Friends of Jesus

in this Age of Bible and Computer

Jerry V. McMichael

A Challenge Sufficient for the Falling Away
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“...until the time of the end; many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase.” (Daniel 12:4)

Jerry V. McMichael

Dedication is on the next page.

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This PDF copy of Friends is dedicated to the readers and surfers of SunGrist_Bible and the biblecombibleman.com website with the prayer for each individual that you will be blessed in the reading of the Bible herein about Jesus with the expectations of Jesus for your life as a challenge that is sufficient to overcome the Falling Away of the end time, of our time. Few church members would doubt that the great and inevitable Falling Away which must come before the Second Coming (II Thessalonians) is more a falling away from Christ, the Bible, and the Living God than it is away from churches where the attendance will go up; that as less and less people “will endure sound doctrine” (II Timothy 4:4,5), the gap between church membership and Christ will grow larger, our Christianity becoming even more soft, superficial, subverted, and it will become so popular that we will see it less and less. (You have two obvious and popular perversions today from false Prophets and false and itching ears Bible teachers in Joel Olsten, who has revived the priority of things—this message of the Gospel of Prosperity, that if you have faith you will not be ill or lack prosperity, has damaged numerous people and families who for years strive to cover up illness or lack of prosperity in order to support an appearance of faith—and Rick Warren, who has substituted an artificial appearance of unity for the local church that replaces the Holy Spirit as the real basis and source of the unity of the faith “once for all delivered to the saints”—likewise damaging numerous peoples and churches with a strange spirit that is more contagious than the purpose driven attitude, and diverting thousands from a realization of the kind of Oneness that Jesus prayed for all disciples in the Garden, “I pray that they all may be One as you and I Father are One”, who believe based on what the Apostles said in the Bible; and further the disciples of Warren and Saddleback divert away from the main purpose of Christ for evangelism through this Oneness, that the world would see not the artificial unity of one or several local churches but rather the Oneness of both the total church body and the kingdom of Christ of all time. The attention goes to them and their local churches more than to the total body of Christ, and therefore is diverted from leading the world to believe in Christ because of the Oneness of the total church body. Even as Paul warned that these grievous wolves would scatter the flock, make disciples to themselves, so this “purpose driven” has diverted from God’s purpose—to bring into One all things in Christ that are in heaven and earth—as given in Ephesians 1:10. Ask anyone what the “purpose” according to Warren is? They can not tell you in spite of it presently being written into church covenants; in spite of the fact that they studies the purpose driven books and worked on purpose for 40 days; and in some cases they can not define that “purpose” even after they have taught the books. I suppose the reason for the 40 days is that after 40 days the purpose self-destructs. What it reminds one of is how Masons and Mormons seek after universal truth for most of their lives, going through stages and degrees, and this come to find in the last degree that truth is hazy. All disciples of Warren seem to remember is that since “purpose driven” is popular every person and every church should be that way, and further that by adopting “purpose”, even undefined, they have some how become better than other Christians and churches. Never forget as a safeguard of intellectual honesty that popularity is a bad sign during the Falling Away, so that you must only answer two questions about them: (1) Are we in the Falling Away? and (2) Are they popular? Yes, Billy Graham was before the Falling Away! Anytime anyone or any church becomes exclusive or competitive about Christ, they have departed from this Oneness that Jesus prayed for all believers!

What can we do positive to overcome the Falling Away? Accept the challenge of Jesus Himself to become Friends of Jesus. There is not a single of the 11 Apostles who received the original challenge from Jesus to be a “Friend” that during their subsequent lives could be called soft, superficial, sentimental, and subverted!
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Friends of Jesus...
CHAPTER 1

Friends of Jesus in this Bible and Computer Age

The goal of this book is straightforward and simple: to make so clear an understanding of John 14-16 centered around the concept of “Friends of Jesus”, words from Jesus Himself, that readers accept the challenge of the potential of someday hearing Jesus say to them personally, “Friend”. Of course, correlated to this is the goal to present this as a challenge sufficient to overcome the inevitable Falling Away of this generation. We were all recently saddened as we heard in the news of the Lordsburg high school student who committed suicide, learning at the same time in the news that New Mexico is third in the nation in teenage suicides. Surely this young man who kicked the winning field goal that gave the Lordsburg High School a state championship knew the challenge of a good high school education, also the challenge of leadership on a championship football team; but we failed him and other youth in the State as we did not sufficiently present the challenge of Friendship with Jesus for this time of the Falling Away!

The message and teachings of Jesus in John 14-16 are made for troubling, fearful, and perplexing times like this generation of the Falling Away. It was a bad time for the eleven apostles: Jesus was personally leaving them in favor of the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension; one of their members, Judas Iscariot had betrayed Jesus, popularity had turned sour. It was time even as today for Jesus to say to them:
“Let not your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me.” (John 14:1)

Almost all people believe in God, Jesus would encourage all as they begin to accept the challenge of “Friends” to also believe in Him. What to believe in Him we will come to more thoroughly in chapter 5 on “Who is the Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible?” What Jesus told the Apostles to believe in Him we begin on immediately in this book’s focused look on John 14-17. Unfortunately, we have a gap to fill to come up to where the 11 apostles were as background for the intense teachings of John 14-17, because they had listened and observed Jesus for themselves night and day for over 3 years. You talk about a Bible seminary of all Seminaries, you be with Jesus and learn; and you must also recognize that the background training of the people of Jesus’ day in the Old Testament is much greater than what we receive initially as we are raised.

While there may be some truth to the accusation that Christians focus on eternal salvation for their religion more than on works on this earth, we dare not back away from the encouragements of Jesus, especially during crisis times, in terms of His Father’s house of many mansions that are prepared for the faithful, and the larger encouragement that Jesus at the Second Coming will come back to get Friends for whom He has prepared a place, so that where He is physically we can be there also. Did I hear some Amens!

“In My Father’s house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also.” (John 14:2,3)

However, I will encourage you right now that John 14-17 can sound clearer to you than any other Bible you have ever read! Jesus spoke plainly in the encouragements and teachings of 14-17. The 11 Apostles recognized that too, and they told Him so.

“His disciples said to Him, ‘See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech! Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God.’” (John 16:29)

Would that you would come to that same point in your life in the reading of this book, that you read these plain words of Jesus and understand them down deep
in your heart, then you too cultivate more faith in Jesus as sent to earth for salvation by God the Father. The personal relationship between you and Jesus, between you and God and Jesus, is not secondary: it is everything! Even as quite often in these 4 chapters of 117 verses God points out the Oneness of Him and the Father, so also the challenge of this personal relationship between you and eternity is to join this Oneness. {This is the most difficult of all Bible concepts to understand, and hopefully it will become clearer as you read the rest of the book.}

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as You, Father, are in Me, and I in YOU; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:20,21)

Thus even the Oneness we can have with the first disciples, with God the Father and God the Son has the benefits of evangelism in that when the world outside the church and churches see the Oneness will come closer to believing that God the Father sent the Lord Jesus Christ to earth! Even as Jesus as you will see later in the chapter on “The New Commandment” taught that with this special love of disciples for each other in the same manner as Jesus loved the first disciples promotes evangelism as the world sees it and believes in Jesus, so this Oneness promotes evangelism. And the two, love for other disciples like Jesus had and humble unselfish service and Oneness between the Son, the Father, and individual disciples, may have more to do with each other than we realize at this point before we have completed the complete study of John 14-17.

**Jesus Calls Disciples “Friends”**

You know how people like to tell of the meeting of a famous person such as an author, athlete, movie star or government official. Often some will talk about them loosely as a “friend”. There is even more loose talk about friendship with the very Son of God, the famous Lord Jesus Christ. “What a Friend we have in Jesus” is not only a well known song, but the theme of many who look for a superficial over simplification to their way and walk as a Christian. Most often in this Age of the Falling Away, herein referred to as the Age of the Bible and the Computer, it is a sentimental substitute for something real with the Eternal God and His Son! The real challenge is to have Jesus call us a “Friend” as He did the 11 Apostles in John 14-17.
“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:15)

The word “Christian” has lost meaning to the extent that anyone of any belief or no beliefs think of and call themselves Christian. It is even as former Prime Minister of Israel Begin said years ago, “You Americans are born Christians just like we Israelis are born Jews.” Wrong! There would be more validity to this statement if he had said as you Americans are born again as Christians, but in this Heaping Up Bible Age where fundamentalists Baptists have largely taken control of popular religion as instantaneous new birth has taken the place of the 9 month new birth that Jesus taught to Nicodemus in John 3. And as far as Israelis being born Jews in the sense of the chosen people of God, that ceased to be true after God made His decision as recorded in Daniel and Zechariah to accept only one-third of the nation not long after the crucifixion of Christ; and you would think that Prime Minister Begin, like most Muslims and Jews, had never read God’s revelations through Paul as recorded in the book of Romans where “all Israel is not of Israel”, where the Jews of the chosen people of God become only one-third Israelis and two-thirds Gentiles. In short, now in this contemporary Age of the Bible and the Computer it seems irrelevant to challenge people to be a Christian. “Which Christian”, they might say, “the American born person of high morality or a member of the moral majority” {another contribution from the Baptist fundamentalists like Falwell, Stanley, and LeHaye which clouds the distinction between any good American and what it means to be a Christian, to be discussed further in the chapter on the “American Conscience” and the “American Democratic Faith”}, or “do you mean my revered parents or pastor, or do you mean some nut who carries around his Bible and uses the name of Jesus or God like a curse word.

Indeed Christian was never a word used by Jesus Himself, and in particular never did Jesus use the word to summarize the challenge of following Him as “the way, the truth, and the life”. In fact, the three times the word “Christian” is used in the Bible, it was primarily to historically record how outsiders were calling those who assembled and lived according to the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth. Jesus of Nazareth identified Himself as the “Christ” or “Messiah” of the Old Testament, which indeed He was and is, and so His apostle-friends {Judas Iscariot excluded} taught and preached Him as that Promised Messiah, so that the world came to call them “Christians”. It happened first to the church at Antioch. The Bible tells us in Acts 11:26, “And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch.”

Note what the Bible primarily identifies these worshippers at Antioch as, even as the Bible so identified the original 12 Apostles, indeed as Jesus so called all of those who followed Him and accepted the learning of His way of life as a serious challenge. That brings us back to the challenge of this book which is to challenge Christians of this Age to go beyond discipleship, of course not skipping the neces-
Friends of Jesus...

nary stage of discipleship, in order to hear Jesus call us a Friend. You know what
this challenge of Friend from Jesus is akin to? It is much like the promise to one of
the 7 churches of Asia Minor to receive a personal and hidden name for the Risen
and Ascended Lord Jesus Christ Himself!

“He who has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches. To him
who overcomes I will give some of the hidden manna to eat. And I will give him
a white stone, and on the stone a new name written which no one knows except
him who receives it.” (Revelation 2:17)

Would you not like to be, although in a corrupt and compromising church like at Per-
gamos, called by Jesus an “overcomer” and Friend; and would you not like to have the
challenge of a new name with the name Friend, for example to be called Friend the
Overcomer, It will be written on a stone in heaven and hidden by the Lord Jesus
Christ until you get there: no one else in your church or denomination or even in this
world will know it, only the person who becomes the true Friend of Jesus will receive
that name. Parenthetically, before we pass on, you should note several things about
the text and the context of Revelation 2:17 that will be very pertinent to the chal-
lenge of this book: (1) the message from the Holy Spirit and the Ascended Christ
has largely failed to reach the ears of most church members at Pergamos even as it
had failed to reach the ears of six out of seven of the churches in Asia Minor, in
spite of the good start they had under the very ministry of the Apostle Paul Himself
{later we will discuss how Paul warned the Ephesian elders at Miletus how after
him would come grievous and salvage wolves that would make disciples after
themselves and scatter the flock, and how during this Age of the Falling Away
we can expect this to happen even more so, indeed if you can not see it now in
the popular and itching ears Bible teachers then perhaps you are not ready to
pass from discipleship to Friendship}; (2) the Spirit, that is the Holy Spirit or
Spirit of God and Jesus continues to talk to departing churches and church members
{“Beware my brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in
departing from the living God.”}, right up until the end of “today” or until so
grieved by the sin of unbelief as well as other sins in the Christian life that He can
no longer stand it, or finally according to II Thessalonians where He near the end of
the Falling Away is withdrawn from this earth which looses Satan; (3) the promise
with the challenge is for “hidden manna to eat” {you might think of this as the
equivalent of what Paul wrote “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has it
entered into the heart of man the things that God has prepared for those who
love Him, as you consider that these things prepared have both an earth and
now aspect as well as an Eternal home aspect}, and hopefully consider that this
manna is right there in the book of 66 books that you have been playing with all your
life—you know how it can be right there all along, hidden if you would, and you did not
see it even though perhaps memorized or at least read often {“the Word of God is
alive, dynamic, and powerful”}; (4) don’t you think that a “white stone” in the eter-
nal heaven is far better than a tombstone here on earth that speaks of fame and fortune?

