

# The Last Days Times

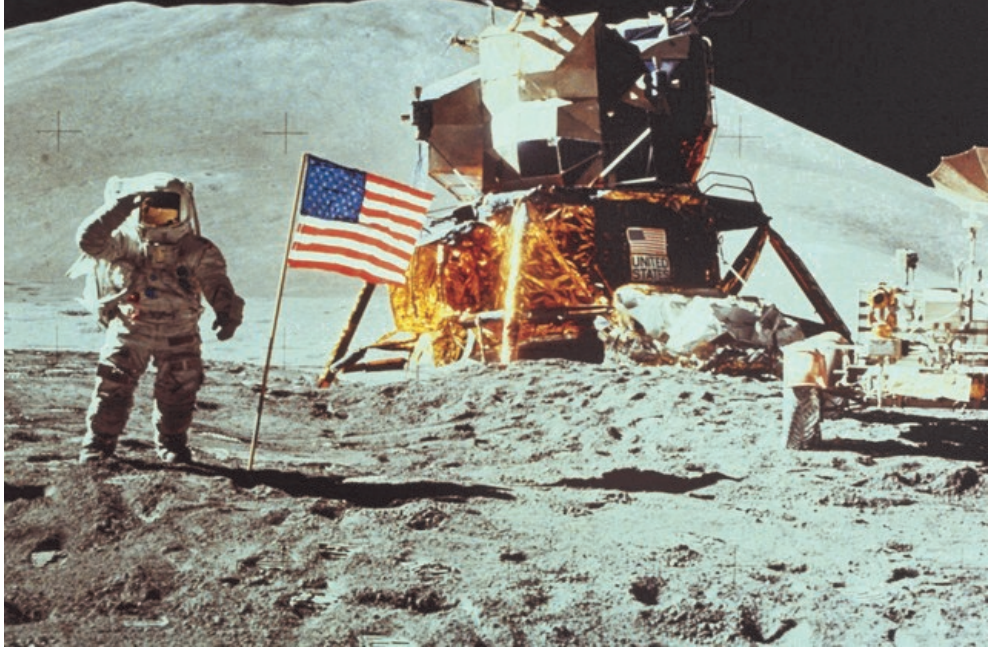


Make your calling and election sure... II Peter 1:10

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## All the Way to the Moon Six Times!



First Man on the Moon, July 21, 1969

## The Final Frontier

*Man's long legacy is all about himself, something clearly seen in these last days.*

The final frontier of the free world is about to face lockdown. After a century of outstanding achievements, and having overcome seasons of civil unrest at home and abroad, even America's successes are destined to be overcome by disaster in the end. Only God's kingdom shall stand.

In the end, lost humanity still struggles with an ageless fundamental problem that undermines his very best: man is by nature a sinner. His odious curse outshines his tinsel glory, and he cannot do anything about it by himself. The leopard cannot change his spots; and without God's aid, a man cannot change who he is at the core. He may make valiant attempts, but he can never escape his inner self on his own – like a dog that returns to his vomit, and the white-washed pig that runs back to her filthy mire.

**Man is by nature a sinner. His odious curse outshines his tinsel glory, and he cannot do anything about it by himself.**

Without faith that leads to real repentance from what he is at the core of his being, coupled with absolute surrender to his Creator by faith in the Person and work of Jesus Christ, man is without hope.

Nearly six thousand years after his existence began, his sin-filled nature is still on full display all across the landscape of his earthly home; and the time has come when God is ready to fold up the earth like a garment (Heb. 1:10-12). But who among us is truly ready?

### America Past and Present

We do thank God for our country, but we realize that even her glory must fade in God's time; and it is fading fast today. Yet God has used our once beloved nation to make a positive indelible mark on the world. Let us take a brief look at her past victories and present dilemma.

There were several wars throughout the world over the last century when America bravely came to the defense of others, e.g., WWI and II, then the Korean Conflict, the Vietnam War, followed by various smaller conflicts such as Bosnia, Kosovo, Panama, Kuwait, etc. Also, there was the problem with Russia threatening to stage nuclear missiles in Cuba, our next-door neighbor. Had God not made America strong and given her an equally strong resolve, the world would have been overwhelmed by tyrants even in our time.

In all, approximately 650,000 American service members lost their lives in the last century alone, but their ultimate sacrifice aided untold millions abroad.

On the prosperity front, beginning in the early 1900s, new industrial feats and modern technological advances led to comforts and conveniences the whole world was jealous for. America's products filled cargo ships en route to every land. Our skyscrapers stretched higher; our banks bulged bigger; the dream to own a home was realized by an unprecedented number of just plain folks; and to top it all off, we sent men to literally touch the moon – SIX TIMES!

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## What To Do Now?

*Thankfully, many people are curious enough to start asking what to do now. Sadly, many people do not really want God's answer because it costs them everything..*

The answer to this question is the same for everyone – whether born again or not, rich or poor, bond or free, male or female, young or old. Regardless of the country in which someone lives, or of his or her nationality or race – the answer to this question is the same.

There are many ways to say it, a Bible chock full of scriptures to support it, and millions of lives lived to prove it. In brief, it may be summed up by simply saying this: “Sincerely repent of your sins by faith in the sufficiency of Jesus Christ alone for your salvation; continue yielding to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit so that you mature spiritually, doing God's will; and abide in God's Word, and let it abide in you.” Period. End of answer. There is more that could be elaborated on, but if you get that part, the Lord will show you the rest.



Christ in the Storm - (with His own)  
By: Rembrandt

**In this** you will find salvation if you are lost, or you will grow into spiritual maturity if you are already born again (regardless of your current spiritual condition). Your eternal life will be as safe as God's promise – and God cannot lie. Concerning your earthly situation, you will be constantly under His divine care, whereby He will sustain you and give you strength for every challenge, no matter how great. You see, the answer of what to do at the end of the age is the same answer as what to do at the beginning and all time in between.

**“Where Christianity has room to roam under man's domain, it will eventually become man's Christianity.”**

**The most difficult thing God ever asks anyone to do is simply to yield to Him.**

*Isaiah 66:1-2, Matthew 11:28-30*

**The most difficult thing the natural man ever does is simply to yield to God.**

**The Bible says that the natural mind is against God, and the heart is deceitful above all things and desperately wicked.**

*Romans 8:7, Jeremiah 17:9*

**We should be careful that our hearts and minds do not deceive us into holding onto our lives rather than yielding to Him in all things.**

*Acts 5:1-11*

**The ones who are wholly yielded to Him now are the ones who will walk with Him in confidence and strength until the end.**

*II Peter 1:3-11, I John 2:29*

He has always been a helper to the helpless, a father to the fatherless, a guide to the blind, comfort to the sorrowful, strength to the weak, a shelter in the time of storm, a provider for the needy, a healer of the sick, a rock in which to hide, water for the thirsty, bread for the hungry, rest for the weary, a light in the darkness, life for the dead, and anything else good that you could possibly imagine. He has been and He will be, always.

Neither time nor circumstance changes God's ability to rescue or to save. This remains true for the terrible times at the end of the age also – whether it is through a fiery trial, over a trial, under it, around it, or out of it. If you yield to Him, you will be fine!

As for that one question everyone wants a specific answer to – the one about what to do with our possessions. Our Lord already gave us the answer **in writing** a long time ago; and it has not changed (Matt. 6:19-21). He said that we are simply to yield it **ALL** to Him!

### Inside This Edition:

- 30 Statistics Show Middle Class Dying in America
- Insight On I Corinthians 1 - 3
- Real Spiritual Maturity Must Become the Christian's Priority
- Dangers in Mixing Common Kingdom Traits
- When Will It All Come Down?



**Final Frontier** (from page 1)

There were internal threats to America's prosperity, however, such as the Great Depression. There was the struggle to mature above racial discrimination that dragged on for nearly 100 years after the Civil War ended. Then there were the hippies of the turbulent sixties to deal with, followed by an Arab oil embargo in 1973 and subsequent sky-high interest rates that peaked in 1980. But through it all, God graced us to continue leading the world with the greatest peace and prosperity that any nation has ever enjoyed.

