

THE BELIEVER'S ETERNAL DESTINY – Part #1

One of the things that seem to have a very low priority today is planning for our eternal destiny. Most will be concerned about insurance and monetary protection and planning for retirement but take little thought about eternal things. The consensus seems to be that our destiny is all in God's hands and there is nothing we can do about it. Much of the church teaches that we are all going to the same place, called heaven, and the only difference between one believer and another is in the number and size of the rewards received. In this study we want to get more specific and show there is a tremendous difference between the eternal destiny of thief on the cross and ,as an example ,the apostle Paul who served God with all his heart and life. If the thief on the cross received the same reward as those who had served God in much pain and suffering for many years and died as martyrs, then the justice of God could be questioned. To even suggest that the thief on the cross will sit with Christ on His throne and rule with Him is ignorant. He was a forgiven thief but he was still a thief because his character was not transformed by life experiences and the discipline of God.

My thesis for this study will be that those who achieve the perfection of the bride of Christ and are joined to Him for eternity as His wife constitute a very small company of believers. While there will be a great multitude of every ethnic group that will be "saved", a much smaller number will inhabit the New Jerusalem which is the wife of the Lamb.

REV 7:9 After these things I looked, and behold, **a great multitude, which no one could count, from every nation and all tribes and peoples and tongues, *standing before the throne and before the Lamb, clothed in white robes, and palm branches were in their hands;*** [10] and they cry out with a loud voice, saying, 10 **"Salvation to our God who sits on the throne, and to the Lamb."**

REV 3:21] **He who overcomes, I will grant to him to *sit down with Me on My throne, as I also overcame and sat down with My Father on His throne.***

The difference between the great multitude and those who sit with Him on His throne is the difference between those who overcome and those who don't overcome in that dimension.

REV 21:1 And I saw a **new heaven and a new earth;** for the first heaven and the first earth passed away, and there is no longer any sea. [2] And I saw **the holy city, new Jerusalem,** coming down out of heaven from God, made ready **as a bride** adorned for her husband

Some will be on New Earth, some will be in New Heaven and some will be in New Jerusalem. Some will rule with Him and some will be ruled over by the overcomers because their lives were not sufficiently transformed from their old life or they failed to grow up in all things into Christ. In this study we will see that there really is a reason to count the cost AND pay the price to do whatever is necessary to complete our course and so win the PRIZE, which Is Christ, Himself!

REV 2:26] **And he who overcomes, and he who keeps My deeds until the end, TO him I will give authority over the NATIONS; [27] AND HE SHALL RULE THEM WITH A ROD OF IRON, AS THE VESSELS OF THE POTTER ARE BROKEN TO PIECES,** as I also have received authority from My Father; [28] and **I will give him the morning star.**

REV 22:16 **"I, Jesus, have sent My angel to testify to you these things for the churches. I am the root and the offspring of David, the bright morning star."**

If someone is going to rule over the nations that means there will be those in the nations who will be ruled over. To assume that the New Earth is reserved just for the Jews is not confirmed by scripture.

The second part of my thesis is that we are now in apprenticeship training to rule with Him for eternity. If we are too busy to be trained or refuse to pay the price of training we will suffer eternal loss. Not all who have been predestined to share His glory will actually ascend to the place of His glory. The self life and living to please ourselves is our greatest enemy to overcoming and inheriting all things. This life occupies too much of our time! Satisfying self will rob us of our eternal destiny because self refuses to change or be changed into His image.

ROM 8:29] For whom He foreknew, **He also predestined to become conformed to the image of His Son**, that He might be the first-born among many brethren;

The balance of my thesis is that the goal of all creation is to prepare the perfected church as the bride of Christ to provide a suitable wife for the King of all the universe.

Experience shows us that of all the multitudes that are saved from every generation, not many will give themselves so completely to Him that the Holy Spirit can perfect them for this eternal call. Never the less God has a place for every born again child of God but everyone will not be in the same place. Not everyone will be able to dwell in the everlasting burnings or ascend His holy hill! MAT 7:14] “For the gate is small, and the way is narrow that leads **to life**, (Zoe) and **few are those who find it**. If we could make a distinction between those that find forgiveness of sins and those that find His Life as their experience we could understand “the Few.” Innumerable multitudes will be saved **but** never develop into His likeness.