Please consider this only an introduction to the Challenge of being called a Friend by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself that is the gist of this book; and which by and large will be based on the timeless teachings of Jesus as recorded in John 14-17. This challenge is greater because of the Age of the Bible and the Computer in which we live even as the challenge of a new and hidden name was greater than normal in the church at Pergamos or even in all of the seven churches of Asia Minor. In fact, at some point in the discussion of this book we must consider the difference between the “perilous times” of II Timothy 3:1, like the perilous times of the church at Pergamos, and “the time will come” of II Timothy 4:3, the same as the time of the Falling Away or Great Apostasy which I like to call this present Age of the Bible and the Computer; and perhaps a preliminary definition is in order right here: the perilous times of II Timothy 3:1 where so many churchmembers have a “form of godliness but deny the power thereof” and which the church of Pergamos was experiencing about 100 A.D. can be considered as the historical valleys that members and churches pass through on either side of the mountain top experiences of revival, while the “time will come when they (church members) will no longer endure sound doctrine” is the historical event of the great Falling Away, comparable to what happened as recorded in the book of Hebrews to almost all the children of Israel in the wilderness, and what is with a visual of the Son of Perdition one of the main signs given by the Bible to herald the Second Coming of Christ.

There is so much to say and write on this subject that it will take a book, albeit and hopefully a short but to the point book, to say it. However, there are two major aspects to Friendship with Jesus above and beyond the main requirements and details of such Friendship as recorded in John 14-17 that we must introduce before in later chapters coming to the exegetical details of John 14-17, and that is the two major aspects of Friendship whereby, according to Jesus and John 14-17, entails (1) knowing all that Jesus received of teachings from God the Father and has and continues to be willing to pass on to His personal Friends; and (2) things of the future that had to be revealed to these Friends later when they were more able to receive them. Why this has to be done now in the introductory chapter is because you will find throughout the chapters of this book a combination of the now and the latter, or the teachings of Jesus for the present life and the harder teachings of the life to come, generally called “eschatology”. Don’t forget that you must have an understanding of both for Friendship with Jesus, that is if the Friendship is to be mutual, both from the perspective of Jesus and from your own perspective.

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth;
for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come.” (John 16:12,13)

Surely you never thought that you would have to know some eschatology to be called a "Friend" by Jesus, but I think you see that is the way it is in John 16 and the rest of the Bible. It almost seems as bad as the Baptist fundamentalists, now in control of the largest Protestant denomination in the world, the Southern Baptist Convention, who for years have made belief in the eschatology of the Scofield Reference Bible a test of fellowship. Indeed, if we had enough honest and current historians they would admit that at the heart of the warfare between the moderates and the fundamentalists that split the SBC into three denominations, and continues at the warfare level, was said Notes. Well, more important eternally and now for the living of the Christian life is to be called a Friend by Jesus instead of a friend of the fundamentalists; and although it is not suggested that you throw away your Scofield Reference Bibles since so many of the helps promote good Bible Study, it is suggested that in order to be a Friend of Jesus you need to stop treating those Notes as if they were Scripture itself. And you talk about what you can not bear now, in the same category of why Jesus did not teach His 11 Friends the things to come in the Garden, this is also too hard to bear right now as to all the harm the fighting spirit of the fundamentalists have caused us Southern Baptists in leadership toward the Falling Away. Adequate background in the Bible and American history and thought must be provided before there is proper ground to receive such seeds. Let me just say right now, up front, that 50 years ago when I was growing up in Houston, we called them "fuedamentalists" because you knew what they were against more than what they were for. They have always had a fighting spirit, sometimes you have heard it like in the words W.A. Criswell spoke to Bill Moyer when he said of the warfare that split the Convention, "We are going to keep fighting until one side or the other wins", sometimes you do not hear it as the attitude has almost gone underground now in the board meetings where they exercise control. Like the Sanhedrin, these fundamentalists leaders, are afraid of the popularity among the people of real Southern Baptists, striving to work in their sheep's clothing over a bad spirit, simulating that same popularity. Enough, the emphasis of this book will be more positive than that; and if you desire more of these brutal facts please read my other books like "Christ, Paul, and the Falling Away", a commentary on Hebrews, and "Snatching, Stumbling, and the Falling Away", a reconciliation of the Falling Away with the Security of the Believer based on the parable of the Seed and Sower. You will find it primarily mentioned as part of the background in which we live and function as American Christians, part of the atmosphere of the Age of the Bible and the Computer.

The Bible and the Computer

At least one more concept must be introduced since it is part of the title of this book, the concept of this Age as the "Age of the Bible and the Computer". First of
all, I hope that you lovers of literature will see in this a takeoff of “The Virgin and the Machine” which was used in an earlier period of American history and thought to describe the twin influences of religion, symbolized by the Virgin, and science and technology symbolized at the Machine. I would suggest that what the Virgin and the Computer were in earlier American history, the Bible and the Computer are today. Truly, you would recognize that among all Americans science and technology has come home to the average American in no way comparable to the computer. It is at work, in the home, and at school. We have come to depend on the computer internet for communication with friends and work associates, for play, and for high powered sophistication of calculations like in MATLAB and DOORS. Now about the Bible as the other dominant thought pattern of this twenty-first century hopefully would with a little reminder should be obvious. For example, have you ever in your life heard of so many Bible teachers and preachers--the whole world it seems has become called and qualified to teach the Bible--that they are coming out of the wood work. Well, may I remind you that according to II Timothy 4:3,4, at the same time the church and churches pass from simply the ups and downs of the perilous times to the steady lack of endure of sound doctrine of the Falling Away, there is a vast “heaping up” of Bible teachers with itching ears. Well, that is the Falling Away; and the reason for the “Age of the Bible and the Computer” in the title. Some aspects of the Bible as a dominant thought pattern, like the renewed interest in eschatology and the Middle East, are good and some are bad; likewise some aspects of the Computer are good and bad. But regardless they are both here to stay; they are part of the life we live and the air we breath; and we must consider how to be called a Friend by Jesus while we live in our own world. It is even as you may summarize much of the teachings of how to live the Christian life from both the Apostle Paul and the Apostles John as “in the world, and not of the world.” {This will be just one Bible principle we will consider throughout the book as we LEARN CHRIST FROM THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS.}

“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 4:3,4)

You can go with the majority of church members, letting the dictates of your own personal desires determine your faith and practice, leading and voting to help others amass in churches, colleges, seminars, teachings, books, and best sellers this vast army of Bible teachers with itching ears; or you can chose in favor of the Challenge to the minority to be called by the Lord Jesus Christ Himself, “A Friend”! The majority of church members in this Falling Away will turn aside to FABLES, the minority of true Friends of Jesus will receive the white stone in heaven with a hidden name only known to them and God; and of course the hidden manna now of secrets in the Bible remaining to you for illumination. {This special
illumination you will come to appreciate as we look at the ASPI interpretation of
the Bible, the Authorized Semi-Public Interpretation, based on the Bible of the
Apostles and Prophets, and in particular the Bible verse “no scripture is of any
private interpretation”.
Chapter 2

Categories of Christians

Church members like Americans can not be adequately described or categorized by the single word “Christian”. You know the confusion that exists on what it is to be a Christian, and we must turn to the Bible, our sole criterion for faith and practice, to find the different categories of Christians. I am sure you would expect the list of the categories of Christians to be much larger than one. Even to describe the uniqueness of Americans, it takes far more than the single word American to try to describe all of them. Most are familiar with the question about categories on job applications where you must, if you desire, identify yourself as Afro-American, Latin American, Indian American, Caucasian, and so on. While we can find many categories of Christians in the teachings of the Bible, we will try to focus on six broad categories. These are (1) attendees, (2) listeners, (3) learners, (4) disciples, (5) departers, and (6) friends of Jesus.

1-1: Attenders. (Perhaps proper English demands the word “attendees”.)
Attendance is good. It is half of the Bible admonition to “forsake not the assembling of yourselves together, but exhort one another while it is still called today”. We might question how good attendance is when there is not the other half of the admonition to exhort one another, to exhort on God, Christ, and the sound doctrine of the Bible. However, you would have to admit that when you weigh the emphasis that the Bible places on church attendance with the current emphasis in churches, there is a disparity. Only once in the Bible is it mentioned to assemble yourselves together in church attendance, and again that is only half of the admonition; and yet you can not number the times each Sunday on forms and vocally do you hear about
Categories of Christians

church attendance. One would almost think that church attendance is a criterion for going to heaven, and yet nowhere in the Bible does it teach that your place in heaven will be secured by the number of days you attend church in the year.

I think as you look at the categories of Christians to follow, you will agree that the lowest level of a Christian is one who attends only. Only in the simple case of the widow who in giving her mite gave all that she could, and only in the case of Jesus’ prescribed remembrance for the woman that anointed Him with oil, showing faith are there a very few church members with only the capability to attend and listen.

1-2: Listeners.
The second category of Christians of Listeners is also good in that we know from the Bible that “faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God.” Listening can be the very beginning of faith in God, Christ, and the sound doctrine of the Bible; however again we must widen the canopy of our Bible understanding in that it must be the hearing of the Word of God. There is a lot of Bible teaching and preaching today, especially in the itching ears classification, that is about the Bible instead of Bible itself.

One scripture from Pastor James, pastor of the first church at Jerusalem, who wrote as part of the Word of God, “Be not hearers of the Word only, but doers also.” It is not simply hearers of the Word only who call themselves Christians that will experience salvation, but also doers of the Word. Like the military saying, “It is necessary not only to talk the talk but also to walk the walk.”

1-3: Learners.
During this time of the Falling Away in the world, the real challenge of our generation, there is no more critical verses of the Bible for us to focus on than those of Ephesians 4:4-6 where we are told the proper way to learn Christ. First of all, did you know that there is a proper way and then there is an improper way to Learn Christ. Of course, we must add that the improper way to learn Christ is to learn a Christ that is not the Christ of the Bible, the Son of God. If you are already a listener to the Bible, then listen to the words of Ephesians 4:4-6:

“But you have not so learned Christ, if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him, as the truth is in Jesus...” (Ephesians 4:20,21)

I am amazed at the number of people who will not talk Bible. How can there be something real in the life of a person who will not even talk about Jesus, God, and the Bible? Almost as equally amazing is the number of people who call themselves Bible believers, who are not aware of the many times in the Bible where the salvation of Christians is questioned like here in Ephesians 4:20,21. What a lot of nerve? Who does the Bible think it is to question where we are in the category of Christians that is called learners of Christ? Perhaps, these verses like all the
other verses of the 66 books of the Bible are the Word of God? Yes; and it tells us a proper way and an improper way to learn Christ.

First the improper way to learn Christ is given by an exegesis of the verses of Ephesians 4 just before these verses of 20 and 21. We can summarize Ephesians 4:17-19 with teachings like this: (1) you can not live, walk, act, and think like the Gentiles Americans around you; (2) the thinking of most Americans is distorted, the Bible calls it “the futility of the mind”—what they think is so right about their life and decisions is useless and futile; (3) the understanding of most Americans, church members or otherwise in this time of the Falling Away, is darkened—what they consider as light for the paths to follow is truly darkness; (4) they are alienated from God as they would not retain God in the thinking long ago or because they are departers with an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God; (5) all of these bad characteristics of Gentile Americans come out of ignorance of the things of God, but it is more a blindness of the heart, what they want to believe and think, even more than a mental ignorance; and (6) many of your fellow American Gentiles and Gentile church members having slid after 40 or more years into the Falling Away, have the famous seared conscience that make them past feeling, placing themselves in the category of church members with a form of godliness only as Paul enumerated in II Timothy 3:1-9.

The proper way to learn Christ is given throughout the Bible time and time again; but perhaps the easiest to understand is from Jesus Himself as recorded in John 14 where Jesus answered three questions from three of His Apostles. The three answers give us both an adequate understanding of what it is to properly Learn Christ, and what it is to experience real salvation. The first question from the Apostle Thomas. He asks of Jesus, “how can we know the way to God and heaven?” Jesus replied with the answer that most have heard: “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no man cometh unto the Father except through Me.”

There is no other way to heaven and God, for salvation, except through Christ. That is the way God wants it, that is the way God planned it, and that is the way in the final analysis that it will be!

The second question was from Philip. Philip asked Jesus, “Show us what God is like and we will be satisfied.” Isn’t this the key question that mankind has always asked, “What is God like, what does God expect of me, or what are the teachings of God.”

And although many wise in this world and even claiming to be wise on religion and the Bible still seek to know what God is like, Jesus answered this question once and for all for us. The answer is there in the Bible, in the Word of God, of John 14. It is sufficient. The answer of Jesus was and still is, “The person who has seen me has seen the Father.” Jesus stated that He and the Father are One: to see Jesus is to see God and to see God is to see the Father. Jesus further amplified that all the teachings and other works that He did and taught here on earth came from God the
Father. Jesus did not operate independently of God the Father. He repeated what the Father taught Him and He did what the Father told Him to do.

