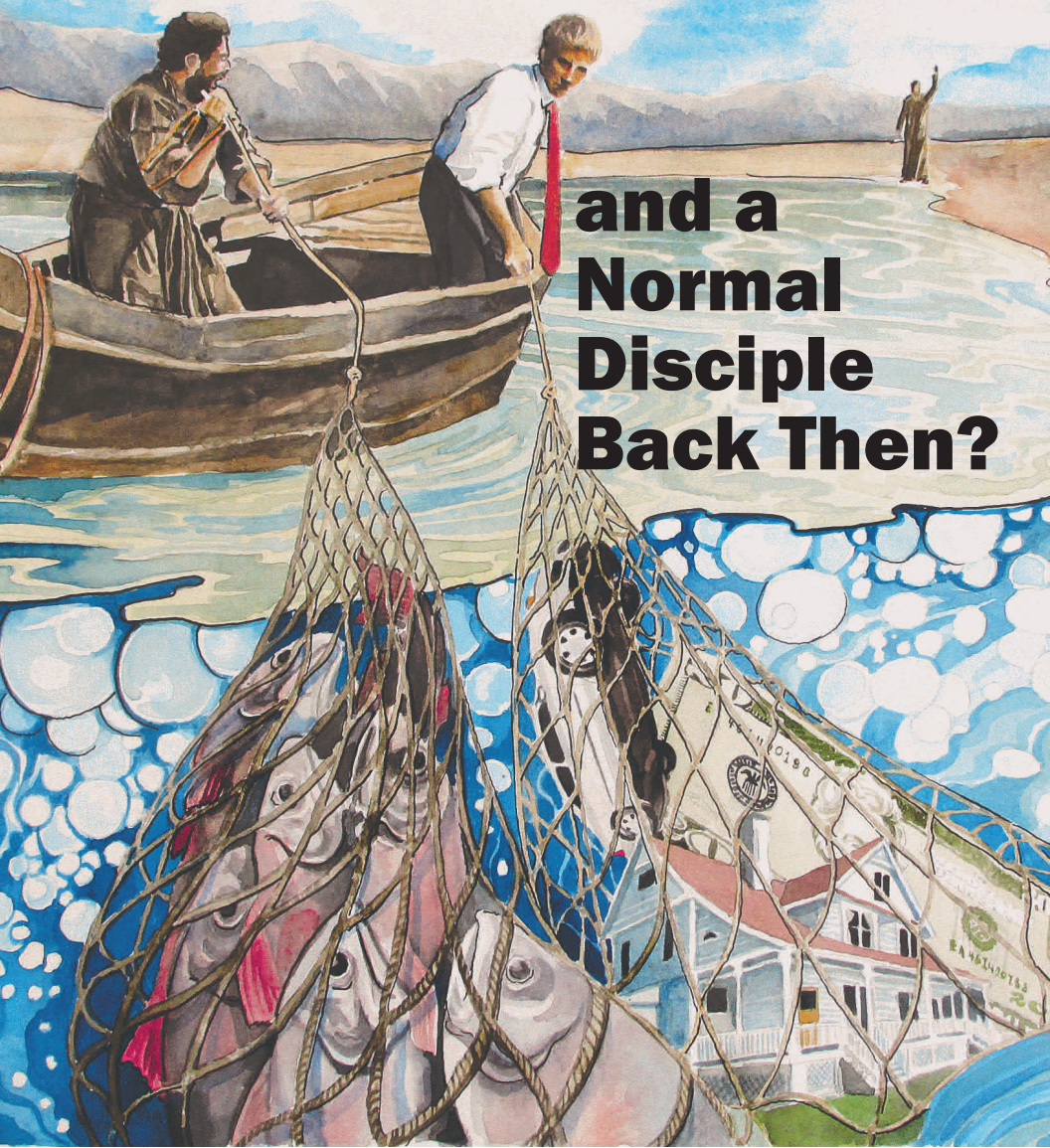


**Is there a Difference
between a
Normal Christian
Today**

**and a
Normal
Disciple
Back Then?**





We who wrote this paper actually live together like an extended family, sharing all things in common, just as the first disciples did in the first century. The Bible plainly says regarding the first church, "All who believed were together and shared all things in common."¹ It goes on to describe how they were of one heart and soul, and that there was not a needy person among them, for they gave up all their possessions to meet the needs of their spiritual brothers and sisters.² Some people say this was only for back then, but we've been living this way for over 40 years. You can come and see for yourself at any of our addresses, which are printed in the back of this paper and on our web site, www.twelvetribe.org.

In each of our communities, there are one or more houses in a cluster, some in cities and some on farms. Several families and single people live together in each house, according to the size of the house. We like large houses because we like to live together. Married couples have their own rooms, plus as many adjacent rooms as needed for their children. The single men share one or more rooms, as do the single women. We all share a common kitchen and dining room, where we take our meals together "with gladness and sincerity of heart."³

In at least one house in the cluster we have a large gathering room where we gather together every morning and evening to worship our Creator in song and dance as in Psalm 150, using the prescribed musical instruments that we are learning to build and play. We are all free to speak from our hearts the things we are learning, as our heavenly Father teaches us through one another, according to the gifting and grace given to each per-

¹Acts 2:44 ²Acts 4:32-35 ³Acts 2:46



son.⁴ As a spiritual priesthood, we pray together for the pressing needs of our people and for our Father's will to be done on earth.

After our morning gathering we have breakfast together and then go to work in our various places, doing the deeds prepared for each one of us.⁵ We work together in our own cafés, farms, cottage industries, and trades, not as independent contractors or employees of outside companies. All income from our various endeavors goes into a common purse from which all of our needs are met equitably. We don't have our own independent income or debts to carry by ourselves, except for the debt of love we owe to our Savior, which we repay by loving and caring for one another.

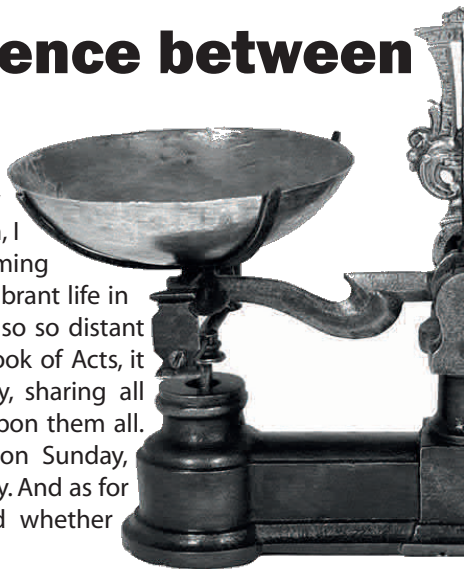
We love and cherish our children. We teach them at home, using a curriculum we are developing ourselves, to give them the basic skills they need to read, write, and speak effectively, to live together in peace, and to fulfill their created purpose. Our children's training goes far beyond the classroom, however, as they are fully integrated into every aspect of our socially and spiritually rich tribal life. They learn to cook and sew, build and farm, care for animals, sing and dance, play musical instruments, and most importantly, extend hospitality to the constant flow of guests who are drawn to the light of our life of love.

Together we are experiencing and demonstrating the restoration of all things spoken of by the prophets of old,⁶ and by our Master Yahshua,⁷ whose life, death, and resurrection make this life possible. ✨

⁴1 Corinthians 14:26; 1 Peter 4:11; Romans 12:6 ⁵Ephesians 2:10 ⁶Isaiah 49:6; Jeremiah 30:20; 31:1,4,13,14; Malachi 4:5-6 ⁷Matthew 5:17-19; 17:10-11; 22:37-40; Luke 1:17; 24:44 (*Yahshua* is the original Hebrew name of the one called *Jesus* in most English translations of the Bible. See page 28 for more about this name.)

