

God's plan for redeeming His creation.

advancing the KINGDOM

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special thanks

Jerome, I greatly appreciate our talks on the Kingdom of God. Our conversations were the catalyst of what is presented upon these pages.

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introduction

Advancing the Kingdom illuminates the history of God and His creation from the perspective of His Kingdom. This message is framed through God's redemption of His creation that was lost through disobedience.

What began as a general message of salvation on the Spiritual Combatants website has blossomed into what you read today. It is my desire that in explaining God's message of salvation for man, you will understand the purpose of the Kingdom of God; how you can live for the Kingdom of God; and how you can enter the eternal Kingdom of God.

I pray this message will help answer many of the questions on your heart concerning God's plan of salvation throughout the ages. May you come to know His Son Jesus and the gift of salvation through His Name. May *Advancing the Kingdom* be a great help in your journey as you walk with Him.

Hamp Lee III

a kingdom lost

God created the heavens and earth (Genesis 1-2). As creator, He has the ultimate authority and rule over all He created.

The earth was created as a place where man could dwell in eternal fellowship with the Lord. Man was created in the image of God and for His glory (Isaiah 43:1-7), yet was without sin - even without the knowledge or understanding of good, evil, or sin (Genesis 2:25).

God extended His authority to the man and woman (Adam and Eve) He created (in His image) to rule over the earth. Their purpose upon the earth would be to (a) have dominion over every living thing that moves upon the earth; (b) be fruitful, multiply, and replenish the earth; and (3) subdue it (Genesis 1:26-29).

God placed man in a garden named Eden to dress and keep it (Genesis 2:15). There was one commandment that Adam was to follow: not to eat of the fruit of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. God said that if he ate of this fruit, he would surely die (Genesis 2:17, Genesis 3:3).

One of the creatures, the serpent, came to Eve to tempt her to eat of this fruit. The serpent is Lucifer, also known as the devil and Satan (Isaiah 14:12-15; Revelation 12:9-10). He was an anointed cherub that was once upon the holy mountain of God (Ezekiel 28:11-19). He was beautifully covered with every precious stone and was filled with pipes and tabrets (timbrels, tambourines) in the day he was created - and he was perfect in all his ways until sin was found in him.

His heart was lifted up because of his beauty and his wisdom was corrupted through the reason of his brightness. He sought to place himself above the stars of God (Isaiah 14:12-15). He enticed one-third of the angels to join with him against God and he (and those angels) were removed from heaven and will be eternally punished at a future time (Ezekiel 28:16-19; Luke 10:18; Revelation 12:4, Revelation 20).

Satan is a deceiver, tempter, and adversary against God and His creation (Matthew 4:1-11; 1 Thessalonians 3:5; Revelation 12:9-10). His name, Satan is translated as 'adversary' and devil is translated as 'prone to slander, slanderous, accusing falsely.'

In his nature, he came to Eve to tempt her to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. He deceived her into seeing the 'benefit' of eating the fruit (to become wise like God), while ignoring the disobedience of the act. She ate and gave some to Adam (Genesis 3:1-11).

Adam disobeyed God's commandment. When Adam ate of the fruit, their eyes were opened where gained the knowledge of good and evil. Because of his disobedience to God's command, he would surely die, but there was another consequence.

The authority and dominion that was given to the man was now usurped by the devil. He became the prince of the power of the air and the god of the earth (John 8, John 12:31; 2 Corinthians 4:1-4; Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 1:13; 1 John 5:19). He continues his quest to place himself above the stars of God. Though the devil has influence, dominion, and power within the earth, his authority is still limited by the Lord (Job 1:6-12, Job 2:1-7). The devil is establishing his dominion upon the earth by multiplying and replenishing the earth with animals and people that live and act in disobedience to God's original standard and purpose.

SIN HAS ENTERED THE WORLD THROUGH MAN

Man could no longer dwell eternally with God or live forever because of our sin and His holiness (Romans 5:12). The curse and sin of man has reigned upon this earth (and in our hearts) since this ONE act of disobedience (Romans 5:17-19). Pain, destruction, sadness, disease, war, etc. filled our world and lives. The trials, tribulations, and pains experienced today are a result of one man's decision to disobey God. The judgment of sin and death is upon mankind - to be eternally separated from God and to suffer everlasting condemnation and destruction.

Though eternally separated from the man and woman He created, God loved them so much that He would restore the eternal position of His creation (Ezekiel 33:11; John 3:16; 2 Peter 3:9)...and destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8). Therefore, after God confronted Adam for his disobedience and brought judgments upon him, the woman, serpent, and earth, He foretold of a seed of woman (a child) that would crush the head of the serpent, while the serpent would bite the heel of the child (Genesis 3:14-15). The seed of woman would establish God's Kingdom to restore the eternal relationship between God and man.

a coming kingdom

As the story of man continued to unfold, God established a people for Himself through a man named Abraham and his descendants (Genesis 12:1-4, Genesis 15). He stated that Abraham would be the father of many nations, and through him ALL nations would be blessed (Genesis 22:18; Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:8). The blessing that would come through Abraham would reach all people of the world. (This further builds upon God's promise/judgment upon the serpent in Genesis 3).

Through Abraham's descendants, God forms a nation that would represent Him upon the earth - the people of Israel. The people of Israel would belong to Him and He would be their God (Leviticus 26:9-12). As He established them as a nation, God provided them with various words, judgments, and a covenant (i.e. contract) that would govern their activities as a people (Exodus 20 - Deuteronomy). God was to be their King and ruler (1 Samuel 8:4-7). Even though the people of Israel would agree to the conditions of the covenant (Deuteronomy 27-28), they would continue to cycle through obedience and disobedience. In the people's disobedience, God would punish them for their sins, yet when the people would cry out to Him, He would send people to deliver them from their oppression (i.e. Judges 4-6).

