

**THE QUESTION OF OBEDIENCE
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Note: All Scripture quotations are from the King James Version unless otherwise stated. This is because the King James is the most common translation available.

CHAPTER ONE

If you don't believe in a Creator God, don't bother reading this book. If you do believe in this Creator God, you had better read this book. The whole of your eternity is riding on the question of this book.

Most Americans and Europeans believe, to one degree or another, that there is a God. Even the so called Pagans believe in one or many all-powerful beings. All who call themselves Christian not only believe in the Creator God, but believe that he sent to the earth his Son, Jesus, to reconcile mankind to God for the purpose of becoming the offspring of God. The Christian is who this book is for.

But, What does this relationship entail? How are we reconciled to God? Just what does it mean to be created?

Let's tackle first things first. If you already believe in a Creator God you have an idea of what I am talking about. But it is very important that you understand precisely every detail of what it means to be created.

Before going any further, we need to establish some ground rules for the rest of this book:

1. The Bible is the Word of God to man.
2. The Bible is THE collection of all necessary knowledge for mankind.
3. God is powerful enough to get put down in writing and preserve the exact thought that He wanted to convey to us in the Bible.
4. Any other writing that does not agree with Scripture is not of God.
5. Scripture interprets itself. Because of this, it not open to private interpretation or being taken out of context. Therefore, before you believe anything said or written by anyone, prove it first in the Bible.
6. As with all things, the Bible must be approached with prayer.

That's it. These six simple statements, if followed, will open your eyes to the truth of God.

NOW STOP. Put this book down and pray. Ask God to reveal HIS truth to you.

Good! Now treat the rest of this book as though it is being written to you personally much as Luke wrote to Theophilus. Don't worry about my credentials. I have none, not of man anyhow. Suffice it to say that I have examined many of the Christian Denominations both in and out of the subject of this book and have compared them to the Scriptures. Here are my conclusions:

CHAPTER TWO

CREATED. WHAT DOES THIS MEAN?

All Christians believe that they were created by God. But, do you realize that the job ain't done? You're not finished. The final product that you are going to be is not here yet.

Look at Genesis 1:26-27 "And God said, Let Us make man in Our image, after Our likeness: . . . so God created Man in his OWN image, in the image of God created he him; . . ."

Now, I look at myself in the mirror, and I don't look like God. Of course, I don't know

what He looks like, but, I'll bet that, that figure staring back at me don't look like God.

Let's put things in perspective:

1. Jesus said " . . . He that hath seen Me hath seen the Father; . . . " John 14:9.
2. "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.
3. You and I are not a body that happens to have a personality; we are a personality, a character, that dwells in a body. So, we should look at God through His personality, His character, presented to us in Jesus.
4. When God talks about things He often speaks as though they are an accomplished fact, because that's the way he sees it. God sees billions of individuals of mankind as creations like Himself. He is not limited by space, time, or matter. But, He did temporarily put these limitations on us. And, of these three, time is the most important.

It's all like making a loaf of bread: First you take flour, and oil blended together - your mom. Then add yeast and warm water blended together - your dad. Then mix - God. Now you got raw dough. This is you at conception.

Now we let the dough rise. This is you growing from conception, through birth till the time that you heard the calling of God and answered.

Then something strange happens! The rising dough is kneaded, smashed, pushed on with the fists. The puffiness is knocked out of it. This is your conversion. If you are truly converted, you had to realize that you were in total opposition to God. This came as a tremendous blow to you ego. Most people like to think that they are at least a little righteous. When you found out that the only good that you had was just in your eyes, and maybe your mother's, you were smashed, crushed, like you were pushed on with fists. You were kneaded by God's fists (actually it was His Word). Jesus is the Word of God (John 1:1,14). Your personality - character was compared with God's and found wanting, very badly.

The dough - you, is then set in the pan and allowed to rise slowly under the right temperature and humidity conditions. Only this time, you rise with the right kind of small bubbles that give bread the texture that makes it taste so good. This is you between your conversion and your physical death, your time of slow growth and shape forming by the pan. The pan is the Word of God forming you; the right temperature is the Ministers of God; the right humidity is the Body of Christ - His People. The all-important small bubble texture is the Character of God - His Personality. This is what gives you the good flavor.

But we're not done yet; or should I say, "You're not done yet." That's right! "The oven cometh!" You - the loaf of bread - must be baked to set in the texture permanently - forever the Character of God. This is you at the resurrection at the time of Christ's coming, or you being "caught-up" (1 Ths 4:17) if you are still alive at that time.

There is an all-important part of this analogy that must not be overlooked. If for any reason the loaf - you, while forming in the pan - developing that good texture - the Character of God, is dropped, smashed - the small bubble texture knocked out of it before it is baked, it will never resemble a proper loaf of bread. It will be smaller and have a tougher texture. The baking in the oven sets-in whatever texture is there.

The rising of this small bubble texture can happen only once. This is you my Brother in Christ, right now! You are developing that small bubble texture - God's Character - right now.

This is the reason for this book. None of us should be without any of the small bubbles of God's Character. Or, to quote God using Paul's hand: "For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ: Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, **UNTO A PERFECT MAN, UNTO THE MEASURE OF THE STATURE OF THE FULLNESS OF CHRIST:**" (Eph 4:12-13 emphasis added). This means no bubbles missing!

After "The oven cometh", we, you and me, will be like Him. "Beloved, now are we the sons of God, and it doth not yet appear what we shall be: but we know that, when he shall appear, we shall be like him; for we shall see him as he is." (1 John 3:2). This also tells us of the incredible potential for you and me. It is the reason and purpose for our creation. God is creating beings like Himself: ". . . in the image of God created He him; . . ." (Gen 1:27).

God is RECREATING - DUPLICATING - HIMSELF IN US! WOW!

But, as the analogy shows, this process of our creation to be the Duplication of God is an ongoing process. Scripture also bears this out. Not just in Ephesians 4, but in the gospels where Jesus talks about the growing of fruit and also in 1 Peter 2:2, 2 Peter 3:18, Ephesians 2:21, 2 Thessalonians 1:3. Take the time to read these Scriptures. If you and I are still growing, we are not done yet. We have not achieved to the finished product. God is not going to turn over to us the awesomeness of His Glory and Power until we are perfect like him in Jesus. He has only given us a taste of what that will be like to help perfect us. Seeing this perfection is the driving force for us. It becomes the desire in us that "I want to be like God!"

This is why God put His spirit in us. That Spirit is the taste and the power to cause us to change. "In whom ye also *trusted*, after that ye heard the word of truth, the gospel of your salvation: in whom also after that ye believed, ye were sealed with that Holy Spirit of promise, which is the earnest of our inheritance until the redemption of the purchased possession, unto the praise of his glory." (Eph 1:13-14)

In case you are a little younger in physical age than me, the word EARNEST in these scriptures is not an adjective. It is used as a noun. From Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition: "1: something of value given by a buyer to a seller to bind a bargain. 2: a token of what is to come: pledge"

The word translated EARNEST in Ephesians 1:14 according to Strongs Exhaustive Concordance is the Greek word "ARRHABON, a pledge, i.e part of the purchase - money or property given in advance for the rest: earnest."

In other words, God puts His Holy Spirit in us at conversion as a DOWN-PAYMENT to bind us to Him. But, the Holy Spirit is more than that in us. Remember, this Holy Spirit is the same power of God that raised Jesus from the dead. This great power of God is put in us to give us the power to overcome our former personality and become the character of God.

It's like tightening a nut onto a bolt. I can only do so much with my fingers. But, if I use a socket wrench, I can tighten it to the desired tightness. God gives us that extra power of His Holy Spirit so we can reach the desired perfection in Christ Jesus.

The finished product of our creation is the meaning and purpose of our creation. God has supplied all the necessary knowledge and power to achieve what He set out to do. I hope that this answers for you the question of this chapter's title.

CHAPTER THREE RECONCILED TO GOD

Working backwards in our list of three questions of Chapter One, we come to the subject of this chapter. Since I don't know enough about your conversion, I might cover some things that you already know, please bear with me. And please read this entire chapter word for word; I'll probably say something from a slant that you have never seen before and that will help you see a little clearer.

Most people that call themselves Christians went through what I call "Patented Paths": the "Roman Road," the "Tracts," or some of the others. I'm not knocking these, because God uses these to get people away from their "Hell Bent" life. I, myself, went through the Charismatic Renewal.

All of these paths help bring about conversion; and conversion is being reconciled to God. But, we need to pick this apart to completely understand conversion - from what and to what - and reconciled - both from what and to what.

We need to start at the beginning, before Adam sinned. I already covered the reason for our creation. But, if you go back to Genesis One:

^{Gen. 1:28} And God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth, and subdue it: and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth.

^{Vs. 29} And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat.

^{Vs. 30} And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for meat: and it was so.

^{Vs. 31} And God saw every thing that he had made, and, behold, *it was* very good. And the evening and the morning were the sixth day. (Gen.1:28-31)

There are two things I want to point out here: 1) We started off with "very good" stock. God said so in verse 31. It got ruined. 2) God didn't just say "Okay, be fruitful, multiply, and subdue the earth." Verses twenty-eight through thirty are only a synopsis of what God implanted in their minds. As a matter of fact, the first 5 1/2 chapters of the Bible are only a synopsis of the first 1500 or so years of the history of man. They just hit the high spots - the important things.

God's style of writing in Scripture is that wherever there is a list of things, He always puts the most important thing first; then it is a progression to the least important. (For proof compare the list starting in Galatians 5:22 with 1 Corinthians 13:13)

Let's work backwards starting in verse thirty. "And to every beast of the earth, and to every fowl of the air, and to every thing that creepeth upon the earth, wherein *there is* life, *I have given* every green herb for meat: and it was so." This is a synopsis of how all animal life is to behave from the tiniest one-cell animal to the giant whales. Read it again.

Verse twenty-nine tells us how to sustain and how to take care of our physical bodies, in synoptic form. "And God said, Behold, I have given you every herb bearing seed, which *is* upon the face of all the earth, and every tree, in the which *is* the fruit of a tree yielding seed; to you it shall be for meat."

Working backward through verse twenty-eight we see that we are to have "dominion" over these listed things. This means authority. We are not only created above these other creations, but are to have authority over and control them; to put them in proper order. ". . .and have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the fowl of the air, and over every living thing that moveth upon the earth."

Continuing backwards we come to "subdue and replenish the earth". This refers back to Genesis 1:2 about the condition of the earth. This is part of man's commission or appointment, his commission of authority to "fix-up" this planet. How it got in the condition it was in is the subject of another book.

"Multiply." God instructed them, Adam and Eve, all about reproduction. This means all the God ordained functions of sex and its proper use. But He also instructed them on how to live together as husband and wife. This also carries over to how to get along with the rest of mankind.

Now we come to the most important term, the one listed first: "Be fruitful". This is a spiritual term. Jesus is the word of God. (John 1:1,14) The word of God - Jesus, was speaking to Adam and Eve. Whenever we hear Jesus talk about bearing fruit - being fruitful, He is not talking about the number of people that you bring into the fold, or the bearing of children, Adam couldn't bear children. He is talking about taking the knowledge that He gives us and turning that knowledge into spiritual, God-like character; the perfect development of your personality.

In order to fulfill this commission, which is actually a command, God gave Adam and Eve all the necessary knowledge to do the job. They were NOT to do any experiments. Just the idea of experiment means "let's see if it works." This implies that it could fail. Remember verse 31 ". . .behold, *it was* very good." No, they were to follow God's commands using the knowledge that He gave them. They were fully equipped to obey and qualify to take the Throne of the Government Of God Over The Earth away from the now Satan, the former Archangel, Lucifer.