So let us begin our study by seeing what God purposed from the foundation of the world.

If we can prove from scripture this thesis then the focus and goal of the whole corporate

Christian life of the church should be this one event. That is the presenting of the glorious church to the glorious King of the universe.

EPH 5:25 ----Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her; [26] that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, [27] that **He might present to Himself the church in all her glory**, having no spot or wrinkle or any such thing; but that she should be holy and blameless. To assume that every born again child of God will automatically achieve to that perfection and glory is presumptuous, if not ignorant.

The beginning of earth’s history in Gen 1 & 2 and the end of earth’s history in Rev 21 & 22 shows that from before the foundation of the world God’s eternal purpose was in this perfected City which is the Bride of Christ and the wife of the Lamb. God begins with a man and a woman and He finishes with a Man, Christ Jesus, and a woman, the bride of Christ. Gen 1 & 2 explains what God set out to do and Rev 21 & 22 explains the end of what God started. In between is how God worked it all out. Since not all the redeemed have this vision and goal God must perfect a small group from each generation. This small group we will call the ‘remnant church’. The “few that be that find it” is speaking of this relative few that make up the “remnant church.”

If the whole purpose of creation finds it’s fulfillment in this “remnant church”, the perfected bride for Christ, we could say that all of creation (natural and spiritual) was designed and has it’s

purpose in this “perfected few.” While this statement may seem too extreme and be too radical, the end of church history is revealed in Revelation 21 and shows the perfection of the “wife of the Lamb” as God’s goal for all creation. Genesis 1 is fulfilled in Revelation 21. What God began in Genesis 1 is now completed in Revelation 21! This, of course, follows the millennial reign of Christ upon this earth which shows that God’s purpose is not yet complete in Revelation 19 with the marriage supper of the Lamb. The New Earth, the New Heaven and the New Jerusalem are not set into eternity until after the 1000 year reign of Christ with His saints upon this earth.

The number that inhabits the New Jerusalem could be compared to those that inhabit a city with those that inhabit the world. Even though there may be hundreds of thousands that inhabit the New Jerusalem this will be “few” compared to those that inhabit the New Earth and the New Heaven.

LUKE 12:31] “But seek for His kingdom, and these things shall be added to you. [32] **“Do not be afraid, little flock, for your Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.**

The “little flock” could be “the few that find it”. Why it gives God pleasure to give the Kingdom to the “little flock” is not revealed but God has chosen to do that “gladly”. The total consecration of the “little flock” is revealed in the next verses. [33] “Sell your possessions and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. [34] “For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.

This makes it clear why there is a little flock rather than the multitudes that no man can number. The consecration divides the congregation between those that rule with Christ and those that will be ruled over. Still consecration is not complete by selling the possessions but by being also conformed to His image and being changed into His character. In other words this means by being transformed into a new species of humans that are just like Him; the Man Christ Jesus!

It is the Father’s good pleasure to give us the Kingdom. Is that a symbolic kingdom or a figurative kingdom that really speaks of something else? Are we predestined to a symbolic glory, to sit on a symbolic throne? No! Daniel saw this Kingdom and the saints receiving that Kingdom.

DAN 7:13 “I kept looking in the night visions, And behold, with the clouds of heaven One like a Son of Man was coming, And He came up to the Ancient of Days And was presented before Him. [14] “And to Him was given dominion, Glory and a kingdom, That all the peoples, nations, and men of every language Might serve Him. His dominion is an everlasting dominion Which will not pass away; And His kingdom is one Which will not be destroyed.

This is not a symbolic kingdom or a symbolic glory. Jesus said the glory that God had given Him He gave to us. He said it was the same glory that He had with the Father before the world was. If His glory is symbolic then the Father’s glory is also symbolic.