**Our skyscrapers stretched higher; our banks bulged bigger; the dream to own a home was realized by an unprecedented number of just plain folks; and to top it all off, we sent men to literally touch the moon — SIX TIMES!**

More clever technology eventually opened up instant communication practically everywhere, permitting nations at the corners of the earth to share ideas and to think and work together. Modern networking was directly responsible for bringing hundreds of millions or perhaps billions of people into a more modern world. Multitudes were freed from unnecessary hardships as they shared in some of the benefits of developed nations.

With all these successes and many more, one could certainly surmise that we are ready for whatever comes along — but that is not so. Just moments after the most prosperous century the world has ever known, we are suddenly faced with challenges the world has *never* known. It is as if enemies stronger than men have suddenly invaded the world.

A dark spirit of deception seems to be leading people astray en masse. Confusion and fear have multiplied so that real peace is a rarity. A new tide of evil is rising, and evil tyrants are actually able to empower themselves to make the world tremble. Everyone, from the smallest to the greatest, is to some degree nervous about tomorrow. Many realize that we are at the end of this age. The rumblings of the dreaded apocalypse are just beneath the surface. Man's wisest and best has already been exhausted, and we are staring in the face of the whole world out of control.

Our modern 20th century institutions, created to maintain the life and livelihood of literally billions of people around the world, are lining up to collapse. World governments and their economies are reeling with a kind of stunned drunkenness, wringing their hands and wiping their brows in fear of

**Many Americans are no longer... well, American. Our mixed multitude is so diverse and divisive that our national identity has been lost.**

what will happen next. It has become all too common to hear world leaders say things like, "We have never been here before, and we do not know where we are going."

**All too often leaders are not held accountable when overreaching their legal boundaries. The crowd that shouts the loudest or the mob that intimidates its opposition the most is able to determine the rule of life for everyone.**

Whereas only a few decades ago there would have been a reasonable possibility for recovery from such a crisis, that possibility no longer exists. The dynamics of the normal world order during most of the last century have changed drastically. Many Americans are no longer... well, *American*. Our mixed multitude is so diverse and divisive that our national identity is lost.

**Ancient Pagan Practices Live and Corruption Reigns**

Significant numbers of people over the entire cultural landscape from sea to shining sea of this once exceptional nation have dumbed themselves down to do things anciently pagan and uncivilized. Ostentatious body piercings, vulgar tattoos, weird hairstyles, and radical dress are all in vogue (even among Christians), just as they were among uncivilized masses a thousand years ago.

All too often leaders are not held accountable when overreaching their legal boundaries. The crowd that shouts the loudest or the mob that intimidates its opposition the most is able to determine the rule of life for everyone else. The voice of practical commonsense logic that once guided the democratic process has been overwhelmed by the unruly. And it appears that American Idol winners and the like have about as much influence on who may become the next president as do bonafide, trusted analysts.

The whole political system has lost its way; and so has the overall body of the electorate. After many years of insider corruption and an ideological shift in the national media, our once-upon-a-time coveted system of government has finally been hijacked altogether.

**Trusted analysts forecast China's economy to overtake America's in just four short years; and India's will quadruple in only eight!**

The financial sector is out of sync with Main Street, too. The middle class is dwindling fast; and that spells disaster for a capitalistic society. On the larger front, the savviest economists who have long derided America's monetary system as merely the shifting of accounts from one ledger column to another have been proven right. Like that

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**30 Statistics Show Middle Class Dying in America**

1. Today, only 55.3 percent of all Americans between the ages of 16 and 29 have jobs.
2. In the United States today, there are 240 million working age people. Only about 140 million of them are working.
3. According to CareerBuilder, only 23 % of American companies plan to hire more employees in 2012.
4. Since the year 2000, the US has lost 10% of its middle class jobs. In the year 2000 there were about 72 million middle class jobs in the USA but today there are only about 65 million middle class jobs.
5. According to the New York Times, approximately 100 million Americans are either living in poverty or in "the fretful zone just above it".
6. According to that same article in the New York Times, 34 percent of all elderly Americans are living in poverty or "near poverty", and 39% of children in America live in poverty or "near poverty".
7. In 1984, the median net worth of households led by someone 65 or older was 10 times larger than the median net worth of households led by someone 35 or younger. Today, the median net worth of households led by someone 65 or older is 47 times larger than the median net worth of those led by someone 35 or younger.
8. Since the year 2000, incomes for U.S. households led by someone between the ages of 25 and 34 have fallen by about 12% after you adjust for inflation.
9. The total value of household real estate in the U.S. has declined from \$22.7 trillion in 2006 to \$16.2 trillion today. Most of that wealth has been lost by the middle class.
10. Many formerly great manufacturing cities are turning into ghost towns. Since 1950, the population of Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania has declined by more than 50 percent. In Dayton, Ohio 18.9 percent of all houses now stand empty.
11. Since 1971, consumer debt in the United States has increased by a whopping 1700%.
12. The number of pages of federal tax rules and regulations has increased by 18,000% since 1913. The wealthy know how to avoid taxes, but most of those in the middle class do not.
13. The number of Americans that fell into poverty (2.6 million) set a new all-time record last year and extreme poverty (6.7%) is at the highest level ever measured in the United States.
14. According to one study, between 1969 and 2009 the median wages earned by American men between the ages of 30 and 50 dropped by 27% after you account for inflation.
15. According to U.S. Representative Betty Sutton, America has lost an average of 15 manufacturing facilities a day over the last 10 years. During 2010 it got even worse. Last year, an average of 23 manufacturing facilities a day shut down in the United States.
16. Back in 1980, less than 30% of all jobs in the United States were low income jobs. Today, more than 40% of all jobs in the United States are low income jobs.
17. Most Americans are scratching and clawing and doing whatever they can to make a living these days. Half of all American workers now earn \$505 or less per week.
18. Food prices continue to rise at a very brisk pace. The price of beef is up 9.8% over the past year, the price of eggs up 10.2% and the price of potatoes up 12% over the past year.
19. Electricity bills in the United States have risen faster than the overall rate of inflation for five years in a row.
20. The average American household will have spent a staggering \$4,155 on gasoline by the end of 2011.
21. If inflation was measured the exact same way that it was measured back in 1980, the rate of inflation in the United States would be well over 10%.
22. If the number of Americans considered to be "looking for work" was the same today as it was back in 2007, the "official" unem-



**Final Frontier** (from page 2)

long-predicted California earthquake that experts contend to be way overdue, our whole financial system is way overdue a quake of the same magnitude.

**It is as if enemies stronger than men have suddenly invaded the world. A dark spirit of deception seems to be leading people astray en masse.**

**Changing of the Guard**

Clearly, a changing of the guard is taking place. America's once shining beacon of strength as a helper to the helpless is in danger of no longer gleaming across the waves. In the same way that Christianity has been reduced to just another one among many religions, so America has been reduced to just another one among many nations.

Also, China and India are no longer just knocking on the door but have actually managed to get a firm footing inside the room. Respected economists forecast China's economy to overtake America's in just four short years; and India's will quadruple in only eight! Let us not forget that, in the world system, the one with the most money rules!



An even more pressing situation is what to do with the sudden invasion of a superimposing Arab world! That \$64,000 question is already over-

whelming nearly every household in the free world after just ten short years! All this is piling up at a time when America's resolve to remain American is weak.

Finally, I should mention the renewed vigor of that frightful atheistic bear which commanded so much attention only a few decades ago – Russia. She is already teamed with Iran to do God's bidding aimed directly at Israel (Ezek. 38-39). The "hook" is being fastened in their "jaws," and there is no stopping their despicable deeds until they head straight for Jerusalem. The reality of that recent but well established prophetic partnership speaks loudly that Jesus Christ is getting all things ready for His Glorious Appearing (Titus 2:13)!

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Yes, we are in a clash of civilizations that cannot be avoided; and it is at a time when the free world's ideology is shifting and its bedrock institutions are failing. Our own constitution has been betrayed numerous times in recent years without legal challenges, and Congress is at an all-time deadlock. The consequences of these things colliding together will not be pretty for those of us who are accustomed to peace, prosperity, and freedom.

One thing is for sure –the American way of life as we have known it cannot be sustained. Today's small steps away from normalcy may soon become giant leaps. Get ready! Our secular world has nowhere to go from here but backward. It is only a matter of a brief moment in time – our time –

that perhaps the swiftest and greatest civilization transformation ever will take place right in our own backyards!

