundred of the brothers at the same time, most of whom are still living, though some have fallen asleep. Then he appeared to James, then to all the apostles, and last of all he appeared to me

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as to one abnormally born.” (1 Cor. 15:3-8) Jesus rose from the dead and many saw his physical body.

The book of The Acts of the Apostles starts out by recording, “After his suffering, he showed himself to these men and gave many convincing proofs that he was alive. He appeared to them over a period of forty days and spoke about the Kingdom of God.” (Acts 1:3) On the fortieth day, “he was taken up before their very eyes, and a cloud hid him from their sight. They were looking intently up into the sky as he was going, when suddenly two men dressed in white stood beside them, ‘Men of Galilee,’ they said, ‘why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven.’” (Acts 1:9-11, Luke 24:50-53)

The word “resurrection” in Greek is “anastasis”, meaning literally “standing again.” It is used forty times in the New Testament, and always refers most naturally to a bodily rising from the dead. (John 11:24; Acts 4:33, Rev. 20:5) There is certainly no warrant for taking it to mean something else.

Jesus walked out of his tomb in the same body that was crucified. When he arrived in heaven, however, his body was changed, for he shined as the verses quoted earlier state. This is the state of Jesus now. He is in a glorious resurrection body. This is the form that God and he chose him to be in. This is how the Bridegroom looks. This is the state of the King.

What is Jesus' bride's future? The bride will be married to Jesus alone. Matthew 22:29-32 records Jesus saying, "You are in error because you do not know the Scriptures or the power of God. At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven." Jesus is saying only that an angel does not marry another angel. Similarly, the bride will not marry another human. Jesus continued, “But about the resurrection of the dead--have you not read what God said to you, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not the God of the dead but of the living.”

Like Jesus rose from the dead, so his bride will rise from the dead. We will be married to him alone. In this life we choose to marry someone from the opposite sex and may have children together. In the future, after the current physical body dies, Jesus' bride will be alive in a resurrected body, married to Jesus, the King.

Perhaps, somewhere locked in human cells and genes is the code of the resurrected body. Perhaps, God will take from that which has died and make from it a new mold, just like he took clay and molded it into Adam and Eve. The mechanism of resurrection is not that important. What is important is that we know, hope, and believe that it will be done. Jesus' bride can be assured we will have a new resurrected physical body.

While in this world Jesus' bride is weak. We are subjected to temptation, suffering, and persecution from the children of this world. They hate us without reason. (Matt. 5:11, 10:22, Mk. 13:13, Lk. 6:22, 12:12-19, 21:17, Jn. 15:18-25) When we die we leave a weak body, sufferings, and persecutions behind. When Jesus returns he will give his bride a new resurrected body

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similar to his own. The new body will not be susceptible to sickness, disease, and death. Jesus' bride hopes in this glorious future body our King has in store for us. (John 12:23-26)

Romans 8:18-25 states, "I consider that our present sufferings are not worth comparing with the glory that will be revealed in us. The creation waits in eager expectation for the sons of God to be revealed. For the creation was subjected to frustration, not by its own choice, but by the will of the one who subjected it, in hope that the creation itself will be liberated from its bondage to decay and brought into the glorious freedom of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

Philippians 3:20-21 also tells us of the bride's glorious future. It states, "But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body." Jesus came as the Savior from sin and death the first time. Jesus will come again as the Savior from our dead weak bodies and oppressive governments. Jesus' bride eagerly waits for the Savior of our body and governments. What a glorious hope!

Another great description of what awaits Jesus' bride is found in 1 Corinthians 15. King Jesus speaking to Paul through the Holy Spirit tells us, "But if it is preached that Christ has been raised from the dead, how can some of you say that there is no resurrection of the dead? If there is no resurrection of the dead, then not even Christ has been raised. And if Christ has not been raised, our preaching is useless and so is your faith. More than that, we are then found to be false witnesses about God, for we have testified about God that he raised Christ from the dead. But he did not raise him if in fact the dead are not raised. For if the dead are not raised, then Christ has not been raised either. And if Christ has not been raised, your faith is futile; you are still in your sins. Then those also who have fallen asleep in Christ are lost. If only for this life we have hope in Christ, we are to be pitied more than all men. But Christ has indeed been raised from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive. But each in his own turn: Christ, the firstfruits; then, when he comes, those who belong to him. Then the end will come, when he hands over the kingdom to God the Father after he has destroyed all dominion, authority and power. For he must reign until he has put all his enemies under his feet. The last enemy to be destroyed is death. For he "has put everything under his feet." Now when it says that "everything" has been put under him, it is clear that this does not include God himself, who put everything under Christ. When he has done this, then the Son himself will be made subject to him who put everything under him, so that God may be all in all. Now if there is no resurrection, what will those do who are baptized for the dead? If the dead are not raised at all, why are people baptized for them? And as for us, why do we endanger ourselves every hour? I die every day--I mean that, brothers--just as surely as I glory over you in Christ Jesus our Lord. If I fought wild beasts in Ephesus for merely human reasons, what have I gained? If the dead are not raised, "Let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we

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die." Do not be misled: "Bad company corrupts good character." Come back to your senses as you ought, and stop sinning; for there are some who are ignorant of God--I say this to your shame. But someone may ask, "How are the dead raised? With what kind of body will they come?" How foolish! What you sow does not come to life unless it dies. When you sow, you do not plant the body that will be, but just a seed, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body as he has determined, and to each kind of seed he gives its own body. All flesh is not the same: Men have one kind of flesh, animals have another, birds another and fish another. There are also heavenly bodies and there are earthly bodies; but the splendor of the heavenly bodies is one kind, and the splendor of the earthly bodies is another. The sun has one kind of splendor, the moon another and the stars another; and star differs from star in splendor. So will it be with the resurrection of the dead. The body that is sown is perishable, it is raised imperishable; it is sown in dishonor, it is raised in glory; it is sown in weakness, it is raised in power; it is sown a natural body, it is raised a spiritual body. If there is a natural body, there is also a spiritual body. So it is written: "The first man Adam became a living being"; the last Adam, a life-giving spirit. The spiritual did not come first, but the natural, and after that the spiritual. The first man was of the dust of the earth, the second man from heaven. As was the earthly man, so are those who are of the earth; and as is the man from heaven, so also are those who are of heaven. And just as we have borne the likeness of the earthly man, so shall we bear the likeness of the man from heaven. I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." "Where, O death, is your victory? Where, O death, is your sting?" The sting of death is sin, and the power of sin is the law. But thanks be to God! He gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore, my dear brothers, stand firm. Let nothing move you. Always give yourselves fully to the work of the Lord, because you know that your labor in the Lord is not in vain."

Jesus, through these words in 1 Corinthians 15 makes it clear that we will bear his image in a glorious spiritual/physical body. Our physical bodies do not bear his image now, though our spirit has been born again. (John 3:5-8) There is a great future coming for a true believer for if our bodies are just seeds now, how much greater will our bodies be when we are raised from the dead.

Does this mean that our new bodies will be physical in essence? Yes, for Jesus' body is physical in essence? Does this mean that our new body will be spiritual in essence? Yes, for Jesus' body is spiritual in essence? Does this mean our new bodies will be better than our bodies are now? Yes, in ways that we can imagine and can't imagine. Does this mean that God will restore our bodies to that of Adam and Eve? Our new resurrected bodies will be better than Adam and Eve's bodies. Does this mean our body will radiate? Yes, for Jesus radiates with the Glory of God as pointed out in the verses already quoted. This does not mean that we will be like angels who have been made flames of fire. (Heb. 1:8) We will be and are the King's bride.

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Some may think it strange that we will radiate with the Glory of God. However, when Moses received the Ten Commandments his face was radiant to the point where he wore a veil when he was among the Israelites. For a long time after that when Moses went in to meet with God in the Tabernacle and came out his face was radiant. (Ex. 34:29-35) Paul points out, "if the ministry that brought death, which was engraved in letters on stone, came with glory, so that the Israelites could not look steadily at the face of Moses because of its glory, fading though it was, will not the ministry of the Spirit be even more glorious? If the ministry that condemns men is glorious, how much more glorious is the ministry that brings righteousness! For what was glorious has no glory now in comparison with the surpassing glory. And if what was fading away came with glory, how much greater is the glory of that which lasts! (2 Cor. 3:7-11)

Moses was not the only person who radiated with the glory of God because the Spirit of God was on him. When Stephen was standing before the Sanhedrin being judged by them and about to be condemned Acts 6:15 states, "All who were sitting in the Sanhedrin looked intently at Stephen, and they saw that his face was like the face of an angel."

Another verse that states the bride will radiate with the Glory of God is Matthew 13:43a. Jesus said, "Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father." Col. 3:4 says we "will appear with [Jesus] in glory." Daniel 12 also states that we will shine forever and ever.

An old saying that is seldom heard anymore is that when a woman is in the early stages of pregnancy her body radiates because of the miracle of conception. How much more will the bride of Jesus be when she brings her fruit, the souls she has ministered to? The Lord told Daniel, "At that time Michael, the great prince who protects your people, will arise. There will be a time of distress such as has not happened from the beginning of nations until then. But at that time your people--everyone whose name is found written in the book--will be delivered. Multitudes who sleep in the dust of the earth will awake: some to everlasting life, others to shame and everlasting contempt. Those who are wise will shine like the brightness of the heavens, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever." (Dan. 12:1-3)

The bride is reminded, "Dear friends, now we are children of God, and what we will be has not yet been made known. But we know that when he appears, we shall be like him, for we shall see him as he is. Everyone who has this hope in him purifies himself, just as he is pure." (1 John 3:2-3) Jesus' bride hopes, looking forward to the day we'll be given a new resurrected physical body of glory.

THE ETERNAL NATURE OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Jesus is the King of kings. He came to this world to establish and populate his kingdom. His rule has been and is being established in the hearts of men and women. He has a bride. Jesus' bride consists of those who accept his rule and proclaim to others the greatness of the King. Jesus' bride is the future queen of God's Kingdom. (Eph. 5:22-33) Jesus' bride was people of this world, sinners who broke God's laws and resisted the works of his kingdom. He called these people to accept his rule and become members of his kingdom. He cleansed them through his sacrificial crucifixion. He rose from the dead and is the first to receive a resurrection body; the

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firstfruits of such. (1 Cor. 15:20) He will restore his bride's body to a state much greater than they ever were before when he gives them a resurrection body, a body like the one he has. Jesus will also restore the world they live in to a state much greater than it has ever been. He will also restore the heavens (all of them, 2 Cor. 12:2) and connect them to the New Earth. (Isa. 66:1, Matt. 5:35, 2 Peter 2:13, Rev. 21:1) Jesus' kingdom will not end. These things are truly great things to hope for.

Can we be sure that our hope in Jesus is in a trustworthy place? Yes. How can we know this? Jesus' first coming was predicted by over three hundred prophecies by different authors over a period of hundreds of years. All of the three hundred prophecies concerning his first coming were literally fulfilled. How amazing is this? Below is a list of some of them.

Isaiah 7:14 – Born of a virgin

Micah 5:2 – Birth at Bethlehem

Jeremiah 31:15 – Slaughter of the children after his birth

Hosea 11:1 – Called out of Egypt

Isaiah 11:2 – Anointed with the Spirit

Zechariah 9:9 – Entry into Jerusalem

Psalms 41:9, 55:12-14 – Betrayed by a friend

Zechariah 13:7 – Disciples forsake Jesus

Zechariah 11:12 – Sold for thirty pieces of silver

Zechariah 11:13 – Potter's field bought

Isaiah 50:6 – Spit on and scourged

Exodus 12:46, Psalm 34:20 – Not a bone broken

Psalm 69:21 – Gall and vinegar

Psalm 22 – Hand and feet pierced. Garments parted; lots cast

Isaiah 53 – Poverty, suffering, patience and death

A scientist calculated the odds of just eight of the over three hundred prophecies as coming true to be 1 in 10^{17} . The odds were verified by the American Institute of Science and Technology. To further illustrate this he gave this example. If Texas was entirely filled with three feet of silver dollars and only one of them was marked with an "X", the odds of a blindfolded person finding that one marked silver dollar is 1 in 10^{17} . Is our hope in Jesus in a trustworthy place? Yes, most assuredly.

Still not sure if hope in Jesus is assured hope? *More Than a Carpenter* by Josh McDowell answers the question, "Who is Jesus?" Josh states that since Jesus stated he is God he was either liar, lunatic, or the Lord. His research as recorded in his book documents facts with varacious accuracy from reliable sources ranging from secular scientists to conservative seminarians. A skeptic himself for many years, McDowell always believed that Christians were "out of their minds" but now insists that "never has an individual been called upon to commit intellectual suicide in trusting Christ as Savior and Lord."

Will the things we hope for ever be taken away once God gives them? Many verses speak of the eternal nature of Jesus' kingdom. Daniel 7:26-27 states, "But the court will sit, and his (Satan's) power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty,

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power and greatness of the kingdom under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him.”

REWARDS

Many of the verses already quoted speak of those in Jesus' kingdom receiving a reward for the righteous acts they commit during their life in this age. These rewards are not given in this life and age as some believe. Yet, it is true that living the way God intends is better than living against his ways. The fact that righteous living now is better for us than living in sin is just as true as the fact that God will reward works of righteousness performed in this age in the next age; a time that is soon to happen. Our reward will be in the resurrected life and age to come.

We should never confuse the fact that salvation from sin, death, and punishment for sins is not a reward, it is a gift given freely by God through faith. Ephesians 2:8-10 states, “For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith--and this not from yourselves, it is the gift of God-- not by works, so that no one can boast. For we are God's workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do.”

These two facts are true; salvation is a gift and God gives rewards to his bride if they do righteous acts. The subject of rewards will be addressed in more detail in future chapters.

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CHAPTER 3 - THY KINGDOM COME

WAITING AND WONDERING

The believer's future is greater than anyone can imagine. "We speak of God's secret wisdom, a wisdom that has been hidden and that God destined for our glory before time began. None of the rulers of this age understood it, for if they had, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory. However, as it is written: 'No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no mind has conceived what God has prepared for those who love him.'" (1 Cor. 2:7-9) And yet, based on what we have been told we can imagine a lot. Jesus' secret wisdom and promises excite and empower his bride. They are so thrilling that we want to see them fulfilled right now. Sadly we have to wait. The bride is excited with anticipation and patient with peace. (Rom. 8:25, Rev. 3:10)

While waiting is there anything wrong with asking when these things will take place? The souls of those who had been slain because of the word of God and the testimony they had maintained shouted from under God's altar, "How long, Sovereign Lord, holy and true, until you judge the inhabitants of the earth and avenge our blood?" (Rev. 9-10) Jesus' disciples asked without retribution while they were seated on the Mount of Olives, "Tell us when will this happen, and what will be the sign of your coming and of the end of the age (the sign that they are all about to be fulfilled and take place)?" (Matt. 24:15, Mark 13:4, Luke 21:7) They were not rebuked for wanting to know when the promises will be fulfilled.

1 Peter 1:10-12 states, "Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things." The apostles, the saints now departed, the prophets, angels, and all of creation wants to know when and how Jesus is restoring that which is lost.

Like them it is not wrong for the bride who is still in this world to want to know when and how the Bridegroom will return, when he will give us resurrection bodies, when and how his physical reign will be established, and when will the earth be restored. Is it possible to know?

One thing for sure, these things have not happened yet, as some have claimed. "It is not to angels that he has subjected the world to come, about which we are speaking. But there is a place where someone has testified: 'What is man that you are mindful of him, the son of man that you care for him? You made him a little lower than the angels; you crowned him with glory and honor and put everything under his feet.' In putting everything under him, God left nothing that is not subject to him. Yet at present we do not see everything subject to him. But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels, now crowned with glory and honor because he suffered death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone." (Heb. 2:5-9)

Jesus told his disciples that certain events must take place before the events they asked about (above) will happen. His words are recorded in Matthew 24, Mark 13, and Luke 17 & 21. But will

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we know exactly when these events will happen? No, not the exact dates as many false prophets and well intending people had tried to predict in the past. Mark 13:32-37 records Jesus saying to his disciples, "No one knows about that day or hour, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Be on guard! Be alert! You do not know when that time will come. It's like a man going away: He leaves his house and puts his servants in charge, each with his assigned task, and tells the one at the door to keep watch. Therefore keep watch because you do not know when the owner of the house will come back--whether in the evening, or at midnight, or when the rooster crows, or at dawn. If he comes suddenly, do not let him find you sleeping. What I say to you, I say to everyone: 'Watch!'" The bride will not know when Jesus is returning until we see him returning. But we are told to watch and keep doing what our King and Bridegroom tells us to do as we hope for the things he promises to be fulfilled.

RESTORATION IN STAGES

God's redemption plan for his bride, his future queen, is set up in stages. The stages are referred to as ages or eons (aiōn in Greek used 124 times & ôlâm in Hebrew used 439 times). An age is a period of time marking a specific type of work of God. Jesus claimed, "Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man will be forgiven, but anyone who speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven, either in this age or in the age to come." (Matt. 12:32) The point Jesus was making concerned the Holy Spirit. Yet, we can also learn that Jesus acknowledged that there are ages with specific beginnings and endings. He referred to the one that he was in and another age to come. [The ages before and after these (Acts 15:18, Col. 1:26) nor all the different break down of the ages, will not be addressed here.]

What are the two ages Jesus was referring to in Matthew 12:32? In Luke 16:16 he stated, "The Law (Torah in Hebrew) and the Prophets were proclaimed until John. Since that time, the good news of the Kingdom of God is being preached, and everyone is forcing his way into it." So John the Baptist ended the age of Proclaiming the Law and the Prophets (Jewish tradition claims its a 2,000 year period called "Torah" that started with Abraham) and Jesus' ministry marked the age of the Preaching of the Good News of the Kingdom of God. The first age Jesus was referring to in Matthew 12:32 is the Age of the Preaching of the Good News of the Kingdom of God (aka "Age of Grace" and "Church Age"). We are still in this age. What is the other age he was referring to in Matthew 12:32?

The second age Jesus was referring to in Matthew 12:32 has not started yet. It will be the age of Jesus' physical rule on earth, often called the Millennium. Revelation 20:1-6 states, "And I saw an angel coming down out of heaven, having the key to the Abyss and holding in his hand a great chain. He seized the dragon, that ancient serpent, who is the devil, or Satan, and bound him for a thousand years. He threw him into the Abyss, and locked and sealed it over him, to keep him from deceiving the nations anymore until the thousand years were ended. After that, he must be set free for a short time. I saw thrones on which were seated those who had been given authority to judge. And I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded because of their testimony for Jesus and because of the word of God. They had not worshipped the beast or his image and had not received his mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the

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thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who have part in the first resurrection. The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ and will reign with him for a thousand years.”

