

EXALTING CHRIST · EQUIPPING BELIEVERS · EVANGELIZING THE WORLD

CORNERSTONE

JULY-AUGUST 2026

true discipleship

The Twelve

The Course of this World

...and more

...JESUS CHRIST HIMSELF BEING THE CHIEF CORNERSTONE · EPHESIANS 2:20

From the Editor

George T Ferrier

Following Christ

"Therefore be imitators of God as dear [beloved] children."
Ephesians 5:1

The Greek word *mimētēs* can be translated “imitator” or “follower” (YLT) and is related to *mathētēs*, meaning “disciple” or “pupil.” Because the word “imitator” can refer either to someone authentic or to a mere pretender, the qualifier “*as beloved children*” is essential. Only a child of God can truly follow God, and we do so as children of a loving Father.


“Putting the wagon before the horse” is an idiom meaning to do things in the wrong order or to act prematurely. The phrase emphasizes that the horse—the means—must come before the wagon—the goal. An unbeliever can mimic the Christian life. Throughout church history, many groups have emphasized the wagon of Christian behavior at the expense of the horse, which is a personal relationship with the Lord Jesus Christ. The appeal is for the children of God—not the unregenerate—to be imitators of God. A person must first be saved before following Christ; our identity as children of God must precede discipleship.

Early in His ministry, the Lord had many “disciples” who did not truly believe in Him. When the Lord Jesus spoke of Himself as the source of eternal life, many found His teaching hard to accept and turned back from following Him (John 6:22–66). When Jesus asked the twelve whether they also wanted to go away, Peter replied, “*Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also, we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God*” (vv.67–69). Many “followers” turned back because they did not truly believe in Christ. Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, remained for a time but later betrayed Christ because he too was a “disciple” who did not truly believe (vv.70–71). In the modern era, we have also witnessed prominent personalities who claimed to be “Christ-followers” but later turned back (1 John 2:19).

Discipleship does not begin with asking, “What would Jesus do?” and then trying to imitate Him. It does not begin with attending a local church, nor is it about reforming ourselves. A baby must first be born into this world before it can learn to walk. In the same way, a person must first be born again spiritually before beginning to walk as Christ’s disciple. Discipleship begins with faith in the Lord Jesus Christ, the only Savior (Acts 4:12).

One day, a little boy was walking behind his father across a field after a fresh snowfall. He carefully stepped into his father’s footprints, trying to place his small feet exactly where his father had stepped. At first, he missed many times, but he kept trying because he wanted to walk just like his dad and follow in his footsteps.

Believers are called to walk in complete dependence upon our heavenly Father. A child intuitively reaches out to a father for love, help, and provision. Similarly, we cannot follow Christ in our own strength. In His upper room ministry, Christ said, “*Abide in Me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in Me. I am the vine; you are the branches. He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing*” (John 15:4-5).

As we abide in Christ, we will instinctively imitate Him. To imitate Christ is to imitate God. We will be “*kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God in Christ forgave you*” (Eph. 4:32). We will “*...walk in love, as Christ also has loved us and given Himself for us...*” (5:2). Being “*light in the Lord*,” we will “*walk as children of light*” (5:8). As Christ gives us light, we will “*walk circumspectly*” or wisely (5:14-15). We will also increasingly discover that being Christ’s disciples—abiding, learning, and following Him—brings rest to our souls (Matt. 11:29). Let all who truly bear the Name of Christ accept the challenge to follow Him. 



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A man in a dark t-shirt and jeans is walking across a large wooden cross that is partially submerged in a lake. The scene is set at sunset, with the sky in shades of orange and yellow, and the water reflecting the light. The background shows a line of trees and hills under the twilight sky.

true discipleship

If someone asked you what the greatest hindrance to the spread of Christianity was, what would you say? Would your answer be the sway of atheism, materialism, skepticism, or humanized religion? Well, these ideologies have been around for a long time and the Church has continued to survive and flourish despite these influences. In actuality, the greatest obstacle to fulfilling Christ's commission to His disciples is that blood-bought, born-again, heaven-bound believers fail to be true disciples of Christ. Perhaps this realization is why the Lord addressed the subject of discipleship often, usually by prefacing the necessity of His own death.

After hearing the Great Supper parable (Luke 14:12-24), an impulsive crowd began following Christ. Everyone seemed to enjoy this parable. However, this enormous following troubled our Lord, as many simply wanted a good meal rather than spiritual transformation. He stopped, turned to face them, and taught them about the cost of following Him (Luke 14:25-35). The Lord was more concerned with the commitment of His disciples to Him than with the crowd of people merely following Him. He desired disciples who would learn from Him and be loyal to Him without reservation.

True Discipleship: An All or Nothing Venture

The parables of the Unfinished Tower and the King's Rash War (Luke 14:25-33) were told together directly after the Great Supper parable and share a common message: following Christ is an all-or-nothing venture. It is foolish to begin building a tower without first knowing that you have the resources to finish it. If started

and then abandoned due to poor planning, the builder will lose the initial investment and appear foolish to others. Likewise, if a king decides to take on an invading force twice the size of his own army, it must be an all-out effort—any haphazard battle plan will end in defeat. He and his soldiers must give their all in the defense of their city or capitulate and offer terms of surrender to avoid war.

True Disciples Must Forsake All

Our desire to follow Christ measures how much we truly love Him and believe His message. The reason we hold back from being fools for Christ, and thus from seeing the mighty hand of God in our lives is disbelief; we do not trust God. Through disbelief, the One who was offended for us becomes an offense to us. Those who associate with Christ superficially will ultimately find Him loathsome. The Lord Jesus did not teach a middle ground concerning discipleship; those who follow Him are to do so without any reservation (Luke 9:23-24; 14:33).

A true disciple of Christ esteems Him as more important than anything this world has to offer: career, wealth, education, prestige, fame, following peers, or going with the flow. The Lord's message on true discipleship dispersed the people. In general, the crowds followed Him no more. Only a few loyalists were willing to make the necessary sacrifices to be His disciples. These disciples "*forsook all and followed Him*" (Luke 5:11), leaving behind their professions and families (Mark 1:16-20). Forsaking must occur before following; otherwise, there are too many anchors to the old life, which will hinder close fellowship with the Savior. The Lord grew weary of shallow followers; He wanted true disciples.

He desired quality in consecration, not a large quantity of half-hearted patriots.

True Disciples Must Deny Themselves

Complete identification with Christ means that we practically reckon our former selves in Adam (that is, in our unregenerate state) as dead and gone, and recognize that we are now alive in Christ. Paul put it this way: “*I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me*” (Gal. 2:20). The Greek verb translated “*crucified*” is in the passive voice and perfect tense, indicating that God has, once and for all, carved us out of the world by the cross of His dear Son, and now we are to live for Him. We are one with Christ forever and must seek to live out His life in the way He desires. This new calling excludes self-ambition, self-sufficiency, self-exaltation, and self-gratification (that is, anything beyond what has God’s approval).

