

THE STIRRING OF THE HEART



FREE

Those whose hearts were stirred to return and rebuild the temple in Jerusalem had to forsake the comforts and security of their former lives. Is the call of the Gospel any different today?

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There is nothing more exciting for a true believer than to look back in the scriptures and see how prophecy was fulfilled. It gives credence to God and His witness. One of the most exciting fulfillments of prophecy recorded in the Old Testament is that of the Jews leaving Babylon and returning to rebuild Jerusalem. This was to fulfill the words of Jeremiah the prophet:

When the seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill my gracious promise to bring you back to this place. (Jeremiah 29:10)

What a wonderful time to live in! The Babylonian captivity was about to end and Abraham's offspring were about to go to their homeland and rebuild the temple. This is what they had longed for, hoped for, and waited for.

You would think that the response to the call by King Cyrus to “go up to Jerusalem in Judah and rebuild the temple of the Lord, the God of Israel, the God who is in Jerusalem” would have been overwhelming.¹ However, it wasn’t at all. Although they were in a foreign land, with foreign customs and gods, many did not want to leave. According to the ancient historian Josephus they had become quite prosperous in Babylon and most of them did not like the idea of leaving and beginning all over again — in fact they loathed it.

Although some did return, the majority did not. They had

grown comfortable in Babylon, in spite of the many commandments from their God not to mix with other cultures. They had become successful in business, owned property, accumulated possessions, some amassing great wealth. Why, when they were beginning to do so well in society, did God want them to up and leave? Did He really mean to leave everything? Even family members, if they were unwilling to come? All they had to return to was a desolate wasteland full of wild animals and rubble. Surely He did not expect them to abandon all they had gained for that!? How would people view their God if they were

so irrational as to suddenly leave their jobs, possessions, friends, and family to return to Jerusalem? What kind of witness would that be?

These questions must have reverberated in many of the minds that heard the call. Therefore, many Jews decided to stay in Babylon. This was no time to leave. Perhaps they would be able to make Babylon into a better place. Perhaps they could influence their society politically and financially and change things for the better.

Oddly enough, upon reading this intriguing story in the Bible, we find that God actually *did* want them to leave. It is what God had

predestined for them to do. No one today would actually argue that it was not God's will that the Jews in Babylon leave everything and return to rebuild Jerusalem.

So, how is this ancient story in the Bible relevant today? Part of the answer lies in the response of those who *did* leave Babylon. In Ezra 1: 5 it says, "...everyone whose heart was stirred by God." These were the ones who responded to the call. Something was awakened in their hearts by the prophet to return to Jerusalem after seventy years. This was a once-in-a-lifetime chance to hear and obey. It is what many had lived their lives in anticipation of.

They did not want to settle for a comfortable life in Babylon. They knew God wanted more than that. These people set their face like flint



From the outset, the pilgrims faced many obstacles, including this inhospitable Chaldean desert.

to return and rebuild. It was like another exodus.

The stirring of the heart to go rebuild can be compared to the stirring of the heart to hear Christ's message and follow Him — setting one's face like flint to rebuild the Kingdom and not look back. Looking at the gospel of Christ, it is not difficult to see the parallel between His call to leave everything to follow Him and what God called the Jews in Babylon to do. Many of the Jews in Babylon thought it was unreasonable to expect them to leave everything behind, even unwilling family members, and many people today think the same

way about Christ's call to forsake everything, including unwilling family members, to follow Him.

It is very similar in America today to how it was in Babylon: people are quite comfortable in their living conditions, careers, schools, and social circles. They've accumulated property and possessions. Many are doing "quite well" in the world today. But what if the call came from God to abandon all that, follow Christ, and build His kingdom? Would their hearts be stirred to obey? Or would they rather stay and live out their days in Babylon?

To build up His kingdom and to

build up the world are two entirely different things. In fact, Christ said, "My kingdom is not of this world."² In fact, the world is an entirely different kingdom and is ruled by a different king.

Then the devil, taking Him up on a high mountain, showed Him all the kingdoms of the world in a moment of time. And the devil said to Him, "All this authority I will give You, and their glory; for this has been delivered to me, and I give it to whomever I wish." (Luke 4:5-6)

We know that we are of God, and

that the whole world lies in the power of the evil one.

(1 John 5:19)

We also know that anyone who is of the truth hears His voice and follows Him.³ Anyone who is unable to hear His voice is still under the sway of the ruler of this world. If someone wants to follow Him and build up the Kingdom of God, then he must change kingdoms and allegiances. He must leave Babylon (the world) in order to build up Jerusalem (His kingdom).

For He rescued us from the domain of darkness, and trans-

¹ Ezra 1:2-4 ² John 18:36 ³ John 18:37

ferred us to the kingdom of His beloved Son. (Colossians 1:13)

I have given them Your word; and the world has hated them because they are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should keep them from the evil one. They are not of the world, just as I am not of the world. (John 17:15-16)

If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world,

but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.

(John 15:18-19)

The gospel of Jesus Christ called men to leave everything behind and follow Him. They could not stay where they were and build — they had to get up and come after Him. They could have no other allegiances. The response by those first disciples when they heard His message validates this:

*And He said to them, “Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.” **Immediately they left their nets and followed Him.** Going on from there He saw two*

*other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. **Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.***

(Matthew 4:19-22)

*Peter began to say to Him, “**Behold, we have left everything and followed You.**” Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, but that he will receive a hundred times*

as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.” (Mark 10:28-30)

The first disciples did not think it was unreasonable for Him to expect them to leave everything, even family, and follow Him. In addition, Christ did not think it unusual that they did this, nor did He say it was unnecessary when Peter exclaimed that they had left everything to follow Him. This was the normal response to His gospel.

These first disciples had to face the same hardships that those who left Babylon did; they had to leave behind those who weren't stirred in their heart.⁴ They had to leave behind parents, children, husbands and wives, brothers and sisters — whoever was not stirred to go and build what God was building.⁵

Even Abraham, the first one God called, had to leave behind his family, his country, and his father's house and go to the land God would show him.⁶ He left one place and went to another place. He was called out by the same voice:

*And the Spirit and the bride say, “Come!” And let him who hears say, “Come!” And let him who thirsts come. Whoever desires, let him take the water of life freely.
(Revelation 22:17)*

The word *come* denotes motion from one place to another.⁷ The very same essential requirement that Abraham had when he was called by God is present in all the Gospels — movement from one place to another. The first step in obeying the gospel is to leave one place in order to go to another place — a new place and environment. When

⁴ Matthew 10:34-35,37; 12:46-47 ⁵ Luke 14:26 ⁶ Genesis 12:1 ⁷ John 6:44 ⁸ Genesis 12:1-2 ⁹ Hebrews 11:8

a person is born again he receives a brand new heart and is immersed into the brand new culture of the Body of Christ — he does not remain in the culture of the world.

Abraham had to leave his land,⁸ turn his back on his previous life, and obey

what God was calling him to do. He had to do this before God could show him all the other things he would do through him.⁹ Abraham did not shrink back even though he was commanded to leave his life in

this world behind him, turning his back on his family and friends and the world he had known. He said his farewells, kissed his loved ones good-bye forever, and placed his

Those whose hearts are stirred won't settle for a comfortable life in Babylon. They will set their faces like flint to rebuild the temple — the Body of Messiah, which is a Community.

life in the hands and care of the One who spoke to him saying, “Leave your life, your family and

friends, your job and security. Trust me and I will take care of you.”¹⁰ Those who are Abraham’s seed will have Abraham’s faith and will do what Abraham did.¹¹ 🙏



8 ¹⁰ Matthew 6:31-33 ¹¹ Galatians 3:7,29; John 8:39; Romans 4:12

Contradictions

Hear, O Israel!

*The LORD our God, the LORD is one.
You shall love the LORD your God
with all your heart, with all your
soul and with all your strength.
(Deuteronomy 6:4-5)*

I *it is hard to live with contradictions. They gnaw at your soul, wearing you down until you either face them squarely, admit your hypocrisy, and change, or you silence your nagging conscience and become a cynical, beaten wreck of a human being.*

Such was the crossroads I found myself at about fifteen years ago. I had a challenging and lucrative career as a consultant on the cutting edge of the computer graphics industry. I was respected as a Christian leader and Bible teacher. I had a wonderful, faithful, capable wife who home-schooled our four sweet daughters. We were living in one of the most beautiful places in the world, waking up every morning to the breathtaking panorama of Lake Geneva and the Swiss Alps. I was miserable.



In my heart I wanted to serve the God of Heaven; in my soul I was fighting a losing battle with my flesh; with my strength I was building up the kingdoms of this world. I was

doing the very thing the Apostle Paul said not to do, “No soldier gets entangled in civilian pursuits, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him.”¹ My life was a living contradiction. I could not obey the most basic commandment to love God with all my heart, all my soul, and all my strength.

With All Your Heart

Didn't I love Him with all my heart? I thought so. After all, I had given my life to Him the best I knew how. I prayed, studied the Bible, taught Sunday School, and paid my tithes. What is love for God anyway?

That question always led me to John's gospel and letters, which gave me no comfort...

“If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.” (John 14:15)

“Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me...” (John 14:21)

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another.” (John 13:34)

By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us, and

we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers. But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need, yet closes his heart against him, how does God's love abide in him? Little children, let us not love in word or talk but in deed and in truth. (1 John 3:16-18)

Lay down my life for my brothers? I couldn't honestly claim to be doing that in any practical way. See my brothers in need? I only saw them for a couple of hours on Sunday, wearing their Sunday best. I didn't even know *where* most

10 ¹ 2 Timothy 2:4 (See our freepaper, *Civilian Affairs*, for an in-depth study on this passage.)

of them lived, let alone *how* they lived. How would I know whether they needed anything? How could I love them just as Jesus had loved His disciples? And if I could not do that, then how could I obey His commandments? And if I did not obey His commandments, then according to the Scriptures I did not love Him with all my heart. I was living a lie:

Whoever says, "I know Him," but does not keep His commandments is a liar, and the truth is not in him. (1 John 2:4)

With All Your Soul

As for my soul, well, there was

no way to get *all* of it to do much of anything. The soul, I'm told, consists of the mind, the will, and the emotions. My mind was easy to get moving... in almost any direction. It took every bit of my will to keep my mind from plunging me into ruin, much less focusing my faculties consistently on godly things. And my emotions were rather reluctant to respond to anything with much passion, including the call to worship. Oh, I could sing hymns with the best of them, but whatever feelings they may have stirred up returned to their placid state moments after the last chord rumbled out of the

organ. As much as my heart wanted my soul to be on fire for the Lord, it wouldn't cooperate.