Is there a Difference between

I grew up in a Christian family, and of course we went to church every Sunday. But at some point in my youth, I started actually reading the Bible, becoming personally interested in what it said. The vibrant life in Acts 2 and 4 seemed so wonderful, but also so distant and unlike my life as a Christian. In the book of Acts, it says all the disciples were together daily, sharing all things in common, and great grace was upon them all. All of us Christians were together only on Sunday, sharing only 10% of our money, supposedly. And as for great grace, well, sometimes I wondered whether God was with us at all.



I wondered, like so many others, whether it was even possible to live like those early disciples. But was it really *optional*? Was it really up to each person to choose whether he wanted to live like that? Although there were a few obscure groups that lived in community, nearly everyone said, “That was for back then,” and everyone agreed that giving up one’s possessions was not required.

What is required to be a Christian? Is it different from what was required to be a disciple “back then”?

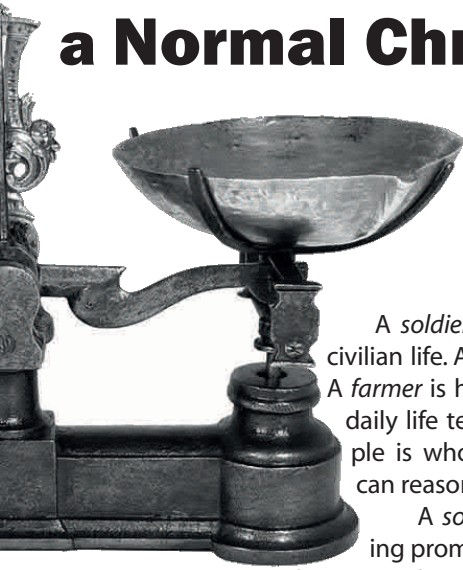
Let’s compare two groups of people to find the differences between them. One group is the *Normal Christians*: a usual or typical member of Christianity in the 21st century — “now.” The other group is the *Normal Disciples*: a usual or typical member of the church in the first century — “back then.” Granted, our comparison doesn’t include the Christians over the past 1900 years, but since I want to know today whether the life of Acts 2 and 4 was just for back then, we’ll take a look at the ends of the timeline — Normal Christians *now* and Normal Disciples *back then*.

Paul tells Timothy to be a “good soldier” — one of several metaphors he uses to describe a normal disciple:

No one serving as a soldier gets entangled in civilian affairs, since his aim is to please the one who enlisted him. Similarly, anyone who competes as an athlete does not receive the victor’s crown except by competing according to the rules. The hardworking farmer should be the first to receive a share of the crops. Reflect on what I am saying, for the Lord will give you insight into all this. (2 Timothy 2:4-7)¹

¹ See also 2 Peter 2:20-22 and 1 Corinthians 9:25-27.

a Normal Christian and a Normal Disciple?



A *soldier* does not get entangled in the affairs of civilian life. An *athlete* competes according to the rules. A *farmer* is hard-working and *shares* in the crops. Their daily life tells who they really are. Each of these people is wholeheartedly pursuing a specific goal and can reasonably expect a future reward.

A *soldier* pleases the authority over him, gaining promotions and medals by his deeds. An *athlete* gains the crown of victory. A *farmer* gains an abundant harvest. Each lifestyle tells you who's who and what they are seeking.

A normal disciple gives up everything. Luke 14:33 apparently applies to *disciples*, but not to *Christians*.² Back then, Peter had to leave his nets behind to follow the Son of God. He walked away, leaving his father and his livelihood behind.³ Back then, Barnabas sold his land and laid the proceeds at the apostles' feet.⁴ Back then, the rich young ruler was told to give up all, but he refused.⁵ The rich young ruler was qualified to be a Christian, but not a *disciple*.

A normal Christian can continue living his independent life in this world. A 2015 study showed that Christians own 55% of the wealth worldwide,⁶ which isn't so surprising, considering how many there are.⁷ Some well-

² Luke 14:33 — "So then, none of you can be My disciple who does not give up all his own possessions."

³ Matthew 4:21-22 — "Going on from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John. They were in a boat with their father Zebedee, preparing their nets. Jesus called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father and followed him."

⁴ Acts 4:36 — "Joseph, a Levite from Cyprus, whom the apostles called Barnabas (which means "son of encouragement"), sold a field he owned and brought the money and put it at the apostles' feet."

⁵ Mark 10:21-22 — "Jesus looked at him and loved him. 'One thing you lack,' he said. 'Go, sell everything you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.' At this the man's face fell. He went away sad, because he had great wealth." (The story starts in verse 17)

⁶ <http://www.deccanherald.com/content/453467/christians-hold-largest-percentage-global.html>

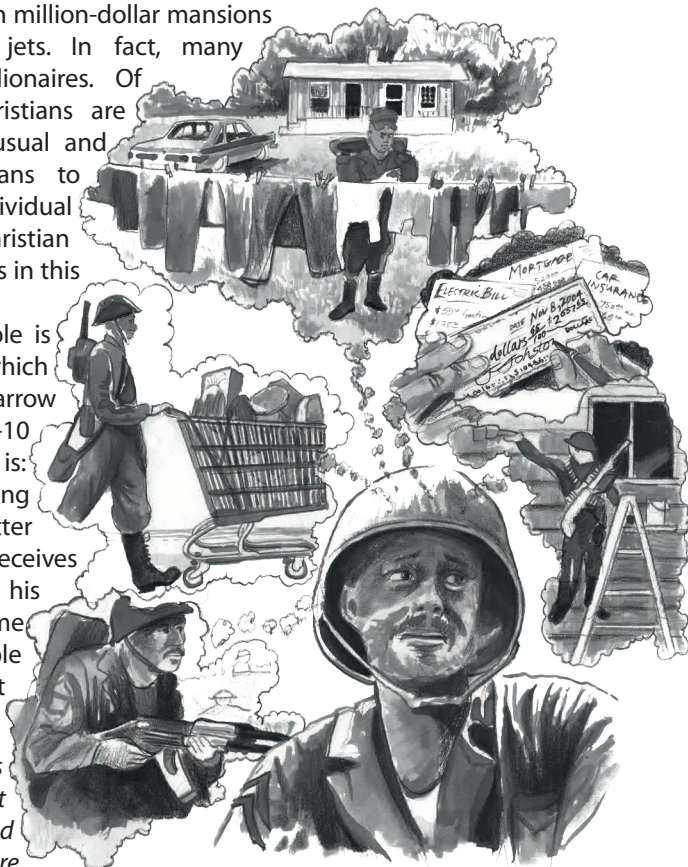
⁷ About one third of the world's population claim to be Christians.

known pastors live in million-dollar mansions and own private jets. In fact, many Christians are millionaires. Of course, not all Christians are wealthy, but it is “usual and typical” for Christians to retain their individual assets. A normal Christian holds on to his assets in this world.

A normal disciple is under authority, which keeps him on the narrow way. Matthew 8:5-10 tells how a soldier is: under authority, having no time to just putter around. An athlete receives the direction of his coaches. In the same way, a normal disciple is under authority at all times.

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. (John 12:26)

The normal disciples in Acts 2 didn't live separate lives. They didn't “go to church” once or twice a week, but rather “daily they continued to meet together,” and daily they “ate together with glad and sincere hearts.”⁸ It wasn't as it was in the book of Judges when there was no king in the land, and everyone did what was right in his own eyes.⁹ There was apostolic authority correcting and directing all normal disciples.¹⁰ In contrast, normal Christians consider themselves free to choose what job they will have, where they will live, what they will do with their time and money, and what church they will attend on Sunday.