True Disciples Must Bear Their Own Crosses Daily

Each disciple must take up their cross daily. In ancient times, anyone nailed to a cross was destined to die a slow, agonizing death. Those crucified had no plans for the following week. Dying daily means saying, “Not my will, but Your will be done, Lord.” Additionally, when someone’s hands were nailed to the cross, it was impossible for them to grasp anything. Bearing one’s cross daily means that believers cannot engage in carnal appetites or become sidetracked by worldly pursuits. Thus, we come to Christ’s cross and leave with our own cross. The cross is a symbol of shame and death, and Christ asks those who believe in Him to follow His selfless example of faithfulness, even unto death.

True Disciples Must Love the Lord Above All

Christ must be the believer’s first love, which means all other natural relationships must be a distant second compared to our affection for Christ. “*If anyone comes to Me and does not hate his father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters, yes, and his own life also, he cannot be My disciple*” (Luke 14:26). From the parallel account in Matthew 10:34-39, we understand that the word “*hate*” is used as a comparative term. Our love for the Lord should be so great that any natural affection we might have for another would, by comparison, seem like hate. The Lord will not tolerate a divided heart in those who serve Him. He warned His disciples that having more than one master would keep them from living for Him (Matt. 6:24). Divided allegiance is not possible! The Lord states that there can be no middle ground; He is either the believer’s first love or He is not the believer’s Lord.

True Disciples Obey the Lord

The Lord Jesus told those following Him not to call Him Lord if they were not willing to do what He commanded (Luke 6:46).

He must be Lord of all, or He is not Lord at all. John 14:15 records the Lord’s plea to His disciples on the eve of His crucifixion: “*If you love Me, keep My commandments.*” Is there any greater way to show the Lord that you love Him than by doing what He says? Obedience can be forced, but submission is a heart issue, a matter of the will. This is why the Lord Jesus posed faithful submission to His word as a test of discipleship: “*...If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed*” (John 8:31). Faithful obedience to Christ’s teachings is proof that one is His disciple.


True Disciples Learn Christ

A disciple is a “learner,” which is the meaning of the Greek word “*mathetes*,” generally rendered as “disciple” in the New Testament. What is a disciple to learn? The true disciple of Christ must learn Him (Matt. 11:29)! Matthew 11:28-30 is the only passage in the New Testament where the Lord personally informs His disciples of what He is like and tells them that they should learn from Him. Believers are able to experience the Lord’s gentle and humble spirit when yoked with Him in service. His abiding presence imparts peace to the weary soul.

We can do nothing without Christ (John 15:5), but we can do all things that have His approval through Him (Phil. 4:13). True discipleship is an invitation to learn Christ. Every believer is to be a lifelong apprentice of Christ, properly reflecting His character and message to a world that desperately needs to see real Christianity—Him!

Summary

True discipleship emphasizes that the Holy Spirit’s work of sanctification in a believer’s life is crucial for effectively serving the Lord. Learning and knowing Christ are integral parts of the sanctification process. Completely identifying with Christ: learning from Christ (Matt. 11:29), becoming like Christ (Matt.

10:25), and living for Christ (Gal. 2:20) are the essence of biblical discipleship. The extent to which this identification occurs will directly reflect how well the believer manifests the nature of Christ to the world. The Lord Jesus forces no one to be fully devoted to Him, but He does promise a life worth living to those who choose to be His true disciples. May we seek to gain what has value to God and can never be lost. 

“Every believer is to be a lifelong apprentice of Christ, properly reflecting His character and message to a world that desperately needs to see real Christianity—Him!”



by Warren Henderson

Warren Henderson and his wife Brenda serve the Lord full-time and currently make their home in Stevensville, Montana. Warren is involved in a writing, evangelism, and Bible teaching ministry and has written and published a number of books which can be obtained worldwide through online retailers.



The Twelve

The Paradox of Leadership

When we think of the word "leadership," a certain set of virtues typically comes to mind. In the high-stakes arena of professional sports, we define it by physical strength, unwavering perseverance, and the courage to take the final shot. In the boardroom, we seek integrity, confidence, and a charismatic ability to inspire a team toward a quarterly goal. Within the Church, we naturally add qualities such as compassion, piety, and a scholarly aptitude for teaching. While these traits are undeniably essential for any leader of a local church, the most vital quality is one we rarely associate with the role in a secular context. In the Christian life, the hierarchy is inverted: to be a leader in the Church, one must, first and foremost, be a follower and servant of Christ.

This paradox lies at the heart of the apostles' story. Before they became the pillars of the early church—before the fire of Pentecost and the bold preaching that shook Jerusalem—they were simply men who obeyed a two-word command given directly from the mouth of Jesus Christ: *"Follow me."*

Defining the Disciple

What does it actually mean to be a disciple? In our modern vocabulary, the term is often shrouded in mystery or relegated to historical trivia. For some, *"the disciples"* refers strictly to the twelve men who walked with Jesus during His earthly ministry. For others, it is seen as a "higher tier" of Christianity—a spiritual promotion reserved for the elite or the exceptionally holy.

However, a biblical survey suggests something much more accessible, yet also far more demanding. In Matthew 10:24–25, Jesus provides the framework: *"A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. It is enough for a disciple that he be like his teacher, and a servant like his master..."*

From this, we take away a simple truth: for the disciple, the teacher is the ideal. We recognize that we can never be greater than Him, yet our lofty ambition is to model our lives after His. To be a disciple is not to hold a position; it is to pursue a Person. One of Christ's first commandments was to become a disciple, and one of His final instructions, in the Great Commission, was to make disciples of all nations (Matt. 28:19). It is the beginning and the end of the Christian journey.

The Cost of the Call

Christ introduced the cost of this pursuit with language that often shocks the modern ear. He stated that unless one hates his father, mother, wife, children, and even his own life, one cannot be a disciple (Luke 14:26). To understand this, we must look past our 21st-century definitions. In this biblical context, *"hate"* does not imply the anger or hostility we associate with the word today. Rather, it refers to a rejection in terms of priority. We see this in Malachi when God says, *"...Was not Esau Jacob's brother?" Says the LORD. "Yet Jacob I have loved; But Esau I have hated..."* (1:2-3). This was a matter of election and priority regarding the promise to the nation Israel.

Christ is telling us that if we desire to follow Him, He must hold undisputed first place. Our earthly lives, our deepest family ties, and our personal ambitions must take a distant second place to the desire to know Him. In a world competing fiercely for our attention and affection, this remains the most challenging requirement.

The Divine Recruitment Strategy

If this is the rigorous standard—absolute surrender—the next logical question is: who would be brave enough to answer the call? If we were orchestrating a movement intended to change the world, we would likely look for people of renown.

We might have recruited a Pharisee like Nicodemus for his intellectual clout, a Roman general for strategic insight, or perhaps a few members of the nobility to provide the necessary funding and social standing. We would choose people whom history was already prepared to acknowledge, those with large circles of influence who could ensure the message went viral.