THE AGE OF PREACHING THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM OF GOD

Since Jesus started to preach the good news (gospel in Greek) his kingdom has been steadily growing in numbers. Jesus made it clear in many parables that his kingdom would grow unceasingly until he returns (i.e. the parable of the mustard seed; the parable of the yeast). Luke 19:11 also clearly states, “While they were listening to this, he went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the Kingdom of God was going to appear at once.” The parable he told is the parable of the Ten Minas. Through these and others parables Jesus explained that his kingdom would slowly and continually grow because the good news would be preached unceasingly to the ends of the earth until people from all over the world would believe the message. (Mark 13:27, 16:15, Matt. 28:19, Acts 1:8)

Jesus is the King and he began inviting people into his kingdom around two thousand years ago. He gave the work of continuing the kingdom's proclamation first to handpicked twelve Jewish men he called apostles. (Matt. 10:1-4, Mark 3:13-19, Luke 6:13-16, Acts 1:2) Just after Jesus' ascended into heaven he appointed two more Jewish men as apostles, one to replace Judas (Acts 1:26) and the other Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles (Acts 9:1-31, Phil. 3:5). Jesus' apostles passed the preaching onto the next generation of believers which included both Jews and Gentiles. And so it continued that way from generation to generation; for two thousand non-stop years the message of the Kingdom of Jesus has been proclaimed. Some have claimed that the message of Jesus' kingdom stopped and/or was changed when Constantine I united Christian churches during his Roman Empire reign (306 to 337 A.D.). This is not what God has proclaimed. God told us what Jesus started would continue uninterrupted until he returns.

Many of Jesus' brides believe that the age we are in now, the age of the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God will soon end and the next age, the Millennium, will start. When and how can we know that this is true? Jesus, the Word of God, gave his bride several ways to learn when and how this will happen. One is through Jesus' teachings as recorded in the four Gospels. Another is in the Apostles letters to the churches, including the book of Revelation. Another is through the Old Testament also called the Law and the Prophets.

Among the prophets Daniel is quoted and studied most often when making reference to the end of this age. God's declarations through Daniel states that what Jesus began two thousand years ago during the time when Israel was under Roman rule, will never stop until he returns. Daniel chapter 2 and 7 records that Jesus' kingdom will grow and grow and grow every year, month, day and second until he returns as conquering King.

Daniel chapter 2 is a record of when God told Daniel, an exiled Jew, the interpretation of King Nebuchadnezzar's dream. God gave Nebuchadnezzar, the king of Babylon a dream concerning five kingdoms, his and four other future kingdoms (from his perspective). The first three kingdoms are before verse 40 and are in our past. The fourth kingdom described in verses 40-44 is the Roman Empire. The fifth kingdom is the Kingdom of God.

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Daniel 2:40-44 states, "Finally, there will be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron--for iron breaks and smashes everything--and as iron breaks things to pieces, so it will crush and break all the others. Just as you saw that the feet and toes were partly of baked clay and partly of iron, so this will be a divided kingdom; yet it will have some of the strength of iron in it, even as you saw iron mixed with clay. As the toes were partly iron and partly clay, so this kingdom will be partly strong and partly brittle. And just as you saw the iron mixed with baked clay, so the people will be a mixture and will not remain united, any more than iron mixes with clay." Chapter 7 expands this. These revelations are an exact description of the Roman Empire as it was when Jesus began preaching the good news of his kingdom and still is to this very day.

Daniel 2:40-44 continues, "In the time of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that will never be destroyed, nor will it be left to another people. It will crush all those kingdoms and bring them to an end, but it will itself endure forever." So God tells us through Daniel that he will start the Kingdom of God through Jesus' preaching when the Roman Empire is ruling Israel. He also states through Daniel that Jesus' kingdom will crush the Roman Empire and Jesus' kingdom will NEVER be destroyed and never interrupted. Daniel chapter 7 expands this.

The Roman Republic (508-26 B.C.) followed by the Roman Empire has consisted of many nations, tribes, and peoples. After Jesus' ascension the Roman Empire split in half several times only to rejoin again. In 395 A.D. the Roman Empire split in two and later splintered into many shifting and changing pieces. Yet, its basic political, financial, and ideological structure has remained until today. The first three; the Vandals, the Heruli, and the Ostrogoths were removed by Justinian in 554 A.D. at the behest of the pope. After Justinian's "Imperial Restoration" came Charlemagne (800 A.D.), Otto the Great (962 A.D.), Charles the Great (1520 A.D.), Napoleon (1812 A.D.), Hitler and Mussolini (1939 A.D.). These men reunited the many pieces for short times. Now one final uniting of most of the nations that were a part of the Roman Empire has joined together in the works of the European Union (started in 1958). Most of Jesus' followers believe that this is the feet and toes made up of iron and clay in Daniel 2.

God tells his bride through Daniel that Jesus the King of kings and Great Bridegroom came and started building his kingdom in the hearts of his future queen during the time of the Roman Empire, the fourth kingdom. He also tells us that up to this very day Jesus' kingdom has been growing in the midst of the shadow of the remnants of Roman Empire (the ten iron and clay toes). He also tells us that very soon Jesus' kingdom will crush the final establishment of the Roman Empire, bringing it to an end. Revelation chapter 18 confirms this. This is our hope.

THE KING'S TWO COMINGS PREDICTED IN THE HEBREW CALENDAR

God has given his bride another way to learn about the end of this age, the age of the preaching of the Good News of the Kingdom of God and the soon to come Millennium. In the Old Testament God gave Israel a calendar and its holidays (feasts) through his servant Moses. (Lev. 23) He gave them just after he led them out of Egypt, the start of the age of proclaiming the Law and Prophets. It is called the Hebrew and/or Jewish calendar. By looking at the Feasts of the Lord we can learn a lot about the beginning and end of the last age and the beginning and end of the current age. As Colossians 2:16-17 says they "are a shadow of things to come, but the body is Christ."

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What is this calendar? The Hebrew calendar is a lunisolar year calendar. A lunisolar calendar is a calendar whose date indicates both the moon phases and the time of the solar year. The calendar the world currently uses as a standard is the Gregorian calendar. It too is a lunisolar calendar. The two are not in sync with each other. The Hebrew calendar determines the dates for the Lord's Feasts, agriculture, the appropriate public reading of the Torah (Word of God), commemorating the death of a relative, daily Psalm reading, and many ceremonial uses.

The Hebrew calendar is based on twelve lunar months of twenty-nine or thirty days, with an intercalary lunar month added seven times every nineteen years (once every two to three years) to synchronize the twelve lunar cycles with the slightly longer solar year. (Num. 28:11-15, 29:1-6) Its weekly cycle of seven days mirror the seven day period in Genesis chapter 1. (Lev. 23:3) The names for the days of the week, like those of Genesis' seven days, are simply the day number within the week, with the Sabbath (Shabbat in Hebrew) being the seventh day. A Hebrew day always runs from sunset to the next sunset. Adjustments specifying a standard time and time zones are not relevant to the Hebrew calendar for Jerusalem is its center.

The twelve regular months' modern names are: Nisan (30 days), Iyar (29 days), Sivan (30 days), Tammuz (29 days), Av (30 days), Elul (29 days), Tishrei (30 days), Cheshvan (29 or 30 days), Kislev (29 or 30 days), Tevet (29 days), Shevat (30 days), and Adar (29 days). The total is 355 or 353 days. In the leap years (such as 5771 Hebrew year) an additional month, Adar I (30 days) is added after Shevat, and the regular Adar is referred to as "Adar II". This is done to keep Passover and the other spring feasts in the spring.

Originally the Lord said each month should begin by observing the first appearance of a new crescent moon. At that time they were to blow a trumpet. (Num. 10:10, Ps. 81:2-4) The occasional month that was added to keep Passover in the spring was also based on observation of natural events, namely the ripening of barley to reach the stage of "abib" (nearly ripened crop). Beginning in the Jewish tannaitic period (0-210 A.D.) and through the Jewish amoraic (210-500 A.D.) and geonic (620-1500 A.D.) periods the observations were slowly displaced by changing mathematical rules. These calculations often proved inaccurate when compared to the original ways. Eventually the calculations were settled by the time of the Maimonides, Jewish scholars who compiled the Mishneh Torah in 1180 A.D.

Blackstone wrote in his book *Jesus is Coming* "The division of time into *sevens*, or *weeks*, permeates the Scriptures. A fundamental enactment of the Mosaic Law was the keeping of the *Sabbath* (Ex. 20:8). This was based upon God's great rest day in Genesis 2. Upon this is founded not only the *week* of days, but also the *week of weeks* leading to Pentecost (Lev. 23:15-16); the *week of months*, with the Atonement and *seven* days' feast of Tabernacles in the *seventh* month (Lev. 23:27-28); the *week of years*, ending with the *Sabbatic* year (Lev. 25:4); and the *week of weeks* of years, ending with the *seventh Sabbatic* year, and followed by the year of Jubilee (Lev. 25:8-12)." He continues with more and quotes 2 Peter 3:8 then continues, "...so we also have the great *week* of Millenniums. Six thousand-year days of labor and then the Millennium, or blessed *seventh* thousand-year of rest." He is not the first to see the significance.

God, through Moses, designated Nisan (originally called Abib) as the first month of the year (Ex. 12:1-11, 13:3-10). At the same time God called the season of the fall Festival of Booths (aka

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Tents, Tabernacles, Ingathering, and Sukkoth) the end of the year even though it is in the seventh month. The Festival of Booths is one of seven feasts the Lord established.

Exodus 23:14-16 records the Feasts of the Lord. It states, "Three times a year you are to celebrate a festival to me. Celebrate the Feast of Unleavened Bread; for seven days eat bread made without yeast, as I commanded you. Do this at the appointed time in the month of Abib, for in that month you came out of Egypt. No one is to appear before me empty-handed. Celebrate the Feast of Harvest with the firstfruits of the crops you sow in your field. Celebrate the Feast of Ingathering at the end of the year, when you gather in your crops from the field."

The first Feast of the Lord is a seven day event commemorating when the Lamb of God's blood saved Israel from death and slavery in Egypt. It starts with Passover and ends with the seven days Feast of Unleavened Bread with the Day of Wave Sheaf in the midst of it. (Ex. 23:19, 2 Ki. 4:42) Leviticus 23:4-8 states, "The Lord's Passover begins at twilight on the fourteenth day of the first month. On the fifteenth day of that month the Lord's Feast of Unleavened Bread begins; for seven days you must eat bread made without yeast. On the first day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work. For seven days present an offering made to the Lord by fire. And on the seventh day hold a sacred assembly and do no regular work." Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread are further described and explained in Exodus 12:1-30 and Exodus 13:1-16.

The second holiday, Omer is what the Jews call the count from the Feast of Firstfruits to Pentecost. The day of Omer is in the second month and is part of the count of seven weeks. (1 Cor. 15:23) Omer's 49 days correspond to the time between Israel's physical emancipation from Egypt (starting on Passover) to the time of Israel's spiritual liberation at the giving of the Torah (Law, the first five books) at the foot of Mount Sinai. The last day of Omer marking the giving of the Torah is called Shavuot. Shavuot is in the third month and is not explicit in the Bible because it only marks the conclusion of the counting of the Omer. Shavuot was later called Pentecost (fifty in Greek). Pentecost is the day that the Holy Spirit descended on Jesus' disciples with visible tongues of fire. (Acts 2:1-4)

The interesting fact to be learned from the first holidays is that Israel, the Lord's first bride, was called into existence as a nation in the same way as the beginning of the Lord's second bride, the church. (Matt. 26:2, 26-27) The Hebrew feasts just mentioned were a shadow pointing to the start of the age of the Preaching of the Good News of the Kingdom of God. Also, the count of days is exact for both.

After the seven weeks (49 days) of Omer there is a long time until the next holiday.

The first and second day of the seventh month is the next holiday, Zicaron Terua, meaning "a memorial with the blowing of horns" (Lev. 23:23-25, Num. 29:1-6). Numbers 29:1 calls it the festival of Yom Teruah, meaning "Day of blowing the trumpet (horn)". (Modern Jewish celebration Rosh Hashanah, meaning Head of the Year, is not the same). Two more holidays associated with and following it are also in the seventh month; Yom Kippur (aka Day of Atonement and Awe, Lev. 29:7-11) and Sukkot (aka Feast of Tents or Booths, Lev. 29:12-40). These two holidays are not relevant to the fact being made here, but will be in a future section of this book.

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The book of Revelation chapters 8 through 11 look forward to the sounding of seven trumpets during the Tribulation; and 4:1 records, "the voice... like a trumpet said, 'Come up here...'" The six blasts in chapters 8 and 9 are judgments. Revelation 10:7 states, "But in the days when the seventh angel is about to sound his trumpet, the mystery of God will be accomplished, just as he announced to his servants the prophets," and 11:15 states, "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.'"

Jesus himself said, "At that time the sign of the Son of Man will appear in the sky, and all the nations of the earth will mourn. They will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of the sky, with power and great glory. [Also in Rev. 6:15.] And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other." (Matt. 24:30-31) Jesus is speaking as Revelation has recorded the ending of the age we are in and the beginning of the next age.

Jesus' bride can learn that the Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread corresponds with Jesus' death, resurrection, and his sending of the Holy Spirit. Jesus' bride can also learn that the Feast of Trumpets and the Day of Atonement correspond to Jesus' second coming. (See the chart in the next section.) Jesus' bride can also learn that just as there is a long time between the first set of holidays and the second set of holidays, there has been a long time between Jesus' first and second physical comings to the earth. The age of the preaching of the Kingdom of God was always meant to be a long time. Also, just as there is a long time after the second coming until the end of the Hebrew calendar, there will be a long time after Jesus second coming until the end of that age; Jesus told us it's one thousand years.

THE END OF THE AGE OF THE PREACHING OF THE GOOD NEWS

Jesus told his bride much about the ending of the current age. He told us that when he returns it will be at the end of seven years of trouble and tribulation unlike any ever experienced on earth so far and even will never be experienced again. (Matt. 24:21-22) It is called "the time of trouble for Jacob" in Jeremiah 30:7. The source of the distress will come from three sources; the wrath of God (Deut. 4:30-31, Isa. 2:6-22, 24:1, 3, 6, 19-21, 26:20-21, Dan. 9:27, Joel 1:15, 2:1-2, Amos 5:18, 20, Zeph. 1:14-18), the evil that people induce unto one another (2 Tim. 3:1-7, Isa. 24, Matt. 24:9-12), and evil inflicted by demons (Luke 13:16, 1 Cor. 5:5, 1 Tim. 1:20). Most believe that the seven years of tribulation are the last of the age of the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God and are the end of the birth pains of Matt. 24:8 and Mark 13:8.

Jesus' loved ones have been told that the dead in Christ and those alive on the earth will be removed from the earth when he comes. This is called the rapture. Rapture is Latin meaning "caught up." (1 Thes. 4:17, Rev. 3:10, 14:13-20, 18:4) Some believe this will be just before the tribulation begins, others believe it's in the middle of the seven years, and others say it will be at the end. Some have said it won't happen but Jesus will hide his bride from the tribulations somewhere on earth referring to Isaiah 26:20-21 (the place of hiding does not have to be on the earth).

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All three understandings contain the fact that when God's wrath is poured out on the unrepentant and unbelievers, he will not pour it out on his bride for we are not under his wrath. (Rom. 5:9) Many more verses back this up, for example Exodus 12:12-13. Also, God protected Noah and his family, and Lot and his family before those judgments. 2 Peter 2:5-9 states, "if he did not spare the ancient world when he brought the flood on its ungodly people, but protected Noah, a preacher of righteousness, and seven others; if he condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah by burning them to ashes, and made them an example of what is going to happen to the ungodly; and if he rescued Lot, a righteous man, who was distressed by the filthy lives of lawless men (for that righteous man, living among them day after day, was tormented in his righteous soul by the lawless deeds he saw and heard)-- if this is so, then the Lord knows how to rescue godly men from trials and to hold the unrighteous for the day of judgment, while continuing their punishment. This is especially true of those who follow the corrupt desire of the sinful nature and despise authority."

Jesus said, "As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. For in the days before the flood, people were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, up to the day Noah entered the ark; and they knew nothing about what would happen until the flood came and took them all away. That is how it will be at the coming of the Son of Man. Two men will be in the field; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding with a hand mill; one will be taken and the other left. Therefore keep watch, because you do not know on what day your Lord will come. But understand this: If the owner of the house had known at what time of night the thief was coming, he would have kept watch and would not have let his house be broken into. So you also must be ready, because the Son of Man will come at an hour when you do not expect him." (Matt. 24:37-44)

Luke 17:24-36 similarly records Jesus saying, "For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other. But first he must suffer many things and be rejected by this generation. Just as it was in the days of Noah, so also will it be in the days of the Son of Man. People were eating, drinking, marrying and being given in marriage up to the day Noah entered the ark. Then the flood came and destroyed them all. It was the same in the days of Lot. People were eating and drinking, buying and selling, planting and building. But the day Lot left Sodom, fire and sulfur rained down from heaven and destroyed them all. It will be just like this on the day the Son of Man is revealed. On that day no one who is on the roof of his house, with his goods inside, should go down to get them. Likewise, no one in the field should go back for anything. Remember Lot's wife! Whoever tries to keep his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life will preserve it. I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding grain together; one will be taken and the other left."

Jesus and the apostles gave us more information about his bride before and during the tribulations. Those left at his coming will be like "Enoch (who) was taken from this life, so that he did not experience death; he could not be found, because God had taken him away. For before he was taken, he was commended as one who pleased God." (Heb. 11:5, Gen. 5:24, Jude 1:14-15)

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God will pour out seven years of wrath and judgment on the unrepentant. (Rev. 6-18, Dan. 9:24-27, Jer. 30:7, Is. 34:2) During the seven years a few of them will repent and accept Jesus as their King and Bridegroom. Many if not all Jews will accept Jesus as the Messiah. (Rev. 7 & 14) At the start of the seven years the man of lawlessness will be revealed, deceive many, and unite them against the Kingdom of God and all who belong to it. (2 Th. 2:1-12)

At the very end of the seven years all the armies of the earth will gather together in the valley of Megiddo in Israel to battle each other and Jesus, the King of kings, and the Lord of lords. (Ps. 2) The battle is referred to as Armageddon. (Rev. 16:16) When the armies are gathered together Jesus will return to earth marking the beginning of the next age, the Millennium. (Rev. 12:16-21) As stated earlier his return will be at the last trumpet. The last trumpet will also be when Jesus' bride will be raised from the dead and changed to be like him. (1 Cor. 15; Rev. 10:7, 11:15-18)

Jesus' enemies have been telling people that Armageddon is the end of the world. This is a lie. Armageddon is not the end of the world. It is the end of this age and the beginning of the greatest age mankind has ever experienced, the Millennium. (Rev. 19)

THE AGE OF THE THOUSAND YEAR REIGN OF JESUS

Many believe that the current age began with Jesus' preaching the good news of the kingdom of God. His ministry began sometime around the year 29 A.D. Three and a half years later, six days before his last Passover, Jesus entered Jerusalem on a donkey. (Matt. 21:1-11, John 12:12-28) Many believe this was Friday, Nissan the 8th, 32 A.D. (All scholars conclude that Jesus was born between 7-2 B.C. and died and rose again between 26-36 A.D.)

Soon this age will end and the next age, the Millennium will begin. Millennium means one thousand years. Revelation 20:1-6 (already quoted) states that at the beginning of the Millennium Jesus will physically return to earth with his bride, physically rule the earth from Jerusalem, remove Satan and his demons from the earth, and give rewards to his loved ones who will rule in a hierarchy with Jesus as the highest authority. During the current age the King rules spiritually in his bride's hearts. During the Millennium the Kingdom of God will be spiritual and physical. Jesus' rule will be physical as he himself states, "I tell you the truth, I will not drink again of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it anew in the Kingdom of God." (Mark 14:25)

Three Greek words are used in the New Testament to describe Jesus' physical return to earth. "Parousia" carries the idea of the personal presence of the King. When he returns, Jesus will come in person in the flesh of his glorious resurrection body. "Epiphaneia" carries the idea of appearing out of darkness; like a star that has been there all day hidden from view, only to suddenly appear at dusk. "Apolalupsis" carries the idea of unveiling of one who has been hidden. In the current age the King is hidden from view though he is present with his bride through the Holy Spirit. We currently live by faith in the King and hope of his return. When the Anointed King, the Messiah, returns we will see him with our own eyes. (Source: *World Aflame* by Billy Graham and *Things to Come* by J. Dwight Pentecost.)