I'm getting a little ahead of myself here. But this was, AND STILL IS, the purpose of God. When Adam sinned and failed to qualify for this. The Second Adam, Jesus, came to Earth as a man and qualified to arrest this Throne back to God.

Now that we know God's purpose, let's look at reconcile. According to Strong's Exhaustive Concordance the word "reconcile" is translated from the Greek word "apokatallasso", which means: "to reconcile fully." Its prefix is the Greek word "apo", which denotes "separation, departure, cessation, completion, reversal, etc.", the word "reconciled", from the Greek, "to change thoroughly." and "to change mutually, to compound a difference - reconcile.", and the word "reconciliation" from the Greek "exchange, restoration to (the divine) favor: - atonement, reconciliation". (AT - ONE - MENT)

Next we look up reconcile in Merriam Webster's Collegiate Dictionary, Tenth Edition. The first definition reads: "to restore to friendship or harmony, settle, resolve." The second definition reads: "to make consistent or congruous (~an ideal with reality)." I like that last one, "reality". That's where God dwells.

The idea of restore to harmony, and/or friendship, and put us in reality, where God lives, is what we are after. But, the very idea of restore means that we have left a former position and are brought back to it.

When God created man, He made the raw dough and even kneaded it by putting in the

minds of Adam and Eve all the necessary knowledge of life. Somewhere along the line, Satan came in and dropped the pan - The Word Of God - with the slow rising dough in it. As stated earlier, that small bubble rise only happens once: one life to have a chance to qualify. Once Adam disqualified himself, it would take a miracle to re-qualify him. The miracle of God came in the form of JESUS.

All the ceremonial law of Leviticus pointed to the uncleanness of man and the need of the sheading of the blood of a spotless, without blemish male for the reconciling of man to God because of man's sin. This was done just so God would dwell among them in the Holy Of Holies. (If you haven't read through the first five books of the Bible, take the time to do it.) All of this ceremony and blood shedding was a type of Jesus' sacrifice and blood shedding.

God put it more succinctly in Hebrews 9:1 - 10:18. I like the Revised Standard Translation for this Scripture:

"NOW EVEN the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail.

These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually unto the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people. By this the Holy Spirit indicates that the way into the sanctuary is not yet opened as long as the outer tent is still standing (which is symbolic for the present age). (NOTE: Because God had Paul writing this in the age that we are now in, this means that as long as our outer tent - our physical corruptable body - is here, we still have a separation between us and God, we are not yet a spirit being.) According to this arrangement, gifts and sacrifices are offered which cannot perfect the conscience of the worshiper, but deal only with food and drink and various ablutions, regulations for the body imposed until the time of reformation.

But when Christ appeared as a high priest of the good things that have come, then through the greater and more perfect tent (not made with hands, that is, not of this creation) he entered once for all into the Holy Place, taking not the blood of goats and calves but his own blood, thus securing an eternal redemption. For if the sprinkling of defiled persons with the blood of goats and bulls and with the ashes of the heifer sanctifies for the purification of the flesh, how much more shall the blood of Christ, who through the eternal Spirit offered himself without blemish to God, purify your conscience from dead works to serve the living God.

Therefore he is the mediator of a new covenant, so that those who are called may receive the promised eternal inheritance, since a death has occurred which redeems them from the transgressions under the first covenant. For where a will is

involved the death of the one who made it must be established. For a will takes effect only at death, since it is not in force as long as the one who made it is alive. Hence even the first covenant was not ratified without blood. For when every commandment of the law had been declared by Moses to all the people, he took the blood of calves and goats, with water and scarlet wool and hyssop, and sprinkled both the book itself and all the people, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which God commanded you." And in the same way he sprinkled with the blood both the tent and all the vessels used in worship. Indeed, under the law almost everything is purified with blood, and without the shedding of blood there is no forgiveness of sins.

Thus it was necessary for the copies of the heavenly things to be purified with these rites, but the heavenly things themselves with better sacrifices than these. For Christ has entered, not into a sanctuary made with hands, a copy of the true one, but into heaven itself, now to appear in the presence of God on our behalf. Nor was it to offer himself repeatedly, as the high priest enters the Holy Place yearly with blood not his own; for then he would have had to suffer repeatedly since the foundation of the world. But as it is, he has appeared once for all at the end of the age to put away sin by the sacrifice of himself. And just as it is appointed for men to die once, and after that comes judgment, so Christ, having been offered once to bear the sins of many, will appear a second time, not to deal with sin but to save those who are eagerly waiting for him.

For since the law has but a shadow of the good things to come instead of the true form of these realities, it can never, by the same sacrifices which are continually offered year after year, make perfect those who draw near. Otherwise, would they not have ceased to be offered? If the worshipers had once been cleansed, they would no longer have any consciousness of sin. (This blows away the idea of offering a sacrifice of physical things every day in our present time.) But in these sacrifices there is a reminder of sin year after year. For it is impossible that the blood of bulls and goats should take away sins.

Consequently, when Christ came into the world, he said, "Sacrifices and offerings thou hast no desired, but a body hast thou prepared for me; in burnt offerings and sin offerings thou hast taken no pleasure. Then I said, 'Lo, I have come to do thy will, O God,' as it is written of me in the roll of the book." When he said above, "Thou hast neither desired nor taken pleasure in sacrifices and offerings and burnt offerings and sin offerings" (these are offered according to the law), then he added, "Lo, I have come to do thy will. " He abolishes the first in order to establish the second. And by that will we have been sanctified through the offering of the body of Jesus Christ one for all.

And every priest stands daily at his service, offering repeatedly the same sacrifices, which can never take away sins. But when Christ had offered for all time a single sacrifice for sins, he sat down at the right hand of God, then to wait until his enemies should be made a stool for his feet. For by a single offering he has perfected for all time those who are sanctified. And the Holy Spirit also bears

witness to us; for after saying, "This is the covenant that I will make with them after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws on their hearts, and write them on their minds," then he adds, "I will remember their sins and their misdeeds no more." Where there is forgiveness of these, there is no longer any offering for sin." (End Quote)

This is what reconciled to God means and is all about.

CHAPTER FOUR

WHAT OUR RELATIONSHIP TO GOD ENTAILS

First of all, since your conversion you have tried to find out what is right and get on it. This includes daily scripture reading and time spent talking to God and listening to Him. These are parts of your relationship with Him. But real character development comes by living the life of Christ or, better yet, letting Christ live His life in you. This means the killing off your old personality. This is the hard part.

As I stated in chapter one, I have looked at many of the Christian denominations and have found them all wanting in one area or another. Yet, every one of them claims to be the "true church". I don't mean to put them down, but each one is lacking in one area or more.

First and foremost, Christ is the head of God's church (Eph. 5:23); and it is God's Church (Acts 20:28, 1 Cor 1:2, 10:32, 11:22, 15:9, 2 Cor. 1:1, Gal 1:13, 1 Tim 3:5, 15). But this doesn't mean that every organization that uses the title "Church of God" as their name or part of their name is the right church. **REMEMBER, GOD IS INTERESTED IN OUR CHARACTER, NOT IN WHAT HANDLE WE CALL OURSELVES BY.**

So what are the identifying signs of the real, true believers? The scriptures tell us:

1. "But as many as received Him, to them gave He power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on His name." (John 1:12)
2. "By this shall all men know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another." (John 13:35)
- 3,4,5. "Then Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost." (Acts 2:38)
6. "If ye keep my commandments, ye shall abide in my love, . . ." (John 15:10) and "If ye love me, keep my commandments." (John 14:15)
7. "And these signs shall follow them that believe; in my name they shall cast out devils; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they drink any deadly thing, it shall not hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover." (Mark 16:17,18) And: "Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that believeth on me, the works that I do shall he do also; and greater works than these shall he do; because I go unto my Father." (John 14:12) Also read Acts 4:30, 5:12, 7:36, 8:13, 14:3.

These seven marks are the identifying signs of the true believers. If they believe on the Name of Jesus; they love God and one another: they repent of past life and sins; they have been baptized; they have received the gift of the Holy Spirit; they are found keeping the words of Jesus (they keep His commandments); signs and wonders follow them (the power of the Holy Spirit working through them to spread the gospel). Through these seven signs and because of them, the true believers are growing in the character of God. And this is their relationship with Him.

I don't mean to be redundant, but we must know exactly what these seven marks or signs are.

When I say "marks" I want you to understand that I am using the same term that is used in Revelations as an identifying sign.

Again from Strong's Exhaustive Concordance: mark "charagma-from the same as 5482 a scratch or etching, i.e. stamp (as a badge of servitude), . . ." This word is identified as "5480" in Strong's numbering system. But even more interesting is tying it together with 5481 and 5482: "5481 . . . charakter, (pronounced - khak-ak-tare'); from the same as 5482; a graver (the tool or the person),i.e. (by impl.) engraving (["character"], the figure stamped, i.e. an exact copy or [fig.] representation); - express image." "5482 . . . charax . . . (to sharpen to a point; a kin to 1125 through the idea of scratching); . . ." 1125 means to describe or to write.

Now, put all these together. Mark - as it is used in Revelation - means the character that has been etched or written in us - on our hearts. I doubt very much that there will be a physical "mark of the beast" on our foreheads and/or on our hands. We will be identified by our character and our behavior. Remember, that God sees all things from a spiritual perspective. The writing of his character in us - on our hearts - is a spiritual matter. So, also, is the character of our adversary - Satan.

Now, let's break down the seven identifying signs of the true believers.

Number one on this list of identifying marks (signs) is that they believe in the name of Jesus, the Christ. This is best illustrated in the gospel of John, chapter 20 verses 24 through 31.

"But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

"And after eight days again his disciples were within, and Thomas with them: *then* came Jesus, the doors being shut, and stood in the midst, and said, Peace *be* unto you. Then saith he to Thomas, Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust *it* into my side: and be not faithless, but believing. And Thomas answered and said unto him, My Lord and my God. Jesus saith unto him, Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed *are* they that have not seen, and *yet* have believed.

"And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name."

Now, you wouldn't be reading this book if you didn't already believe in the salvation God granted to mankind by the death and resurrection of Jesus. This was a stumbling block at first for Thomas. But, mark this well, it is the primary MUST for anyone's salvation.

Number two is LOVE: "Jesus said unto him, thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. . . . Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Mat. 22:37,39)

Anyone who calls themselves a Christian has no business looking down their nose at anyone or anything for any reason. The idea of "hate the sin but love the sinner" is what applies

to us. There are no excuses:

“Ye have heard that it hath been said, Thou shalt love thy neighbour, and hate thine enemy. But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you; That ye may be the children of your Father which is in heaven: for he maketh his sun to rise on the evil and on the good, and sendeth rain on the just and on the unjust. For if ye love them which love you, what reward have ye? do not even the publicans the same? And if ye salute your brethren only, what do ye more *than others*? do not even the publicans so? Be ye therefore perfect, even as your Father which is in heaven is perfect.” (Mat. 5:43-48) Also:

“A new commandment I give unto you, That ye love one another; as I have loved you, that ye also love one another. By this shall all *men* know that ye are my disciples, if ye have love one to another” (John 13: 34-35).

Look at the sentence structure here. These are commands of Jesus. You have no choice or option here. You may NOT have even the slightest negative thought toward anyone. You must have the constant thought that you have been called by God at this time. They may or may not have. It ain't yours to judge.

And, as far as their ethnic background and/or upbringing, don't even allow any thoughts of their being any difference between you and them. Remember,

“For as many of you as have been baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. Now I say, that the heir, as long as he is a child, differeth nothing from a servant, though he be lord of all; but is under tutors and governors until the time appointed of the father.” (Gal 3:27 - 4:2)

To this, I add denomination.