DAN 7:[27] **‘Then the sovereignty, the dominion, and the greatness of all the kingdoms under the whole heaven will be given to the people of the saints of the Highest One; His kingdom will be an everlasting kingdom, and all the dominions will serve and obey Him.’**

DAN 7:21] “I kept looking, and that horn was waging war with the saints and overpowering them [22] until the Ancient of Days came, and **judgment was passed in favor of the saints of the Highest One, and the time arrived when the saints took possession of the kingdom.**

All the kingdom UNDER THE HEAVENS will be given to the (perfected) saints but His Kingdom will have dominion over all the other kingdoms and all kingdoms will serve and obey Him. This is obviously too late in the unfolding of God's plan to be dealing with rebellion and lawlessness in the saints that will rule. These saints have already been dealt with and changed into His likeness and they will rule over the nations under His sovereignty. Because they will have His character they will rule just like He would rule over these lesser kingdoms. In other words the training to rule will have to take place here in this life and before the time of Daniel 7.. The saints were already to receive the Kingdom at the time the "horn" was waging war on the earth. V21.

We can see in Rev 19 that this takes place following the marriage feast. REV 19:11 And I saw heaven opened; and behold, a white horse, and He who sat upon it is called Faithful and True; and in righteousness He judges and wages war. [12] And His eyes are a flame of fire, and upon His head are many diadems; and He has a name written upon Him which no one knows except Himself. [13] And He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood; and **His name is called The Word of God.** [14] ***And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.*** [15] And from His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may smite the nations; and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty. [16] And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

This is the final battle before the millennial reign of Christ with His saints and takes place immediately following the wedding feast of the Lamb. This cannot take place before the bride company is complete and the bride has made herself ready. This is why we say that the time table for this end time battle is the perfection of the bride and not Israel. God can get Israel ready in a very short time but to perfect the bride has required 2000 years. This should explain the degree of perfection that God has demanded and how carefully that perfection is carried out. This perfection is way beyond "just believe and be saved." What God has accomplished in us here in this life must prepare us for eternity. Until that perfection is obtained the generations on earth must continue until God's purpose is complete. Up until the marriage supper of the Lamb we could say that everything was preparation, training, schooling, developing and maturing but Revelation 19 is graduation.

It is God's good pleasure to give us the eternal Kingdom but the Kingdom must work within us now to accomplish it's governmental work in us to make us compatible with the values of the eternal Kingdom. "To give us the Kingdom" fulfills Daniel 7 and means that we will be made governors or kings in that Kingdom but we will serve and obey Him. If we were given that responsibility when we were forgiven of our sins how long would we last until we began serving ourselves and filling our pockets and mistreating His other servants?

JOHN 12:24] "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains by itself alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. [25] **"He who loves his life loses it; and he who hates his life in this world shall keep it to life eternal.** [26] "If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there shall My servant also be; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him. The "few that find His Life" will first lay down their old life in order to find His Life. Those who save their old (psuche) life will forfeit His (Zoe) Life.

GAL 2:20] "I have been crucified with Christ; and it is no longer I who live, but Christ

lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

“It is no longer I who live” means that Paul’s old life has been laid down and now he is living by the Zoe Life of Christ that is living in him. Is this just a Christian cliché or is Paul telling us the facts of what happened? In 1 Cor 6:3-10 and again in Chapter 11:23-28 Paul gives us the testimony of how this exchange of life took place. The old Paul no longer lives but Christ now lives in him. Through all the trials, testings and sufferings the old life gave up the ghost and the new Life (Zoe) became his dominant Life. That Life IS Christ in him.

Over the years I have tried many times to figure out how all this works and how Christ is formed in us. I have tried several times to put these things into words and write them down so I can share them. I have always come up with a study that was short of something understandable. I will try once again.

Since without Christ we can do nothing or we can be nothing, the possibility that we can accomplish any of these things from ourselves is eliminated. This only leaves the fact that God must somehow “create” these things in us. If the end of history as we know it is the glorious presentation of the perfected bride to Christ then He, Himself must build this church from scratch. The “saints” just do not know how to perfect the bride because the “saints” are also in the process of being perfected. Possibly the perfected saints could then perfect the saints that have not yet come to perfection except that if we do come to perfection He immediately puts in the sickle and reaps and we are out of here. Only God knows what a perfected saint is and only He can make one!