In time, the people desired a 'physical' king and God fulfilled their desire (1 Samuel 8-11). He declared later that through Israel's second king, David, there would always be someone on the throne from his family line and His Kingdom would be without end (2 Samuel 7:11-16; Jeremiah 23:1-6; Luke 1:30-33; Galatians 3:6-29).

The promise of an everlasting Kingdom further came into focus as He announced that a Son would be born that would rule over the people forever (Isaiah 9:6-7; Luke 1). There would be a New Covenant between Him and His people, where His Word would be written on the hearts of the people (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 26:28; Luke 22:20). God would also pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17) and His Spirit (which would live within us) would cause us to walk in His statutes (Ezekiel 36:25-27).

God's purpose in re-establishing mankind and all nations being blessed through the seed of Abraham (which will be the seed of woman) will be fulfilled through the Son to be born.

the King has come

The Lord foretold that a sign would be given concerning the birth of the Son: a virgin being found with child and would give birth to a son and His name would be called Immanuel (Isaiah 7:14).

The Lord also foretold that one would prepare the way - announce His coming:

Isaiah 40:1-5 (KJV) - *Comfort ye, comfort ye my people, saith your God. Speak ye comfortably to Jerusalem, and cry unto her, that her warfare is accomplished, that her iniquity is pardoned: for she hath received of the LORD's hand double for all her sins. The voice of him that crieth in the wilderness, Prepare ye the way of the LORD, make straight in the desert a highway for our God. Every valley shall be exalted, and every mountain and hill shall be made low: and the crooked shall be made straight, and the rough places plain: And the glory of the LORD shall be revealed, and all flesh shall see it together: for the mouth of the LORD hath spoken it.*

The one that prepared the way would be Jesus' older cousin, John the son of Zechariah (Luke 1:5-25, Luke 1:57-80, Luke 3:1-22).

The fulfillment of the Son would be established through a virgin woman named Mary:

Matthew 1:18-25 (KJV) - *Now the birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise: When as his mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Ghost. Then Joseph her husband, being a just man, and not willing to make her a public example, was minded to put her away privily. But while he thought on these things, behold, the angel of the LORD appeared unto him in a dream, saying, Joseph, thou son of David, fear not to take unto thee Mary thy wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Ghost. And she shall bring forth a son, and thou shalt call his name JESUS: for he shall save his people from their sins. Now all this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet, saying, Behold, a virgin shall be with child, and shall bring forth a son, and they shall call his name Emmanuel, which being interpreted is, God with us. Then Joseph being raised from sleep did as the angel of the Lord had bidden him, and took unto him his wife: And knew her not till she had brought forth her firstborn son: and he called his name JESUS.*

The Bible declares that God loved the world (His creation) so much that he sent His Son Jesus, to be born on the earth, and to give His life as a sacrifice (pure, holy, and without sin) (John 3:16-17; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Titus 3:4-6).

The sin of Adam passed through the man (and not woman) because he is the one that was told not to eat of the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (Genesis 2:16-17, Genesis 3:1-7). When Jesus was conceived, He was not born of a man and woman, but the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit would come upon the virgin and power of the Most High would overshadow a young virgin named Mary (Luke 1:26-38). This would allow Jesus to be born not of man and without the sin which originated from man.

Jesus is the fulfillment of God's promise in Genesis 3 that would restore the eternal relationship between God and man...and the Son that would be King (Isaiah 9:6-7; Matthew 1:18-25; Luke 1:26-38; Acts 13:38; Colossians 1:15-20, Colossians 2:13; 1 John 2:1-2).

GODHEAD

The Bible records there is only one God (Deuteronomy 4:35, Deuteronomy 4:39, Deuteronomy 6:4; Mark 12:29; 1 Corinthians 8:4; Ephesians 4:6).

1 John 5:7 (KJV) - *For there are three that bear record in heaven, the Father, the Word, and the Holy Ghost: and these three are one.* (see also John 10:24-30, John 14:7-11)

Jesus is:

- God, manifested in the flesh, and dwelt among men. (John 1:1-14; 1 Timothy 3:16).
- The image of the invisible God, the firstborn of every creature (Colossians 1:13-20).
- The express image of His [God's] person (Hebrews 1:1-4).
- The fullness of the Godhead bodily (Colossians 2:9).

Jesus inherited His name from God (John 17:6; Hebrews 1:4). JESUS is the name above EVERY name and is the only Name given under heaven whereby men *must* be saved (Acts 4:12; Philippians 2:9-11).

Jesus existed before the creation of the world in the beginning of time (Luke 10:18; John 1:1-14, John 8:31-58, John 17:1-7; Colossians 1:12-20; Philippians 2:5-11; Hebrews 1:1-4; Revelation 22:16-17).

a Kingdom for all

The Bible illustrates a number of purposes for Jesus' coming and the Kingdom of God. However, within this document, two will be reviewed.

1. Destroy the works of the devil (1 John 3:8)

To this point (according to Scripture), the devil gained dominion (rule) of the earth through deceiving man. Through his deceit, the curse of sin and death fell upon the earth and its inhabitants. It was the devil's desire to set himself above the stars of God that began his work of deception among the mountain of God and upon the earth (Isaiah 14:12-15).

All power and authority in heaven and earth had been given to Jesus (Daniel 7:13-14; Matthew 9:6, Matthew 11:27, Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:35, John 5:27, John 13:3; John 17:1-4; Acts 2:36; Romans 14:9; 1 Corinthians 15:27; Ephesians 1:9-12; Ephesians 1:15-23; Philippians 2:5-11; Colossians 2:9-12; Hebrews 1:1-4; Hebrews 2:8; 1 Peter 3:18-22). If Satan was able to gain dominion of God's kingdom through deceiving His Son, his goal would be accomplished (Mark 12:1-11).