With All Your Strength

Alas, here was the most formidable of obstacles to sainthood! What was I doing with the bulk of my energy, and the best years of my life? Making money to sustain my comfortable, upper-middle-class lifestyle by selling my skills to the highest bidder. At the time in question, that entailed developing software for financial analysts in private Swiss banks to better manage the fortunes of the richest men on earth. Where did

their wealth come from? I dared not ask, nor would I have been told. But I did wonder. Druglords? Slumlords? Gangsters? Terrorists? Rock stars? Pimps? Whose kingdoms were getting the benefit of my strength? One thing was for sure: it wasn't God's kingdom.

The Crossroad

So there I was, saved and going to heaven, or so I was told. Oh, I had said the "Sinner's Prayer" fourteen years earlier, and no one would have guessed that there was any doubt in my mind about my eternal destiny. But what part of me was saved? Was it just my heart

that was saved? That was the only part that seemed to be oriented in the right direction. But if my soul and my strength couldn't follow my heart, what good was it? Or was the commandment in Deuteronomy 6: 5 only for the Old Covenant, and now in the New Covenant it was ok to just ask Jesus into your heart and live your life much the same as other decent people who make no claim to be Christians?²

In the midst of my turmoil, I happened to stumble upon some disciples who were living a common life together just like you can read about in Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37. It was almost as if I had entered a

time warp and landed back in the first century. The simple purity and devotion of their life shed light on the contradictions of my life and made it all too clear what was missing. At this crossroad my life took a radically different direction, releasing me from the grip of this present evil age and freeing me to give my whole heart, soul, and strength to build God's kingdom.

I have written of how I came to this crossroad and what happened next in another article, which you can read on our web site.³ But now I would like to tell you what I have learned that eliminated the contradiction I had lived with for so many years.

The Salvation of the Whole Man

The Apostle Paul seemed to have a more holistic view of salvation than most Christians have today, as this passage implies:

Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely, and may your whole spirit and soul and body be kept blameless unto the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(1 Thessalonians 5:23)

Somehow it seemed important to Paul that the whole person — spirit, soul, and body (heart,

soul, and strength) — would be completely devoted to God. In fact, the word translated *sanctify*⁴ in this verse means “to set apart from common or profane things and dedicate to God.” And there is a related word that Paul used a few verses earlier:

For this is the will of God, your sanctification... for God has not called us for impurity, but in holiness. (1 Thessalonians 4:3,7)

The word translated *sanctification*⁵ (and also *holiness*) in this passage means the *effect* of being set apart — the purification of heart

and life. Therefore, *sanctification* (being made pure and blameless) can only happen as a result of being *sanctified* (set apart from the common and profane). Paul puts it together in his second letter to the Corinthians:

“Therefore go out from their midst, and be separate from them,” says the Lord, “and touch no unclean thing; then I will welcome you, and I will be a father to you, and you shall be sons and daughters to Me,” says the Lord Almighty. Since we

² Regardless of what the Savior Himself said in Matthew 22:37... ³ <http://www.twelvetribe.org/publications/one-mans-journey.html>

⁴ #37 in *Strong's Concordance* ⁵ #38 in *Strong's Concordance*

have these promises, beloved, let us cleanse ourselves from every defilement of body and spirit, bringing holiness to completion in the fear of God.

(2 Corinthians 6:17 - 7:1)

Where Salvation Happens

Obviously, to the Apostle Paul, salvation was not just a matter of saying the “Sinner’s Prayer” and going to heaven when you die. The promise of being called God’s sons and daughters was based on obedience to the call to come out

of the fallen society and into the set-apart, undefiled place where He can *father* us — give us the care, protection, training, and discipline that children need to grow up right.⁶ Paul was actually calling the wayward Corinthians back to the foundation he had established them on — a community of disciples who lived a set-apart life together, just like the first community in Jerusalem.

That is the way Paul addressed his first letter to the Corinthians:

To the church of God that is in

Corinth, to those sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints together with all those who in every place call upon the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, both their Lord and ours. (1 Corinthians 1:2)

He was writing to those who were “*set apart in Christ*” (not “*by Christ*” but “*in Christ*”). He meant *in the Body of Christ*, which to him was not an ethereal⁷ concept but the *corporeal*⁸ expression of the life of Christ in a particular place where all the saints⁹ call upon the same Lord. That is, they are all coordinated

⁶ Ephesians 4:11-16 ⁷ *ethereal* — characterized by insubstantiality; as impalpable or intangible as air. ⁸ *corporeal* — having material or physical form or substance. ⁹ *Saints* means set-apart ones. ¹⁰ In 1 Corinthians 12:12-27 Paul labors this point. ¹¹ Acts 17:6

in all their actions under one head, just like a physical human body.¹⁰ That is how the church was first established in Jerusalem, setting a definitive pattern that was replicated through Judea. In fact, Paul makes explicit reference to his churches' adherence to the Judean pattern in his letter to the Thessalonians:

For you, brothers, became imitators of the churches of God in Christ Jesus that are in Judea. For you suffered the same things from your own countrymen as they did from the Jews.

(1 Thessalonians 2:14)

It was the radical, set-apart, holy life that they shared together that brought the persecution upon the Thessalonian church, just as it had upon the churches in Judea, because it exposed the shallow, self-centered, idolatrous lifestyle of the

fallen culture they had come out of. They upset the social order of their day,¹¹ just as their Master had said would be the effect of the gospel:¹²

“If the world hates you, know that it has hated me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the



world would love you as its own; but because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15:18-19)

The Gospel of Salvation

And that brings us to the crux of the matter. The gospel Paul preached was the same as the gospel he obeyed — one that caused him to suffer the loss of all things,¹³ turning his back forever on his former life and occupation to be immersed into Messiah’s Body. It was

the same gospel as Peter preached on the day of Pentecost, which caused the 3000 to utterly abandon their old lives and band together, sharing all things in common out of their love for one another. And it was the same gospel that the Savior Himself preached, calling the original twelve disciples to leave everything in order to follow Him, creating an intimate brotherhood in which they experienced salvation night and day.

All these disciples had died the same death to their old lives,¹⁴

giving up everything in obedience to the gospel¹⁵ (the very thing the “rich young ruler” would *not* do¹⁶). They all had to leave one place and go to another¹⁷ where they could lay down their lives for one another every day,¹⁸ loving one another just as their Savior had loved them. This is the gospel that creates community, because it actually calls and delivers people out of the domain of darkness where they live by and for themselves, and into the kingdom of the Son,¹⁹ the commonwealth of Israel,²⁰ where

¹³ Philippians 3:8 ¹⁴ John 12:24-26 ¹⁵ Luke 14:26-33; Mark 10:28-30 ¹⁶ Mark 10:21-22 ¹⁷ Matthew 4:19-20; 8:22; 9:9; Mark 10:21 ¹⁸ Luke 9:23; 1 John 3:16; Hebrews 3:13 ¹⁹ Colossians 1:13 ²⁰ Ephesians 2:12

they can serve Him where He is.²¹

Wherever the Spirit and the Bride are, they say, "Come!"²² Come to the place where Messiah lives in His people, where all who believe are together and have all things in common.²³ There everyone is cared for through the miracle of self-sacrificing love. No one needs to be concerned about meeting his own needs,²⁴ because he has a hundred brothers and sisters and mothers and fathers, just as the Master promised,²⁵ who look out

for him while he is busy looking out for them. Each one is free to use his gifts and the grace supplied to him to do the works he was saved to do²⁶ for the purpose of building up the Body of Messiah,²⁷ not his own kingdom or the kingdoms of this world. And in the process, each one is purified through the difficulties and circumstance of their life together, as their hurtful ways are exposed and healed in the safe environment of love.

Only there is it possible to love

the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your strength.

David



²¹ John 12:26 ²² Revelation 22:17 ²³ Acts 2:44 ²⁴ Matthew 6:31-33 ²⁵ Mark 10:29-30 ²⁶ Ephesians 2:10 ²⁷ Ephesians 4:11-16

Where, Oh, Where Can it Be?

“But this I confess to you, that according to ‘the Way’ which they call a sect, so I worship the God of my fathers, believing all things which are written in the Law and in the Prophets.” (Spoken by the Apostle Paul in Acts 24:14)

If Jesus Christ is the same yesterday, today, and forever,¹ and if the church is His Body of which He is the head,² then it follows that the church must also be unchanging in its essential nature. In other words,

“the Way” (as the church was called in the first century) cannot be any other way than the way it was when it was “the Way.” And what way was that? It was the way it was in the beginning, in Acts 2:44-47 and 4:32-35, when they were one heart and one way, just as the prophet Jeremiah foretold.³

All who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among

all, as anyone had need... Now the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all who were possessors of

lands or houses sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the apostles' feet; and they distributed to each as anyone had need.

But that is not the way it is now. Evidently a mutation has occurred, as the church no longer resembles its original pattern. What happened to the visible demonstration we can read about in Acts 2 and 4, the result of the first preaching of the gospel by those who had actually been with Christ? To find out, let's look at a couple of definitions.

Ethereal — 1. of or relating to the regions beyond the Earth 2. lacking material substance: immaterial, intangible.

Corporeal — 1. having, consisting of, or relating to a physical material body; not immaterial or intangible: substantial. 2. of or relating to a person's body, especially as opposed to his spirit; tangible, material, seeable, touchable.

The first century church was *corporeal*, not *ethereal*. It was the visible, tangible manifestation of the salvation found in Christ, revealed

through a concrete expression of Christ's life and love in His Body. Only a corporeal witness of the Body of Christ can fulfill His new commandment in John 13:34-35 and His last prayer in John 17:23, just before His crucifixion:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another: just as I have loved you, you also are to love one another. By this all people will know that you are My disciples, if you have this love for one another.”