Everything begins with the Word of God becoming incarnate. This Word of God was always the Word of God and was with God always because the Word of God IS God.. This eternal Word of God was planted into Mary by the Holy Spirit. What He planted was the seed or sperma of God which is the living and abiding Word of God. The result of the growth of that sperma was seen in the man Christ Jesus! The manifestation of the Word was the manifestation of the Father. If you see the Incarnate Word you will see the Father because one is in the other. While this contains a great mystery it is not beyond our understanding. We can accept this truth that the Living and abiding Word of God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself.

2 COR 5:17] Therefore if any man is in Christ, he is a new creature (creation); the old things passed away; behold, new things have come. [18] Now all these things are from God, who reconciled us to Himself through Christ, and gave us the ministry of reconciliation, [19] namely, **that *God was in Christ* reconciling the world to Himself**, not counting their trespasses against them, and He has committed to us the word of reconciliation.

In the same way that the Father sent Jesus He also sends us. That eternal Word of God must also be birthed into us. It is by the continual growth of the living and abiding Word of God in us that we become the manifestation of Christ to the world. Our maturity then is directed related to the development of the living Word of God in us.

1PE 1:22 Since you have in obedience to the truth purified your souls for a sincere love of the brethren, fervently love one another from the heart, [23] **for you have been born again not of seed (lit. Sperma) which is perishable but imperishable, that is, through the living and abiding word of God.** The living and abiding Word of God comes into us as the Sperma of God.

In other words the Living and Abiding Word of God becomes incarnate in us similar to the Word that was manifest in the man Christ Jesus.

JAS 1:19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But let everyone be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger; [20] for the anger of man does not achieve the righteousness of God. [21] **Therefore putting aside all filthiness and all that remains of wickedness, in humility receive *the word implanted*, which is able to save your souls. [22] But prove yourselves doers of the word, and not merely hearers who delude themselves.** [23] For if anyone is a hearer of the word and not a doer, he is like a man who looks at his natural face in a mirror; [24] for once he has looked at himself and gone away, he has immediately forgotten what kind of person he was.

The “implanted word” has reference to the word as SEED that is planted in us (Vine’s) and taking root in our lives that **is able to save our souls**. It is probably the development of that living and abiding Word in us that gives us the “ministry of the Word”. That means not just to talk about it but the doing of it.

MAT 13:20] “And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; [21] yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, and when affliction or persecution arises **because of the word**, immediately he falls away. [22] “And the one on whom seed was sown among the thorns, this is the man who **hears the word**, and the worry of the world, and the deceitfulness of riches choke the word, and it becomes unfruitful. [23] “And the one on whom seed was sown on the good soil, this is the man **who hears the word and understands it; who indeed bears fruit**, and brings forth, some a hundredfold, some sixty, and some thirty.”

When the “implanted word” bears fruit and becomes “incarnate in us” the result would be visible. To see us then would be the same as seeing Christ, **IF** we manifest the living and abiding Word of God. The “incarnation of the Word of God” should be a personal reality to each of us.

GAL 2:20] “I have been crucified with Christ; and **it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me**; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me, and delivered Himself up for me.

2 COR 13:3] since you are seeking for proof **of the Christ who speaks in me**, and who is not weak toward you, but mighty in you.

Paul was not only confident that Christ was in him he also knew that it was Christ that was speaking in him. This should also be the testimony of every child of God. 2 COR 13:5] Test yourselves to see if you are in the faith; examine yourselves! **Or do you not recognize this about yourselves, that Jesus Christ is in you--unless indeed you fail the test?:**[6] But I trust that you will realize that we ourselves do not fail the test.

Is Paul speaking about “the man Christ Jesus” who is seated at the right hand of God who was in them or was he referring to the Living and Abiding Word of God? Obviously it was the Spirit of Christ who IS the living and abiding Word of God that was in them. This recognition and confidence that the Eternal Word of God has been birthed in us is basic to the Christian Life because it is ONLY Christ in us that is our hope of glory.