The devil tempted Jesus when He was lead by the Holy Spirit in the wilderness for 40 days and 40 nights (Matthew 4:1-11). Though the devil tempted Him, Jesus did not give into his tactics...and did not sin. Because he could not deceive Jesus, he would destroy Him. However, the devil did not know that was part of the ultimate plan of God (John 12:12-36). Through Jesus' death, He would destroy the works of the devil and cast him out of the world. This was a mystery from the beginning...

1 Corinthians 2:6-8 (KJV) - *Howbeit we speak wisdom among them that are perfect: yet not the wisdom of this world, nor of the princes of this world, that come to nought: But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, even the hidden wisdom, which God ordained before the world unto our glory: Which none of the princes of this world knew: for had they known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.*

Hebrews 2:14-18 (KJV) - *Forasmuch then as the children are partakers of flesh and blood, he also himself likewise took part of the same; that through death he might destroy him that had the power of death, that is, the devil; And deliver them who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage. For verily he took not on him the nature of angels; but he took on him the seed of Abraham. Wherefore in all things it behoved him to be made like unto his brethren, that he might be a merciful and faithful high priest in things pertaining to God, to make reconciliation for the sins of the people. For in that he himself hath suffered being tempted, he is able to succour them that are tempted.*

Remember: The devil would bruise His heel, and the seed of woman (Jesus) would crush His head (Genesis 3:14-15).

2. Jesus came to save sinners

(Luke 4:18-19, 9:56, 19:10; Acts 10:38; 1 Corinthians 15:22-26; 1 Timothy 1:15)

Though man received the punishment of disobedience, God loved the world so much that He gave His own Son to save it (John 3:16-17). He gave His life as a ransom to save many (Matthew 20:28). Salvation from the curse of death (from Adam) is given through Jesus Christ.

Jesus was sentenced to death by crucifixion; died and was buried; on the third day He rose from the dead to be the first of many to enter into eternal life (Isaiah 53; Matthew 20:17-19; Ephesians 1:3-7; Colossians 1:15-22, Hebrews 9:27-28). He died for you and for me...that we may live with Him and God forever (Revelation 21-22:5).

The Kingdom of God is not only for descendents of the people of Israel, but for all people who would believe in Jesus, that HE is the promised Messiah that came to redeem man from their sins (2 Samuel 7:12-16; Isaiah 9:6-7; Daniel 2:44; John 18:33-37; Hebrews 1:8-9).

Romans 5:15-17 (KJV) - *But not as the offence, so also is the free gift. For if through the offence of one many be dead, much more the grace of God, and the gift by grace, which is by one man, Jesus Christ, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that sinned, so is the gift: for the judgment was by one to condemnation, but the free gift is of many offences unto justification. For if by one man's offence death reigned by one; much more they which receive abundance.*

EVERYONE who believes in Jesus will be saved from the curse of sin and death and given everlasting life. They will become a child of God and a joint heir with Christ (John 3:16-17; Romans 8:14-17; Galatians 4:7; Ephesians 2:8-10; Titus 3:7). Children of God will no longer live as the children of disobedience (sin, the devil), but of God - in His likeness and character (Ephesians 2:2; Colossians 3:6; 1 John 2:29; 1 John 3:7-10, 1 John 4:7, 1 John 5:1-10).

Those who would believe in Him would receive God's Spirit and laws through a New Covenant that would govern their behavior and the 'conditions' for receiving eternal life (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Matthew 22:34-40, 28:18-20; John 13:34-35, 16:13; Romans 8:1-17; Galatians 5:16-25, Galatians 6:2; Ephesians 1;13-14; James 2:17-26). Through Jesus, the fulfillment of God's promise to Abraham is complete (Genesis 22:18; Acts 3:25; Galatians 3:8).

The Kingdom of God will overturn the kingdom of Satan, death, and sin (1 Corinthians 15:51-58; Revelation 17-19). In God's appointed time, Jesus will return to redeem His people; sentence Satan (the devil) and his followers to an eternal punishment; and establish a new Heaven and earth where all whose names are in the Book of Life may dwell (Psalm 110; John 14:2-3, 28; Acts 1:1-11; Colossians 3:4; 1 Thessalonians 4:16-18; Hebrews 9:27-28; Revelation 20-21:1-4).

cost of the Kingdom

While Jesus was on earth, He taught many things about the Kingdom of God: its attributes, the behavior of its citizens, etc. Now, to enter the Kingdom of God (everlasting life), you must be born again. (This will be covered further in the next section.) Throughout the history of the world, there will be many that are called, but few will be chosen to enter into the Kingdom of God. Those that were called were known as disciples, for they followed Jesus (Mark 2:14-16).

A disciple is translated as a pupil or learner. The disciple was to follow Jesus' teaching and example (Matthew 11:25-30; John 13:14-16; 1 Peter 2:20-25). Eternal life through Jesus Christ is available to all, and Jesus stated that we must count the cost of becoming a disciple:

Luke 14:25-35 (KJV) - *And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply, after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage, and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple. Salt is good: but if the salt have lost his savour, wherewith shall it be seasoned? It is neither fit for the land, nor yet for the dunghill; but men cast it out. He that hath ears to hear, let him hear.*

The purpose of counting the cost is to ensure you will commit to completing your life as a disciple of Jesus - faithful to the end. Far too many people place their faith in Jesus only to turn away or live a life that is beneath His standard. Jesus said that no one who puts their hand to the plow (moving forward) and looks back is fit for the Kingdom of God (Luke 9:62). You must live by faith...