And why should this surprise those of us who are born again and know the truth about the human condition? Man is falling back to the ground from which he came. Because he has refused to bow down, he is being cast down; and because he refuses to be broken and born again by falling upon the Stone, Jesus Christ, that Stone is falling upon him to utterly crush him (Matt. 21:44)!

**Truth Forsaken**

There is no encouragement to be found in taking a look at America's God-conscience, either. It was traditionally supported by the evangelical church, imperfect though it was; but now hardly a handful of preachers are willing to truly divorce mainstream Christianity's new liberality and to call for non-conformity to the world.

Of America's churches, the most popular ones are little more than entertainment centers and grand platforms for motivational speakers. And although there are movements claiming to go back to the Bible, take caution. Their motives may be to find a way of escape only, rather than to actually yield to the Person and work of the Holy Spirit. Most are guided by the same natural mindset that has guided them in their faith thus far.

And of this sort of people God said, "My people love to have it so. But what will you do in the end?"  
Jeremiah 5:31



Of America's churches, the most popular ones are little more than entertainment centers and grand platforms for motivational speakers.

**In Closing**

We are at the end of the age of grace and truth. Only a spackling of truth remains amid a bundle of grace; yet as grace labors through those who bear it, the vast majority among the religious crowds still turn away to satisfy their itching ears. They may as well be shouting, "Crucify Him!"

Again, of this sort of people our Lord said,

*"He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad."*  
Matthew 12:30

Drumbeats of the last battle of the ages are sounding. The final frontier of freedom is predestined to fail because only God's kingdom shall stand forever. The foundation has been undermined on every front, and eventually true believers who turn to a higher plane will be caught up to meet Him in the air! Now is the time to prepare.

**Are you ready?**

*"Nevertheless we, according to His promise, look for new heavens and a new earth in which righteousness dwells. Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless;"* II Pet. 3:13-14

- employment rate in the U.S. government would be up to 11%.
- 23. According to the student loan debt clock, total student loan debt in the US will surpass the 1 trillion dollar mark at some point in 2012. Most of that debt is owed by the middle class.
- 24. Incredibly, more than one out of every seven Americans is on food stamps and one out of every four American children is on food stamps at this point.
- 25. Since January, 2009, the number of Americans on food stamps has increased by 14.3 million.
- 26. In 2010, 42% of single mothers in the USA were on food stamps.
- 27. In 1970, 65 percent of all Americans lived in "middle class neighborhoods". By 2007, only 44% of all Americans lived in "middle class neighborhoods".
- 28. According to a recent report produced by Pew Charitable Trusts, approximately one out of every three Americans that grew up in a middle class household has slipped down the income ladder.
- 29. In the US today, the wealthiest one percent of all Americans have a greater net worth than the bottom 90% combined.
- 30. The poorest 50 percent of all Americans now collectively own just 2.5% of all the wealth in the United States.

*The Last Days Times has not confirmed these statistics; neither do we endorse all the contents of the site from which they came. We do believe they give a true image of the bigger picture, and they are posted here for you to consider. Compiled by: [www.theeconomiccollapseblog.com](http://www.theeconomiccollapseblog.com)*

**When Will It All Come Down?**

*The one thing everyone wants to know*

*"It is the glory of God to conceal a matter..." (Prov. 25:2a).*

*"And He said to them, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons which the Father has put in His own authority'" (Acts 1:7).*

*"Truly your God is the God of gods, the Lord of kings, and a revealer of secrets, since you could reveal this secret" (Daniel 2:47).*

*"Surely the Lord GOD does nothing, unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets" (Amos 3:7).*

*"Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then the disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea" (Acts 11:28-29).*

**What is your motive for knowing?**

All good Bible students know that God shares with man what He wants to, when He wants to, and He reserves some things for Himself. It is highly unlikely that God is going to give anyone perfect clarity on the day or hour of the collapse that must come at the end of this age. But He has already made clear through Bible prophecy that His return

will be very soon, and the world will collapse at the outset of that long-anticipated event. Whether you believe the gift of prophecy still exists or not, you should be willing to accept that all through the ages God has shared future things with His people through His people. However, due to our fallibility, we may not always hear or interpret what He is saying perfectly. He has shared a number of significant details with me through the years, many which have come to pass, and some that I misinterpreted the timing on a bit, but certainly not always. I have never placed a specific time on anything with certainty, but have always said, "I think" or "I sense strongly" about the timing of said event; but regardless of timing, the events have either become a reality or they are about to. What I would say with **absolute certainty** is that the collapse of the dollar will NOT come about in the particular manner or time that secular analysts predict, either. Many people trust in what they say with impure motives, so God will surprise them. We should honestly guard our hearts lest we seek God's prophetic utterances or man's economically savvy predictions with the wrong motive. God knows the heart, and those with hidden motives will surely be caught by surprise - **Christian or not.**



## Complete in Him - Eagerly Awaiting His Return!

*Grace and Grace Gifts, True Body Unity, Spiritual Thinking and Doing*

**“...so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ...” I Corinthians 1:7**



### I CORINTHIANS CHAPTERS ONE - THREE

#### I Corinthians 1

(1) Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will of God, and Sosthenes our brother,

(2) To the church of God which is at Corinth, to those who are sanctified in Christ Jesus, called to be saints, with all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord, both theirs and ours:

(3) Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ.

(4) I thank my God always concerning you for the grace of God which was given to you by Christ Jesus,

(5) that you were enriched in everything by Him in all utterance and all knowledge,

(6) even as the testimony of Christ was confirmed in you,

(7) so that you come short in no gift, eagerly waiting for the revelation of our Lord Jesus Christ,

(8) who will also confirm you to the end, that you may be blameless in the day of our Lord Jesus Christ.

(9) God is faithful, by whom you were called into the fellowship of His Son, Jesus Christ our Lord.

(10) Now I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and that there be no divisions among you, but that you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment.

(11) For it has been declared to me concerning you, my brethren, by those of Chloe's household, that there are contentions among you.

(12) Now I say this, that each of you says, "I am of Paul," or "I am of Apollos," or "I am of Cephas," or "I am of Christ."

(13) Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul?

(14) I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius,

(15) lest anyone should say that I had baptized in my own name.

(16) Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know whether I baptized any other.

(17) For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel, not with wisdom of words, lest the cross of Christ should be made of no effect.

(18) For the message of the cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved it is the power of God.

(19) For it is written: "I WILL DESTROY THE WISDOM OF THE WISE, AND BRING TO NOTHING THE UNDERSTANDING OF THE PRUDENT."

(20) Where is the wise? Where is the scribe? Where is the disputer of this age? Has not God made foolish the wisdom of this world?

(21) For since, in the wisdom of God, the world through wisdom did not know God, it pleased God through the foolishness of the message preached to save those who believe.

(22) For Jews request a sign, and Greeks seek after wisdom;

(23) but we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness,

(24) but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God.

(25) Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.

(26) For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

(27) But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

(28) and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

(29) that no flesh should glory in His presence.

(30) But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God--and righteousness and sanctification and redemption--

(31) that, as it is written, "HE WHO GLORIES, LET HIM GLORY IN THE LORD."

#### Introductory Thoughts

The truths in Paul's letters to the church at Corinth are essential to healthy spiritual living for Christians of every generation. These first few chapters of I Corinthians introduce outstanding Christian themes that are particularly good for our generation, since it is likely that our generation may witness our Lord's "glorious appearing" (Titus 2:13)! We should give diligence to allow Him to make us ready "spirit, soul, and body," so that we are "not ashamed at His coming" (I Thess. 5:23, I John 2:28).

I have chosen three themes to expound on here in I Corinthians 1-3. Each one is vitally important, and if we are not already walking in them to the fullest, we should make every effort to do so now, as we head around the last curve toward the final stretch in our opportunity for spiritual maturity. We will take a quick but spiritually enlightening look at what Paul had to say to the church at Corinth, and to us, about **Grace and Grace Gifts, True Body Unity, and Spiritual Thinking and Doing**. All these things work together by the Spirit, and none of them work without Him.