Now, we are not only born again where our spirit comes alive unto God once again but we are born into a Messianic race of people who are “new creations”. That means they never existed

before. We could say a new species of men and women that is different from any species on earth. If this becomes a reality to us we will understand why the true Christian is well able to come to the perfection of the bride. Not because of our own cleverness or ability but because of the Word of God that is developing within us, bringing forth His fruit.

In previous studies we saw that Eve was taken out of Adam, built, perfected and brought back to Adam to be his bride and wife to fulfill God's purpose. In that same way also the church was taken out of Christ, is being built, perfected and will be made ready as His bride to become His wife in order to fulfill God's eternal purpose. We pointed out that the church cannot be built out of anything that comes from the earth only that which comes from Christ.

It is precisely because of this principle that the true church must be "created" (built) out of the implanted word of God that brings forth its own fruit in us. This is the living and abiding Word of God, by which we were born again. However, being born is just the first stage of being developed and bringing forth fruit. If this fact is clear we should see that "the ministry of the Word" takes on a new dimension. Planting and watering takes on a new dimension. God causing the growth takes on a new dimension. This takes growth and fruit out of our normal understanding of ministering doctrines and information. We cannot measure growth by how much information is assimilated. We cannot then determine "growth" by the command of the doctrines taught. Maturity makes "growth" a matter of life rather than a knowledge of the doctrines.

MAT 16:18] "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock **I will build My church**; and the gates of Hades shall not overpower it. It is very presumptuous for any man to assume he can do anything to "build the church". Since Christ must build the church out of Himself what can man do? He is helpless except to work with Christ. The church must be built with His resurrection Life. God asked Job what he would have done to assist God or give advice at the creation. One of ministry's concerns should be to make sure that the "ministry" is being built into the church and not just ruling over it.

The church that God is building is His masterpiece and is the centerpiece of ALL creation. It will be the most glorious and beautiful and the perfection that stands out and above anything else of all of God's creation. Zion is called the perfection of beauty, the glory of the whole earth. Nothing is more important to God than finishing this masterpiece of all ages. He will spare no time or resource to complete this precise work that must come to the perfection of His Son. Nothing second class or anything that has a defect is acceptable.

This is exactly why Israel is not the time table for the end time but it is the preparation of the bride for Christ. The final battle of the tribulation in Rev 19 only comes AFTER the bride has made herself ready and following the marriage supper of the Lamb. Following this battle the millennial reign of Christ with His saints begins.

The end time prophetic message is not just a matter of Russia or China or the old Roman empire and what they do. It is about the church giving themselves wholly to God and seeking God to finish the work He started in them and bringing them to the perfection of His Son. Once the bride is snatched away, God will quickly take care of His enemies. His enemies are not the hold up. It is the lukewarm church that is more concerned with their own happiness and well being than coming to the perfection of the bride.

1 COR 9:24 Run in such a way that you may win. [25] And everyone who competes in the games exercises self-control in all things. They then do it to receive a perishable wreath, but we an imperishable. [26] Therefore I run in such a way, as not without aim; I box in such a way, as not beating the air; [27] but I buffet my body and make it my slave, lest possibly, **after I have preached to others, I myself should be disqualified.**

This should be a primary concern for every minister. [MAT 7:21] “Not everyone who says to Me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven; but he who does the will of My Father who is in heaven. [22] “Many will say to Me on that day, ‘Lord, Lord, did we not prophesy in Your name, and in Your name cast out demons, and in Your name perform many miracles?’ [23] “And then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; DEPART FROM ME, YOU WHO PRACTICE LAWLESSNESS.’ Ministry itself is not what qualifies us for the Kingdom. It **IS** possible to preach to others, cast out demons and perform miracles and still be disqualified.

If the finished purpose of Genesis 1 & 2 creation was the perfected bride in Revelation 21 & 22 then Christ entered into the mainstream of human life, lived, died, was buried, resurrected, ascended and now sits on the throne in heaven to carry out this precise purpose. To present the perfected and glorious church, without spot or wrinkle, to Himself. The Holy Spirit was sent to reveal all these things to us and to stand along side us to comfort us and teach us all things.