However, God's ways and thoughts are higher than our own (Isa. 55:8-9). As far back as Deuteronomy 7:7, God reminded Israel that He chose them not because they were the most numerous or powerful, but because they were the fewest. By choosing the unlikely, the victory can only be credited to Him.

Jesus repeated this process with His inner circle. Had He surrounded Himself with the elite, skeptics might have argued that His popularity was simply the result of political manoeuvring. Instead, He chose men who were otherwise destined for obscurity, ensuring that the impact of the early church could only be explained by the power of the Holy Spirit.

The Roster: A Study in Contrast

When we look at the group as a whole, we see a fascinating and often clashing tapestry of backgrounds.

The Mariners of Galilee: At the forefront is the fishing contingent. Simon (Peter) is the most prominent, a man of action and occasionally impulsive words. Alongside him were the "Sons of Thunder," James and John, who rounded out Jesus' inner circle. Finally, there was Andrew, Peter's brother, who had previously been a disciple of John the Baptist, demonstrating a heart that was already searching for the Messiah before the call even came.

The Outcasts and the Skeptics: Moving away from the sea, we find Matthew (Levi). As a tax collector for Rome, Matthew would have been viewed as a traitor by his Jewish peers. Yet Jesus called him from his booth to a higher ledger. Then there is Thomas, often called "The Twin," who gained lasting infamy as "Doubting

Thomas." While history remembers his one act of skepticism, Jesus saw a man willing to ask the hard questions.

The Men in the Shadows: Then there are those who served faithfully with very little mention in the biblical record:

Philip and Nathanael: Friends who recognized the Christ through the study of the law and prophets.

Simon the Zealot: A political revolutionary who likely had to learn to love Matthew, the very man he once would have considered a political enemy.



Jude (Thaddaeus) and James, son of Alphaeus: Men who labored in the background, proving that you do not need the spotlight to be a true disciple.

The Warning: Finally, we must acknowledge Judas Iscariot. Although he walked the same dusty roads and heard the same sermons as the others, his life serves as a sobering reminder: one can be in the presence of the Master without ever truly surrendering to Him.

A Master Who Picks Us Up

Each of these men was profoundly changed by their time with Jesus. Throughout the Gospels and the book of Acts, we glimpse their hardships, their trials, and the eventual joy they discovered in Christ. They faced the same fears, passions, and anxieties that we experience today.

Perhaps the greatest lesson we can learn from the Twelve is that even the best disciples are prone to falling. Peter denied Him; the others fled in the garden. Yet we serve a Master who does not discard us when we stumble. He showed these ordinary men extraordinary things

about Himself, so they could learn to abide in His Word and bear much fruit. Their impact did not come from their own strength, but from the fact that they spent three years simply being with Jesus. We, too, can learn from them how to be like Him.  

“They were simply men who obeyed a two-word command given directly from the mouth of Jesus Christ: *Follow me.*”



by Stephen March

Stephen March serves as the President of FBH International, leading the ministry's mission to share the Gospel through modern media. An elder at Scottlea Gospel Chapel, Stephen is dedicated to digital evangelism and biblical teaching. He lives in St. Catharines, Ontario, with his wife, Corinne, and their four children.



A Friend— the Son *of* Perdition

JUDAS ISCARIOT

At first glance, it seems almost jarring to include Judas Iscariot in a study of the disciples of Jesus Christ. After all, this is the man whose name has become a global synonym for betrayal, the one who sold the Savior for thirty pieces of silver. Yet the biblical record is clear: Judas was not a mere bystander or an accidental tag-along. He was one of the Twelve, specifically selected by Jesus to accompany Him throughout His earthly ministry.

Understanding Judas requires us to look past the caricature of a villain and wrestle with a deeper mystery. His life serves as both a testament to the limitless grace of Christ and a sobering warning about the possibility of being religious without experiencing a transformation of the heart.

The Honored Friend

The lesson of Judas begins not with his failure, but with the Master's treatment of him. From the onset of His ministry, Jesus was under no illusions; He knew exactly who Judas was and precisely what he was destined to do. This raises a difficult question for the human mind: Why bring him along at all? Part of the answer lies in the fulfillment of Messianic prophecy. Psalm 41:9 foretold that a "*close friend*" (ESV) would rise against the Messiah. But beyond the necessity of prophecy, we might wonder if Judas was chosen for a specific skill set. In the worlds of sports or business, managers often tolerate a difficult personality if that individual brings a unique talent to the team. As the keeper of the money bag, perhaps Judas was a shrewd financier. However, the Apostle John reveals a darker reality. Judas was a thief who helped himself to the communal funds.

The Seat of Honor

Despite this internal corruption, Jesus never treated him as an enemy. This is never more evident than at the final Passover shared in the Upper Room. After announcing that a betrayer was among them, the atmosphere turned to confusion and self-suspicion. In that culture, it was traditional for the host to offer a "morsel"—a small token of food—to the most honored guest at the table. This singular gesture signified friendship and high regard.

In John 13, we see Jesus offering this morsel to Judas. The gesture was so convincing that, even when Jesus told Judas to "do quickly" what he was about to do, the other disciples assumed he was being sent on a special, honorable errand. Jesus was not merely putting up with Judas; He was actively showing him the love He preached in the Sermon on the Mount: "Love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you" (Matt. 5:44, ESV).

The Kiss in the Garden

This radical love reached its climax in the Garden of Gethsemane. As Judas arrived with a mob to deliver Jesus to His executioners, he approached with the salutation: "Greetings, Rabbi," followed by a kiss (Matt. 26:49). Jesus' response is staggering: "Friend, do what you came to do" (v.50, ESV). To be called "friend" in the very moment of betrayal must have cut to the quick of Judas' soul. In Jesus, we see a Master who never once treated Judas as an enemy or an outsider, providing us with a radical model for dealing with those who stand against us.

The Son of Destruction

This brings us to a challenging theological crossroads: Was Judas Iscariot truly saved? Some argue that Judas was simply a necessary part of the redemption story, an instrument used by God to accomplish His will. They point out that Judas was among the Twelve when they were sent out to cast out demons and heal the sick. There is no scriptural indication that Judas was excluded from these powers.

However, as we see in the story of Balaam's donkey, God can speak and work through any vessel. The power was never Judas' own; it was in the name of Jesus. The most definitive evidence that Judas was lost comes from the lips of Jesus Himself. In His High Priestly Prayer, He said: "While I was with them in the world, I kept them in Your name...and none of them is lost except the son of perdition, that the Scripture might be fulfilled" (John 17:12).

An Unsundered Heart

The term "son of perdition" or "son of destruction" implies that Judas had never truly believed Jesus was the Son of God. While the other disciples were "kept" or guarded, by Christ, Judas is described as "lost." This is not a case of someone being snatched out of God's hand. Christ promised that this was impossible (John 10:28). Rather, this is evidence that Judas never placed his faith in the Messiah to begin with.