And then with the third question and answer from Jesus we come right down to the nitty-gritty of what it is to properly learn Christ. Remember what Paul wrote, if you heard Him and were taught by Him. Well, the Apostle Judas, not Iscariot, asked Jesus also there in John 14 and in the Garden asked Jesus, “How will you manifest yourself to us and not to the rest of the world?” Is not it true that the manifestation of Jesus to an individual believer is the equivalent of hearing Jesus and being taught by Jesus? Certainly it is, and you will see that in the context of the answer of Jesus.

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him.” (John 14:23)

1-4: Disciples.

Most people are aware that to be a learner of Christ is also to be a disciples of Christ. That is what Disciples of Christ are. They are continuing learners after Christ. Disciples are dedicated learners after Christ, those that have established a habitual habit of being daily with Jesus and learning more about His ways as well as of God the Father; and that seek constantly to do and know His will. We need not think of disciples as only applying to the 12 Apostles, who indeed were chosen to be unique writers of NT scriptures; because Jesus also chose 500 other disciples and sent them also out to witness with power and the help of the Holy Spirit.

Unfortunately there were 12 Disciples and one was a traitor so that we learn that status as in the church does not assure us of salvation and security from the Falling Away. Indeed we would have to say that Judas Iscariot was an example of those who look like Christians, and indeed look like dedicated Christians; but it turns out that their salvation was not a real 9 month new birth. We might liken Judas to the one in the parable of the seed and the sower who first received the seed of the Word with great joy, but it was received in the real life situation of thorns, the thorns of the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other things. (You notice the emphasis in the parable on things.) Anytime you see one first receive the word in a church service, revival, and in person, it is natural to think that this was a marvelous conversion with a miracle of the new birth. But what does the parable of the seed and the sower as told by Jesus tell us? It says later in the life of this disciple after cares of this world, deceitfulness of riches, and other things, they choked out the seed. So it was with Judas; and so it is today with a much larger number of Christians, even the majority, that have become victims of the Great Apostasy called the Falling Away.

1-5: Departers.
So we come to the departees or departers. Once again, it is not a Falling Away from church and church membership as these departees look like real Disciples even as Judas did right up to the final Lord’s Supper. It is clearly according to Hebrews 3:12 a falling away or departure from God, Christ, and the Bible. Listen to Hebrews 3:12.

“Beware, brethren (notice that Christians are being addressed here...beware brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” (Hebrews 3:12)

God thinks a lot different about what is evil than does President Bush or perhaps differently than most people. Whereas murder, adultery, and covetousness might be considered bad evil, what God considers as really evil is a heart of unbelief. Yes, all you must do is have a lack in your heart of faith or belief to be seen as evil in the sight of God; and this evil is so bad that it causes a wound in your inward life that causes you slowly to depart away from faith in the living God. Of course, we must also remember that those in the book of Hebrews about whom Paul was writing, the Hebrews rescued from Egyptian bondage, had seen the works of God for their benefit over 40 years before they actually fell from eternal rest. It is not easy to depart from the living God, after the living God has fed you and clothed you and given you guidance for over 40 years. It takes a positive effort of unbelief; and that is the prime evil that leads so many, Christians and otherwise, away from the sure salvation of God. {If you mistakenly think this departure from the living God, clearly taught in Scripture, is contrary to the Security of the Believer, it is not! Both the Falling Away and the Security of the Believer are mutually solid and sound doctrines of the Bible. Wherein then is the reconciliation of the two, in the parable of the seed and the sower where some hearers of the Word, and even disciples apparently, have the seed snatched away by Satan before there is a real 9 month new birth, or the thorns or stony ground or wayside soil cause stumbling and lack of root also before the 9 month new birth is complete. Most common is that among thorns where the Gospel of Prosperity of cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other things choke out the word of faith. For more on this, please read the SunGrist_Bible teaching commentary entitled SNATCHING, STUMBLING, AND THE FALLING AWAY.}

1-6: Friends of Jesus.
Some time during the 40 or so years of being a church member in the learner and disciples category, a Christian either becomes a departee or a Friend of Jesus. Look at the hundreds of disciples of Christ in our churches that have gone from being mere attendees, listeners, and learners to a point of dedication or lack of dedication where they face the two paths of either being a Friend of Jesus or a departee from the living God.
After Judas was gone, Jesus told the remaining 11 Apostles that He no longer called them disciples but friends, primarily because they understood His purpose in the world and the nature of the kingdom that He established. And what we find in the context of John 14 is that there are several requirements for being a friend of Jesus that He mentions in John 14: (1) we must love Jesus and God; (2) we must keep the commandments of Jesus; (3) we must remain dependent on Jesus through listening to His words in the Bible and through prayer to God the Father that goes through Jesus, like the branch must remain attached to the Vine in order to live and grow; and (4) we must understand the purpose for which Jesus came into the world, the nature of His kingdom, and how to participate in extension of the influence of Jesus in the world. In other words, we truly become Christians as we think and do like Jesus. We then can be honored by Jesus by hearing Him saying, “Well, done you good and faithful servant, you are a Friend of Jesus.”
We have heard the saying, “What you don’t know can not hurt you!”. However, we do know better, whether it is a snake that lies in wait to strike with deadly venom, or a small cancerous growth in the human body, or even a cell of terrorists in this country that we do not know about, they can hurt us. In many cases they do wound us greatly as testified to by what happened in this nation at 9-11. Well, there is a wound in the Christian body that largely remains undetected because the truth about it is an unheard doctrine from Bible teachers and preachers. When is the last time, or ever, that you have heard a sermon or read a sermon or even a book on the Bible doctrine of the Falling Away? I don’t mean this fictitious stuff from Tim LeHaye that is fiction based on fiction where they try to comfort Christians and scare the daylights out of the unchurched with their weird numbers, charts, and efforts to get Christians out of the way during the Falling Away. You see the impossibility of this: the Falling Away is a movement among church members whereby over a period of 40 or so years they depart from the living God. Without those claiming to be Christians, or God’s people, there could not be a Falling Away on this earth; and that is completely contrary to the sound doctrine of the Word of God. Only one book, Second Thessalonians, and four verses of Second Thessalonians are enough Bible to assure us that there can not be a Second Coming of Christ--and hardly any church member doubts the reality of the Second Coming of Christ...there can not be according to Second Thessalonians 2:1-4 a Second Coming until first there is a Falling Away and the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition is visible in contemporary history.
2-1: The Falling Away was not Engineered by God to Be a Wound, it like the Man of Sin is meant to be a Sign that warns that the End is near.

1. You can attempt to put the End off with all these weird number systems of 7, and one thousand, and 666; but when the Bible speaks of the End, it is straightforward and simple, without any need of vast charts and elaborating numbering systems that confuse the real doctrines of the Bible.

(1). Jesus said the Gospel will be preached to every nation and then the End will come.

Eschatology is simply the word used to describe all the events and happenings before the termination of this world order as we know it. Our problem is that in our efforts to put off the eschatology of last events, we have failed to realize that eschatology is NOW! We are now in the Falling Away as many signs in the heavens above and in the earth beneath as on the earth itself now indicate. We are NOW reading about eschatology in the headlines of our newspapers. We are NOW hearing eschatology in the news on our televisions, and we are hearing last things and events on our radios.

(2). The Old and New Testaments group all these termination universe events under the heading of the Day of the LORD and Lord. In the Old Testament it was the Day of the LORD in all capital letters for Jehovah God, because it was and still is primarily the Day of true justice from the God the Father of this universe. In the New Testament and after the life and teachings of Jesus on earth, that same Day became as much the Day of the Lord Jesus Christ as the Day of LORD God the Father. The last event is the punishment of the unbelievers and the reward of the believers. Now this One Day has no numbers in it like seven and one thousand and 490. Even as 1 is 1, so the One Day of the LORD and Lord is one day!

Is it a 24 hour Day? I doubt it. Most Bible scholars know that the Hebrew word for “day”, the word “yom”, literally means a period of time; and I would lean to that since so many things have to happen such as the Second Coming of Christ, the last great battle of Armageddon where Jesus destroys the army that comes against Jerusalem and the camp of the saints outside Jerusalem, the gathering of the believers from the four corners of the earth, the separation of the goats from the sheep in Judgment, then in Judgment the consignment of the unbelievers to hell with Satan and his angels and the consignment of believers to heaven and the new earth. That is a lot for one 24 hour day; but the God of heaven and earth that in the first place created the universe of
hevens and earth in seven days can do it all in one day if that is what He so desires. And we must always remember that in the thinking of God, that one day is as a thousand years and a thousand years as one day. Nail down in the mentality the fact that you can know for certainty about eschatology is that one equals one thousand and one thousand equals one in the mind of God! Well, that is what the Apostle Peter told us in II Peter 3:8, how “that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (The Apostle John and the Holy Spirit in the writing of the book of Revelation had enough respect for this verse from Peter to explain the variable nature in the mind of God about one thousand years to use this same variable of a thousand years in Revelation 20 which in reality was an exact time that God did not chose to make known except to clarify in other Scriptures how it correlated at the beginning with the Coming of the Holy Spirit on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension and at the end with the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth. Even there is also the little variable of a “little while” added to the 1000 years.)

(3). It is what comes before that “great and notable One Day of the LORD and Lord that is the focus of the Old Testament, and the Signs such as the shaking of the heavens and the earth, such as the blood and fire and vapor of smoke, the signs such as the moon turning to blood and the sun and stars to darkness...all these are signs that usher in over a period of time the Second Coming of Christ with final battle, judgement, reward and punishment. The total picture we get from the Bible is that the shakings of the heavens and the earth will take place over a much longer period of time than of the One Day of the LORD and Lord. Even as it took 40 days and 40 nights of rain for God to destroy the total earth in the times of Noah, so it will take approximately 40 or more years for God to destroy this universe as He allows it to be shaken to pieces from the uttermost stars to the last inward stone of this planet earth. In order to get a mental image of this whole termination process, we could well think of the physics process called by scientists “entropy” where the whole universe is running down and going into a state of disorder, except where scientists like to throw thousands of years at it like the meteorologists did for global warming until lately, in reality the signs in the heavens above and the earth beneath are well into the final process.

2. We have not yet looked carefully at II Thessalonians 2:1-4 carefully as we should for the two signs that we are in that longer period of time before the One Day of the LORD and Lord. Actually what we are going to find in II Thessalonians is far more than the two signs as precursors of the Second Coming, alias the Day of the LORD and Lord, for besides the Falling Away of Christians and
the Visibility of the Man of Sin, we see other signs such as the withdrawal of
the Holy Spirit from earth and the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness.
So in reality, there are really at least four signs in II Thessalonians which God
has given us in His Word to indicate that the time of the Second Coming and
Judgment is at hand.

Long ago in the Old Testament, God let His people know through a Prophet that
He would never do anything on this earth without first letting His own people
know. Well, these four signs of II Thessalonians are an effort on the part of
God to let the people of God know that we are in the final longer period just
before the One Day of the LORD and Lord. Well, let us look at II Thessalo-
nians 2:1-4 for two of those signs.

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our
gathering together to Him (you see how simple a little real Bible makes the
One Day seem as we see grouped together the Second Coming and the
Gathering of the saints: you don’t see a common there, or a semi-colon
for a thousand years or even seven years—it is simply The Coming of our
Lord Jesus Christ AND our gathering together to Him...if we would throw
just a little literal Bible into our eschatology with the lawyer-like dreams
of Darby and Scofield with their Scofield Reference Bible notes, how
much simpler would the two periods of eschatology be, the signs before the
Day and then the One Day}.....

Let me start again and without comment!

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our
gathering together to Him, we ask you not to be soon shaken in mind or
troubled, either by spirit or by word or by letter, as if from us, as though
the day of Christ (you see here in the New Testament the One Day of the
LORD has become the Day of Christ, but the same One Day). Let no one
deceive you by any means, that Day (here the One Day is That Day) will
not come unless the falling away comes first...”

I hope you saw and heard that. “that Day will not come unless the falling away
comes first...” Good sound Bible doctrine: (1) it is that Day, the Day of the
Lord and the LORD when Christ comes again and gathers together the saints;
(2) the Falling is called THE Falling Away is that there is no other like it in
extent and magnitude although the falling away of the Hebrews in the wilder-
ness as described in the book of Hebrews is an example; and (3) it is good Bible
The Wound that is being described in this message is this Falling Away, and the Unheard Doctrine that is being described is the reality of the Falling Away.

2-2: The Nature of the Wound among Christians and Church Members is both internal and external. It is a wound to each individual Christian that has unknowingly slipped into unbelief, cultivated a evil heart of unbelief, and has unknowingly departed from the living God; and it is a wound to the total body of Christ as the Falling Away is definitely a movement of the people of God away from Christ, God, and the sound doctrine of the Bible.