#### Grace and Grace Gifts

**His grace is His favor and enablement toward us** (Heb. 13:20-21, Phil. 2:12-16, II Cor. 9:8, Eph. 2:10, I Cor. 15:10, Col. 1:27-29). This truth is very important to point out, since God's grace is generally confused with His mercy. It is correct that grace is used to express God's unmerited favor in the same way that mercy is unmerited favor; but grace goes far beyond that, particularly as it pertains to New Covenant believers, since through the New Covenant we are called to actually become like Him. **So grace is the enabler to do His will, even to the extent that we become as He is** (II Cor. 7:1, Heb. 12:14, II Pet. 1:4 & 13-23, 3:14, 17-18).

This enablement of grace to become even as He is can be expressed in the context of the "grace gifts" (Eph. 4:7, I Pet. 4:10). Through the proper exercise of the grace gifts, we glorify Him, do His will, bear fruit, and also grow up into His image. The grace gifts are not only those given for leadership, but they also include all spiritual gifts given to all the members of the body for edification of the whole -- for example, those listed in Rom. 12 and also I Cor. 12. **The hard reality is that, if we do not use His grace gifts, we can never fully develop into Christ's stature. This is something most Christians are not taught, and so they remain underdeveloped spiritually all their lives. Sanctification is a work already done, but progressively walked out by His grace and grace gifts.**

The process of whole-life spiritual development is much like the process of whole-life natural development. Whether born into a natural family or into the spiritual family of God, we start out as babies. Peter refers to Christians at this stage as "new born babes" (I Pet. 2:2). A natural baby who is born healthy, into a healthy family, has all that is necessary to develop into full maturity as an adult. So it is with those born spiritually into the family of God. We are born perfectly healthy into God's spiritual family by His Spirit, and hopefully we are born into a healthy, spiritual local church, in which case we have all that is necessary to fully develop into truly healthy spiritual adulthood (if we are not in a spiritually healthy local church, we may grow up, but not healthy and whole spiritually). **But in the same way that the natural man may develop into adulthood physically yet not in other ways, so a spiritual man can develop in some ways and not in others.** This is exactly why Paul wrote about three parts to the believer: "spirit, soul, and body."

Well, here in I Corinthians 1:3-9, the apostle Paul writes about the importance of the exercise of all these gifts as if to say they play a central role in our readiness to greet the Lord when He comes; and the rest of the scripture certainly supports that. **Since according to the scriptures we know that the gifts are central to our development into the full measure of Jesus Christ, and since according to the scriptures these gifts will continue until we arrive to that place of spiritual maturity, we can safely conclude what Paul seems to be saying - that they are essential to our readiness for the coming of the Lord.** I want to strongly encourage you to evaluate the scriptures on this point and pray for understanding unfiltered by your tradition. Perhaps you have a prejudice against the need for the gifts of the Spirit due to their overwhelming misuse in the body of Christ. I concur that there has been, and continues to be, abuse. But let us direct our concerns toward those who abuse the gifts, not toward the gifts themselves.

Let me punctuate this one truth. God has designed all things so that we should fully develop into the "measure of the stature that belongs to Christ" (Eph. 4:13, Rom. 6 & 8, and on, and on). It all began when God created man in His own likeness and image. **Whether we become like Him or not is a decision we must make.** He is always working on our behalf to steer us to that end. Jesus Christ was our example so that we could be confident that, through His redemptive plan for our "spirit, soul, and body," we could be made complete even as He is.

**Ch. 1:2** This letter was written to the church at Corinth and to "all who in every place call on the name of Jesus Christ our Lord." Thus Paul teaches that the grace gifts are for all believers for all generations - especially ours. Not one has ceased, lest that one be lacking from the body; if one were lacking, we could not come into His full measure, nor be completely prepared for His return.

### GRACE and GRACE GIFTS

THE ENABLEMENT TO DO  
THE FATHER'S WILL  
TO THE FULL!

"Now may the God of peace who brought up our Lord Jesus from the dead, that great Shepherd of the sheep, through the blood of the everlasting covenant, make you complete in every good work to do His will, working in you what is well pleasing in His sight, through Jesus Christ, to whom *be* glory forever and ever. Amen." Hebrews 13:20-21

It is GOD HIMSELF working in and through us that enables us to do His will and to be complete in Him.

There is a fine line between HIS power at work through us and our power at work for Him; yet we settled for the latter. Thus we accomplish far less than we could, and we use far more energy than necessary to do it. And what is more, the world never will see God as THE GOD above all other gods.

The world can feed the poor and house the homeless. These we should do too; but so much more. It is undeniable resurrection life and power from God that they must see.

"To them God willed to make known what are the riches of the glory of this mystery among the Gentiles: which is Christ in you, the hope of glory. Him we preach, warning every man and teaching every man in all wisdom, that we may present every man perfect in Christ Jesus. To this end I also labor, striving according to His working which works in me mightily." Colossians 1:27-29

It is not us, but Christ in us who does the perfect will of God through us. The word perfect (complete) is used in the New Testament as it relates directly to the believers Christ-likeness, more than a dozen times. This completeness comes only by HIS grace and grace gifts.

"As each one has received a gift, minister it to one another, as good stewards of the manifold grace of God. If anyone speaks, let him speak as the oracles of God. If anyone ministers, let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong the glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen." I Peter 4:10-11

We are stewards of HIS manifold (multiple) grace. Our lives are simply an extension of His. Jesus said that what He did, we should do - and GREATER (John 14:12)!

To ignore His grace gifts is to ignore Him. To be satisfied with anything less is to reject His best.



“For by grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; it is the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast. For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them.”  
Ephesians 2:8-10

**This scripture confirms again that we are the product of HIS doing, and what He wants us to do is HIS doing - all prepared before hand. We are to walk out HIS doing - not only natural things with His aid, but supernatural with HIS unction!**

“Therefore, my beloved, as you have always obeyed, not as in my presence only, but now much more in my absence, work out your own salvation with fear and trembling; for it is God who works in you both to will and to do for His good pleasure. Do all things without complaining and disputing, that you may become blameless and harmless, children of God without fault in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you shine as lights in the world, holding fast the word of life, so that I may rejoice in the day of Christ that I have not run in vain or labored in vain.” Philippians 2:12-16

Here the apostle Paul makes clear again that it is GOD who works in us to give us the will, (desire) to do HIS good pleasure, and the ability to do it too.

The prophet Isaiah spoke saying that God's thoughts and ways are higher than ours. It is only when we do HIS work HIS way that we do HIS will to the full.

“For this reason I bow my knees to the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, from whom the whole family in heaven and earth is named, that He would grant you, according to the riches of His glory, to be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man, that Christ may dwell in your hearts through faith; that you, being rooted and grounded in love, may be able to comprehend with all the saints what is the width and length and depth and height—to know the love of Christ which passes knowledge; that you may be filled with all the fullness of God. Now to Him who is able to do exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us, to Him be glory in the church by Christ Jesus to all generations, forever and ever. Amen.”  
Ephesians 3:14-21

Simply put, there is a fullness in the measure of God that has been made available to us and we have yet to grasp it; but the Spirit of God inspired the apostle Paul to pray that we might attain to it. Shall we continue in our “good” works, or HIS perfect work? The difference is:

- To pay for a funeral, or to raise the dead
- To rebuild a house, or to turn the tornado
- To drown in the sea, or to walk on the water
- To go and buy food, or to multiply bread
- To panic in fear, or to trust in faith

**Ch. 1:3 - 7.** The testimony of Christ is confirmed in the body at Corinth because they have been enriched by grace evidenced by their possession of all the grace gifts. Is the testimony of Christ confirmed in your church for the same reason? If not, why not? Do you think that this matter is important enough to explore? If not, why not?

Now we conclude with verse 7. Because **all** the gifts have been given, **and** assuming those gifts will be exercised properly (Paul gives instructions for their proper use in chapters 12 and 14), those Corinthian believers had been equipped sufficiently to fully develop into Christ's measure. Thus they “eagerly await” Him, as opposed to waiting on Him with trepidation.

### True Body Unity

Perfect unity between the individual members is also vital if the collective body is ever to mature into the perfect man. (“Perfect” means absolutely complete, lacking nothing and without a flaw; for example - **hol**y in position, **righteous** in conduct, and **matu**re in spiritual gifts.) Just like Jesus! Paul emphasizes perfect unity in doctrine, without favoritism given to personalities. Any carnal division will hinder their journey to spiritual maturity. He advocates perfect spiritual unity for God's spiritual work.

