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**Christ
is
The Kingdom of God**

By Leroy Surface

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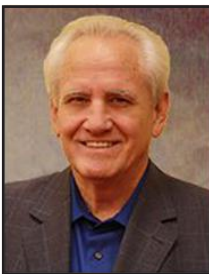
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Leroy Surface

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Keith Surface

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Christ: The Kingdom of God

Message by: Leroy Surface

Many years ago I sought God diligently for the *“revelation of the Kingdom of God.”* I had heard a teacher who could teach for hours about the kingdom of God from the parables Jesus gave us about the *“net,”* the *“mustard seed,”* the *“little leaven,”* and many other illustrations which Jesus used. I fasted and prayed for weeks, so hungry for *“the revelation.”* One night I was praying and worshiping God at the midnight hour when I was *“caught up”* in the Spirit, and I knew God was going to give me the revelation of the Kingdom of God. The Spirit of God spoke to me, and this is what I heard: *“Christ is the Kingdom of God.”* Those six words is all I heard, and I was disappointed. At the time, I had absolutely no comprehension of what God had spoken. Over forty five years later, I understand; *“Christ is the Kingdom of God,”* and I, like the apostle Paul in his generation, seek the *“grace of God”* and the *“anointing of the Holy Ghost”* to preach the *“unsearchable riches of Christ”* (Ephesians 3:8). Let me hasten to say, the *“unsearchable riches of Christ”* are not *“things,”* but they are Christ Himself. He is *“the Kingdom of God.”*

Christ: The Kingdom

Colossians 1:12-13: *“Giving thanks unto the Father...who hath delivered us from the power of darkness, and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”*

The *“power of darkness”* is *“sin.”* Some call it *“the sin nature,”* but it is in reality *“the nature of the serpent”* which came into the world through the deception of Eve and the disobedience of Adam. *“Salvation”* is *“deliverance”* from the nature of the serpent, which is *“sin.”* The angel Gabriel told Joseph of the birth of Jesus shortly before he took Mary to be his wife, saying, *“Thou shalt call His name Jesus, for He shall save His people from their sins”* (Matthew 1:21).

“...and hath translated us into the kingdom of his dear Son.”
The children of Israel’s wandering in the wilderness for forty years is not the pattern that is set forth for the children of God. Many

teachers have arisen in these last days, seeking authority over the people, because they want to be a “*Moses*” between God and man. The apostle Paul gave a clear warning concerning these when he said, “...*of your own selves shall men arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them*” (Acts 20:30). These “*teachers*” will cause their followers to wander about from fad to fad all the days of their life, yet they can never bring them to enter the kingdom of God. The apostle Paul spoke of these also when he quoted from the ninety-fifth Psalm:

Psalms 95:7-11: “*To day if ye will hear his voice, Harden not your heart, as in the provocation, and as in the day of temptation in the wilderness: **When your fathers tempted me** (tested me), **proved me, and saw my work.** Forty years long was I grieved with this generation, and said, It is a people that do err in their heart, and they have not known my ways: **Unto whom I swear in my wrath that they should not enter into my rest.**”*

It is amazing to me that God “*proved Himself*” again and again to the children of Israel in the wilderness both before and after they refused to enter their land of promise. They saw the great miracles of God’s deliverance and provision more so than any people ever, but they “*perished in the wilderness.*” Please believe me, the “*wilderness walk*” is not the way of salvation for those who believe God. His way is to “*deliver them from sin*” (the power of darkness) and immediately “*translate them into the kingdom of His dear Son.*”

The conversion of Saul of Tarsus from the “*chief of sinners*” to the greatest among the apostles is given as a “...*pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting*” (I Timothy 1:16). Saul of Tarsus was by his own confession, “*the chief of sinners*” because he had persecuted the church. He was a very devout Jew who kept the righteousness of the law blamelessly (Philippians 3:6), but was so filled with hatred against the Christians that his every breath “*breathed out slaughter*” against the disciples of Jesus (Acts 9:1). He was on his way to Damascus with authority to arrest any Christians he found in the synagogues and bring them in chains to Jerusalem where they would stand trial for their lives. On the way, a great light from heaven shone upon Saul of Tarsus, blinding him, and causing him to fall to the ground. He heard a voice from heaven, saying,

“Saul, Saul, why persecuteth thou me.” Saul answered, *“Who are you, Lord?”* He heard the answer, *“I am Jesus whom thou persecuteth.”* Saul’s immediate answer was *“What would you have me do, Lord.”*

We hear a lot about the need for Christians to *“make Jesus Lord.”* Those who try, find it to be a lifetime task filled with much struggle. Peter tells us it is God who has made Jesus to be *“both Lord and Christ”* (Acts 2:36). Saul of Tarsus did not *“make Jesus Lord;”* he only discovered that Jesus *“is Lord,”* and his immediate response was, *“What would you have me do, Lord?”*

Some people argue that Saul was not saved until he was baptized in water. What a foolish argument! Saul of Tarsus was converted to Jesus the moment he understood that *“Jesus is the Christ.”* Saul was a devout Jew who longed to see the day that Christ would come. He *“loved Christ,”* but he *“hated Jesus”* until the instant he discovered that *“Jesus is the Christ.”* At that moment, according to the apostle John, Saul of Tarsus was *“born of God”* (1 John 5:1). This was the *“first day”* of his salvation. On the *“third day”* he received his sight and was filled with the Holy Ghost,” and the scripture says, *“And straightway he preached Christ in the synagogues, that he is the Son of God”* (Acts 8:20). Within three years, Saul of Tarsus received the greatest revelation ever given to man, the *“revelation of Jesus Christ,”* which God used to *“turn the world upside down”* in that first generation (Acts 17:6).

Forgiveness or Freedom?

Colossians 1:14: *“In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness of sins.”*

The translators of the KJV sometimes mistranslated a word or a phrase perhaps for no other reason than they could not possibly comprehend the power of what was actually written. This last phrase in this verse is one such instance. The words *“even the forgiveness of sins”* serve to tell us what *“redemption through His blood”* is, but it is in the definition of the Greek word *“aphesis,”* which the translators rendered as *“forgiveness,”* that the problem arises. According to *“Strong’s Greek Dictionary,”* the proper definition of

“*aphesis*” is “*freedom*.” “***Redemption through His blood***” brings “***freedom from sin***” instead of “*forgiveness of sins*.” A common fallacy is that Jesus Christ had to die before God could “*forgive our sins*.” The truth of that matter is, God has always, from the beginning of time, forgiven and even pardoned those who “*forsake their wicked ways and turn to Him*” (Isaiah 55:7). When God revealed His great name to Moses, He declared Himself to be “*...merciful and gracious, longsuffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, keeping mercy for thousands, **forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin**...*” (Deuteronomy 34:6-7). If Jesus died only to “*forgive our sins*,” He died in vain. The atonement was so much more than that. Christ died to “*take away the sin of the world*,” and to make those who know the truth “*free indeed*” from sin (John 8:32-36, Romans 6:6-7, 6:18, 6:22).