My brother, let me tell you a secret: Love and hate are the opposite ends of the same decision. That's right, I said "decision". You can just exercise your will and make-up your mind to love everyone unconditionally as God has already done on our behalf. When you do, you will become so happy with yourself; not pridefully: but full of peace, you know; the kind that passes all understanding.

There is one more angle that you and I must see about this love/hate thing. Turn to Genesis three and read the first thirteen verses.

“Now the serpent was more subtil than any beast of the field which the LORD God had made. And he said unto the woman, Yea, hath God said, Ye shall not eat of every tree of the garden? And the woman said unto the serpent, We may eat of the fruit of the trees of the garden: But of the fruit of the tree which *is* in the midst of the garden, God hath said, Ye shall not eat of it, neither shall ye touch it, lest ye die.

“And the serpent said unto the woman, Ye shall not surely die: For God doth know that in the day ye eat thereof, then your eyes shall be opened, and ye shall be as gods, knowing good and evil.

“And when the woman saw that the tree *was* good for food, and that it *was* pleasant to the eyes, and a tree to be desired to make *one* wise, she took of the fruit

thereof, and did eat, and gave also unto her husband with her; and he did eat. And the eyes of them both were opened, and they knew that they *were* naked; and they sewed fig leaves together, and made themselves aprons.

“And they heard the voice of the LORD God walking in the garden in the cool of the day: and Adam and his wife hid themselves from the presence of the LORD God amongst the trees of the garden.

And the LORD God called unto Adam, and said unto him, Where *art* thou?

And he said, I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, because I *was* naked; and I hid myself.

And he said, Who told thee that thou *wast* naked? Hast thou eaten of the tree, whereof I commanded thee that thou shouldest not eat?

And the man said, The woman whom thou gavest *to be* with me, she gave me of the tree, and I did eat.

And the LORD God said unto the woman, What *is* this *that* thou hast done? And the woman said, The serpent beguiled me, and I did eat.”

Satan sets up in the minds of Adam and Eve a spirit of competition against God. The results were immediate: “. . . I heard thy voice in the garden, and I was afraid, . . .” verse 10, “. . . the woman whom thou gavest to be with me, she gave me of the tree, . . .” verse 12, “The serpent beguiled me,. . .” verse 13.

They became so scared that they hid. Have you ever known that kind of fear? I think that I can relate to it. I served in Vietnam. One night, while under attack, I got so scared that I couldn't control my wind or water. Why? I had put myself in competition against the Vietcong. It almost killed me.

After the fear, when they're confronted by God, came the blame game. "She did it!" . . . "No it was the snake's fault!"

Have you ever watched the interviews in the losers' locker room after the super bowl or the world series? The players are in deep thought as to "why", and "what happened". The one I like is: "Well, they were just better than us."

God DID NOT create us to be in competition against Him or anybody. He created us to live in harmony with Him, ourselves, and all the rest of creation. When we have negative thoughts or feelings about anyone, we have a spirit of competition against them. It becomes "them against me".

Understand that the spirit of competition is the result of deception, just like with Adam and Eve. These first two members of mankind decided to accept Satan's word about God's plan. They didn't know it, but they had been deceived into deciding to put themselves in competition against God and on the side of Satan. This is what we have been forgiven of: "Father, forgive them; for they know not what they do." (Luke 23:34)

Deception is always smooth-talking. As a matter of fact the word translated "serpent" in Genesis 3 means: "hiss, i.e. whisper a (magic) spell: . . . divine enchanter, . . . learn by experience . . ." (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance). Learn by experience sounds like experiment, doesn't it? It's really harmless. Or is it? Don't think with your own reasoning; use the Spirit of God that is in you. To use your own reasoning, to work it out for yourself, is SIN. You and I have been forgiven of all sin and its results have been conquered. God said it to us this way: "And be not

conformed to this world: (by competition or deception) but be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind, that ye may prove what is that good, and acceptable, and perfect, will of God." (Romans 12:2) You must throw aside the deception and decide that you are going to be in harmony with God and His creation.

"There are three things that remain - faith, hope, and love - and the greatest of these is love." (1 Cor. 13:13 L.B.) **YOU CAN ACHIEVE THE GREATEST OF ALL THINGS WITH A DECISION.**

Next on the list of seven is repent.

Before I heard God's calling, I had an aversion to this Word. I just didn't know what it meant. I had this vision of a "Hell-Fire and Brimstone" preacher shouting "Repent! Repent! Repent!" I wanted no part of anyone shouting at me. I got enough of that growing up.

To the dictionary we go again. (The same one) "repent: 1: to turn from sin and dedicate oneself to the amendment of one's life. 2 a: to feel regret or contrition b: to change one's mind"

Oh! "To change one's mind". I know some people that are in a constant state of changing their mind.

Does this sound familiar? It should! That's right! Making a decision to have your life going in God's direction, toward Him: repent.

Now that you are a Christian, you are living in a constant state of repentance. You are not constantly changing your mind, but you ARE changing each area of your life (your character) that you find out of the will of God; His order of things. This will be an ongoing process for the rest of your life. Remember the loaf of bread in the pan, and more importantly Romans 12:2: ". . . be ye transformed by the renewing of your mind."

"Be baptized . . . in the Name of Jesus . . ." is next.

Now let's end all speculation about this. The order of things as laid out in scripture is simple: repent, then be baptized in the Name of Jesus, then receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. (Acts 2:38) If you think that infant baptism is okay, think of this: an infant does not know any thing about sin, God, God's law, Jesus, and the list goes on and on. Until a person reaches an age where they can understand the things of God - who He is and their relationship to Him - they cannot repent; they don't know to repent. Besides, what does a six week old baby have to repent of, dirty diapers? **UNTIL A PERSON UNDERSTANDS THE THINGS OF GOD AND REPENTS, BAPTISM IS OUT OF GOD'S ORDER OF THINGS. PERIOD!** Note: the idea of having "godparents" standing in for or speaking for the infant is just as off the wall. No one can speak for us before God; we must do that for ourselves.

Now the words for baptize, baptized, baptism, baptist, and baptizer all have the same root in the Greek: bapto; Strong's Exhaustive Concordance Greek word #911 (I wonder if this number is more than just a coincidence.) and means: "to whelm, i.e. cover wholly with a fluid . . ." The words used in Scripture, which the New Testament was written in Greek, tell us how a baptism is to be done. A sprinkling, or a pouring over the head, just doesn't cut it. We need to understand the function of baptism, to understand its proper use in the Christian's life.

Baptism is an outward symbol of our dying and being buried, and then, as we come up out of the water, being raised to new life. It is only the outward symbol of what is happening inside the person who has repented and is now dying inside, only to be raised to the New Life in Christ.

This whole act is done for our benefit. God already knows the heart and mind-set of the

candidate. He is having this person confirm, by means of their own outer actions, in front of witnesses, the irrevocable direction that they have decided to walk in. It is done primarily for the candidate.

Next, "Receive the gift of the Holy Ghost (Spirit).

Grasp the whole implication of this. God is placing a portion of himself in us; or, more accurately, united-with, to be a part of, us. **THE ALL POWERFUL, ALL MIGHTY, PURE LOVE GOD IS A PART OF ME!**

We believed in the name of Jesus, not having seen or touched (physically), we believe. As a result of this belief, we were "pricked in the heart" (see Acts 2:37) and repented. We sought after, and were baptized in His Name: we, in symbolic form, died to ourselves - were buried in the waters of baptism - to rise up to a new life. We are now given the second part of God's creating us into the duplication of Himself; He unites Himself to us. This unification is what makes us a "New Creation". (2 Cor. 5:17 R.S.)

Up until this time, the Pentecost of Acts 2, God had never united Himself to any of His creation. All of creation was His, but He had never taken and made Himself a part of the creation.

Go back to Genesis 2:7: "And the Lord God formed man *of* the dust of the ground, and breathed into his nostrils the breath of life; and man became a living soul." God used already created material to make man. He "breathed into his nostrils". There was no unification here, just temporary life imparting.

Two things here: 1) God uses the already created material of man as the base material, then unites Himself to this converted base material to form the new creation of His Son - what you and I are to become at the end of this process when Jesus returns to Earth. 2) Had Adam eaten of the Tree Of Life – verse 9, which represented God's Spirit and character, he, Adam, would have become this NEW CREATION then and would have not wanted to eat of the forbidden fruit.

Before we leave this section on the Holy Spirit, (By the way, Ghost and Spirit are interchangeable terms.) in Acts 2:38 this is called a "gift." This means that you have to receive and use. You must use the power of God's Spirit in you to become what Eph. 4:13 talks about. But anyone who has the Spirit of God as part of him, would automatically strive for this goal because the Holy Spirit drives him, and gives him a taste, a sample, "the earnest", of what is to come.

CHAPTER FIVE

THEY ARE FOUND KEEPING THE WORDS OF JESUS

Turn to Revelation 2. The second and third chapters are devoted to the letters to the Seven Churches of Asia. What I want to zero-in-on is the first and last thing that Jesus says through John to each of the churches:

To Ephesus: " . . . To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the tree of life, which is in the midst of the paradise of God." (verse 7)

To Smyrna: " . . . He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches; He that overcometh shall not be hurt of the second death." (verse 11)

To Pergamos: " . . . To him that overcometh will I give to eat of the hidden manna, and will give him a white stone and in the stone a new name written, which no man knoweth saving he that

receiveth *it*." (verse 17)

To Thyatira: "And he that overcometh, and keepeth my works unto the end, to him will I give power over the nations: And he shall rule them with a rod of iron; as the vessels of a potter shall they be broken to shivers: even as I received of my Father. And I will give him the morning star. He that hath an ear, let him hear what the Spirit saith unto the churches." (verses 26-28)

To Sardis: "He that overcometh, the same shall be clothed in white raiment; and I will not blot out his name out of the book of life, but I will confess his name before my Father, and before his angels." (chapter 3, verse 5)

To Philadelphia: "Him that overcometh will I make a pillar in the temple of my God, and he shall go no more out: and I will write upon him the name of my God, and the name of the city of my God, *which is* new Jerusalem, which cometh down out of heaven from my God: and *I will write upon him* my new name." (verse 12)

To Laodicea: "To him that overcometh will I grant to sit with me in my throne, even as I also overcame, and am set down with my Father in his throne." (verse 21)

Notice all the promises that Jesus makes: to each church, an additional set of promises! All of these promises are for us if we "overcome." But overcome what?

In everyone of these letters Jesus is talking about "works". "I know thy works" He says to all seven of the churches (King James Version). Read it at the head of each letter for yourself.

What "works" is Jesus talking about? What are "works?" The word translated "works" means: "an act; - deed, doing, labor, work." (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance) Another way of saying this might be: "I know your doings."

These are physical actions which are the reflections of the mind-set of the people of those churches: ". . . That which cometh out of the man, that defileth the man." (Mark 7:20) This not only refers to the words of your mouth but also your physical actions; your doings; your works: "For from within, out of the heart of men, proceed evil thoughts, adulteries, fornications, murders, thefts, covetousness, wickedness, deceit, lasciviousness, an evil eye, blasphemy, pride, foolishness: All these evil things come from within, and defile the man." (verses 21-23) These are the indicators of the condition of your heart - your mind-set; but they all manifest themselves in physical actions - works. But the converse is also true:

GODLY MIND-SET PRODUCES GODLY ACTIONS - WORKS.