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The thousand year reign of Jesus and his bride will be a glorious time for all and the best age to date. (Is. 25-27) The best thing about it is that Jesus will rule in the flesh and everyone will have access to him. Some will have more access to him than others. Those who actively work out their life in faith, hope, and love will be given more access to Jesus than those who do not. As Jesus often said, "Those who are first will be last and those who are last will be first." (Matt. 20:16, Mark 10:31) Isaiah 3:10-11 also states, "Tell the righteous it will be well with them for they will enjoy the fruit of their deeds. Woe to the wicked! Disaster is upon them! They will be paid back for what their hands have done." Jesus' first coming restored our spiritual bodies; his second will restore our physical bodies and be the true form of government.

When Jesus' enemies see the righteous, just, and loving rule of Jesus and his bride, and know that they are not allowed to live in the Kingdom of God, they will have great regret for having rejected Jesus' and his bride's preaching. Luke 13:28-30 records Jesus' promise, "There will be weeping there, and gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the Kingdom of God, but you yourselves thrown out. People will come from east and west and north and south, and will take their places at the feast in the Kingdom of God. Indeed there are those who are last who will be first, and first who will be last."

What do those who accept Jesus' invitation have to look forward to? Many verses reveal the greatness of the physical Kingdom of God with Jesus' physical rule on earth. Isaiah 11:1-11 states, "A shoot will come up from the stump of Jesse; from his roots a Branch will bear fruit. The Spirit of the Lord will rest on him-- the Spirit of wisdom and of understanding, the Spirit of counsel and of power, the Spirit of knowledge and of the fear of the Lord-- and he will delight in the fear of the Lord. He will not judge by what he sees with his eyes, or decide by what he hears with his ears; but with righteousness he will judge the needy, with justice he will give decisions for the poor of the earth. He will strike the earth with the rod of his mouth; with the breath of his lips he will slay the wicked. Righteousness will be his belt and faithfulness the sash around his waist. The wolf will live with the lamb, the leopard will lie down with the goat, the calf and the lion and the yearling together; and a little child will lead them. The cow will feed with the bear, their young will lie down together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox. The infant will play near the hole of the cobra, and the young child put his hand into the viper's nest. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain, for the earth will be full of the knowledge of the Lord as the waters cover the sea. In that day the Root of Jesse will stand as a banner for the peoples; the nations will rally to him, and his place of rest will be glorious. In that day the Lord will reach out his hand a second time to reclaim the remnant that is left of his people from Assyria, from Lower Egypt, from Upper Egypt, from Cush, from Elam, from Babylonia, from Hamath and from the islands of the sea."

2 Thessalonians 1:5-10 states, "All this is evidence that God's judgment is right, and as a result you will be counted worthy of the Kingdom of God, for which you are suffering. God is just: He will pay back trouble to those who trouble you and give relief to you who are troubled, and to us as well. This will happen when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven in blazing fire with his powerful angels. He will punish those who do not know God and do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. They will be punished with everlasting destruction and shut out from the presence of the Lord and from the majesty of his power on the day he comes to be glorified in his holy

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people and to be marveled at among all those who have believed. This includes you, because you believed our testimony to you.”

Isaiah 2:1-5 states, “This is what Isaiah son of Amoz saw concerning Judah and Jerusalem: In the last days the mountain of the Lord's temple will be established as chief among the mountains; it will be raised above the hills, and all nations will stream to it. Many peoples will come and say, ‘Come, let us go up to the mountain of the Lord, to the house of the God of Jacob. He will teach us his ways, so that we may walk in his paths.’ The law will go out from Zion, the word of the Lord from Jerusalem. He will judge between the nations and will settle disputes for many peoples. They will beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. Nation will not take up sword against nation, nor will they train for war anymore. Come, O house of Jacob, let us walk in the light of the Lord.”

Isaiah 4:2-6 states, “In that day the Branch of the Lord will be beautiful and glorious, and the fruit of the land will be the pride and glory of the survivors in Israel. Those who are left in Zion, who remain in Jerusalem, will be called holy, all who are recorded among the living in Jerusalem. The Lord will wash away the filth of the women of Zion; he will cleanse the bloodstains from Jerusalem by a spirit of judgment and a spirit of fire. Then the Lord will create over all of Mount Zion and over those who assemble there a cloud of smoke by day and a glow of flaming fire by night; over all the glory will be a canopy. It will be a shelter and shade from the heat of the day, and a refuge and hiding place from the storm and rain.”

Isaiah 9:2-7 points to both Jesus' first coming and his second. It states, “The people walking in darkness have seen a great light; on those living in the land of the shadow of death a light has dawned. You have enlarged the nation and increased their joy; they rejoice before you as people rejoice at the harvest, as men rejoice when dividing the plunder. For as in the day of Midian's defeat, you have shattered the yoke that burdens them, the bar across their shoulders, the rod of their oppressor. Every warrior's boot used in battle and every garment rolled in blood will be destined for burning, will be fuel for the fire. For to us a child is born, to us a son is given, and the government will be on his shoulders. And he will be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and peace there will be no end. He will reign on David's throne and over his kingdom, establishing and upholding it with justice and righteousness from that time on and forever. The zeal of the Lord Almighty will accomplish this.”

Isaiah 14:1-8 states, “The Lord will have compassion on Jacob; once again he will choose Israel and will settle them in their own land. Aliens will join them and unite with the house of Jacob. Nations will take them and bring them to their own place. And the house of Israel will possess the nations as menservants and maidservants in the Lord's land. They will make captives of their captors and rule over their oppressors. On the day the Lord gives you relief from suffering and turmoil and cruel bondage, you will take up this taunt against the king of Babylon: How the oppressor has come to an end! How his fury has ended! The Lord has broken the rod of the wicked, the scepter of the rulers, which in anger struck down peoples with unceasing blows, and in fury subdued nations with relentless aggression. All the lands are at rest and at peace; they

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break into singing. Even the pine trees and the cedars of Lebanon exult over you and say, "Now that you have been laid low, no woodsman comes to cut us down."

Isaiah chapters 32 and 35 continue to tell us of the greatness of Jesus' reign during the Millennium. "See, a king will reign in righteousness and rulers will rule with justice. Each man will be like a shelter from the wind and a refuge from the storm, like streams of water in the desert and the shadow of a great rock in a thirsty land. Then the eyes of those who see will no longer be closed, and the ears of those who hear will listen. The mind of the rash will know and understand, and the stammering tongue will be fluent and clear. No longer will the fool be called noble nor the scoundrel be highly respected. For the fool speaks folly, his mind is busy with evil: He practices ungodliness and spreads error concerning the Lord; the hungry he leaves empty and from the thirsty he withholds water. The scoundrel's methods are wicked, he makes up evil schemes to destroy the poor with lies, even when the plea of the needy is just. But the noble man makes noble plans, and by noble deeds he stands." (Isaiah 32:1-8)

Many more verses speak of the greatness of the Millennium. The Holy Spirit will reveal them as Jesus' bride reads them. (John 14:26)

THE MILLENNIUM PREDICTED IN THE HEBREW CALENDAR

Jesus, the Word of God, has told his bride the events of the beginning of the glorious age of his physical rule in the Hebrew Calendar. As mentioned previously the Feast of Trumpets (Yom Terium) proclaims the bride's resurrection, God's judgment on the wicked, and Jesus' second coming. Numbers 10:1-10 and Joshua 6:1-20 state the reasons to blow a trumpet are; to call the community together, to call the elders together, to have the Israel camp set out, before going into battle, during a battle, taking a city, at the beginning of each month (new moon), during the time of rejoicing, during the holy feasts, and over burnt offerings and fellowship offerings.

Revelation records seven trumpets sounding. When the last of the seven trumpets sounds several things will happen including Jesus physically arriving on earth as King. Revelation 11:15-18 states, "The seventh angel sounded his trumpet, and there were loud voices in heaven, which said: 'The kingdom of the world has become the kingdom of our Lord and of his Christ, and he will reign forever and ever.' And the twenty-four elders, who were seated on their thrones before God, fell on their faces and worshipped God, saying: "We give thanks to you, Lord God Almighty, the One who is and who was, because you have taken your great power and have begun to reign. The nations were angry; and your wrath has come. The time has come for judging the dead, and for rewarding your servants the prophets and your saints and those who reverence your name, both small and great-- and for destroying those who destroy the earth."

Isaiah 18:3 also states, "All you people of the world, you who live on the earth, when a banner is raised on the mountains, you will see it, and when a trumpet sounds, you will hear it." Ezekiel 33, Zephaniah 1:14-18 & 9:14-17 and Isaiah 30:15-33 should be read by the people alive when God sounds the seven trumpets.

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Isaiah 27:12-13 records worshipers being gathered at a trumpet's sounding. It states, "In that day the Lord will thresh from the flowing Euphrates to the Wadi of Egypt, and you, O Israelites, will be gathered up one by one. And in that day a great trumpet will sound. Those who were perishing in Assyria and those who were exiled in Egypt will come and worship the Lord on the holy mountain in Jerusalem." This seems to be the threshing Jesus spoke of in Matthew 13.

1 Thessalonians 4:13-18 states, "Brothers, we do not want you to be ignorant about those who fall asleep, or to grieve like the rest of men, who have no hope. We believe that Jesus died and rose again and so we believe that God will bring with Jesus those who have fallen asleep in him. According to the Lord's own word, we tell you that we who are still alive, who are left till the coming of the Lord, will certainly not precede those who have fallen asleep. For the Lord himself will come down from heaven, with a loud command, with the voice of the archangel and with the trumpet call of God, and the dead in Christ will rise first. After that, we who are still alive and are left will be caught up (rapture in Latin) together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And so we will be with the Lord forever. Therefore encourage each other with these words." John 5:28-29 record Jesus saying this. Jesus also said, "And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am." (John 14:3)

1 Corinthians 15:50-54 states that at the last trumpet is when Jesus' bride will receive their resurrection bodies. It states, "I declare to you, brothers, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the Kingdom of God, nor does the perishable inherit the imperishable. Listen, I tell you a mystery: We will not all sleep, but we will all be changed-- in a flash, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trumpet. For the trumpet will sound, the dead will be raised imperishable, and we will be changed. For the perishable must clothe itself with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality. When the perishable has been clothed with the imperishable, and the mortal with immortality, then the saying that is written will come true: "Death has been swallowed up in victory." Many in recent years have been confused by this "trumpet" and ignore the word "last".

Some say it is recorded in Revelation. 1:10-11 states, "On the Lord's Day I was in the Spirit, and I heard behind me a loud voice like a trumpet, which said: "Write on a scroll what you see and send it to the seven churches: to Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamum, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea." The voice like a trumpet was Jesus speaking. After scribing for Jesus letters to the seven churches, John wrote, "After this I looked, and there before me was a door standing open in heaven. And the voice I had first heard speaking to me like a trumpet said, "Come up here, and I will show you what must take place after this." (Rev. 4:1) Then the seven trumpets of Revelation are sounded a few chapters later.

Some believe Jesus saying to John, "Come up here," is the time of the rapture. They say this is the trumpet calling the bride to rise from the grave if deceased and those alive joining them in the air to eventually be taken to heaven, the home Jesus has prepared for his bride. There are two problems with this understanding. First, John did not specifically say that the second time the trumpet voice spoke to him that it sounded like a trumpet.

Second, since this is before the seven trumpets of Revelation how can it be the last trumpet? What trumpets are before it? One stretched possibility is that Israel was to sound a trumpet at the beginning of each month when the crescent of the moon is first seen. (This could take two or

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three days; no one really knew for sure). Since the Feast of Trumpets is at the first day of the seventh month, then there could be six months trumpets before this one. But they are not recorded in the Bible. Second, since as some believe there are seven ages and the Millennium is the seventh, then it is possible that the sounding of the trumpet to mark the beginning of this feast and month is the last of seven "age" trumpets. But they are not recorded in the Bible.

The simplest solution is that, "Come up here" was only to John and it does not foreshadow the rapture. Rather the rapture is the last of the seven trumpets in Revelation.

Jesus' bride can also learn about Jesus' coming at the sounding of trumpets from his leading Israel into the Promised Land. The King led his first love, the Israelites across the Jordan River into the Promised Land. (Jos. 1-4) Joshua [Yehôshua in Hebrew/Aramaic, similar to Y'shua (Jesus)] was the leading judge at the time. The Lord told the Israelites through Joshua that they were to take the land wherever they went from the hands of the evil doers who occupied the land. Jericho was the first city to be taken. (Jos. 5) During the battle the Lord did all the fighting. The Israelites were told to march around the city once a day for seven days with seven priest blowing seven trumpets at the front of the procession. On the last day they sounded the trumpets and the Lord tore down the walls and the Israelites took the city. (Jos. 6) The Lord tells us this now so that we will understand what he is soon to do upon his return. The seven trumpets of Revelation will sound and evil doers will perish and the righteous will take possession of the land.

Jesus' bride can also learn about his coming as King of kings and Lord of lords on the Mount of Olives in Jerusalem by looking back to the time when Israel was led out of Egypt to Mount Sinai to receive the law of God. At that time the Lord became their King a trumpet blasted and the mountain shook and was ablaze with fire and smoke for the Lord descended onto the mountain in fire, and there was lightning and thunder. The Israelites could not approach the mountain because of their sins and needed to be consecrated and have their clothes washed. Moses was told, "Only when the ram's horn sounds a long blast may they go up to the mountain." (Ex. 19-20) Hebrews 12:18-29 tells us that Israel at Mount Sinai foreshadows Jesus' second coming.

Isaiah 29:5-8 also reveals that Jesus' second coming as King of the Kingdom of God is as the Lord God came down Mount Sinai to become Israel's king. It states, "But your many enemies will become like fine dust, the ruthless hordes like blown chaff. Suddenly, in an instant, the Lord Almighty will come with thunder and earthquake and great noise, with windstorm and tempest and flames of a devouring fire. Then the hordes of all the nations that fight against Ariel (Jerusalem), that attack her and her fortress and besiege her, will be as it is with a dream, with a vision in the night-- as when a hungry man dreams that he is eating, but he awakens, and his hunger remains; as when a thirsty man dreams that he is drinking, but he awakens faint, with his thirst unquenched. So will it be with the hordes of all the nations that fight against Mount Zion." The armies assembled at Megiddo will see Jesus come in glory to Jerusalem.

God revealed to everyone again and again that the Feast of Trumpets is the day marking Jesus' second coming, his bride receiving resurrected bodies, and judgment of the nations. It is on the first and second day in the seventh month of the Hebrew calendar. It marks the beginning of

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Jesus' physical reign on earth, the Millennium. (Please note that Biblical days start at the sunset of the previous day. Biblical days do not start end at midnight as they do now.)

God also established two other feasts in the seventh month of the Jewish calendar. Yom Kippur is on the 10th day. Shmini Atzeret is on the 15th day. They also mark events of the Millennium.

Yom Kippur means Day of Atonement. The Day of Atonement and The Feast of Trumpets are connected. They are called the High Holy Days. The Feast of Trumpets is the first of the High Holidays, followed by ten holy days, and ends on the Day of Atonement.

The High Holidays are also called Yamim Noraim, meaning "Days of Awe"; and Asseret Yemei Teshuva, meaning "Ten Days of Repentance." The High Holidays are specifically set aside to focus on the wonder and fear of the Lord and on repentance. (Ex. 30:10, Lev. 16:1-34, 23:27-32, 25:1-55, Num. 29:7-11)

In Ezekiel 40:1 there is a general reference that the High Holidays are the "beginning of the year." Exodus 23:16 and 34:22 also seem to indicate this. Why call the seventh of twelve months the first day of the year? The end of the Feast of Trumpets and the beginning of the Day of Atonement is the first day of the year because it marks the beginning of Jesus' reign on earth.

Yom means "day" in Hebrew. When the first English translators came upon the word kippur they discovered there was no English equivalent. So they created the word "atonement" by joining "at", "one", and "met". The Day of Atonement marks the time when Jesus' bride and those who made it through the seven years of wrath will be gathered before Jesus' throne in Jerusalem at the great banquet feast of the Lamb. There will be great celebration and joy for several days.

Kippur comes from a root Hebrew word that means "to cover or hide"; a secondary meaning is "to obliterate (sin)" and hence "to expiate". There is a link to the Hebrew word kapporet meaning the "mercy seat". 2 Corinthians 5:10 and Romans 14:10 tell us that believers will be brought into examination before the Son of God, the King and their Bridegroom. The New Testament uses the Greek word "bema" for this judgment seat. Bema means a raised platform which had a seat on it. Sale-Harrison wrote in the book *The Judgment Seat of Christ*, "In the Grecian games in Athens, the old arena contained a raised platform on which the president or umpire of the arena sat. From here he rewarded all the contestants; and here he rewarded all winners. It was never used as a judicial bench." Paul used the Athens' games as an example of his goal to gain a prize and a crown. (1 Cor. 9:24-27, 2 Tim. 2:5, 4:6-8, Phil. 4:1, 1 Th. 2:19)

Thus, Yom Kippur (Day of Atonement) is when each of Jesus' loved ones meets him face-to-face. We will see him with our own eyes and he will judge our deeds done in this life. As we approach his radiant glory, glory of staggering proportions, his light will burn away all that is unpleasing. As we approach him all that will be left in us is the good deeds we did in this life.

The Day of Atonement is described by Paul in his first letter to the Corinthians. "For no one can lay any foundation other than the one already laid, which is Jesus Christ. If any man builds on this foundation using gold, silver, costly stones, wood, hay or straw, his work will be shown for what it is, because the Day will bring it to light. It will be revealed with fire, and the fire will test the quality of each man's work. If what he has built survives, he will receive his reward. If it is

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burned up, he will suffer loss; he himself will be saved, but only as one escaping through the flames." (1 Cor. 3:11-15)

What does gold, silver and costly stones represent? What will survive? Later in his first letter to the Corinthians Paul tells us, "And now these remain faith, hope and love." (1 Cor. 13:13a) When Jesus' loved ones come before their King and Bridegroom his glory will burn away all that was not done with faith, hope, and love. All that will remain is what was done with faith in Jesus, hope in his kingdom, and love for him and others. This day marks the day when Jesus will give rewards to his bride according to what they did during their first lives. (Rev. 22:12, 5:10, 4:2, 1:5-6, 2 Cor. 5:10, 1 Cor. 6:2, Dan. 7:22, 12:1-13, Luke 19:11-27, Matt. 25:14-30, Jam. 1:12, 1 Pet. 5:4, etc.)

Every kind act of love, no matter how small, even giving a glass of water will be rewarded. Every act of faith, even as small as a mustard seed will be rewarded. Every parent's sacrifice for their children, even changing diapers will be rewarded. Every person we witnessed to, even if they did not accept it will be rewarded. Every person we encouraged even if they did not thank us will be rewarded. Every person we ministered to, no matter the age, race, or response will be rewarded. Every persecution we endured with love, faith, and hope will be rewarded. Every child who obeyed their parents will be rewarded. Every spouse who did not divorce even though their love was not returned will be rewarded. Every cheek turned will be rewarded. Every prayer said for one's enemy will be rewarded. Every temptation resisted because of hope in Jesus will be rewarded. Every Bible teacher will be rewarded. The saying, "No good deed goes unpunished," is false. The saying should be, "Jesus will reward his bride for every good deed when we meet him at the mercy seat."