We see this tragedy play out at the Last Supper when Satan entered into him. It is a staggering reality that Judas was so vulnerable to the enemy while standing in the physical presence of the Lord. It suggests a heart that offered little resistance because it had never truly been surrendered to Christ.

Remorse vs. Repentance

We see further evidence of this in Judas' final moments. After the betrayal, he is overcome with remorse. He attempts to return the money to the chief priests, citing Deuteronomy 27:25: "Cursed be anyone who takes a bribe to shed innocent blood..." (ESV) On the surface, this appears to be a noble realization, but consider where Judas seeks reconciliation. He goes to the Temple and the priests.


Had Judas truly believed the message he had heard for three years, he would have known that forgiveness was not found in silver or in the legalistic rituals of the Sanhedrin. It was found in the very Person he had betrayed. While Peter's failure led him back to the feet of Jesus in repentance, Judas' remorse led him to a tree in despair. He realized he had violated the law, but he failed to see that he had rejected the Savior.

The Great Warning

Judas Iscariot stands as a personification of one of the most sobering passages in all of Scripture. Matthew 7:21 says, "Not everyone who says to Me, 'Lord, Lord,' shall enter the kingdom of heaven, but he who does the will of My Father in heaven." Judas called Jesus "Master" and "Rabbi." He performed the works, walked the roads, and was numbered among Christ's closest followers. Yet he lacked the one thing that mattered: a heart that does the will of the Father. And what is

that will? As Jesus clarifies in John 6:29, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He sent."

When we consider the life of Judas, we are compelled to examine our own walk. It serves as a reminder that we can perform all kinds of good deeds, spend time with the right people, and even teach the right things, yet still be far from God. Service and association are good, but they can never substitute for genuine faith in Jesus Christ.

The tragedy of Judas is that he spent three years in the presence of the "Light of the World" yet remained in darkness. He was a member of "The Twelve," but never counted among those redeemed in Christ. As we reflect on him, let us be sure to examine ourselves, not to determine if we have done enough good things, but to ensure that we have put our full trust in the person of Jesus Christ to save us from our sins. Proximity to Christ is not the same as having a relationship with Him. Let us ensure that we are following Christ because we have already looked to Him and fully believed that He is the Son of God, our only Savior (John 3:16; 5:24; 14:6). 

by Stephen March

FOUNDATIONS *of the* FAITH

Our Adoption

The Greek word "*uihothesia*" translated "*adoption*," occurs five times in the New Testament, all in Paul's epistles (Rom. 8:15, 23; 9:4; Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). It means "son placing," signifying the position of a son being given to someone to whom it does not naturally belong.¹ Four occurrences refer to the individual believer in the Body of Christ, whereas the other refers to the nation of Israel. In both cases, God grants both blessings and responsibilities.

The Believer's Adoption and Regeneration

In life, no one is both born into and adopted by the same family. A father never adopts his own child. However, for the believer, it is different. Regeneration and adoption occur simultaneously and inseparably at salvation, though they are not the same.

All people are born spiritually dead. When a person trusts Christ as Savior, the Holy Spirit regenerates, or imparts spiritual life, to the human spirit (Eph. 2:1). The individual is thereby born again (John 3:3-7; Titus 3:5; Jas. 1:18; 1 Pet. 1:3; 1 John 3:9; 4:7; 5:1), brought from death to life (John 5:24), and made a partaker of the divine nature (2 Pet. 1:4; 1 Pet. 1:23). This does not imply that the believer becomes divine, but rather that he or she becomes a member of God's family. This divine nature, implanted within the inner being of the believing sinner, provides both the desire and the capacity to do God's will (Phil. 2:13) and to commune with Him in prayer. Having been made spiritually alive, the believer is a new creation in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17) and a child of God (John 1:12; 1 John 3:2).

Conversely, adoption signifies the believer's new legal status as a mature son in God's family. By this, God grants them the same standing as His eternal, unique, only-begotten Son (Gal. 4:5; Eph. 1:5). Furthermore, God welcomes them into His household as

stewards of His grace, a position that entails many blessings and responsibilities.

Regeneration concerns new spiritual life and a relationship with God, whereas adoption concerns a new position within God's family. Regeneration makes a person a child of God, while adoption makes that person a son of God. Regeneration signifies "Christ in you," whereas adoption refers to the believer as being "in Christ." Thus, regeneration emphasizes a new nature, while adoption underscores a change in legal status.

Blessings of Adoption

One of the blessings of adoption is that the Holy Spirit permanently indwells the believer. We have "*...received the Spirit of adoption by whom we cry out, 'Abba, Father.' The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God*" (Rom. 8:15-16).

Through our fellowship with Christ (1 Cor. 1:9), there is nearness, communion, and fellowship with God our Father (Eph. 2:13; 1 John 1:3). We also have the fellowship of the Holy Spirit (Phil. 2:1). One of the comforting ministries of the Holy Spirit is to bear joint witness with our own spirits that we are part of God's family and can address God as our Father (Gal. 4:6). We may come confidently before the throne of grace knowing we are always welcome to seek His wisdom, strength, and grace for the need of the hour (Heb. 4:16). He convicts us of sin, burdens us to pray, teaches us the things of Christ through God's Word, prompts us to testify of Christ, and empowers us to build up the Body of Christ.

Another blessing is fellowship in and with the Body of Christ, the Church. Living in a world that hates Christ and in view of the

Lord's approaching return, God's Word exhorts us to, "*consider one another in order to stir up love and good works...exhorting one another, and so much the more as you see the Day approaching.*" (Heb. 10:24-25). Our fellowship is not with the world but with the triune God and the Body of Christ. Sharing in the very life of Christ, we take part in family life—God's family.

Responsibilities of Adoption

There are also responsibilities that come with belonging to God's household. Yet serving Christ by fulfilling our family duties is itself a blessing, because we serve the greatest of masters. The indwelling Holy Spirit gives each believer one or more spiritual gifts, suited and chosen specifically for that person (Rom. 12:3-8; 1 Cor. 12:4-11; Eph. 4:11-12; 1 Pet. 4:10-11). He also empowers, guides, and helps us carry out the Lord's tasks (Zech. 4:6; Luke 24:49; Acts 1:8; Eph. 6:10).

Our responsibilities fall under three main categories. First, in our local church and in our everyday lives, we are a holy priesthood, called to worship and praise Him as we "*offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ*" (1 Pet. 2:5). Second, we are a royal priesthood, called to carry out the Great Commission by making disciples of all nations as Christ's witnesses (Matt. 28:16-20; 1 Pet. 2:9). Third, we are to fellowship with other believers, using our gifts to encourage, build up, and promote growth in the Body of Christ (Eph. 4:16; Heb. 10:24-25). The ultimate goal of all these activities is to glorify Christ (1 Cor. 6:20; Col. 3:17; 2 Thess. 1:12).