A clear understanding of the Greek word “*aphesis*,” which was used seventeen times in the New Testament, will forever change the way a person sees the gospel of Christ. It was translated six times as “*forgiveness*,” nine times as “*remission*,” and one time each as “*deliverance*” and “*liberty*,” but in each of these cases it should have been translated as “*freedom*.” Only in Romans 3:25 can the English word “*remission*” be understood as “*forgiveness*” when it speaks of “*the remission of sins **that are past**, through the **forbearance of God***.” The word “*remission*” in that verse was translated from the Greek word “*paresis*,” and is defined by “*Strong’s Greek Dictionary*” as “*toleration*.” In every other place in the New Testament the word “*remission*” speaks of “*freedom*.” It is not “*freedom to sin*,” as many seem to believe, but “***freedom from sin***,” and carries with it “*freedom from the oppression, depression, and obsession of the devil*.” Your past sins do not matter if the blood of Christ has “*cleansed you from all sin* (I John 1:7)” for your present and future. God “*tolerates*” past sins because He is “*merciful, gracious, and longsuffering*” (Deuteronomy 34:6). He does not “*tolerate*” present and future sins, because Christ died to take “*all sin*” out of the heart and nature of those who “*believe the truth*” and “*trust in Him*.”

The next two chapters in this message are a listing of those verses where the words “*forgiveness*” and “*remission*” should have been

translated as “*freedom*.” Examine them prayerfully. Ask God for understanding of what they actually say.

Forgiveness = Freedom

Acts 5:30-31: “*The God of our fathers raised up Jesus, whom ye slew and hanged on a tree. Him hath God exalted with his right hand to be a Prince and a Saviour, for to give repentance to Israel, and forgiveness-of (freedom from) sins.*”

Acts 13:38-39: “*Be it known unto you therefore, men and brethren, that through this man is preached unto you the forgiveness-of (freedom from) sins: and by him all that believe are justified from all things, from which ye could not be justified by the law of Moses.*”

Acts 26:15-18 “*And I said, Who art thou, Lord? And he said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest. But rise, and stand upon thy feet: for I have appeared unto thee for this purpose, to make thee a minister and a witness both of these things which thou hast seen, and of those things in the which I will appear unto thee; delivering thee from the people, and from the Gentiles, unto whom now I send thee, to open their eyes, and to turn them from darkness to light, and from the power of Satan unto God, that they may receive forgiveness-of (freedom from) sins, and inheritance among them which are sanctified by faith that is in me.*”

Ephesians 1:7: “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness-of (freedom from) sins, according to the riches of his grace;*”

Colossians 1:14: “*In whom we have redemption through his blood, even the forgiveness-of (freedom from) sins:*”

Remission = Freedom

Matthew 26:28: “*For this is my blood of the new testament, which is shed for many for the remission-of (freedom from) sins.*”

Luke 1:76-77: “*And thou, child, shalt be called the prophet of the Highest: for thou shalt go before the face of the Lord to prepare his ways; to give knowledge of salvation unto his people by the remission-of (freedom from) their sins...*”

Luke 24:47: “And that repentance and ~~remission of~~ **(freedom from)** sins should be preached in his name among all nations, beginning at Jerusalem.”

Acts 2:38: “Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the ~~remission of~~ **(freedom from)** sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost.”

Acts 10:43: “To him give all the prophets witness, that through his name whosoever believeth in him shall receive ~~remission of~~ **(freedom from)** sins.”

Hebrews 10:18: “Now where ~~remission of~~ **(freedom from)** these is, there is no more offering for sin.”

Christ: The Image of God

Colossians 1:15: “Who is the image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature:”

According to the revelation God gave to Peter, Jesus is “*the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). On the Day of Pentecost, Peter brought a message to prove by the scriptures that Jesus is “*both Lord and Christ*” (Acts 2:36). Christ existed eternally as “*the Word of God,*” whom John said was “*in the beginning with God*” and “*was God*” (John 1:1). He was, according to the Greek text “*The Logos,*” which is defined by “*Strong’s Greek Dictionary*” as “*the divine expression, (that is, Christ).*” Christ is as eternal as God is, and has forever been the “*expression of God.*” We express ourselves with words, thus Christ, being the “*expression of God*” is “*the Word of God.*” When “*The Word was made flesh*” (John 1:14), Christ became a man, “*the Son of the living God*” (Matthew 16:16). Even as a “*man*” Christ was still the “*expression of God,*” but now He could be “*seen*” with the eye, “*heard*” with the ear, and “*handled*” with hands (1 John 1:1). The apostles revealed Jesus Christ as “*the express image of His (God’s) person*” (Hebrews 1:3). The “*Son of God*” is the “*visible image*” of the “*invisible God,*” as well as “*the first born of every creature.*”

“...the first born of every creature.” Christ is as eternal as God is, because He was *“with God”* and *“was God.”* Christ was not a creation of God, neither was He *“born of God.”* He was eternally *“the Word of God,”* the *“expression of God.”* The Son of God was *“born of God,”* but He was also *“born of Mary.”* Paul tells us in Galatians 4:4, *“But when the fulness of the time was come, God sent forth his Son, **made of a woman**, made under the law....”* Jesus, the Son of the living God, was *“made of a woman.”* As the *“first born of every creature,”* He is also the *“firstborn among many brethren”* (Romans 8:29). It is the New Creation Paul speaks of in this verse. Remember that every man in Christ is a *“new creature,”* of which Jesus is the *“firstborn.”*

Christ: The Creator

Colossians 1:16-18: *“For **by him** were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created **by him**, and **for him**: and he is before all things, and by him all things consist. And he is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence.”*

Notice the three sets of two words I have highlighted: *“by him,”* which is used two times, and *“for him,”* which is used only once. The first *“by him”* was translated from the Greek words *“en autos,”* which mean *“in him.”* The second time the words *“by him”* appear, they were translated from the Greek words *“dia autos,”* which mean *“through him.”* Finally, the words *“for him”* were translated from the Greek words *“eis autos,”* which mean *“into him.”* The apostle clearly tells us, *“All things in heaven and earth, both visible and invisible, whether they are thrones, dominions, principalities, or powers; all things were created **in Him, through Him and into Him.**”*

(17) “...and he is before all things...” Christ is as eternal as God is. He told the Jews, *“Before Abraham was, I am”* (John 8:58). There was never a time that Christ did not exist. He was before the heavens and the earth were created.

“...and by him all things consist.” Again, the word “*by*” in the verse should have been translated as “*in*.” All things were created in Him, and “*in Him all things consist*.” The English word “*consist*” was translated from two Greek words, the first denoting “*union*” and the second meaning “*to stand*.” All things “*stand in union with Christ*.” Anything that is not in harmony with Him, whether it be “*a man*,” a “*nation*,” the “*earth*,” or “*the entire universe*,” that “*thing*” will descend into chaos. Paul speaks of Christ in Hebrews 1:3 as “*upholding all things by the word of His power*.”

Christ: The Head of the Body

(18) “And he is the head of the body, the church...” It seems as though this statement by the apostle comes almost as an afterthought. After telling of the greatness of Christ, “*in whom, through whom, and into whom*” all things were created, I can hear Paul say, “*Oh, by the way, He is the head of the body, the church*.” Our “*head*” is not a man that could fail. He is the “*creator of all things*” who became a man and shed His precious blood to “*redeem us from all iniquity and purify us unto Himself*” (Titus 3:13-14). He is the “*head of the body*” and we who are reconciled into Him are His members.