The Day of Atonement is a special holiday, especially every forty-nine years. Leviticus 25:8-13 states, "Count off seven Sabbaths of years--seven times seven years--so that the seven Sabbaths of years amount to a period of forty-nine years. Then have the trumpet sounded everywhere on the tenth day of the seventh month; on the Day of Atonement sound the trumpet throughout your land. Consecrate the fiftieth year and proclaim liberty throughout the land to all its inhabitants. It shall be a jubilee for you; each one of you is to return to his family property and each to his own clan. The fiftieth year shall be a jubilee for you; do not sow and do not reap what grows of itself or harvest the untended vines. For it is a jubilee and is to be holy for you; eat only what is taken directly from the fields. In this Year of Jubilee everyone is to return to his own property."

Why did the Lord Jesus instruct Israel to celebrate the Year of Jubilee? Does it have something to do with the number of years from some past event to his joyous return? Does it mean 50 years times 40 generations equal 2,000 years? Is this 2,000 years the length of time of the age we are in? Jewish tradition claims that the first age was 2,000 years, the second age was 2,000, the third age (the one we are in) will be 2,000 years. Is this what the Lord is telling us with the Year of Jubilee? I don't know. We can only wonder as the prophets, angels, and Apostles did. (1 Peter 1:10-12)

The third holiday in the seventh month is the Feast of Tents or Booths (Sukkot) lasts seven days. It's associated with the harvest and thus also called the Feast of Ingathering. (Num.

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29:12-40) After its seven days it is immediately followed by another festive day, Shemini Atzeret. Exodus 23:16, 34:22, Duet. 16:13-15, Ezek. 45:25 and Neh. 8:14-18 all speak of it.

Moses instructed the children of Israel to gather for a reading of the Law during Sukkot every seventh year. (Deut. 31:10-11) King Solomon dedicated the Temple in Jerusalem on Sukkot. (1 Kings 8; 2 Chron. 7) Sukkot was the first sacred occasion observed after the resumption of sacrifices in Jerusalem following the Babylonian captivity. (Ezra 3:2-4)

God told Moses concerning Sukkot to command the people, "On the first day you are to take choice fruit from the trees, and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars, and rejoice before the Lord your God for seven days" (Lev. 23:40), and "Live in booths for seven days: All native-born Israelites are to live in booths so your descendants will know that I had the Israelites live in booths when I brought them out of Egypt. I am the Lord your God." (Lev. 23:42-43)

According to Zechariah 14:1-4 and Micah 4:2, in the Millennium, Sukkot will become a universal festival and all nations will make pilgrimages annually to Jerusalem to celebrate the feast there.

God's Plan of Restoration Revealed in the Hebrew Calendar

| Holiday | | Dates Base on 2014 * | | | | Reason and Meaning Linked to the King | |
|---|---|----------------------|--------|-----------|--------|---|---|
| Name | God Given Meaning to Israel | Hebrew ** | | Gregorian | | Jesus' First Coming | Jesus' Second Coming |
| | | Month | Day(s) | Month | Day(s) | | |
| Pesach - Passover | God told Israel to Kill a Lamb for Its Blood would Save Them | Abib (1) | 14 | April | 14 | Jesus' Blood and Death Purifies and Saves those who Believe Him | n/a |
| Feast of Unleavened Bread & the Day of the Wave Sheaf | God Freed Israel from Slavery of Egypt | Abid (1) | 15-21 | April | 15-21 | Jesus Frees from Slavery of the Fear of Death w/ Resurrection | n/a |
| Omer - Seven Weeks of Seven Days | Firstfruits & God Led Israel from Egypt to Mount Sinai | Lyar (2) | 16 | April | 16 | Count of 49 Days to Shavuot (Pentecost) | n/a |
| Shavuot - Last day of Omer - Pentecost | Israel Received the Law of God at Mount Sinai | Sivan (3) | 6 | June | 3 | Holy Spirit Descended on the Apostles | n/a |
| Yom Teruah - Ten day Feast of the Blowing of Horns (Trumpets) | Days of Repentance and Awe (Beginning of Ten Days ending with the Day of Atonement & Awe) | Tishrei (7) | 1-10 | Sept. | 24 | n/a | Seven Trumpets-God's Wrath is poured out. The last is our Rapture, receiving Resurrection Bodies, and Jesus Returns as King of kings. |
| Yom Kippur - Days of Atonement and Awe | To cover, hide, obliterate and expiate sin (link to the mercy seat) | Tishrei (7) | 10 | Oct. | 3 | n/a | Jesus Gives Rewards, The Wedding Feast & Each Goes To Their Assigned Land |
| Sukkot - Feast of Tents (Booths) or Feast of Ingatherings | Remember how Israel lived in Tents after God Led them Out of Egypt Until they Entered the Promised Land | Tishrei (7) | 15-22 | Oct. | 8 | n/a | Everyone on Earth annually returns to Jerusalem to Worship and Hear from King Jesus during the Millennium (1,000 year reign) |

* Not a prediction of fulfillment just to show that each year the holidays fall on the same Hebrew date, but not the same Gregorian date.

** Twilight starts a Hebrew day whereas the same Gregorian day starts several hours later at midnight; 12 AM.

Knowing the great things that God has in store for his bride what should we do? Revelation 3:21-22 states, "To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne. He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches." We are to overcome this age with faith, hope, and love.

THE BRIDE IN THE MILLENNIUM

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Revelation 5:1-10 states the bride's future in the Millennium. "Then I saw in the right hand of him who sat on the throne a scroll with writing on both sides and sealed with seven seals. And I saw a mighty angel proclaiming in a loud voice, 'Who is worthy to break the seals and open the scroll?' But no one in heaven or on earth or under the earth could open the scroll or even look inside it. I wept and wept because no one was found who was worthy to open the scroll or look inside. Then one of the elders said to me, 'Do not weep! See, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has triumphed. He is able to open the scroll and its seven seals.' Then I saw a Lamb, looking as if it had been slain, standing in the center of the throne, encircled by the four living creatures and the elders. He had seven horns and seven eyes, which are the seven spirits of God sent out into all the earth. He came and took the scroll from the right hand of him who sat on the throne. And when he had taken it, the four living creatures and the twenty-four elders fell down before the Lamb. Each one had a harp and they were holding golden bowls full of incense, which are the prayers of the saints. And they sang a new song: "You are worthy to take the scroll and to open its seals, because you were slain, and with your blood you purchased men for God from every tribe and language and people and nation. You have made them to be a kingdom and priests to serve our God, and they will reign on the earth."

Verse 10 states Jesus' bride will be a kingdom, priests, and reign on earth during the Millennium under Jesus' authority. Many other verses agree. For example, when the Bible says that Jesus is and will be the King of kings and the Lord of lords, the kings and lords it is referring to are his chosen people, his bride. Also, Jesus' parable in Luke 19:11-27 states that he will put us in charge of varying number of cities based on our faithfulness with what he has given us charge of in this age. We'll examine more what it means to be kings, lords, and rulers in the next chapter. One thing for sure it is much different then the current world's leadership positions as we saw in chapter 2. Many believe our home will be in the New Jerusalem. (Rev. 3:12, 21:2)

At this point we need to consider who will occupy the cities with Jesus' bride during the Millennium? Who will be in the kingdoms we will rule over? The Bible makes it clear that during the seven years of trouble are seven trumpets, the last is when the saints are raptured. Perhaps after this a small amount of people will repent of their sins, accept Jesus as King, and be saved. Then the wrath of God will fall on earth.

During the seven years of great tribulation many Israelites will repent and accept Jesus as the Messiah, the King of Israel. (Rev. 7) Many Jews are doing so at an ever increasing rate right now at the end of this age (Hos. 3:4-5). They are Messianic Jews and are also Jesus' bride and will be a part of the rapture. The amount of Messianic Jews who accept Jesus now before the seven years of tribulation are small compared to those who will accept him during the tribulation.

Also, the other tribes of Israel will accept Jesus as their King during the tribulation. God makes it clear that the tribes of Israel who were blended into the world's nations will return to him during the tribulation. (Ezek. 20:33-43, 36:1-38, 39:25-29, Jer. 3:11-18) The Book of Revelation states that at least 144,000 (12,000 from each of the twelve tribes) will be saved and appointed as the final people to preach the good news of the Kingdom of God during the last seven years of this age. (Rev. 7:1-8, 14:1-5) They will be raptured at the seventh trumpet. Then God's wrath will come.

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After that a few Gentiles will accept the gospel. They will not be judged with the rest of the world. They will live through the wrath of God and join Jesus' bride in Jerusalem at the start of the Millennium. They will not receive resurrection bodies. They will remain in the bodies they were born with. They will marry and have children. Their descendants will increase in number and populate the country, cities, and kingdoms. These are those who the bride will act as judges and priests for. (Is. 4, 5:16-17, 10:20-23, 27:6, 28:5, 49, 51, 54, 56, 60-62, & 66:18-24)

Each of Jesus' loved ones will be assigned as rulers and priests over groups of people under Jesus' authority. Each group will be assigned land to live in just like the Lord God assigned land to the tribes of Israel. When Israel entered the Promised Land he assigned each tribe land to live in and laws to govern the keeping of land in each family. (Num. 32, 34, 36, Deut. 3:12-20, Josh. 13-21)

After the first thousand years of Jesus' physical rule what will happen? Revelation 20:7-10 states, "When the thousand years are over, Satan will be released from his prison and will go out to deceive the nations in the four corners of the earth--Gog and Magog--to gather them for battle. In number they are like the sand on the seashore. They will march across the breadth of the earth and surround the camp of God's people, the city he loves. But fire will come down from heaven and will devour them. And the devil, who deceived them, will be thrown into the lake of burning sulfur, where the beast and the false prophet will be thrown. They will be tormented day and night forever and ever."

When Satan is released he will not be able to deceive Jesus' bride. However, those we rule over will sin and be just as susceptible to his lies. How many he will deceive is not known. Yet it seems that there will be enough from some lands to form an army. After they lose Jesus will conduct the final judgment.

THE FINAL JUDGEMENT

God has decreed that Jesus will conduct three kinds of judgments; one each for Jesus' bride, the unrighteous, and the nations. (John 5:22) These judgments will not happen at the same time or with the same result.

First, as already mentioned, Jesus' bride will be judged at the mercy (bema) seat, but not in the sense that we will be condemned. Instead Jesus will hand out rewards to those who believed in him. The saved believer's acts committed in this life will be reviewed at the judgment seat of Jesus at the beginning of the Millennium. "For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive what is due him for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad." (2 Cor. 5:10) As stated many times, people are forgiven of sin and saved from death by faith in the blood, death, and resurrection of Jesus. (Eph. 2:9, Tim. 3:5) They are Jesus' bride and will stand before him to give an account of their life works at the beginning of the Millennium. (1 Cor. 3:11-15)

Second, there is a judgment of the nations. This is when Jesus comes when the seventh trumpet is sounded. Matthew 25:31-34 records Jesus saying, "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his throne in heavenly glory. All the nations

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will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left. Then the King will say to those on his right, 'Come, you who are blessed by my Father; take your inheritance, the kingdom prepared for you since the creation of the world.'" Matthew 25:41 continues, "Then he will say to those on his left, 'Depart from me, you who are cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels.'" This is also in Isaiah 24.

Third, those who are not Jesus' bride will be judged and condemned. (Pro. 1:20-31) Jesus will be the judge and he will know what is truly in their hearts. (Rom. 2:16) If they did not accept Jesus as their King and Bridegroom, that is accept him into their hearts, then they will be condemned. (Mark 3:28-29) This judgment is after the Millennium and after Satan is released and deceives the nations for a short time. This judgment will not be conducted on the earth.

Revelation 20:11-15 calls it the great white throne, "Then I saw a great white throne and him who was seated on it. Earth and sky fled from his presence, and there was no place for them. And I saw the dead, great and small, standing before the throne, and books were opened. Another book was opened, which is the book of life. The dead were judged according to what they had done as recorded in the books. The sea gave up the dead that were in it, and death and Hades gave up the dead that were in them, and each person was judged according to what he had done. Then death and Hades were thrown into the lake of fire. The lake of fire is the second death. If anyone's name was not found written in the book of life, he was thrown into the lake of fire."

In Athens, Paul proclaimed in a council of men that constantly sought information, "In the past God overlooked such ignorance, but now he commands all people everywhere to repent. For he has set a day when he will judge the world with justice by the man he has appointed. He has given proof of this to all men by raising him from the dead." (Acts 17:30-31)

Jesus said, "Moreover, the Father judges no one, but has entrusted all judgment to the Son, that all may honor the Son just as they honor the Father. He who does not honor the Son does not honor the Father, who sent him... Do not be amazed at this, for a time is coming when all who are in their graves will hear his voice and come out--those who have done good will rise to live, and those who have done evil will rise to be condemned. By myself I can do nothing; I judge only as I hear, and my judgment is just, for I seek not to please myself but him who sent me." (John 5:22-23, 28-30)

Many of the people who are judged on that day will be people who attended churches, served at various functions, had impressive family trees, lived clean lives, and were filled with knowledge and teaching skills. They may have even donated to various fund drives and given to missions. Yet, they missed the one most important entrance requirement to the Kingdom of God. They did not truly believe in Jesus. Jesus said, "Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven. Many will say to me on that day, 'Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in your name, and in your name drive out demons and perform many miracles?' Then I will tell them plainly, 'I never knew you. Away from me, you evildoers!'" (Matt. 7:21-23)

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Isaiah 65:8-12 tells the results of accepting or rejecting the invitation of the King. "This is what the Lord says: "As when juice is still found in a cluster of grapes and men say, 'Don't destroy it, there is yet some good in it,' so will I do in behalf of my servants; I will not destroy them all. I will bring forth descendants from Jacob, and from Judah those who will possess my mountains; my chosen people will inherit them, and there will my servants live. Sharon will become a pasture for flocks, and the Valley of Achor a resting place for herds, for my people who seek me. But as for you who forsake the Lord and forget my holy mountain, who spread a table for Fortune and fill bowls of mixed wine for Destiny, I will destine you for the sword, and you will all bend down for the slaughter; for I called but you did not answer, I spoke but you did not listen. You did evil in my sight and chose what displeases me."

2 Peter 3:7-13 also states, "By the same word the present heavens and earth are reserved for fire, being kept for the day of judgment and destruction of ungodly men. But do not forget this one thing, dear friends: With the Lord a day is like a thousand years, and a thousand years are like a day. The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. He is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief. The heavens will disappear with a roar; the elements will be destroyed by fire, and the earth and everything in it will be laid bare. Since everything will be destroyed in this way, what kind of people ought you to be? You ought to live holy and godly lives as you look forward to the day of God and speed its coming. That day will bring about the destruction of the heavens by fire, and the elements will melt in the heat. But in keeping with his promise we are looking forward to a new heaven and a new earth, the home of righteousness."

After mankind and angel's final judgment the very elements of creation will burn away. Only since the atomic age has man discovered the atom and the great energy and heat release when it is torn apart. The very words used by Peter through the Holy Spirit is the same as the atom burning away. We really do not know for sure. We can only conjecture that this is what is meant. When this occurs the curse that all creation is under because of man's sin (Gen. 3:17-19) will be burned away with it. The age long effects of God's great curse on the ground as recorded in Genesis 3:17 must be and will be purged from the very elements to the primordial soup of creation before it can be renewed for its eternal purposes as the new heavens and the new earth. This is when Jesus' promise to his bride, "Heaven and earth will pass away," (Matt. 24:35) will be accomplished.

ETERNITY

After the final judgment at the white throne of Jesus what will happen? Revelation 21:1-8 states, "Then I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, "Now the dwelling of God is with men, and he will live with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away." He who was seated on the throne said, "I am making everything new!" Then he said, "Write this down, for these words are trustworthy and true." He

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said to me: "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To him who is thirsty I will give to drink without cost from the spring of the water of life. He who overcomes will inherit all this, and I will be his God and he will be my son. But the cowardly, the unbelieving, the vile, the murderers, the sexually immoral, those who practice magic arts, the idolaters and all liars--their place will be in the fiery lake of burning sulfur. This is the second death."

Revelation 21:9-27 continues the chapter, "One of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues came and said to me, "Come, I will show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb." And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. There were three gates on the east, three on the north, three on the south and three on the west. The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. The angel who talked with me had a measuring rod of gold to measure the city, its gates and its walls. The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide. He measured the city with the rod and found it to be 12,000 stadia in length, and as wide and high as it is long. He measured its wall and it was 144 cubits thick, by man's measurement, which the angel was using. The wall was made of jasper, and the city of pure gold, as pure as glass. The foundations of the city walls were decorated with every kind of precious stone. The first foundation was jasper, the second sapphire, the third chalcedony, the fourth emerald, the fifth sardonyx, the sixth carnelian, the seventh chrysolite, the eighth beryl, the ninth topaz, the tenth chrysoprase, the eleventh jacinth, and the twelfth amethyst. The twelve gates were twelve pearls, each gate made of a single pearl. The great street of the city was of pure gold, like transparent glass. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life."

Revelation 22:1-6, the beginning of the last chapter of the book, reveals that all will be restored to better than the Garden of Eden. "Then the angel showed me the river of the water of life, as clear as crystal, flowing from the throne of God and of the Lamb down the middle of the great street of the city. On each side of the river stood the tree of life, bearing twelve crops of fruit, yielding its fruit every month. And the leaves of the tree are for the healing of the nations. No longer will there be any curse. The throne of God and of the Lamb will be in the city, and his servants will serve him. They will see his face, and his name will be on their foreheads. There will be no more night. They will not need the light of a lamp or the light of the sun, for the Lord God will give them light. And they will reign for ever and ever. The angel said to me, "These words are trustworthy and true. The Lord, the God of the spirits of the prophets, sent his angel to show his servants the things that must soon take place."

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Isaiah 65:17-25 states, "Behold, I will create new heavens and a new earth. The former things will not be remembered, nor will they come to mind. But be glad and rejoice forever in what I will create, for I will create Jerusalem to be a delight and its people a joy. I will rejoice over Jerusalem and take delight in my people; the sound of weeping and of crying will be heard in it no more. Never again will there be in it an infant who lives but a few days, or an old man who does not live out his years; he who dies at a hundred will be thought a mere youth; he who fails to reach a hundred will be considered accursed. They will build houses and dwell in them; they will plant vineyards and eat their fruit. No longer will they build houses and others live in them, or plant and others eat. For as the days of a tree, so will be the days of my people; my chosen ones will long enjoy the works of their hands. They will not toil in vain or bear children doomed to misfortune; for they will be a people blessed by the Lord, they and their descendants with them. Before they call I will answer; while they are still speaking I will hear. The wolf and the lamb will feed together, and the lion will eat straw like the ox, but dust will be the serpent's food. They will neither harm nor destroy on all my holy mountain."

The just quoted passages and others like them describe the believers' future. These are real places; physical in nature so that our physical resurrection bodies can interact in them.