So, what we must overcome is the mind-set that produces these defiling works. But just overcoming this mind-set is not enough:

"When the unclean spirit is gone out of a man, he walketh through dry places, seeking rest, and findeth none. Then he saith, I will return into my house from whence I came out; and when he is come, he findeth *it* empty, swept, and garnished. Then goeth he, and taketh with himself seven other spirits more wicked than himself, and they enter in and dwell there: and the last *state* of that man is worse than the first. . . ." (Mat.12:43-45)

The overcoming of the wrong mind-set sweeps you clean; but the empty mind must be filled with the right things that will produce the fruits of the Spirit: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, Meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." (Gal.5:22-23) These are the Godly works. Notice that they are all "from within the man".

When you were converted your mind was swept clean; you repented - turned away from - all your life of going in the wrong direction - after the lust of the flesh listed above in Mark 7:21-23 and in Galatians 5:19-20. And now, you've started filling your mind with the things of God. You are in the same state that Adam was in after his creation while being filled with all the essential knowledge of life. There are two differences: you have been forgiven - Adam had not sinned yet, so he didn't need forgiveness, and you have God's Spirit living in you.

Although God does deal with us directly through His Holy Spirit in us, He also relies on His Church to provide the proper application of His Word - The Scriptures. This can be where error can come in. The Church - which means "called out ones" - is comprised of called out ones like you and me who have not yet achieved perfection. He has done this so that we are dependant on each other; and, as the body of Christ, we are dependant on Him.

So how do we prevent, and/or correct error? "All scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness:" (2 Tim.3:16) And "Knowing this first, that no prophecy of the scripture is of any private interpretation." (2 Pet.2:20) Notice that Second Timothy says "All scripture".

Now, when God had Paul and Peter pen these thoughts, the only scriptures that were available were the Old Testament. The New Testament hadn't been compiled yet - it wasn't complete until about 96 AD. with the Book Of Revelation. Since there is no private interpretation, how is scripture interpreted?

IT INTERPRETS ITSELF.

This means that the Old and New Testaments are inter-connected. They rely upon each other for explanation. And, if you look at them from God's point of view, the collection of books starting with Matthew, is just a CONTINUATION of the entire collection of God's thoughts for man. The division of Old and New Testaments is only a marking by God to show where He moved to the inside of man the whole of His plan for us. It now covers our whole being, not just the physical, as so many people look at the Old Testament; it is now spiritual also. More about this in chapter seven.

Don't confuse interpretation with translation. Translation is just conversion from one language to another. Interpretation is the ciphering of its meaning.

God said that "there is nothing new under the sun." (Ecl.1:9) He had already expressed all His thoughts about the behavior of man. Everything else is either Prophetic Warning, or explanation - refinement - of already expressed thoughts. Even the works of Jesus were all in line with the first five books of the Scripture, remember the Gospels, Acts, The Letters to the Churches and individuals, and Revelation hadn't been written yet. Jesus was just acting out the Law of God through His life exactly as it should be applied.

Take the time to read the first five books of the bible. But don't just read them; place yourself there as a partaker in all the events and an eye-wittiness. This is important, go ahead and put this book down to do this. It might take you a couple of weeks or more, but it'll be worth it. Read with the understanding of what the ceremony and sacrifices point to - Jesus.

Now that you've done that, turn to Matthew 5: "Think not that I am come to destroy the law, or the prophets: I am not come to destroy, but to fulfil. For verily I say unto you, Till heaven

and earth pass, one jot or one tittle shall in no wise pass from the law, till all be fulfilled." (verses 17&18) If you have several other translations available, verify the wording and the thoughts expressed. I don't know which one it is, but there is a translation out there that reads: "not one dot of an `I' or cross of a `T' will be removed from the law . . . "

Now there are those that say that the Kingdom of God is already here in us, and that fulfills this prophecy of Christ. But God's law is for all of creation. Look around you; do you see all of creation, and especially all of man, in line with the behavior that is outlined in God's Law? No you don't. All that you have to do is pick-up a news-paper or catch the evening news. Yes, God's Kingdom is in us; but we are not the entire Kingdom. And even you and I don't act like God's Children should act all the time.

Besides that, look at the time frame here in verse 18: "Till heaven and earth pass." Jesus Himself establishes that the Law of God will be in force at least until the New Earth and the New Jerusalem appears. I'll talk more about this in chapter seven.

In the Gospels Jesus is found telling the people to keep the law, follow the law, obey the law. (see Matthew 5:17-19, 7:7-12, 12:1-12, 19:3-9, 22:16-21, 22:36-40, Mark 2:23-28, 3:1-5, 10:2-8, 12:14-17, Luke 2:22-27, 6:1-10, 10:26-28, 14:1-4, 16:16-17, 20:22-25, 24:44, John 7:19) Do you think maybe it was important to God that the Christ tell us this many times to keep the Law?

Now to be sure that these sayings were not just for Jesus' ministry time, turn to Romans three, verse thirty-one. Read this verse in as many translations as you can get your hands on. "Do we then make void the law through faith? God forbid: yea, we establish the law." (K.J.) "Do we then overthrow the law by this faith? By no means! On the contrary, we uphold the law." (Revised Standard) "Well then, if we are saved by faith, does this mean that we no longer need obey God's laws? Just the opposite! In fact, only when we trust Jesus can we truly obey him." (Living Bible) God had Paul pen this thought long after Jesus had ascended to the throne of God.

Now then, what about Galatians? As with all scripture, you have to look at why it was written. The reason that God had Paul write this was to correct a misconception (deception) that had crept into the minds of the Galatians. That misconception, (deception) probably started by unconverted Jews of that area, was that you are justified by the works of the law.

DON'T BE CONFUSED HERE. READ THIS PORTION OF THIS BOOK SLOWLY AND WITH UNDERSTANDING.

Justification comes "by faith in Christ" (Gal.2:16), and this is a gift of God. But justification means the same thing as reconciliation - you are made right with God.

This means that by faith in Jesus Christ your slate is wiped clean - you get a fresh new start. It also means that every time that you stumble, you can go to God and be justified - reconciled - by faith in Jesus. The unconverted Jews of Galatia were trying to get the Christians to believe that they still had to be circumcised in order to be justified. But, as we have already seen in Hebrews, Christ has fulfilled this portion of the law. The rest of the law must be fulfilled by us; or, I should say, by Christ living in us. This is the code that you must live the rest of your life by. It was summed up by Jesus this way:

"Then one of them, *which was a lawyer*, asked *him a question*, tempting him, and

saying,

Master, which *is* the great commandment in the law?

Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind.

This is the first and great commandment.

And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself.

On these two commandments hang all the law and the prophets." (Mat 22:35-40 R.S.V.)

These two commandments are, as Jesus said, a summary of the law. Exodus through Deuteronomy give all the details of how to love God and our neighbor.

The only things Christ fulfilled were the sacrifice and ceremony aspects of the law. So now we can approach God boldly, directly, with Jesus Christ as our High Priest. Spiritually we enter into the Holy Of Holies - the Throne of God - His Presence - with Christ at our side: "Father, this is Dan (insert your name here)" is what Jesus says to the Father. The Father says back to me: "I know you, My Son."

If you keep these two commandments, you will be keeping the whole law. You, having been justified by faith in Christ, and will be living the life of Christ. You will be keeping the words - the commands - the law - of Jesus. You will "overcome" (Rev.2&3) the "works of the flesh" (Gal.5:19) and perform the works of loving "The Lord thy God with all . . . and thy neighbor as thyself" (Mat.22:37-39).

To sum-up what God says to us in Glatians: "I (God) took on human flesh, then allowed that flesh to die in your stead for your sins and sin nature so that I could declare you without sin, since I was Holy to begin with. All you have to do is accept this to be reconciled to Me (justified). If you truly accept this you will live with Me and these fruits will be in you and those works of the flesh will not. Remember, I'm God, and I make all the rules." The works and the fruits are just the outward (physical) signs of the condition of our hearts.

I have one last thought before getting out of this chapter. Turn to 1 John 3:4 " . . . for sin is the transgression of the law."

IF, after you have been baptized and received the Holy Spirit, you are out from under the law, then you cannot sin. Your slate is wiped clean; you now have no more need of God. There is no more sin for you because the law doesn't apply to you. So why then did God have Paul write what we know as Romans Seven and Eight? If you really believe that you don't have to keep the law, then you also believe that you can't sin. Why did God say "there is therefore no condemnation for you if you are in Christ Jesus and walk after the way of the spirit and not after the way of the flesh?" (Rom.8: 1-4 paraphrased for this text)

Condemnation is the opposite of reconciliation and the result of not being reconciled to God. It is the sentence of death for unrepentant sin. God says that He knows that you will stumble and sin; but He also knows that you want to not sin and that your flesh, which is warring against your spirit (united with God's spirit), has caused this sin. The most important thing here is that you repent and turn away from that sin and continue on walking the path of the Spirit of Christ. When this is accomplished there is no condemnation, death sentence, for you. It is the forgiveness God grants through the blood of Christ that wipes away - erases - the condemnation, your death sentence, which you deserved for that ONE stumble: "for whoever keeps the whole

law but fails in one point has become guilty of all of it." (Jas.2: 10 R.S.V.)

But "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins, and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make him a liar, and his word is not in us." (1 John 1:9-10)

The point being that we do sin, even after baptism; but we get forgiveness (reconciliation). If then, we sin; the law still applies to us, because "sin is the transgression of the law." (1 John 3:4)

The law is still here and still applies. The law will always be here and always apply. Even in Heaven, God's law, which he passed onto man first through Adam, then Moses, and ultimately Christ, is in force. It's just that in Heaven, God's law is obeyed implicitly and with joy and willingness. The dwellers of heaven obey automatically much like you and I suck air. This is the Spirit that we must allow to dwell in us.

Don't be afraid of the law. Yes, it does point out sin, but those who embrace God's law soon find that they only see life. You see God's law is the law of love. "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment. And the second *is* like unto it, Thou shalt love thy neighbour as thyself." (Mat.22:37-39) God's law is the outgoing concern for all creation. It is the "give" way not the "get".

CHAPTER SIX

SIGNS AND WONDERS SHALL FOLLOW THOSE WHO BELIEVE IN HIS NAME

First of all, Jesus already stated the works that would follow those who believe. There shouldn't be any controversy or argument about these, but there is.

The works themselves are not as important as the attitude and spirit that produces them. Jesus said that the works that he did and greater works would believers do. (John 14:12) But, it was the Spirit of God in Jesus that provided the power to perform these works. More important than the power was the attitude in Jesus that caused him to use that power to show God's love and spread the Gospel.

When I said earlier that I found all churches lacking, this is one of the big areas of lack. The reason for this lack is attitude. Genuine love is not self-serving, nor does it operate in fear. The Churches I have found are. They are concerned with numbers, or how they might appear, or what someone might say. The one that is a real slam in Christ's face is: "Those things were only for the time of the Early Church." Very few seem to be concerned with the individual afflicted. Remember that these works are for the benefit of the recipient and the witnesses for the sake of the Gospel in their lives.

As you read the Gospels, you find that Jesus was "moved with compassion." He felt a deep emotion of sorrow for the condition of the people, and because He had God's Spirit dwelling in Him (the same Spirit that you and I have), He knew He had the power to relieve their suffering. It wasn't to make Himself big, or for self-gratification, He had a deep love for these people and just wanted the best for them. **THIS IS THE ATTITUDE THAT PRODUCES MIRACULOUS WORKS.**

There are two other necessary provisions involved in miraculous works: **FAITH** and **DISCERNMENT.**

Jesus performed miracles and told the people that THEIR faith had healed them. It was the faith of the recipient; their belief in Jesus and in God that provided the path for the power of God to be displayed in their life. Jesus already believed in God and in God's power and willingness to make them whole, all because of His love for them. You and I have this same belief also.