“...who is the beginning...” This phrase is not a question. The apostle John wrote, “*In the beginning was the word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God...*” (John 1:1). Christ was not only “*In the beginning with God*,” but He “***is the beginning***.” These words by the apostle Paul are confirmed three times by our Lord Himself in His revelation to John:

Revelation 1:8: “*I am Alpha and Omega, **the beginning** and the ending, saith the Lord...*”

Revelation 21:6: “*And he said unto me, It is done. I am Alpha and Omega, **the beginning** and the end.*”

Revelation 22:13: “*I am Alpha and Omega, **the beginning** and the end, the first and the last.*”

When I first saw this great truth, I was afraid to speak it. Christ is *“the beginning”* of all things. Genesis 1:1 is a testimony of Christ; *“In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.”* All things were created *“in Him, through Him, and into Him,”* who *“is the beginning.”* He is also **“the beginning” of the “new creation,”** which will have no end. Paul tells us, *“...we are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus unto good works...”* (Ephesians 2:10). This is also the truth Jesus revealed about Himself to the Philadelphian church; *“These things saith the Amen, the faithful and true witness, **the beginning of the creation of God** (the new creation)”* (Revelation 3:14).

In Ephesians 3:4, the apostle Paul speaks of his knowledge of the *“mystery of Christ”* which he did not receive from man, but by *“revelation of Jesus Christ”* (Galatians 1:12). When Jesus was born to Mary, He was both the *“seed of the woman”* and *“the Son of God.”* He was *“the first man of a new creation.”* He is and forever will be *“the only begotten Son of God,”* because He was *“begotten”* the Son of God from the womb of a woman. The baby Jesus was the *“firstborn”* among the *“many brethren”* which would be *“born of God”* through His death and resurrection (1 Peter 1:3).

“...the firstborn from the dead...” While our redemption was made complete through the death of Christ on the cross, it is through His resurrection the third day that we are *“born of God,”* the *“children of God.”* In a previous verse (15) He is called *“the firstborn of every creature.”* The baby Jesus, wrapped in swaddling clothes and laid in a manger, was the firstborn of the *“new creation.”* In this verse, He is the *“firstborn from the dead,”* which speaks of His resurrection. Isaiah prophesied of this in Isaiah 53:10, saying, *“...when thou shalt **make his soul an offering for sin** (speaks of the atonement), **he shall see his seed** (speaks of the new creation), **he shall prolong his days** (speaks of His resurrection), and **the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in his hand** (speaks of His reign at the right hand of His Father).*

“...that in all things he might have the preeminence.” Notice that the word *“things”* is italicized in the scripture. He who was *“before all things”* and is *“the creator of all things,”* has become, through His death and resurrection, *“the head of the body, the church.”* At this point, the apostle ceases to speak about *“things,”* because *“all*

things” belong to the old creation that is passing away. Jesus tells us “...beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not **in the abundance of the things** which he possesseth” (Luke 12:15). The apostle John warned the believers, “Love not the world, **neither the things that are in the world**” (I John 2:15). It is not in or among “all things” that Christ has the preeminence, but “in all,” that is, in and among all who are “born of God,” Jesus Christ is preeminent. He is “the head of the body.”

A “New Creation in Christ”

Revelation 21:1: “And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away...”

Revelation 21:5: “And he that sat upon the throne said, Behold, I make all things new.”

In the original creation, the first thing God created was “the heavens and the earth” (Genesis 1:1). Afterward, He created all things that are on the earth, and the last “thing” He created was man. In the “new creation,” God has reversed the order of creation. The first thing He has created is “a new man in Christ,” and the last thing He will create is “the new heavens and the new earth.” Right now, however, the entirety of the “new creation” has its existence in Christ, who is the creator of all things (Colossians 1:16-18). Christ is the Kingdom of God, and “in Christ” is paradise. I have a very close friend, a man of God and pastor of a great church, who struggled for understanding of the gospel of Christ for a period of time. He believed what I was preaching was true, but he could not understand it for himself. One day while worshipping the Lord, he heard the words of Jesus to the thief on the cross, “Today shalt thou be with me in paradise” (Luke 23:43). With those words, the truth seemed to burst into his understanding with great joy of knowing and understanding. To be honest, it was a time before I understood what he had seen, but it is clear that “in Christ is paradise.” Christ died to restore that which was lost in Adam, and all that was “lost” is “found” in Christ for those who will believe and trust in Him.

Christ prayed for us, saying to the Father, “...these are in the world...” (John 17:11), “...they are not of the world...” (John 17:16), “...I

have sent them into the world” (John 17:18). Jesus told His apostles the day before His death on the cross, *“These things I have spoken unto you, that in me ye might have peace. In the world ye shall have tribulation: but be of good cheer; I have overcome the world”* (John 16:33). We are *“in the world”* but our citizenship is in heaven. We are not *“of the world”* because our dwelling place is in Christ. As long as we are *“in the world”* we will be affected by the circumstances of the world. We will have the same trials that are common to all who are in the world, but we will have *“righteousness, peace, and joy* (Romans 14:7) *”* that is not of this world.

Consider the apostle Paul for a moment. *“In the world”* they beat him with whips five times, and with rods three times. They stoned him with stones and left him for dead. They drove him out of the synagogues, and from city to city, but all along the way he preached Christ. In Philippi, they severely beat Paul and Silas, and cast them into the inner prison, with their feet in stocks. At the midnight hour, they were singing praises to God. How could this be? *“In the world”* they had tribulation, but *“in Christ”* they had peace. Several years later, when Paul set his course to leave Asia for Jerusalem, in every place along the way, the saints warned him that he would be bound and imprisoned in Jerusalem. Paul told them *“None of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy...”* (Acts 20:24). Several weeks later, when the prophet Agabus prophesied of Paul that he would be bound and imprisoned when he came to Jerusalem, Paul’s only response was, *“I am ready not to be bound only, but also to die at Jerusalem for the name of the Lord Jesus”* (Acts 21:13).

II Corinthians 4:17: *“For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, worketh for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.”*

Romans 8:18: *“For I reckon that the sufferings of this present time are not worthy to be compared with the glory which shall be revealed in us.”*

Christ: “Unsearchable Riches”

Ephesians 3:8: “Unto me, who am less than the least of all saints, is this grace given, that I should preach among the Gentiles **the unsearchable riches of Christ.**”

The “*riches of Christ*” are “*unsearchable*,” which means a believer may receive “*more of Him*” every day they live, and never exhaust the treasury that Christ is. For this reason it is much easier to tell of “*things*” that are “*not in Christ*” than tell all the things that are.

1. There is no sin in Christ. “*And ye know that he was manifested to take away our sins; and in him is no sin*” (1 John 3:5). When the next verse says, “*Whosoever abideth in Him sinneth not*,” the indication is that Christ is the dwelling place of all who are “*born of God*,” and they “*cannot sin*” (1 John 3:9), because they “*abide in Him*” in whom there “*is no sin.*” Certainly, it follows that “*there is no sinner in Christ.*”

2. There is no devil in Christ. Due to a lack of understanding of the new creation, many people seem to believe Christ failed to do what He was sent to do. On the same day sin entered into the world, God promised a “*seed of the woman*” who would “*bruise the head of the serpent*” (Genesis 3:15). When Christ became a man, He became both the Son of God and the “*seed of the woman.*” His mission on earth was to “*bruise the head of the serpent*,” which He did through His death on the cross. Paul said it this way; “*Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, He (Christ the creator) also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil*” (Hebrews 2:14). Satan is “*the god of this present evil world.*” It is obvious that he is “*alive and well*” in this world, but he was “*cast down from heaven*” when Christ shed His blood for us on the cross. Those who “*abide in Christ*,” dwell in “*heavenly places*” which is “*...far above all principality, and power, and might, and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this world, but also in that which is to come*” (Ephesians 1:21).