⁸ Acts 2:46-47

⁹ Judges 17:6 — “In those days there was no king in Israel; every man did what was right in his own eyes.”

¹⁰ See 2 Corinthians 13:10, 1 Thessalonians 2:6, Titus 2:15, and Hebrews 13:17 for references to authority in the early church.

A normal disciple lives a life of obedience. That was the Great Commission: “*Make disciples ... and teach them to obey everything that I have commanded you.*”¹¹ Every normal disciple was taught to know and obey the Master’s commandments.

To follow Yahshua,¹² you have to hate your life in this world, hating anything that would cause you to hold on to your old life, your own job, clothing styles, habits, even your own culture. If you claim to be a disciple and don’t obey Yahshua’s commandments, it makes you a liar.¹³ According to the Scriptures, Yahshua is only the savior of those who *obey Him*,¹⁴ and the Holy Spirit is only given to those who *obey Him*.¹⁵

A normal Christian is nearly indistinguishable from an average unbeliever. Normal Christians are found in nearly every occupation — in politics, the military, show business, sports, and on and on. Normal Christians wear the same clothing and hair styles, go to the same movies, watch the same football games, listen to the same music, and read the same books as the rest of the world. They may try to “be good,” but the commandments are not even seen as attainable, and are often explained away.

So there is a marked difference between a normal Christian and a normal disciple. It’s not easy to be a normal disciple — or a farmer, an athlete, or a soldier. It’s not easy, but it is possible. It requires a choice. It requires devotion to live that kind of life. It requires effort towards a goal. Only then will the farmer, the athlete, the soldier, and the normal disciple receive their sought-after reward.

Otherwise, the Scriptures are irrelevant.✿

**A normal disciple
lives a life
of obedience.
That was the
Great Commission:
“Make disciples...
and teach them
to obey everything
that I have
commanded you.”
Matthew 28:19-20**

¹² Matthew 28:19-20 — “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age.”

¹³ *Yahshua* is the original Hebrew name of the one called *Jesus* in most English translations of the Bible. See page 28 for more about this name.

¹⁴ 1 John 2:4 — “The one who says, ‘I have come to know Him,’ and does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in him.”

¹⁵ Hebrews 5:9

¹⁶ Acts 5:32

WHAT IS A “CHRISTIAN CULTURE”?

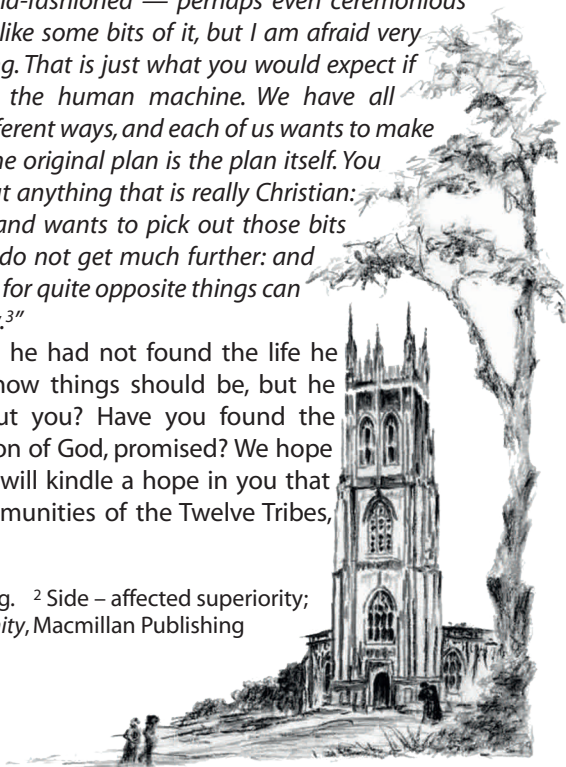
What would a society or culture be like that was actually based on the teachings of the Bible? The popular Christian author, C. S. Lewis, in his book *Mere Christianity*, described it this way:

“All the same, the New Testament, without going into details, gives us a pretty clear hint of what a fully Christian society would be like. Perhaps it gives us more than we can take. It tells us that there are to be no passengers or parasites: if man does not work, he ought not to eat. Everyone is to work with his own hands, and what is more, every one’s work is to produce something good: there will be no manufacture of silly luxuries and then of sillier advertisements to persuade us to buy them. And there is to be no ‘swank’¹ or ‘side,’² no putting on airs. To that extent a Christian society would be what we now call Leftist. On the other hand, it is always insisting on obedience — obedience (and outward marks of respect) from all of us to properly appointed magistrates, from children to parents, and (I am afraid this is going to be very unpopular) from wives to husbands. Thirdly, it is to be a cheerful society: full of singing and rejoicing, and regarding worry or anxiety as wrong. Courtesy is one of the Christian virtues; and the New Testament hates what it calls ‘busybodies.’

“If there were such a society in existence and you or I visited it, I think we should come away with a curious impression. We should feel that its economic life was very socialistic and, in that sense, “advanced,” but that its family life and its code of manners were rather old-fashioned — perhaps even ceremonious and aristocratic. Each of us would like some bits of it, but I am afraid very few of us would like the whole thing. That is just what you would expect if Christianity is the total plan for the human machine. We have all departed from that total plan in different ways, and each of us wants to make out that his own modification of the original plan is the plan itself. You will find this again and again about anything that is really Christian: Everyone is attracted by bits of it and wants to pick out those bits and leave the rest. That is why we do not get much further: and that is why people who are fighting for quite opposite things can say they are fighting for Christianity.”³

C. S. Lewis died knowing that he had not found the life he described here. He understood how things should be, but he never experienced it. What about you? Have you found the abundant life that Yahshua, the Son of God, promised? We hope that what you read in this paper will kindle a hope in you that such a life does exist in the Communities of the Twelve Tribes, and that you can be a part of it. ✨

¹ Swank – smartness in style or bearing. ² Side – affected superiority; arrogance. ³ C.S. Lewis, *Mere Christianity*, Macmillan Publishing Company, NY, NY, 1952, p. 64-68.





A heron flew across the still lake, flapping its wide wings for an awkward landing in some reeds by the shore. Its reflection in the water could be seen by a single figure on shore, reading at a picnic table. Tim's Bible and notebook were open, and had been open for hours. Tim was the new program director at Camp Pocono Plateau, and he had come up three weeks before his new job started to take walks in the woods and pray and study. It would have been easier to just read some camp books from the Christian bookstore about how to reach kids' lives for the Lord, but Tim had a deeper mission, and one that he wasn't about to start talking about yet.

The pages were filled with verses about topics he had heard all his life — baptism, salvation, belief — but he was looking up the verses to find out what was actually written about these things. Tim plugged in his music and put on some Larry Norman tunes. "Good ol' Larry wasn't afraid to say the truth," Tim thought to himself. Tim's findings were both exciting and frightening to him. It was like finally solving a cryptogram; the conclusions were coming quicker and easier. But now he was left with the next question: What do I do now?

His job as the program director would be to give the "campfire talks," leading the young people to the Lord who came to summer camp. Salvation, he realized, was a whole lot more than just asking Jesus into your heart and going back to your same old life. There was baptism, which was done after you believed, not sprinkled as a baby. That belief alone made him a heretic in the United Methodist church, which owned the camp. But even this concept of salvation seemed like more than just going to heaven when you die. Tim resolved to be a hidden heretic that summer, not to deny the truth, but also not rock the boat too much too soon.