Discernment is another matter. Jesus knew when a miracle was called for. He also had compassion on all who approached Him in faith. He knew their faith; He knew their need; He knew their sin. This knowledge was provided by the Holy Spirit of God in Him. This doesn't mean that this same Holy Spirit of God that's in you and me will provide an abundance of information to us. We're not mature enough in Christ for that yet. It also doesn't mean that we will be able to hear and recognize that information. Hearing and recognizing this divinely supplied information is discernment. It comes with time and experience with God.

That pretty well covers most of the "signs and wonders" mentioned in Mark 16:17-18 except the question of tongues.

There are three different areas of this ministry of tongues. The first is prayer in tongues: "Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words." (Rom 8:26 R.S.V.)

Have you ever had a thought, an idea that you couldn't get into words?

Your relationship with God should be so deep that every physical and spiritual fiber of your being should be totally involved. But sometimes an idea hits you that you just can't get the words out. So you pray, and the Spirit of God helps you. One translation says "with groanings;" another calls it the "language of angles." Any way you put it, it doesn't sound like intelligible speech. But the next verse says it all: "And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God." (verse 27 R.S.V.)

Don't be afraid of praying in tongues when the words won't come out. The Holy Spirit is helping you to pray as you should.

The next area of tongues is best exhibited by Acts 2:

"And they were all filled with the Holy Ghost, and began to speak with other tongues, as the Spirit gave them utterance. And there were dwelling at Jerusalem Jews, devout men, out of every nation under heaven. Now when this was noised abroad, the multitude came together, and were confounded, because that every man heard them speak in his own language. And they were all amazed and marvelled, saying one to another, Behold, are not all these which speak Galilaeans? And how hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born? Parthians, and Medes, and Elamites, and the dwellers in Mesopotamia, and in Judaea, and Cappadocia, in Pontus, and Asia, Phrygia, and Pamphylia, in Egypt, and in the parts of Libya about Cyrene, and strangers of Rome, Jews and proselytes, Cretes and Arabians, we do hear them speak in our tongues the wonderful works of God." (verses 4-11)

There was a need to have all hear in their own tongue. Most of the time, today, there is not such a need. If you become a missionary to another country, yes, the need might arise. But, if you stay in your own neighborhood, the need will probably not arise.

This area of ministry in tongues is for the unbelievers. It is a sign to them of God's power

to have you speak in words that they will understand. This is a miraculous event.

This also ties to the third area of the ministry of tongues: interpretation. Back in the early days of the Church, the congregations were made up of many nationalities. There was a language problem. If one spoke in Greek, an Ethiopian might not understand. So, an interpreter was needed. In both cases, these things were divinely provided. They were practical manifestations of God's power for the building of the Body of Christ.

Before we leave this chapter, this needs to be said: There are many people and churches that say that these signs and wonders were for the early Church only. You won't find this particular thought anywhere in scripture. God's power is still the same, and He still wants to show that power through His people. But His people have to be willing to be used of God this way. Ever since the Garden of Eden, Satan has been twisting and making into lies the word of God. This is just another lie. God still wants to relieve the suffering of His people.

CHAPTER SEVEN OBEYING WHICH COMMANDS?

Every denomination has its own ideas about which commands of God are to be obeyed, which are fulfilled, and which have been changed. One major denomination even claims that it has the power to change the commands of God, and has done so.

I repeat: "There is nothing new under the sun." (Ecl.1:9) All the commands of God are covered in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers, and Deuteronomy. Jesus only fulfilled the sacrifice and ceremonial portions of these laws. He changed the sacrifice of the lamb at passover (which was a symbol He fulfilled) to the symbols of bread and wine, which represent His body and blood respectively. He also changed the male circumcision to the circumcision of the heart of everybody; He moved it from the outside to the inside. (Remember, circumcision was a sign of the covenant that God made with Abraham. It is not part of Mossiac law.)

THE CIRCUMCISION OF THE HEART IS THE SIGN OF THE COVENANT GOD MAKES WITH ALL WHO BELIEVE. IF PHYSICAL CIRCUMCISION WAS A REQUIRMENT FOR SALVATION HOW COULD A WOMAN BE SAVED ?

Take notice here, when a law is fulfilled it is not done away with; **IT IS CHANGED IN FORM:** the Passover Lamb to Bread and Wine, the cutting of the male foreskin to the opening of all our hearts to God.

"For he is not a Jew, which is one outwardly; neither *is that* circumcision, which is outward in the flesh: But he *is* a Jew, which is one inwardly; and circumcision *is that* of the heart, in the spirit, *and* not in the letter; whose praise *is* not of men, but of God. (Rom. 2:28-29)

GOD IS THE LAWGIVER.

Turn to Zechariah 14. Look at verses one and sixteen: "BEHOLD, THE day of the Lord cometh, . . . And it shall come to pass, *that* every one that is left of all the nations which came against Jerusalem shall even go up from year to year to worship the King, the Lord of hosts, and to keep the feast of tabernacles."

Verse one tells us when this prophecy will take place: at the coming of Christ to set up the Kingdom of God. Verse sixteen tells us that in the Kingdom we will all celebrate the Feast of Tabernacles. (I hope you took the time to read about this in the first five books of the Bible like I

told you to do.)

These Feasts of God point to God's plan for man: Passover points to the Passover of Jesus and His Resurrection, and ultimately our Passover. Pentecost, or Feast of First-fruits, points to this time right now, the First Fruits of the Harvest of God. The Feast of Trumpets points to the catching up of the church and the final pouring out of God's wrath. The Feast of Atonement points to the establishment of the Kingdom of God on Earth when all will be reconciled to God (at-one-ment). The Feast of Tabernacles points to the thousand years of the Kingdom of God on Earth. And the Last Great Day points to what is known as the Great White Throne Judgment.

Did you ever notice that when God establishes a Holy Day, that day always points toward some future event? When man sets up a holiday, it commemorates something in the past. God is always looking toward the future. Man is always looking back at the past to see if his experiment worked, then he pauses, and rejoices at what he thinks are his success, while Satan snickers.

Let's take Christmas for example. The celebrating of Christmas didn't start until after 300 A.D. This was a little late, but what the heck, better late than never. This day points to something in the past. Easter, or Ishtar, is the same thing. If God had intended for us to celebrate these days, He would have first established Holy Days pointing toward them and would have done so through His Prophets: "Surely the Lord God will do nothing, but he revealeth his secret unto his servants the prophets." (Amos 3:7)

Now these Holy Days, or Feasts of God - His Holy High Sabbaths, were established by God through Moses and will be celebrated in the Kingdom; even though the way we celebrate them will be changed. So where in Scripture were they done away with? Nowhere. Man did away with them after the death of the Apostle John. Scripture shows that Jesus celebrated these, as seen in the Gospels, (John 7:2-29) and the early Church under the apostles did too, as pointed out by Acts.(Acts 2:1, 12:3-4, 18:18, 20:6,16, 21:24-25, 27:9,12)

But now, in their place, we are to celebrate, in the dead of winter, the pagan custom of celebrating birthdays - that of Jesus seemed to man to be logical. Also, in place of Passover, we were to celebrate the spring pagan festival of Ishtar, the Babylonian god of fertility, with colored eggs and rabbits. And because Satan wanted to distract all attention away from God, he even put it in the mind of man to change the day of the week called for in Scripture to be the day of rest - the seventh day, to the first day - Sunday - the day that man thinks the sun was created. This is also pagan - the day of sun worship. (By the way, if you study the first chapter of Genesis, you will discover that the sun was not created until the fourth day of creation week, Wednesday, the day that God created the stars, of which our sun is a medium, sized one; so Sunday is miss-named.)

This all came about because people that were embracing Christianity didn't want to turn loose of their comfortable pagan customs, and the church leaders of that time saw that this tremendous influx of converts would greatly enhance their power and their coffers. Here's what God has to say about the mixing of pagan worship with the God prescribed worship:

"When the Lord your God cuts off before you the nations whom you go in to dispossess, and you dispossess them and dwell in their land, take heed that you be not ensnared to follow them, after they have been destroyed before you, and that you do not inquire about their gods, saying, 'How did these nations serve their gods? - that I also may do likewise,' You shall not do so to the Lord your God; for every

abominable thing which the Lord hates they have done for their gods; for they even burn their sons and their daughters in the fire to their gods.

Everything that I command you shall be careful to do; you shall not add to it or take from it."(Dut. 12:29-32 R.S.V.)

In addition to Sunday worship, here are a few more pagan items that have crept into Christianity:

1. The worship of Mary as "Mother of God, Queen of Heaven, Ever Virgin, etc. Source - in ancient Babylon, the wife of Nimrod, Semiramis, (who became known after his death as Baal), and her son Tammuz.
 2. The Rosary . Source - the prayer-bead worship in Ancient Nineveh copied by Islamics today.
 3. Saints, their days and symbols. Source - Babylon's 5000 gods and goddesses.
 4. Steeples, temples, and towers. Source - the Tower of Babel.
 5. The Cross and crucifix. Source - as a religious symbol, these can be traced back to Babylon.
- And we have just scratched the surface.

Consider this: God established His Feast Days, these High Holy Sabbaths, through Moses in about 1440 B.C. And, since He has told us through Zechariah that we will celebrate them when the Kingdom of God is fully established, why don't we celebrate them now, during these 2000 years since Jesus? This makes God seem wishy-washy: "First you're gonna' do it, then you're not, then you're gonna' do it."

NO, MY GOD IS A ROCK, A FORTRESS, A MODEL OF CONSISTENCY.

His plan for man was laid out before the foundations of the world were laid. It even applies now and therefore should be celebrated by means of these Holy Days that God gave us to mark the steps of His plan by. When we celebrate His Holy Days, as laid out in Scripture, we celebrate Him as our God, creator, and most of all savior.

Now, lets look at all these other holidays that have crept into our society that have no origin in Scripture:

1. New Years and its Eve: God begins the New Year in Spring (Ex 12:1-2) when things take on new life, just as we do when we take on the new life in Christ. Man says, according to the Roman Calendar that we now use, that the year begins in Winter when everything is dead. Satan is the dead one. God is life.
2. The birthdays: Washington, Lincoln, King, etc.: this is a custom going back to Pagan Babylon. Remember God's warning in Dut. 12:29-32 about doing the practices of the pagans.

A point of interest here: if you read the first five books of the bible like I told you, you read that if a foreigner wanted to become part of Israel he and his family would have to live outside the camp or town for seven years, and then, they would not be allowed to intermarry with Israelites for four generations. This was to see to it that all pagan customs were long gone from their lives. That's how important this is to God.

3. St. Valentine's Day & St. Patrick's Day: These, and all others like them, not only get us to invoke the names of dead folks (see Ecl 9:5), but celebrate the elevation of humans to exalted places like sainthood. Only God has the right to judge the saintliness of a person. But, some men seem to think that they have the right to make this determination, or they want you to think that they are so close to God that God lets them know about such things. This is just another

deception by the advisory to get us to worship persons or things other than the Creator God. If you want to make merry, celebrate your Creator the way He told you to in the scriptures.

4. Palm Sunday, Good Friday: There is no place in Scripture that tells us to celebrate these days. Here again, Satan has deceived man into NOT celebrating Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread. Passover and the Days of Unleavened Bread have not been done away with. Their symbols have been changed and the spirit of why we celebrate them has been revealed.

5. Pentecost: Yes, it is the birthday of the church, but what did God say about celebrating pagan practices, which is what birthdays are? Get the proper perspective about this. The Feast of Pentecost celebrates God starting to harvest (figuratively speaking), which is this time right now.