Revelation 12:9-11: “*And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan, which deceiveth the whole*

*world: he was cast out into the earth, and his angels were cast out with him. And I heard a loud voice saying in heaven, **Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God, and the power of his Christ:** for the accuser of our brethren is cast down, which accused them before our God day and night. And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb....”*

The scripture tells of a warfare between Michael and his angels, and the dragon (Satan, the serpent) and his angels, that began when Lucifer (Satan, the serpent) exalted himself above the angels of God (Isaiah 14:12-13). The warfare continued with neither side prevailing until Christ shed His precious blood on the cross. Immediately there was a “*loud voice*” in heaven saying, “*Now is come salvation, and strength, and the kingdom of our God....*” The word “*now*” defines the moment the victory was won and the devil was cast down. “*Now*” defines the moment salvation came, because the “*works of the devil*” had been destroyed (I John 3:8). The chains of sin were broken off, and the prisoners were made free. “*And they overcame him by the blood of the Lamb...*” Michael the archangel was the first to overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb, but everyone who is “*born of God*” is also an overcomer and has also “*overcome the devil by the blood of the Lamb.*”

The apostle John spoke to the “*little children*” in I John 4:4. The Greek word “*teknion*” which he used speaks of “*infants.*” He said to the new converts in the congregation, “*You are of God, little children, and have overcome them, because greater is He that is in you than he that is in the world.*” The newborn infant Christians were overcomers for no other reason than they were “*born of God.*” Incredibly, it was the spirit of antichrist that is in the world they had overcome by reason of their “*new birth.*” The least among those who have been “*born of God*” can say with Paul, “*I live, yet not I, but Christ liveth in me*” (Galatians 2:20).

Born Again

John 3:3: “*Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, **he cannot see** the kingdom of God.*”

Can you “see” the kingdom of God? So many people who “*believe they are believers*,” think they are spiritual because they have entered into “*warfare*” against the devil and his angels. They tell us it is hard to be an overcomer, and it is only through constant vigilance that a child of God can keep themselves from sinning. These “*believers*” have never seen the kingdom of God. Jesus promised “*rest*” and not “*struggle*” to those who come to Him. Do you “*rest*,” or do you “*struggle*?” We at “*Behold the Lamb Publications*” go into great detail to explain “**who Christ is, why He came into the world, and the complete victory He won at Calvary over death, hell, and the devil.**” Christ did not save us to put us in the forefront of a battle against Satan. Satan is defeated! He is “*cast down to earth*,” and he “*knows he has but a short time*” (Revelation 12:12). We who believe are “*raised up together with Christ*” (Ephesians 2:6). He has “*delivered us from the power of darkness*,” and “*translated us into the kingdom of God’s dear Son*” (Colossians 1:13). Christ is that kingdom. Those who dwell in Christ dwell in the Kingdom of God where there is no sin or Satan.

Born of God

I Peter 1:23: “*Being born again, not of corruptible seed, but of incorruptible, by the word of God, which liveth and abideth for ever.*”

“*Being born again*” is not a “*process*,” it is the “*birth*” of a “*new man*” that has never existed before. Those who are “*born of God*” are not “*adopted*.” We are not “*stepchildren*,” because we are born of the “*incorruptible seed of God*.” Concerning “*the adoption*,” the apostle Paul explained it in Romans 9:3-4; “*I could wish that myself were accursed from Christ for my brethren, my kinsmen according to the flesh: Who are Israelites; to whom pertaineth the adoption....*” The nation of Israel was “*adopted*” by God when He chose them in Abraham, but those who have “*received Christ*” (John 1:12) “*have received power to become the sons of God.*” The word “*become*” can easily confuse the reader into believing in a “*process*” of “*becoming the sons of God*.” The Greek word “*ginomai*,” which was translated “*become*” means “*to cause to be (generate)*.” We became the sons of God through “*regeneration*,” which means we are “*born again*,” the sons and daughters of God.

The Greek word “*uihothesiahe*,” which means “*to place as a son*” was translated “*adoption*” five times in the New Testament. Adam was “*placed as a son*” by creation (Luke 3:38). The nation of Israel was “*placed as sons*” by God’s choosing. Those who believe the gospel of Christ are “*placed as sons*” by new birth. They are the ones who are “*born of God*.” They are born again with a “*new heart*” and a “*new spirit*,” and God has promised to put “*His Spirit*” within them (Ezekiel 36:25-27), and they do “*walk in His statutes and keep His judgments*” because these are “*written*” in their hearts (Jeremiah 31:33).

The Least in the Kingdom

Luke 7:28: “*For I say unto you, Among those that are born of women there is not a greater prophet than John the Baptist: but he that is least in the kingdom of God is greater than he.*”

The English word “*least*” is used seventeen times in the New Testament. Eight of those times, it is translated from the Greek word “*elachistos*,” which means “*least (in size, amount, dignity, etc.)*.” A correct understanding of the word in those verses would be “*insignificant*.” In six verses, the word “*least*” was translated from the Greek word “*mikros mikroteros*,” which means “*small*.” Amazing to us, the apostle Paul considered himself to be the “*least* (insignificant)” among the apostles because he “*persecuted the church*” (1 Corinthians 15:9). He also considered himself to be “*less than the least* (far less)” of any among the saints of God (Ephesians 3:8). The modern Christian thought would be that Paul had a “*self-esteem*” problem, because he considered himself to be insignificant. The truth is, Paul did not “*esteem himself*,” but he “*highly esteemed*” Christ, who lived His life in and through the apostle. Paul tells us that God has “*chosen*” those whom the world considers to be “*foolish*” to “*confound the wise*,” the “*weak*” to “*confound the mighty*,” and those whom the wise of the world reject as “*nothings*” to “*bring to nothing those that are*” (1 Corinthians 1:27-28). Contrary to all modern religious thought, Paul was willing to bear the “*labels*” the world put on him. He spoke for all the apostles of Christ when he said, “***We are fools for Christ's sake, but ye are wise in Christ; we are weak, but ye are strong; ye are honourable, but we are despised***” (1 Corinthians 4:10). The “*wise of the world*” gave their opinion

of Paul without reservation; *“His letters are weighty and powerful; but his bodily presence is weak, and his speech contemptible”* (II Corinthians 10:10). The apostles were willing to be counted as fools and *“ignorant nobodies”* (Acts 4:13) by the religious elite. When they were beaten with whips the first time, they went away *“...rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for his name”* (Acts 5:40:41). There were the ones Christ chose to *“turn the world upside down”* with the gospel they preached.

Jesus spoke of those who are *“born of women,”* saying there was not a greater prophet than John the Baptist. In this same verse He speaks of the *“least”* in the kingdom of God as being *“greater than he”* (John the Baptist). The comparison in this verse is between those who are *“born of women”* and those who are *“born of God.”* Our only entrance into the Kingdom of God is through the *“new birth.”* In the words of Jesus, John the Baptist was as great as or greater than any person who had lived on earth since the beginning of time. Consider the ramifications of this saying; Enoch, Noah, Abraham, Moses, David, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and all others of the Old Testament patriarchs and prophets were among those who were *“born of women,”* but not *“born of God.”* Among this list of those who were the greatest among men, Jesus said that not one of them was *“greater than John the Baptist.”* Then came a shocking statement; *“He that is **least in the Kingdom** of God is greater than John.”* The word Jesus used for *“least”* in this statement of truth speaks of the *“smallest in the Kingdom of God.”* The *“newborn” child of God,* the *“infant Christian,”* one who has only now been *“born of God,”* is greater than John the Baptist and all others before Him. The *“babe in Christ”* possesses something of God that all these others could only hope to receive. *“These all died in faith, not having received the promises...”* (Hebrews 11:13). *“These all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise: **God having provided some better thing for us...**”* (Hebrews 11:39-40). We are *“born of God;”* we are *“the children of God.”*

Christ: Our Life

For over fifty years at this time, I have studied the scriptures with no other study aid than the *“Strong’s Concordance”* with the Greek

and Hebrew dictionaries. I have used only the King James Version of the bible, not because I believe it is “*perfect*,” but because I trust the Greek text it was translated from more than I trust the revised Greek text from 1881. I sometimes find places where the translation of the KJV seem to be weaker than the Greek text allows. Even so, I find the KJV to be much stronger in the gospel than any of the modern versions.