2TH 2:13 But we should always give thanks to God for you, brethren beloved by the Lord, because God has chosen you from the beginning for salvation **through sanctification by the Spirit and faith in the truth.** [14] And it was for this He called you through our gospel, that you may **gain the glory of our Lord Jesus Christ.**

The vast majority of “the saved” only have the vision of escaping hell and making heaven their home. Just as long as I get in the outer door of the court is all I want, is the attitude of too many

The devil is working on building his city, Babylon, which is perfected in perversion. God is busy building His city, the New Jerusalem, which is the perfection of beauty. Preaching the perfection of God’s city and the requirements for the bride of Christ is the gospel of the Kingdom. To see the perfection of the Kingdom we need only look at the perfection of the New Jerusalem. This is the place of His habitation, Mt Zion, the place of His throne and the headquarters of His eternal government! The masterpiece of His creation!

The shock comes when we get the revelation that this eternal city of God is not like New York City. It is a city that IS the Bride, the Wife of the Lamb. The perfection of the city IS the perfection of the Bride. REV 21:9 And one of the seven angels who had the seven bowls full of the seven last plagues, came and spoke with me, saying, “**Come here, I shall show you the bride, the wife of the Lamb.**” [10] And he carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and **showed me the holy city, Jerusalem,** coming down out of heaven from God, [11] having the glory of God. Her brilliance was like a very costly stone, as a stone of crystal-clear jasper.

Historically we know that God lived among His people in a temple. However, in the New Jerusalem there is no temple. REV 21:22] And I saw no temple in it, **for the Lord God, the Almighty, and the Lamb, are its temple.** [23] And the city has no need of the sun or of the moon to shine upon it, for the glory of God has illumined it, and its lamp is the Lamb.

In eternity the Bride of Christ will dwell in the “temple” which means she will dwell in God. In the New Jerusalem God doesn’t need to dwell in a temple like He did when He visited the earth. Then He needed a sanctified and holy place to dwell but in the New Jerusalem He can just “BE” because everything there IS HOLY. This is not an imputed righteousness or an imputed holiness but the bride, the wife of the Lamb, has come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ and is conformed to His image. She has grown up in all things into Christ! The “doctrine of in Christ” is not just a teaching in the New Jerusalem but “in Christ” is the reality. To say “in the temple” is the same as saying “in Christ” because the temple IS Christ.

The real question is not will the bride come to perfection but how will the bride come to this perfection. Part of our perfection must certainly come through trials, suffering and tribulations.

One of the mysteries of the Bible is why there MUST be tribulations connected with entering into the Kingdom of God. Since the church has been faithful to preach that nothing more is required to participate in the eternal Kingdom of our Lord and Savior, Jesus Christ, but to believe something about Jesus, why this suffering?

ACTS 14:21] And after they had preached the gospel to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra and to Iconium and to Antioch, [22] strengthening the souls of the disciples, encouraging them to continue in the faith, and saying, **“Through many tribulations we must enter the kingdom of God.”**

MK 10:23 And Jesus, looking around, said to His disciples, **“How hard it will be for those who are wealthy to enter the kingdom of God!”** [24] **And the disciples were amazed at His words.** But Jesus answered again and said to them, **“Children, how hard it is to enter the kingdom of God!** [25] “It is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God.” [26] And they were even more astonished and said to Him, “Then who can be saved?” [27] Looking upon them, Jesus said, “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God.” [28] Peter began to say to Him, “Behold, we have left everything and followed You.” [29] **Jesus said, “Truly I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or mother or father or children or farms, for My sake and for the gospel’s sake, [30] but that he shall receive a hundred times as much now in the present age, houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and farms, along with persecutions; and in the age to come, eternal life.** [31] “But many who are first, will be last; and the last, first.”

According to the gospel of the half-priced sale this must be a mis-print or else intended for someone other than believers. This probably means for the Jews during the Millennial kingdom. However, the scripture is clear that the Kingdom is not granted on the basis of what we believe but on the basis of fruit.