(John 13:34-35)

“I in them and You in Me, that

¹ Hebrews 13:8 ² Colossians 1:18 ³ Jeremiah 32:39

they may become completely one, so that the world may know that You have sent Me and have loved them even as You have loved Me.” (John 17:23)

The love and unity among His disciples must be visible to the world to prove that God did indeed send His Son into the world to save it. The world cannot believe unto salvation without seeing this unity among His disciples, whose obedience to His word sets them apart from the rest of the world.⁴ This is what *sanctified* means: set apart, made distinct, undefiled spiritually and physically.

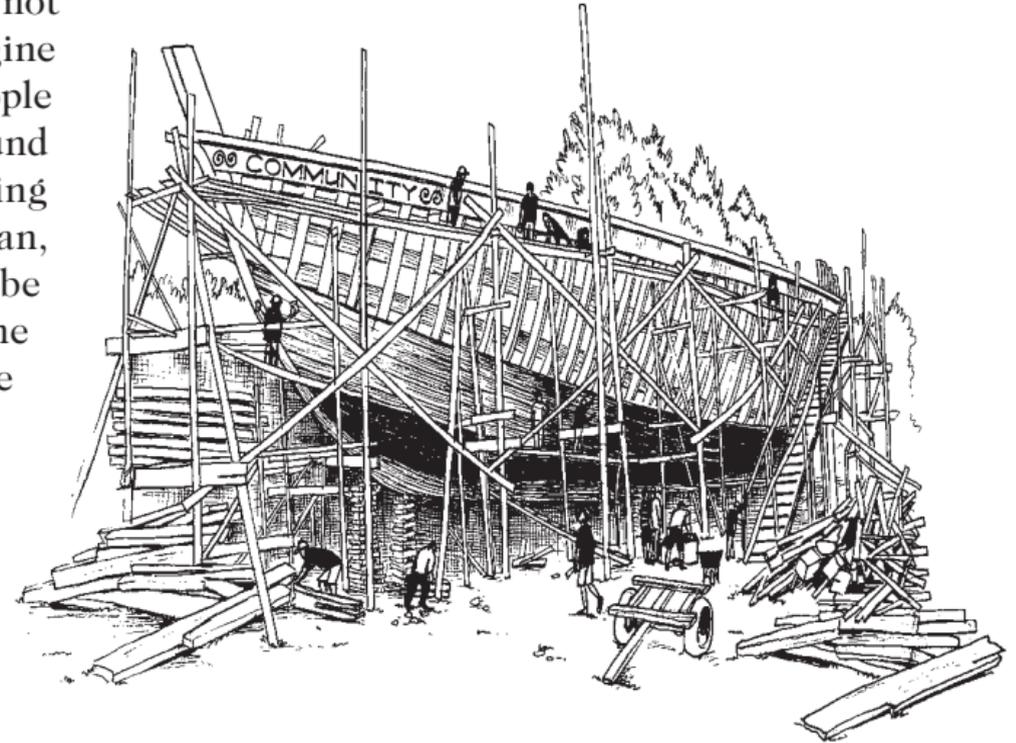
The Body of Christ can be

compared to a ship on the open seas, carrying all the passengers safely to their destination. A ship is in the ocean, but not of the ocean. Imagine a bunch of people just floating around separately, treading water in the ocean, all claiming to be safely on the same ship going to the same destination.

Ridiculous!

In the beginning, the church was like

that ship, and its structure was community.⁵ What does the life of the first-century disciples in



Jerusalem document if not the Master's commandment in John 13: 34-35 and His prayer in John 17: 21-23? It was a detailed expression which elucidated⁶ His prayer and His command to His disciples, throwing light upon the commandments.⁷ That life was the *blueprint* of the Body of Messiah.

That outward expression of community was the *nucleus* that was to replicate itself throughout the world. The Jerusalem pattern was to be only the beginning of the corporate, corporeal Body of Christ. For example, Paul commended the

Thessalonian church for following the same pattern that was expressed throughout the churches in Judea,⁸ observing that they were also persecuted because of that radical demonstration of their faith.

Living in community, by the power of the Holy Spirit, purifies all those within it. Experientially, you are truly made complete spiritually. The spiritual strongholds in your life caused by your sin are broken down by the loving hands of those committed to you in the same life. Jeremiah's prophecy of the New Covenant⁹ can only be fulfilled by

this life in community, which is the only way you can actually become one — having one heart and one way, unified in every aspect of your being, growing up into the head, which is Messiah.¹⁰ There you grow to live in absolute unity, just as the Savior prayed for in John 17:23 — “one as the Father and Son are one” — a unity which makes no room for denominations.

The outward, visible unity of the early church was the outcome of love reaching the innermost parts of everyone who *believed*. The gospel had cut them to the heart and the

⁴ John 17:15-19 ⁵ Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-35 ⁶ *elucidate* — make free from confusion or ambiguity; make clear and comprehensible.

⁷ John 14:15,21,23,24 ⁸ 1 Thessalonians 2:14 ⁹ Jeremiah 31:31-34; 32:38-41 ¹⁰ Ephesians 4:11-16

outcome was absolute surrender to the sovereignty of Messiah over them. This was expressed through the corporeal witness of the Body, the reality of their salvation. There were no solo disciples doing whatever they felt God wanted them to do, independent of each other. A real body doesn't work that way. "All who believed were together..."¹¹ Their love for each other was real — *corp-o-real*. They had truly *believed* in Messiah and therefore were grafted into His Body through baptism, surrendering their independent existence. Those 3,000 surrendered lives, added to the original 120, comprised not an *ethereal* body,

but a *real* body of believers living together in community. Their love was real and visible, and their unity was real and visible, lived out daily as the *corporeal* expression of the

Body of Christ.

Sadly, Christianity today expresses quite a different response to Messiah's call to discipleship. Church leaders everywhere accept



the impossibility of such a corporeal expression of the Body of Christ with sayings like, “Let’s agree to disagree,” and, “We’re only human,” and, “The flesh is just too strong,” and, “We’ll be one in heaven.” Unfortunately, that “pie-in-the-sky” unity won’t do the world any good, since, according to the Savior, they need to *see* a demonstration of that unity in order to believe that the Father sent the Son.¹² After all, if His sacrifice wasn’t sufficient to set His followers free from the sin that

divides them,¹³ then what evidence is there that He died and rose again on their behalf?

Spiritualizing the words of Christ so as to avoid simply obeying them only produces an ethereal result — wispy and mystical. But the first church actually was said to “turn the world upside down.” Its effect was far from ethereal. It was *corp-o-real*.

When the church is restored to its original foundation and pattern — that *real* body and *real* life that

results from the reality of “all who believed were together” — then there will be hope for the world to believe that the Father sent His Son. Then the church can truly grow with a growth that is from God,¹⁴ increasing to the full stature of Messiah,¹⁵ as a Bride prepared for her King.¹⁶ And only then will her King return for His Bride to establish His kingdom on this earth. 🙏

¹¹ Acts 2:44 ¹² John 17:23 ¹³ John 8:36 ¹⁴ Colossians 2:19 ¹⁵ Ephesians 4:11-16 ¹⁶ Revelation 19:7-8



ONLY MAKE BELIEVE

John 14:21 Whoever has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me.
And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father,
and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.

**Only make believe
I love you.**

John 14:15

If you love Me, you will keep My commandments.

John 14:23

If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word.

John 14:24

Whoever does not love Me does not keep My words.

**Only make believe
that you love Me.**

1 John 3:16-17

By this we know love, that He laid down His life for us,
and we ought to lay down our lives for the brothers.
But if anyone has the world's goods and sees his brother in need,
yet closes his heart against him,
how does God's love abide in him?

**Some may find peace
of mind in pretending.
Should you?**

**Should I?
Should we?**

Whoever says “I know Him”
but does not keep His commandments
is a liar, and the truth is not in him.

1 John 2:4

**Make believe our hearts
are blending
In a phantom bliss,
of unity.**

For God so loved the world, that He gave His only Son,
that whoever **believes** in Him should not perish but have eternal life.
And all who **believed** were together and had all things in common. *Acts 2:44-45*
And they were selling their possessions and belongings
and distributing the proceeds to all, as any had need.

John 3:16

**Might as well make believe
I love you,
For to tell the truth,
I don't.**

Strive to enter through the narrow gate,
for many, I say to you, will seek to enter and will not be able.
When once the Master of the house has risen up and shut the door,
and you begin to stand outside and knock at the door, saying,
“Lord, Lord, open for us,” and He will answer and say to you,
“I do not know you.”

Luke 13:24-25

*(Lyrics adapted from the musical Showboat —
with apologies to Kern & Hammerstein)*



The **SHIFT** from *Community Life* to *Doctrine*

After the first century, right doctrine became the litmus test for faith instead of loving as Christ commanded.¹ Late in the first century, Jude urged the believers to *contend* for the faith delivered once for all to the saints. This word *faith* meant the persuasion to do what Christ commanded, for this was the

purpose for the faith the 3000 received by hearing the gospel on the day of Pentecost in Acts 2:36-45.²

Faith in Jude 1:3 meant persuasion from God to do His will, which first came

to the saints by hearing the gospel. But today the word *faith* in Jude 1:3 is taken to simply mean the knowledge and assent to religious truths, without regard to good works, which is therefore a false faith.³

The only assurance of faith is Ephesians 2:10 and 4:16 — doing

the good works one was saved to do in order to build up the Body. Jude 1:3 has nothing whatsoever to do with doctrinal correctness, as the context in verse 4 proves. It speaks of grace being turned into license to do your own thing, doing what is right in one's own eyes, since there was no longer authority from God to be adhered to.⁴ There was no restraint; each one did whatever he wanted, but still maintained a form of godliness, although denying its power.⁵

Doctrine, or the right theology, requires no *faith* to believe.⁶ Faith is

for the purpose of doing the works prepared for one to do in the Body of Christ, the Community. Theology requires no faith, but John 13:34-35 does require faith:

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.”