The bible says that without faith, it is **impossible** to please God (Hebrews 11:6). What is this type of faith? This type of faith holds to the promise that Jesus will give them eternal life through their belief in Him. Because they believe this, they (continuously) prepare for it and await the Lord's coming (Hebrews 11:1). They live in a manner that is representative of God, knowing that a great

and eternal reward awaits them (John 3:1-8; Romans 8:12-17; Galatians 5:16-26; Titus 3:3-8; Hebrews 11; 1 John 2:1-3:10, 4:7, 5:1-21).

James explains this as faith without works being dead (James 2:17-26). If you say you believe something, your actions should back up what you believe. Jesus says that people will know that we are His disciples if we love one another (Matthew 28:18-20; John 13:34-35). This is the mark of the disciple and the fruit we produce gives further evidence (Galatians 5:22-25). John states that children of God do not sin and have overcome the world (1 John 5:4-10). We are Christ's if we crucify the flesh with its passions and affections (Romans 8; Galatians 5:22-25). God is looking for a church without spot or blemish...overcomers (Ephesians 5:25-32; Revelation 21:7, 22:14)!

...and without holiness, no one will see the Lord (Hebrews 12:14)

Many Christians do not understand the important of their complete (and continuous) belief in Jesus (and the actions that should follow). For many, the concept of eternal life is only known by a mental knowledge, but not truly believed (as displayed by their actions). They still attend church services, volunteer in church, and even conduct many works on God's behalf, but they are not following His commands, and therefore will not receive eternal life (Matthew 7:21-23).

When you believe in Jesus, your actions should mimic His, instead of your previous life of sin (1 John 2:6). One that is born lives after the dictates of the nature from which it came from. Living in the world before Christ, we lived as the world in our carnal nature and displayed its nature (1 John 2:15-17; Galatians 5:19-21). When you believe in Jesus, you become a child of God and no longer lives by the dictates of the flesh. They possess the very nature of God...becoming a new creature (2 Corinthians 5:17; Galatians 5:16-26; 1 John 4:7, 1 John 5).

God will one day judge everyone based upon their works (Matthew 25:14-46; Romans 14:10-14; 2 Corinthians 5:9; Revelation 20:11-21:8). If you do not believe in Jesus (and show your belief through your actions), you will stand before Him condemned and will face a judgment of eternal separation and punishment (John 3:16-18; Mark 16:16).

A Christian life is not all about receiving blessings on earth. Christians will face unjust persecutions, slander, false accusations, gossip, imprisonment, and even death for their belief in Jesus (Matthew 5:11-12; Luke 6:22-23; John 15:18-21; 2 Timothy 2:3-4, 2 Timothy 3:12-14; James 1:2-3; Hebrews 11), but it is to those that overcome and endure that receive the crown of life (James 1:12). Serving the Lord is not for improving your earthly life, it is preparing you for your eternal life, which is far better (Revelation 21:1-7)!

You must consider this as you choose to place your faith in Jesus. NOTHING on this earth is worse than eternal separation from God!! Count the cost...

John 12:46 (KJV) - *I am come a light into the world, that whosoever believeth on me should not abide in darkness.*

enter the Kingdom

To enter the Kingdom of God, you must be born again:

John 3:1-8 (KJV) - *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again. The wind bloweth where it listeth, and thou hearest the sound thereof, but canst not tell whence it cometh, and whither it goeth: so is every one that is born of the Spirit.*

Believe on the Lord Jesus (John 1:12, John 3:14-18, John 5:24, John 3:36, John 6:35, John 6:47, John 12:46; Acts 10:43; Acts 11:17-18, Acts 16:1-34; Romans 9:33, Romans 10:9-10; 1 Peter 2:6; 1 John 5:5-13). The belief Jesus was speaking of is that which belongs to salvation...that He is the Son of God, the Christ that died for the sins of the world, which God raised from the dead, and has come to save the world from sin, as He sits on the right hand of God awaiting for the time when His enemies will be made His footstool - making intercession (prayer) for us (Psalm 110; Romans 6:3-4, Romans 10:9-10; 1 Corinthians 15:20-28; 2 Corinthians 5:17-21; Ephesians 2:1-9; Colossians 1:15-22; 1 Timothy 2:3-4; Hebrews 2:17, Hebrews 7:22-27; 1 John 2:1-2).

Belief in Jesus is a consistent demonstration of faith through a person's actions

James 2:17-24 (KJV) - *Even so faith, if it hath not works, is dead, being alone. Yea, a man may say, Thou hast faith, and I have works: shew me thy faith without thy works, and I will shew thee my faith by my works. Thou believest that there is one God; thou doest well: the devils also believe, and tremble. But wilt thou know, O vain man, that faith without works is dead? Was not Abraham our father justified by works, when he had offered Isaac his son upon the altar? Seest thou how faith wrought with his works, and by works was faith made perfect? And the scripture*

was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called the Friend of God. Ye see then how that by works a man is justified, and not by faith only.

Everyone who believes in Jesus will be saved from the curse of sin and death

Acts 2:38-39 (KJV) - *Peter said unto them, Repent, and be baptized every one of you in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins, and ye shall receive the gift of the Holy Ghost. For the promise is unto you, and to your children, and to all that are afar off, [even] as many as the Lord our God shall call.*

Repent of your sins (Matthew 4:17; Mark 1:14-15; Luke 13:3; Acts 3:19-21, 5:31, 17:30; 2 Corinthians 7:10). Repentance is a turning away from your sinful nature, behavior, and actions - to change one's mind for better, to heartily to amend with abhorrence one's past sins. Abhorrence means to have a feeling of extreme repugnance or aversion; utter loathing; abomination; something or someone extremely repugnant or loathsome. This is the condition one must have toward their life of sin, not feeling bad for doing wrong. It is the Lord's desire that no one should perish, but that all would come to repentance (2 Peter 3:9).