**Ch. 1:10 - 13.** These three verses alone repudiate the possibility for a valid argument in favor of division within the body – except, of course, for those divisions that are necessary for cleansing (Matt 18:15-20, I Cor. 5:1-13). Thus the denominational system and all other forms of sectarianism within the body of Christ have no authority in the scriptures, even though God does work with His people who are in the system; but this is in spite of our various formations and not because of them. God's whole objective is to bring us into oneness just like the oneness modeled by His perfect unity with His SON (John 17:20-26).

Paul, Apollos, and Cephas were of “the same mind and the same judgment,” even though each one had a separate role to play. Their relationship to the believers did not represent doctrinal divisions, but rather the unified working of each member according to his measure of Christ's gift – which is Paul's whole point. He continues with this theme of spiritual thinking and doing over carnal thinking and doing.

### Spiritual Thinking and Doing

Paul carries the theme of being spiritual, rather than carnal, all the way through chapters 1 - 3.

**Ch. 1:17 - Ch. 2.** He goes on to emphasize the need to present the gospel by the Spirit's unction only, since it is the Spirit who is God's power; after all, it is God's message that we preach. He points out that it is by the Spirit that God reveals His deep things to us, and it is His Spirit who discerns men's hearts (those to whom we minister). The obvious lesson Paul teaches here is that it is not by man's might, or power, or wisdom that Truth should be discerned or delivered, but by the Spirit. He teaches that we even have the mind of Christ by which to live and teach! We must engage our spiritual minds and forsake carnal interpretations of spiritual things.

My friend, we should re-evaluate the way we present the gospel to see whether it is in the effectual manner of the Spirit, or in the carnal manner of our natural understanding. Do your leaders preach and teach by the power and wisdom of the Spirit, or by the strength of their own wisdom, reinforced with a seminary degree or two? It is interesting to note that it is becoming more and more difficult to be accepted as an elder/leader if the candidate does not have a doctorate in something. This is proof that Christians are looking more and more to carnal men for counsel and leadership. A thorough understanding of the Bible is certainly essential to being an effectual elder/leader. Knowledge of how people tick so that we can be effective counselors is also good; but man's degrees are not always beneficial, and oftentimes they even work against the wisdom that the Spirit wants to impart. The problem is not education itself; it is that we put far too much emphasis on those things that make for carnal knowledge, such as doctorates being qualifying requirements for elder/leaders. Spiritual understanding and discernment are what we need above all else, and usually they are what we lack the most. If the elder/leaders where you are do not appear to be speaking by the power of the Spirit, even though they are very sincere, pray earnestly for them to forsake their own understanding in exchange for the Spirit's power. Otherwise, neither you nor those around you can ever become spiritually mature, fully developing into Christ's image.

**Ch. 3.** Paul goes on to explain that the collective body (the local churches) cannot be built correctly by men, but only by God's Spirit. He says that while Jesus Christ is certainly the foundation of any true Christian gathering, men are subject to building thereon with whatever they think best; and what they build will eventually be tested by the fire of the Spirit.

There are indeed Christian religious houses all around us that are built upon the proclamation of Jesus Christ, but from there up how many are the work of either zealous Christian men, or religious institutions and their traditions? **And here comes the FIRE!**

### I Corinthians 2

- (1) And I, brethren, when I came to you, did not come with excellence of speech or of wisdom declaring to you the testimony of God.
- (2) For I determined not to know anything among you except Jesus Christ and Him crucified.
- (3) I was with you in weakness, in fear, and in much trembling.
- (4) And my speech and my preaching were not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power,
- (5) that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.
- (6) However, we speak wisdom among those who are mature, yet not the wisdom of this age, nor of the rulers of this age, who are coming to nothing.
- (7) But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory,
- (8) which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory.
- (9) But as it is written: "EYE HAS NOT SEEN, NOR EAR HEARD, NOR HAVE ENTERED INTO THE HEART OF MAN THE THINGS WHICH GOD HAS PREPARED FOR THOSE WHO LOVE HIM."
- (10) But God has revealed them to us through His Spirit. For the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God.
- (11) For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.
- (12) Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God.
- (13) These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual.
- (14) But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned.
- (15) But he who is spiritual judges all things, yet he himself is rightly judged by no one.
- (16) For "WHO HAS KNOWN THE MIND OF THE LORD THAT HE MAY INSTRUCT HIM?" But we have the mind of Christ.

### I Corinthians 3

- (1) And I, brethren, could not speak to you as to spiritual people but as to carnal, as to babes in Christ.
- (2) I fed you with milk and not with solid food; for until now you were not able to receive it, and even now you are still not able;
- (3) for you are still carnal. For where there are envy, strife, and divisions among you, are you not carnal and behaving like mere men?
- (4) For when one says, "I am of Paul," and another, "I am of Apollos," are you not carnal?
- (5) Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one?
- (6) I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the increase.
- (7) So then neither he who plants is anything, nor he who waters, but God who gives the increase.
- (8) Now he who plants and he who waters are one, and each one will receive his own reward according to his own labor.
- (9) For we are God's fellow workers; you are God's field, you are God's building.
- (10) According to the grace of God which was given to me, as a wise master builder I have laid the foundation, and another builds on it. But let each one take heed how he builds on it.
- (11) For no other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.
- (12) Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw,
- (13) each one's work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one's work, of what sort it is.
- (14) If anyone's work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.
- (15) If anyone's work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.
- (16) Do you not know that you are the temple of God and that the Spirit of God dwells in you?
- (17) If anyone defiles the temple of God, God will destroy him. For the temple of God is holy, which temple you are.
- (18) Let no one deceive himself. If anyone among you seems to be wise in this age, let him become a fool that he may become wise.
- (19) For the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God. For it is written, "HE CATCHES THE WISE IN THEIR OWN CRAFTINESS";
- (20) and again, "THE LORD KNOWS THE THOUGHTS OF THE WISE, THAT THEY ARE FUTILE."
- (21) Therefore let no one boast in men. For all things are yours:
- (22) whether Paul or Apollos or Cephas, or the world or life or death, or things present or things to come--all are yours.
- (23) And you are Christ's, and Christ is God's.



## Real Spiritual Maturity Must Become the Christian's Priority

*This Last Days church will never survive without it.*

The power of the gospel to save is as real today as it ever was. Its power to heal our hurts, to comfort our hearts, and to do all kinds of tangible miracles is still available, too.

But what about the power of the gospel to actually mature believers, particularly to bring spiritual maturity to the collective members of a local body so that we are led to measure up to the stature that belongs to Jesus Christ? Is that power still available? Yes! It is still available, too! But it must be believed and appropriated in order to be realized among believers in the same way that the gospel's power to save, heal, comfort, and do miracles must be.

We are so far from understanding the theme of spiritual maturity that many believers do not even know that it is a part of the gospel message. This is true even among many who believe in spiritual gifts. Only a tiny percentage of Christians really have a vision for the fullness of Jesus Christ in the body, or even see it as a part of the gospel message. But the gospel is a whole life message. It brings change immediately, it saves ultimately, and between the two it grows us up.

### How We Got Here

There are several contributing factors which have led to our present spiritual dilemma. The primary one is that for the last 500 years we have prioritized preaching for saving over teaching for spiritual maturity. Another one is that it is much easier to preach the saving part of the gospel than it is to submit to the maturing part of the gospel. And finally, the natural man likes things that can be measured and boasted about, and preaching for saving usually yields a headcount. But there are no immediate grand results from submitting to the power of the gospel for spiritual maturity. They come over time.

Even though Christianity today is accustomed to prioritizing salvation over spiritual maturity, this does not change the fact that we **are** spiritual creatures, born after God Himself. As spiritual creatures, whether we feel like it or not, **our new default is to be spiritual**. But the natural man fights the spiritual man for all he is worth (which is not very much, by the way). As born-again believers, we are reprogrammed away from the natural man altogether, but we are all too familiar with how difficult it is to keep him in check. **Nonetheless, our new spiritually advanced DNA leads us to preach not only the gospel that saves, but also the gospel that grows us up into the full measure of the stature that belongs to Jesus Christ.** I do not discount the great importance of preaching the gospel that saves, but only advocate that we also teach and practice spiritual growth by it, too; and it is through growing up spiritually that we will see more people saved, anyway.