Our text for this chapter begins with II Corinthians 5:14: “*For the love of Christ constraineth us; because we thus judge, that if one died for all, then were all dead.*” Most of the modern translations agree, correctly so, that the last three words of this verse should have been translated “*all died.*” Christ died as a “*proxy*” for every person on earth, so when He “*died,*” we all “*died.*” It is in the next verse (14) that the truth of the gospel is hidden by the translators of every version I have checked, including the KJV, which says, “*And that he died for all, that they which live should not henceforth live unto themselves, but unto him which died for them, and rose again.*” To give clarity, I will give this verse along with the reference numbers from Strong’s Greek dictionary:

II Corinthians 5:15: And^{G2532} **that** he died^{G599} for^{G5228} all,^{G3956} that^{G2443} they which live^{G2198} **should not** henceforth^{G3371} (no longer) live^{G2198} **unto** themselves,^{G1438} but^{G235} **unto** him which died^{G599} for^{G5228} them,^{G846} and^{G2532} rose again.^{G1453}

I have placed in bold three words that do not have a corresponding Greek word to support their usage. I understand that oftentimes words have to be added for flow of language, but these three words have hidden the truth of this verse from millions of people for hundreds of years. This verse, which was written by the apostle Paul is indicating for every believer the same truth that Paul expressed for himself in Galatians 2:20: “*I am crucified with Christ: nevertheless **I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me:** and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me.*” Using this guide, II Corinthians 5:15 is clearly understood to say, “*And He died for all, in order that **they which live no longer live themselves, but He who died for them and rose again lives in them.***”

Christ after the Flesh

(16) “Wherefore henceforth know we no man after the flesh...”

The word “*wherefore*” is of great importance in this verse. The Greek word is properly defined as “*thus therefore,*” and brings the truth of the previous verse as the basis of understanding what it means to “*know no man after the flesh.*” If Christ who died for us is living in us, that is the only basis by which we are to judge. This is not to say, as some modern versions imply, that sin doesn’t matter if we “*believe in Jesus.*” Instead, this should be understood in the same way Jesus understood the Pharisees, not by the deeds of their flesh, but by the content of their hearts. He said to them, “*Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! for ye are like unto whited sepulchres, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so ye also outwardly appear righteous unto men, but within ye are full of hypocrisy and iniquity*” (Matthew 23:27-28). The Pharisees were so perfect in their outward keeping of the Law of Moses that no one could condemn them as sinners. Jesus said of them, “*If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had not had sin: but now they have no cloke for their sin*” (John 15:22). In the next verse, Jesus reveals their sin, which they could not hide from view: “*He that hateth me hateth my Father also*” (John 15:23). Hatred filled their hearts and they could not hide it. They would become the murderers of Jesus

Remember the simplicity of the fifteenth verse: “*...they which live, no longer live themselves....*” It is Christ who lives in the children of God. He is our life (Colossians 3:4). He is our “*eternal life*” (1 John 5:11-12), and if He is not “*living in us*” we have no “*life.*”

“**...yea, though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.**” Christ “*after the flesh*” is the thirty-three and a half years of the life of Jesus on earth. The people saw His great works and marveled, “*What manner of man is this...?*” (Matthew 8:27). The woman at the well told all she met in Samaria, “*Come, see a man, which told me all things that ever I did: is not this the Christ?*” (John 4:29). She was one of very few who understood the secret of His life and power. The apostle Paul told Timothy, “*And without controversy great is the mystery of*

godliness: God was manifest in the flesh...” (I Timothy 3:16). There can be no “*controversy*” about the secret of godliness. Jesus revealed His secret to His apostles during His last day with them before the cross: “*Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works*” (John 14:10).

All of the apostles with the exception of Paul had been with Jesus for at least three years before His death on the cross. Does it seem strange that they did not spend the rest of their lives preaching to the entire world the wonderful works and miracles which were done by Jesus of Nazareth? Apart from the history given in the four “*gospels*” by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, they did not preach “*Christ after the flesh.*” When Matthew and Luke gave their stories of Jesus, they began with His birth to Mary and the “*manger scene.*” Mark began at His baptism by John when Jesus was thirty years old, but the apostle John began his story before time itself: “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God and the Word was God...and the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us...*” (John 1:1, 14). Christ existed for all eternity as “*The Word,*” before Jesus was born to Mary. Jesus is “*The Christ;*” He is “*Christ after the flesh,*” but Paul says, “*...though we have known Christ after the flesh, yet now henceforth know we him no more.*” It is based upon this statement of fact that we move to the next verse.

In Christ

(17) “Therefore if any man be in Christ, he is a new creature...” What an amazing and wonderful statement this is to the believer. The word “*therefore*” is translated from the same Greek word as “*wherefore*” in the previous verse. It is based upon the truth of who Christ was before the incarnation. “***Thus therefore if any man be in Christ....***” The image of our “*abiding*” in the man, Jesus of Nazareth (Jesus is “*The Christ*”) is a bit difficult, but the image of the believer living and abiding in the “*eternal Spirit of Christ*” is beyond human words to express. It is “*in Christ,*” who is “*The Kingdom of God,*” that the “*new man*” abides. Paul tells us that any and every person who abides in Christ is a “*new creation.*”

“...old things are passed away...” It should be understood that there is no Greek word to support using the word *“things”* at any place in this text. The Kingdom of God is never about *“things.”* Paul tells the Romans, *“For the kingdom of God is not meat and drink; but righteousness, and peace, and joy in the Holy Ghost”* (Romans 14: 17). The term *“old things”* was translated from the Greek word *“archaios,”* which is properly defined by *“Strong’s”* as *“original.”* The *“original creation (old man) has passed away...”*

“...behold, all things are become new...” Again, the word *“things”* does not belong in this text. The word *“all”* stands alone to say *“Everyone in Christ has become new.”* They are a *“new creation, created in Christ Jesus”* (Ephesians 2:10).

(18) “...and all things are of God...” This is the third time in this single verse that the translators added the word *“things,”* which can only blind us to what the apostle actually said. Again, the word *“all”* stands alone to say *“everyone in Christ is of God,”* which simply means they are *“born of God.”*

Reconciled in Christ

“...who hath reconciled us to himself by Jesus Christ...” Notice that it is God who has reconciled us, and it is by (through) Jesus Christ that He did so. God sent Christ into the world to *“make an end of sins”* and to *“bring in everlasting righteousness”* (Daniel 9: 24). The Jews believed the Messiah would do these things when he came, but they refused to accept Jesus as their Messiah. Jesus told them, *“If you believe not that I am He, you shall die in your sins”* (John 8:24). Multitudes in the churches of today are dying in their sins because they do not believe that *“Jesus is the Christ”* whom God sent into the world to *“make an end of sins.”* We who believe were *“reconciled to God”* when Christ, the creator of the original creation died on the cross as the *“Lamb of God”* to *“take away the sin of the world.”* Those who believe the truth, and simply trust in Christ to do in them what He came into the world to do, are reconciled to God in Christ Jesus.