Repent because you need to be saved from your sins . . . not because you want a better earthly life.

Be baptized¹ (Matthew 28:18-20; John 3:3-7; Acts 1:5; Romans 6:1-4; 1 Corinthians 6:9-11; Galatians 3:27). Baptism is a commandment of Jesus (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:16). It is the baptism that washes away your sins and allows you to enter the kingdom of God (John 3:1-8; Acts 22:3-16; 1 Peter 3:21). We are buried with Him into death; and as He was raised from the dead, we should walk in the newness of life, knowing we too will be raised with Him (Acts 4:12; Romans 6:1-6; Colossians 2:12).

Receive the gift of the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; John 3:1-8, 4:14, 7:38-39, 14:15-17, 16:7-14; Acts 2:1-4, 38-39; 10:44-48, 19:1-6; Ephesians 1:10-14; Galatians 3:14; 1 Corinthians 12:13). Receipt of the Holy Spirit is a born again 'experience' given to all who repent and are baptized (John 3:3-8; Acts 2:38). The receipt of the Holy Spirit is similar to that of Jesus after being baptized by John (Matthew 3:13-17; Mark 1:9-11; Luke 3:21-22; John 1:32-34). The Scriptures also declare that those who ask, believe, and obey Jesus' commandments will receive the Holy Spirit (Luke 11:13; John 7:37-39, 14:15-16; Acts 5:32; Ephesians 1:10-14). God has declared that He would pour out His Spirit upon all flesh (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17). This outpouring of the Spirit would come through Jesus, as He is the One declared to baptize with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Matthew 3:11; John

1:29-33). The Holy Spirit is given as a guarantee (or deposit) of our inheritance of eternal life, which is to come (Ephesians 1:10-14). Through the Holy Spirit, we will receive a New Covenant that will be in our hearts AND He will live in us (Jeremiah 31:31-34; Ezekiel 36:27; John 14:16-18). We will be guided into all truth to help us live a righteous, faithful, and obedient life; producing His fruit among the world (Romans 8:26-27; 1 Corinthians 2:12; Galatians 5:22-25; Ephesians 5:18). In His fullness and power, the Holy Spirit helps us live as bold witnesses for God (Luke 4:1-14, 24:49; Acts 1:1-8), where we are also given other 'gifts' as the Lord wills to accomplish His purposes (1 Corinthians 12:1-11).

living for the Kingdom

To live for the Kingdom of God, we must live as one of its citizens. Citizens of any country must abide by the regulations governed by their country. Likewise for the disciple, it is important that we (1) know what the Lord requires of us as disciples; (2) live according to His standard; and (3) represent Him wherever He desires for us to go and in whatever He desires for us to do.

2 Timothy 2:3-4 (KJV) - *Thou therefore endure hardness, as a good soldier of Jesus Christ. No man that warreth entangleth himself with the affairs of this life; that he may please him who hath chosen him to be a soldier.*

The life you live before God is one that pleases Him...according to His standard. Mind. Body. Soul. All that you have, think, or will ever be is because of Him, for Him, and through Him.

As a disciple, it is very important that you learn of Jesus. He presented the example and teachings on how we are to live for Him (Matthew 11:28-30; John 13:1-17; 1 Peter 2:21-25; 1 John 2:1-11). Discipleship is not a one-time process. It is a life-long journey of learning, knowing, and walking with Jesus.

Living for the Kingdom of God can be grouped into four areas as a lifecycle of faith:

Compassion (Love)

Compassion is your foundation in your life with God. Our love for God must be our first and chief aim - loving God with all our heart, mind, and soul (Matthew 22:36-40). It is love that brought God to redeem mankind through His Son (John 3:16). It is love that shows each of us mercy and grace. It is love that identifies us as Jesus' disciples (John 13:35). All that is done in our lives must be modeled through love. It is our motivation (and motive) for all we believe, do, and say. Our minds and lives must be continually shaped through the lens of compassion (Romans 12:1-2).

Matthew 22:36-38 (KJV)

- Master, which is the great commandment in the law? Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind. This is the first and great commandment.

Communion²

Communion is an intimate relationship and union with the Lord. In the Greek language, the word communion comes from *κοινωνία* (*koinonia*) and is translated as “fellowship, association, intimacy, joint participation.” Our communion with God is manifested out of our knowledge and love for Him (Matthew 22:36-40; Philippians 3:7-11; Colossians 1:3-17). We love the Lord because He first loved us (Deuteronomy 7:7-8; 1 John 4:19).

Psalms 24:3-6 (KJV)

- Who shall ascend into the hill of the LORD? or who shall stand in his holy place? He that hath clean hands, and a pure heart; who hath not lifted up his soul unto vanity, nor sworn deceitfully. He shall receive the blessing from the LORD, and righteousness from the God of his salvation. This is the generation of them that seek him, that seek thy face, O Jacob. Selah.

In our communion with the Lord, we must to come to Him; seek His face; sit at His feet; and stand in His presence (2 Samuel 7:18; Psalm 24:6, Psalm 27:8-10, Psalm 105:1-5, Psalm 123:1-2; Isaiah 30:18; Matthew 11:28-30; Hebrews 11:6). Our communion with the Lord is manifested from our time with the Him in prayer (Psalm 65:2, Psalm 145), meditation (Psalm 1:1-3, Psalm 119:15; James 1:22-25), praise (Psalm 100, Psalm 103, Psalm 150; Hebrews 13:15), and worship (1 Chronicles 16:29; John 4:24). As such, we are to minister to Him first and allow everything we say and do to be an extension of our communion with Him. (Psalm 119:1-17; Luke 2:36-38; Acts 13:1-3).