Our Future Inheritance

The adoption is both a present and future reality. In the present, believers have already received the "*Spirit of adoption*" (Rom. 8:15), which immediately grants us family standing along with enduring blessings as a downpayment; the remainder will be realized after the redemption of the body (Eph. 1:11-14; 1 Pet. 1:4). Romans 8:23 notes that we are "*waiting for the adoption, the redemption of our body,*" which points to a future fulfillment. This will occur at the rapture with the completion of our redemption and glorification (Rom. 8:30; 1 Thess. 4:13-18; 1 John 3:2). It is the final stage of salvation, when we will be fully delivered from sin and perfected in character. Only then will we be eternally freed from our fallen, sinful nature and fully transformed into the image of Christ.

Manifestation of the Sons of God

The sons of God will be revealed to the world when Christ returns with us to the earth to set up His thousand year kingdom (Rom. 8:19; Col. 3:4; Rev. 19:11-21). We will have the responsibility

of reigning with Christ and, in our glorified state, a greater capacity to enjoy our inheritance: the riches of His glory and the unsearchable riches of Christ (Eph. 1:18; 3:8). Then, throughout eternity, God will demonstrate "*the exceeding riches of His grace in His kindness toward us in Christ Jesus,*" by bestowing upon us manifold blessings and responsibilities (Eph. 2:7).

Romans 8:17 says we are "*heirs of God and joint heirs with Christ.*" Our present lives and eternal destiny are securely linked to Christ, the heir of all things (John 3:35; Eph. 1:22; Heb. 1:2; 2:8). As the Bride of Christ, our identity and union with Him mean that we share all things with Him (Cor. 3:21-23; Gal. 3:29; Eph. 1:3).

"If we read the Word of God to discover all that God has planned for Christ, we shall discover that there is not one promise that is given to Him that is not also given to us."

One commentator writes, "In law there is a difference between an heir and a joint heir...If a man dies, leaving a large farm to four heirs, the estate is divided evenly and each heir receives twenty-five per cent of the whole. But if a man leaves a farm to four of his sons as joint-heirs, then each one owns the whole farm. Each one can say, "That house is mine; those barns are mine; those fields are mine." Thus when the Lord tells us that we are heirs of God and joint heirs of Christ, we are being informed that everything that God the Father has given to the Lord Jesus Christ has been given to us also. If we read the Word of God to discover all that God has planned for Christ, we shall discover that there is not one promise that is given to Him that is not also given to us. When He came forth from the

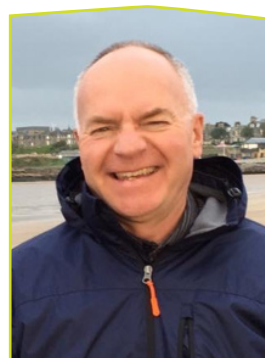
empty tomb in His resurrection we were joined to Him in the thought of God, and everything was planned for us together with Christ, for all eternity."²

Eternally adopted into God's family. Amazing grace! 

Endnotes

¹ W.E. Vine's Complete Expository Dictionary of Old & New Testament Words, e-Sword software version

² Donald Grey Barnhouse, Romans Volume 3 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing, 1994), p.113-114



by George T Ferrier

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THE COURSE OF THIS WORLD

“In which you once walked according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air, the spirit who now works in the sons of disobedience.” Ephesians 2:2

”I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith.” 2 Timothy 4:7

In highlighting the saving work of Christ, the apostle Paul reminded the Ephesian believers of who they were before they came to Christ, what happened to them when they came to Christ, and what they would eventually become because they came to Christ. In effect, he outlined their spiritual past, present, and future.

Regarding their past, Paul described their pre-conversion days as having walked *“according to the course of this world, according to the prince of the power of the air”* (v.2). Though they did not realize it at the time, they were blinded by the prince of darkness. They were unknowingly guided by a sinister, unseen adversary who led them down a certain path in which they fulfilled all *“the desires of the flesh and of the mind, and were by nature, children of wrath, just as the others”* (v.3). It was (and still is) a path of depravity, darkness, and disobedience to God’s laws (v.2). It promotes covetousness, arrogance, rebellion, and at times, various forms of perversion. It shows no regard for the things of God. It has a penchant for the morose, the macabre, and anything opposed to what is good, holy, and true, manifesting itself in different ways. Its influence is reflected in culture through the media and communicated by subtle and not so subtle innuendos in music, movies, and the world’s extensive entertainment industry. It is driven by advertising, the clothing industry, and other facets of

society. It is pervasive and permeates nearly every aspect of daily life, and its effects are seen everywhere.

Children, who seem so innocent in their younger years, begin to show evidence of a steady diet of the world’s attitudes and underlying philosophies as they grow older. It is a broad path, and one that the majority of people travel on. The Word of God declares that it is a path that leads to destruction (Matt. 7:13), and unless a person turns from this course, God’s Word declares it will ultimately end in spiritual disaster.

Paul describes *“the course of this world”* in a harrowing way. Anyone who has come from a similar background can certainly identify with these Ephesian believers. They were so desensitized by sin that they were *“past feeling,”* and they were given over to lewdness, to work *“all uncleanness with greediness”* (Eph. 4:17–19). What a horrible condition!

In Titus 2:12, we also read that the grace of God teaches us to deny two things: ungodliness and worldly lusts. The first accurately characterizes the Ephesians before they came to Christ. However, the other—worldly lusts—depicts the other side of the coin. These lusts are contrary to what some may think. Instead, they manifest themselves not in lives of debauchery, but rather in worldly ambition and a craving for success, riches, fame, and fortune. In some ways, they look quite respectable. But underneath a thin veneer of respectability lies the underlying evidence of a “me first” attitude, fueled by the same selfish and sinful spirit that characterizes the person whose life is “in the gutter.” After all, gutters can be in two places: down low along the curb or up high along the roof. Without Christ, no matter what a person’s position in life is, whether good or bad, life can indeed be a life in the gutter.

"What a contrast there is between the course of this world and God's course for us."

Apart from the Lord, this is the plight of men and women who do not know the Savior. As Paul reminded Titus, people outside of Christ can be *"living in malice and envy, hateful and hating one another"* (Titus 3:3), living impure lives, and stepping on and over anyone who gets in their way. They were walking according to the course of this world, before they found the Savior, by whom they were wonderfully and miraculously saved, to the glory of God. If it were not for His mercy and grace, and the ministry and testimony of faithful servants like Paul, they, like us, would have continued to walk according to the course of this world on a path that would have led to their demise.


For the Ephesians, everything changed when a man with an unimpressive appearance and contemptible speech (2 Cor. 10:10) boldly proclaimed the life-giving message of the Cross. Through the power of the Word, they went from darkness to light in a moment, from walking a downhill course to following the good Shepherd of the sheep. Fortunately for these Ephesians, this dedicated and faithful servant named Paul was God's ambassador, used by Him to lead them off this dreadful course. He stepped into their path and pointed them to Another who said, *"I am the Way, the Truth, and the Life"* (John 14:6). This forever changed their lives, leading them onto a much better course, one that granted spiritual life and blessing from the God of Heaven.