MT 21:43 “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken away from you, and **be given** to a nation **producing the fruit of it.**

LUKE 12:31] “But **seek for His kingdom**, and these things shall be added to you. [32] “Do not be afraid, little flock, for your **Father has chosen gladly to give you the kingdom.** [33] **Sell your possessions** and give to charity; make yourselves purses which do not wear out, an unfailing treasure in heaven, where no thief comes near, nor moth destroys. [34] *“For where your treasure is, there will your heart be also.*

Since there are too many of these scriptures to list all of them, we will just print these few. However, these should be sufficient to verify that the Kingdom of God is more than being born again or “saved” or reconciled or “converted” as far as the church! In fact much of the church will rejoice when someone receives the word of God with joy and “repents” and declares that “they are saved”.

Mat.13:19] “When anyone hears **the word of the kingdom**, and does not understand it, the evil one comes and snatches away what has been sown in his heart. This is the one on whom seed was sown beside the road. [20] “And the one on whom seed was sown on the rocky places, this is the man who hears the word, and immediately receives it with joy; [21] yet he has no firm root in himself, but is only temporary, **and when affliction or persecution arises because of the word, immediately he falls away.**

Sometimes we declare people to “be saved” who have not yet been afflicted or persecuted so we don’t know if they will fall away in dry and hot desert times..

The scriptures are clear that there are certain “DEMANDS” put upon us if we are going to participate in the Kingdom of God. When we receive the word of the Kingdom it must produce a harvest within us. What we believe is irrelevant if no harvest of the Kingdom seed is produced.

The problem is that when the word of the Kingdom is received there will be persecutions and afflictions that accompany that word. It seems that this “gospel of forgiveness of sins” or “gospel of salvation” can be believed and received and no conflict develops that could be called persecutions and afflictions.

The great question is this; Why must tribulations, afflictions and persecutions be endured in order to enter into the Kingdom of God? The implications are that great eternal benefits are ours through great tribulations. One benefit is that we have access to the Kingdom of God.

The word “tribulations” seem to be a general term that denotes various degrees of afflictions and sufferings. It is taken from a word that means “threshing by dragging” as in the threshing of wheat. That could include to be badly treated, to be tormented, to suffer affliction, to suffer due to pressures of circumstances beyond our control, to endure antagonisms from others, to be pressed or pressured with trouble from without, to suffer anguish of soul, to be burdened beyond measure because of our activity within the Kingdom. The trouble is not coming from God or from the Kingdom but from forces without. It could be external influences exerted against our mind and emotions or against our body in beatings etc. It is a mistake to think that God will not permit these “tribulations” to come upon us.

2 Cor 11:23 Are they servants of Christ? (I speak as if insane) I more so; in far more labors, in far more imprisonments, beaten times without number, often in danger of death. [24] Five times I received from the Jews thirty-nine lashes. [25] Three times I was beaten with rods, once I was stoned, three times I was shipwrecked, a night and a day I have spent in the deep. [26] I have been on frequent journeys, in dangers from rivers, dangers from robbers, dangers from my countrymen, dangers from the Gentiles, dangers in the city, dangers in the wilderness, dangers on the sea, dangers among false brethren; [27] I have been in labor and hardship, through many sleepless nights, in hunger and thirst, often without food, in cold and exposure. [28] **Apart from such external things, there is the daily pressure upon me of concern for all the churches.** [29] Who is weak without my being weak? Who is led into sin without my intense concern?

In these few verses we can see many kinds of pressure, sufferings, persecutions and afflictions. The greatest torment will generally come from those who are “our friends” or someone who should know better.

2 Cor 6:3] giving no cause for offense in anything, in order that the ministry be not discredited, [4] but in everything commending ourselves as servants of God, in much endurance, in afflictions, in hardships, in distresses, [5] in beatings, in imprisonments, in tumults, in labors, in sleeplessness, in hunger, [6] in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness, in the Holy Spirit, in genuine love, [7] in the word of truth, in the power of God; by the weapons of righteousness for the right hand and the left, [8] by glory and dishonor, by evil report and good report; regarded as deceivers and yet true; [9] as unknown yet well-known, as dying yet behold, we live; as punished yet not put to death, [10] as sorrowful yet always rejoicing, as poor yet making many rich, as having nothing yet possessing all things.