1. The nature of the internal wound is that **unbelief in the human heart is the greatest evil in the sight of God**. Beyond murder and adultery and covetousness or even lying and mistreatment of parents is the evil in the sight of God of unbelief. Unbelief is the only sin, or lawlessness, that will send a person to hell. A person can commit adultery, a person can commit murder, or lie, cheat and steal and still receive forgiveness and go to heaven; but a person that continues for 40 or so years in unbelief can not receive forgiveness and go to heaven. That is serious enough, isn’t it, to call an evil heart of unbelief a serious and determinative internal wound?

2. The nature of the internal wound in the heart of a Christian is that **the departure from the living God is silent and unseen.** It appeared to the children of Israel in the wilderness that they were still one with God over that period of 40 years as God fed them, clothed them, and gave them guidance by day and night; and yet in the sight of God that had departed from faith in Him.

You see we can see Christians active as church members. We can see their works at church, their attendance, their presence as they sit there and listen, and seemingly learn something from the pastor and the Word of God. However recall that Jesus during that gathering period of the saints will have many church members and church leaders say to Him, “Look at all these marvelous works of attendance, church building, etc that we have done in your name.” And Jesus will say to them, “depart from me you that work iniquity, for I never knew you.” They worked iniquity in the church because they developed over a period of many years an evil heart of unbelief; and they did not know it, before Christ they were convinced that there was no wound in their life and heart! That is what departees and false prophets and false and itching ears Bible teachers do. First they deceive themselves that they are doing the works of God and Christ just as the men did in the parable of Jesus above, and then they manage to con-
3. The nature of the external wound of the Falling Away is that it is encouraged by the world and the majority of church members. That is one reason that it will take the shock of the judgment for many to see that an evil heart of unbelief and a subsequent approximately 40 year departure from the living God has deceived them.

The external symptoms of the wound of the Falling Away among Christians has many evidences, but the one very determinative evidence verified by a recent survey of American Christians is that over 61% of American Christians believe the Gospel of Prosperity. Do you realize how hideous that is? What the Gospel of Prosperity says is that if you do not prosper materially as a Christian and do not prosper health wise, you do not have enough faith. That is horrible; so contrary to the real Gospel of Christ; it is another Gospel, other than that preached by Paul; it is another spirit or attitude contrary to the real Gospel; it is under a curse of the Bible; it promotes the cares of this world under the guidance of the world, the deceitfulness of riches that leads to a choking of the Word of God out of the soil of the human heart; it causes stumbling; and it causes no root to be built in the lives of church members until they stumble into a state of the Falling Away.

2-3: We Should as Briefly as Possible Look at Internal and External Evidences—let us call them symptoms of the Falling Away.

1. Have you ever heard of so many Bible teachers and preachers, and so many with itching ears Bible teachings? You just have to recognize that the “time will come” of II Timothy is the time that we are in now.

“The time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine.”

2. Hand in hand with the vast heaping up of itching ears Bible teachers is the intolerance toward sound doctrine among Christians and church members.

3. The wound of the Falling Away is deeper than simply the intolerance toward sound doctrine as Christian church members have become motivated in their church and church work by their own personal desires. As hideous as it is for a minister to work for personal gain and a personal following, it is also as hideous for church members to chose pastors, conduct church business, and dictate doctrine out of their own personal desires. Generally these are personal desires to justify themselves centered around the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and the Gospel of Prosperity. Their desires are for security and comfort, and any doctrine or teaching or sermon from the Bible that does not square with these
Wound of the Unheard Doctrine

desires is aggressively opposed, running off the pastor even if he will not conform to their wishes and desires.

4. The internal wound is so deep of the Falling Away among church members that whole churches and the whole Christian movement has turned into fables. You have the famous fable of the Gospel of Prosperity; you have the famous fable about what God expects in a marriage; you have the famous fable of justification of the taking of God’s name in vain; you have the famous fable where democracy in the church replaces Christ and the pastor as head of the church; and you have a great number of fables centered around the worship in the church such as speaking in tongues that Paul dealt with adequately in First and Second Corinthians years ago, but which have been ignored.

2-4: The Caution of the Bible, time and again, is for Christian Brethren to Beware of falling into the Falling Away. At this point we must look at the prime Scripture of the message of “The Wound of the Unheard Doctrine”, that of Hebrews 3:12.

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God: but exhort one another daily, while it is called ‘Today’, lest any of you be hardened through the deceitfulness of sin. For we have become partakers of Christ if we hold the beginning of our confidence steadfast to the end, while it is said: ‘Today, if you will hear His voice, do not harden your hearts as in the rebellion.’” (Hebrews 3:12-15)

1. We mistakingly think that “today hear His voice” is for the unchurched and lost, but it is for brethren as the address of Paul here is for Christian “BRETHREN”.

2. It is that caution against the internal and unseen wound of the evil heart of unbelief, just like the children of Israel did for 40 years in the wilderness in spite of seeing many mighty works from God.

3. The exhortation in the only admonition to assembly for Christians in the Bible is the very reason that Christians assemble in the first place. If you assemble without exhortation you have become simply occupiers of a seat. Exhort one another in order that you may stay away from the Falling Away. EXHORT, EXHORT, and EXHORT; and if you can not the probability is that you should not be there in the first place. Although this verse of Hebrews 10:25 is used by pastors and other church leaders to promote attendance; that is really half-truth as the real emphasis of the verse is on exhortation, on exhortation that increasing will not be allowed by heaped-up teachers of itching ears and a congregation that no longer “will endure sound doctrine”. What really overrides attendance in such congregations is the admonition of II Timothy 3:1-9 not to associate with those “who have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof”. This is when groups within the congregation as listed in those verse are dominated by things like “love of self”, “love of money”, “boasters”, “proud”, and “despisers of good”: obvious signs that this congregation
has gone so far into the Falling Away of II Timothy 4:4,5 that there follies no longer can be revealed internally within the local church body.

4. Exhort one another about the wound of the hardened heart, the deceitfulness of sin that causes the Falling Away. Remember it was Jesus who said near the End that "because sin would abound, the love of many would wax cold."

2-5: Let us Exhort One Another by Adding to Our Eschatology Exhortation on the Unheard Doctrine of the Falling Away; the internal and external consequences of the wounds; and the exhortations that can prevent just a few from Falling into the trap of the church member around them. Increasingly both in and outside the church will be the cause and nature of the Falling Away become more popular, so that Friends of Jesus will find it also increasing necessary not to associate with many of their church members. It is an association that can lead to eternal death!

Who would think that the majority of the church go be wrong; but that is exactly what the Falling Away is. Even as many as compared to a few is the majority versus the minority, when Jesus said as sin abounds the love of many will wax cold, the many waxing cold is the majority in the church body.
Science and Religion

Science and Religion is an important topic in the History of American Thought, sometimes called American Studies as it can be from a Literature perspective or from a strictly historical perspective. Some of the classics in this intellectual discipline that touch on science and religion are books like Henry Steele Com- mager, formerly of Amherst in his book THE AMERICAN MIND (Commager was a professor of American Literature and American Studies), like Stow Persons THE AMERICAN MINDS (a professor of history), like Vernon Louis Parrington’s, of University of Washington’s HISTORY OF AMERICAN THOUGHT, like Merle Curtis’ books, and like Gabriel’s MAIN DOCTRINES OF THE AMERICAN DEMO- CRATIC FAITH (this last is especially important in the development of the thought pattern of “The American Democratic Faith” that will be the subject of a later chapter). The history of American thought as it has progressed from the Colonial Period where religion definitely dominated over science but where men like Benjamin Franklin with experiments on electricity made contributions also to science, through the other periods like the Age of the Engligenment, The Romain- tic Age, the Gilded Age, the Progressive Era, and the Atomic Age has witnessed ups and downs on science and religion with each dominant during different peri- ods. (Also a careful study of the history of American Thought will indicate up and down cycles of conservative versus liberal. For example you would have to say that the boomer generation of the Hippies and Yippies of the ’60’s while a
liberal on top cycle, the reactions in this present Age of the Bible and the Computer is a conservative on top cycle with the birth of Political Correctness, Bush politics, the religious right, and control of the SBC by the fundamentalists. {These fundamentalists left the SBC approximately 1920 to become for the most part “Bible Baptists”, but under the leadership of men like Criswell, Rogers, Stanley, and Falwell in the background, took over control of the SBC approximately 30 years ago. By the way this history of religion in America of the largest Protestant denomination in the world has yet to be written about in an objective manner, unclouded by the axe to grind of a conservative, fundamentalists, moderate, or liberal. However it can not long be ignored since it split the SBC into at least 3 denominations, pitted the SWBTS against Baylor, Texas Baptists against the SBC, and instigated a deep seated warfare in the Convention that will go on for generations, unless Christ comes first. While there are some very “broad-minded” and general books you can get from the Baptist book store where so many different politically correct authors, teachers and pastors, explain different reasons they think the Convention split so as to leave you confused, much like the book by a bunch of Southern Baptist pastors a few years ago that tried to explain “church and churches”, it is not to the advantage of pastors with their retirement investment in the Relief and Annuity Board to show intellectual honesty on the real cause of the split; however, except for the minor appearance of some liberals in the SBC that had gotten a foot hold in various denominational organizations and who needed rooting out, almost any Baptist preacher who grew up in the Convention and its churches, colleges, and seminaries, can tell you that the prime thrust of the fundamentalists that has always made them fighters with a bad attitude is their commitment to the eschatology of the Notes of the Scofield Reference Bible.}

This Age of the Bible

In order to appreciate this Age we are in now as an Age of the “Bible”, we should also appreciate that the challenge of this generation is the Great Falling Away, called the Great Apostasy. It is amazing the number of Christians who look for the Second Coming, talk about the Second Coming of Christ, and have such a confused set of beliefs about “Last Things” {eschatology}, that they overlook or ignore completely the clear Bible teachings of Paul and II Thessalonians of how you must look first for the Falling and a Visual of the Son of Perdition before you can look for the Second Coming. Paul stated clearly that before the Second Coming {most generally called the Day of the LORD and
Lord as much more than the Second Coming happens on that One Day), and not to be confused that it had already happened, because first there is The Falling Away and also a Visual on the Man of Sin, the Son of Perdition. Whereas a few years ago in the United States as we looked at the Bible and international affairs, along with thinking that the world was getting better and better as it also got more and more democratic, even to the point of boredom as one intellectual predicted in his book, and to which many subscribed; now with our shocks back into the realities of the Jihad and terrorism and fundamental Muslim intentions toward Israel and the United States, we have an opposite problem of finding a Man of Sin that wants to destroy Jerusalem and Israel, we have the problem of too many like Osma Bin Ladin, the president of Iran, the leaders of Palestine, and the Hisballah that all want to destroy Israel. {You see the reason this is important is that as the Battle of Armageddon starts, as the many armies of the world come against Israel, there has to be an attack of this huge world-led army against Jerusalem and the camp of the saints outside Jerusalem. Before we could not visualize this as to who in the world, now that the Nazi Germany of Hitler is gone, would want to join in a vast army of Evil in order to attack Jerusalem and the Camp of the Saints. Well, now we have too many options. We have North Korea, China, Iran--large countries with nucs and missiles that can join in with many Muslim countries to come against Israel and Jerusalem.}

Even as the best single biblical definition of the Falling Away, second that is to the statement by Jesus that "as sin abounds the love of many will wax cold" is the admonition of Paul in II Timothy for Christians to "preach the Word" because...because "the time will come" of the Falling Away.

“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 4:3,4)

We will labor the point shortly that the time has already come...that this Age of the Bible and the Computer is that time which has come. What does it take for you to see that all these aspects of the Falling Away are happening now, in this generation and in this age: (1) there is the obvious lack of endurance of sound doctrine on salvation as the Presbyterians voted whether to no longer say that Jesus is the only way of salvation as it seemed intolerant, as well over 50% of church members are divorced and will not endure the sound doctrine of God's plan for marriage; (2) there is the obvious motivation of their own desires among
church members as the secular world encourages that trend of self-expression and self-fulfillment and democracy to the extent that perhaps the most violated admonition of all Scripture for church members is “not to think of yourself more highly than you ought”, the reason for many decisions in churches has become “how does this affect me?” (while recently psychologists are lamenting the narcissist attitude of teens and college youth as to self-centered, this trend in churches, especially centered around youth, who are always told that they are “special” has gone on for years); (3) “because they have itching ears”, the church members, the pastors, the seminary and college teachers have itching ears that want to hear something new, something comforting, and a matter of security rather than hearing sound Bible doctrine (more and more preachers and teachers of sound doctrine are being run off while they are replaced with itching ears Bible teachers--especially on radio and TV); and (4) this characteristic of the Falling Away alone should convince you that we are now in the time of the Falling Away, that is THE HEAPING UP. Have you ever seen or heard of so many Bible teachers and preachers that are being heaped up as now; everybody has a Word to speak and so many of the words are extra-biblical as they are either not in the Bible or construed from what is in the Bible; and unknown to most of us are who has called and authorized and commissioned all these Bible teachers with such new sounding words, concepts, and itching ears doctrines. They are like termites that are coming out of the wood work. If I had not heard on El Paso TV from a Dr. Peter Popoff with a Miracle Healing Water, I would not have believed that such doctrines are claimed and believed. (5) Dr. Peter Popoff and his followers have already gone into the fifth and sixth phases of the Falling Away. That is where they turn away from the truth and turn into fables.