What did this mean for them, and for us who are no longer on this course? First, it means that all Christians have been *"raised up"* spiritually and are *"seated"* with Christ. In Christ, God views us as seated with Him in heaven (2:6). Second, it means that we can look forward to a future time when we will be on display as a testimony to the magnificent grace and mercy of God (2:7). Until then, all who know and love the Lord are to do the good works to which they have been appointed (Eph. 2:10).

What a contrast there is between the course of this world and God's course for us. One focuses on self and resists the Lord, whereas the other lives for the Savior, delights to do His will, and yields to Him. The world's course resembles the raven sent out by Noah after the flood, feeding on the "dead" things of this world. In contrast, the believer's course resembles the dove, seeking and feeding on what is clean. Furthermore, the world's course is wide and leads to destruction, while the believer's course is narrow and leads to everlasting life (Matt. 7:13-14). More than simply a path leading to a glorious future, it is a path overseen by the Bishop

and Shepherd of our souls (1 Pet. 2:25), who guides us *"by the skillfulness of His hands"* (Ps. 78:72).

God has appointed a unique path for all of us in Christ, a personal path that leads to glory and is tailor-made. David wrote: *"Your eyes saw my substance, being yet unformed. And in Your book they all were written, The days fashioned for me, When as yet there were none of them"* (Ps. 139:16). God has planned all our days in advance. He knows the beginning and the end of our days, and He knows the path we will take through life. Consequently, after we have come to know Him, we need to live for Him by faith and serve Him acceptably with reverence and godly fear. We must also be aware that it can be easy, even as believers, to revert to living according to the course of this world instead of living by God's Word. Don't do it! Paul understood this principle when he told the Ephesian elders that he might finish his course with joy (Acts 20:24). Indeed, what he hoped for came to pass, as he later gratefully proclaimed from his Roman prison that he had finished his course with joy (2 Tim. 4:7).

As believers in Christ, we recognize that we have been divinely redirected from one course to another, which Scripture calls the *"path of the just"* (Prov. 4:18; Isa. 26:7). It is a path that *"shines ever brighter unto the perfect day"* (Prov. 4:18). As we reflect on this, we should make every effort to avoid being influenced by those who walk according to the course of this world. As James 1:27 says, we are to keep ourselves *"unspotted from the world."* Because our lives are different now, we are to walk in newness of life. We are to follow the steps of our Savior and walk as He walked, in a way pleasing to Him who called us by His own glory and virtue. May we always remain grateful for the change of course that has taken place in our lives and for how He has redirected our steps and our eternal destiny. 

by Mark Kolchin

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THE *Eternal* THRONE

REVELATION 4-5

We are living in a rapidly changing world. Events are drawing us closer to a one-world government, a one-world religion, and a one-world trade system.

These significant developments affect all of humanity, regardless of country or culture. Politically, religiously, and commercially, global groups are striving for unity, believing it is essential for achieving peace in the world.

Paul says in 1 Thessalonians 5:2-3 *“For you yourselves know perfectly that the day of the Lord so comes as a thief in the night. For when they say, “Peace and safety!” then sudden destruction comes upon them, as labor pains upon a pregnant woman. And they shall not escape.”* In light of these coming events, we are not to be discouraged or afraid, for there is a higher power far greater than all earthly powers.

Paul also exhorts in Colossians 3:1-2: *“If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth.”* Consider for a moment what is above.

The Throne Set in Heaven

“After these things I looked, and behold, a door standing open in heaven. And the first voice which I heard was like a trumpet

speaking with me, saying, ‘Come up here, and I will show you things which must take place after this.’ Immediately I was in the Spirit; and behold, a throne set in heaven, and One sat on the throne” (Rev. 4:1-2).

After the Apostle John’s vision of the glorified, ascended Christ in chapter one, the next two chapters of Revelation focus on the Church as a lampstand, bearing light in a very dark world. In chapter four, a door is opened in heaven to welcome us in. The Church age will conclude with the Lord coming for His redeemed—what an incredible moment that will be! As Paul explains in 1 Thessalonians 4:16, *“For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God.”*

Being in the Spirit is exhilarating. The Lord told His disciples that the Spirit would be in them and would abide with them forever (John 14:16–17). It is through the Holy Spirit that the things of Christ are revealed to us, and throughout eternity, He will continue to unveil the supreme glories of our Lord Jesus Christ.

The Person Who Sits Upon the Throne

The throne set in heaven remains unaffected by anything taking place on earth, for the One seated upon it is Himself

eternal. His beauty is described as being like jasper and sardius stones in appearance. These same precious stones appeared on the breastplate of the high priest in Old Testament times, though in reverse order (Ex. 28:17-20). A rainbow encircled the throne, shining like an emerald (4:3). God is a God of rich colors! The rainbow signifies that judgment is past, and for the believer, there will never again be a need for judgment.

The People Who Surround the Throne

Surrounding the throne were twenty-four elders, each seated on separate thrones, clothed in white robes and wearing golden crowns (4:4). There are various interpretations regarding their identity, but I believe they represent the Church. In 1 Chronicles 24, twenty-four leaders from the priestly line of Aaron were selected to represent the priesthood serving the people of Israel. Similarly, in 1 Peter 2, believers are called a holy and royal priesthood; Revelation 1:6 tells us “He has made us kings and priests to His God and Father, to Him be glory and dominion forever and ever. Amen.” Collectively, the Church is a priesthood, and we will all be part of the royal priestly company represented by the twenty-four elders.

Alongside the elders stand four living creatures from the heavenly realm. These beings have six wings, covered with eyes both front and back; one resembles a lion, another a calf, the third has a face like a man, and the fourth is like a flying eagle. Their primary role is to give glory, honor, and thanks to Him who sits on the throne (4:6-8). The twenty-four elders join them, falling down in worship before the One who lives forever and ever (4:9-11). This breathtaking scene of ultimate worship is directed to Him who created all things—what an extraordinary outburst!

The Problem at the Throne

Now, in the midst of this glorious scene, a problem arises: Who is worthy to open the book and break its seven seals (5:2)? This brings immense sadness to John, who weeps over the situation (5:3-4). But then one of the elders says, “Do not weep. Behold, the Lion of the tribe of Judah, the Root of David, has prevailed to open the scroll and to loose its seven seals” (5:5).

When John looked, he did not see a Lion; instead, he saw a Lamb as though it had been slain (5:6). Only Jesus, the Lamb of God, through His sacrifice at Calvary, was found worthy to open the book (5:7-8). There are so many wonderful truths here that cannot all be addressed at this moment. This Lamb is omnipotent, omniscient, and omnipresent—for He is the Son of God.

The Praise and Worship at the Throne

This marvelous outcome, witnessed by John in his vision, led to the singing of a brand-new song. Earlier, praise was directed


to the Lord as Creator (4:11); now it is directed to the Lord as Redeemer (5:9). We have been redeemed to God by His blood from every tribe, tongue, people, and nation. In chapter 6, we see that He will soon act to fulfill what was written in the scroll, for though He was slain, He is alive!