1 John 3:16 and 23 also require faith, without which even someone with the right doctrine won't pass the litmus test of 1 John 3:14

— regardless of whether he says he believes.⁷ So, believing the right doctrine requires no faith, no love, and no laying down of one's life for his brothers.

“I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is your reasonable service. And do not be conformed to this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind, that you may prove what is that good and acceptable and perfect will of God.” (Romans 12:1-2)

¹ John 13:34-35; 1 John 3:14,16,23; 5:12-13 ² Romans 10:17 ³ James 2:14-26 ⁴ Judges 17:6; 21:25 ⁵ 2 Timothy 3:1-5 ⁶ James 2:19

⁷ John 5:24

No one can do Romans 12:1 unless he obeys verse 2 by faith as well. Otherwise, the faith of Jude 1:3 is considered merely doctrine, the theology of theologians, learned men who can quote many scripture verses, but laying down their lives as 1 Jn 3:16 says is far from them. They can only teach their flocks the same “faith” as they have. A student, when fully trained, will be like his teacher. So their empty “faith” has been passed down ever since theological Bible schools have existed on earth. They have no relationship with the true Messiah⁸ and can only give mental assent to theological terms, concepts, and

decrees thought up by the apostates of the fourth century.⁹

These apostate leaders valued doctrine higher than love and ended up persecuting people, deposing bishops, and banishing into exile those considered to have the wrong doctrine. Ultimately, they started killing those they deemed heretics. So why is it always those with the right doctrine who end up killing those with the wrong doctrine? They obviously didn't understand 1 Cor 1:10 in the right spirit. You can't force unity. Forced unity is not the right spirit. As 2 Cor 11:4,13-15 clearly states, only Satan's servants or ministers could ever do what

the Christian theologians did to dissenters. All this was in absolute violation of the Master's words to leave them alone, to let them be.¹⁰

The reason Jude so urgently said to *contend* for the faith that was imparted in the beginning was because of a change he saw coming in — away from the pattern in Acts 2 & 4 and toward what would become the state church of Constantine. We can see the change in the way Christians thought, being persuaded and influenced by a different spirit, propagated by a different gospel, and ending up with a different Jesus from the one they accepted in the beginning.¹¹

The church turned from being the *persecuted* to being the *persecutor*. By that time, the Holy Spirit had long ago left the church.¹² No longer could anyone truthfully confess 1 John 4:2-3 or John 12:26 from his experience, but only from his mind. As the church declined in its love in every place,¹³ in spite of Paul's exhortation to them in Ephesians 6:24, none seemed to be able to pass the litmus test of 1 John 5:13. This was because 1 John 3:16 and 23 were no longer the emphasis, but rather mental assent to a list of doctrines now called



“the faith.” So this doctrinal “faith” replaced the works true faith was meant to energize, as James later wrote in the second century.¹⁴

So as the church careened down its fatal decline, the emphasis

shifted to doctrine, which is now called or considered “faith.” But Jude, who wrote by the end of the first century, looking into the second, urged that they *contend* or have a vigorous defense of the faith delivered once and for all to God's people. What he meant by this was the faith that produced the expression of the abundant life recorded in Acts 2 & 4. That was “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.”¹⁵ Faith came to those who had ears to hear.¹⁶

But after love left, the Holy Spirit left. Eventually those who were

⁸ 2 Corinthians 11:4, ¹⁵ See <http://www.theblackboxspeaks.org/church-councils.html> ¹⁰ John 12:47-48; Luke 9:54-55, NKJ; Acts 5:34-39 ¹¹ Galatians 1:6-7 ¹² Revelation 2:4-5 ¹³ 1 Corinthians 1:2 ¹⁴ James 1:26-27; 2:14-26 ¹⁵ Acts 2:44-45 ¹⁶ Acts 2:40; John 18:37; 10:27

as John 9:41 describes took the word *contend* in Jude 1:3 to mean taking up arms to force their “right doctrine” upon those with “wrong doctrine” under pain of death. This was contrary to the words of the true Messiah, “My kingdom is not of this world. If my kingdom were of this world, my servants would fight.”¹⁷

Jude wrote to the few who were not yet disqualified:

To those who are called, sanctified (set apart) in God the Father and kept for Jesus Christ: May mercy, peace, and love be multiplied to you. (Jude 1:1-2)

It was addressed to those who were *still* set apart by God the Father, and kept, preserved for Messiah. May mercy and peace and love be multiplied to you, who are *sanctified* as in 1 Corinthians 1:2 — those separated from the world in the Body of Messiah, the Community, as in Acts 2:42-47 and 4:32-37. They are set apart in a place where the refining process can take place in each one’s life, which cannot be accomplished unless one is separated from fellowship with the world in that place where Messiah actually is in His Body.¹⁸

In 1 Corinthians 1:2, “in every place” means in every township,

just as the letters from Paul were addressed to each community according to its particular town or locality. Starting from Jerusalem, the first community swarmed to surrounding towns in Judea,¹⁹ after which Paul patterned his communities. Of course, it was “with persecutions,” as Mark 10:29-30 promises. This is the mark of those who have separated themselves in a place in which they can be made pure as 1 John 3:1-3, “that they may see Him as He is, and everyone who has this hope in them purifies himself as He is pure.”²⁰

Mark 10:29-30 was Christ’s

answer to His disciples' question, "Who then can be saved?"²¹ So verse 27 explains how one is saved by obedience to His gospel. Someone has to receive the faith to not only believe in Him, but to do what He required of all whom He would save from this present evil world and put into a place where they could be purified — where He is.²² There, and only there, can anyone serve Him. As 1 Corinthians 1:2 implies, it must be a set-apart place that is in the world, but not of it.²³

The word *sanctify* in John 17:17 is the same as in 1 Corinthians 1:2

— set apart from the evil world system to be made ready (prepared) to rule with Messiah; and John 17:18 is their mission.

As John 17:19 says, Christ had to sanctify Himself, not that He had to be made pure, but He meant to set Himself apart from all other things in order to purify His disciples through the truth of His word — to be made pure as 1 John 3:1-3. The sanctification process²⁴ cannot be accomplished without someone being set apart in a particular place

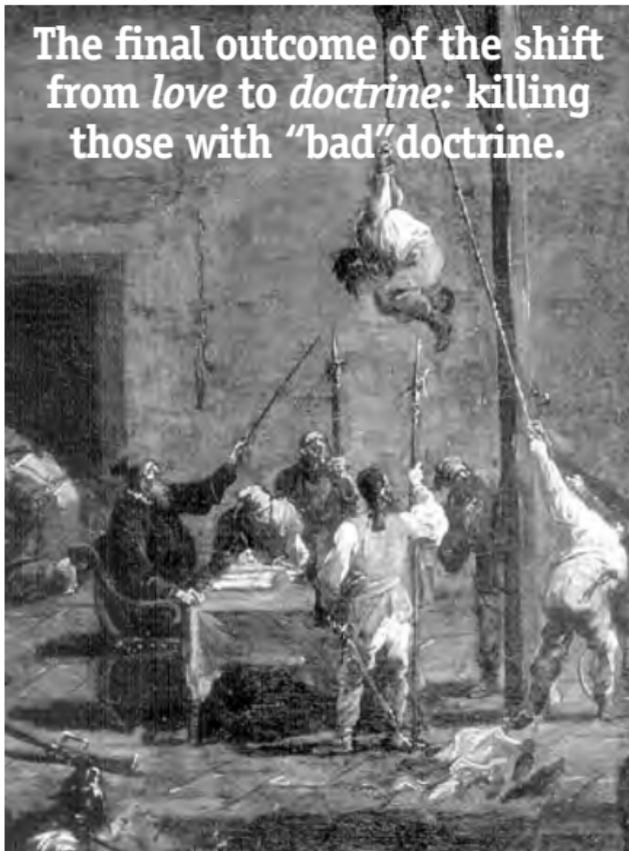
where the work of sanctification can be accomplished in his life.²⁵ *Sanctification*, as in 1 Thessalonians 4:3 and 7, is the resultant state befitting those who are *sanctified* as in 1 Corinthians 1:2.

The church turned from being the persecuted to being the persecutor.

So for someone to walk down the aisle in the Billy Graham Crusade and be "saved" is impossible, for he goes back home and does the very

¹⁷ John 18:36 ¹⁸ John 12:26 ¹⁹ 1 Thessalonians 2:14 ²⁰ Romans 5:3-5; 2 Peter 1:4-11; 1 Peter 5:4 ²¹ Mark 10:26 ²² John 12:25-26 ²³ John 17:14-17 ²⁴ Revelation 19:7-8 ²⁵ Colossians 1:28,23

The final outcome of the shift from *love* to *doctrine*: killing those with “bad” doctrine.



same things as before, except now supposedly he's going to heaven when he dies. But has he simply believed in vain, as those in John 2:23-25? Was it only make believe? Might as well make believe you love Him, as to say you do, but not obey Him.²⁶ But this is not what Christ told His disciples they had to do to be saved in Mark 10:17-30.