Community

The community of believers is the connection point where all disciples meet, grow, and are sent (Acts 2:42-47; Ephesians 2). Through our connection with a community of disciples, we have encouragement, growth, teaching, support, and partakers in the work of the Lord. The community of believers is worldwide and not defined by a specific perspective of Scripture. In the household of faith, we are to love all, regardless of our race, color, or social status.

The basis of our communal support must be molded through our love for God and one another (Matthew 22:36-40; Galatians 6:1-10; Philippians 2:1-11; Hebrews 13:1-2). Community (in and out of church) is one of the ways in which God is seen and glorified (Matthew 5:14-16, Matthew 25:31-46). It is the extension of our lives before Him in love.

How we entreat others in community is not based upon their level of love toward us or others. We are to love others as we love ourselves (Matthew 22:36-40; 1 John 3:14-18). This is the standard for all believers at all times. Love is not based upon what you have been given or expect to receive in return.

In the concept of community, there are many churches in the world. It is important that you find a local community of the Lord's choosing. He will tell you where He wants you to go. Serving the Lord is not about finding a church or community with your desired amenities. Where the Lord may lead you may not have any amenities and asks you to support those that are beginning or struggling in their community.

Some of the places the Lord sends you will be to strengthen, correct, grow, and prepare you (Romans 15:1-7). He also sends you to places to strengthen, correct, teach, and prepare others (Acts 20:16-38). Love is a two-way street. Serve your community and not only take (Romans 12:9-21; Philippians 2:1-18). Whatever the Lord has given you, bring them to Him and the community for its benefit and growth (1 Peter 4:9-10).

Commission

Our lives in Christ should not be surrounded solely by those that believe in Jesus. We are to go out beyond the boundaries of our churches and communities of faith to reach those that do not know God (Romans 10:10-15). We are to do good unto all people (Matthew 5:14-16, Matthew 25:31-46). We are to share the love of God with the world. We are to make disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20; Mark 16:15-16). We are to go everywhere the Lord requires us to be for His purposes and His alone (Psalm 119:133; Proverbs 3:5-6, Proverbs 16:9; Acts 13:1-4).

Next Steps

Please read our second volume of this series, *Living for the Kingdom*. It is an expanded study that focuses on teaching the commands (and teachings) of Jesus. Find it on our website, www.spiritualcombatants.com.

Matthew 6:9-13 (KJV) - *After this manner therefore pray ye: Our Father which art in heaven, Hallowed be thy name. Thy kingdom come, Thy will be done in earth, as it is in heaven. Give us this day our daily bread. And forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors. And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from evil: For thine is the kingdom, and the power, and the glory, for ever. Amen.*

change log

December 20, 2010

- Accomplished small administrative corrections.
- Removed all link references and placed references within *Advancing the Kingdom* under endnotes.

December 22, 2010

- Removed similar statement from *Repent of Your Sins* under Enter the Kingdom (page 17).
- Additional scripture references added to *Community* under Living for the Kingdom (page 21, second paragraph).

January 3, 2011

- Rewrote *Communion* under Living for the Kingdom (page 20).

January 21, 2011

- Rewrote *Compassion* under Living for the Kingdom (page 19).

June 5, 2011

- Made additions to *Believe on the Lord Jesus, Be Baptized, and Receive the Holy Spirit* under Enter the Kingdom (pages 16-18).

July 6, 2011

- Made additions to *Repent for your sins* under Enter the Kingdom (page 17).

November 28, 2011

- Made correction to A Coming Kingdom (page 8).

February 3, 2012

- Updated A Kingdom for All (page 11).

Being Born Again

John 3:1-7 (KJV) - *There was a man of the Pharisees, named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews: The same came to Jesus by night, and said unto him, Rabbi, we know that thou art a teacher come from God: for no man can do these miracles that thou doest, except God be with him. Jesus answered and said unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God. Nicodemus saith unto him, How can a man be born when he is old? can he enter the second time into his mother's womb, and be born? Jesus answered, Verily, verily, I say unto thee, Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

Except a man be born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God

As Nicodemus conversed with Jesus, He explains that a man cannot see the kingdom of God unless is he born again. Though Nicodemus considered the physical aspect of being born again (enter the second time into his mother's womb), Jesus had another meaning altogether...

Except a man be born of water and of the Spirit, he cannot enter into the kingdom of God. Here, Jesus tells Nicodemus what it means to be born again - being born of water and of the Spirit. In being born again, we will receive another 'birth' - one spiritual (and eternal) implications.

Born of Water

Being born of water represents the water baptism Jesus commanded His disciples to accomplish in making disciples of all nations (Matthew 28:18-20). (The Greek word for baptize is *baptizo*, to dip repeatedly, to immerse, to submerge (of vessels sunk), to cleanse by dipping or submerging, to wash, to make clean with water, to wash one's self, bathe, to overwhelm.) Through repentance and baptism, you are forgiven for your sins (Acts 2:38) and identified with Jesus Christ.

Romans 6:3-4 (KJV) - *Know ye not, that so many of us as were baptized into Jesus Christ were baptized into his death? Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.*

Born of the Spirit

Being born of the Spirit can be broken in two 'phases' as one represents a rebirth on earth and the other into eternal life (the crux of Jesus' discussion with Nicodemus). As we are buried with Jesus unto death (via baptism), we walk in the newness of life (on earth) and will rise with Him in the resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:42-57). Walking in the newness of life represents a life that follows after the Spirit of God instead of the flesh and sin (Romans 6:5-11).