I am always moved when I see athletes standing on the world stage, receiving their gold medals as national anthems play in honor of their achievements. But dear redeemed reader, it will be far greater to join this heavenly chorus, singing the glorious new song—not because of what you have accomplished, but because of what our wonderful Savior accomplished for you through His blood on the cross. How astounding that every nationality will be represented, giving praise and honor to Him who did it all!

He has made us kings and priests to our God, and we shall reign upon the earth. What that will entail is beyond our greatest imagination — we must wait until that day to find out. Yet we can be assured that it will far surpass anything we could ever conceive. Keep looking up, for the best is yet to come (5:10).

Joining this redeemed company will be the voices of angels, together with the elders and the living creatures — a number described as ten thousand times ten thousand, and thousands of thousands. What a heavenly choir that will be (5:11).

The theme of their song is: “Worthy is the Lamb who was slain to receive power and riches and wisdom, and strength and honor and glory and blessing!” (5:12) Every creature in heaven, on earth, under the earth, and in the sea — all that is in them — will say, “Blessing and honor and glory and power be to Him who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb, forever

and ever!” (5:13) All praise and honor return to Him who alone is worthy. This leads the four living creatures to declare, “Amen!” and the twenty-four elders to fall down and worship Him who lives forever and ever (5:14). Surely we can say, “Amen and amen!” May these glorious truths uplift your spirit today. 

“The throne set in heaven remains unaffected by anything taking place on earth, for the One seated upon it is Himself eternal.”



by Jim Paul

Jim was commended to the work of the Lord by his assembly in Broxburn, Scotland in 1981 and by the Bridlewood assembly in Ottawa, Ontario in 1991. Jim has been involved in prison ministry, camp work, volunteer on call hospital chaplaincy, and has preached the Word throughout Canada and the US. He presently lives in Port Colborne, Ontario with his wife, Elizabeth.



PRAISING *the* GOD *of* CREATION

The book of Psalms is a multi-themed book. In it, we encounter themes of worship, thanksgiving, suffering, and redemption, to name but a few. Yet, in some of the Psalms, we also find celebrations of creation.

The flagship of the Psalms of Creation is Psalm 8. Here we see David overwhelmed by the wonder of the night skies, dazzled by the glory of the moon, and feasting on the spectacle of the stars. Perhaps with the naked eye David could have observed as many as a thousand stars on a good night. But with the aid of a telescope, we now know that the wonders of the celestial realm are almost numberless. Yet God knows them all. And this is only the work of His fingers. The ease with which we might make a bracelet or a paper airplane with our fingers, is in no way comparable to how immeasurably easy for the all-powerful infinite God of glory to speak heaven and earth into existence. So infinite his creative power, so infinite His mind!

As David pondered, he wondered: “*What is man that you are mindful of him, and the son of man that you visit him?*” The vastness

of the universe overwhelmed him, silenced him, and made him feel small. Psalm 8 models for us the worshipper’s proper response to the universe. C.S. Lewis observed that God made both the universe and a creature with the capacity to appreciate it, saying, “Men look on the starry heavens with reverence; monkeys do not” (C.S. Lewis, *Dogma, and the Universe*). The heavens are indeed a magnificent and majestic spectacle, yet He has set His “*glory above the heavens*” (Ps. 8:1). That is to say, the universe communicates “*His eternal power and Godhead*” (Rom. 1:20), and yet at the same time is not sufficient to communicate all that God is. It is only a hazy illustration of His Being, a faint whisper of His power, a small sampling of His creative genius. No wonder David began and ended this Psalm with the refrain: “*How majestic is Your Name in all the earth!*” (ESV)

We all like to be well-thought of, and it feels good to be remembered. My wife especially loves it when I buy her a card and give it to her for no apparent reason. David marvelled that God was mindful of us and was astonished that He would even deign to visit us. But love thinks about the object it loves and desires to be with the one in whom it delights. That is why God

came to this planet, why the *“Dayspring from on High has visited us”* (Luke 1:78). David was amazed that God visited us, but how much more would he have marvelled if he knew that even *“before the foundation of the world”* God made plans to come to earth. He visited us in the person of Christ, coming first as a babe in Bethlehem, then living as a man in Galilee, then offering himself as a sacrifice at Calvary. On this planet God visited us for over 30 years, teaching, healing, leading, and loving us, until He was received back up into glory.

Psalms 19 is next in the Creation Psalms. Like a continuous siren, the heavens declare the glory of God - universally, emphatically, and triumphantly. There are no people or language groups who cannot hear or see the message of God's glory. The mountains are His, the rivers are His, the stars are His handiwork as well. David then focuses on the sun as a metaphor for God's pre-eminent glory and power. The sun rejoices like a strong man ready to run his race in a circuit across the track of the sky. It comes out of its chamber like a bridegroom to unite with his bride, the sky. The glory of creation is a continuous river of messages poured out upon mankind, so that they are without excuse. Men may suppress the knowledge of the truth, but they cannot deny it, since He has given us such a clear witness in creation.

Just as the sun is the king of the heavens, around which all things orbit and from which all things draw their life, so too is the Lord Jesus the Son of our redemption. Colossians 1:17 says, *“He is before all things, and in Him all things consist.”* On the mount of Transfiguration, His disciples caught a glimpse of His true glory when it peeked out from behind His flesh (Matt. 17:2). When John saw Him on the Isle of Patmos, he recorded that *“His countenance was like the sun shining in its strength”* (Rev. 1:16). No sinner could ever endure even a single glimpse of the brightness of His glory, yet God has made a way for mankind to dwell with Him.


On April 8, 2024, a phenomenal once-in-a-lifetime event occurred: the total eclipse of the sun. For just over four minutes, the moon eclipsed the sun's strength, allowing mankind to look directly at it with the naked eye. The sight was so spectacular and unparalleled that it made me think of the first coming of our Lord. For centuries, it was foretold that He would come. Then finally, in the fullness of time, God sent forth His Son into the world, born of a woman, and laid Him in a manger. The brightness of His visible glory was briefly eclipsed, and people beheld His glory as they looked upon the face of the Son of God. In the Old Testament, God told Moses, *“You cannot see My face, for no man shall see me and live”* (Ex. 33:20). But the incarnation made a way

for people to look upon God without burning the retinas of their eyes and without overwhelming the sanity of their minds. For more than three decades they saw with their eyes and handled with their hands (1 John 1:1) the holy, high, and hallowed Son of God, until the resurrection and ascension took Him away to glory where He now shines at God's right hand, waiting until *“the Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings”* (Mal. 4:2).

Psalms 104 also speaks of the glory of creation. Just as a person might set up a tent in the space of an afternoon, so God erected the entire universe in six days. Every morning, when a woman opens the curtains, she is re-enacting the drama of creation, when God stretched *“out the heavens like a curtain”* (Psa. 104:2). There, as a master framer, He laid the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; and, like a construction worker pouring concrete, He laid the foundations of the earth.