6. Memorial Day, July 4th, Labor Day. etc. These national holidays have certain significance toward the country that God has given us to live in. If approached from this attitude there is nothing wrong with thanking God for this privilege, this includes Thanksgiving Day.

7. Halloween (All Hallows Eve): This one goes back hundreds of years before Christ when the Druids celebrated the dead. When the Roman Church came along, they tried to convert it into the Eve of All Saints day. Neither one has any scriptural authority. As a matter of fact, celebrating death is Satan's bag.

8. This brings us to the biggie, Christmas: With all its symbols and customs, it's strange that not a one of them has any Scriptural authority. Christ was probably born somewhere around the Feast of Tabernacles in late September, so the date is wrong. If God wanted us to celebrate this, don't you think that He would have given us the correct date? And the decorations, especially the trees have its origins in Druid worship.

"Thus says the Lord: "Learn not the way of the nations, nor be dismayed at the signs of the heavens because the nations are dismayed at them, for the customs of the peoples are false. A tree from the forest is cut down, and worked with an axe by the hands of a craftsman. Men deck it with silver and gold; they fasten it with hammer and nails so that it cannot move. Their idols are like scarecrows in a cucumber field, and they cannot speak; they have to be carried, for they cannot walk. Be not afraid of them, for they cannot do evil, **neither is it in them to do good.**" (Jeremiah 10:2-5 R.S.V. emphasis added)

God does not require decorations. God wants a contrite heart, a heart willing to obey and follow Him.

"Sacrifice and offering thou dost not desire; but thou hast given me an open ear. Burnt offering and sin offering thou hast not required. Then I said, 'Lo, I come; in the roll of the book it is written of me; I delight to do thy will, O my God; thy law is within my heart.'" (Ps.40:6-8 R.S.V.)

The giving of gifts one to another is not wrong. But, the idea of Santa Claus is a lie. And, who is the father of all lies? By the way, when the Wise Men gave gifts to Jesus, these gifts were symbolic: gold - His Earthly Kingship, incense - His Deity as God, myrrh - for His burial. Notice that they did not come into Jesus' presence and exchange gifts amongst themselves.

I know that this is a big shock. Practically everybody in the Non-Islamic free world celebrates this day. Remember: "Satan deceives the whole world" (Rev.12:9 & 13:14). This is just part of the deception. Check it out for yourself. Don't just accept my word for it. And don't just accept what you were told by your parents or some organized church as a God given fact.

Ask yourself "where in Scripture does it say that we are to celebrate Jesus' birth?" Remember, you're going to have to stand in front of your Creator some day and you can't just say: "Well my parents told me this."

I REPEAT: GOD IS THE LAWGIVER. NOT YOUR PARENTS OR YOUR CHURCH

God did not place in still fallible men the power to change His law. Remember:

"Don't misunderstand why I have come - it isn't to cancel the laws of Moses and the warnings of the prophets. No I came to fulfill them, and to make them all come true. With all the earnestness I have I say: Every law in the Book will continue until its purpose is achieved. And so if anyone breaks the least commandment, and teaches others to, he shall be the least in the Kingdom of Heaven. But those who teach God's laws *and obey them* shall be great in the Kingdom of Heaven." (Mat. 5:17-19 L.B.)

His law will remain, and remain the same, until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom; and then, the way it is celebrated will be changed in form. That's right, I said celebrated. God's law is something to be celebrated.

Now, what about all the times that Paul says that we are not under the law? This question must be answered or this whole book is a lie. The answer is simple: anyone who willingly obeys the law, that is, he or she has God's law written on their heart and follows it, is not under the law but part of it. You see it is all in your attitude, and because of Christ. Romans Eight says: "For the mind that is set on the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, indeed it cannot; and those who are in the flesh cannot please God. But you are not in the flesh, you are in the Spirit, if in fact the Spirit of God dwells in you. . . ." (Romans 8:7 – 9 R. S. V.) If you are obeying - submitting to, God's Law, you are indeed in the Spirit of God and His Spirit is in you: for you cannot obey - submit to, God's Law except that His Spirit be in you and His law be written on your heart. Six-thousand years of human history have proven that. Jesus' life proved that.

So, we are indeed, not under the law, but because of His Spirit in us, and our willingness to submit to God totally, we are, as God is, part of, the law; and His Law is part of us.

Turn to Genesis twelve and read verses one through three. God makes His first covenant with Abram (later to be renamed Abraham by God). If you will do this, I will do that; this is a covenant or contract.

Next, read from chapter fourteen, verse twenty-two through the whole fifteenth chapter, and then first fourteen verses of chapter seventeen. Finally, read the first eighteen verses of chapter twenty-two.

If you read these verses carefully you will notice that each time God makes an additional covenant, a progression of covenants. He has done the same with us. You will also notice that the last two God made with Abraham, were unconditional; they were based on the obedience that Abraham had already performed. God said that "because you DID that, I'm gonna' do this."

God first, made His covenant with Israel: "If you obey, I will bless you." Then, partly because of Israel's failure to obey, but mostly because of all mankind's need for a permanent, once-and-for-all sacrifice - the perfect sacrifice - the spiritual rather than the physical sacrifice, God extended His original covenant to all peoples and made the additional covenant that is based

on the belief on and in Jesus. We are bond to keep both covenants because the New Covenant is a continuation of, and based on, the First Covenant. In the New Covenant, what was a physical action, has been transformed into a spiritual condition. Let me say that again:

THE LAW IS A SPIRITUAL CONDITION

If you are building a house, you first lay the foundation. Then you build the rest of the house on that foundation. The Old Covenant is the foundation that is the support of the New. Without the Old Covenant, the New Covenant collapses because it has nothing to support it. In the Old Covenant, God established all of the symbols and laws. These were all physical in their form and observance, but pointed to the New Covenant; which is a spiritual covenant. This New Covenant, which was initiated by Jesus at that Passover meal with His disciples when He instituted the symbols of bread and wine, is built on the foundation of the Old Covenant step by step, event by event. Just as a foundation is nothing but an empty hole in the ground, the building is nothing but a pile of material until it sits, in proper order, on a foundation. And, in this case, the foundation of the Old Covenant, which points to Christ and is physical, is the support, the very proof, that the New Covenant, which is Christ, is the Spirit that was pointed to by the Old.

At this Passover meal, Jesus said: "do this in remembrance of me." This is a DO thing, a physical performance that we are to do because we now know its meaning. This is to be done at the celebration of Passover. When Jesus said "take and eat, this is my body," He was saying that all who eat of - come in to him - are His Body - The Body of Christ. This is to be done at Passover because it symbolizes our Passover as well as His. We are passing-over from the physical man into Christ. This is what Jesus meant when He said "This is My Body." Remember: "For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them." (Mat. 18:20 R.S.V.)

Understand this also:

"For unto us a child is born, unto us a son is given: and the government shall be upon his shoulder: and his name shall be called Wonderful, Counsellor, The mighty God, The everlasting Father, The Prince of Peace. Of the increase of *his* government and peace *there shall be* no end, upon the throne of David, and upon his kingdom, to order it, and to establish it with judgment and with justice from henceforth even for ever. The zeal of the Lord of hosts will perform this." (Is 9:6-7)

That's right, "government", said twice. This is speaking of Jesus' reign as King of The Kingdom of God. Now let me ask you, did you ever hear of a government that didn't have laws? Did you ever hear of a king that didn't give decrees that were his laws? Of course not!

What I find, is that this soon coming King and Kingdom of God has already made its laws known to us who will be in, and thus subject to, this King and Kingdom.

THIS LIFE IS LIKE PRACTICE TIME.

We get to form the habits and make part of our life all the ways that produce blessings now, even before the Kingdom is set-up.

THIS IS A PRIVILEGE NOT A CHORE.

So, which laws do we keep? Which commands - words - of Jesus do we keep?

All of them: the entire Bible is the word of God. Jesus is the word of God. So, Jesus is the Bible. Jesus is the essence - the spirit - of every thought that is spoken in the Bible.

Which laws have been changed? Only those that we've already talked about: the sacrifice-

ceremony laws and the law of circumcision. Remember, by changing these, the law has now become spiritual in nature.

Who has the power to change God's laws? Only God, of course. God is the law-giver. When a law is changed, it becomes a new law. Only God has the authority to issue, and actual power to enforce, any law.

The idea of any human having the authority to change God's law is actually Satan's idea. He thought that he would rise to God's throne and then he would have the power to make all things his way. He failed to seize, by force, God's throne, so he at least is trying, in man's mind, to usurp God's authority and place it in man's hands - remember man is under Satan's deceptive sway, which means that Satan controls most of man.

The churches that claim this law-changing authority use as their Scriptural basis Matthew sixteen, verses eighteen and nineteen:

"And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the powers of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven." (R.S.V.)

This idea is repeated two chapters later in Matthew eighteen, eighteen, but notice what Jesus is talking about - forgiveness. Read it from verse fifteen through verse twenty-two:

"If your brother sins against you, go and tell him his fault, between you and him alone. If he listens to you, you have gained your brother. But if he does not listen, take one or two others along with you that every word may be confirmed by the evidence of two or three witnesses. If he refuses to listen to them, tell it to the church; and if he refuses to listen even to the church, let him be to you as a Gentile and a tax collector. Truly, I say to you whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Again I say to you, if two of you agree on earth about anything they ask, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, there am I in the midst of them."

"Then Peter came up and said to him, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? As many as seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you seven times, but seventy times seven." (R.S.V.)

What is Jesus talking about? Forgiveness of others that have wronged us. Now insert the idea of forgiveness of sins into Matthew sixteen, and read from verse thirteen through verse nineteen:

Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, "Who do men say that the Son of man is?" And they said, "Some say John the Baptist, others say Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets." He said to them, "But who do you say I am?" Simon Peter replied, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." And Jesus answered him, "Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jona! For flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but my Father who is in heaven. And I tell you, you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the power of death shall not prevail against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind (what forgiveness you do not grant) on

earth shall be bound (not forgiven) in heaven, and whatever you loose (forgive) on earth shall be loosed (forgiven) in heaven. (R.S.V. my parenthetical insertions)

First of all, understand that the word rock in verse eighteen means: "An immovable object." (Strong's Exhaustive Concordance) What immovable object is Jesus referring to? He is saying: "That you are Peter, and upon this immovable rock - unchangeable fact, that I am Christ, the son of the living God, that I will Build my church . . ." The church is built upon the unchangeable fact that Jesus is the Christ, the son of the living God. It is not built upon the fact that Peter is unchangeable; he - Peter - was changed at Pentecost. And, he went on being changed as he grew in the grace and knowledge of Christ.

Now what are the keys to the kingdom of heaven? See Matthew six and zero in on verse twelve. "And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors." This verse should read "Forgive us our sins in the same manner as we forgive others their sins." It's the same principle, forgiveness of others. This is a very large portion of what love is all about because love starts with forgiveness and is seasoned all throughout with forgiveness.

Look, the basic principle of binding and loosing - forgiving sins and holding sins bound - is laid out in the sixteenth chapter, and is explained in the eighteenth chapter. This principle is the key to the Kingdom of Heaven. Read on in the eighteenth chapter, verses 23 through 35; read it in your own Bible.