“Who then can be saved?” Only those who hear and obey the gospel, including the “many other words” (the “hard sayings” of Christ) as

in Acts 2:36-41 and Mark 10:17-30. The “rich young ruler” wanted to know what he had to do to be saved. The answer is the same now as it was for the 3000 on the day of Pentecost, who gave up everything in response to the first message of salvation to be preached after the Messiah ascended, in obedience to His commission.²⁷ Ask yourself why the preaching of the gospel doesn't produce the same results today. Could it be a different gospel?²⁸ 🙏

²⁶ John 14:15,21; 1 John 2:4; See also “Only Make Believe” on page 26

²⁷ Matthew 28:19-20 ²⁸ 2 Corinthians 11:4

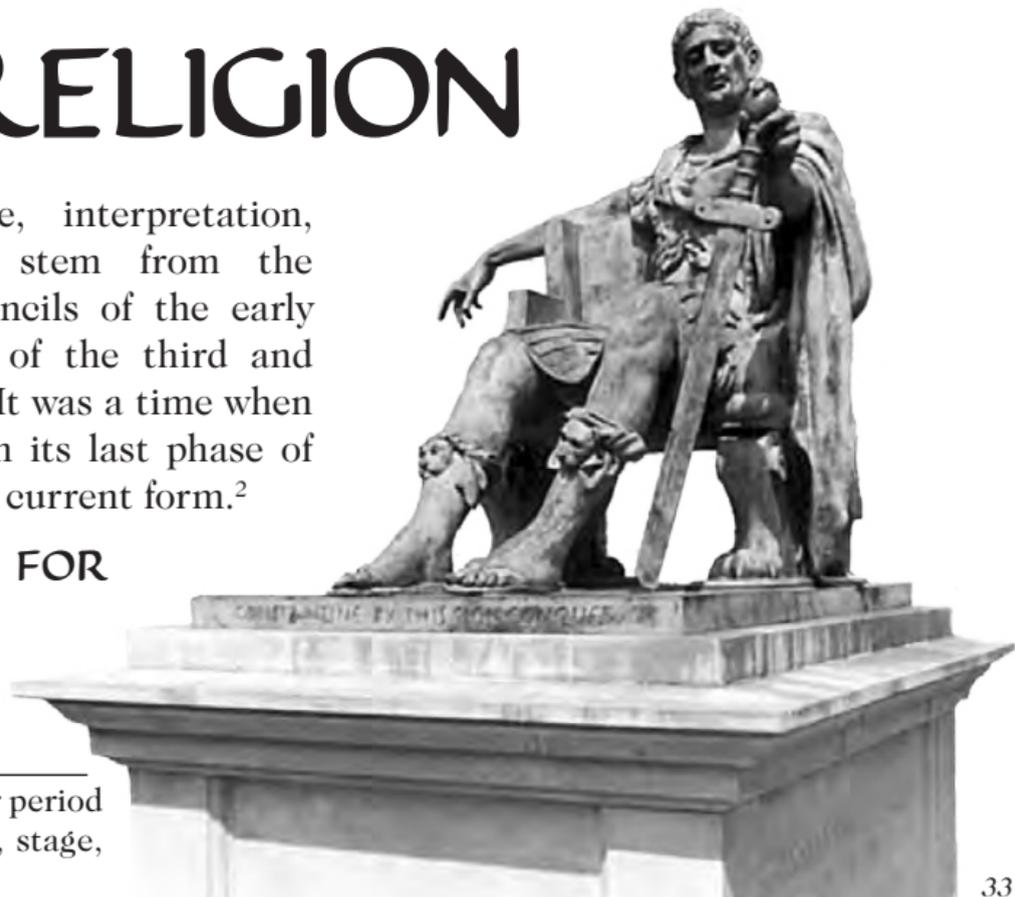
THE FAVORED RELIGION

Most Christians today have no idea that the basic tenants of their faith, religious practice, and doctrine come from the *integration of the church and state*¹ during the reign of the Roman Emperor Constantine. That may not initially seem so alarming, but actually it has had a very significant effect on what they have believed and how they live. Although Christians are universally taught from the words of Christ himself, their

present influence, interpretation, and application stem from the writings and councils of the early “church fathers” of the third and fourth centuries. It was a time when the church was in its last phase of *transition* into its current form.²

CONTENDING FOR “THE FAITH”

For nearly
two centuries



¹ A result of the *Edict of Milan*, early in 313. ² *transition* — a process or period in which something undergoes a change and passes from one state, stage, form, or activity to another.

the church had experienced a steady decline from its original vibrancy of living together *in community*, when love was the glue which held their life together.³ The book of Jude records, near the end of the first century, the writer's alarm and distress, pleading with all the churches to contend earnestly for "the faith" that was delivered to them once for all by the apostles themselves. That term "once for all" means there was no other foundation upon which a valid church could be established.⁴ "The faith" delivered to them by

the apostles was their spiritual foundation, the result of the gospel they had received. It was expressed through the visible and tangible life they shared together, having a community of goods.

Jude describes it as their "common salvation" which all the churches universally held, having been apostolically established. Jude 1:4 tells how *that life* was threatened, challenged, and ultimately destroyed by apostates⁵ — those who departed from being devoted to the fellowship

of the original apostles and their teachings.⁶ Peter himself says these apostate "brothers" were the very ones twisting and convoluting⁷ the gospel. And in the end, it would result in their own destruction, according to their deeds.⁸

For certain men have crept in unnoticed, who long ago were marked out for this condemnation, ungodly men, who turn the grace of our God into a license for immorality and deny our only Master and Lord Jesus Christ... These are

³ John 13:34-35 ⁴ 1 Corinthians 3:9-11; Ephesians 2:20-22; 1 Corinthians 12:12 ⁵ *apostates* — those who departed from the teaching and fellowship of the apostles; departing from the faith while maintaining a pretense of it. ⁶ 1 John 1:3; 2:19,20,27; Jude 1:17-19

34 ⁷ *convolute* — to twist or coil something. ⁸ 2 Peter 2:1-3,19; 3:16; 2 Corinthians 11:15; 1 John 1:3; 2:19



grumblers, complainers, walking according to their own lusts; and they mouth great swelling words, flattering people to gain advantage.” (Jude 1:4,16)

The second letter to the Corinthians also speaks of Paul’s alarm over the imminent loss of the original simplicity and purity of the faith he had passed on to them. Through craft and scheming the apostates twisted the scriptures, even the very gospel of the

Lord, delivered through the apostles. They rejected the authority of the apostles and sought to promote themselves as those who are first among their brothers.⁹

For if he who comes preaches another Jesus whom we have not preached, or if you receive a different spirit which you have not received, or a different gospel which you have not accepted — you may well put up with it! ... For such men are false

⁹ 2 Peter 2:10; Jude 1:8; 3 John 1:9-10

apostles, deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For even Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore, it is no surprise if his ministers also transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works. (2 Corinthians 11:4,13-15)

There is a consistency in the writings of the apostles in the way these treacherous apostates (self-proclaimed apostles) are described. They held to a form of godliness, but did not have revelation or power from the Holy Spirit. They

were natural men, not spiritual, and like brute beasts they ravaged the sheep, causing confusion and division within the church and its leadership. They knew well the hardships of the churches in every place and played upon this very fact to captivate a receptive audience.

Subtly, these false ministers gained an advantage, motivated by selfish desires, not seeking the welfare of the sheep or its fold, but only to promote themselves, their own name, for their own glory.¹⁰ Since the love that produced the communal life of the early church was no longer the standard by which a true believer's genuine confession

could be judged, it was no wonder these "deceitful workers"¹¹ were able, through their speech and persuasion, to captivate the mind and intellect of the fallen church remnant. Community was no longer the "litmus test" by which the authenticity of their faith could be judged, but *doctrine* was hailed as the standard to determine whether one "believed." Their gospel required nothing more than mental assent, producing a dead religion of "belief" only. Hence, by the end of the third century, the church was splintered by bickering bishops and a docile laity, ready for a new era.

THE FATAL TRANSITION: EMPEROR CONSTANTINE

According to some scholars, this new era brought the completion of a *fatal transition* from which the church would never again recover its original Judean pattern.¹² Community, which had long ago dissolved,¹³ was the only means by which those first disciples had shared a “common salvation.” Its original structure and spiritual

foundation was a *communal life*, yet by the fourth century the church had become entirely different in nature from the original pattern that is explicit in Acts 2:41-47 and 4:32-37, and assumed throughout the epistles.¹⁴

After a lengthy period of persecution, spiritual decline, and constant friction from within, Constantine baited the already-weakened ranks of the Church. The

Roman world during the second and third centuries had long been divided by the continual unrest of civil strife and disorder of every sort. Constantine sought a means to unify the crumbling empire. At the same time, the churches of the western and eastern provinces suffered tremendously under the strain of both the Empire and the constant influence of apostates. Over two hundred years of factions

¹⁰ John 7:17-18; Jude 1:8,12,13,17-19 ¹¹ 2 Corinthians 11:13 ¹² “Between the years AD 100 and AD 500, the Christian Church changed almost beyond recognition... [At first] the organization of the church was still fluid... there were no creeds to be recited, no set forms of worship... [By AD 500] the worship of the church was entirely liturgical with fixed, set forms of prayer...” (Tony Lane, *The Lion Book of Christian Thought*, Lion Publishing Company, Batavia, Illinois, 1984, p.8) ¹³ *dissolve* — 1. to fade away gradually and disappear, or make something gradually fade away and disappear; 2. to break up, or break something up, into smaller or more basic parts; 3. to bring a legal relationship, for example, a business partnership or a marriage, formally to an end. ¹⁴ 1 Thessalonians 2:14

from within and persecutions from without held the church continually in the place of compromise and hypocrisy.

Early in the fourth century, Constantine resolved to protect himself and his own provinces against the threat of other challenging Roman rulers and marauders who contended for control of the weakened empire. He went to war against Maxentius' army in order to secure his territories. The historical account says that as Constantine approached Rome he was given a vision to

conquer under the sign of the Cross of Christ. He had this emblem affixed to the shields of his soldiers (most of whom were pagans) as they went into battle. Far outnumbered by Maxentius' army, Constantine won a miraculous victory. From then on, Constantine worked tirelessly to unite the fractured church and bring it into intimate fellowship with the Roman state. This merger of church and state set the stage for Christianity's development over the next 1700 years.



Constantine's Maneuver

Seizing the opportunity, Constantine maneuvered the church and its leaders through flattery, luring them into an inescapable relationship with that of the state. Publicly acknowledging the Christian God for the victory gained, Constantine believed this same God would now protect the Roman Empire from harm as long as the emperors worshipped Him and the church remained both united and devoted to the Empire. Sniffing the hope of an

end to persecution and a path to prosperity, the leaders of the fourth century church swallowed the bait — hook, line, and sinker.

Constantine called a series of church councils to bring unity among the bickering bishops. He didn't simply command them to come; he paid their expenses and even provided their means of getting there. Then, while still holding his position as the head of the state pagan religion, Constantine presided over the councils and enforced their decisions. These councils and the creeds that came

forth from them are held in the highest regard in Christianity. They form the basis of identifying what is and what is not Christian faith, practice, and doctrine ever since. From then on, they have formed the foundation for all orthodox Christian faith and practice.