Fall leaves fell on the path leading from the dorm to the science center. Tim was late to his 8 o'clock class, creating a wake of leaves as he ran. His junior year was starting nicely — good friends, interesting classes, lots to do. The guys on his dorm floor played lots of basketball, but also gathered around in rooms and talked about their lives and the problems they saw in their churches, and how we were going to change it all. It was a Christian college, and Tim's friends were all Christians, too, but with a variety of plans and aspirations. Kevin wanted to become a college professor with a PhD, hoping to drive out liberal thought from the seminaries. Charlie and John were studying business, and were content to get married and support a local church. Tim wanted to be a missionary doctor. Mike was going to spend a quarter in Washington, DC, getting involved in politics.

Tim's first class today was Christian Apologetics. It was a mixture of philosophy and logic, learning to defend their faith in rational and logical ways, in hopes that someone could be persuaded to follow Jesus. Tim knew that "faith" didn't work that way, but all the students had experienced the ridicule from non-believers for believing things that weren't factual, so this class was giving them some ammunition to fight back. Tim always enjoyed engaging people of different beliefs in conversation, and trying to persuade them to the truth. He learned the errors of the Muslims, the Jehovah's Witnesses, the Mormons, and the atheists. He hoped to meet one of them this weekend, when his drama group was planning a trip to Indianapolis to do their evangelistic skits right on the streets.

The van rolled down the interstate, passing the exit sign for downtown. Driving down one of the streets, Tim and his friends prayed out loud, asking God to show them where they should go. The street opened up to a large stadium where thousands of youth were standing around. Along the street were protesters, carrying signs. This was the place!

The protesters' signs carried shocking messages: "Ban the Bible!" "Christians are Bastards!" "How Much Sin Can I Get Away With and Still Get to Heaven?" Tim sized them up as some kind of anti-Christian group, probably Satanists or something. These were the kind of people that Tim liked to talk to. He went up to one of the protesters, took a paper, and asked a question: "Why do you want to ban the Bible?"

The man replied provocatively, "The Bible is used as a license to sin," and handed him a paper titled "Satan Worship." Tim listened intently, looking for a chink in the armor, groping for some open door to this man's soul, but no door opened. The protester must have found the conversation too calm, so he excused himself and went on passing out his papers. Tim looked down at the paper, reading it closely. He couldn't figure it out. These men were using verses in the Bible to expose Christianity, even the words of Christ, but they weren't Satanists. Tim shoved the paper into his pocket, determined to develop a response to its bleak message.

The gym closed at 10 PM and the guys returned to the dorm for Kool-Aid and showers. Homework could be done also, for those who needed to. Kevin crashed on the couch. Tim threw him the Satan Worship paper. "What do you think of this?" Tim asked.

Kevin browsed through it, sizing it up. "Ugly graphics, lousy layout," and threw it back.

Tim continued, "Yeah, but did you read it? What do you think of what it says?"

"It's got the error of sinless perfectionism. Your dad's church promoted it for a while, but now they even allow homosexual pastors. John Wesley would hang his head if he were alive today. Yeah, this paper says you're not saved until you're sinless. Pretty depressing situation; not much chance of a winning church softball team."

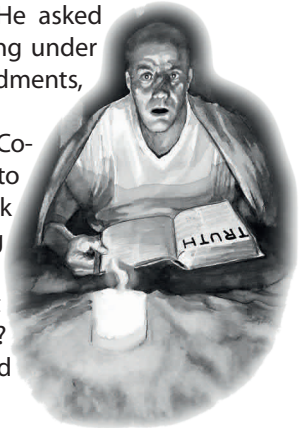
Tim thought for a moment. He grabbed his Bible, looking up one of the verses. "So what does this mean?" he asked. "*No one who abides in Him sins; no one who sins has seen Him or knows Him.*" (1 John 3:6)

"You gotta read the NIV to get the right interpretation." Kevin said smugly.

"Alright." Tim picked up a different Bible. "Here is the NIV. *'No one who lives in him keeps on sinning. No one who continues to sin has either seen him or known him.'*" Tim read it again. "Are they just watering it down because it's too hard the other way? I don't know... I just don't know."

The chapel was empty, except for Tim sitting in the balcony. In an hour, the student body would fill it up with the normal routine. For now, there was time to read. He was reading through the book of 1 John again. Each time he read it, he was more and more convinced that it described a different kind of life than he was experiencing. "Salvation," he thought, "what does it mean? Is it just making it to heaven, or being changed in this life to be like your Savior?" He wrote down a verse in his notebook: "*Anyone who claims to know Him, but does not keep His commandments, is a liar, and the truth is not in Him.*" (1 John 2:4) He asked himself, "But keeping His commandments is being under the law, isn't it? No one can keep all the commandments, right?"

Tim scribbled next to the verse: "The Great Conundrum."^{*} If 1 John 2:4 was true, it seemed to eliminate a vast number of people from the flock of two billion souls. That itself was a stunning thought, but the Savior did say that the way was narrow, and few would find it. But then, what about everyone else who didn't make the cut? With the standard so high, God was cruel and



* Conundrum — a confusing and difficult problem.

unfair, almost menacing, casting almost all of humanity into eternal hellfire. Shouldn't the test have a curve if it was so hard to get right? So then, you let more people into heaven, and you've lowered the standard to lukewarm, and obeying His commandments becomes a nice option.

The whole book had verses that seemed to contradict the typical sermons he had heard all his life. A little further in chapter 2, he copied another verse: *"The one who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk in the same manner as He walked."* (1 John 2:6) It all pointed to the fact that a saved disciple would have the power to obey His commandments. He felt more and more like a spy in enemy territory. He alone carried the knowledge in a hostile land where they might call him a heretic.

The whistle blew and the lifeguard yelled, "Everybody out of the water for buddy check!" Summer camp was in full swing, with a hundred screaming children splashing around. The counselors were having their afternoon meeting at a picnic table in the shade.

Part of Tim's job was to set the tone for the other counselors in the daily devotions and Bible lessons with the children. It was easy to talk about the fruits of the Spirit, or putting on the whole armor of God. Such topics made for easy art projects and lively skits. But today at the meeting there was division.

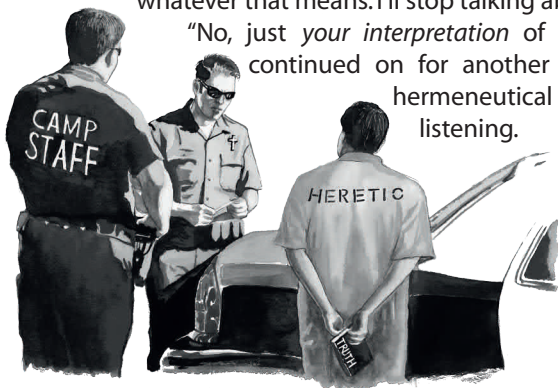
Across the table, Jack and Robin were obviously troubled. They hadn't spoken for several meetings, and Jack looked off in the distance. Today, Camp Director Mike was at the meeting to restore order.

"Tim, you've really brought a heavy spirit to the staff. Your questions about 1 John, and the pamphlets you've been passing around, are causing people to doubt. You're affecting others. It needs to stop."

Tim looked at Jack. He felt as if Jack was only just beginning to understand, even though they had many great conversations. Why is this happening? Camp Director Mike looked at Tim for a response. He was waiting.

"I don't mean to bring a heavy spirit. I just want to find salvation, whatever that means. I'll stop talking about the Bible."

"No, just *your interpretation* of the Bible," he said, and continued on for another few minutes with some hermeneutical monotony. Tim wasn't listening.