### Reformation but Not Spiritual Maturity

I mentioned earlier that a major contributing factor to our lack of spiritual fitness is that for nearly 500 years we have prioritized numerical growth, giving very little attention to spiritual maturity. Allow me to give an overview to show you what I mean.

By the time of the death of the beloved apostle John, the center for the church for all practical purposes had moved to Rome, under the leadership of Clement of Rome, who was later named the bishop of Rome. Within just a few short generations, succeeding church leaders began dominating Christian thought and doctrine entirely. Having left the Spirit's leadership and fallen captive to Satan's religious bondage, the early church evolved into a damning religious institution. Roman Catholicism purposefully set out to bring all people everywhere under its thumb. Its leaders interpreted the scriptures to say that all souls who wanted to claim Christ would have to come under the established church. Thus they taught that any hope of salvation had to come from the Catholic Church; and their dogma reigned supreme throughout much of the world for nearly 1400 years.

Amazingly, it still enslaves more than a billion souls today!

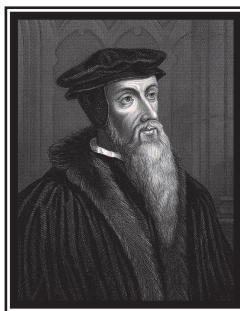
Then, about 500 years ago, God loosed Truth that resulted in the freeing of countless souls throughout the institution's horrid domain around the world. Whole families and even nations had been under the Roman religious system for generations, but finally God raised up Christian reformers who, in the face of papal authority, established soundly through the scriptures that anyone could be saved by grace through faith in Christ alone - apart from the Catholic Church or any other institution. And with that, the battle for proclaiming Christ alone through open evangelism had begun!

A dozen years or so later, after Martin Luther openly challenged papal supremacy, new authority was assumed by King Henry VIII over the Church of England, and he continued the fight against any unbridled Christian who preached that souls are saved by faith alone. But the cat was already out of the bag; and by the grace of God, within just a few decades, multitudes of people who had lived in the darkest dungeon of humanity's existence for centuries burst into the glorious light



Pope Saint Gregory the Great (590-604) "Now the holy Church universal proclaims that God cannot be truly worshipped saving within herself, asserting that all they that are without her shall never be saved."

of the gospel! Countless numbers of people were set free to read the Bible for themselves for the first time (at least as quickly as they became available) and to evangelize. And for the first time in more than 1000 years, the world discovered that any and every man, woman, and child was a priest in his or her own right through faith in Jesus Christ. Surely the heavens shouted in delight when, after so many centuries of hellish religious bondage, earthly humanity realized that it was not in Jerusalem, or "on this mountain" (John 4:20-24), or under Rome's Catholicism, or the Church of England, or anywhere else that they would have to worship! But as wonderful as that was for the gospel to have been loosed, the road to spiritual maturity had only just begun. At this point, however, the deeper understanding of the believer as a new creation and his



John Calvin (1509-1564) Institute of Christian Religion: "holy doctrine which no man might speak against." Calvin burned Dr. Michael Servetus at the stake on Oct. 23, 1553 for disagreeing with him on the doctrine of the Trinity and infant baptism.

enablement by the Spirit to actually grow up into Christ's image was not even known, much less pursued on a large scale. And since so much of our modern-era evangelical doctrine finds its base in Reformation theology, I dare say that, in spite of great spiritual awakenings around the world over more recent centuries, today's most vocal voices in Christianity are more influenced by John Calvin from 500 years ago than by the Spirit of God of eternity past! Authentic spiritual understanding for authentic spiritual maturity is provided for by Christ in us, the hope of the glory of God on earth; but mainstream evangelicalism is still in the dark ages on this truth.

The apostle Paul knew this revelation was deep and easy to overlook. He prayed earnestly that believers everywhere would come to an understanding of all that had been accomplished

*"...that the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, may give to you the spirit of wisdom and revelation in the knowledge of Him, the eyes of your understanding being enlightened; that you may know what is the hope of His calling, what are the riches of the glory of His inheritance in the saints, and what is the exceeding greatness of His power toward us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power which He worked in Christ when He raised Him from the dead and seated Him at His right hand in the heavenly places, far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but also in that which is to come. And He put all things under His feet, and gave Him to be head over all things to the church, which is His body, the fullness of Him who fills all in all."*  
Ephesians 1:17-23

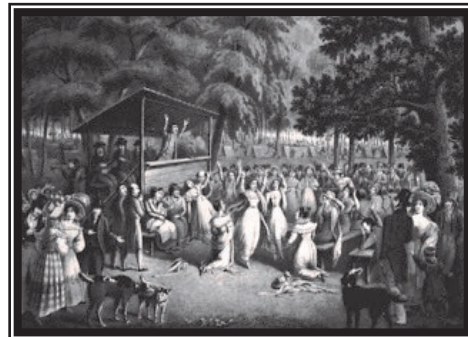
through the work of Jesus Christ for His glory to be revealed in us here and now, as well as for our eternal glory (Ephesians 1:15-23)! It is in knowing and appropriating those benefits which

we have received for **this age** that we are made a truly spiritual people **in this age** - something that only segments of Christianity have touched in recent centuries.

Is there any wonder why we are not growing up into the image of Christ? And what about taking on the demonic battles that are lurking at our doorstep? How many among the Christian community are ready to take on Satan's spiritual forces as he marches against this Last Days church? Can you not hear the Spirit of the Lord crying out to you and me that we **MUST** become a spiritually mature church if we expect to endure victoriously the times in which we live? Let us look at more evidence of why we are still spiritual babies, not ready for this late hour.

### Great Awakenings but Not Spiritual Maturity

The Great Awakenings of the 1700s and 1800s boosted preaching for salvation and renewal for those already saved - and it was very effectual. God used a few inspired men to call the world to attention. Men such as Jonathan Edwards, George Whitefield, and John Wesley started, followed in the next century by Charles Finney, James McCready, Barton Stone, and others.



These led tens of thousands into repentance from sin and faith toward God. Their preaching set on fire hundreds of other fiery preachers, then thousands. From England to America, makeshift pulpits popped up on busy streets and in the open fields, wherever there were people. And this was wonderful! Oh, how many of us would love to see this kind of revival preaching now! But it would have to happen on the streets and in the fields, since the churches far and wide, large and small, are in their own Dark Age and will NOT let God in! And many do not even realize it! Again our point is made that, as wonderful as this power preaching for salvation was then, there was still no knowledge of or emphasis given to spiritual maturity as it relates to the whole body coming into the image of Christ.

In the same way, there is lack in that area today. In the largest denomination in America, in fact, the call for salvation (watered down though it usually is) is still the focus of preaching every Sunday - even to those who are already saved! Is there any wonder why the body of Christ is so spiritually immature? Oh, what a spiritual awakening we need to get us out of the nursery! Limiting ourselves to the traditions and priorities of revivals past will not allow God's people to come into lasting spiritual maturity - which was God's goal from the beginning, and which is an absolute **MUST** if we are to endure these last chapters of these

*(Continued on page 8)*



## Danger in Mixing Common Kingdom Traits

God's Kingdom Principles without Personal Identity with the Cross

**1** "Preach the word! Be ready in season and out of season. Convince, rebuke, exhort, with all longsuffering and teaching. For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine, but according to their own desires, because they have itching ears, they will heap up for themselves teachers; and they will turn their ears away from the truth, and be turned aside to fables."

II Timothy 4:2-4

There is more evangelical zeal today than knowledge. Paul accused some of the Jews of having "zeal without knowledge," thereby missing the Truth. They failed to see that Old Covenant precepts were given to lead them to LIFE through their Messiah.

In like manner, overzealous evangelicals fail to see that New Covenant precepts were given to lead us to actually live the LIFE of Jesus Christ. A much shallower concept is assumed. We are, however, to become new creatures, separate from the world while living in it. Christian leaders are zealous to draw the masses to Christianity by telling them what they want to hear, and by excusing or only polishing the world's way of life. They fail to call the masses to actually live the LIFE of Christ, and not that of the world!

**2** "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the grace of Christ, to a different gospel, which is not another; but there are some who trouble you and want to pervert the gospel of Christ. But even if we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than what we have preached to you, let him be accursed. As we have said before, so now I say again, if anyone preaches any other gospel to you than what you have received, let him be accursed."