In being born of water and spirit, you enter into a regeneration that will ultimately allow you to eternally dwell in the kingdom of God:

Titus 3:3-7 (KJV) - *For we ourselves also were sometimes foolish, disobedient, deceived, serving divers lusts and pleasures, living in malice and envy, hateful, and hating one another. But after that the kindness and love of God our Saviour toward man appeared, Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Ghost; Which he shed on us abundantly through Jesus Christ our Saviour; That being justified by his grace, we should be made heirs according to the hope of eternal life.*

Through our belief in Jesus, we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, sealed as a guarantee (down payment) of our future inheritance, eternal life (Acts 2:38; Romans 8:12-17; Ephesians 1:13-14). When the time comes for us to receive our inheritance, we will receive the full measure of being born of the Spirit:

1 Corinthians 15:42-57 (KJV) - *So also is the resurrection of the dead. It is sown in corruption; it is raised in incorruption: It is sown in dishonour; it is raised in glory: it is sown in weakness; it is raised in power: It is sown a natural body; it is raised a spiritual body. There is a natural body, and there is a spiritual body. And so it is written, The first man Adam was made a living soul; the last Adam was made a quickening spirit. Howbeit that was not first which is spiritual, but that which is natural; and afterward that which is spiritual. The first man is of the earth,*

earthy; the second man is the Lord from heaven. As is the earthy, such are they also that are earthy: and as is the heavenly, such are they also that are heavenly. And as we have borne the image of the earthy, we shall also bear the image of the heavenly. Now this I say, brethren, that flesh and blood cannot inherit the kingdom of God; neither doth corruption inherit incorruption. Behold, I shew you a mystery; We shall not all sleep, but we shall all be changed, In a moment, in the twinkling of an eye, at the last trump: for the trumpet shall sound, and the dead shall be raised incorruptible, and we shall be changed. For this corruptible must put on incorruption, and this mortal must put on immortality. So when this corruptible shall have put on incorruption, and this mortal shall have put on immortality, then shall be brought to pass the saying that is written, Death is swallowed up in victory. O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.

The full measure of being born of the Spirit is receiving an incorruptible (spiritual) body. See, where we were physically born into 'Adam' and sin (Psalm 51:5), through Jesus Christ, we are reborn into Him, and will receive a new body that is able to see and enter into the kingdom of God:

John 3:6-7 (KJV) - *That which is born of the flesh is flesh; and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit. Marvel not that I said unto thee, Ye must be born again.*

2

Knowing God's Voice

John 10:1-18 (KJV) - *Verily, verily, I say unto you, He that entereth not by the door into the sheepfold, but climbeth up some other way, the same is a thief and a robber. But he that entereth in by the door is the shepherd of the sheep. To him the porter openeth; and the sheep hear his voice: and he calleth his own sheep by name, and leadeth them out. And when he putteth forth his own sheep, he goeth before them, and the sheep follow him: for they know his voice. And a stranger will they not follow, but will flee from him: for they know not the voice of strangers. This parable spake Jesus unto them: but they understood not what things they were which he spake unto them. Then said Jesus unto them again, Verily, verily, I say unto you, I am the door of the sheep. All that ever came before me are thieves and robbers: but the sheep did not hear them. I am the door: by me if any man enter in, he shall be saved, and shall go in and out, and find pasture. The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. I am the good shepherd: the good shepherd giveth his life for the sheep. But he that is an hireling, and not the shepherd, whose own the sheep are not, seeth the wolf coming, and leaveth the sheep, and fleeth: and the wolf catcheth them, and scattereth the sheep. The hireling fleeth, because he is an hireling,*

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and careth not for the sheep. I am the good shepherd, and know my sheep, and am known of mine. As the Father knoweth me, even so know I the Father: and I lay down my life for the sheep. And other sheep I have, which are not of this fold: them also I must bring, and they shall hear my voice; and there shall be one fold, and one shepherd. Therefore doth my Father love me, because I lay down my life, that I might take it again. No man taketh it from me, but I lay it down of myself. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it again. This commandment have I received of my Father.

Jesus tells a parable about a pasture land that is given to the sheep that follow Him. This peaceful pasture land is given through the gift of eternal life. The sheep represent those the Lord has called by name, loved, and cared for. Jesus said that the sheep know His voice and follow Him (into eternal life) - a stranger they will not follow (John 10:3-5).

Many people want to know how to hear God's voice. However, the **BIGGER** desire (or question) must be to **KNOW** His voice. God speaks to us all...and so does the devil (and our own lust). The issue is to recognize God's voice above all others, so that when He speaks, you know it is the Lord. There are many that would ask how they are to hear God's voice. He speaks to us through the Holy Spirit (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit will only speak what He receives from the Father, nothing more, nothing less. The voice we hear could be considered a voice without sound or one that speaks from within (i.e. still small voice).

To recognize His voice, you must be attuned to Him. Just as a new puppy to a home learns to respond to their owner's voice, we do the same with the Lord. Our recognition comes through spending time with Him and understanding His character and Word. The Lord will speak in a manner that is different from the devil or the flesh (lust).

Three Things about God's Direction:

1. God will not contradict (or go against) His Word.
2. God will not go against His character.

God is love (1 John 4:6-10). The Scriptures also reveal what love is (1 Corinthians 13:1-8) and some of the Lord's character traits. He will not go against His character in telling you to do something.