After nearly three centuries of struggle, the walls of the church came tumbling down, completing its transformation.¹⁵ Constantine promoted Christians to positions of prominence within the state and surrounded himself with Christian advisors. After all, ethically and

¹⁵ *transformation* — 1. a complete change, usually into something with an improved appearance or usefulness; 2. a permanent change in the genetic makeup of a cell when it acquires foreign DNA.

morally speaking, the Christians' code of living raised the standard of Roman society. Before long Constantine even had Christian bishops accompany his troops into battle to ensure God's favor and to strengthen the moral character of his armies. He built magnificent cathedrals and Roman buildings in honor of the Christian God and began paying salaries out of the state treasury to church leaders. He passed laws in favor of the church in exchange for obligatory state service. He believed that a united and loyal church would ensure God's blessings on the entire empire.

One of the main reasons the

religion of Christianity became the favored religion of governors and emperors was because Christians could be totally involved in nearly everything that any average citizen of the empire was involved in. Constantine groomed Christianity as his "pet religion" because of its docile, compromising nature. While in the past the church had been persecuted for its stance against the Empire's evils, it was now accepted as both church and empire "turned over a new leaf" in their development.

The distinction between Christians and non-Christians was broken down, and more and more

pagans became "believers," since Christianity was now the favored religion, offering a greater hope of worldly success and prosperity. Church leaders taught submission to authority, which strengthened the relationship between the church and its Roman overlords. Christians achieved respect and admiration, where formerly they were held in contempt and dishonor. They were generally responsible and dutiful, and their faith posed no problem whatsoever, no strange or outrageous behavior, belief, or practice that would cause upheaval or disruption in the government or national peace.

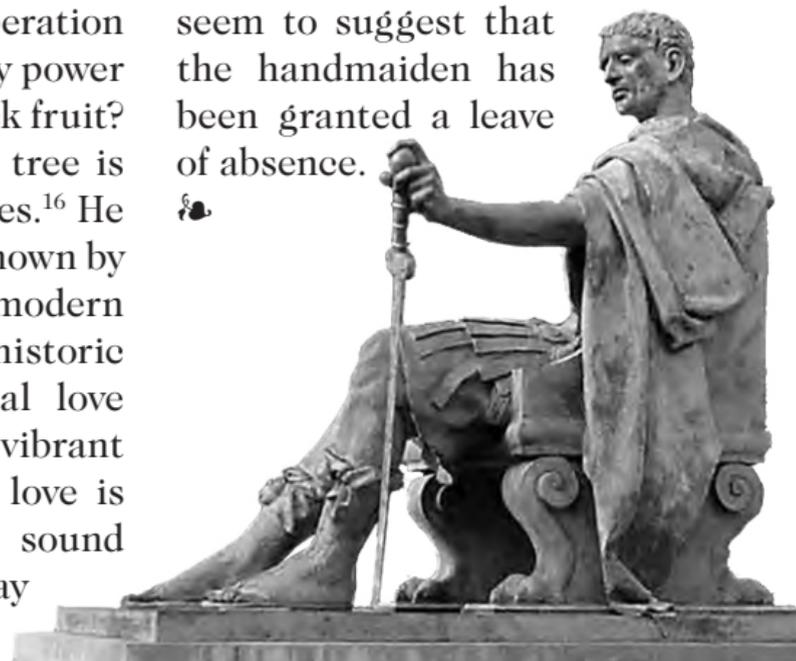
So Constantine proclaimed Christianity the favored religion of the Roman World. Hailed as the deliverer and emancipator of the church, Constantine was then and still is viewed as a savior, securing the church's position in the world that would span the centuries. Most of the Christianized world today is content with the doctrines of faith that came down through the spiritual lineage of a nationally recognized Roman religion, never questioning very deeply the roots of their Christian religion or the foundation of the gospel they have trusted in. The legacy of

¹⁶ Matthew 7:16-20 ¹⁷ John 13:34-35

Constantine is a church at one with the world that it was commissioned to call others out of. That legacy remains.

So, is this intimate cooperation and compromise with worldly power a good tree from which to pick fruit? The Son of God said that a tree is known by the fruit it produces.¹⁶ He said His disciples would be known by their love.¹⁷ A “watchdog” of modern heresies and advocate of the historic creeds once wrote, “Biblical love is the hallmark of a truly vibrant Christian witness, however, love is always the handmaiden of sound doctrine and not the other way around.” The centuries-

long trail of blood flowing from all who opposed that favored religion, and the uncountable divisions caused by its internal strife would seem to suggest that the handmaiden has been granted a leave of absence.





Distinguished

The prophet Malachi wrote some of the last words recorded in the Old Testament — the final words before a four-hundred-year silence. In Malachi 3:18, these words are recorded: “So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.”

At the time he was writing, there was no longer any distinction. The prophet was

looking ahead to a time in the future when there would again be a distinguishing mark or characteristic of a people who served God and were wholly set apart from the nations around them — the role Israel was to fulfill in the Old Covenant (which they didn’t do — as plainly stated in Matthew 21:43).

Now let’s “fast forward” to the time when the Messiah walked the earth, four hundred years later. He spoke many words, giving

instruction to His disciples on how to live as befitting His followers, the requirements for being His disciples. His desire for them was exactly the same as God's desire had been for Israel in the Old Covenant — He longed to see a people who were different, distinct, distinguishable from the nations around them. In some of the first words He taught His disciples, He made clear the distinguishing characteristics of His followers [the “you” here]:

“No one can serve two masters; for either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and

wealth. For this reason I say to you, do not be worried about your life, as to what you will eat or what you will drink; nor for your body, as to what you will put on. Is not life more than food, and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds of the air, that they do not sow, nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not worth much more than they? And who of you by being worried can add a single hour to his life? And why are you worried about clothing? Observe how the lilies of the field grow; they do not toil nor do they spin, yet I say to

you that not even Solomon in all his glory clothed himself like one of these. But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which is alive today and tomorrow is thrown into the furnace, will He not much more clothe you? You of little faith! Do not worry then, saying, ‘What will we eat?’ or ‘What will we drink?’ or ‘What will we wear for clothing?’ For the Gentiles eagerly seek all these things; for your heavenly Father knows that you need all these things. But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be added to you. So do not worry about tomorrow;

for tomorrow will care for itself. Each day has enough trouble of its own.”

These words He uttered in Matthew 6 were not idealistic standards, not merely unattainable ideals, put forward as impossible to attain — He said them and He meant them. He spoke not from a theoretical standpoint, but rather from the life He Himself lived as an example for others to follow. Does it sound impossible? Does it sound unreasonable? Does it sound as if it can't be done in these modern times?

If not, then where can one find these distinguishable people who

are serving God, a people who are *actually* living according to what Jesus taught in Matthew 6? Only in community. For it still takes a community, you know. As John 12:26 makes abundantly clear, only *there* in that place [community] can one *serve Him*. For that is where He is:

“If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.”

Are you *there*? Hello...!?

Maybe then the reason that you are not *there* (yet) — where He is

— is simply because you don't hate your own life in this world. Since no one can follow Him until he does, no one can be where He is and serve Him there (the Father honors all who do). Do you think that the Father honors you where you are? It's evident that you're still outside the *there* for the obvious reason that all who believe *as the scriptures say* [in the manner the scriptures require] have rivers of living water flowing from their innermost being (John 7:37-39).

To get to that place, one must meet the daily qualifications of discipleship. Here's a challenge to be completely honest with yourself

— is this really happening in your daily experience?

And He was saying to them all, “If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself and take up his cross daily and follow Me, for whoever wishes to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake, he is the one who will save it. For what is a man profited if he gains the whole world, and loses or forfeits himself? For whoever is ashamed of Me and My words, the Son of Man will be ashamed of him when He comes in His glory, and the glory of the Father and of the holy angels.” (Luke 9:23-35)

So since you know you are not there, you’d better get here. Here (in community with brothers and sisters) you can know with certainty that you are one of the distinguished ones serving God. Why community? It’s the only way to meet the criteria presented here in I John of actually daily laying down our lives for the brethren:

We know that we have passed out of death into life, because we love the brethren. He who does not love abides in death. We know love by this, that He laid down His life for us; and we ought to lay down our lives for the brethren. This is His

commandment, that we believe in the name of His Son Jesus Christ, and love one another, just as He commanded us.

(1 John 3:14,16,23)

By these qualifications one can clearly distinguish between those who serve God and those who don’t. ❧

So you will again distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve Him.

Is Anything Required of a Disciple?

Does salvation by grace through faith release the believer from obeying the commandments?

⊙ If so, then why did Jesus and His apostles emphasize them?

⊙ If not, then what are the consequences for not obeying them?

It is not a question of whether a believer can lose his salvation. Once a person is sealed with the Holy Spirit, it is irrevocable:

In Him you also, when you heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation, and believed in Him,

were sealed with the promised Holy Spirit, who is the guarantee of our inheritance until we acquire possession of it, to the praise of His glory. (Ephesians 1:13-14)

But the same apostle who wrote that comforting passage also passionately expressed this desire:

...that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and may share His sufferings, becoming like Him in His death, that by any means possible I may attain the resurrection from the dead. Not that I have already obtained this or

am already perfect, but I press on to make it my own, because Christ Jesus has made me His own.

(Philippians 3:10-12)

In the Apostle Paul's mind, there was a goal that required tremendous effort on his part to reach, and to which he had not yet attained, and which he could fail to attain. What was the resurrection he had to strive for? Are not all believers resurrected at Messiah's coming, unless they are alive when He returns?

Then I saw thrones, and seated on them were those to whom the

authority to judge was committed. Also I saw the souls of those who had been beheaded for the testimony of Jesus and for the word of God, and who had not worshiped the beast or its image and had not received its mark on their foreheads or their hands. They came to life and reigned with Christ for a thousand years. (The rest of the dead did not come to life until the thousand years were ended.) This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy is the one who shares in the first resurrection! Over such the second death has no power, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and they will reign with Him

for a thousand years.