“Therefore is the kingdom of heaven likened unto a certain king, which would take account of his servants. And when he had begun to reckon, one was brought unto him, which owed him ten thousand talents. But forasmuch as he had not to pay, his lord commanded him to be sold, and his wife, and children, and all that he had, and payment to be made. The servant therefore fell down, and worshipped him, saying, Lord, have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. Then the lord of that servant was moved with compassion, and loosed him, and forgave him the debt. But the same servant went out, and found one of his fellowservants, which owed him an hundred pence: and he laid hands on him, and took *him* by the throat, saying, Pay me that thou owest. And his fellowservant fell down at his feet, and besought him, saying, Have patience with me, and I will pay thee all. And he would not: but went and cast him into prison, till he should pay the debt. So when his fellowservants saw what was done, they were very sorry, and came and told unto their lord all that was done. Then his lord, after that he had called him, said unto him, O thou wicked servant, I forgave thee all that debt, because thou desiredst me: Shouldest not thou also have had compassion on thy fellowservant, even as I had pity on thee? And his lord was wroth, and delivered him to the tormentors, till he should pay all that was due unto him. So likewise shall my heavenly Father do also unto you, if ye from your hearts forgive not every one his brother their trespasses.

Jesus gives an example of what happens with both forgiveness and unforgiveness: both the unforgiving servant and the servant that he refused to forgive ended up in the same prison, the prison of unforgiveness. This must be a torturous place. If you've ever been angry at someone, you know the burning feeling in your gut. This is a warning to you of what you are doing spiritually to yourself and the person that you haven't forgiven. And what God says to you is that you must get rid of this immediately - forgive them.

Notice also, that the king - God, cannot forgive a debt that someone else owes you. You must be the one to do that. This is the principle of binding and loosing.

But, this principle must not be misconstrued as license to change God's law. There is never given, in scripture, any delegation of authority to man to change God's laws, commandments, or anything else. We won't even have that authority as full-fledged sons of God in His kingdom. The Father is always the head of His Household; and God is always our Father. The Father always establishes the laws of His House.

What is so ironic about this man changing God's laws is that God predicted this would happen some 500 years before Christ. Turn to Daniel, the seventh chapter, verse twenty five. "And he shall speak *great* words against the most High, and shall wear out the saints of the most High, and think to change times and laws: and they shall be given into his hand until a time and times and the dividing of time."

Who is this speaking about? I know that I told you to do a lot of reading, but read the whole seventh chapter. This fourth beast, or kingdom, which is different (diverse) from all the others, is a religion ruling over governments; this is what makes it different. The others were kingdoms or world ruling governments that had some religion. This beast, or kingdom, that thinks to change the times and laws (seasons) did so about 326 A.D. (After Christ). The beast, or antichrist, this religion ruling over governments, changed the official day of worship to the day that Constantine was used to, the day of the sun.

Now as to the rest of verse twenty-five, it says that the saints of the most High will "be given into his (the beast or antichrist) hand for a time and times and the dividing of time." In prophetic language this is 3 1/2 prophetic years or actually 1,260 years on God's calendar. This actually happened. The Sabbath Keepers were persecuted from about 326 to 1586 when the "New World" of North America started to be settled by people seeking religious freedom. During this time, the history books are mostly void of facts concerning Sabbath Keepers.

God said that this would happen, and it did. That doesn't mean that He sanctioned it.

So, where does one start? Try this: "Ye shall make you no idols nor graven image, neither rear you up a standing image, neither shall ye set up any image of stone in your land, to bow down unto it: for I *am* the Lord your God. Ye shall keep my sabbaths, and reverence my sanctuary: I *am* the Lord. If ye walk in my statutes, and keep my commandments, and do them; Then I will give you rain in due season, and the land shall yield her increase, and the trees of the field shall yield their fruit." (Leviticus 26:1-4)

These are the two test commandments, no idol worship and keep My Sabbaths. Israel, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, was taken away into captivity, never to return until the second coming of Christ, for breaking these two test commandments. Judah, the southern kingdom, went into captivity about 150 years later for breaking these two commandments. They are very important to God if he would do this to his chosen people. (If you read Kings and Chronicles, all four books, you will see that they broke all the others first but breaking these two really brought on God's punishment.)

God made such a big deal of these two commandments, yet their change, which started officially about 326 A.D. by Constantine and the Bishop of Rome, was never included in scripture. You would think that after punishing His chosen people so severely for breaking these commandments (His laws), that He would at least make a formal announcement "Hey guys, I see

that these two are too hard for you to keep, so, I'm changing them." You don't see anything like this in scripture. As a matter of fact, Israel, the ten tribes of the northern kingdom, is still in exile for breaking these two laws; they are still being punished. If God was going to change them, He would have held scripture open to include these changes. "I warn every one who hears the words of the prophecy of this book; if any one adds to them, God will add to him the plagues described in this book, and if any one takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God will take away his share in the tree of life and in the holy city, which are described in this book. He who testifies to these things says, 'Surely I am coming soon.' Amen. Come, Lord Jesus! The grace of the Lord Jesus be with all the saints. Amen." (Revelation 22:18-21 R.S.V.) These are the last four verses of the bible and they were completed in about 96A.D. As we've already seen, the changes were made about 326 A.D.

Do you want to know why these two laws are so important? Here's why: 1) The true Sabbath - the Seventh Day of the week - points to God as creator. "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness *was* upon the face of the deep. And the spirit of God moved upon the face of the waters. And God said, Let there be light: and there was light." (Gen. 1:2-3 also see Psalms 95:6, 96:5, 100:3 Isaiah 40:25-26, 45:18) This is very serious stuff! On the first day of the week God created the light. By the seventh day of the week, He had finished His creating work and rested, He celebrated His creating work. If you celebrate any other day you are worshipping creation and not the creator; just what Satan wants you to do.

Look, you can settle this whole question of which day is set aside for the Holy Purpose (Sanctified) of Rest (Sabbath) by asking yourself three questions: 1. Who is the one that originally sanctified a particular day for rest ? Answer: God. "Thus the heavens and the earth were finished, and all the host of them. And on the seventh day God ended his work which he had made; and he rested on the seventh day from all his work which he had made. And **God blessed the seventh day, and sanctified it:** because that in it he had rested from all his work which God created and made." (Gen. 2:1-3)

2. Which day did He sanctify ? The seventh day of the week.

3. Who changed God's Law around to suit man ? A man: the Bishop of Rome around 326 A.D. Oh, he said that he was speaking for God (a self proclaimed prophet); and most of the world believed him. But it is Satan that deceives the world.

If you take the time to study the Ten Commandments you will find that the fourth and fifth commandments are the only ones that are NOT "thou shalt nots". These two are DO commandments. And the fourth is the only one that contains its own instructions as to how to obey it. This one is the longest of the commandments covering four verses. Do you think that maybe this commandment was important enough to God that He took some extra time with it?

There are many people out there that I have heard say "God ain't gonna' barbecue me over which day I go to church. Besides, I count all days as holy."

Let's stop and examine this for a while. As I stated earlier, God still has the Ten Tribes of the Northern Kingdom of Israel in exile for violating His Holy Sabbaths and making idol gods.

Why?

Read Leviticus 26. In verses one and two God repeats His Law. Then He explains the blessings for following His Law (verses 3 - 13). Notice that they are both physical - rain in their season (vs. 4) - and spiritual - God dwelling in them and among them (vs. 11&12). This is the

safety and beauty of doing things God's Way, staying His course.

Next in this chapter God details out what happens when you don't obey His Law (vs. 14-39). Again, the results are both physical - sowing seed in vain - and spiritual - sudden terror, fear (vs. 16).

As you read on, you see that God has set-up the results of disobedience in phases (vs. 18, 21, 23, &27). God does not enjoy, nor does He want to see His people - His creation - being punished. This is why He pauses in phases, to allow the sinner time to reflect and maybe repent - turn away from the sin. You see the choice as to endure punishment is not God's. He has already set in motion the law of obedience - blessings, and of sin - cursing or punishment. **THE CHOICE IS OURS.** "For I have no pleasure in the death of any one, says the Lord God; so turn, and live." (Ezekiel. 18:32)

Now as to this barbecue thing, the fate of the one that does not repent - turn away from sin - will be the same as of the advisory - permanent non-existence - as though they had never been created (see Revelation 21:4&5). There ain't no real barbecue pit. When we read of "hell's fire," it is being used as a metaphor.

Look, God does not speak just to hear Himself talk. Everything that He says is important and for our own good. He didn't tell us to "keep His Sabbaths" just to see if He could give Moses writer's cramps. He gave us these rests for our physical and spiritual well-being. And then, He explains what happens when we take advantage of them - both physical and spiritual. But He doesn't stop there; He also explains the results of not taking advantage of these rests.

Look at a young child that has learned to walk, in that stage of absolute curiosity. He or she doesn't know that grabbing that pot of boiling water off the stove will severely harm them. But that doesn't change the fact that it will cause severe burns or death if the child pulls it off the stove. God's Law is the same way. Just because you don't know about it or all of its ramifications; doesn't mean that it don't apply with all of its ramifications. It's just that most people have been deceived into thinking that this is the way life is; that it don't get any better than this.

WRONG

As one who tries with very great effort to obey these commands of Leviticus 26, the writer of this book testifies as to the great peace and physical well-being that comes from this obedience. Life got a whole bunch better as I started to follow God's way. I'm not gonna' tell you that everything is perfect; heck, I don't know what a perfect life really is. I just know that even when an apparent disaster strikes, I am able to handle it with the peace of knowing that God is in control and that I am growing in Him.

The images that man makes out of the already created by God materials of wood, stone, or now plastic tear down the deity of God; they try to put God on man's level as part of creation. This denies God as the creator. All of the gods of the pagans were gods of creation: the Sun god, the god of fertility, the god of the moon, of the planets, etc.; and they carved out of stone and wood what they imagined these gods looked like. The one true Creator God created the sun, the moon, the planets, the stars. (Gen.1:3-5, Ps.8:3, 104:19, 136:7-9) He created fertility as part of reproduction. And now man has said that he worships the true God in front of these images that he has carved out because they remind him of God - they help put good thoughts about God in him. But they kneel down in front of these images. This makes me want to grab them and say:

"Look around you! Did not God create the grass, the trees, the dogs, the cats, the stones, the air that you breathe? Look at yourself in the mirror. Did not God create you? You don't need any more reminders than that. Worship God in your closet."

We don't need a God that's on our own level. If He is down here, He ain't no God.

Our God is an awesome God who rules the universe from His throne in heaven.

The advisory - Satan - tried to ascend to the throne of God: "How art thou fallen from heaven, O Lucifer, son of the morning! how art thou cut down to the ground, which didst weaken the nations! For thou hast said in thine heart, I will ascend into heaven, I will exalt my throne above the stars of God: I will sit also upon the mount of the congregation, in the sides of the north: I will ascend above the heights of the clouds: I will be like the most High." (Isaiah 14:12-14) Notice all the "I wills;" conceited ain't he. God threw him down to earth. So now Satan tries to drag God down to creation's level. But, the only place that he can do this is in the minds of men. It is the exact aim and purpose of Satan to get men to weaken or deny the law thus weakening or denying the lawgiver - God. Once a person accepts a misconception (Satan's deception) about God, he or she has a false image of God in his or her mind. He or she has an idea of a weakened or flawed character of God. (read the first five verses of Genesis three for proof) Usually, as has it has been for the past 6000 or so years, this becomes a comfortable philosophical IDOL enthroned in the place of Jehovah - our Creator God; in other words, IDOL WORSHIP. And, it really doesn't matter if our parents taught us this or we picked it up some place else; like at church, it is still idol worship.

Something else too, if you call yourself Christian, you are calling yourself by one of God's names. If you call yourself by God's name but don't do what He said, you are profaning God's name. You are dragging down the holiness of God, especially in the eyes of the world that you are supposed to be witnessing to.