“...and hath given to us the ministry of reconciliation.” Everyone who has been reconciled to God has been given, by God, the

“ministry of reconciliation.” Paul explains what this means in the next verse.

(19) “To wit...” The Greek word *“hoce”* means *“in that manner.”* **“...that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto himself...”** Paul gives an example of what it means for those who are *“reconciled”* to have the ministry of reconciliation. *“In the same manner that God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself,”* He has promised to dwell in His children for that same purpose. The example will not be complete until the end of verse twenty.

“...not imputing their trespasses unto them...” An incorrect understanding of this phrase has doomed multitudes to believe that God keeps no record of the sins of those who profess to *“believe in Jesus.”* We can easily see what the apostle actually said by a simple study of the word *“not”* which was translated from the Greek word *“me”* (*may*), and should have been translated in this verse as *“lest.”* The thought of this phrase answers to the last verse in the Old Testament, which is a prophecy of Elijah the prophet, which Jesus said was fulfilled in John the Baptist (Matthew 11:13-14). These last words of the Old Testament are a stern warning from God concerning the ministry of John the Baptist, who came to *“prepare the way”* for the first appearing of Christ: *“And he shall turn the heart of the fathers to the children, and the heart of the children to their fathers, lest I come and smite the earth with a curse”* (Malachi 4:6). It is obvious that John, through no fault of his own, utterly failed in his mission to *“turn the hearts”* of the people. After King Herod beheaded John, Jesus said, *“I say unto you, That Elias (Elijah) is come already, and they knew him not, but have done unto him whatsoever they listed. Likewise shall also the Son of man suffer of them”* (Matthew 17:12).

With the rejection and murder of John the Baptist, Jesus Christ had a choice; whether to *“smite the earth with a curse,”* or to ignore their sins against Him and lay His life down for the reconciliation of all who would receive Him. He made His choice in Gethsemane, hence the wording in this text, that *“God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself, lest imputing their trespasses unto them....”* If Christ had imputed their trespasses to them, He would have called for the legions of angels to *“smite the earth with a*

curse.” Instead, He prayed from the cross, *“Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”* (Luke 23:34). It was with these words to His Father that their *“trespasses”* were not *“imputed.”* He took the *“curse”* upon Himself to reconcile even His enemies to God (Romans 5:10). He was *“cursed”* by the Law of Moses, for the Law said, *“cursed is He that hangeth on a tree.”* It was on that *“tree (the cross)”* that our sin was *“taken away”* and we were *“reconciled to God.”*

The Word of Reconciliation

“...and hath committed unto us the word of reconciliation.” The *“great commission,”* which Jesus gave to His apostles and disciples, was to *“Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature”* (Mark 16:15). It was here that the *“word of reconciliation (the gospel of Christ)”* was *“committed to us.”* Paul refers to the *“Great Commission”* when he tells us that God has *“committed to us”* the *“word of reconciliation.”* The *“word of reconciliation”* is the *“gospel of Christ,”* which Paul says is *“the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believeth”* (Romans 1:16). Jesus spoke of the power of the gospel when He said, *“...he that believeth ...shall be saved, but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:16).

According to the Greek word *“tithemi,”* which was translated in this verse as *“committed,”* God has *“placed”* the word of reconciliation in us, in a *“passive position.”* This is very important to understand, because *“the truth”* will *“lie in the streets (Isaiah 59:14-15)”* until those who *“know the truth”* pick it up and proclaim it to the world. Jesus said, *“Ye shall know the truth, and the truth shall make you free”* (John 8:32). He was speaking of absolute freedom from sin when He spoke those words to the Jews (John 8:33-36). Those whom God has *“illuminated (II Corinthians 4:6)”* with the truth of Christ have been given a grave responsibility to proclaim it to the entire world.

(20) “Now then we are ambassadors for Christ...” The words *“now then”* in this verse were translated from the Greek word *“oun,”* which is properly defined to say *“accordingly.”* Based upon the fact that God has given us the *“ministry of reconciliation,”* and committed to us *“the word of reconciliation,”* He has made us to be His *“ambassadors”* or *“representatives”* for Christ. The word *“for”* was translated from the Greek word *“huper,”* which when

used to indicate a “*place*” can be properly translated as “*above, beyond, or across.*” In this verse, however, it is used to indicate a “*cause,*” and can be translated as “*for, instead, or regarding.*” The message the apostle Paul conveys in this verse is that in this present time, we are God’s ambassadors “*instead*” or “*in the stead*” of Christ. Jesus Christ finished His work of reconciliation on the cross, but ours began on the Day of Pentecost. His was to do the work of reconciliation; ours is to tell the world that Christ has come, and He has reconciled to God everyone who will believe and receive.

“...as though God did beseech you by us...” Look at the words “*as though.*” They were translated from the same Greek word as “*to wit*” in the nineteenth verse. In both places the proper definition is “*in that manner.*” Understand Paul to say (verse 19), **“*In that manner that God was in Christ, reconciling the world to Himself... (verse 20) ...in that same manner God is in us to call you to Himself through us.*”** If we are in fact “*ambassadors for Christ,*” we must say what God says, and nothing more. We should also understand that what God says is clearly written in the scriptures that “*testify of Jesus Christ*” (John 5:39). Our agenda cannot be our own. “*The testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy*” (Revelation 19:10).

“...we pray you in Christ's stead (instead of Christ), be ye reconciled to God.” We will consider what reconciliation is for a moment. The Greek word “*katallasso,*” which was translated “*reconciled*” actually means “*to change mutually.*” God has never “*changed*” His mind about sin, nor has He become “*reconciled*” to sinners. Instead, He sent Christ into the world to “*save sinners*” from their sin. To define the “*mutual change*” in a few words, “*Christ came down to bring man up.*” He who was God became “*the Son of God.*” He came into the world to “*take away sin*” (John 1:29, I John 3:5), out of the heart and nature of the sinner, in order that they could be “*born again, the sons of God.*” Christ came as “*the Lamb of God*” to “*take away the sin of the world*” (John 1:29). “*The sin*” that entered by the first man Adam was “*taken away*” by Christ, who became “*the second man,*” which Paul called “*the Lord from heaven*” (I Corinthians 15:47). Certainly, it would be very foolish for any to believe that “*sin*” has been taken out of “*this present evil world*” (Galatians 1:4). No! But sin has been taken out of the heart and

nature of everyone who believes the truth that Jesus said would *“make you free”* (John 8:32). It is what Christ came to do, and He will do it in us if we will believe the *“simplicity that is in Christ”* (11 Corinthians 11:3) and trust in Him to do it in us. In Hebrews 1:3, speaking of the Son of God, Paul said, *“...when He had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”* Notice that it was *“by Himself”* that Christ *“purged our sins.”* Notice that our sins were *“purged”* before He *“sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high.”* He does not need our help to save us from sin, to make our heart clean and pure, and to *“present us faultless before the presence of his glory with exceeding joy”* (Jude 1:23). He only needs our faith and trust.