Galatians 1:6-9

In addition to compromise with the world, there is also compromise with other religions, sometimes to the extent that their participants are assumed to be a part of God's family and citizens of His kingdom. However, the Bible makes abundantly clear that there is no other way to God except via the new birth which comes by grace through faith in Jesus Christ alone. To compromise on the issue of Jesus Christ alone is to remove His uniquely essential work for our redemption, justification, and salvation. To concede on any part of His position is to concede on Him altogether.

The world tolerates all religions, assuming salvation for whoever claims it; but the world does not know God. Evangelical leaders who are soft on this point act as if they do not know God, either. Some are afraid to offend, but others reason that a good, moral lifestyle may earn God's favor regardless of one's faith. Such leaders fail God and man.

**3** Therefore "COME OUT FROM AMONG THEM AND BE SEPARATE, SAYS THE LORD. DO NOT TOUCH WHAT IS UNCLEAN, AND I WILL RECEIVE YOU."

II Corinthians 6:17

"And I heard another voice from heaven saying, 'Come out of her, my people, lest you share in her sins, and lest you receive of her plagues.'"

Revelation 18:4

God is holy, and He calls His people to be holy. To be holy is to be "set apart." Generally, it can be better to be involved in a gathering of God's people, though spiritually immature, than it is not to be involved at all; but there comes a time when compromise and/or contamination should cause those who really belong to Him to separate themselves. This is becoming more and more the case in evangelical Christian circles today, as illustrated here.

God **delivered us** from the spirit and power of darkness, placing us into His Son's kingdom. There we have His LIFE and bear fruit to His glory. Deception by religion is presently consuming many in the Christian community, taking them back under that darkness from which they were once delivered. They are deceived. Believers who can still see should escape again immediately!

**4** "Jesus answered and said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the kingdom of God.'"

John 3:3

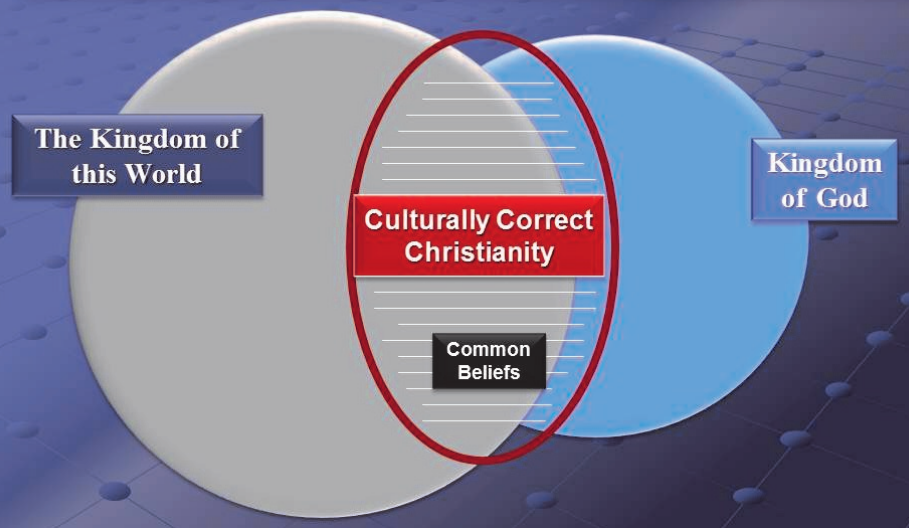
"I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me; and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave Himself for me."

Galatians 2:20

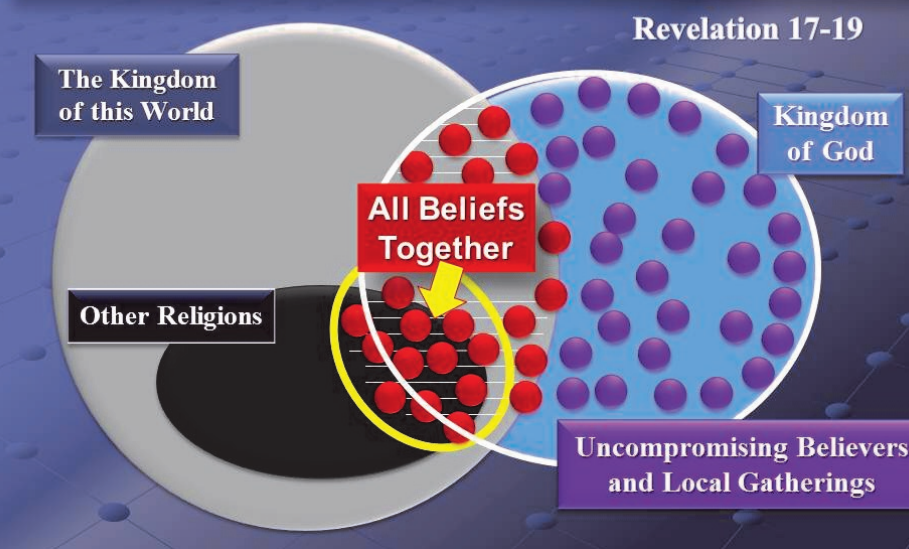
Authentic preaching and adherence to the gospel of Jesus Christ will differentiate between those who merely participate with God's kingdom people as opposed to those who have actually **entered into** His kingdom.

There are traits between the kingdom of the world and God's kingdom that have a similar tone. When kingdom life principles are taught as if they are the whole gospel message, many citizens of the world draw nigh. Regardless of their participation, however, they may never **enter into His kingdom**; and their presence actually hinders spiritual maturity in the body. Thus personal identification with the cross must be taught regularly, since it is death to self that is essential for **entering into** God's kingdom. A crucified life is **not** common with the world. Whole-gospel preaching separates those who assume we are a common lot, and then the body has opportunity for spiritual maturity!

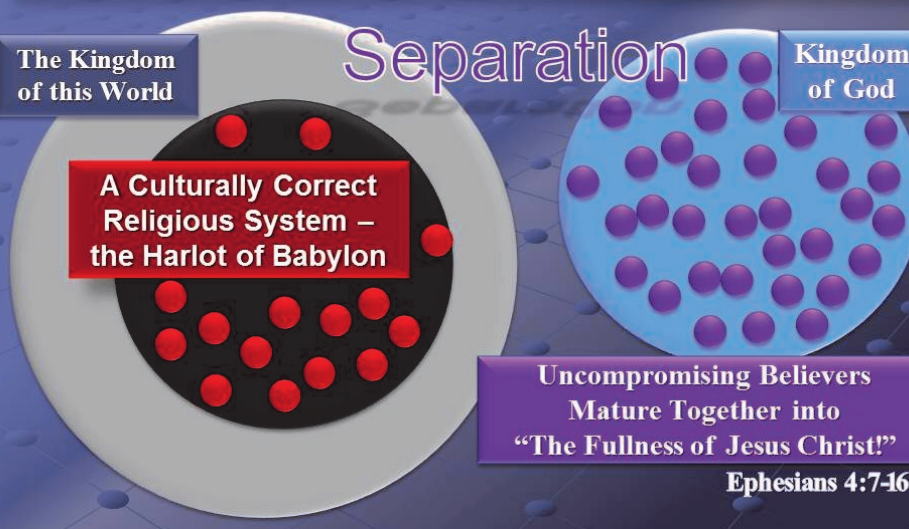
## Evangelical Zeal Without Knowledge A Wrong Assumption for Gaining a True Harvest



## Construction of One-world Religion The Harlot of Babylon?



## Believers Without Compromise Separate and "Come Out"



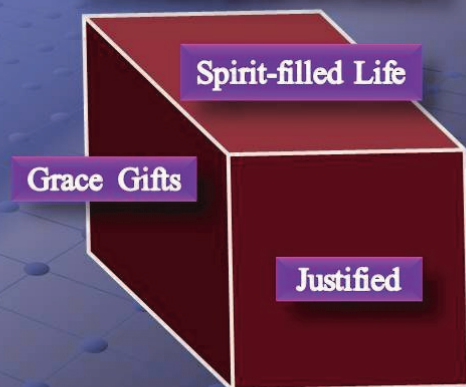
## Jesus is the Cornerstone of God's Kingdom

### Before the Cross



Those who are not crucified with Christ may practice Kingdom principles but they are not saved.