Now, do you see why “The Age of the Bible” along with the Computer is chosen as a description of this time of the Falling Away in which we live. There is plenty of Bible; however there is also even more Bible of unsound doctrine, that is about the Bible instead of real Bible; there is plenty of itching ears teachings mixed in with Bible to confuse where real Bible leaves off and unsound doctrine begins; there is a lot of personal desires in the present teaching and preaching, sometimes disguised around “self-fulfillment” and “self-expression” concepts of contemporary and secular psychology; there is a lot of turning away from the truth of the Bible on marriage and divorce, on gays and lesbians, on the usurping of authority in a local church by deacons, and so on and on with what we might call practical doctrine. If you would consider momentarily the book of Ephesians, written as a summary of the first ten books of the Apostle Paul, as “Paul’s Statement of Faith and Practice” then take the second half of
the book, say from chapter 4 to 6 as the Practice, or applied doctrine aspect, you
as you held up these standards for practice in a New Testament church, would
have to note the contradictions to what you actually find practiced in the average
church today, SBC, Lutheran, Catholic, or otherwise. I recall one Sunday morn-
ing while traveling across North Texas listening to the present pastor of First
Baptist Church of Dallas as he lamented how that there was no shortage of Bible
in that church, I think the words were “goodness, there is no shortage of Bible”;
but how nothing significant had happened in that church for over 20 years. That
is the same story in most, if not all, southern baptist churches—granted some
hide it and PR over it better than others like the Bank which does not want its
dirty linen aired in public, and in all other churches and denominations, nothing
significant has happened in spite of all this Age of The Bible in those churches in
over 20 years; and the reason is that something significant really is happening
in a negative direction, perhaps unseen because church members are too close
and involved to see... it is the Falling Away.

It is real easy for Catholics and Lutherans and perhaps Presbyterians and even
the Community Churches to fall into this unsound doctrine of the Falling Away
since most of them tend to believe in a certain evolution of sound doctrine that
is as much based on human teachings as on the Bible; but it is hard to understand
and justify this happening among Baptists where it has always been a fundamen-
tal statement of belief and practice that “the Bible is the sole criterion for
faith and practice.” Amazing we are seeing this same evolution away from sound
document and with new words and itching ears teachings among the Pentecostals,
no doubt greatly due to the influence of Oral Roberts. You have the Copelands,
the Bettys, and the Peter Popoffs.

God predicts the Falling Away in no uncertain terms in the Bible, but is He stand-
ing by to let it happen in His churches? No, listen Bible belt such as in Alabama,
Florida and Georgia, you who think like in Romans 2 that you are teachers of the
law but by whom the name of God is blasphemed all over the world, God and
Christ and the Holy Spirit are trying to get your attention with tornadoes, hurri-
canes, earthquakes, and other tragedies. That recent outbreak of March 1,
2007 whereby there were approximately 76 tornadoes in two days {36 confirmed
according to the weather channel in Missouri, Alabama, and Georgia} hit the Bible
belt harder than any other part of the nation; and while this was the worst out-
break since 1936 or so, what is different now is the way it is hitting the sacred
institutions like schools, churches, and hospitals. Don’t you think God is in con-
trol, and that God is trying to tell this Age of the Bible something special?
Study carefully when something tragic happened to the people of God, and all the
people in fact, and you will find that if the Bible does not say that God sent the wind, or sent the fire, or sent the tragedy directly; it will say something like it does many times in the book of Revelation that the controlling actor or event was “allowed by God”. In either case, God is in control and directing. Why do you think we and the law calls natural events like tornados and hurricanes and earthquakes as “acts of God”. God is ultimately responsible and in control! You in Alabama, Georgia, and Florida had better dust off your Bibles, especially dust off your doctrines, and heed these milder forms of warnings from God where only a few are killed and mainly structural damage is done; before the final shaking of the heavens and the earth comes where all the elements are melted with a fervent heat. You should be grateful that you did not experience the magnitude of the judgment of God through the recent Tsunami of Indonesia where thousands died; that you did not experience the flood of the whole earth like in the time of Noah where every living person on the face of the earth died except for 7 souls; that you were not in the total destruction of the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah.

You can take these signs in the heavens above and in the earth beneath as indications, like the Bible of Joel and Acts of the Apostle Peter indicated, as precursors of the Great and Notable Day of the LORD and Lord. God is trying to tell you to replace your Bible of unsound doctrine, personal desires, and itching ears teachings, your Bible of the Falling Away if you would, with a Bible of sound doctrines and sound practices.

The Age of the Computer

There is definitely an evolution in American life and thought that early in American Thought Herbert Spencer chose to call “social evolution”. (Later we will discuss what the Noble prize winning physicist, Dr. R. A. Millikan, had to say on “The Evolution of Science and Religion.”) How far we have evolved in our way of thinking during the last 50 years is directly proportional to how the computers have physically evolved from large mainframes of the analog and digital types that required a whole room for operation and storage, to the mini-computers of transistors to the microcomputers of integrated circuits of first desktop variety and then laptops. How far we have evolved from the thoughts and book by J.B. Phillips of YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL, where youth interviewed decided that God did not understand radar, or the electron, or science in general, to where now we do not think the great mind and God of the universe does not understand computers. Lo and behold, His very brain is a computer that can compass one day as a thousand years or a thousand years as one
day: that can simultaneously number the hair on every head in the universe; that knows when each sparrow falls to the ground or each lilly spins without toil; that knows when you sit down and get up; and even as the best minds of science and technology will go beyond in size and computation the present capability of computers, so God exceeds in every aspect we can think of our own science and technology capability. After all, the Great God of this universe in the first place made it all with the Lord Jesus Christ there as the mediating cause and the Holy Spirit there as the effecting cause. There is nothing that the human mind can conceive or create that God can not exceed as the creator of that human mind. Is the clay greater than the potter? Or can the pottery say to the Creator, why did you make me this way?

However as a current observer of American thought and practice, I would have to say that the evolution in American Thought can be summarized under three broad concepts: (1) the American Conscience, where Americans religious and otherwise have made their own conscience and the collective social conscience which we can call the American Conscience the ultimate criterion for faith and practice; (2) the American Democratic Faith where toleration has replaced conviction, democratic has replaced the law and teachings of God, and the majority will has replaced the Bible teaching of the priority of the minority; and (3) a broad generational progression from the oldest Classical Generation to the In-Betweeners to the Boomers and so on which can be summarized as (a) “condemn others in order to protect self”, (b) “blame others in order to be innocent”, and (c) “accuse others in order to justify self”. Not that the boomers could really help themselves as they quickly became a majority generation; however, you would note that the attitude toward others became softer with each generation. The boomers as a majority generation became inheritors of the “accuse” and “excuse” of the American Conscience of Romans 1:15.

“who show the work of the law written in their hearts, their conscience also bearing witness, and between themselves their thoughts accusing or else excusing them”...

Notice it is their conscience, in the case of the Boomers, the American Conscience that allows them to excuse themselves and accuse others. Can you say it was their fault or just the evolution of an American Society to their generation where increasingly “God was not retained in their thinking”, God consequently giving them up to a reprobate mind and godliness? By the very nature of its composition as a larger generation where inevitably a higher precentage had to be lost more than saved {never forget the teachings of Jesus on the majority which...
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goes the broad way of destruction and the minority that goest the narrow and right way), they fell into this civilization characteristic of those who no longer or little longer thought about God and His righteousness. You will notice that with their generation came the wholesale lack of respect for marriage and God’s will and way on marriage, came the rebirth of gays and lesbians that left as previously godless generations the natural use of the man and women; and above all the Falling Away. Certainly we can not blame the Falling Away on one generation as the Falling Away was really the result of a certain evolution or De-Evolution in American Thought and Conscience. {Later in the chapter on the American Conscience, we should look more closely at the Bible teaching of Romans 1 and 2 about Gentile and Jewish civilizations. We must also look in more detail about the teachings from the Apostle John in the little epistles on how “God is greater than the (American) Conscience.”} We might just summarize right now, perhaps ahead of time, that (a) God is greater than radar or the computer, greater than science or technology whereby He laughs at the wisdom of this world, of necessity holding it in contempt as immature and juvenile, (b) greater than the majority or democratic opinion even as the heavens are greater than the earth and His ways and thoughts greater than our thoughts and (c) God is greater than in tolerance and conviction than any puny little temporal and generational-based value systems that we can come up with; and (d) God, the author of the Bible with Christ and the Spirit, is much greater than any mental model of the Bible which we may have, having shown that greatness for those who have eyes to see and ears to hear in the Authorized Semi-Public Interpretation of the Bible; that is “no scripture is of any private interpretation”, but Holy men of God {Apostles and Prophets} spoke or wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit. His own Interpretation of the Bible is greater than any other, and it is available for those allowed understanding as the Friends of Jesus because they are willing to do the will of God in the first place.

Things

Most of all in this present Age of the Bible and the Computer is that this marvel of man’s scientific and technological achievements has been allowed on a large scale in America, and as a “thing” in the category of things of second priority in the Sermon on the Mount where first priority is to be given to God and His righteousness and kingdom, to take the place in the heart, mind, and sometimes even soul of God and what is His.
There are so many subjects in John 13-17 that we dare not neglect in an attempt to do justice to that section of the Word of God: a section where Jesus is talking so plainly to those who would be His Friends. One of those obvious subjects is the Oneness of God and Jesus. It is always so timely since generally all believe in God, and that is a good starting point, Jesus said, to go on into faith in Him.

“If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” (John 14:7)

The same Jesus that John introduced in chapter 1 as the “Word made flesh Who dwelt among us and we beheld His glory as the only begotten of the Father”, introduced as there with God the Father at Creation as the Mediating Cause, is the Jesus of John 14:7 above, eternally present, who tells us that at any time in history when someone like Job or Moses or Adam has previously known Jesus if they have previously know God the Father. If you didn’t, you should; and may Jesus be able to say of you as a first step on the way to becoming a dedicated Friend of Jesus that “from now on you know Him and have seen Him.” It is really this simple: He who knows the Father knows the Son, and He who knows the Son knows the Father. It is one and the same!

“Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father…” (John 14:9)
The simplicity and plainness continues as we rapidly sweep through the section: He who sees Jesus sees the Father; and here please do not forget with this answer of Jesus to Philip also the answer to Judas, not Iscariot, on how Jesus will manifest Himself not to the world but to believers, how God and Jesus together come in to take up residence in the human heart that is receptive; and which is also the way to LEARN CHRIST of Ephesians, “if you have indeed seen Him and been taught of Him.” More of the simplicity: the God of the Universe and His Son through the effecting cause of the Holy Spirit have found a miracle working and powerful way to manifest themselves to Christians without showing themselves to the whole unrecptive world; that you can see Jesus in that unique way; further that you can personally be taught by Jesus Himself through His other self, the Spirit of truth. {And I would add an awesome possibility that Jesus can use that same method of communication through the Holy Spirit, even through the visions and dreams of the last day period of the presence of the Spirit on earth, to assure you that Jesus has already called you “Friend”, well before you will hear Him say it in the eternity of heaven. Now, I want to warn you that it may require a time of persecution, chastisement, or crisis before it happens; for what you will also find in John 14-17 is a lot of “persecution” and works. How persecution and works have a oneness also, we must consider as we go along!}

“Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves” (John 14:10,11)

Wow, where do you start with this: (1) even as the Father and the Son come “into” us, so also the Father is in the Son and the Son is in the Father—-that is the very basis of how it can happen in our lives; (2) you talk about an authority to teach and preach, here is one as Jesus says His teachings come from God and are backed by the authority of God {would that we had more of those from TV in this time of intolerance toward sound doctrine where “itching ears” Bible teachers call themselves out of their own authority, then backed by the personal desires,etc of church members}; (3) Jesus did all the works that the disciples saw, the 7 miracles of John and more signs, because God the Father was doing them from the vantage point of His indwelling presence in Jesus {never forget that “God was in Christ, reconciling the world unto Himself”}; (4) Another statement of faith in the Oneness is uttered with a plea from Jesus to “Believe me”--I am in the Father and the Father is in Me-
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- (did you see that and hear that Jesus Seminar?) and (5) if you as a disciple can not believe Jesus for this reason, that is for the reason of the Oneness, then just believe Jesus for the sake of the works that God the Father gave Him to do. Surely you would believe like a contemporary of Jesus said when he saw some of these miracle-works, “Surely no man can do this except God be with Him.”

“A little while longer (the crucifixion) and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live (the resurrection), you will live also.” At that day (resurrection and ascension) you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you.” (John 14:19,20)

1. Another benefit of the Oneness: because Jesus lives again through the resurrection after His own death, you will also live.