The Exchange

Romans 5:10-11: *“For if, when we were enemies, we were reconciled to God by the death of his Son, much more, being reconciled, we shall be saved by his life. And not only so, but we also joy in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, **by whom we have now received the atonement.**”*

The Greek word that was normally translated as *“reconciliation”* is *“katallagē,”* which is defined by *“Strong’s”* as **“exchange, that is, restoration** to (the divine) favor.” In this text alone, *“katallagē,”* was translated as *“atonement,”* which is an English word coined by William Tyndale in 1526 to better express what reconciliation actually is. He took the words *“at”* and *“one,”* and added the suffix *“ment,”* and gave us the word *“atonement”* in place of reconciliation. *“Atonement”* is the answer to Jesus’ prayer in John 17:21, *“That they all may be one; as thou, Father, art in me, and I in thee, **that they also may be one in us:** that the world may believe that thou hast sent me.”* In John 17:5, He had prayed, *“And now, O Father, glorify thou me with thine own self with the glory which I had with thee before the world was.”* Reconciliation (atonement) restores man to God *“in Christ,”* and restores *“the glory”* of how things were *“before the world was,”* that is, before sin entered with the transgression of Adam.

(21) “For he hath made him to be sin for us, who knew no sin...”
This verse twenty-one describes perfectly the *“mutual change”* that

was required to reconcile man to God. He “*who knew no sin*” speaks of the eternal Spirit of Christ, the creator of all things, who was “*made to be sin for us*” in what we call “*the incarnation.*” John describes it in John 1:1, 14; “*In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God... (14) And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us, (and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father,) full of grace and truth.*” The eternal Spirit of Christ became flesh and blood man in the incarnation. He who was “*with God*” and “*was God*” became the “*only begotten Son of God,*” which is Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus was not a sinner, and He had no sin nature. He was tested by the adversary in every way possible, but there was no sin in Him. Paul tells us He was “*...in all points tempted (the Greek word means ‘tested’) like as we are, yet without sin*” (Hebrews 4:15). Christ, the eternal Spirit, accepted a “*change*” that took Him from being “*with God as God*” to being “*with man as man.*” That “*man,*” however, was Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, who was made “*a little lower*” than God (John 14:28).

Hebrews 2:9: “*But we see Jesus, who was made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death...*”

The apostle speaks of the Son of God, “***Being made so much better than the angels,*** as he hath by inheritance obtained a more excellent name than they. For unto which of the angels said he at any time, *Thou art my Son, this day have I begotten thee?*” (Hebrews 1:4-5) The scripture also bears out that Jesus was “*made a little lower than God,*” agreeing with the Hebrew text in Psalms 8:4-5: “*What is man, that thou art mindful of him? and the son of man, that thou visitest him? For thou hast made him a little lower than the angels (the Elohim), and hast crowned him with glory and honour.*” (The Hebrew word, “*Elohim,*” properly defined as “*gods*” is used 2601 times in the Old Testament, but was translated in this verse alone as “*angels.*”) God made Adam “*a little lower than God,*” and “*a little above the angels.*” When he disobeyed God, he “*fell*” through transgression to a place far beneath the angels and very little above the beasts of the field. Jesus of Nazareth was born in the condition Adam was created in; a “*little lower than God,*” but “*so much better than the angels.*” If this be the case, however, why did Paul say the Son of God was

“made a lower than the angels?” (Greek word ‘angelos’). The apostle explains this in his letter to the Philippians.

Philippians 2:5-8: *“Let this mind be in you, which was also in Christ Jesus: Who, being in the **form of God**, thought it not robbery to be equal with God: But **made himself of no reputation**, and took upon him the **form of a servant**, and was made in the **likeness** (form) **of men**. And being found in fashion as a man, he humbled himself, and became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross.*

In these verses, the apostle show how Christ *“humbled Himself”* two times, once as *“God,”* and again as *“the Son of God.”* He who was *“in the form of God”* and *“equal with God,”* whom John said was both *“with God”* and *“was God,”* took upon Himself *“the form of a servant,”* and was *“made in the likeness of men.”* He who *“was God”* became *“the Son of God.”* He was *“made so much better than the angels,”* but He was also *“made a little lower than God.”* Jesus clearly told His disciples, *“My Father is greater than I”* (John 14:8). Paul said He *“made Himself of no reputation,”* which means He *“emptied Himself”* of all that He was to become *“a little lower than God”* as the Son of God. This was His *“first step down,”* which was necessary to reconcile lost humanity to God. His *“second step”* will make Him who was *“so much better than the angels,”* but *“a little lower than God,”* yet a little less.

“...made a little lower than the angels for the suffering of death...” In this text the word *“for”* is translated from the Greek word *“dia,”* which means *“through.”* In no way was Jesus *“lower than the angels”* except in His death, because angels cannot die. When Jesus Christ *“humbled Himself, and became obedient unto death,”* He accepted a place *“a little lower than the angels”* who could not die, and when He became obedient to *“the death of the cross,”* he submitted Himself to the curse of the Law of Moses, which said, *“cursed is he that hangeth on a tree”* (Galatians 3:13). He who was *“the Lord of heaven* (1 Corinthians 15:47)” became one who was *“despised and rejected of men”* (Isaiah 53:3), and died under the curse of the Law of Moses.

“...that we might be made the righteousness of God in him.” According to the apostle Paul, the *“righteousness of God”* is

manifested in *“Christ crucified”* (Romans 3:25). *“Whom God hath set forth to be a propitiation (atoning victim) through faith in his blood, to declare his righteousness for the remission of sins that are past, through the forbearance of God.”* Two chapters later, Paul gives the *“reasoning”* of our righteous God:

Romans 5:12: *“Wherefore, as by one man sin entered into the world, and death by sin; and so death passed upon all men, for that all have sinned.”*

If because of the disobedience of one man, all of humanity must suffer the curse of sin and damnation in the end, there is no justice. There must be a *“second man”* to undo what the *“first man”* did. There was no such man because every man was a sinner by nature. Christ, who was *“with God”* from the beginning, and who *“was God”* became that *“second man.”* Paul said, *“The second man is the Lord from heaven”* (I Corinthians 15:47). The *“incarnation”* was the first installment in the cost of our redemption. He who was *“with God”* and *“was God”* became a man, *“a little lower than God.”*

Romans 5:18: *“For as by one man’s (Adam’s) disobedience many were made sinners, so by the obedience of one (Christ) shall many be made righteous.”*

Christ became *“obedient”* when He *“took upon Him the form of a servant and was made in the likeness of men”* (Philippians 2:7). As a man, He yet *“humbled Himself”* and *“became obedient unto death, even the death of the cross”* (Philippians 2:8). Notice that Christ *“became obedient.”* It is important to understand that He had never, in all eternity, been either *“disobedient”* or *“obedient,”* because He was *“with God,”* He *“was God,”* in the *“form of God,”* and He was *“equal with God.”* In order for Christ to *“become obedient,”* He had to *“make Himself of no reputation,”* which according to the Greek text means He *“emptied Himself,”* and *“took the form of a servant.”* Christ came *“down to obedience”* to bring fallen man up to the same. The *“obedience of Christ”* to the *“death of the cross”* has made many righteous. Christ died for all, and as many as believe the truth and trust in Him are *“made”* to be *“the righteousness of God in Him”* (II Corinthians 5:21). They are the proof that God is righteous. The conclusion of this matter is this: Christ the creator

became a man; He who was “*with God*” and “*was God*” became “*the Son of God*” and the “*lamb of God*” in order that through His atoning death, we who believe would be “*born again*,” the “*sons of God*” in the image and likeness of the Son of God. It is the “*mutual change*,” or the “*exchange*” which was made in the “*atonement*” to reconcile fallen man to God.