The meeting dismissed, and Tim walked by the camp van. There in the window was a publication that someone had picked up when the van went to some

Billy Graham event in Philadelphia. Tim grabbed the paper and put it in his pocket.

The airplane turned a steep angle and prepared to land at the second most dangerous airport in the world — Tegucigalpa, Honduras. Passengers on the left side who looked out their window could see a woman hanging out her T-shirts to dry. Tim was in Central America as a teacher. His plans of being a missionary doctor weren't working out. Medical school didn't accept him, but more importantly, Tim was sure he couldn't tell people about salvation. He wanted to. With all his heart, he wanted to, but he had to *have* salvation before he could share it. And before that, he had to know what salvation was.

And so, when the call came from his roommate, Steve, inviting him to come and teach high school in Honduras, it was as good an idea as any. Secretly, he thought he might find the answers to his questions if he just got away from his materialistic American culture. As the months went by, he found himself more and more alone and without hope. Life was more simple in Honduras. You could ride buses anywhere in the country for a couple of coins. A bag of fried plantains with shredded cabbage on top was a great treat. But the country was bound up in centuries of Roman Catholicism. People wore rosaries and crossed their hearts in front of statues of Mary, but had the same selfishness within as Americans.

To add to Tim's isolation, he had come to the conclusion that his own salvation was not real. He continued to read his Bible, and began seeing verses he had never seen before. Beliefs he had been taught started unraveling, and a whole new understanding of the Scriptures was forming. Salvation, as the early church understood it, was not going to church one day a week until you die and go to heaven. It was a life together, a full-time life of discipleship. Disciples learned to walk just like their Lord, actually overcoming sin in their lives and being set apart from the world.

Tim counted the \$100 bills onto the table. It was half of what he had saved during a whole year in Honduras, and the full tuition for summer school at Linguistics School in Eugene, Oregon. By paying in cash, Tim wanted to feel the weight and value of the courses he was taking.

The linguistic classes were run by missionaries, mostly of Wycliffe Bible Translators, known to go into far-away places where there wasn't even a language, and produce a Bible for the people.

One missionary sat down next to him at lunch. He had taken note of Tim's motivation, and hoped Tim might join his organization. "Tim, have you considered what you might do after the summer?"

Tim was glad to open his heart to anyone who asked. He wasn't worried now about appearing as a heretic. He knew it was the truth. He knew he wasn't saved.

"I'm really looking for salvation; that's the main thing I want to do," Tim started.

"Well, if you're here, you must already be saved. That's a funny thing to say," said David.

"No, I have read certain things in the Bible that show me that I'm not experiencing in my life what the first disciples did. I don't know how to get there, and honestly, I don't know if anyone here does either. I know the verses about calling on Jesus' name and you'll be saved. I know Ephesians 2:8-9 about being saved by grace through faith. But there are other verses — many other verses — that say our lives should be different once we're saved. The life of a disciple is not just staying the way you are. It's being changed into the likeness of your Savior. Whoever claims to know Him must walk as He did. Can I show you some verses?" Tim asked.

David was nearly blown-away. "Sure."

"1 John 4:17 — *'As He is, so also are we in this world.'* It means *now*. He cared for the poor, and we need to care for the poor. He overcame temptation, and we need to overcome temptation. He was always with his brothers and sisters, and we need to always be with our brothers and sisters. Do you see it? 1 John 3:2 — *'When He appears, we shall be like Him.'* Does that mean we are changed beforehand, or in that instant?"

David replied, "It must be then, when He appears."

"Wrong!" Tim sprung back, "Look at the next verse. *'All who have this hope in Him purify themselves, just as He is pure.'* The purification happens *now*. That's what I'm saying. Look at verse 7. *'Dear children, do not let anyone lead you astray. The one who does what is right is righteous, the one who does what is sinful is of the devil.'* We've all been led astray! I've been taught that we are positionally righteous, and forgiven, even if our external deeds are full of sin, but it's not true!"

David was getting uncomfortable. "Yes, but we are saved by grace."

"Right, but what is grace?" Tim pleaded. "Is grace just being able to be forgiven, or is it actually having the power to overcome sin, and to love as our Savior did? Couldn't God give us the power through the Holy Spirit to live as the disciples did in the New Testament? Isn't that expected?"

"So, it sounds as if you've found the truth. You're saved and we're all not," David turned on the offensive. "I don't know of any denomination that is going to agree with what you are saying."

"I know, I know. And that's my whole problem. No, I don't believe I'm saved. I believe that if I die, I will go to the Lake of Fire. My life doesn't line up with the life of a normal disciple in the Bible. But I'm not going to stop until I find what I'm looking for. That's why I can't join your missionary group."

"Well, I respect your decision, but I can't say that I agree with you. Let me know how your life goes." David said farewell.

Is grace just being able to be forgiven, or is it actually having the power to overcome sin?

The traffic whizzed by the biker riding down Route 30 towards York, Pennsylvania. Tim had finished Linguistic Classes and returned home to his parents' house to get a job and figure out what to do next. The bicycle was now his transportation to and from work, as well as the transportation on his continuing search.

The paper he had retrieved from the van at camp years ago was still in his files. Their big message was that a person needed to be baptized to be saved. Maybe that's why he wasn't experiencing true salvation. He called the number and asked if he could come and visit. "The Church in York" was a simple collection of zealous and strict Christians. Several families lived together in a large house, and met together often. There was a lot that appealed to Tim.

Tim sat in his basement, reading over the book, trying to weigh his decision to join or not join. On one hand, he wanted to be saved and know that he was cleansed of the guilt he felt. On another hand, he was afraid of compromising and joining another lie, another misrepresentation, after coming so far. He decided to join the church in York.

A freezing wind blew around the stadium in Urbana, Illinois. Tim and others from the church in York were at an event, passing out papers and preaching their gospel. Lots of college students were walking around. But there were other groups there, too, passing out their literature. Tim grabbed one of their papers and put it in his pocket to read later. The cold was intense, and he pulled his coat up tighter to his neck and kept walking and passing out papers for the church in York.

Later that evening, Tim emptied his pockets and looked at the other paper he had received. It was from the "Twelve Tribes" and talked about loving God with all your heart. For whatever reason, the paper didn't interest Tim, and he threw it away. He had been saved for three weeks now. Tim really thought his life was different now.

Tim knocked three times on the front door. A woman answered. "Could I ask if you know Jesus as your Savior?" She wasn't interested, and closed the door in Tim's face. It didn't matter. Persecution and rejection were expected for a normal disciple of Jesus. Tim looked back at the row of houses that he had just visited. Some had taken papers, but no one had really responded. This only increased his determination. He walked back to his car.

Tim had just returned from a large event in Toronto. Their church traveled all over the place to events to witness to people. Most of the income from their meager collection was used on travel, or on printing. Tim had called it his own "Summer of Evangelism." Determined to see growth and new people come to the church in York, he had stepped up his own personal determination to limit his personal projects and hobbies to maximize evangelism time. There were others in the church who were just as zealous, if not more.

Persecution and closed doors didn't bother him. But other things did, such as the lack of clarity about doctrines, the lack of new people for years, despite tremendous effort, the lifelessness of many of the congregation, the depressed hopelessness of some of the mothers, and the undercurrents among the leadership in the church. Those undercurrents were churning, getting ready to explode in a blast that would shatter the church in York.