2. How else can you explain what the disciples saw, these 11 and even more than 500 at one time, the resurrected body and life of Jesus? And when you recognize that, you will also come to know that God the Father, the eternal and indestructible One, had to be in Jesus for Him to live again.

3. Furthermore it will cultivate the faith that you are in Jesus and that Jesus is in You, remember the unique way that Jesus said He and the Father would manifest themselves to Christians and not to the world!

Part of that Oneness is Jesus Back at the Same Place as God!

Jesus and God originated the same place, in heaven, if you can even use the word “originated” with God and Jesus since the Bible tells us that God the Father is alpha and omega, the beginning and the end; and although Hebrews quotes the Old Testament to tell us when God said to Jesus, “You are My Son, this day have I begotten you”, we do not know what time this is; and yet it is a sufficient answer from the Word of God to so-called Bible scholars of the Jesus Seminar (we should call it the Satan Seminar and get the Mormons who believe that Jesus and Satan were brothers to join it), that Jesus or the Bible never claimed that Jesus was and is the Son of God. What ignorance!

“You have heard Me say to you, ‘I am going away and coming back to you. If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, I am going to the Father, for My Father is greater than I.” (John 14:28)
Some of the simplicity momentarily passes as we see God the Father as greater than God the Son, perhaps temporarily since Jesus, the God-man, had some limitations while being present in a human body; but whether we are satisfied with such biblical speculations as this or not, we recognize the ever present slap in the face to critics like the recent author of “God is not Great” and the thesis of His book, as we realize how Jesus is teaching us, and this is the great Jesus of sterling character, of mighty works and miracles, the Saviour of the world and the magnificent teacher—the author and finisher of our faith once for all delivered to the saints—saying God the Father is even greater than Me. Put that in your pipe, critics, and smoke it for a while!

Surely we must add the simple parable of the vine and vinedresser of John 15:1 to our brief list of Oneness in John 14-17.

“I am the true vine, and My Father is the vinedresser.” (John 15:1)

Do you want to know and become attached to the only “true vine”, He who also said of Himself with teachings from the Father, “I am the way, the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father but by me.” (Presbyterians I think you are safe in believing and quoting from Jesus here that He is the only way to salvation since He is the only way to God the Father.) Warning, be ready for the challenge of Pruning from God the Father that will be discussed in a later chapter, for it—sometimes called chastisement—is as inevitable as is the difference between a real son of God and a bastard son. If you do not receive persecution directly from the world, you can count on chastisement from God; and we must consider that this persecution of the world is chastisement allowed by God to prune our fruit of works and make us better Friends.

“By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” (John 15:8)

The flow of the reason is logical, plain and simple: (1) you are a disciple if you bear the fruit of works for God; (2) since Jesus and the Father are One and what happens to Jesus happens to the Father, and vice versa, and even as Jesus did all His works for the glory of God the Father as you are admonished to do often in the Bible; (3) so the good fruit of your works for God glorify the Father of Jesus.

You see a lot of “Oneness” in Love next, which we suspected would have some connection as we noted how Jesus said there were two ways the world would
know that we are His disciples, through the obvious Oneness between God, Jesus, and us and the other as the world saw the unique love between disciples like Jesus showed them in humble unselfish service.

“As the Father loved Me {it is past and recognized by the disciples}, I also have loved you {also recognized at the last supper with the humble unselfish service of the foot washing, if not before}; abide in My love. {Abide in Jesus is something you will see a lot of in this book as “Abide in Jesus” is a significant and often presented theme of John 14-17; and we must progress to the “love connection”, that is how to Abide in Jesus is also to Abide in the Love of Jesus. And once again this is more a practical relationship that may seem theologically to travel in circles, than academics, as we are talking about that Oneness inwardly between the Father, the Son, the Holy Spirit, and us.) If you keep my commandments {oh my, works and requirements, stipulations of the abiding and love}, you will abide in my love {well there it is: keeping the commandments or teachings of Jesus is a pre-requisite for abiding in the love of Jesus}, just as I have kept My Father’s commandments and abide in His love.” (John 15:9,10)

{NOTE: The love connection involves a works, commandments, and fruit for the glory of God the Father connection. Abiding in Jesus, abiding in the love of Jesus, and abiding in the Oneness of God the Father and the Son, even also of the Holy Spirit, is not as simple as we might have thought at first; certainly not as simple as we had thought in the “no cross, no crown” version of Christianity.}

Often in this devotional study of the Bible centered around 14-17 you will notice the necessity of a practical and applied understanding of the teachings of Jesus, sometimes as in the case of the humble unselfish service as a new commandment, sometimes older commandments like the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount and others in the New Testament, sometimes the oldest of the older commandments as when Jesus explains in the Sermon on the Mount the real meaning of the Ten; and sometimes with poignant teachings on “Bread and the Bible”: and you will notice that works for the glory of God consistent with these teachings is necessary to fulfill all the steps to “Friends”. Jesus summarized all these commandments and teachings for the 11 apostles when in John 15:15 He said “for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” Does that not summarize all the teachings and commandments of the Bible--and surely a teaching is a commandment just because Jesus, the author and finisher of the faith, said it--does this not summarize the Bible. It is like “every word
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that proceeds out of the mouth of God.” I hope you have noted in John 15:15, and we must come back to it often as the essential gist of the book, that before Jesus can call you a “Friend”, that is if it is like His first friends and I think you would agree that it is: (1) you have become a “servant”; and (2) you have received all the things from Jesus that came to Him from God the Father as recorded in the Bible.

There is Also a Oneness of Anticipated Persecution!

You will find that this persecution is the opposite of keeping the Word that you give to the world from Jesus, so that if you suffer no other persecution it will come from the neglect and indifference of the world. The same ones like the ones who during His life kept the word of Jesus are the same kind of people who will listen and heed your word to them!

“Remember the word that I said to you {right now, if not before, start remembering the word and words of Jesus, and may the Spirit of Truth be your Helper as He desires and was destined by God to be}, ‘A servant is not greater than his master.’ If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” (John 15:20)

And the ONENESS of God and the Son are also in this persecution of neglect and slander: in John 15:21 the reason the world will do this, certainly you must see that this does not exclude the world of the US, is because “they do not know Him {yes the God the Father who sent Jesus} who sent Me.” {And something else needs to be noted here for future reason on what it is to work and pray “in the name” and “for the sake of Jesus”: it is the at first seemingly strange teaching of Jesus that “for My name’s sake” the world will persecute you. Strange that the world would do anything for the Name sake of Jesus; yes, there it is, also in plain language; and we must pursue it later in the book. Look for it under the heading of “The Persecution of the World ‘for Jesus’s name sake.’”}

Jesus Prays for You

Yes, you are part of the prayer of Jesus to the Father for all those that will believe through the word of the Apostles. How did you believe? Through the word of the Bible, and the New Testament of the Bible is the unique word and writings of the Apostles. Listen to Jesus prayer for you!
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“I do not pray for these alone (the 11 Apostles), but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one (did you get that: Jesus is praying that we might be One with the original 11 Apostles, so that whatever this Unity of Oneness is it is NOT physical assembly together contrary to what many today with their non-denominational and ecumenical movements would have you believe), as You, Father are in Me, and I in You {is this our clue for this kind of unity of oneness, that we are to be in the Apostles even as the Apostles are in us in spirit}, that they may also be One in Us {Jesus prays that we, apostles and believers through the Apostles, may participate in that same kind of Oneness that the Father and the Son have--Jesus was on earth and the Father was in heaven so that they could not physically assemble together, but they were close to each other in spirit, in mind, in heart, in unity of purpose, and unity of activity}, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:20,21)

With this kind of unity of Oneness between all Friends of Jesus, the world will see that unity of spirit, heart, mind, purpose, and activity; and more of the world will believe that God the Father sent Jesus for the salvation of the world. Then it gets very difficult.

1. Jesus passed on to 11 Apostles and those who believe in them through the word of the Apostles the same “glory” that God gave Him. And if we can come to understand what this inherited glory from Jesus is, we come closer to understanding the Oneness. This glory is significantly part of the Oneness.

“And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one.” (John 17:22)

NOTE: So important is this glory for the kind of non-assembly Oneness that we can have with the Father and the Son, that we must learn all we can from Jesus about it as He continues to pray.

2. The next step of progression in 17:23 is “perfection in one” as Jesus is in Friends and believers and the Father is in Jesus. How much does this mean that even as “God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself,” even so are in Christ also reconciling the world unto Christ? This evangelism, or fruit that remains, the greater works of the previous chapters of John, has to be there as in the second half of John 17:23, again the goal of the perfection in unity is “that the world may know that You have sent Me.” Also you must see in this commission of Jesus by the Father as very similar to the requirement of Friendship
announced by Jesus as knowing what He is doing in the world. (John 15:15). They were called “Friends” by Jesus because they knew what the Master was doing in the world. The two verses of John 17:22 convey more meaning to us if we write them like this with the first phrase followed by the last phrase: “And the glory which You gave Me I have given them...and have loved them as You have loved Me.” (John 17:22a,23b)

1. The glory that Jesus passes on to believers, like the glory the Father gave to Him, is related to the same love from the Father that Jesus passed on to believers. {We must know more about this glory, a place to start is with the number of times it is mentioned in John 17, in the 14-17 passage, and in the Gospel of John.}

Now what is between the glory of 22a and the love of 23b is more on the Oneness and how the Oneness promotes evangelism in the world. (1) “that they may be one just as We are one”--a reiteration of the prayer of John 17:20,21 and 17:9,10; (2) Jesus in disciples and the Father in Jesus--so that obviously this unity of oneness centers around the common “in-ness” in that we are all in each other in spirit; (3) “that they all may be made perfect in one”--there is a perfection of oneness attainable that did not exist at the time of prayer nor that does not exist today among believers but which is still attainable; and (4) always this kind of common love, unity, and evangelism is in order that more in the world will believe that the Father sent the Son to earth. {You want to know why there is not more fruit of evangelism in churches today, and fruit that remains in the total church body? It is because the world is not seeing this unity of Oneness; and one significant reason that there is not more of this kind of unity is because the nature of it has become confused with a oneness of assembly together.}

2. Jesus prays the Father that those believers whom He has given Jesus may be with Him in eternity__“be with Me where I am”. It has two parts this glory: (1) believers to be where Jesus is, and (2) to be there eternally like Jesus has been; and both of these aspects have a glory to them. (John 17:24)

3. The world has not known God the Father. (John 17:25a)

4. Jesus had personal knowledge of the Father from heaven and eternity, and Jesus declared the name of the Father to believers (John 17:25,26).
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5. As Jesus declares the name of the Father to believers, it is in order that the love of God and Jesus may also be in believers. (John 17:26)

“Glory” in John 17, other than those previously mentioned.

1. This prayer to the Father of John 17 starts with a prayer that God will “glorify” His Son in order that by the Persecution, Crucifixion, and Resurrection, the Son will in turn glorify the Father. (John 17:1)

2. Don’t you know there is glory in eternal life, the subject of 17:2,3.

   (1). God gave Jesus “authority” over all flesh {and herein is some of the glory and authority imparted to other disciples to bind in heaven what is bound on earth, and vice versa} to pass out eternal life to those God gave Him. You talk about empowerment. Here is empowerment. From God to Jesus to disciples, eternal life and the glory of eternal life!

   (2). It is eternal life “TO KNOW” God, the only true God; and it is eternal life to know the Jesus Christ whom God sent. {Be careful with how much you allow the toleration of the American Democratic Faith to overcome your respect for the truth of the one true God and the one true Lord Jesus Christ that was sent from the one true God. It could overcome your corresponding gift of eternal life!}

   (3). You can see in John 17:11 that significant to the ONENESS is disciples that remain, unlike Judas or other fruit that does not remain, kept by the power of God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit.

   “Holy Father, keep through Your Name those whom You have given Me, that they may be one as We are.” (John 17:11)

   Eternity is a large part of the Oneness, and eternity is not possible without a being kept by the power of God. This is the fruit that remains!

3. Jesus glorified the Father by completing the work that God the Father gave Him to do on earth. (John 17:4) You see what Jesus is saying in prayer: that at that point all the work that the Father had give Him to do on earth as far as living the example, teaching, preaching, healing, and miracles had been done. Of course, except for the crucifixion and resurrection and ascension about to happen!
4. Jesus wants to be glorified with the Father in the same manner of the glory they had together before the world was created. You see, it is a prayer for resurrection and ascension to go back to the status that they had together, and is it any wonder to you that John starts His Gospel, knowing what he will also record on John 14-17, of how “In the beginning was the Word, the Word was with God and the Word was God; and that all things were made through Jesus, not a single thing created on this earth without being done through Jesus the mediating cause of Creation?”
CHAPTER 6

Signs: Who is this Lord Jesus Christ of the Bible?