(Revelation 20:4-6)

Clearly, Paul understood that reigning with Christ during His millennial kingdom on the earth was not a foregone conclusion for a believer, but depended on how one lived his life in this age. It was possible to be among “the rest of the dead” who did not come to life until the thousand years were ended. This possibility of being disqualified to rule with Him is mentioned in many places in the New Testament. For example:

And you, who once were alienated and hostile in mind, doing evil deeds, He has now reconciled in His body of flesh by His death, in order

to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before Him, if indeed you continue in the faith, stable and steadfast, not shifting from the hope of the gospel that you heard, which has been proclaimed in all creation under heaven, and of which I, Paul, became a minister.

(Colossians 1:21-23)

What if you *don't* continue in the faith, stable and steadfast? Will you still be blameless and above reproach before Him?

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. He who overcomes shall not be hurt by the second death.”

(Revelation 2:11) 47

What if you *don't* overcome? Will you be “hurt” by the second death? What does it mean to be “hurt” by the second death?

“You have a few names even in Sardis who have not defiled their garments; and they shall walk with Me in white, for they are worthy. He who overcomes shall be clothed in white garments, and I will not blot out his name from the Book of Life; but I will confess his name before My Father and before His angels.”

(Revelation 3:4-5)

What if you *have* defiled your garments? Will you *still* walk with Him in white? Will you *still* be worthy? If you *don't* overcome, will your name

remain in the Book of Life — the register of those who are counted worthy to rule with Him?

So Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to bear sin, but to save those who are eagerly waiting for Him.

(Hebrews 9:28)

What if you are not eagerly waiting for Him?

For, “Yet a little while, and the coming One will come and will not delay; but My righteous one shall live by faith, and if he shrinks back, My soul has no pleasure in him.”

(Hebrews 10:37-38)

Evidently it is possible for one of His righteous ones (to whom He imputed His righteousness when they first believed) to be among those who shrink back when He returns. Let's back up a few verses to see how this is possible:

For you have need of endurance, so that when you have done the will of God you may receive what is promised. (Verse 36)

What if you *don't* do the will of God? What if you *lack* endurance? Will you *still* receive what is promised?

Therefore do not throw away your confidence, which has a great reward. (Verse 35)

How can you throw away your confidence? And if you do, what will be your reward?

For we know Him who said, "Vengeance is mine; I will repay." And again, "The Lord will judge His people." It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God. (Verses 30-31)

Who are "His people" who are judged and fall into the hands of the living God?

How much worse punishment, do you think, will be deserved by the one who has spurned the Son of God, and has profaned the blood of the covenant by which he was

sanctified, and has outraged the Spirit of grace? (Verse 29)

How does one spurn the Son of God or profane the blood of the covenant or outrage the Spirit of grace? Is this talking about believers?

For if we go on sinning deliberately after receiving the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a fearful expectation of judgment... (Verses 26-27)

Have you received the knowledge of the truth? What if you go on sinning deliberately?

For it is impossible to restore again to repentance those who have once

been enlightened, who have tasted the heavenly gift, and have shared in the Holy Spirit, and have tasted the goodness of the word of God and the powers of the age to come, if they then fall away, since they are crucifying once again the Son of God to their own harm and holding Him up to public shame.

(Hebrews 6:4-6)

What does it mean to "fall away" or to hold the Savior up to public shame? What becomes *impossible*? Will such a one be "hurt" by the second death? What is the second death?

Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive the word

implanted, which is able to save your souls. (James 1:21)

What if you *don't* put aside all filthiness and wickedness? What if the standards of His word do *not* become part of your very nature, as expressed in your behavior? What will happen to your soul?

For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly

affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ. For whoever lacks these qualities is so nearsighted that he is blind, having forgotten that he was cleansed from his former sins. Therefore, brothers, be all the more diligent to make your calling and election sure, for if you practice these qualities you will never fall. For in this way there will be richly provided for you an entrance into the eternal¹ kingdom

of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-11)

What if you *don't* add virtue² and self-control to your faith? What if you *don't* diligently increase in steadfastness and godliness and love? Will entrance into the Kingdom *still* be richly provided to you?

Blessed is the man who remains steadfast under trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life, which God has promised to those who love Him.

(James 1:12)

What if you *don't* remain steadfast?

¹ This word actually means *age-lasting*, i.e., the kingdom of the millennial age.

² *virtue* — behavior showing high moral standards.

Will you *still* receive the crown of life?
If you *don't* stand the test, what is the
proof that you love Him?

*"If you love Me, you will keep My
commandments. Whoever has
My commandments and keeps
them, he it is who loves Me. And
he who loves Me will be loved by
My Father, and I will love him and
reveal Myself to him."*

(John 14:15,21)

What if you *don't* keep His
commandments? Do you still love
Him? Will He still reveal Himself to
you? Or will you be shown to be a
liar?

*Whoever says "I know Him" but
does not keep His commandments*

*is a liar, and the truth is not in him.
(1 John 2:4)*

Is the truth in you?

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever
hears My word and believes Him
who sent Me has eternal life. He
does not come into judgment, but
has passed out of death and into
life." (John 5:24)*

Have you passed out of death and
into life? How can you be sure?

*We know that we have passed out
of death into life, because we love
the brothers. Whoever does not love
abides in death. (1 John 3:14)*

Do you love the brothers? How do
you know?

*By this we know love: that He
laid down His life for us, and we
ought to lay down our lives for the
brothers. (1 John 3:16)*

What does it mean to lay down
your life for your brothers?

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, if anyone
keeps My word, he will never see
death." (John 8:51)*

What if you *don't* keep His word?
Will you see death? ☠



The Living Dead

"Why do you seek the living among the dead?"¹

I used to be numbered among the living dead. I was alive, inasmuch as I was breathing and moving, but I didn't have life. There was a movie called "The Night of the Living Dead," about people who had turned into zombies incapable of rational thought even on the simplest level, completely given over to satiating their own bizarre desires. That was me.

There were others like me, too, and there still are — the living, walking, dead men and women of the earth. Some you can spot a mile away, but some are not so obvious. They are people who have given up the good fight, surrendered their lives to a powerful enemy they cannot see. They don't know that their pursuit of self-satisfaction is the very thing holding them in death, and that

¹ Luke 24:5

there is a way out. The enemy keeps these things hidden from them.

Two thousand years ago, John the Baptist was sent with a message, a warning to the people in the religious system, the Jews. He told them they were way off. Something was wrong, and if they didn't repent and change their ways, they would not be heirs of the promise made to Abraham's offspring, even though they were his descendants. They were told that God could raise up children of Abraham from the stones if He wanted to.² They asked, "What then must we do?"³

His reply was radical. He said,

"Whoever has two coats must share with him who has none."

These were "God's people." Why did they need to be told that? Why did a prophet have to come with a dire warning before they were willing to give their extra coat to someone who didn't have one? How far from God do you need to fall to be in that place?

He told tax collectors to only collect what they were due, no more. He told soldiers to stop threatening and extorting from people, and to be content with their wages. He was teaching "God's people" common decency. He was saying, "You have

a conscience. Listen to it!" The people in their religion had grown dull to the instinctive knowledge of the truth within them. This is a process. Over time, because of a little compromise here, a little justification there, they had steadily drifted away from the foundation and their source of life. They had become an empty shell, a blurry shadow of who they were supposed to be. They were the living dead.⁴ Religion today has followed suit.

John the Baptist came to prepare the way for a new hope — our Master Yahshua.* Yahshua came as a way back, a bridge across the gap

² Luke 3:8 ³ Luke 3:10-14 ⁴ Matthew 23:27 * See the article *The Name Above All Names* on page 59

between God and man, a gap man had created by his drifting. Many believed His good news and followed Him, leaving behind everything for the sake of something greater.⁵ They responded wholeheartedly to God's love for them with simple, sincere devotion — together. This would eventually lead to the day of Pentecost, the birth of the church, which was a community.⁶

Before long, though, the Apostle John would



be echoing the words of John the Baptist, writing to the communities, “How does God’s love abide in anyone who has the world’s goods and sees a brother in need and refuses to help?”⁷ The writer of Hebrews, likewise, warned them to pay much closer attention to what they’d heard, lest they drift away from it.⁸ Drifting is an unconscious process. All you have to do to drift is *nothing*. When

the disciples stopped loving one another with a fervent love, they drifted away from love.

It’s simple: “The children of God and the children of the devil are revealed in this way: all who do not do what is right are not from God, nor are those who do not love their brothers.”⁹ But the evil one is crafty. He complicates, confuses, and manipulates. He led the church astray and she drifted away and never recovered. Now, after nineteen hundred years of steady drifting, she bears no resemblance to her pure beginnings, but is

⁵ Mark 10:28; Luke 5:11, Matthew 8:22 ⁶ Acts 2:42-47; 4:32-37 ⁷ 1 John 3:17 ⁸ Hebrews 2:1 ⁹ 1 John 3:10

defiled¹⁰ — stained and scarred by her exploits, proud and puffed up, shamelessly unrepentant — a child of the devil.

But the King still needs a Bride, and she is being prepared.¹¹

There used to be “the church,” but today there are many “churches.” Most people who convene in these buildings are unaware that they are all serving different gods. If God is one, as the



Scriptures say, then how can two people be in communion with Him, but each have different doctrines, conflicting lifestyles, separate goals, and unrelated desires? Would God give one person one “truth” and someone else another?¹²

God is one, therefore the church is a community. When the church in the first century was warned to repent and do the deeds they did at first,¹³ they were being told to remember what happened after Pentecost: “All who *believed* were together

and shared all things in common.”¹⁴ But they didn’t repent, and their lampstand went out. Christianity today is not the light of the world.

The belief that brought the first church to birth is the belief our Master was talking about when He said, “Whoever *believes* in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life.”¹⁵ There are people on the earth today with that belief. They are together, sharing all things in common. What one truly believes is revealed in what he does. We believe in Him, so we’ve given up our own rotten, stinking lives to do our part to prepare the earth for His return.

¹⁰ 2 Corinthians 11:3 ¹¹ Revelation 19:7-8; Ephesians 2:10; 4:11-16 ¹² 1 Corinthians 1:10 ¹³ Revelation 2:5 ¹⁴ Acts 2:44 ¹⁵ John 3:16

We serve Him where He is,¹⁶ where brothers and sisters dwell together in unity¹⁷ and lay down their lives for one another. That's what gives us the confidence that He hears us,¹⁸ and so we pray that He would grant us the

What one truly believes is revealed in what he does.

grace to do His will, not our own selfish will.