Ronn slid open the filing cabinet. In the very back, there was an unlabeled folder. Ronn opened it and took out some of his papers from "The Twelve Tribes." The church in York frowned heavily on Ronn's interest in this outside group, and Ronn was often in trouble for disagreeing. So this private stash of papers was *kept* private. But in the recent months of increasing trouble in the church, Ronn had opened this folder many times. He wondered whether there was something wrong at home, and something very right with this other group.

Tim knocked and came right into the room, as Ronn looked up nervously. "Oh, it's you." He relaxed.

"Are you reading your Twelve Tribes freepapers again, you heretic?" Tim teased.

Ronn smiled. They'd had many talks about the pros and cons of this other group. He knew that they thought alike about the problems in the church in York, as well as in Christianity in general.

"I'm going, by the way," Tim dropped the bomb. "I'm even going to go to the leaders and ask for their permission to go and visit."

"They won't let you go," Ronn said. "They'll never approve of that."

"They have to. I'll say it's a matter of my conscience to go and check it out. The Queen of Sheba came to King Solomon to see if the stories were true. Jesus said that. So there's no harm in going for a visit to see whether what they're saying is true."

Ronn shook his head and warned, "Our pastor says that they are a bad group and will deceive you. He says they are a cult."

Tim quipped back, "Yes, and? Everybody's in a cult. The Catholic church is a cult. Christianity is a cult. I'm going to visit the Twelve Tribes."

**There's
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is true.**

Driving under the silvery glow of moonlight, Tim cruised along the dark interstate that runs the entire height of Vermont. At the very north was Island Pond, home of one of the oldest communities of the Twelve Tribes. In the morning, he sat down for breakfast with Ehud.

Ehud opened up his Bible to 1 John 3 and started talking about the basis for the community. He explained how when a person is truly saved, the love of God is poured into his heart, and he will obey the Master's greatest

commandment to love one another. This means sharing all of your material goods, all of your time, all of your life. The result of obeying the gospel is community, and community is the place where you can do the deeds that you were saved to do. Only in community can you obey His commandments.

"So the community is the visible Body of Christ?" asked Tim. He was trying to process all of these new things, looking for errors, trying hard not to be deceived. But his heart was telling him that this was the truth he had been looking for.

"Yes, well, we would say Messiah instead of Christ, because we use the Hebrew words for things, like *Yahshua* instead of *Jesus*. It's what the angel said to Mary. He spoke Hebrew, you know, and *Yahshua* was his Hebrew name," Ehud said.

"One of the things that I saw early on was that the book of 1 John exposed a false concept of salvation. Being saved didn't just mean going to heaven when you die, but it meant becoming like *Yahshua* in this life," Tim explained his heart-felt conviction that no one ever agreed with. "I want to do His will, and I believe other people do, too. But there's really no way to obey *Yahshua* in the system of Christianity as it presently is."

The Bride of Messiah will be a spotless bride, formed of completely devoted people who obey His commands.

Instead of bristling as so many others had, Ehud nodded his head, saying, "Exactly! That's because Christianity is not what *Yahshua* started. It's something else that started later. The Bride of Messiah is the Twelve Tribes. Here look at this verse in Revelation 21:9 and 21:14. In the next age, there isn't heaven with people floating around on clouds. In the next age, there is Israel and there are the nations. In this age, it is Israel and the nations. Israel is the Bride of Messiah, who will truly be a *spotless* bride made up of those who are completely devoted. Disciples spend their time preparing themselves to be the bride of their King."

Tim and Ehud talked for hours. Tim realized that if what Ehud was saying was true, it all made sense. The light turned on. The Bride of Messiah would be a spotless bride, formed of completely devoted people who obeyed His commandments. And then there were the nations, composed of people who never had a chance to hear the gospel. It answered the Great Conundrum. If these things were true, then the implications were far-reaching. In spite of his efforts, he was still in a deception. Now the choice was whether to humble himself again, and admit he was still lost, in hopes of finding the true salvation that was here in the Body of Messiah. The reason he never experienced salvation is because he never had the place where he could put the words of Christ into practice.

Ehud said, "Here, look at this verse in 1 John 5:13. The King James says it best, *"These things have I written unto you that believe on the name of the Son of God; that ye may know that ye have eternal life, and that ye may believe on the name of the Son of God."* Ehud continued, "I don't doubt your sincerity or your experience, but you don't have faith. Faith comes by hearing the Good News spoken by a disciple who is already living the message."

**Faith
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Tim longed to believe, but he didn't yet believe to the point of completely entrusting his entire life, surrendering all his possessions, aspirations, time, and money. Nor could he really do so until he encountered the good soil where all the disciples were together and obedient to His commands. Only in community, with the life described in Acts 2:44, can disciples do the works that were prepared for them to do, in order to build up the Body of Christ in a visible and tangible way. Only in community can disciples give up everything and still have a place to live. Only in community can disciples obey the commandments of Jesus and the directions of the New Covenant Scriptures, such as "encourage one another daily." Tim believed in the name of the Son of God, yes. But he did not know that he had eternal life, because he did not *fully* believe in Him — to the point of utter surrender. But he wanted to believe. He wanted to do God's will. And so the question was before him: should he hold on to his old life, or give it up?

The choice wasn't hard. Tim returned home for a few weeks to pack his bags and tie up loose ends, and then traveled back to the Twelve Tribes to move in. Within two weeks, he had surrendered his whole life to be a disciple of Yahshua. Through a great search, Tim finally found his heart's desire.

This story began in 1996. My life here in the Communities of the Twelve Tribes continues to be a means of salvation as I learn to walk as our Master Yahshua walked. Please come and visit, I'd love to meet you and talk with you. ❁



P.S.: Ronn is here, too!

WHAT IF...?

Following are a number of scripture passages whose significance seems to be overlooked by many Christians, but have dire consequences if ignored...

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)

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 do 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? Did you know that there are actually two distinct types of "second death" mentioned in the Scriptures? The second death for unbelievers we all know about — eternity spent in the Lake of Fire.¹ But the second death for disciples — which will be for the foolish virgins only² — is to miss the millennial kingdom rule of Messiah on the earth. These foolish virgins will spend a thousand years in death with the unbelievers³ to pay for their unconfessed sins. They did not give themselves to purification in this age and so their souls were not saved from death.⁴ They are unable to be presented to their King as whole and complete, and so will miss out on the kingdom age.⁵

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)

¹ Revelation 20:14-15 ² This is graphically illustrated in the parable of the ten virgins in Matthew 25:1-13 ³ Luke 12:46 ⁴ James 5:19-20 ⁵ James 1:4

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 eternal⁶ kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. (2 Peter 1:5-11)

What if you *don't* add virtue⁷ 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? 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, 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? ❄

⁶ This word actually means *age-lasting*, that is, the kingdom of the millennial age.

⁷ *virtue* — behavior showing high moral standards.

Give up *everything* for the faith? Give up *anything* for the faith? Such questions never confronted me while growing up in the very large denomination my family belonged to. They did become an issue for me later on, though, and that for an amazing reason. But as a teenager, I simply stopped going to church. My high school and college years were unremarkable, but then my story took a surprising turn... well, actually, there were two or three surprises...

I was as surprised as any agnostic to find myself drawn towards the Christian faith. My attraction towards a young woman aglow with her newfound faith (who later became my wife) played a big part — that and the influence of some sincere Christians on campus. They deeply impressed me and gave me hope that my life could make a difference.