THE DAY OF THE LORD

The Old Testament prophets often spoke of "The day of the Lord" as the time when God reveals His sovereignty over human powers and human existence. For example "The day of the Lord" is the dominant theme of Joel. Besides Joel six other Old Testament prophets (Isaiah 13:6,9; Ezekiel 13:5, 30:3; Amos 5:18,20; Obadiah 1:15; Zephaniah 1:7,14; Malachi 4:5; perhaps Zechariah 14:1 too) uses the term "the day of the Lord". Sometimes the prophets of Israel and Judah abbreviated it to "that day". It was familiar to their audience, a term by which the audience expected light and salvation (Amos 5:18), but the prophets painted it as a day of darkness and judgment (Isaiah 2:10-22; 13:6,9; Joel 1:15; 2:1-11,31; 3:14-15; Amos 5:20; Zephaniah 1:7-8,14-18; Malachi 4:5). The Old Testament language of the day of the Lord is aimed at warning sinners among God's people of the danger of trusting in traditional religion without commitment to God and to His way of life. It is language that could be aimed at judging Israel or that could be used to promise deliverance from evil enemies (Isaiah 13:6,9; Ezekiel 30:3; Obadiah 15). The day of the Lord is thus a point in time in which God displays His sovereign initiative to reveal His control of history, of time, of His people, and of all people.

The apostles Peter and Paul also used the term "day of the Lord" (in place of "Lord" they also put "God" and "Lord Jesus"). (Acts 2:20; and 1 Corinthians 1:8, 5:5; and 2 Corinthians 1:14; and 1 Thessalonians 5:2; and 2 Thessalonians 2:2; and 2 Peter 3:10-12)

The apostles used the terms "last times" and "last days" referring to the whole period introduced by Jesus' first coming. (John 11:24; Jude 1:17-18; Acts 15:16-18; Hebrews 9:26; and 2 Peter 3:3) These days are last in comparison to Old Testament days, which were preliminary and preparatory. (Romans 16:25-26; Ephesians 3:9; Colossians 1:26) Also, the Christian era is the time of the beginnings of prophetic fulfillment. (1 Corinthians 10:11) The "days" can be interpreted as "ages" (Matthew 12:39, 13:39-40, 49, 24:3, 28:20; Ephesians 1:21, 2:7; and 1 Timothy 6:19; Titus 2:12; Jude 1:25) (periods of time) that reflect the six days of creation with

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the seventh day as a day of rest. Indeed the apostles very clearly call the one thousand year reign of Jesus as "the Lord's Sabbath" and "the day of rest". (Hebrews 4:1-11, 6:5; Revelation 14:13) Jesus himself invited us to his day of rest (Matthew 11:19; Luke 18:30, 20:34-36) and to work now and rest in the future (John 9:4). Since this is the time just before the Sabbath rest, then we are in the sixth day, the time when man and woman (Adam and Eve) were created. The Lord God Almighty is called the "King of the ages". (Revelation 15:3)

2 Peter 3:3 used the Greek words "epi eschatos hemera" which is translated "in the last days" in the NIV and other English translations. "Epi" is a primary preposition properly meaning superimposition (of time, place, order, etc.). "Hemera" has the meaning age, day, and judgment. Hemera is used more with the light part of a twenty-four (24) hour day. "Eschatos" narrows the time period to the end time. With other New Testament writers, Peter viewed the whole period beginning with Christ's first coming (more precisely his ascension) to his second as the last days. (Acts 2:17, and 2 Timothy 3:1, Hebrews 1:2, and 1 Peter 1:20) They understood this to be the "last" of the days because neither former prophecy nor new revelation concerning the history of salvation indicated the coming of another era before the return of Christ. The word "last" in "last days," "last times" and "last hour" also expresses a sense of urgency and imminence. I as a Christian am to be alert, waiting for the return of Christ. (Matthew 25:1-3) Last day also refers back to the six days of creation and the one day of rest. We are now at the last hour of the sixth day. The next day, the Sabbath rest, starts when Jesus comes again.

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CHAPTER 4 - THE PLACE OF GOD HAS BECOME THE PLACE OF MEN

LIFE WITH THE KING IN HIS KINGDOM

God is love. God is peace. God is strength. God is wisdom. God is spirit. God is hope. God is light. God is. Jesus is God. Jesus said that his bride is blessed because we believe and say, "Jesus is our Lord and our God." (John 20:28)

Jesus loves his bride. Jesus gives his bride peace. Jesus is his bride's strength. Jesus makes his bride wise. Jesus gives his bride the Holy Spirit. Jesus is the bride's hope. Jesus is the light of the world. Jesus is, and was, and will come again.

University and college philosophy 101 professors will ask the age old question, "Can God create a rock that he can't lift?" This question seems intriguing at first hearing except for those who have a deep knowledge of and relationship with God. The fundamental problem with the logic in this question is that it lacks wisdom. Let's ask the question in other ways and then answer the question.

Can anyone go farther than infinity? Infinity implies distance and distance implies space. God not only created space, he exists before space.

Can anyone live longer than eternity? Eternity implies time and time is a measurement from event to event. God not only created time, he exists outside of time.

Can anyone be omnipresent? Presence implies substance and substance implies material. God not only created matter, he exists without matter.

Can anyone have more than absolute power (omnipotent)? Power implies ability and ability implies authority. God not only created authority, he controls all authority.

Can anyone be cleaner than pure? Purity implies quality and quality implies integrity. God not only created integrity, his will is always accomplished.

Can anyone be happier than bliss? Bliss implies contentment and contentment implies wholeness. God is whole unto himself before he created anything.

Can anyone be all knowing (omniscient)? Knowing implies intelligence and intelligence implies wisdom. God is wisdom.

Jesus is the Creator God. Jesus is therefore infinity, eternity, omnipresent, omnipotent, pure, bliss, and omniscient. The revelation of Jesus is the unending life pursuit of the bride. Can the attributes of Jesus be comprehended by those who are finite, limited, localized, weak, dirty, and in need? Yes, if God wills it and he wants no more that to reveal himself to his bride, but not all at once.

Can God create a rock that he can't lift? C.S. Lewis wrote in *The Problem of Pain*, "(God's) omnipotence means power to do all that is intrinsically possible, not to do the intrinsically impossible. You may attribute miracles of Him, but not nonsense. There is no limit to His power.

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If you choose to say, 'God can give a creature free will and at the same time withhold free will from it,' you have not succeeded in saying *anything* about God: meaningless combinations of words do not suddenly acquire meaning simply because we prefix to them the two other words 'God can.' It remains true that all *things* are possible with God: the intrinsic impossibilities are not things but nonentities. ...nonsense remains nonsense even when we talk it about God."

God directs in Proverbs 2:1-5, "My son, if you accept my words and store up my commands within you, turning your ear to wisdom and applying your heart to understanding, and if you call out for insight and cry aloud for understanding, and if you look for it as for silver and search for it as for hidden treasure, then you will understand the fear of the Lord and find the knowledge of God." Proverbs 9:10 instructs, "The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and knowledge of the Holy One is understanding." Proverbs 19:23 instructs, "The fear of the Lord leads to life: Then one rests content, untouched by trouble." Proverbs 16:6 instructs, "Through love and faithfulness sin is atoned for; through the fear of the Lord a man avoids evil."

God helped Nebuchadnezzar to learn him and when he did he stated, "I issue a decree that in every part of my kingdom people must fear and reverence the God of Daniel. For he is the living God and he endures forever; his kingdom will not be destroyed, his dominion will never end." (Dan. 6:26)

Jesus' kingdom is a continual and progressive existence in the revelation of his being and growing in his likeness. (John 14:26, Rom. 8:29, 2 Cor. 3:17, Eph. 1:18-23, Phi. 3:10-11, Col. 2:2-3, 1 John 5:20) The Kingdom of God is where Jesus is. Life in the Kingdom of God is never dull. Jesus is restoring his bride so that we can live and learn in him. "Now this is eternal life: that they may know you, the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom you have sent." (John 17:3) The Westminster Shorter Catechism says, "Man's chief end is to glorify God and enjoy him forever." (Ps. 86, 16:5-11, 144:15, Is. 12:2, 60:21, Luke 2:10, Rom. 11:36, 1 Cor. 6:20, 31, Phil. 4:4, Rev. 4:11, 21:3-4)

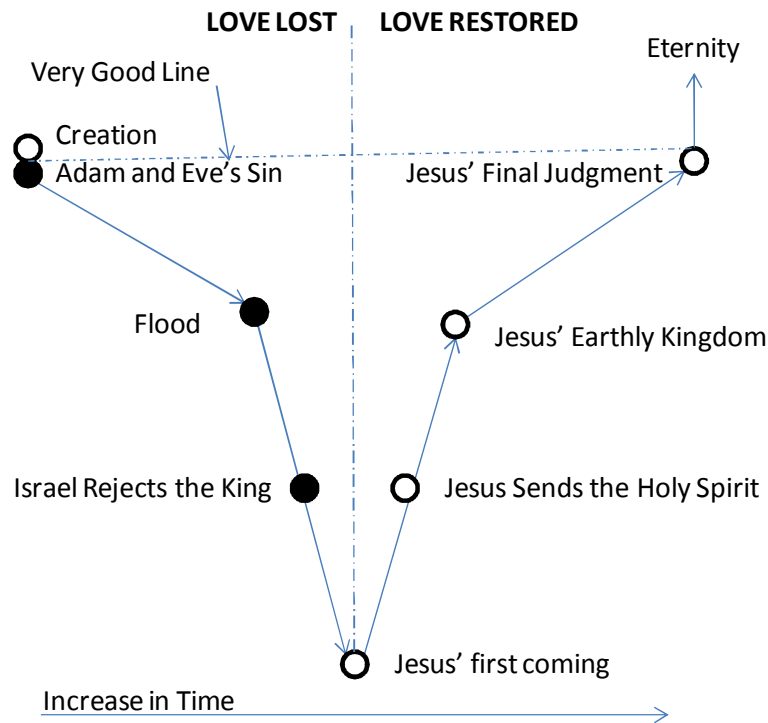
JESUS' RESTORATION WORK

Jesus is restoring what was lost since Adam and Eve brought sin into the world. Sin is a barrier to knowing and experiencing God and life to the full. The progression of restoration is shown in the chart below. Each stage that Jesus removes the barrier to God gains us better understanding and experience of God and a fuller life.

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Restoration's Progression



God created Adam and Eve with a physical body, a soul, and a spirit. Physical bodies are chemical as plants and animals are, but angels are not. Souls (heart) are the nexus of thought, will, and emotion like animals and angels have, but plants do not. The spirit is the breath of God which angels are, but animals and plants are not. Mankind is unique in all creation in that we have a physical body, a soul, and a spirit. (Dt. 6:5, 10:12, 11:13, 30:6, Matt. 22:37, Mk. 12:30, Lk. 10:27)

Adam and Eve's sin perverted the physical body, the soul, and the spirit. The chemical processes in the physical body started to deteriorate. (Heb. 9:27, Eccles. 3:2, Ps. 89:48) The mind, will, conscience and emotions were confused and in need. (Rom. 1, John 8:34) The spirit was dirtied and died. (Eph. 2:1) Jesus is in the process of restoring all three. Jesus' death restores our spirit. Jesus' resurrection restores our body. Jesus' rule restores our soul. Jesus will destroy all our enemies; the last is death and Hades. (1 Cor. 15:26, Rev. 20:14)

Adam and Eve's sin perverted all of creation. Jesus is restoring all that sin has perverted so that we may live in one with him. Jesus is restoring our relationship with other people. Jesus is restoring our access to heaven. Jesus will restore our relationship with animals. Jesus will restore the decaying universe. Jesus will restore our government.

PHYSICAL DEATH BEFORE THE KING RETURNS

Jesus is not finished with his restoration work. For example our physical body has not been restored. Only Jesus has a glorious resurrection body. He will give us a new resurrection body that will not die, nor decay, nor become diseased; a body that will be capable to fully mend

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itself. So what happens when a person's physical body dies before Jesus is done with his restoration?

What happens to the soul and spirit of the bride that dies in the age of the preaching of the Kingdom of God and former ages?

Those who die in this age (if believers this is before they have received a resurrection body) leave their physical body decaying in this world and their souls go to one of two waiting places; one is in heaven and the other is the torment side of Hades (Sheol in Hebrew). Hades means grave. All non-believers' souls go to Hades and stay there until Jesus judges them at the great white throne.

Many believe it is possible for disembodied souls to roam freely on the surface of the earth, some to haunt homes, hotels, factories, grave yards, and wooded lots. The Bible does not support this view. The Bible does record human's use of mediums and spiritists. (Isaiah 8:19) They are not channels of the dead as they say. Rather, they are mouth pieces of demons who seek to pervert all that is right and good. Jesus taught that dead unbelievers go to Hades immediately and cannot leave. (Luke 16:19-31)

As Jesus' believers die before his return they go to heaven to await their marriage to Jesus, receiving a new resurrection body, rewards for acts done in this life, and their Millennium rule under King Jesus. Phil. 1:23 says they wait in "a far better place" than this current earth.

In the Old Testament when a person of God died physically it was written, "He was gathered to his people." (Gen. 25:8, 17, 35:29, 49:33) From the time of Adam to Jesus' death and resurrection believers left their physical body and their souls would go to the comfort side of Hades. When Jesus died he descended to this place, preached to them, and escorted them to the waiting place in heaven mentioned above. (Acts 2:27, 31, Eph. 4:8-10) This is why paradise is referred to as "up". (Rev. 2:7, 2 Cor. 12:4)

The Bible records one incident where Saul, the first king of Israel asked the Witch of Endor to "Bring up Samuel" from the comfort side of Hades because God stopped giving him messages. (1 Sam. 28) She did not do this and was very surprised and alarmed when Samuel suddenly came out of the earth. Samuel did not want to leave the comfort side of Hades because it is a far better place than this earth. Still Samuel appeared to Saul to deliver God's message to him. This lone incident does not say that mediums and spiritists are able to communicate with human disembodied spirits. It was only allowed by God because Saul would not obey.

Jesus' parable further describes this. He taught, "There was a rich man who was dressed in purple and fine linen and lived in luxury every day. At his gate was laid a beggar named Lazarus, covered with sores and longing to eat what fell from the rich man's table. Even the dogs came and licked his sores. The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side. The rich man also died and was buried. In hell, where he was in torment. He looked up and saw Abraham far away, with Lazarus by his side. So he called to him, 'Father Abraham, have pity on me and send Lazarus to dip the tip of his finger in water and cool my tongue, because I am in agony in this fire.' But Abraham replied, 'Son, remember that in your

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lifetime you received your good things, while Lazarus received bad things, but now he is comforted here and you are in agony. And besides all this, between us and you a great chasm has been fixed, so that those who want to go from here to you cannot, nor can anyone cross over from there to us.' He answered, 'Then I beg you, father, send Lazarus to my father's house, for I have five brothers. Let him warn them, so that they will not also come to this place of torment.' Abraham replied, 'They have Moses and the Prophets; let them listen to them.' 'No, father Abraham,' he said, 'but if someone from the dead goes to them, they will repent.' He said to him, 'If they do not listen to Moses and the Prophets, they will not be convinced even if someone rises from the dead.'" (Luke 16:19-31)

NO SECOND CHANCES – NOT ON A CURVE

Jesus, the bridegroom gives all who have ever been born or will ever be born one lifetime to answer yes or no to his marriage proposal. (Heb. 9:27) He said, "These are the words of the Amen, the faithful and true witness, the ruler of God's creation. I know your deeds, that you are neither cold nor hot. I wish you were either one or the other! So, because you are lukewarm--neither hot nor cold--I am about to spit you out of my mouth. You say, 'I am rich; I have acquired wealth and do not need a thing.' But you do not realize that you are wretched, pitiful, poor, blind and naked. I counsel you to buy from me gold refined in the fire, so you can become rich; and white clothes to wear, so you can cover your shameful nakedness; and salve to put on your eyes, so you can see. Those whom I love I rebuke and discipline. So be earnest, and repent. Here I am! I stand at the door and knock. If anyone hears my voice and opens the door, I will come in and eat with him, and he with me. To him who overcomes, I will give the right to sit with me on my throne, just as I overcame and sat down with my Father on his throne." (Rev. 3:14-21)

Again Jesus said, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30)

King Jesus made a similar plea to Israel when most were rejecting his proposal. "Come now, let us reason together," says the Lord. "Though your sins are like scarlet, they shall be as white as snow; though they are red as crimson, they shall be like wool. If you are willing and obedient, you will eat the best from the land; but if you resist and rebel, you will be devoured by the sword." (Is. 1:18-20)

Accepting Jesus' proposal is imperative because all are born in sin, in Adam and Eve's sin as 1 Corinthians 15:21-22 states. Romans 3:10-12 also states, "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands, no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one," and verse 23 continues, "for all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God." Psalm 14:3, 143:2, Isaiah 53:6 and 2 Chronicles 6:36 all states the universal sinfulness of mankind.

Many believe that God lets people become members of his Kingdom by grading our life works on a curve; that is our life compared to other's lives. He does not. Others believe that entering the Kingdom of God will be based on our good work verses our bad work. That is, if the good is

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more than the bad, then we will be let in. This is flawed thinking. Why are these viewpoints wrong? They are based on ourselves, not on God.

God's kingdom is about absolute purity. (Pro. 15:26, 22:11, Ps. 18:26, 24:1-6, 1 Tim. 5:22, Jam. 3:17, 1 John 3:3) If anyone who is impure were to enter the Kingdom of God then it would be flawed. Since all have sinned at least once, than none can be in the Kingdom of God unless God makes them clean. Why is the Kingdom of God based on purity? The Kingdom of God is based on an intimate relationship with the pure God. If anyone impure were to join with the pure God, if that were possible, then God would have impurity in him. That is not possible. Since God is pure, then those who join with him must also be pure. He makes his bride pure when they have faith in Jesus, in Jesus' act of selfless love for his bride, in the shedding of his blood. (1 John 1:7, Heb. 9:22)

Purity is why David wrote, "For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his love for those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far has he removed our transgressions from us." (Ps. 103:11-12)

Jesus prayed to God his Father on his disciples behalf during the Passover meal, "Sanctify them by the truth; your word is truth." (John 17:17) Jesus prayed that his bride would be sanctified. Being sanctified means being purified and set apart for God's glory and honor and use.

While in this life everyone has a chance to accept God's love by faith. By faith we must repent and believe. We do not get another chance after our physical body dies. Jesus told them, "You are going to have the light just a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, before darkness overtakes you. The man who walks in the dark does not know where he is going. Put your trust in the light while you have it, so that you may become sons of light." (John 12:35-36) Hebrews 9:26-28 states, "But now he has appeared once for all at the end of the ages to do away with sin by the sacrifice of himself. Just as man is destined to die once, and after that to face judgment, so Christ was sacrificed once to take away the sins of many people; and he will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to bring salvation to those who are waiting for him."

Jesus' first coming and soon to take place second coming is all about reconciliation. He wants to be one with us. He wants our relationship to be that of an eternal bride and bridegroom, merged together in purity, becoming one in spirit. The bride's eternal future is a pure loving relationship with Jesus, the Bridegroom and King.

COMPLETE RESTORATION

Jesus is not only restoring his bride, he is also restoring all that sin has twisted and tainted. (Acts 3:21) All of creation was diminished and continues to diminish because of sin. (Gen. 3:17, Rom 5:12, 8:19-23, Isa. 24, Col. 1:15-20) The whole of creation was thrown into disharmony. Thus, the world and all of creation needs to be restored. (Matt. 19:28, Acts 3:20-21, Heb. 12:26-28, 2 Peter 3:10-13, Isa. 24, 65:17, 66:22)

The earth is in labor pains. (Matt. 24:8, Mark 13:8, Rom. 8:21, 1 Th. 5:3) Soon, God will cause the current earth to birth a renewed earth. (Rom. 8:22) This will be in two stages; first during the

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great tribulation and second and completely after the Millennium is over and Satan is forever locked up.