People are giving up all hope every day. Many are looking for justice and truth, and goodness, struggling to hold on to what they know is right in the face of great opposition. But a man's strength is limited, and his

hope runs out. Only in Yahshua is true love and justice found. He is the way, the truth, and the life — the only hope that does not disappoint. 🙏



WHAT'S IN A NAME

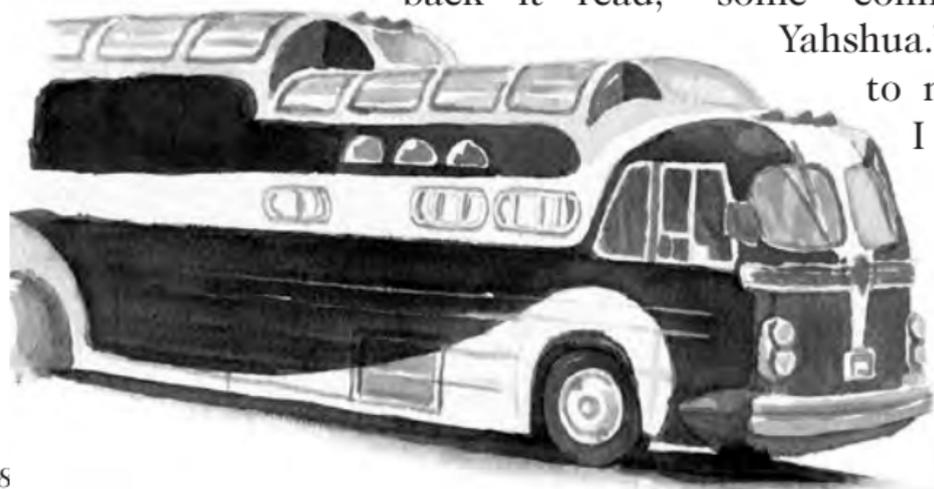


Some time ago when I was in college, I was searching for something meaningful in life. I wasn't finding it in school. I had been primed all my life to go to college and then on to "life", whatever that meant. Somehow, being one more cog in the machine didn't appeal to me. I wanted true friends and I wanted to do something with my life that really made a difference. I was experiencing neither.

A few years earlier in high school, I was at a music concert in much of the same state of mind as I would be several years later — lonely and searching for something.

When I left the concert someone must have handed me a little paper. It was from some people who lived in a community. This was very interesting to me since I was looking for something like this. However, in the busyness of my life, I put it into my closet and forgot about it.

As the years went by, I would see them at many of the events that I went to. They were beginning to capture my interest. One day a friend and I happened to park right behind their big maroon-and-cream-colored bus. On the back it read,



“We Know the Way, We’ll Bring You Home.” I thought to myself, “That’s what I want, a real home.” As we were sitting there, I asked my friend whether he knew anything about them.

He answered, “Yeah, they are some community that follows Yahshua.” “Yahshua,” I thought to myself, “who is that?”

I was disappointed, to say the least. These people seemed so nice, but if they didn’t follow the Son of God then I didn’t want to have anything to do with them. If there

was one thing I didn’t need to get involved with, it was some strange religion. So I decided to steer clear of them.

So eventually there I was in college, still very lonely and still searching. Some friends had invited me to several concerts that would be happening that summer. I decided to go with them. At one of the first concerts, I saw that same bus and I was instantly intrigued again. Something about these people seemed so special, but, I had to remind myself, they didn’t follow the Son of God. It had been a couple of years since I had first come in contact with them. I had gone my

way, searching for something real, but had found nothing.

At one of those concerts, I was walking through the parking lot and saw a good friend of mine. Oddly enough, he was sitting very near that bus. He was talking with someone and I sat down to join the conversation. After a few minutes, I asked him whether he knew anything about that bus. He told me that I should talk to the other man, because he was part of the community that was traveling on the bus.

I was excited, since I had never actually talked to anyone from the bus; I had just heard things about

them. The things I had heard about them following “Yahshua” had kept me away for almost two years. But I was full of questions about the community and what they believed. My first question was, of course, “Do you believe in the Son of God?”

To my surprise, the man said, “Of course we do. Our entire life revolves around Him and His teachings!”

I could hardly believe it!

He went on to explain to me that while most people call the Son

of God *Jesus*, they preferred His original Hebrew name, *Yahshua*. He told me that it actually meant “God’s Salvation.”

The more he talked the more everything began to make sense to me. I had grown up in a society that had caused me to question everything, but somehow I never questioned what had been handed down to me at church. I thought that because these people didn’t

say *Jesus*, although they were full of love and kindness, they must be bad. But what I found out was that *Jesus* wasn't even the Savior's name!

So now, as you have guessed, I am a part of this people who follow the Son of God, and I would like to share with you the amazing things I have learned about His name.

THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

In the days of John the Baptist and the Son of God, they spoke Hebrew in the land of Palestine. So, when the angel Gabriel brought the

good news to the Hebrew virgin, Miriam (or *Mary* in English), that she would give birth to the Savior of the world, and told her what His name would be, what language do you suppose he spoke? Hebrew, of course! And certainly Miriam and Yoceph (or *Joseph* in English) named the child just as the angel had commanded them — *Yahshua*.

In Matthew 1:21, your Bible

probably reads, "...and you shall call His name *Jesus*, for He will save His people from their sins." But the name *Jesus* is a modern English adaptation of the Greek name, *Iesous*, which is itself a corruption of the original Hebrew name *Yahshua*. The name *Jesus* or *Iesous* has no meaning of its own,¹ but the Hebrew name *Yahshua* literally means *Yahweh's Salvation*,² which

¹ Some authorities say that *Iesous* is derived from an earlier form meaning "healing Zeus," the supreme god of ancient Greek mythology.

² *Yah* is the personal name of God, and *shua* is from a Hebrew root word that means "to save." God identified Himself to Moses as *YAH* (meaning "I AM") in Exodus 3:14, as in Psalm 68:4 ("whose name is *Yah*"), and as most familiar in the word *Halleluyah* ("Praise *Yah*"). And in John 5:43 and 17:11, *Yahshua* says that He came in His Father's name, "the name which You have given Me" (NASB), so it is not surprising that the Father's name would be incorporated into the Son's name, *Yahshua*.

makes sense out of what the angel said in Matthew 1:21, “...you shall call His name *Yahshua* [Yahweh’s Salvation], for He shall save His people from their sins.”

If you look in an old King James Bible, you will find the name *Jesus* in these two passages:

*Which also our fathers that came after brought in with **Jesus** into the possession of the Gentiles, whom God drave out before the face of our fathers, unto the days of David... (Acts 7:45, KJV)*

*For if **Jesus** had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. (Hebrews 4:8, KJV)*

However, if you look in any modern Bible, including more recently printed King James Bibles, you will find that in place of the name *Jesus* they use the name *Joshua*, for in the context it is clear that it is speaking there of Moses’ successor and not the Son of God. But in the Greek manuscript the name in both of these verses is *Iesous*.

You see, *Joshua* is the popular English transliteration of the Hebrew name *Yahshua*. Joshua of the Old Testament had the same name as the One called *Jesus* in the New Testament, for Joshua was the prophetic forerunner of the Son

of God, bringing Israel into the Promised Land and leading them to victory over their enemies. But since the translators obviously know this fact, why do they only translate *Iesous* as *Joshua* in these two verses, and as *Jesus* everywhere else?

The fact is, the name of God’s Son was not even pronounced as “Jesus” in English until the 16th century, simply because there was no “J” sound or letter in English until then.³ The modern letter “J” developed from the letter “I” which began to be written with a “tail” when it appeared as the first letter in a word. So in old

English the name now written as *Jesus* was actually written and pronounced much like the original Greek *Iesous*. Eventually the hard “J” sound crept into the English language to accompany the different way of writing the initial “I” in the name.

You may also find it interesting that in Acts 26:14-15, it says that the apostle Paul heard the name of the Son of God pronounced “in the Hebrew tongue” by the Son of God Himself, so he certainly didn’t

hear the Greek name *Iesous* or the English name *Jesus*, but rather the Hebrew name, the name above all names, *Yahshua*.⁴

I’d much rather call the Son of God, my Savior, by His true name — the name His own mother, Miriam, and father, Yoceph, and all of His Jewish friends called Him. Not only have I found out what His true name is, but His true Body on earth as well. I am so thankful to have finally found true rest with the true Savior.

Please take the time to read the other articles in this paper. You are always welcome to come visit us in any of our communities. Please see the back cover. 🌿

Michael



³ *Compact Edition of the Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford University Press, 1971), pp. 1496,1507. ⁴ *Philippians 2:9; Acts 4:12*

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Like a Beehive

Have you ever watched a beehive? It is fascinating seeing thousands of little bees working together to produce honey. As you come near the hive, you can hear an exciting buzz as they go about the many tasks necessary to keep the hive alive. The workers are responsible to collect nectar and guard the hive. The young bees keep the hive in good condition, feed the larvae, and support in other household chores. There is never a dull moment in the busy life of a little bee.

This is much like the life that we have. No matter what we do, we love to do it together. Daily we gather to thank our Master for His salvation, and to hear Him speak to us through one another. This gathering keeps alive a genuine love and care for each other. As we work, we take advantage of the daily situations, guarding ourselves from the selfishness and pride that would come in to separate us and take away our love. Our children are a vital part of our life. We not only homeschool them, but we work with them to accomplish the simple tasks necessary to maintain a family life. Our life is not a dull routine of chores, but is full of the warmth that comes from the sweet fellowship of friends speaking their hearts to one another.

But there are a few things that differ in our life from that of a beehive. One is that we are not driven by instinct or controlled by something separate from our own will. Each of us is here because we chose to leave behind our own separate lives to increase the life of this hive. Our life is not enclosed like the hive of a bee, nor do we have a stinger to harm any uninvited guests. We welcome anyone to experience our life with us. Please come and see what it is like to be part of a beehive of people expressing the warmth and love of our Creator. 🐝