The trees of the Lord are full of sap, and He appointed the moon for seasons. The high hills are for the wild goats, and the cliffs are a refuge for the rock badgers. All these marvellous, diverse, and intricate works made the psalmist cry out, *“O Lord, how manifold are Your works! In wisdom you have made them all”* (Ps. 104:24).

Finally, the book of Psalms ends with a sustained paean of praise to the God of creation. As if summoning all creation together in a choir, the psalmist personifies sun, moon, and stars, and calls upon them to praise their Maker alongside the host of heaven (Ps. 148:2-3). And that's not all. The sea creatures of the deep are to praise Him too, as well as the

wind, hail, snow, and storm, which do His bidding and fulfil His Word. In fact, everything from mountains to magpies is to praise the name of the Lord. From the heights of heaven to the depths of the sea, all creatures are to join in praising the Maker of heaven and earth. Praise the Lord. Amen. 

“From the heights of heaven to the depths of the sea, all creatures are to join in praising the Maker of heaven and earth.”



by **Shane Johnson**

Shane Johnson was commended by Bethel-Park Bible Chapel as a full-time worker from 1999 to 2017. He now serves the Lord in itinerant teaching, preaching and children's ministries. He is also the author of 31 Days Christmas Devotionals available at Gospel Folio Press.

ISSUES & ANSWERS

“SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES...”

JOHN 5:39

What does 1 Thessalonians teach about the coming of the Lord Jesus for His Church?

First, notice that each chapter has something to say about the Lord's coming. And then note that each mention builds upon the previous one.

“... you turned to God from idols to serve the living and true God, and to wait for His Son from heaven, whom He raised from the dead, even Jesus who delivers us from the wrath to come.” (1:9-10)

It is truly remarkable that believers can “wait” for the Lord Jesus with the assurance of being delivered from God's coming wrath. That is certainly a good thing. However, by itself, it is not all that exciting. One could argue we will simply cease to exist. That would be deliverance from the “wrath to come,” but not really something worth waiting for.

The next chapter assures us we will not cease to exist:

“For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Is it not even you in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming?” (2:19)

We will be in “the presence of our Lord” at His coming. Now that is certainly something to look forward to... Well, maybe.

When we behold the Lord Jesus in all His sinless glory, one might think that we may sink in fear, unable to move for as long as we are there with Him. We certainly do not deserve to be in His presence. What would it be like to be there while every terrible sin we have committed comes to mind? Maybe the joy of being in His presence will only last as long as it takes to realize just what we actually are by nature: undeserving, rebellious sinners.

Chapter 3 brings relief:

“So that He may establish your hearts blameless in holiness before our God and Father at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ with all His saints” (3:13)

Not only do we have His return to look forward to and the assurance of being in His presence, but in His presence our hearts will be established as “*blameless in holiness.*” We will no longer be rebellious sinners. In our glorified, redeemed bodies, we will be free from our sinful nature and from the guilt of our past sins. We will be morally perfect, conformed to Christ's image (Rom. 8:29; 1 John 3:2). There will be no fear in His presence. Wonderful. But how long will this last?


Chapter 4 tells us:

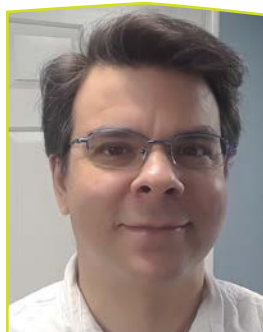
“Then we who are alive and remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord.” (4:17)

We “*shall always be with the Lord.*” It will last forever. We wait for His return. When He comes, we will be in His presence. In His presence, our hearts will be established blameless in holiness, and it will last forever. This sounds too good to be true. What's the catch? How can we possibly expect something so wonderful?

The final chapter reassures us with the magnificent news that there is no catch:

“Now may the God of peace Himself sanctify you completely; and may your whole spirit, soul, and body be preserved blameless at the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ. He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.” (5:23-24)

Believers place all their confidence in the Lord Jesus. “*He who calls you is faithful, who also will do it.*” None of this depends on us. The Lord Jesus Christ is coming. We will be in His presence, our hearts will be blameless, and we will be with Him forever. And He is faithful and able to accomplish all He has promised to do. Praise His holy Name!” 



by Joe Wilbur

Joe Wilbur is in fellowship with the saints in Nokesville Gospel Chapel in Nokesville, VA. In recent years, the Lord has given Joe increasing opportunities to teach God's Word at several assemblies in PA and VA.

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Claremont Bible Chapel Fall Conference

► November 13 - 15, 2026

432 Harrison Ave. Claremont, CA

Claremont Bible Chapel invite you to their fall conference with invited speakers Micah Tuttle and John Glock. The conference begins at 7:00 pm with two sessions, continues with four sessions on Saturday, and two on Sunday. Lunch will be served on both Saturday and Sunday, and there will be a time of fellowship on Saturday evening at a local home. Nursery is available during all the meetings. Please join them for a challenging time in God's Word and an abundance of fellowship.



In the Next Issue of Cornerstone Magazine:

- Justification and Roman Catholicism
- The Godly Chain of Example
- The Taxman and the Revolutionary

Jars of Hope

Jars of Hope is a faith-centered initiative that connects artisans to a wider market, creating opportunities for meaningful work and renewed hope. Currently, through partnership with Haven of Hope (CMCT Chennai), women from underprivileged communities are equipped with skills, supported in building sustainable livelihoods, and introduced to the hope of the gospel. Over time, one of the goals for Jars of Hope is to increase the partnerships with artisans working with missionaries around the globe. It is governed by a Board of believers, ensuring the work remains rooted in integrity, accountability, and care for those it serves. The Jars of Hope website is a small, purpose-driven marketplace where handcrafted work is honored, and every purchase becomes part of a larger story of dignity and hope. Each handcrafted piece tells a story of dignity and grace. Your purchase of handmade items like pencil cases, tote bags, dolls, and much more will support these women's efforts to lift their families above the poverty line.

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I WILL FOLLOW THEE, MY SAVIOR

By P. P. Bilhorn (1865-1936)

I will follow Thee, my Savior,
Thou hast shed Thy blood for me;
Lead me to the cleansing fountain,
Where from sin I may be free.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,
Thou hast died to make me free;
I am poor and weak and helpless,
Therefore would I follow Thee.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,
All my daily life shall be
Consecrated to Thy service,
I will trust and follow Thee.

I will follow Thee, my Savior,
Taking up my daily Cross;
Follow in thy bleeding footprints,
Counting earthly gains but loss.

As I follow Thee, my Savior,
Draw me near Thy wounded side,
Till I reach the heavenly city;
Then with Thee be glorified.

I will follow, follow,
Yes! I'll follow only Thee,
I will follow, follow
Yes! I'll follow only Thee.