### After the Cross



By identifying with Him in death, we lose our own lives in exchange for His.



**Spiritual Maturity** (from page 6)

Last Days, not to mention our need to become His spotless, glorious bride!

**Sunday School / Bible Studies but Not Spiritual Maturity**

In the continuing evolution of evangelical Christianity, Bible study was first given emphasis through what came to be known as Sunday School. Most historians attribute its origin to Sunday Bible-reading lessons for children that took place in England, starting in the 1780s. As a part of the industrial revolution, thousands of young children were forced to work in awful conditions and for unthinkable hours six days a week, making it impossible for them to attend school; so God raised up a man named Robert Raikes, an Anglican evangelical, to start teaching these underprivileged children to read the Bible on Sundays, their only day off. From that was born Sunday School, which eventually spread to America. From that humble beginning, Bible study became a regular part of early elementary education. Then approximately 100 years later, when the state began to take over the

"Now we have received, not the spirit of the world, but the Spirit who is from God, that we might know the things that have been freely given to us by God. These things we also speak, not in words which man's wisdom teaches but which the Holy Spirit teaches, comparing spiritual things with spiritual. But the natural man does not receive the things of the Spirit of God, for they are foolishness to him; nor can he know them, because they are spiritually discerned." 1 Corinthians 2:12-14

responsibility of educating children, Bible training began to be moved out to the churches for Sunday study only, where it became a mainstay for the next 100 years. More recently, evangelicalism has largely turned from authentic Bible study in Sunday School to opinion-based discussions about God, with perhaps an accompanying Bible reference or two to support free thinking. Even so, the early Sunday School program set the pattern for regimented Bible study among 20th century evangelicals. Of course, there have been many other outstanding programs for Bible study that have contributed to excellent Bible training as well. But the point is that even 200 years of consistent Bible study has not solved the believer's handicap of Spirit-life underdevelopment. Again, this is primarily due to our unwillingness to progress beyond doctrines and traditions established in centuries past.

There are those believers who, in their earnest pursuit to walk with the Lord, have returned to the land where He and His apostles walked. They have gone to Israel, as well as to the lands of Paul's missionary journeys. Other believers have pursued a closer walk with Him by going back to get seminary training, and some have even learned a little Greek and/or Hebrew,

so they can read the Bible in its own language; but **few have come away from any of those things having grown deeper in their spiritual understanding of all that has been accomplished through Christ for us in real time. To truly walk as Jesus walked still seems far away; and to pursue the fullness of Christ in the body is, for all practical purposes, foreign. Once again, Christianity as a religious practice has failed to actually yield Spirit-filled Christ-likeness on a large scale.** Millions and millions of genuine believers today have been kept in the state of the natural man by traditional thinking and doing which can be traced back to early religious ideas since the Reformation. Oh, if only we could break out of the nursery and enter into Bible study and fellowship **with spiritual understanding** that would lead us all to spiritual maturity! Indeed, the world is waiting!

**Please note:** There have probably been exceptions to this overall absence of spiritual development to maturity, of course. God may have been working deeply behind the scenes, bringing His people to a more complete Christ-likeness in the most unnoticeable places, such as in the underground church, perhaps. Only He knows all that He has done. And I do not mean to suggest that God has not and is not at work through His people. He certainly is at work among us, especially in the area of the demonstration of Christ's love in action. There are many "good works" being done on the part of the body of Christ across the whole spectrum of Christianity. But the fullness of Christ would mean even so much more to the body, and to the world around us, than all the "good works" we could ever produce by our own strength and inspiration.

**Pentecostal Denominationalism but Not Spiritual Maturity**

Consider the Pentecostal denominations. Their origins can usually be traced back to truly authentic spiritual awakenings at the turn of the 1700s, 1800s, and 1900s. Some churches that considered themselves Pentecostal genuinely sought to allow the Spirit to have His way. Their meetings were obviously accompanied by the Spirit's presence, evidenced by the activity of spiritual gifts just as was the case with the church of Corinth. The opportunity was certainly there for believers to develop into spiritual maturity and deep Christ-likeness. In the end, however, they followed in the footsteps of the church at Corinth, too. They had all the gifts but never reached spiritual maturity. Eventually they gave in to a religious form, and the Spirit's power faded; but they continued to duplicate the habits and practices of their early stages, nonetheless, not knowing that the Spirit had moved out.

The largest Pentecostal denominations in the world have become nothing more than giant religious institutions. Just like their more spiritually conservative brothers and sisters in Christ have done, their system is tiered, weighty, and burdensome on local churches. They have long snuffed out any hope for true spiritual development. Here again, the effort of the

Spirit to bring about deep spiritual understanding that leads to a deep spiritual walk was overwhelmed by Christianity becoming religious.

**The Charismatic Movement but Not Spiritual Maturity**

I should not neglect to mention a genuine move of the Holy Spirit that started in America in the 1950s and spread around the world, called the Charismatic Movement. The Spirit of the Lord moved afresh on God's people of every denomination. Tens of thousands of churches were started in America alone by believers who came out of traditional churches which refused to allow the Spirit His liberty in their meetings. Many of those newly organized churches sought to mature spiritually - not only in their worship meetings, but also as corporate bodies growing up into the measure of the stature of Christ. But they experienced



Full Gospel Businessmen's Fellowship - from 1952

burnout when too many became so emotionally driven that they moved away from a truly Biblical foundation. Today, theology among the remnants of the Charismatic Movement, for the most part, is about as emotionally exaggerated and theologically twisted as it could ever be. **Yet when evaluating that movement along with all the others, we must separate what men have done from what God was trying to do through men. If we discern between God's way and men's results, we can take the good and grow while leaving the bad behind.**

"... having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief cornerstone, in whom the whole building, being fitted together, grows into a holy temple in the Lord, in whom you also are being built together for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit." Ephesians 2:20-22

Even though God's work in that season of spiritual awakening did not lead to widespread spiritual maturity, it was certainly an authentic work which impacted the body of Christ around the world on a scale that no previous move had done. **Yet we still groan within ourselves to become more like Him.** God has not failed; we have. And even though we know there is something missing, and we read the scriptures spelling it out, we have yet to make the connection for the long-term. Oh, that God would take us to the fullness of Christ's measure soon!

**But Jesus Said:**

**"I will build My church."**

Regardless of the tremendous spiritual warfare that keeps the body of Christ as spiritual babies, our Lord said that **He** would build His church. Any true believer who honestly evaluates the

"... till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head—Christ—from whom the whole body, joined and knit together by what every joint supplies, according to the effective working by which every part does its share, causes growth of the body for the edifying of itself in love." Ephesians 4:13-16

general spiritual condition of Christianity today would have to concede that the Lord is not the one who put this mess together. **He has built the church indeed, in that He is the author of our salvation individually; but we have built ourselves together corporately. Nonetheless, based upon His promise, He will build His corporate body His way; and just like many of you, I can hardly wait to see it come together!**

We have all the ingredients. The scriptures declaring what we should become are clearly seen in the Bible. The example of how we are to follow the Father's perfect way was set by His Son. His aid and guidance are freely offered by the grace of His Spirit within. And His promise is sure.

We need only to ask Him to show us every area in our thought and practice that should be removed, and then remove it, or allow Him to do so. We should seek a continuing infilling of His Spirit and provide a place that is wholly hospitable for Him within. We should abide in His Word and believe it completely. We should come together when He calls us to. We should wait patiently on Him and be sensitive to obey. We should not lose hope but instead take heart. We can appropriate and facilitate His work by doing these things, but only HE can do the work itself. Let us not frustrate His Spirit but yield. This Last Days church will never survive without Him!

Mark and Debbie Case established The Father's Field Ministries in 1997 while serving as a foreign missionary family in Buenos Aires, Argentina. Bro. Mark's specific call is to the church, where he uses the five-fold ministry gifts God has given him to edify. The Lord has sent him to various countries throughout Central and South America, Europe, the Middle East, and Asia for more than ten years, where he has had the privilege of working with several thousand church leaders in dozens of Christian denominations, including churches in persecuted lands. Mark and Debbie also led a church in their home in Mississippi for a few years. They have three children and five grandchildren.



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