3. God's direction will always lead you closer to Him (righteousness, integrity, holiness), not further away.

The Direction of the Devil and the Flesh (Lust)

To describe the devil or the flesh (lust), they are the opposite from God. They will seek to have you contradict God's Word, go against His character (and will), and will lead you further from Him. Their direction is filled with receiving pleasure now and pleasing the emotions of the flesh. To illustrate this, let's review Matthew 4:1-11 when Jesus was tempted by the devil:

Matthew 4:1-11 (KJV) - *Then was Jesus led up of the Spirit into the wilderness to be tempted of the devil. And when he had fasted forty days and forty nights, he was afterward an hungred. And when the tempter came to him, he said, If thou be the Son of God, command that these stones be made bread. But he answered and said, It is written, Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceedeth out of the mouth of God. Then the devil taketh him up into the holy city, and setteth him on a pinnacle of the temple, And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone. Jesus said unto him, It is written again, Thou shalt not tempt the Lord thy God. Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me. Then saith Jesus unto him, Get thee hence, Satan: for it is written, Thou shalt worship the Lord thy God, and him only shalt thou serve. Then the devil leaveth him, and, behold, angels came and ministered unto him.*

1. The devil will use physical needs to tempt you

After fasting 40 days and 40 nights, Jesus was hungry. The devil comes to Him and says if He's hungry, then He should command these stones to be made into bread. The devil is addressing a physical need (hunger), yet Jesus says that man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3; Matthew 4:4).

If we live by bread alone or the things only within 'natural' lives, such as sight, taste, touch, or smell, we can be swayed toward sin. The devil seeks to steal, kill, and destroy you. He plays for keeps and will lead you down a 'nice looking' path before the final falling away from the Lord and eternal life.

All it takes it a little 'flesh' or sin to spoil the whole man

2. The devil will also use God's Word against you.

If you do not understand God's Word, he will twist it to suit his purposes.

In tempting Jesus, the devil takes Him upon a pinnacle of a temple, *And saith unto him, If thou be the Son of God, cast thyself down: for it is written, He shall give his angels charge concerning thee: and in their hands they shall bear thee up, lest at any time thou dash thy foot against a stone* (Matthew 4:6).

The scripture the devil is referring to is found in Psalm 91:11-12, *For he shall give his angels charge over thee, to keep thee in all thy ways. They shall bear thee up in their hands, lest thou dash thy foot against a stone.*

Jesus responds saying that it is also written that we are not to tempt the Lord thy God (Deuteronomy 6:16; Matthew 4:7).

The Lord will give His angels charge over us, but we are not to test Him by jumping off a building to prove it.

It is important to know God's word and its context!

3. The devil and the flesh (lust) will use emotions to steer (or control) your decisions, such as anger, jealousy, pride, desire for money or status, etc.

Matthew 4:8-9 (KJV) - *Again, the devil taketh him up into an exceeding high mountain, and sheweth him all the kingdoms of the world, and the glory of them; And saith unto him, All these things will I give thee, if thou wilt fall down and worship me.*

Lastly, the devil offers Jesus all the kingdoms of the world and the glory of them...if He would fall down and worship him. Far too many times people are led into sin and following the devil (and the world) by giving into the glory and pride of life, positions, and possessions (1 John 2:15-17).

We are continually bombarded with thoughts of having more, getting rich, and living the American dream. That dream may be what many desire, but at what cost do they receive it? For them, the cost is often their eternal soul. A person cannot serve both God and money (Matthew 6:24). This is why Jesus responds saying (as it is written), you shall worship the Lord only serve Him (Deuteronomy 6:13; Matthew 4:10).

Desires and emotions can be very strong and consuming. Without a clear thought, they can lead you to do all manner of evil - **BECAUSE THEY EXIST WITHOUT CONTROL**. This is what the devil and the flesh wants of you – to live without restraint.

James 1:13-15 (KJV) - *Let no man say when he is tempted, I am tempted of God: for God cannot be tempted with evil, neither tempteth he any man: But every man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own lust, and enticed. Then when lust hath conceived, it bringeth forth sin: and sin, when it is finished, bringeth forth death.*

Self-control and discipline are paramount for a child of God (1 Peter 1:13-15).

Where We Go From Here

Now that we understand some basics concerning how the Lord, the devil, and flesh desire to speak to us, it becomes important to recognize when God speaks. A stranger, as Jesus points out in John 10, is someone that the sheep does not recognize. For you, this is the devil and the flesh (lust). They are strangers because they seek to lead you toward eternal destruction rather than eternal life with God.

When the devil and the flesh speak, they are often accompanied by emotional 'pushes' to lead you in a specific direction. (Remember what was written above.) Additionally, their 'voices' sound different from the Lord's...they are often louder, pushy to get you to make a quick decision. They are strangers to your life in God. Let the peace of God rule in your heart (Colossians 3:15).

If there comes a time when you are confused about what to do (or if you hear something you are unsure about), take a moment to pause. If you become overly anxious, worried, or upset...you can be tempted to make a bad decision that makes your situation worse.

If you are unsure of the Lord's direction or if He said it, ask Him to confirm His message to you (and pause). This has happened before in the Bible (Judges 6:11-40; 1 John 4:1-3) and it is OK to ask for confirmation if you cannot recognize His voice. The Lord will often use visions, dreams, other people, or even situations to confirm what He spoke (and if He spoke it).

The Lord may not answer you immediately, but sometimes He does. You have to remain sensitive and open to the Spirit's leading. The Spirit will not move according to your master design for your life (or your timing). As a child of God, you must live according to the Lord's desires...so that when He speaks, you will recognize His voice and take heed to what you hear.

Warning

Be very cautious if you desire **ONLY** to depend upon other people to speak God's Word to you. Some people would find it easier to just trust what someone else says God wants them to do, rather than hearing from God themselves. Sure, there can be some righteous men and women out there that seek to do God's will, but there are many, many people that will take advantage of you (2 Timothy 3:1-8; 2 Timothy 4:3-4). Jesus spoke of hirelings in John 10:12-13 that do not care for the sheep, and sadly, many of these people surround you today.

Learn to recognize God's voice for yourself so that you will not be a victim to abuse within the church or in your personal life. A person's position does not guarantee they live under God's authority. Check the fruit of these people - what they do and what they say (Matthew 7:15-20; Acts 17:1-13).

Know His voice! So when He speaks...you listen and follow!



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