Jesus gave details of the labor pains now taking place when he answered his disciples concerning the end of this age, "Watch out that no one deceives you. For many will come in my name, claiming, 'I am the Christ,' and will deceive many. You will hear of wars and rumors of wars, but see to it that you are not alarmed. Such things must happen, but the end is still to come. Nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. There will be famines and earthquakes in various places. All these are the beginning of birth pains." (Matt. 24:4-8) 1 Thessalonians 5:3 also states, "While people are saying, 'Peace and safety,' destruction will come on them suddenly, as labor pains on a pregnant woman, and they will not escape. " Labor pains increase in intensity and frequency for a pregnant woman and for the earth until the new is born.

In Revelation, the nature of the new heaven and earth stands in marked contrast to the old heaven and earth. The Greek word translated "new" designates something which already exists, but now appears in a new way. The new world is the old world gloriously transformed. Purity (Rev. 21:27) and freedom from the wrath of God (Rev. 22:3) are marks of the new heaven and earth. Further, the new world is marked by perfect fellowship of the saints with one another and with God. God and his people dwell together in the new age. (21:1-3)

Ezekiel 36:33-36 states of land and weather restoration, "This is what the Sovereign Lord says: On the day I cleanse you from all your sins, I will resettle your towns, and the ruins will be rebuilt. The desolate land will be cultivated instead of lying desolate in the sight of all who pass through it. They will say, 'This land that was laid waste has become like the garden of Eden; the cities that were lying in ruins, desolate and destroyed, are now fortified and inhabited.' Then the nations around you that remain will know that I the Lord have rebuilt what was destroyed and have replanted what was desolate. I the Lord have spoken, and I will do it." Verses like this include Joel 2:21-27, Hosea 6:1-3, Isaiah 30:23, 35:1-10, 32:13, 51:3, and Ezekiel 34:26.

KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS

The Bible calls Jesus the King of kings and the Lord of lords and rightly so for he has always had complete control even though he has given Adam and Eve's race rule over earth. (1 Tim. 6:15, Rev. 17:14, 19:16) Most believe that stating Jesus' authority with this phrase refers to the past and current rulers and leaders of the earth. They believe that it serves as a kind of message to them to humble them and plant the fear of God in them.

Although this may be true to an extent, the fact is that many rulers, leaders, and people in important places either do not acknowledge Jesus' authority or acknowledge it with their lips, but do not portray it with their life decisions. Instead they submit to their selfish desires, the world influences, and even evil spiritual principalities that are in power. (Eph. 6:12)

While stating that Jesus is King of kings and Lord of lords refers to past and current human authority, more importantly it refers to the coming Millennium and all eternity. Many verses state

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that Jesus' loved ones will be kings, rulers, and priests in the next age and forever. (1 Cor. 3:11-15, 6:2-3, Matt. 19:28, Luke 19:11-27, Matt. 25:14-30, Rev. 5:9-10, 22:5).

For example Revelation 1:5-6 states, "And from Jesus Christ, who is the faithful witness, the firstborn from the dead, and the ruler of the kings of the earth. To him who loves us and has freed us from our sins by his blood, and has made us to be a kingdom and priests to serve his God and Father--to him be glory and power forever and ever! Amen." And Daniel 7:21-22 states, "As I watched, this horn was waging war against the saints and defeating them, until the Ancient of Days came and pronounced judgment in favor of the saints of the Most High, and the time came when they possessed the kingdom." This means, "the court will sit, and [Satan's] power will be taken away and completely destroyed forever. Then the sovereignty, power and greatness of the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be handed over to the saints, the people of the Most High. His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all rulers will worship and obey him." (Dan. 7:26-27)

In this current age being a person in authority has good and bad consequences. Because of the bad consequences of being in authority in this current age some may not like the idea of being in authority in the next age. Randy Alcorn wrote in his book *Heaven*: "The fear, anxiety, dread, and turmoil we associate with certain activities on the present Earth will be gone on the New Earth. If God wants us to do something, we'll be wired and equipped to do it. Our service will not only bring him glory but also bring us joy."

The hierarchy in the next age will be similar if not the same as the one God established for the Israelites just before they crossed the Jordan to go into the Promised Land. Men were to be leaders of the family. (Num. 1:4, 1 Cor. 11:3) From within a clan one man was chosen to be the leader of the clan. From these some were assigned as elders of the twelve tribes. (Ex. 18:24-26) Finally, the Lord chose one man as lead judge through whom he would speak. The lead judge did not rule as in a democracy, socialism, dictatorship, or monarchy. Rather he settled disputes between people and groups of people and acted as chief overseer and messenger of God's will. This type of hierarchy and government is called a theocracy. A theocracy is the type of government the apostles established in the individual churches. (Acts 1:15-26, 2:42-47, 4:32-35, 6:1-7, 11:19-21, 13:1-3, 14:21-23, 15:6, 20:17, 21:18, 1 Cor. 6:4, 1 Tim. 5:17, Titus 1:5-9, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1-4) Even the angels appear to be set up in this type of governing structure with the archangels being the highest. (Luke 1:19, 26, Jude 9, Dan. 8:16, 9:21-23, 12:1, 10:13, Rev. 6)

G. N. H. Peters wrote in his book *Theocratic Kingdom*, "the theocracy embraces in itself the elements both of a monarchy and of a republic; a monarchy in that the absolute sovereignty is lodged in the person of the One great King; to which all the rest are subordinated, but republican in this, that it embraces a republican element in preserving the right of every individual, from the lowest to the highest."

How then does the mechanism of the hierarchy work? On what principles does Jesus' kingdom function? The Kingdom of God is based on Jesus' character, his divine nature. When Jesus returns he and his bride will govern according to his character, his divine nature. Government should be a reflection of God's character; that is, based on his character. (John 5:19-23)

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Jesus wants his bride to rule with him the way he rules us. In the Millennium and through eternity the bride will learn of and reflect Jesus' character in all that is done. In fact, that is what we are to do right now, right here, in this life. Jesus said, "Come and learn from me." (Matt. 11:29) Paul wrote, "I want to know Christ." (Phil. 3:10) This fact is also why Jesus will judge and reward his loved ones with more in the Millennium if they are faithful with the small gifts and talents given now through the Holy Spirit.

Jesus called the apostles with, "Follow me?" (Matt. 4:19, 9:9, John 1:43) He calls all of his loved ones this way. (Matt. 10:38, 16:24, John 10:27, 12:26) What does Jesus mean to follow as a disciple? In those days when a person became someone's disciple they were to live with him twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for the rest of their life. Thus, the disciple follows the teaching in all aspects of life. When a person answers the King's call to follow him, their lives become a continual learning from and of Jesus until it can be said they are in the spirit of their master. (2 Kings 2:15) We are learning the character of our King and Bridegroom so that we may imitate him in all we will do now and forever.

Jesus' bride is called to live the "follow me" way today. Whether the bride knows and understands it or not, this is how the bride is kings and priests even now. The reason why many of Jesus' followers don't know and/or understand this is because we don't realize that Jesus' kingdom is nothing like the governing of today's and past kingdoms.

2 Peter 1:3-11 states, "His divine power has given us everything we need for life and godliness through our knowledge of him who called us by his own glory and goodness. Through these he has given us his very great and precious promises, so that through them you may participate in the divine nature and escape the corruption in the world caused by evil desires. For this very reason, make every effort to add to your faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, brotherly kindness; and to brotherly kindness, love. For if you possess these qualities in increasing measure, they will keep you from being ineffective and unproductive in your knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. But if anyone does not have them, he is nearsighted and blind, and has forgotten that he has been cleansed from his past sins. Therefore, my brothers, be all the more eager to make your calling and election sure. For if you do these things, you will never fall, and you will receive a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ." What is the character of Jesus that we should rule with?

First, is the glory and praise of God. "All the nations you have made will come and worship before you, O Lord; they will bring glory to your name. For you are great and do marvelous deeds; you alone are God. Teach me your way, O Lord, and I will walk in your truth; give me an undivided heart, that I may fear your name. I will praise you, O Lord my God, with all my heart; I will glorify your name forever. For great is your love toward me; you have delivered me from the depths of the grave." (Psalms 86:9-13) D. Martyn Lloyd-Jones wrote in his book *The Plight of Man and the Power of God*, "Nothing but a belief in God and a desire to glorify Him, based upon our realization of our utter dependence upon Him and our acceptance of His way of life and salvation in Jesus Christ His Son, can ever lead to a good society. This is not merely a dogmatic statement. It can be proved and demonstrated repeatedly in the history of mankind."

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Second, Jesus' kingdom's government is not based on selfishness. Jesus' kingdom's government is based on serving others in love for "it is better to give than receive." None of what Jesus does is for himself. As he prayed, "Not my will, but yours be done." (Luke 22:42)

Third, Jesus has given his bride's different gifts through the Holy Spirit to use as we rule. (Rom. 12:4-8, 1 Cor. 12, 2 Cor. 9, Eph. 4:1-16, Heb. 2:4) Some gifts are better used in some situations than others. Some gifts will edify some people at a particular time and circumstance, and other people at other times and circumstances. Some people have been given different talents than others. These talents are best used in some groups of people and not other groups of people.

For example, say God gives a person the talent of music and that person chooses to learn and become an excellent violinist. They learn, practice and teach for God's glory and honor and the edification of others. In this way that person is filled with joy when using the gift God has given for God's glory and the edification of others. Would it be wise to make that person the leader of a group of building constructors? No. So, during the Millennium Jesus will make one person the leader and ruler of a music guild or group and another the leader and ruler of a building contractor's guild or group because that is the talent that he gave that person. Another will be given the gifts needed to lead a city which has musicians, builders, teachers, chiefs, etc. This doesn't mean that what a bride is doing in this age will be the same thing in the next age.

What is meant is that what Jesus has planned for each of his loved ones during the Millennium isn't necessarily just being king or lord of a land area; although no doubt some will be so. As the Holy Spirit gives gifts in this age so will it be in the next. However, we all will teach, guide, and assist in what talent he has given us whether it be one person or a thousand. Jesus' kingdom is about people growing and working together in collective groups to bring glory and honor to God and to edify others. By living so we will be in obedience to, "Love the Lord our God with all our heart, all our soul, and all our mind; and love our neighbor."

Fourth, in Jesus' kingdom the source of joy and happiness is not activities and actions or items. The source of joy is the King. A person may say, "I enjoy shopping. Will there be shopping during the Millennium and/or in heaven? Because if there isn't shopping, then I won't be fully happy there." Another person might say, "Will we eat steaks during the Millennium and/or in heaven? Because if there aren't steaks to eat, then I won't be fully happy there." These statements are flawed because the source of joy and happiness is not in activities and things.

The source of bliss is Jesus, his love, his being. With him in our lives everything else diminishes in importance and impact. This isn't saying he is the only thing for he gives all good things to those who believe in him. (Matt. 7:9-11, Luke 1:53, 16:25, Rom. 8:28) The point being made is that when a person is one with bliss, then the things that we do with the bliss only reflects back to the bliss. (John 3:21)

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CHAPTER 5 – WHY THIS WAY?

God's works are hard to understand if one does not know or forgets that his goal is to be reunited in a loving relationship with his bride. Once united through Jesus' sacrificial act of love, he works to establish and grow faith, hope, and love in his bride. These three qualities are desirable and good. They purify us as he is pure. Understanding these facts we can continue to grow in wisdom and that wisdom has fruit that will endure before the face-to-face meeting with our Bridegroom and King. 1 Thessalonians 1:3 states the results of faith, hope, and love. "We continually remember before our God and Father your work produced by faith, your labor prompted by love, and your endurance inspired by hope in our Lord Jesus Christ." Faith, hope and love produce work, labor, and endurance.

WHAT IS LOVE?

1 John 3:16 gives us the ultimate example and definition of love. "This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers." 1 John 4:8-12 says the same. "Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love. This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. Dear friends, since God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; but if we love one another, God lives in us and his love is made complete in us." 1 John 4:19-20 simply instructs, "We love because he first loved us."

Love is more than an emotion. Love without action is not love at all. Love is made complete with action. How can we love? We can look at how Jesus loves us. Mark 6:34 records, "When Jesus landed and saw a large crowd, he had compassion on them, because they were like sheep without a shepherd. So he began teaching them many things." Luke 13:34 records Jesus' passionate love, "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how often I have longed to gather your children together, as a hen gathers her chicks under her wings, but you were not willing!"

Who cannot be moved by Jesus' parable of the father's love for his two sons in Luke 15:11-32? Jesus is the Father who loves both the Gentiles and the Jews. He longs for the Gentile nations to return to him. He longs for the Jews to recognize his love for her and his love for the Gentiles.

Who should we love? Jesus gave the parable of the Good Samaritan to teach who we should love. (Luke 10:25-37)

THE NATURE OF A LOVE RELATIONSHIP

Love builds up the one receiving the love as well as the one giving the love. (Phil. 2:1-15) Loving another is often not easy, but it is the best way. Everything should be done in love. 1 Corinthians 13:1-13 is sometimes read at weddings because sometimes it is harder to love those who are close to us. "If I speak in the tongues of men and of angels, but have not love, I am only a resounding gong or a clanging cymbal. If I have the gift of prophecy and can fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, and if I have a faith that can move mountains, but have not

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love, I am nothing. If I give all I possess to the poor and surrender my body to the flames, but have not love, I gain nothing. Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. Love never fails. But where there are prophecies, they will cease; where there are tongues, they will be stilled; where there is knowledge, it will pass away. For we know in part and we prophesy in part, but when perfection comes, the imperfect disappears. When I was a child, I talked like a child; I thought like a child, I reasoned like a child. When I became a man, I put childish ways behind me. Now we see but a poor reflection as in a mirror; then we shall see face to face. Now I know in part; then I shall know fully, even as I am fully known. And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these is love.”

THE KING'S LOVE

Jesus loved beyond what anyone has ever loved. Former chapters have examined his love in part. “You see, at just the right time, when we were still powerless, Christ died for the ungodly. Very rarely will anyone die for a righteous man, though for a good man someone might possibly dare to die. But God demonstrates his own love for us in this: While we were still sinners, Christ died for us.” (Rom. 5:6-8) But they are just words if not accepted. Jesus' love should be accepted in soul and mind. Without his love we are nothing.

2 Corinthians 5:14-15 states, “For Christ's love compels us, because we are convinced that one died for all, and therefore all died. And he died for all, that those who live should no longer live for themselves but for him who died for them and was raised again.”

Ephesians 1:3-14 states, “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ. For he chose us in him before the creation of the world to be holy and blameless in his sight. In love he predestined us to be adopted as his sons through Jesus Christ, in accordance with his pleasure and will-- to the praise of his glorious grace, which he has freely given us in the One he loves. In him we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, in accordance with the riches of God's grace that he lavished on us with all wisdom and understanding. And he made known to us the mystery of his will according to his good pleasure, which he purposed in Christ, to be put into effect when the times will have reached their fulfillment--to bring all things in heaven and on earth together under one head, even Christ. In him we were also chosen, having been predestined according to the plan of him who works out everything in conformity with the purpose of his will, in order that we, who were the first to hope in Christ, might be for the praise of his glory. And you also were included in Christ when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation. Having believed, you were marked in him with a seal, the promised Holy Spirit, who is a deposit guaranteeing our inheritance until the redemption of those who are God's possession--to the praise of his glory.”

RECIPROCATED LOVE

Jesus' bride must return his love. We should not be like Adam and Eve in the Garden and the Israelites at Mt. Sinai who betrayed his love by worshiping the calf. We should love him. How

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should the bride return his love? Jesus tells us how to love him, "If you love me, you will obey what I command. " (John 14:15) He also said, "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." (John 14:21)

The relationship we have and will always have with Jesus is based on love. Jesus explains, "As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Now remain in my love. If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete. My command is this: Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this, that he lay down his life for his friends. You are my friends if you do what I command." (John 15:9-14)

Romans 13:8-14 states, "Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another, for he who loves his fellowman has fulfilled the law. The commandments, "Do not commit adultery," "Do not murder," "Do not steal," "Do not covet," and whatever other commandment there may be, are summed up in this one rule: "Love your neighbor as yourself." Love does no harm to its neighbor. Therefore love is the fulfillment of the law. And do this, understanding the present time. The hour has come for you to wake up from your slumber, because our salvation is nearer now than when we first believed. The night is nearly over; the day is almost here. So let us put aside the deeds of darkness and put on the armor of light. Let us behave decently, as in the daytime, not in orgies and drunkenness, not in sexual immorality and debauchery, not in dissension and jealousy. Rather, clothe yourselves with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature."

1 Corinthians 8:1-3 states, "Now about food sacrificed to idols: We know that we all possess knowledge. Knowledge puffs up, but love builds up. The man who thinks he knows something does not yet know as he ought to know. But the man who loves God is known by God."

WHAT IS HOPE?

The King is still at work in his bride. We are not yet complete. The target is the image of the King. When we are fully like Jesus, the King, we will be complete. (Col. 3:10, Phil. 3:10, 1 John 4:17, James 1:4) This is hope; to believe he will accomplish what he promised us and started in us.

Hope in Jesus' work in us saves us. Romans 8:22-25 states, "We know that the whole creation has been groaning as in the pains of childbirth right up to the present time. Not only so, but we ourselves, who have the firstfruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait eagerly for our adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies. For in this hope we were saved. But hope that is seen is no hope at all. Who hopes for what he already has? But if we hope for what we do not yet have, we wait for it patiently."

When we understand and accept Jesus' plan for us, hope springs up in us and produces endurance and joy. We hope and understand when we study the Word of God. Romans 15:4

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states, "For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through endurance and the encouragement of the Scriptures we might have hope."

2 Corinthians 1:8-11 contains words of encouragement to those who are going through hardship. It states, "We do not want you to be uninformed, brothers, about the hardships we suffered in the province of Asia. We were under great pressure, far beyond our ability to endure, so that we despaired even of life. Indeed, in our hearts we felt the sentence of death. But this happened that we might not rely on ourselves but on God, who raises the dead. He has delivered us from such a deadly peril, and he will deliver us. On him we have set our hope that he will continue to deliver us, as you help us by your prayers. Then many will give thanks on our behalf for the gracious favor granted us in answer to the prayers of many."

WHAT IS FAITH?

"Now faith is being sure of what we hope for and certain of what we do not see." (Heb. 11:1) The rest of Hebrews 11 gives us great examples of faith from those who lived by faith in God in ages past. All of those examples are given when they were in need, tested, in pain, about to die, and against all practical means of hope. Who grows in faith when they are not in need? And are we truly in need if we have faith?

The bride has faith in Jesus, the King and his Father. We do not have faith in mere humans, mankind's abilities, nor what man has or will create. We do not have faith in angels whether faithful to God or fallen from God. We do not have faith in some intangible force. We do not have faith in the created universe. We have faith in God and his Son who far exceed all these things, who we know personally. We have faith that Jesus will keep the promises he made.

Faith always compels action. James 2:14-18 states, "What good is it, my brothers, if a man claims to have faith but has no deeds? Can such faith save him? Suppose a brother or sister is without clothes and daily food. If one of you says to him, "Go, I wish you well; keep warm and well fed," but does nothing about his physical needs, what good is it? In the same way, faith by itself, if it is not accompanied by action, is dead. But someone will say, "You have faith; I have deeds." Show me your faith without deeds, and I will show you my faith by what I do."