We could sum this all up by saying “ With much tribulation we must enter the Kingdom of God”. The real question is WHY should “the best Christians” suffer and the “worst Christians escape?” Could it be that those who suffer the greatest persecutions will experience the greatest joy? Maybe those who suffer much will inherit a much better place or position in eternity. Since God certainly is not unjust there must be an explanation!

JAS 1:2 Consider it all joy, my brethren, when you encounter various trials, [3] knowing that *the testing of your faith produces endurance*. [4] And let endurance have its perfect result, that **you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing**.

Rom 5:3] And not only this, but we also **exult in our tribulations**, knowing that **tribulation brings about perseverance**; [4] and **perseverance, proven character**; and proven character, **hope**; [5] and *hope does not disappoint*, because **the love of God** has been poured out within our hearts through the Holy Spirit who was given to us.

JAS 1:12 Blessed is a man who **perseveres under trial**; for once **he has been approved**, he **will receive the crown of life**, which *the Lord has promised to those who love Him*.

It seems clear that when we are tested, tried and proved through tribulations, if we are to be “approved” we must come through still loving the Lord. If our love fails we have failed the test. If our perseverance fails and we give up we can not be “approved” or pass the test.

The promise is that once we are approved we will receive the “crown of life” which the Lord has promised to those who love Him. The cheap gospel of greasy grace says that all believers shall receive the crown of life simply because they believe something about Jesus.

Of course many trials, temptations and suffering are not recognized as producing anything eternal in us. For that reason we resist any change that is meant to be experienced during this time. In sharing these things recently I found that few understood there is great eternal benefit to suffering IF we understand that God is after something in us that will not fit into God’s eternal purpose. Generally when people mistreat us and we respond in some negative un-Christian way we immediately think they are at fault because we wouldn’t have responded that way had the situation not come up. Most never consider that their own reaction is what they are responsible for regardless of how it happened.

In every hostile situation when we respond in a negative way we are identifying a serious defect in

ourselves. We may waste that opportunity to acknowledge the defect, confess it and repent before God. Then we can ask Him to remove that bad character from us. To try to overcome these anti-Kingdom traits in ourselves, by ourselves, puts us into a Romans 7 frustration of wanting to do good but find we are unable.

If God requires us to come to “perfection”, and we are surely unable to fulfill Math 5:48, He must have a process to overcome our weakness. He does! However, it all requires our acknowledging the fault, repenting and asking God to remove it. If the church which is His body is to be without spot or wrinkle, holy and blameless then God must have a process to accomplish that work in us.

While we are not responsible for other people’s defective character and how they act we are responsible for how we respond to their bad behavior. Trouble makers in the church are a great eternal blessing if they reveal un-Christian character in us and give us the opportunity to repent and get our character right.

Titus 2:11] For the grace of God has appeared, bringing salvation to all men, [12] instructing us to deny ungodliness and worldly desires and to live sensibly, righteously and godly in the present age, [13] looking for the blessed hope and the appearing of the glory of our great God and Savior, Christ Jesus; [14] **who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself a people for His own possession, zealous for good deeds.**

Most Christians know this verse and that God’s purpose is to purify for Himself a people but how to identify the impure things in our lives escapes us. If we lived on a mountain top by ourselves we **might think** we were holy. However, the conflicts within family or friends, at work or in the church soon reveals we have serious problems.

In the second section of this study we shall try to identify how God solves these problems in us if we cooperate with Him by repenting and asking Him to cut these things from us.

In the consecration offering the priest opened up the sacrifice and exposed the inward parts to the light. Then they were washed with water and burned on the fire of the altar. If we have truly given ourselves to God as a living sacrifice He will surely open us up and exposed these hidden things within that we think are just they way we are. Some people think that because God loves you just like you are He will be satisfied to leave you that way. No! Because He loves you He wants to change you so you can be where He is.