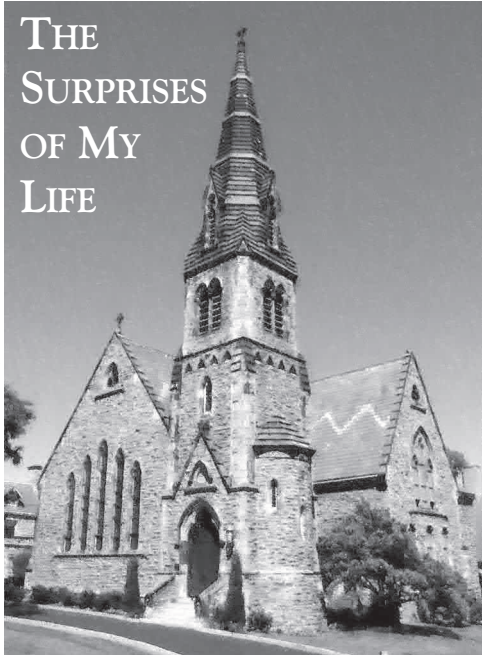
As earnestly as I could, one early morning in an empty parking lot, I gave my life to Jesus, asking him to forgive my sins and come into my heart. I was now a Christian on my own, not just because I'd grown up as one. I would probably still be a Christian if it weren't for one thing. It was the second great surprise of my life.

One summer I did something that we just didn't do in the church I had grown up in. I opened up the Bible and read it from beginning to end, one book a day. Some days it was a lot of reading. Wow! I was never the same again. The disquiet I felt at reading the New Testament never left me.

No matter how committed or content I seemed at church, at Sunday school, or as I signed checks and mailed them off to some far-away ministry, I did not ever have true peace in my heart. If the Gospels had just been left out of the New Testament, I think I would have been content with my life. But they were there, and what they said was not the gospel I had been presented with. What did this all mean?

True gospel? False gospel? For a long time, I did not sense that I even had a choice to make. The Christian gospel was the only one I had heard. It was the only one anybody had that I knew of. Why it was different from what I read in the Gospels, I didn't know, but I couldn't deny the fact that it was. I

THE SURPRISES OF MY LIFE



could only wonder how a religion so great, so long-lasting, and with so many adherents could have so little to do with its charter documents, its alleged foundation.

So many disturbing words confronted me in the Gospels:

- You must hate your life in this world.¹
- You must give up all your possessions in order to be His disciple.²
- You must put away the sword.³
- You must despise what is highly esteemed among men.⁴

Were these the words of a cult leader to his deluded followers, or of the Son of God to His would-be disciples? Actually, I did not for a moment think it was the former. But I wondered, if people would be honest with themselves about the Gospels, would they say that He was to them as the Gospels say He must be? Because if He were truly their Lord and Savior, wouldn't they be doing what He said? And what of me? Shouldn't I be doing what He said? Was He my Savior, or was I just fooling myself that He was? Maybe I had believed in vain, as Paul feared of the Corinthians.⁵

Thinking things through, I began to realize that the Epistles weren't what I thought, either. There was another host of impossibles there. Were they just given to condemn us? I had heard teachings that said, more or less bluntly, that not only was the Old Covenant law given only to condemn us and cause us to see our sinful condition, but that so were the "hard sayings" of the New Testament. Were the commandments actually meant to be taken seriously? Paul and John seemed to think so.

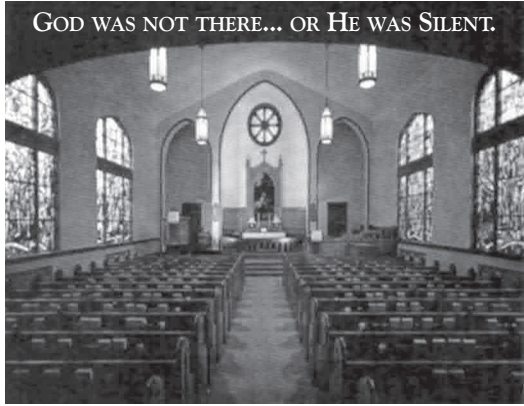
- Do not be bound together with unbelievers.⁶
- Among the works of the flesh are *factions*.⁷
- Submit to your leaders.⁸
- You must not love the world or the things of the world.⁹
- If you do not love your brother, whom you can see, you do not love the Father, whom you can't see.¹⁰

It very much seemed, to paraphrase the Christian apologist, Josh McDowell, that the New Testament must be the work of madmen, evil men, or godly men.¹¹ I believed that Jesus was the Savior, and that the men who followed Him were godly, but where was I to become His disciple? Among the multitudes who were not doing any of His "hard sayings"? I didn't think so. I kept reading, pondering, and praying. There wasn't much else to do.

Then one day, when I was alone in the sanctuary of my church, I experienced the third surprise of my life. Actually, there was no one else in the building. As Sunday school superintendent, I had keys to the place. So I

¹ John 12:25 ² Luke 14:33 ³ Luke 22:51 ⁴ Luke 16:15 ⁵ 1 Corinthians 15:1-2 ⁶ 2 Corinthians 6:14 ⁷ Galatians 5:20 ⁸ Hebrews 13:17 ⁹ 1 John 2:15 ¹⁰ 1 John 4:20
¹¹ McDowell's particular questions were, "Was He a liar? Was He a lunatic? Was He Lord?" [*Christianity: Hoax or History?*, Tyndale House Publishers, pages 8-10.]

cried out with all my heart to God, on my face in His sanctuary (as I thought it was), but I heard nothing. Not a hint that I was even heard; not a hint of response from Him could I detect in my spirit. Strain as I might, I heard nothing. *God was not there... or He was silent.*



I knew then that I would not continue going to this place, to this empty building, where He was not. I looked around at the cavernous, empty space. Just why should He answer me there? What was in such a place for Him? Was it a place for His word to dwell? Where? In space? He already had space. He had a universe of space. He needed a people — a people who would do His will.

That is what had led me to cry out to Him in the first place. I had recently met a people who seemed to actually be doing His will on the earth. So what I really wanted to know was whether I should stay where I was, or go and join myself to them. What decided the matter for me was the gospel.

Somehow there was within me a powerful urge and desire to keep the words of the Son of God. I can only thank God for this desire. My part was to respond. If you have made it this far reading this article, I presume the same desire is in you, too. I had come to the firm conclusion that I could not (nor could anyone) keep His words alone. It is only together, as they were together in the first community in Jerusalem,¹² that we are able to keep His commandments.

No “born-again” Christian I knew ever had to give up anything dear to him. Yes, many will say “I gave up drugs and booze, and stopped being immoral.” It is very good to stop doing the things that degrade you and hurt others. Most religions teach such right things, and quite often their members behave as well or better than many Christians.

But disciples give up everything. They cast their lot with their brothers and sisters, “putting all their eggs in one basket,” as the old saying goes. That is why disciples live together in community. They love both the Savior and His words about giving up everything:

So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple. (Luke 14:33)

Disciples hate their lives in this world. That’s why they give them up. That’s why they are so thankful to hear that giving up everything is exactly

¹² Acts 2:44; 4:32-35

what the Savior calls them to do. More than that, hating “your life in this world” is prerequisite to gaining eternal life!

He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. (John 12:25)

As Christians, all the things of this world that we clung to only served to divide us, just as the rest of the world was divided — rich and poor, black and white, male and female. We were as divided as the world around us. Those divisions between Christians: personal, denominational, cultural, economic, and national, are why the prayer of the Savior in John 17 seemed as if it would never be answered:

That they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one: I in them, and You in Me; that they may be made perfect in one, and that the world may know that You sent Me, and have loved them as You have loved Me. (John 17:21-23)

Did He really mean these words? Surely He was a righteous man! Wasn't He righteous enough to have His prayer answered?

Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed. The effective, fervent prayer of a righteous man avails much. (James 5:16)

Was His prayer “effectual and fervent” or wasn't it? Was He righteous or wasn't He? These are questions that demand an answer. Couldn't you also say that John 17:21-23 is a judgment, a verdict, that demands evidence? What if there is no evidence? Must not the judgment be vacated, the verdict annulled?¹³

I believed He was Lord, and I believed He was righteous, and I believed His prayer was fervent and effectual. It was worth my possessions, my job, my place in the world, my life, my everything to see this righteous man's prayer answered. So on October 23, 1982, my wife and I forsook everything and were baptized into the true Body of Messiah, entering into a lifelong covenant with others who had done the same.¹⁴ I have not been disappointed. ✨

Kevin



¹³ Josh McDowell's most famous books are *Evidence that Demands a Verdict, 1 and 2*. So where is the evidence? ¹⁴ The addresses of our communities are listed on the back of this freepaper. Come and see for yourself!

THE TEACHINGS OF JESUS OF NAZARETH

(Quoted from *The Outline of History*, by H. G. Wells)

This doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, which was the main teaching of Jesus, and which plays so small a part in the Christian creeds, is certainly one of the most revolutionary doctrines that ever stirred and changed human thought. It is small wonder if the world of that time failed to grasp its full significance... For the doctrine of the Kingdom of Heaven, as Jesus seems to have preached it, was no less than a bold and uncompromising demand for a complete change and cleansing of the life of our struggling race, an utter cleansing, without and within...

He was too great for his disciples. And in view of what he plainly said, is it any wonder that all who were rich and prosperous felt a horror of strange things, a swimming of their world at his teaching? Perhaps the priests and the rulers and the rich men understood him better than his followers...

He was like some terrible moral huntsman digging mankind out of the snug burrows in which they had lived hitherto. In the white blaze of this kingdom of his there was to be no property, no privilege, no pride and precedence... and no reward but love. Is it any wonder that men were dazzled and blinded and cried out against him? Even his disciples cried out when he would not spare them the light. Is it any wonder that the priests realized that between this man and themselves there was no choice but that he or priestcraft should perish? Is it any wonder that the Roman soldiers, confronted and amazed by something soaring over their comprehension and threatening all their disciplines, should take refuge in wild laughter, and crown him with thorns and robe him in purple and make a mock Caesar of him? For to take him seriously was to enter upon a strange and alarming life, to abandon habits, to control instincts and impulses, to essay an incredible happiness...

Is it any wonder that to this day this Galilean is too much for our small hearts? ❀

H. G. Wells, *The Outline of History – A Plain History of Life and Mankind*, Volume 1, Section 29.2, 1920.

THE NAME ABOVE ALL NAMES

In the days of John the Baptist and the Son of God, the preserved language of the devout Jews was Hebrew. 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 Mary and 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, but the Hebrew name *Yahshua* literally means *Yahweh's Salvation*,¹ which 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."

יהושע

If you look in a pre-1769 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, 1611 KJV)*

*For if **Jesus** had given them rest, then would he not afterward have spoken of another day. (Hebrews 4:8, 1611 KJV)*

However, if you look in any modern translation of the Bible, including the New King James, 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 of Moses' successor, which meant, "He will save." This name looks forward to the name of the Son of God, for Joshua was the prophetic forerunner of the Messiah, bringing

¹ *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*.

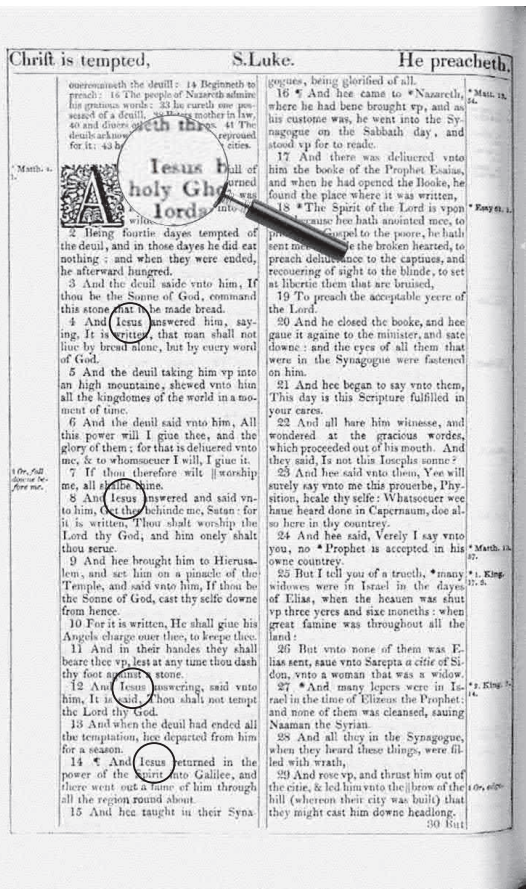
Israel into the Promised Land and leading them to victory over their enemies. But since the translators obviously know this fact, why do they only translate *Iesous* as *Joshua* in these two verses, and as *Jesus* everywhere else?

The NIV New Testament even has a footnote supporting this fact under Matthew 1:21: "*Jesus* is the Greek form of *Joshua*."

But the fact is, the name of God's Son was not even written or pronounced as "*Jesus*" in English until the 1600s, simply because there was no "J" sound or letter in English before then.² The modern letter "J" evolved 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



A page from the 1611 Authorized Version (King James Bible). Note the lack of a "J" in the Savior's name.

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*.³ ❄

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



COME OUT OF HER, MY PEOPLE!

He called out with a mighty voice, "Fallen, fallen is Babylon the great! ... Then I heard another voice from heaven saying, "Come out of her, my people, lest you take part in her sins, lest you share in her plagues; for her sins are heaped high as heaven, and God has remembered her iniquities." (Revelation 18:2-5)

Many religious extremists have taken it upon themselves to call Christians out of the traditional churches, believing the Catholic Church, or Christianity as a whole, to be the Harlot described in chapter 17 of the book of Revelation. But they entirely miss the spirit of this call of compassion from the One who is Love. They call Christians to leave the pews, but they have nothing to offer them other than another set of beliefs. They do not make a home for the lonely, the orphan, or the widow.¹ So these vulnerable ones continue to be *"tossed to and fro by every wind of doctrine, by human cunning, by craftiness in deceitful schemes."*²

The true spirit of the call in Revelation 18:4 is found in these words of the true Messiah:

O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, the city that kills the prophets and stones those who are sent to it! How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you were not willing! See, your house is left to you desolate." (Matthew 23:37-38)

Yahshua was calling people out of the established religion of His day, but He wasn't going to leave them as orphans. He wanted to gather them into a full-time life of love and care, of warm fellowship and purposeful service, a prophetic life with consequential effect toward the tearing down of Satan's kingdom.³

We also are calling you *out* because we want to gather you *in* to a restoration of that very same radical life of love and care — if you are willing! ✨

¹ Psalm 68:5-6 ² Ephesians 4:14 ³ Hebrews 10:12-13

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THERE IS A PEOPLE who woke up this morning with one thing on their minds: to love their Creator with all their heart, soul, and strength, and to love one another just as He loved them. Being ordinary human beings, we are far from perfect in our love, yet, in hope, we persevere. Our goal? That the Kingdom of God would come on earth as it is in heaven, so that love and justice can rule on the earth. Sound impossible? It would be, were it not that Yahshua, the Messiah, came to redeem mankind, to set us free from the curse of sin, and to enable us to love. Because we have come to see His worth and our own desperate need, we have surrendered everything in order to follow Him. Our hearts and our homes are open night and day to any who are interested in our life or are weary of their sin and want to know the purpose for which they were created. ✨