These are the reasons for these two test commandments. If you violate these, you will have left the true God for a god that has been conjured-up in your mind, a God in an image that you can accept. You will be creating God in your own image, not the other way around. You will have abandoned the way that He said that you should worship Him for a way that seems right in your own mind. "There is a way which seemeth right unto a man, but the end thereof *are* the ways of death." (Proverbs 14:12, 16:25)

Start keeping these two commands. The weekly Sabbath starts at Friday sundown and goes to Saturday sundown. God will, as a result of keeping these, open your heart to a whole new aspect of His character. You will want to dig out all that He has for you in His Scripture. You will develop a whole new understanding of what He has said. I grant you, that you will have to find a church that "keeps" God's Sabbaths; but there are becoming quite a few out there. Don't worry about what others will say, remember that Jesus said that the world will hate you for following Him. (John 15:18) If the world hates you, (remember that Satan is the god of this world for now) you must be on the right track.

There was, a few years ago, a Contemporary Christian song out that said: "The image we present can be stepped over." The singer was singing about Modern Christianity. The world accepts Modern Christianity as a part of itself, and looks at it as not presenting any threat to its

system - Satan's system of "GET". Start keeping the Sabbath and watch how the world cannot step over or around you so easily. Then go on from there to keep the whole law, and watch your love for God and all of his creation grow. The Law must be kept in your heart first, then it will manifest itself in the physically appropriate actions. It is because of this love that you will want to obey His law: "I love God, therefore I want to obey His law." This is not salvation by works, but works because of salvation. If you are totally saved, you will have this in you.

Let me ask you something. When you were converted, what did you repent of? Sin, of course. You turned your life away from sin and toward God. But, as we have already seen, sin is the breaking of the law. So, you repented, turned away from breaking the law. And now that you have done that, does God say that the law no longer applies to you, but just to those that haven't repented yet? Of course not. But that is exactly what those who say that the law does not apply to us are saying. They say that the law applies only to those who haven't repented. How utterly ludicrous!

The law applies to all of God's creation, including Satan. Satan is just an avowed law-breaker. His wages will be death - permanent and forever non-existence, as though he had never been created.

"But the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus." (Romans 8:23) You and I have been given this gift. As a matter of fact, He has offered this gift to all of mankind; only few have accepted as of now. This gift is to become part of Him. That's right, I said, "part of Him". That's exactly what you and I become when we put on Christ; we become part of God: we become an extension of our Creator. This is what it means to be a Son of God.

Look, the Law of God is a part of God. It is part of His personality and character. So what are we to say: "God, I want to be like you and part of you except for your law?" That's like saying you want a new car, but you don't want the engine or the drive-train; you just want the new body. You just want to make your old ratty-running clunker look good. By denying the law a person is putting on a form of religion but denying the power of it. (2 Tim. 3:5)

Those that say that we don't have to obey the law are always talking about legalism. What they are really saying is that they don't want to obey the law. And, they don't. But this is a sure sign that they don't have God's Spirit in and part of them. I don't judge them, but I know them by their fruits.

What makes these folks that say that we don't have to obey the law so illogical is that these same people generally always say that the Ten Commandments still apply. The Ten Commandments are just a summation of the Law. If the Ten Commandments still apply, so does the Law. Putting on Christ is a package deal: either you put all of Him on or you don't have any of Him on.

THE LAW IS CHRIST - GOD, AND HE IS THE LAW

This is a rock - an immovable, inseparable fact. And since God is Spirit, so is the law. Quit thinking of it as so many do's and don't's - physical actions. The law is a mindset, a way of thinking: it is the spirit in you. And all you have to do is ask God for it.

There is one last point that you must see about this whole idea of the law. Turn to Matthew twenty-three: "Woe unto you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For ye pay tithe of mint and anise and cummin, and have omitted the weightier *matters* of the law, judgment, mercy, and faith: these ought ye to have done, and not to leave the other undone." (verse 23) Judgment

(justice), mercy, and faith are character traits (marks) of God. This verse makes it clear that you can't have one without the other. The law is your horse in front of your cart. But, your cart must be full of these - your spirit must bear these marks. Why? Because these marks - character traits - are part of LOVE.

You don't need to be a rocket scientist or a brain surgeon to figure out that, as you read the four gospels, Jesus was constantly on the Scribes' and Pharisees' case because they thought that the law was an end, in and of itself.

IT IS ONLY THE BEGINNING.

"Do not suppose that I came to annul the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to abolish but to complete them; for I assure you, while heaven and earth endure not one iota or one projection of a letter will be dropped from the Law until all is accomplished." (Mat.5:17-18 Modern Language Bible)

There are many who think that because Jesus fulfilled the law that it is done away with, as if God only requires just one righteous person to fulfill the law so He could do away with it.

NO. NO. NO.

The law has a purpose to it. But, it is not until you fulfill - keep - the law that you start to see that purpose - **LOVE**. What did Jesus say to the rich, young, ruler?

"And a certain ruler asked him, saying, Good Master, what shall I do to inherit eternal life? . . . Thou knowest the commandments, Do not commit adultery, Do not kill, Do not steal, Do not bear false witness, Honour thy father and thy mother. And he said, All these have I kept from my youth up. Now when Jesus heard these things, he said unto him, Yet lackest thou one thing: sell all that thou hast, and distribute unto the poor, and thou shalt have treasure in heaven: and come, follow me." (Luke 18:18-22)

First, Jesus tells him to keep the law. Then, when the young man says that he already does, Jesus tells him to show the purpose of the law - **LOVE TO MAN**, by giving all that he has to the poor; and **LOVE TO GOD**, by loving man in this way, and by following Jesus.

PLEASE NOTICE THE ORDER THAT JESUS LAYS OUT – FIRST START TO KEEP THE LAW, THEN ALLOW THE LOVE TO DEVELOP IN YOU.

Don't be entrapped by the deception of the material things of this world that will pass away. These things are only temporary, and blind you to the true riches of the above stated purpose of God establishing a law to begin with. The scribes and Pharisees missed this all together. So do most of the teachers of today.

Look, the real law of God is a spiritual condition. When you have it as part of you, you want to love God with all and your neighbor with all. All that the written-in-the-Bible law does is tell you how to go about acting out that love. It is just the mechanics of it.

Ask God to open your eyes to see, and feel, and know this love. This, for you, will become the character of God. You will be a good flavor loaf of bread that all men should live by. " . . . Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God." (Dut.8:3 & Mat.4:4)

CONCLUSION

Look, I have taken the time to write this book to you to help you see something very important: "No man can serve two masters." (Mat.6:24 & Luke 16:13) And: "Know ye not, that to whom ye yield yourselves servants to obey, his servants ye are to whom ye obey; whether of sin unto death or of obedience unto righteousness?" (Rom.6:16) You have to choose to obey or not to obey; you can't remain neutral. By not doing anything, you will not be obeying God and therefore you will be obeying Satan. This life God gave you is an action life; you gotta' do something. You are either going to be a servant of God your creator, or of Satan your adversary. Now Satan, who never did anything good for you, wants to destroy you. God, who loves you so much that He not only created you, but sent Jesus to die for you, wants to reward you. (John 10:10) That's right I said "reward". Look at Psalm 8: "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, and hast crowned him with glory and honour." (verses 4-5) We were created a little lower than the angels. But: "But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, *even* to them that believe on his name:" (John 1:12) **WOAH**, "sons of God". That's a heck of a promotion. God's whole plan for man is to make him into sons like Jesus. Jesus was obedient even unto death; the most horrible death man could conjure up. You and I not only died at baptism, but must die to ourselves every day by being obedient to God's law. The person that was made a little lower than the angles does not want to do that. But the Son of God that is in us by the Holy Spirit does.

This is therefore the question of obedience: who are you going to obey, God, or Satan?

"BUT AS FOR ME AND MY HOUSE, WE WILL SERVE THE LORD"

(Joshua 24:15)

Some extra thoughts.

"Therefore let no one pass judgment on you in questions of food and drink or with regard to a festival or a new moon or a Sabbath." (Col.2:16 R.S.V.) The King James Version says "Let no man therefore judge you . . ." As discomfoting as it is, **NO MAN IS OUR JUDGE OR PRIEST**. All you have to do is read Romans Seven to know for a fact that all of mankind is fallible. There are those that would try to get you to believe that they are better than Paul that they don't sin. Ludicrous! It is very comfoting to think that there would be a person who has sinned like us, judging us because we think he is apt to be more lenient: this is not the case. Instead, in God's infinite wisdom, Jesus, our savior, is our judge. You see Jesus was a man like us in every regard EXCEPT SIN (see Hebrews 9:14). God's love for us is so great, that He did this for us so that He could show us His Mercy while He is still being just (righteous). So that now, if we believe on the name of Jesus, God - our father sees us, not through our sins, or our sin nature, but through the Blood of Jesus, which cleanses all. No man or church is our judge. Jesus is our judge. He is the Word of God. Hold your life up in light of Jesus - the Word of God; in other words, the scriptures - The Bible.

Next: Quit picturing the law as God's thumb on us. Our loving Creator did not make us to

be clones, robots, or slaves. We are not God's slaves, but we are His children. The idea of being His slaves is the same crock of dung that Satan fed Eve in the garden. And what was it that Satan talked her into doing? Not obeying the instructions - the law - of God. Picture if you will, the spiritual gravity of this. Not only did Eve accept a deception - a false idea about her creator, but both her and Adam rejected God and His way - His Law, and worshipped - gave homage - credit to Satan and his way. By surrendering to God and to the blood of Jesus we not only reject Satan's way, but we affirm that only God is our sovereign. In other words, we worship our Creator.

Lastly, it would not be right to end this book without letting you have some insight into how this author celebrates the Sabbath. "Remember the sabbath day, to keep it holy." (Ex.20:8) "Holy" is the key. But, what is holy? What does it mean to keep something or a day holy? The word holy in this scripture means "be clean, consecrate, dedicate, . . . sanctify, . . ." according to the concordance that we've been using. The Sabbath is a type of the rest and communion with God that we will have during the reign of Jesus when the Kingdom of God is established on earth. On this day, we should strip ourselves of the world and just BE - DWELL WITH, our creator. "If thou turn away thy foot from the sabbath, **from doing thy pleasure on my holy day; and call the sabbath a delight, the holy of the LORD**, honourable; and shalt honour him, not doing thine own ways, **nor finding thine own pleasure**, nor speaking *thine own* words: Then shalt thou delight thyself in the LORD; and I will cause thee to ride upon the high places of the earth, and feed thee with the heritage of Jacob thy father: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken *it*." (Isaiah 58:13-14) This doesn't necessarily mean that we must go and hear some preacher, but that can be part of it. Personally, I do my best to clear my mind of all thoughts except God. I try not to touch money because that not only distracts my mind from God, but also if I buy anything, I am causing the person that I buy from to have to work - violating verses nine through eleven of Exodus 20: "Six days shalt thou labour, and do all thy work: But the seventh day *is* the sabbath of the Lord thy God; *in it* thou shalt not do any work, thou, nor thy son, nor thy daughter, thy manservant, nor thy maidservant, nor thy cattle, nor thy stranger that *is* within thy gates: For *in* six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and all that in them *is*, and rested the seventh day: wherefore the Lord blessed the sabbath day, and hallowed it." (Ex.20:9-11) When you buy gas, or food, or anything from someone, that person becomes your servant for that time that you are there. Besides, how much communing with God can you really do in a restaurant or gas station or a store? And I know that anyone that is at work in any store cannot be devoting 100% of their being to God while they are there; I've tried it. One cannot concentrate on their job and God at the same time, our minds just don't work that way. Focus yourself as much as possible on our loving Creator. This is how I celebrate the Sabbath.

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