To get a better understanding of how faith compels action we can look at our everyday activities, the hum-drum actions of faith in things we do without consideration. For example, we have faith that the right key will start an automobile engine. So we insert it into the ignition and turn it or push a button without a second thought. Perhaps the automobile is old; and so we hope that it will start. Our hope compels us to have faith in the key and so we use it to start the automobile and drive to our desired destination. If we did not have faith that the key will start an automobile we wouldn't use the key. We would stay at home, walk to our destination, take a bus, use a cab, or ask a friend to bring us there. Or perhaps we throw the key away, open the automobile's hood and inspect the engine, battery, radiator, hoses and wires, marveling at the design and potential power. Is that faith in the key? Or worse yet we turn the key only a little to get the electricity running without starting the car and then sit in the car, stare out the window, play with the windshield wipers and electric windows and perhaps listen to the radio. Is that faith

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in the key? Real faith in the key compels us to start the automobile and go. In the same way, real faith in Jesus compels us to live out that faith in our day to day actions.

Worry is a lack of faith. When I have a well paying job, do I worry if the bills will be paid, my family will be eating well, and we will still live in the house we are now in? No, not really. I do not worry and feel somewhat content and I believe I have faith; of course, in humility I believe I have faith. I am tempted to believe in times of plenty with a well paying job that God is pleased with me because I have a well paying job and all my family's needs are met.

And if I do not have a job do I worry about those things? Well, I'm not supposed to. (Matt. 6:25, Mark 13:11, Luke 12:29) I resist worry, don't I? I will not know what faith is if I always have a well paying job. And if I lose my job I will ask, "What is worry?" Then I begin to know what worry is for I can sense it in my soul; I can sense worry in my bones. The Holy Spirit tells me what worry is and leads me to examine my faith. What do my bones tell me now?

When jobless I consider my faith when I lived in times of plenty. Am I right to not worry when I have a job and then worry when I don't have a job? Is not Almighty Elohim God my loving Lord and bridegroom with me during both? Does he not take care of me in all circumstances? Am I so vain to think I am the source of stability and income just because I have a job? Why do I consider myself blessed when I have a job? If I won't worry about my needs in the next life, why do I worry in this life? Isn't God's love and care for me in the next life the same as in this life? Why then should I wait for death and resurrection to stop worrying? Oh, what a slippery slope; a slope slimed with pride of self sufficiency.

The Holy Spirit reminds me of Jesus' words concerning his love for me that is greater than the lilies of the valley and the birds of the air. (Matt. 6:25-34) The Holy Spirit reminds me of the apostles' lives after following Jesus, especially after he ascended. The apostles gleaned wheat from the fields for their meals and had no place to lay their heads. (Matt. 12:1, 8:20) The Holy Spirit helps me think what it was like when many had no chances of jobs like during the first great depression from 1930 to World War II.

Why do we in modern day western world believe we have great faith when jobs are abundant, things are cheap and we have plenty to eat? I am led to believe that those who have plenty have not learned deep faith and those who do not know where their next meal is coming from day after day after day have been given a great opportunity to deepen their faith. The latter, if led and trusting in the Holy Spirit, can learn how to have peace in all and any circumstances. They have been given the chance to build up rewards in heaven. The latter have been given a time to learn to trust in God alone. The latter have been given a chance to have peace in God and see what he will do next. If we are to walk with God and let him lead the way doesn't it mean we need to surrender trusting in ourselves for provisions? Why is it hard for the rich to enter the kingdom of God? (Matt. 10:23, Luke 18:24) Because they are often deluded in believing they have great faith and are blessed. (Prov. 30:8-9)

At times of joblessness I am tempted to worry about the immediate future. Is it possible to be tempted to worry? Worry is a lack of faith. A lack of faith is a lack of contentment and peace that

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comes from God. When jobless I should rejoice because I have been given an opportunity to grow in Christ.

George Mueller, a 19th century Englishman of great faith, among other things ran a house for homeless and orphaned children. At times they did not have food to eat. Still, George would have the children set the dishes on the table. There was no food in the kitchen. Nothing was being prepared. None was sent to a neighbor to get food. They had no money. Then he would have the children sit at the table with empty plates in front of them and he would pray. He thanked God for the food that they were about to eat. Many times if not always (I can't remember which) a knock would come from the door. Behind the door was someone with food. At times a restaurant had left over food because they made too much food or not many came to eat that day. Other times leftover food from banquets and weddings were brought to the door.

One morning the children were standing waiting for their morning meal, when Mueller said, "Children, you know we must be in time for school." Lifting his hand he said, "Dear Father, we thank Thee for what Thou art going to give us to eat." There was a knock on the door. The baker stood there, and said, "Mr. Mueller, I couldn't sleep last night. Somehow I felt you didn't have bread for breakfast and the Lord wanted me to send you some. So I got up at 2 a.m. and baked some fresh bread, and have brought it." Mueller thanked the man. No sooner had this transpired when there was a second knock at the door. It was the milkman. He announced that his milk cart had broken down right in front of the Orphanage, and he would like to give the children his cans of fresh milk so he could empty his wagon and repair it. No wonder, years later, when Mueller was to travel the world as an evangelist, he would be heralded as "the man who gets things from God!"

Mueller might have been tempted to worry when no food was in the house. He obviously didn't. He prepared all he could, setting the table, putting the children in place, and thanking God for what they were about to eat even though there was no food in the house. I imagine that when there was no food in the house meal time became a time to see what and how God was going to feed them next. What a delight for them it must have been to know that God loves and cares for those who love and care for him. That man had active faith, grew closer to his bridegroom, and taught the children what practical faith really is. This is what Jesus was teaching the disciples during the feeding of the four thousand and five thousand. (Matt. 14:13-21, 15:29-39, Mark 6:30-44, 8:1-13, Luke 9:10-17, John 6:1-15)

Galatians 5:5-6 shows how faith, hope, and love work together in us. "But by faith we eagerly await through the Spirit the righteousness for which we hope. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision has any value. The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love."

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CHAPTER 6 - HOW THEN SHOULD WE LIVE?

IMMINENCY

Jesus tells his bride, "Behold, I come like a thief! Blessed is he who stays awake and keeps his clothes with him, so that he may not go naked and be shamefully exposed," (Rev. 16:15) and "Behold, I am coming soon! Blessed is he who keeps the words of the prophecy in this book". (Rev. 22:7) Again he states most assuredly, "Behold, I am coming soon! My reward is with me, and I will give to everyone according to what he has done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End. Blessed are those who wash their robes, that they may have the right to the tree of life and may go through the gates into the city. Outside are the dogs, those who practice magic arts, the sexually immoral, the murderers, the idolaters and everyone who loves and practices falsehood. I, Jesus, have sent my angel to give you this testimony for the churches. I am the Root and the Offspring of David, and the bright Morning Star." The Spirit and the bride say, "Come!" And let him who hears say, "Come!" Whoever is thirsty, let him come; and whoever wishes, let him take the free gift of the water of life." (Rev. 22:12-15)

The Morning Star is the name given to the planet Venus when it brilliantly appears in the East (morning sky) before sunrise. Matthew Henry wrote in his commentary, "(Jesus) is the foundation of all light... as such has given to his churches this morning light of prophecy, to assure them of the light of that perfect day which is approaching." Henry Morris wrote in his book *The Revelation Record*, "This is, thus, a blessed reminder to all His people in the churches, that they should watch through the night for His coming, not being led astray by Lucifer, who had aspired to rise above God but whose rebellion would soon be put down."

Jesus wants his bride to always be ready, eagerly and patiently waiting for his coming to take us away and be with him for eternity. (1 Cor. 15:51-52, Phil. 3:20, 1 Thess. 1:10, 1 Tim. 6:14, James 5:8) The bride being taken away (rapture in the Latin Septuagint) at the last of the seven trumpets is the next occurrence in the church's calendar. (The first six are for the world. See chapter 3.) The seventh trumpet is when Jesus will appear in the heavens before touching the earth (Acts 1:9-11) and his angels reaping the harvest of believers (1 Thess. 4:13-18). We shall be changed and see him with our own eyes (Psalm 17:19, 1 John 3:2). We will then descend with him to earth.

Jesus taught us in many parables to "keep watch" for his sure coming. (Matt. 13:30, 21:34, 24:32, 25:13, 19, Mark 4:29, 12:2, 13:35) The word "imminence" meaning, "something is about to happen" is not in any English translation of the Bible. Yet, Jesus' bride has always looked to his coming to take them away. Habakkuk 2:2-3 states, "Then the LORD replied: "Write down the revelation and make it plain on tablets so that a herald may run with it. For the revelation awaits an appointed time; it speaks of the end and will not prove false. Though it linger, wait for it; it will certainly come and will not delay." What then does Jesus mean by telling us to "keep watch"? Does keep watching imply imminence? Many who call themselves Christians believe in imminence, that is, that Jesus can return at any time since his ascension. Is this in line with Jesus' parables? And what of claim that the gospel must be preached in the whole world before he came again which did not happen until recent years? Below is a quote from "The Church and

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the Tribulation" by Robert H. Gundry in chapter 3 under the heading "Expectation and Imminence".

"If the second coming could not have been imminent for those originally commanded to watch at the time they were so commanded, then the commanded expectancy could not have implied imminence of the event looked for. It then becomes unnecessary for us to regard Jesus' coming as imminent, for we have received no further and no different exhortations. In other words, if a delay in the Parousia of at least several years was compatible with expectancy in apostolic times, a delay for the several years of the tribulation is compatible with expectancy in current times. Jesus clearly indicates to the early disciples that His coming will be delayed for some time. The express purpose of the parable concerning the nobleman who went to a "far country" is that the disciples should not think "the kingdom of God was going to appear immediately" (Luke 19: 11-27). "While the bridegroom was delaying" also intimates delay (Matt. 25:5). In the parable of the talents, Jesus likens His return to the lord who "after a long time" came back from a far country (Matt. 25:19).

"Jesus bases the parable of the servants on the presupposition of a delay in His coming, for without the delay no interval would have provided opportunity for the servants to display their true colors (Luke 12:41-48; Matt. 24:45-51). And when Jesus has the wicked servant say, "My master will be a long time in coming," He tacitly admits that there will be a delay. As the wicked servant's eternal judgment "with the unbelievers (or hypocrites)" shows, the contrast in servants distinguishes true disciples, whose characteristic it is to watch, from false disciples, whose characteristic it is not to watch. The necessary delay made no difference to the expectant attitude of the true servant, but it revealed the falsity of the wicked servant. Jesus does not condemn recognition of delay, but the attitude which takes selfish advantage of the delay. Moreover, readiness denotes not so much tiptoe anticipation as faithful service day by day: "Who then is the faithful and sensible steward, whom his master will put in charge of his servants to give them their rations at the proper time? Blessed is that slave whom his master finds so doing when he comes" (Luke's version).

"We might suppose that the long period of delay required in the parables would be satisfied by "a few years." But a few years is all the delay post-tribulationism requires. Jesus could not have given in good faith the great commission with its worldwide extent ("all the nations" and "the remotest part of the earth") without providing a considerable lapse of time in order that the disciples might have opportunity to perform the task. The long-range missionary endeavors of Paul may not possess independent argumentative weight (Paul's journey to Rome was contingent on the Lord's will, Rom. 1:9, 10). Yet as the Lord's commission for him to go "far away to the Gentiles" (Acts 22: 21) and to witness before "kings" (Acts 9:15) and as the promise in Jerusalem that he would "witness... at Rome" (Acts 23:11; cf. 27:24) link up with the great commission generally, they gain considerable weight.

"It may be countered, with an appeal to Paul's statement "the gospel... was proclaimed in all creation under heaven" (Col. 1:23), that "the extensive preaching of the gospel in the first century might... satisfy the program of preaching to the ends of the earth." However, Paul wrote

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his statement during his first Roman imprisonment, some thirty years after Jesus gave the great commission, an interval more than four times as long as the tribulation. And Paul had not fulfilled his intention of visiting Spain, where the Gospel had not yet been preached (Rom. 15:20, 24). Evidently he himself did not regard the great commission as fulfilled. Apparently, then, in Colossians 1:23 Paul is not affirming a fulfillment of the great commission, but is setting the universality of the Gospel (the good news is for all men, even though it has not reached all men) in opposition to the esotericism of the Colossian heresy.

"Of corroborative value is the personal history of Peter (John 21:18, 19; 2 Pet. 1:14). Jesus foretold that Peter, then middle-aged ("when you were young"), would die at an infirm old age ("when you grow old, you will stretch out your hands, and someone else will gird you"). If we try to save the imminence of the Parousia by saying that Peter could have been martyred at any time, we forget that his infirmity and old age were not imminent. And if we say that the prediction concerning Peter was not common knowledge among Christians until long after his death, we overlook the presence of other apostles on the occasion of the prediction. Furthermore, John writes of the incident in order to correct a misimpression which had arisen concerning his own death. The whole matter, then, must have received some publicity in the early Church.

"To claim that these delays were "general in nature, without specific length;" merely avoids the issue. Whether general or specific, long or short, the delays were delays and, by being stated, rendered the second coming non-imminent to the apostolic Church. Moreover, the delays were not entirely general in nature. The specificity of the great commission ("in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and even to the remotest part of the earth"), of the promise that Paul should bear witness at Rome, and of Peter's old age as a time of infirmity to the degree of inability to dress himself make the delays much more pointed than the doctrine of imminence can allow.

"Again, to claim that "the delays had been fulfilled by the time the exhortations to watch were written" runs afoul of historical facts. At least those exhortations to watch in the epistles appeared in writing before the disciples could have fulfilled the great commission, before Paul had completed his extensive missionary efforts, and before Peter had reached old age, become infirm, and died. From the very beginning, even before the written exhortations, Christians knew that they were to watch through the oral ministry of Jesus and the apostles and prophets. In one of his earliest epistles Paul already commends believers for their watchfulness (1 Thess. 1:9, 10). The point remains that if watching could not have connoted imminence in the apostolic age, it need not connote imminence now.

"But should we not think that all else was contingent upon the second coming, that an "only if Christ does not return beforehand" qualified every other expectation? Possibly, but only possibly, in connection with the personal circumstances of Peter and Paul. It is very hard to think, however, that an imminent return of Christ might have taken away sufficient opportunity to fulfill the great commission. Moreover, when imminence becomes the ruling principle by which all else was and is rendered contingent, even the events of the tribulation do not have to take place; they might "die on the vine" just as the great commission and the predictions concerning

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Paul and Peter would have done had Jesus returned beforehand." This ends the quote from "The Church and the Tribulation" by Robert H. Gundry.

Jesus is coming soon to take his bride away. I believe it will be in my lifetime, though I have been wrong about other things. Why do I believe this? As mentioned Luke 21:29-36 records Jesus saying when Israel becomes a nation again, when Jews accept him as the Messiah, "you know that the Kingdom of God is near," and he said, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap. For it will come upon all those who live on the face of the whole earth. Be always on the watch, and pray that you may be able to escape all that is about to happen, and that you may be able to stand before the Son of Man." Not only is the fact that Israel has become a nation and Jews are accepting Jesus as the King of Israel a sign of prophecy fulfilled, but many other things now happening are a convergence of events that make other prophecies' fulfillment possible, those concerning the seven years of tribulation.

Jesus coming for his bride is part of his coming to set up his physical kingdom on this earth. They are separate events but only by a few hours, days, or weeks. I use to believe that they are exactly seven years apart from each other. I now join the growing number who believes otherwise.

When Jesus comes to set up his kingdom he will physically touch the earth at Jerusalem on the Mount of Olives at the end of the seven years of tribulation. (Zech 14:3-4) Many have done studies on this using among other things, for example Daniel's seventy weeks. (Dan. 9) I will not at this time for the point being stressed here is to always be ready for Jesus' coming to transform and take his bride to him as he descends and becomes King of the Earth.

ACTIONS AND REWARDS OR LOSSES OF REWARDS

Since I believe he is coming in my lifetime and knowing all that Jesus has planned for me, how then should I live? Jesus' most famous speech subject has been called The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5) and The Sermon on the Plain (Luke 6). Jesus repeated parts of his sermons several times to different crowds at different times. The first part of these two sermons, called The Beatitudes is the most famous. The word Beatitudes comes from Latin beatus, meaning "blessed" or "happy". The blessings of happiness pronounced by Jesus will be fulfilled in the future based on one's current life. Truthfully, these can be called prophecies.

"Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven. Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. Blessed are the meek, for they will inherit the earth. Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, for they will be filled. Blessed are the merciful, for they will be shown mercy. Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God. Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God. Blessed are those who are persecuted because of righteousness, for theirs is the kingdom of heaven." (Matt. 5:3-10) This is where some stop reading, but Jesus continues, "Blessed are you when people insult you, persecute you and falsely say all kinds of evil against you because of me. Rejoice and be glad, because great is your reward in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you." (Matt. 5:11-12)

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Luke 6:20-23 is a record of Jesus saying these things in a little different way to a different group of people. "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God. Blessed are you who hunger now for you will be satisfied. Blessed are you who weep now, for you will laugh. Blessed are you when men hate you, when they exclude you and insult you and reject your name as evil because of the Son of Man. Rejoice in that day and leap for joy because great is your reward in heaven. For that is how their fathers treated the prophets." Jesus makes it clear that these things will not be fulfilled in this life. They will be fulfilled in the future after one leaves the world as it is now, ruled by Satan and his followers. They will be fulfilled in the next age, the Millennium and through eternity.

What is the future of Satan's followers, those who belong to the kingdom of Babylon and the other kingdoms in the dream Daniel interpreted, the soon to end world kingdoms? Bad things are in their future. Jesus continued the Beatitudes, "But woe to you who are rich, for you have already received your comfort. Woe to you who are well fed now, for you will go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now, for you will mourn and weep. Woe to you when all men speak well of you, for that is how their fathers treated the false prophets." (Luke 6:24-26)

The verses that follow Matthew 5 and Luke 6 give many promises and references to how living in this world will lead to how Christ's bride will be and live in the next age. Jesus used the following phrases; "until heaven and earth disappear" (Matt. 5:18), "until everything is accomplished" (Matt. 5:18), "called least in the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:19), "enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matt. 5:20), "in danger of the fire of hell" (Matt. 5:22), "your whole body to be thrown into hell" (Matt. 5:30), "what reward will you get" (Matt. 5:46), "you will have no reward from your Father in heaven" (Matt. 6:1), "your Father, who sees what is done in secret, will reward you" (Matt. 6:4, 6, 18), and others.

The life Christ's bride lives now is God's validation to how we will be in the future, both during the thousand year reign of Christ the King, and his completed kingdom that follows the thousand years and extends for eternity. God is clear on the fact that entrance to the Kingdom of God is not through the bride's deeds. Entrance is only to those whom the King made way through his sacrifice of the shedding of his blood, ultimate death and glorious resurrection. However, the reward he gives to each one is completely based on her deeds.