For a relationship of friendship to be real, you must know who Jesus is; for then and now there have always been a lot of false claimants to the throne. Surely you have heard in the news recently of the man from Puerto Rico who claims to be Jesus come back to the earth, and who has millions of followers. You can see why: he says there is no need for prayer anymore because he is here; he says that there is no such thing as sin, always a very popular tenet of acceptable religion; and he condones and practices almost any kind of loose life style including drinking and partying.

How to Summarize on Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God?

There are many ways we could summarize, from the Bible of course, the essentials of who the Lord Jesus Christ is. I have always enjoyed the famous sermon from George W. Truett, “Who Is Jesus”, as the best and simplest that can be said on how the groups of the world have reacted to Jesus: (1) Since He did claim to be the Son of God, either He was mad (delusional like the man from Puerto Rico) or what He claimed to be; (2) Jesus was a good man, but you can not stop there as how good can a person be like the man from Puerto Rico who makes a false claim to be the Son of God; or (3) He is exactly what He claimed to be the son of God, and the signs of the Gospel of John such as His teachings from God, His miracles and healings, the Resurrection and Ascension well testified to by hundreds of disciples present, and His character. (The Jesus Seminar attacks...
at this very point both the reliability of the Gospel of John to be among the other Gospels, putting more weight with a newly found Gospel of Thomas and the reliability that Jesus did claim to be the Son of God. Each year this Seminar of approximately 100 PhD’s and ThD’s at Seminaries, Colleges, and Universities—the list of names, degrees, and universities is at the back of the book, and you should be aware of who they are and where they are—throughout the nation meet to vote on whether Jesus claimed to be the Son of God or not. I think last year they voted “No”; and I am sure God was quaking at the results, however I am also sure, according to the Bible, especially in II Timothy that God will eventually get even with them for destroying the faith of some!

The Signs of the Gospel of John

The Gospel of John is unique among the four Gospels (Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John), I will have to give that much to these false Bible teachers of the Jesus Seminar. It does not take you long in a study of the classic work of A. T. Robertson on A HARMONY OF THE GOSPELS where the parallel scriptures in the four gospels are lined up according to common content, and how often in that excellent harmony do you see the Gospel of John setting alone. Was it because only John taught about “Friends of Jesus”; because John was the disciple that Jesus loved most; because only John writes about “signs” and centers the Gospel of John around only 7 miracles; because John was the last Apostle to write Scripture and near the end of the first century? All of these are much better explanations than that of the Jesus Seminar that since all the other gospels agree more with the new Thomas, and that Thomas and Mark correlate where they do discuss common content, then approximately two-thirds of John is to be discarded or ignored. {That is the work of Satan since the Gospel of John is so simple and effective in evangelism.} The reality is that this new Gospel of Thomas is an attempt to discuss only the historical facts of the life of Jesus, leaving out the teachings of Jesus such as His obvious claim to be the Son of God.

After the feeding of the five thousand, just one of the miracles of Jesus, and as Jesus had sent His 12 special disciples across the Sea of Galilee in a boat ahead of Him, later walking past them on the water {another of the miracles of Jesus}, all of these disciples stated how they believed Jesus to be the Son of God.
“Then those who were in the boat came and worshiped Him, saying, ‘Truly You are the Son of God.’” (Matthew 14:33) {And this is written in the corroborative Gospel of Matthew.}

You can hardly expect to be a Friend of the Jesus of the Bible, the Jesus of God and as the Son of God, the Jesus who is at the right hand of God the Father to make intercession for our sins and Who will come again in great power and glory {and by the way the Jesus that was at Creation the mediating cause and as Colossians states “through Whom all things consist”}, if you do not appreciate Who He Is!

**Signs of the Gospel of John**

So much can be written about Jesus, and there are so many ways to summarize who Jesus is; however since the Apostle John has already done that for us in his Gospel, we should take advantage of it with a summary of the summary. Recall as previously stated that John organized his gospel around only 7 miracles. John also gave us the benefit of stating exactly why he wrote the Gospel of John, and it relates to “signs”.

“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of His disciples, which are not written in this book; but these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God, and that believing you may have life in His name.” (John 20:3031)

If you have not come as far as believing that this Jesus of Nazareth written of by the disciples in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, then it is advised that first you complete this chapter so that you know some details of what to believe in, then go to the last chapter of the book on “Faith”. Then you will be in a feasible position to pursue the Friendship of Jesus, continue with the next chapter.

Above with John’s statements: (1) Jesus did many other signs in the presence of the disciples not recorded in John; and (2) these signs in John are written to engender faith in Jesus of Nazareth as the Son of God; we thus have a clue as the how of how to summarize the Gospel of John on Jesus, around “signs”. However the problem with that is John only uses the word “sign”—literally translated “sign, mark, or signal” 4 times while the other three Gospel writers use it 27 times.
The first trip to Jerusalem that John records in John 2:14, Jesus confronted sellers of sheep, oxen, and doves, also the money changers doing business for profit in the temple; and with a whip of cord He drove them and the sheep and oxen out of the temple, poured out the money and overturned the tables.

“So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘What sign do you show to us, since You do these things.” (John 2:14)

The Jews asked for a Sign from Jesus so Jesus promised them the Resurrection—“destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up”, not understanding that He was talking about the temple of His own body (2:19-21); but after the Resurrection from the dead the disciples remembered this and …

“They believed the Scripture {OT predictive Scriptures about Jesus and which Jesus often quoted to them on how He was the Promised Messiah or Christ} and the word which Jesus had said.” (John 2:22)

{NOTE: You will find that “the word” which Jesus spoke, used singularly as “the” and somewhat different from the pluralistic commandments and teachers is something you will find very important in the chapters to follow as you “Abide in Jesus” and accept the challenge to become a Friend of Jesus.}

However for our present purposes of attempting to summarize Who Jesus Is and with a summary from John around “signs”, you should notice from John 2:22 that the signs John talks about in the purpose of the writer—signs for believing in Jesus as the Christ, the Son of God— are more like the “things”, as in when the Jews said “since you do these things”, than even the word “Sign” as the Jews used it; however the two are closely related, and you guessed it of the 7 sign-miracles chosen by John, and around which He weaved his recollections of the life and teachings of Jesus, the last and highest of all the miracles was the Resurrection of Jesus Himself, and the next closely before it was when He brought Lazarus back from the dead. And perhaps this would be a good time to mention the miracle-signs that organize the book of John.

The Seven Miracle-Signs of the Gospel of John

1. The Water turned into Wine (John 2).
(a). We Preach the Christ who in the beginning made all things and therefore was quite able to exercise authority over just a couple of those elements that He made in the world. When at the marriage feast in Cana, the host ran out of wine, Jesus turned the water into wine; (b) We Preach the Christ Who by turning water into wine showed Himself to be THE JOY OF THE CHRISTIAN LIFE. This marriage feast was a festive occasion and in a home; and Jesus was concerned enough about those social occasions of life to perform the first miracle of the book of John; and (c). We Preach the Christ Who turned the water into wine, a sign that began the proof to the world that Jesus was the Son of God, and that increased the faith of the first disciples in Himself as the Son of God.

“This beginning of signs Jesus did in Cana of Galilee, and manifested His glory: and His disciples believed in Him.” (John 2:11) {Perhaps not a very deep belief with roots down in the soul at this point, but it was a beginning for faith, “as faith cometh by hearing (and seeing) and by hearing the Word of God. This Bible concept should become clearer as you get into a chapter to follow on “The Sound Doctrine of Bread and Bible.”}

2. The healing of the nobleman’s son (John 4).

a. We preach the Christ who in the beginning created man in the image of God, and therefore was quite capable of exercising control over the illnesses of the Bible.

“So Jesus came again to Cana of Galilee where He had made the water wine. And there was a certain nobleman whose son was sick at Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had come out of Judea into Galilee, he went to Him and implored Him to come down and heal his son, for he was at the point of death. Then Jesus said to him, ‘Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will by no means believe.’ The nobleman said to Him, ‘Sir, come down before my child dies!’ Jesus said to him, ‘Go you way: your sons lives.’ So the man believed the word that Jesus spoke to him, and he went his way. And as he was now going down, his servants met him and told him, saying, ‘Your son lives!’ Then he inquired of them the hour when he go better. And they said to him, ‘Yesterday at the seventh hour the fever left him.’ So the father knew that it was at the same hour in which Jesus said to him, ‘Your son lives.’ And he himself believed, and his whole household. This again is the second sign Jesus did when He had come out of Judea into Galilee.” (John 4:46-54)
I want you to notice almost the casual, or at least effortless manner, in which Jesus healed the son and dealt with the man. The goal of Jesus was the eternal salvation of men’s souls, and in order for them to go beyond the mere healing of the human body to the salvation of the soul and body, they must believe in Jesus. He addressed the crowd who heard the nobleman, letting them know that the goal of these signs was to engender faith; and also in the nobleman. After he learned when his son began to heal, the very moment at which Jesus said your son is healed, he believed; and also his household believed.

b. We preach the Christ who can exercise control over fear and anxiety as He brought hope and peace to the heart of a grieving parent.

3. The healing of the paralyzed man (John 5).

The nobleman’s son had been in his sick condition for only a short period of time, the paralyzed man at the pool of Bethesda in Jerusalem had been paralyzed for 38 years. This required a little more power than the turning of water into wine or the healing of the nobleman’s son. With this miracle of the healing of the paralyzed man we Preach the Christ who is a Restorer of both physical and spiritual life, realizing that we must Preach primarily the spiritual life as Christ also did. After the paralyzed man was healed, later Jesus found Him and encouraged him to a faith that would prevent a worse faith than lying impotent every day by the pool of Bethesda.

“Afterward Jesus found him in the temple, and said to him, ‘See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you.’” (John 5:14) {Jesus the co-creator of man has control on the physical body and illnesses, and by the Faith “Friends” can be a channel of faith and healing as they lay their hands on.}

4. Feeding of the 5,000 hungry people (John 6).

(a). We preach the Christ who proved that He could also be the Great Shepherd of the Sheep in whose presence they and we can say “I shall not want”. We shall not want for bread and meat, we shall not want for healing of the physical body and salvation; and we shall not want for the festive occasions of life, the joy of the Christian life.--Jesus took the five loaves and two fishes and multiplied to feed the crowd of five thousand; (b) We Preach the Jesus who is the Promised Christ, the Prophet that was promised in the Old Testament--“Then those men, when they had seen the sign that Jesus did, said,
Who Is The Lord Jesus Christ?

“This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world.” (John 5:14) -- (c) We Preach the Christ who is the Bread of Life. It is not without significance that in the same sixth chapter of John after this miracle with the five loaves and two fishes and after the walking on the water, that Jesus presented His great discourse on the bread of life -- “And Jesus said to them, ‘I am the bread of life. He who comes to Me shall never hunger, and he who believes in Me shall never thirst.’” (John 6:35) (Jesus can provide bread; Jesus would have you seek bread from Him, physical bread and the bread of life as you would not allow your making a live {physical bread} to remain alone when you can add to it “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”.)

5. The walking on water (John 6).

The walk on water by Jesus as He illustrated that He could certainly overcome the very works which He in the beginning made, was more than a simple walk, it was also a calming of the storm and sea. (a) We Preach the Christ who can calm the sea and storm, the Christ who can calm all the storms of life and (b) We Preach the Christ who patiently shows His disciples step by step to a profession of faith. Most of Jesus’ disciples were fisherman by trade, and by showing His authority over the elements where they made their living, He engendered faith from them as the Son of God. Jesus certainly did not throw away the key to creation when He came to earth, nor did He throw away the power of God for miracles over the natural creations of God.

6. The healing of the man blind from birth (John 9).

(a) We Preach the Christ who is the Light of the world as John told us in the introduction to the Gospel of John. Jesus and His disciples discussed the blind man and the factor of sin in his life before he was healed. It was in that discussion, Jesus said -- “As long as I am in the world, I am the light of the world.” (John 9:5) (What Jesus will add in John 14-17, as we will see as we become more familiar with it, is that when He was no longer in the world, that is after the resurrection and ascension, He sent the Holy Spirit to be the light of the world in that the Spirit of Truth now convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; that is until the “little while” at the end of the figurative variable of 1000 years -- the 1000 years variable plus a little while = the last days -- when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from earth according to the Word of God as recorded in II Thessalonians.)
It was then Jesus spat on the ground, made an ointment and placed it on the man's eyes, telling him to go wash in the pool of Siloam; and the man did so, he came back seeing.

b. We preach the Christ of the Introduction to John. I think we appreciate the introduction now more of the Gospel of John. The Apostle John in the Gospel of John had no smaller goal than to prove to people that Jesus was the Promised Prophet and Messiah of the Old Testament, and the Son of God; and in order that they might believe and have life. What John introduced about Christ is what the seven miracles were all about. In the making of water into wine, the Mediator of all Creation—the One of all things were made through Him—was able to reconstruct the things He made at first; in the healing of the nobleman's son, the healing of the paralyzed man, and the healing of the man born blind, the Lord of Creation showed He concern for the Man as the Crown of Creation and His ability and will to overcome any deficiencies that had occurred in His Creation; and in the feeding of the five thousand, the One through whom all the good things to eat had originally been provided, Jesus illustrated the simplicity with which He can still create something out of nothing or out of little; and in the walking on water, the Lord of Creation who made the heavens, the earth, and the seas did not suddenly become a victim of what He had made, rather an Overcomer.