New Heavens and New Earth

Revelation 21:1-2: “*And I saw a new heaven and a new earth: for the first heaven and the first earth were passed away; and there was no more sea. And I John saw the holy city, new Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.*”

In the old creation, God began by creating the heavens and the earth. The final part of His creation was man. In the new creation, God reversed the order; “*new man*” first, and “*new heavens and new earth*” last. Jesus Christ is the “*first man*” of the “*new creation*” exactly as Adam was the “*first man*” of the old creation. Christ was not a man when He was “*in the form of God*,” and “*equal with God*” (Philippians 2:6). He was “*the Word (expression) of God*” who was “*in the beginning with God*” and who “*was God*,” by whom “*all things were made*” and “*without Him was not anything made that was made*” (John 1:1-3). Christ became a man in the incarnation when “*the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us*” (John 1:14). Christ, who was the creator of the first creation, is the new creation. In Christ is everything of the new creation. We do not have a literal “*new heavens and new earth*” at present, but all the fullness of that which is to come, is “*in Christ*” right now. Jesus, who is both “*the Christ*” and “*the Son of the living God*,” is the “*firstborn among many brethren*.” For over nineteen hundred years the “*population*” of the “*new heavens and new earth*” has been increasing even though these do not yet exist. The “*New Jerusalem*,” however, has existed in heaven since the Day of Pentecost. The apostle Paul called it “*Jerusalem which is above, which is the mother of us all*” (Galatians 4:26, Hebrews 12:22). Notice in our text (Revelation 21:1-2), the “*new heaven and new earth*” will not exist until the “*first heaven and first earth*” have “*passed away*.” Then notice that John saw the “*New*

Jerusalem, coming down from God out of heaven, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” As soon as the “new heavens and new earth” are literally created, they will be “fully populated” with a “multitude without number” that has been growing through all the centuries since the Day of Pentecost. They will “come down from God, out of heaven, as a bride adorned for her husband.”

A Vision of the New Jerusalem

Revelation 21:9-11: *“And there came unto me one of the seven angels which had the seven vials full of the seven last plagues, and talked with me, saying, Come hither, I will shew thee the bride, the Lamb’s wife. And he carried me away in the spirit to a great and high mountain, and shewed me that great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God, having the glory of God...”*

God promised to show to John the *“bride, the Lamb’s wife.”* We understand this to be the *“bride of Christ.”* What John saw, however, was a *“city”* with foundations of precious stones, streets of transparent gold, and great towering walls. John saw in great detail the construction of the city, but saw very little about the inhabitants, other than to say, *“The nations of them which are saved shall walk in the light of it”* (verse 24). Many years ago, as a young man to whom God had committed a watchman’s ministry, I was caught up in the Spirit, and heard words very similar to the words John heard from God; *“Come hither, I will show you the New Jerusalem.”* As the vision began, I thought I would see exactly what John saw in the Revelation, but instead, I saw the *“other side”* of what he saw. I did not see a *“city”* made of building and streets surrounded by great walls. Instead, I saw a multitude of people which I could only describe as John described the city, *“having the glory of God.”* It must have been the *“multitude which no man could number”* which John saw in Revelation 7:9, *“...of all nations, and kindreds, and people, and tongues,”* which *“stood before the throne, and before the Lamb, clothed with white robes.”* Even unto this day, it seems strange to me that God promised John to see *“the bride,”* and let him see the *“city,”* but He promised me to see the *“city,”* and let me see *“the bride.”*

I have never seen such people. They were “*adorned*” with “*the glory of God*.” Their “*conversation*” was the “*Word of God*,” but they were not “*quoting scriptures*.” Every unclean spirit and every unclean thing fled before them, and at their “*word*” sickness and diseases were cured. I knew these things were true about them, but what I actually saw was a multitude of people in whom Christ was both glorified and admired (II Thessalonians 1:10). The glory of God which was upon this people as they stood and worshiped the Lamb was such that as I came out of the Spirit, my hands were lifted up, tears flowed down my face, and I was crying aloud, “*I must be one of these! I must be one of these!*” This experience was over forty five years ago, but the vision of that glorious people, the “*inhabitants of the New Jerusalem*” and the “*future inhabitants*” of the “*new heavens and new earth*,” is ever before me, and the cry of my heart remains to this day, “*I must be one of them!*” Nothing else really matters to those who have “*seen Him as He is*.”

Everything that “*will be*” in the new heavens and new earth is presently “*in Christ*” for all who “*abide in Him*.” There is the “*tree of life*” (Revelation 22:2) to eat of, and “*the fountain of the water of life*” (Revelation 21:6) to drink of. “*In Christ*” there is no need for artificial lighting, or even the sun or the moon, because “*the Lamb is the light thereof*” (Revelation 21:23). There is a “*river of water of life*” that flows from “*the throne of God and the Lamb*” (Revelation 22:1), and on each side of the river are “*trees of life*” in “*the midst of the streets*” (Revelation 22:2). Can you see that these things described are “*right now in Christ*” as well as “*things to come*” in the new heavens and new earth? The proof of this is shown in the words of the apostle. “*Right now*” we who are “*in Christ*” have the “*tree of life*” to eat of. Notice the leaves from the tree of life (the gospel of Christ) will “*heal the nations*” (Revelation 22:2). Right now is when the nations must be healed. Right now is the time to “*enter through the gates into the city*,” because “*without are dogs* (those who are spiritually unclean), *and sorcerers, and whoremongers, and murderers, and idolaters, and whosoever loveth and maketh a lie*” (Revelation 22:15). None of these things will exist in the “*new heavens and new earth*,” and none of them are found “*in Christ*,” but they fill the world around us. Twenty years ago I was preaching the reality of “*what a child of God is*” on a Houston television station. After the broadcast one of

the young ministers who worked at the station said to me, *“I believe what you are preaching, but that is only what we are in Christ.”* I responded, *“No! If we are ‘pure and holy in Christ,’ we are also ‘pure and holy’ on Main Street, in the work place, and in the home.”* We who are *“in Christ”* are also *“in the world,”* but we are not *“of the world.”*

Revelation 22:14: *“Blessed are they that **do his commandments**, that they may have right to the tree of life, **and may enter in through the gates into the city.**”*

I cannot close this message without speaking on this verse for the sake of those who may interpret it to their own detriment. What are the *“commandments”* we must do to *“enter through the gates into the city?”* Jesus came into Galilee at the beginning of His ministry preaching, *“The **time is fulfilled**, and **the kingdom of God is at hand: repent ye, and believe the gospel.**”* He preached this to some very devout Jews who were looking for the coming of *“the Christ”* which was spoken of in Daniel 9:24-27. Jesus’ message, *“the time is fulfilled”* meant that *“the Christ”* had come. *“The kingdom of God is at hand”* indicated that *“Christ is the kingdom of God,”* and He was speaking with them even then. The *“commandment”* which He gave was *“repent ye, and believe the gospel.”* Repentance and faith are the *“gates”* through which we enter the kingdom. (Acts 20:21)

Sadly, there are those who will *“twist”* this very message to take innocent people into the traditions of religion, and back under the *“Law of Moses,”* which is *“abolished in Christ”* (Ephesians 2:15). If your *“religion”* has been the great *“struggle”* of trying and failing to *“change yourself,”* simply obey the *“commandment of Jesus”* to *“repent, and believe the gospel.”* God will *“deliver you from the power of darkness, and translate you into the kingdom of His dear Son”* (Colossians 1:13). God is calling you, right now, to *“come,”* to *“enter through the gates into the city.”* He promises, *“I will give unto him that is athirst of the fountain of the water of life freely”* (Revelation 21:6).

Revelation 22:17: *“And the Spirit and the bride say, Come. And let him that heareth say, Come. And let him that is athirst come. And whosoever will, let him take the water of life freely.”*

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