Paul wrote to Titus, "Remind the people to be subject to rulers and authorities, to be obedient, to be ready to do whatever is good, to slander no one, to be peaceable and considerate, and to show true humility toward all men. At one time we too were foolish, disobedient, deceived and enslaved by all kinds of passions and pleasures. We lived in malice and envy, being hated and hating one another. But when the kindness and love of God our Savior appeared, he saved us, not because of righteous things we had done, but because of his mercy. He saved us through the washing of rebirth and renewal by the Holy Spirit, whom he poured out on us generously through Jesus Christ our Savior, so that, having been justified by his grace, we might become heirs having the hope of eternal life. This is a trustworthy saying. And I want you to stress these things, so that those who have trusted in God may be careful to devote themselves to doing what is good. These things are excellent and profitable for everyone." (Titus 3:1-8)

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Jesus makes the connection to actions and rewards so clear when he stated in his famous sermon, "Do not store up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy, and where thieves break in and steal. But store up for yourselves treasures in heaven, where moth and rust do not destroy, and where thieves do not break in and steal. For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also." (Matt. 6:19-24)

Living by love, hope, and faith in the Kingdom of God and one's future place in it is not a shameful thing. Jesus himself told his bride that if his bride does anything that he and the apostles say, then those actions will lead to a reward in the future. Even if we are only living by faith in receiving a reward there is no guilt in the act, as long as it is committed in love. Do not be afraid to store up riches in Jesus' kingdom. Do not be ashamed to be guilty of this kind of faith. Jesus tells us to store up treasures and anything the King says is guilt free. Believers did this in the past and were honored for it. Hebrews 11:35 records, "Women received back their dead, raised to life again. Others were tortured and refused to be released, so that they might gain a better resurrection."

Jesus sent out first his apostles (Matt. 10) and later more disciples (Luke 10) to spread the good news of the Kingdom of God while he was in the middle of his own ministry. Before he sent them out he gave them instructions that link their ministry to future rewards. The first are specific to that particular sending, however, the rest are not only for his apostles, but for all believers since then. He states, "He who receives you receives me, and he who receives me receives the one who sent me. Anyone who receives a prophet because he is a prophet will receive a prophet's reward, and anyone who receives a righteous man because he is a righteous man will receive a righteous man's reward. And if anyone gives even a cup of cold water to one of these little ones because he is my disciples, I tell you the truth, he will certainly not lose his reward." (Matt. 11:40-42)

Jesus promises, "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy and my burden is light." (Matt. 11:28-30) A yoke is put on two oxen so that they may work in tandem. The promises of yoking up with Jesus are in part fulfilled in this life, but in the life to come they will be completely fulfilled. This truth will be understood only by those who have come to Jesus, taken up his yoke, and learned from him.

1 Timothy 6:17-19 is another place where Jesus says a person will receive rewards in the next age for acts done in this age, "Command those who are rich in this present world not to be arrogant nor to put their hope in wealth, which is so uncertain, but to put their hope in God, who richly provides us with everything for our enjoyment. Command them to do good, to be rich in good deeds, and to be generous and willing to share. In this way they will lay up treasure for themselves as a firm foundation for the coming age, so that they may take hold of the life that is truly life." During the current age of the preaching of the good news of Jesus' kingdom we have been given the chance to lay up treasures for our life in the age of the thousand year reign of Jesus. Do not let this opportunity go by, act now.

Many of Jesus' parables concern receiving a reward in the next age due to faithfulness with the things God has given us in this age. Just before he entered Jerusalem, was crucified, died and

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resurrected, Jesus, "went on to tell them a parable, because he was near Jerusalem and the people thought that the Kingdom of God was going to appear at once. He said: 'A man of noble birth went to a distant country to have himself appointed king and then to return. So he called ten of his servants and gave them ten minas. 'Put this money to work,' he said, 'until I come back.' But his subjects hated him and sent a delegation after him to say, 'We don't want this man to be our king.' He was made king, however, and returned home. Then he sent for the servants to whom he had given the money, in order to find out what they had gained with it. The first one came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned ten more.' 'Well done, my good servant!' his master replied. 'Because you have been trustworthy in a very small matter, take charge of ten cities.' The second came and said, 'Sir, your mina has earned five more.' His master answered, 'You take charge of five cities.' Then another servant came and said, 'Sir, here is your mina; I have kept it laid away in a piece of cloth. I was afraid of you, because you are a hard man. You take out what you did not put in and reap what you did not sow.' His master replied, 'I will judge you by your own words, you wicked servant! You knew, did you, that I am a hard man, taking out what I did not put in, and reaping what I did not sow? Why then didn't you put my money on deposit, so that when I came back, I could have collected it with interest?' Then he said to those standing by, 'Take his mina away from him and give it to the one who has ten minas.' 'Sir,' they said, 'he already has ten!' He replied, 'I tell you that to everyone who has, more will be given, but as for the one who has nothing, even what he has will be taken away. But those enemies of mine who did not want me to be king over them--bring them here and kill them in front of me.'" (Luke 19:11-27) Jesus is clear his servants will not lose salvation; however, they may lose their reward.

THE CHURCH

The questions "What is the church?" and "Who is the church?" have been asked by many.

Matthew 16:13-20 records, "When Jesus came to the region of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, 'Who do people say the Son of Man is?' They replied, 'Some say John the Baptist; others say Elijah; and still others, Jeremiah or one of the prophets.' 'But what about you?' he asked. 'Who do you say I am?' Simon Peter answered, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.' Jesus replied, 'Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven. And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.' Then he warned his disciples not to tell anyone that he was the Christ."

"Church" is the Greek word "ekklēsia" meaning a called out congregation and assembly of people. This is the first time Jesus uses church to describe what will grow amongst the Messianic Jews and believing gentiles in this age. The church is thus based on Peter's confession which Jesus told the apostles to preach in this age so that dead sin filled souls that accept and profess Jesus is Christ may be brought out and changed by the Holy Spirit to a new life creation. (Rom. 10:9-13)

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William Blackstone wrote in his book *Jesus is Coming*, "The true church is a persecuted, suffering, cross-bearing people. This is its calling, as the Scripture says, 'all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution.' (2 Tim. 3:12) And this will continue until Christ comes, which precludes any Millennium until after His coming."

And Blackstone wrote, "While Christ was on earth He said, 'it is expedient for you that I go away,' and He went away. He said, 'I go to prepare a place for you.' But 'if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you unto myself; that where I am, there ye may be also.' (John 14:2-3) He gave us this promise as our hope and comfort while He is away. He said: 'In the world ye shall have tribulation.' (John 16:33) 'ye shall weep and lament, and... be sorrowful... but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice.' (20, 22)"

And Blackstone wrote, "The church is to be the bride of Christ, which He is going to present to Himself (Eph. 5:23-32). But now she is a virgin of sorrow and affliction, a companion in suffering with her espoused Husband - the Lord Jesus Christ."

And Blackstone wrote, "But, do you say, 'The church is not persecuted, and does, even now enjoy relative peace'? I answer, it is because the professing church (and by this we include Roman Catholics, Greeks, and all nominal Christians) has conformed so largely to the world that the world has little, if any, controversy with her. Of what benefit to God are nominal, cold-hearted, world-conforming Christians? He wants a separate and holy people, and the command is, 'Come out and be ye separate.' (2 Cor. 6:14-18) I believe the birds of the air and the leaven in the parable of Matthew 13 represents the children of the wicked one, or hypocrites which have lodged in the church, as well as false doctrines which have crept in and have so pervaded the professing church that it has, in general, become merely formal and nominal. God wants zealous Christians, in whom the Word of Life burns as it did in Jeremiah's bones. And are not the number of those few today?"

Blackstone goes on speaking of the true church within the church and the bride of Christ. Blackstone published this originally in 1908 before WWI and WWII. What he saw in the world around him over one hundred years ago is true in this day in even increasing measure.

PREACH THE GOOD NEWS OF THE KINGDOM

The last word someone speaks to his loved ones before he leaves for a long journey are often the most important. They are words he wants his loved ones to remember and follow while he is gone. This truth is most important with our King and Bridegroom.

Matthew 28:18-20 states that just before he ascended into heaven, "Jesus came to them and said, 'All authority in heaven and on earth has been given to me. Therefore go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, and teaching them to obey everything I have commanded you. And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'" Believers call this Jesus' great commission to his bride. The great commission is also recorded in Mark 16:15 and Acts 1:7. John records that Jesus spoke of the commission a few days before Jesus ascended. "Jesus said, 'Peace be with you! As the Father has sent me, I am sending you.'" (John 20:21)

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Not only did Jesus tell his apostles that the good news (gospel in Latin) would spread to the ends of the earth when he left them, he also stated this during his three and a half year ministry. For example he said, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the whole world as a testimony to all nations, and then the end will come." (Matt. 24:14, Mark 13:10) And he stated, "I tell you the truth, wherever this gospel is preached throughout the world, what she has done will also be told, in memory of her." (Matt. 26:13, Mark 14:9)

During his ministry Jesus prepared his disciples for this task. The very title he gave them "apostle" means "ambassador of the gospel" and "messenger". He showed them how to carry out this mission through his life example and teaching. He sent them out on their own missionary journeys. He instructed them before and after he sent them out.

The historical record in the books of Acts shows how the apostles obeyed the great commission directive and how God blessed them as they did. Since then the gospel has spread to every nation and every people group. It is estimated that only a few tribes in very remote places have not heard the gospel. It is also true that there are some places on earth that had the gospel preached to them that need to have it preached to them again because the bride's voice is now weak or has stopped in that place. The task is almost complete. Until it is, that is until he comes again, the bride needs to be obedient to the call.

The author of Hebrews wrote, "Therefore, since the promise of entering his rest still stands, let us be careful that none of you be found to have fallen short of it. For we also have had the gospel preached to us, just as they did; but the message they heard was of no value to them, because those who heard did not combine it with faith... It still remains that some will enter that rest, and those who formerly had the gospel preached to them did not go in, because of their disobedience. Therefore God again set a certain day, calling it Today, when a long time later he spoke through David, as was said before: 'Today, if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts.' For if Joshua had given them rest, God would not have spoken later about another day. There remains, then, a Sabbath-rest for the people of God; for anyone who enters God's rest also rests from his own work, just as God did from his. Let us, therefore, make every effort to enter that rest, so that no one will fall by following their example of disobedience." (Heb. 4:1-2, 6-11)

BE ON GUARD

Jesus is the bridegroom and all the members of the church (congregation is a better translation since church means so much these days) are his loving bride. (John 3:29, Hos. 2:14-23) When Jesus came in the flesh two thousand years ago the Jewish marriage practices were different than the practices of marriage in much of the world today. In those days when children were very young the parents of two families would decide who their children's prospective spouse would be. The children were too young to know what was going on. Then when the two children became of a certain age they would be betrothed as bride and bridegroom for one year. Today's engagement time is similar to the betrothed year, but there are distinct differences. (Ex. 22:16, Deut. 22:13-30, Matt. 1:18, Luke 1:27, 2:5)

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During the one year the betrothed bride and bridegroom were considered legally married. Yet they would not live together, nor have sex together. They would not leave their parents' families until the year was concluded. Before they were married they were to be sanctified as Israel was sanctified before they married the Lord at Mount Sinai. (Ex. 19:10-14) The brides became sanctified by having the ceremonial mikvah (water immersion). While they were betrothed the couple must remain pure and devoted to each other. The bridegroom would prepare a house for them to raise a family in, and the bride would take care of the bridegroom's needs. At any time during the betrothal year if the bride decided that she didn't want to be married to the bridegroom, she could call the marriage off and there would be a legal separation.

When they were finally married there would be two witnesses, friends of the bridegroom. Their role was to prepare the bride and escort her to meet the groom underneath the chupath (wedding canopy) where the marriage would occur. Moses was the witness who led Israel to the Lord at Mount Sinai where a canopy of smoke circled the mountain top. (Ex. 19)

When they married they would have a ketuba (marriage contract/covenant) which states the terms and conditions of the marriage; the Lord and Israel's is Deuteronomy 28 and Leviticus 26. During a traditional Jewish wedding they couple would state their love for each other as the Lord and Israel did at Mount Sinai. (Ex. 19:4-8) The marriage was completed (kiddushin meaning sanctified) when the bridegroom gave something of value to the bride and she accepted it, usually a ring that had a precious stone on it if he could afford it. Then there would be a great wedding banquet, a feast which was held which lasted several days. (John 2:1-11)

The age of proclaiming of the Law and Prophets (Some believe it started at Mt. Sinai and went to John the Baptist. Jews believe it started with Abraham.) is the first covenant. The age of the preaching of the good news of the Kingdom of God (All believe it started with Jesus' first coming and ends with his second coming) is the new covenant. (Matt. 26:28, Mark 14:24, Luke 22:20)

God our Father has given the church to be married to Jesus. (John 6:37-39) When Jesus came in the flesh two thousand years ago he and the church were betrothed; so that since that time when anyone, Jew or Gentile, accepts Jesus they are accepting his proposal and become betrothed to him, the same as the legal agreement was in ages past.

Jesus our bridegroom has left us to prepare a home for us. (John 14:2) He sanctified us by his word and blood. (John 17:17, 19, Heb. 9:13-14) John the Baptist, who came in the power of Elijah (Matt. 11:14) said he is one of the friends of the bridegroom. (John 3:29) Two witnesses are seen in Revelation 11 just before Jesus' comes again; one is expected to be in the power of Elijah and the other to be in the spirit of Moses. (Some believe it will actually be they.) The bride, members of His church, has gone through the ceremony of water immersion baptism. (John 1:25, 33) Soon Jesus will come to get his bride so that we can be married and live with him forever. At that time we will be dressed in the radiant white of God's glory, in gowns of white that he will give us. (Rev. 7:9, 22:14) At that time a canopy of smoke will be over Mount Zion where we will be brought to our bridegroom meeting him face to face. (Is. 4:5-6) At that time our bridegroom will give each one of his loved ones a precious rock that will have our name on it, a new name which only he and we will know. (Rev. 2:17) After the marriage ceremony of Jesus and his bride there will be a great banquet, the wedding feast of the Lamb. (Rev. 19:6-9) Until

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our bridegroom comes for us the bride is to keep ourselves pure and to take care of his business. (1Th. 5:13)

To stay pure (righteous) Jesus bride must always be on guard. For example we are told, "If anyone considers himself religious and yet does not keep a tight rein on his tongue, he deceives himself and his religion is worthless. Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress and to keep oneself from being polluted by the world." (James 1:26-27) C.S. Lewis wrote in his book *The Problem with Pain*, "Beware lest you are making use of the idea of corporate guilt to distract your attention from those hum-drum, old fashioned guilts of your own which have nothing to do with "the system" and which can be dealt with without waiting for the Millennium." As already quoted Jesus said, "Be careful, or your hearts will be weighed down with dissipation, drunkenness and the anxieties of life, and that day will close on you unexpectedly like a trap." (Luke 21:34) Jesus taught this in the parable of the seeds as well. (Matt. 13:1-23, Mark 4:1-20, Luke 8:1-15)

Philippians 3:8-21 is a great word of direction, pointing to where the Spirit is directing our hearts. It states, "What is more, I consider everything a loss compared to the surpassing greatness of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, for whose sake I have lost all things. I consider them rubbish, that I may gain Christ and be found in him, not having a righteousness of my own that comes from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ--the righteousness that comes from God and is by faith. I want to know Christ and the power of his resurrection and the fellowship of sharing in his sufferings, becoming like him in his death, and so, somehow, to attain to the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained all this, or have already been made perfect, but I press on to take hold of that for which Christ Jesus took hold of me. Brothers, I do not consider myself yet to have taken hold of it. But one thing I do: Forgetting what is behind and straining toward what is ahead, I press on toward the goal to win the prize for which God has called me heavenward in Christ Jesus. All of us who are mature should take such a view of things. And if on some point you think differently, that too God will make clear to you. Only let us live up to what we have already attained. Join with others in following my example, brothers, and take note of those who live according to the pattern we gave you. For, as I have often told you before and now say again even with tears, many live as enemies of the cross of Christ. Their destiny is destruction, their god is their stomach, and their glory is in their shame. Their mind is on earthly things. But our citizenship is in heaven. And we eagerly await a Savior from there, the Lord Jesus Christ, who, by the power that enables him to bring everything under his control, will transform our lowly bodies so that they will be like his glorious body."

Matt. 12:36, 1 Cor. 3:11-15, 9:25, Gal. 6:7, Col 3:24-25, Phil. 4:1, 1 Thess. 2:19, 2 Tim 4:1-8, and Rev. 22:12 all are verses indicating that Jesus' bride, must be judged according to their works, either to receive rewards or suffer loss of rewards. This judgment must be completed at the wedding which is prior to the Millennium, because the believers will by the Millennium have been arrayed in white garments representing their "righteous acts" and given thrones of judgment reserved for "over comers" during the Millennium. (Rev. 4:2)

To further illustrate how the bride should then live look at Jesus' words in Luke 14:12-14. "Jesus said to his host, 'When you give a luncheon or dinner, do not invite your friends, your brothers or

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relatives, or your rich neighbors; if you do, they may invite you back and so you will be repaid. But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous.”

Don't forget how Israel had the chance to make the right choice in the last age, the age of the Law and Prophets. Generation after generation most Israelites lost the chance. And don't forget about those men who just before Jesus' first coming left Jerusalem because they were disgusted by what was happening with the Levites at the temple and knew that the Messiah was soon to come, built a community by the Dead Sea only to miss the chance at meeting the Messiah and he did not come out to meet them for their hearts were not circumcised.

Peter reminds us that Jesus' bride now has that chance when he wrote, “But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, a people belonging to God, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light. Once you were not a people, but now you are the people of God; once you had not received mercy, but now you have received mercy. Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul. Live such good lives among the pagans that, though they accuse you of doing wrong, they may see your good deeds and glorify God on the day he visits us.” (1 Peter 2:9-12)

NOT EASY BUT WELL WORTH IT

Living a life of faith, hope, and love is not as easy as some think. In fact, it is the hardest thing to do. Why do most take the wide path that leads to destruction instead of the narrow path? (Matt. 7:13-14) The wide path is much easier compared to the narrow path. The wide path has quick and enticing gratifications of the flesh. The narrow path resists the desires of the flesh and the flow of those on the wide path.

Paul used the illustration of a hard working athlete as his personal inspiration to press on for Jesus' rewards, “Do you not know that in a race all the runners run, but only one gets the prize? Run in such a way as to get the prize. Everyone who competes in the games goes into strict training. They do it to get a crown that will not last; but we do it to get a crown that will last forever. Therefore I do not run like a man running aimlessly; I do not fight like a man beating the air. No, I beat my body and make it my slave so that after I have preached to others, I myself will not be disqualified for the prize.” (1 Cor. 9:24-27)

1 Peter 1:3-12 is probably a good way to finish this book. I encourage you to read the verses that follow these. “Praise be to the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ! In his great mercy he has given us new birth into a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead, and into an inheritance that can never perish, spoil or fade--kept in heaven for you, who through faith are shielded by God's power until the coming of the salvation that is ready to be revealed in the last time. In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while you may have had to suffer grief in all kinds of trials. These have come so that your faith--of greater worth than gold, which perishes even though refined by fire--may be proved genuine and may result in praise, glory and honor when Jesus Christ is revealed. Though you have not seen him, you love

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him; and even though you do not see him now, you believe in him and are filled with an inexpressible and glorious joy, for you are receiving the goal of your faith, the salvation of your souls. Concerning this salvation, the prophets, who spoke of the grace that was to come to you, searched intently and with the greatest care, trying to find out the time and circumstances to which the Spirit of Christ in them was pointing when he predicted the sufferings of Christ and the glories that would follow. It was revealed to them that they were not serving themselves but you, when they spoke of the things that have now been told you by those who have preached the gospel to you by the Holy Spirit sent from heaven. Even angels long to look into these things.”

Press on in faith, hope, and love. Jesus tells his bride, “Peace I leave with you; my peace I give you. I do not give to you as the world gives. Do not let your hearts be troubled and do not be afraid,” (John 14:27) and “Take heart, I have overcome the world.” (John 16:33)

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