7. The raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11).

(a) Lastly in the miracle of the raising of Lazarus from the dead, we Preach Jesus as the Resurrection and Life. And that is exactly what Jesus told the people present before He brought Lazarus back from the dead—“I am the resurrection and the life, He who believes in Me, though he may die, he shall live. And whoever lives and believes in Me shall never die. Do you believe this?” (John 11:13,14)—(b) Herein is the rest of the introduction to the Gospel of John. Jesus is the Life.

And to think that this great miracle worker, also with signs of outstanding and sinless character and signs of teachings from God as well as miracles from God, is the Jesus that is willing and ready to come into the home of your heart, to manifest Himself with the Father to disciples like you but not to the world; but we come to that in John 14-17.
It is time to make a rapid survey of the teachings of Jesus in John 14-17 in order to make a Checklist of Requirements we must meet in order to be called “Friend” by Jesus. That is, if Jesus works the same way today as He did with His first disciples, and with all disciples as He did with the 11 Apostles; and indeed, we have no reason to think otherwise. Even as God the Father is the same yesterday, today, and forever more; even as the Godhead of the Trinity which includes Jesus Christ and the Spirit are God “with whom there is no variableness or shadow of turning”, so Jesus works with us in this Age of Bible and Computers as He did with the first 11 Apostles in John 14-17. That is the consistent message of the Bible where pastor James, one of those 11 Apostles and the pastor of the First Church at Jerusalem reminds us in the book of James that the apostles and prophets, especially men like Elijah and Job, are given to us for examples.

This is not a complete exegesis of John 14-17, nor is it an exegetical message on John 14-17. It is a brief checklist in order to place in our minds the many aspects required for Friendship with Jesus. It remains for the rest of the chapters of the book to elaborate on the details of these requirements. Also later, we will do an exegesis in the form of a paraphrase, and also an exegetical message on “Friends of Jesus.” Perhaps you are familiar with the book by Andrew Blackwood called PREACHING FROM THE BIBLE where he notes as other authors on homiletics (preaching) do that there are generally three types of
Exegetical Checklist

messages: topical where the message centers around a primary subject, textual where a single text is expounded point by point, and exegetical where the message entails the exposition of a whole passage of Scriptures, sometimes even a chapter of the Bible. And of course we all know from II Corinthians 14:1-4 that true “prophesying” or speaking or preaching in the church should have one of the threefold purposes of edification, exhortation, or comfort. Today as then, let the person speaking something hard to understand in the church, concentrate on the priorities of edify, exhort, and comfort. Jesus was doing all three in the teachings and preachings to the 11 as recorded in John 14-17, and we desire to make a checklist of those requirements for Friendship. Perhaps many of us, although consistent in Bible study, have shunned somewhat these 4 chapters of John because, for one reason, Jesus seems to talk in circles. It is hard to make a four point sermon or even to grasp at one setting all the implications here. Even as often the truth of God in the Bible is a circle that centers and wraps around the personality of God Himself, so also are the teachings of Jesus in John 14-17 a circle of personal relationship. It is a circle about the personal relationship of Jesus and a Friend.

1. The proper way to learn Christ and God centered around three questions from the 11 Apostles--Thomas, Philip, and Judas, not Iscariot--and the three answers from Jesus Himself. The questions and answers we will discuss in detail later have to do with: (1) the way to God, Jesus, and heaven where Jesus is about to go; (2) how to see what God is really like, the age old question of man that was answered here two thousand years ago; and (3) how can Jesus manifest Himself to disciples and not to the rest of the world. You see all this preliminary part has to do with being disciples. It was a culmination of Jesus making disciples during three and one-half years of patient example and teachings. To be called a Friend by Jesus goes beyond discipleship, although it is a long and tedious process that must be followed before one is ready be called by Jesus Himself, “Friend”. (John 14:1-24) NOTE: Actually there is some overlap between the proper learning of Christ to be a disciple, and the identification as a Friend as you will see as we continue the exegesis.

2. Believing Friends (Jesus has not in the passage as yet called them “Friends”, but you can tell that He is already addressing them in that manner, for we know the great works done by these Apostles of Jesus later which, especially in the writing of the New Testament Scriptures have gone beyond what Jesus alone could do, and we would also think of the Apostle Paul, a later and noted friend of Jesus and the mighty works for God that he did in the writing of 14 New Testament books and the sponsorship of 3
more through Dr. Luke and John Mark} in Jesus will do the same works that Jesus does, and even greater works. (John 14:12)

3. Jesus urges Friends to ask in His name in prayer so that He can from heaven answer their prayers. (John 14:13,14) I think that you are beginning to see the connotation of “in My Name” from Jesus, and how it must imply a relationship with Jesus that goes far beyond discipleship into Friendship. So close must be the friendship between a Christian and Jesus that thoughts and prayers are consistent with that relationship. And if you are not getting any answers to prayer, perhaps you should improve your relationship with Jesus by jacking it up to the Friend of Jesus level?

4. Keeping all the commandments of Jesus, and we will see just some of them here in John 14-17, is necessary in order to be able to say that you love Jesus {Jesus says if you love Him, you will keep His commandments}; and that makes loving Jesus as proved by commandment keeping a requirement to be called a “Friend of Jesus”. (John 14:15). You see how we go in a circle about your relationship with Jesus, from love to commandments to requirements for Friendship. (“I love Jesus”, most would say; but Jesus measures the extent of your love to the same extent that you keep His commandments.)

5. Jesus does not have “orphans” as Friends, for He comes to His Friends through the Holy Spirit. (John 14:16-18). The Holy Spirit is a “Helper” or “Comforter” {another of the same kind as Jesus} that: (1) the world can not receive because it neither receives Him nor knows Him; (2) He abides with Friends forever {also by the way with disciples although the relationship may not be as good as that of Friends}; (3) He is another “Helper” like Jesus, another of the same kind as Jesus; (4) The Holy Spirit is the very Spirit of Truth just like Jesus is the way, truth, and life; (5) Friends of Jesus know the Holy Spirit because He dwells with them and in them. Forbid for me to repeat all the arguments of Ralph Herring in his wonderful book GOD BEING MY HELPER, read it for yourself; but please accept the emphasis now that the Holy Spirit is a person as much as God the Father of God the Son, and is the key to both successful discipleship and Friendship. {You will find so much about the Holy Spirit and teachings of how to work with Him in a cooperative manner in John 14-17 that we may have to devout a whole chapter, or the equivalent on the work of the Holy Spirit.} Do not ever forget the context of in the Garden before the crucifixion of Jesus where the 11 Apostles were sad as it began to dawn on them what He had taught several times to them of how He must leave them and go away.
6. Friends of Jesus know about the Resurrection of Jesus (John 14:19,20). While I suppose it is possible for mediocre disciples of Christ to know only a historical Jesus without the realities of the resurrection and Ascension, how could it be possible for a real Friend of Jesus not to know that He is alive, at the right hand of God the Father making intercession for our sins and preparing to come back to this earth to get us? “a little while longer”, Jesus said, “and the world will see me no longer; but you shall see me.” And we know how these 11 Friends of Jesus saw Him once without Thomas, then again with Thomas, and over 500 disciples saw Him alive at one time, although most of the world of that day did not see Him as they previously had teaching, preaching, and healing around Palestine.

7. Friends of Jesus after a confidence of faith on the resurrection and ascension of Christ, at that very time and very day also have a corresponding confidence about three great doctrines of the Bible (John 14:19,20): (1) that Jesus and the Father are One; (2) that Friends of Jesus are “in Me” (recall how a favorite word from Paul for this personal relationship is “IN CHRIST”); and (3) Jesus is inside all Friends {I would have to say also disciples although once again there may not be a convincing awareness}. This Jesus in Friends is germane to the “how to properly Learn Christ”, and it leads to a plain answer to Judas Iscariot in 14:22-24 about how the proper learning of Christ is also the way Christ manifests Himself to believers and not to the world.

8. A fundamental for discipleship, alias how to learn Christ properly, is to understand how Jesus manifests Himself to believers, disciples, and Friends; and not to the rest of the world. Judas, not Iscariot asks this very question in John 14:22 and with 14:23,24 from the third question and answer of how to learn Christ. {Perhaps you have not realized the significance from the LEARN CHRIST FROM THE APOSTLES AND PROPHETS commentaries of the “learn Christ” phrase of Ephesians 4:20,21 where first Paul questions if those claiming to be Christian had really learned Christ since they were living and acting like the other Gentiles around them, and if they had indeed heard Christ and been taught by Him.} The three questions and answers of John 14-17 tell specifically how to hear Christ and how to be taught by Him, alias the proper way to Learn Christ.

9. Friends of Jesus have special benefits from the inward presence of the Holy Spirit: (1) He teaches Friends all the things of God and Jesus; and (2) He is a memory jolt from all Friends of Jesus in that He reminds us of the teachings of Jesus. (John 14:25,26) Continuity is provided between the teachings
Friends of Jesus receive a peace that is not the same as the peace which the world knows and gives (John 14:27). We will want to discuss this peace along with the Bible's definition of "peacemaking", much like evangelism, when we come to Paul's Statement of Faith and Practice in Ephesians. For now, let us just say that Jesus Himself is that peace, a peace between God and man and between man and man. Suffice it to say from the John 14-17 context for now that at their best Friends of Jesus have untroubled and unafraid hearts. At least, there is that potential to Friends of no fear and cares of this world. There is another circle of love and peace, for you will remember how the Apostle John, by the way himself called the Apostle of love, taught in I John that "perfect love cast out fear." And you can see how that in the life of John, one so close in his personal relationship with Jesus, how the love and peace of that relationship and assurance of that relationship and the future as well as the presence of that relationship cast out fear in his own life.

11. Friends of Jesus that are such because they really love Jesus, have the conviction of faith that God the Father is much greater than God the Son along with the understanding that Jesus after resurrection and ascension went back to heaven to be with God the Father. (John 14:28,29) Also that Jesus sent the Holy Spirit from God as a great historical event that marked the beginning of the last days, the end to be marked by the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth with the subsequent loosing of Satan.

12. Friends of Jesus have the conviction that Satan is "the ruler of this world", and that as such the world has nothing in Jesus as does Satan (John 14:30). Somehow American Christians have come to believe that the world of the United States is not the same as the world of the Bible, and that Satan does not rule in the world of the United States. Friends of Jesus know better!
13. We see the little regard that Jesus has for Satan and the world; however He does add that He is going to the crucifixion in order that this same world may know that Jesus loves the Father, the same Father who gave Him the commandment of the crucifixion for the sins of the world. (John 14:31)

A Breather

There truly is a transition here between John 14 and 15 where the last verse of chapter 14 where Jesus says, “let us arise and go from here”, even as we will find in 14-17 other transitional events such as on the way to the Garden and in the Garden. Here is 14 is dialogue with a certain give and take with the Apostles, a certain statement of teaching from Jesus and then a look for understanding from the Apostles. You can see how these admonitions from Jesus come rapidly one after another, often without any seeming direct connection. It is almost as if here in the Upper Room and Garden and in these 4 chapters from John, Jesus is trying to summarize in single, terse statements everything that He has taught the disciples for 3 and one-half years. It is almost as if Jesus had in mind a final “checklist” for His disciples that would become friends, before His takeoff back to heaven. Certainly much of it would not make sense if we have not read the teachings and life of Jesus as recorded in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and the rest of John. And by the way, although it would be difficult to paraphrase or precis the “Condensed Version of Mark with comments” in my commentary A CUP OF WATER which you can download free from www.biblecombibleman.com, you can read and study it as a supplement to this book as a reminder of the total teachings of Jesus. In fact to properly learn Christ, it is recommended that you also download from the same website a copy of THE MAGIC OUTLINE OF THE BIBLE. It is also called “12 Top Topics of the Bible”. It will give you the Bible understanding you need to appreciate the next step in being a Friend of Jesus. Remember how at the broad level two things are required: (1) to learn all things that Jesus taught, which as He said He received from God the Father {that would include all the truth of God of the Old and New Testament}; and (2) to know about eschatology, which also includes a lot of the Old and New Testament.

John 13 and the New Commandment

While Jesus gave men teachings in the form of Commandments {whatever teaching is given to you by Your Master and Lord should also be considered a commandment, and Jesus made that clear in His teachings}, such as the Sermon on the Mount and in fact 3 and 1/2 years full of teachings, which we
might call the Old Commandments of Jesus {even new teachings on the older commandments of the Old Testaments} as far as I can recall this in John 13 is the only new commandment that Jesus gave to the disciples.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another {so far it does not sound new but when the next phrase is added it becomes new}; as I have loved you, that you also love one another.” (John 13:34)

First Jesus needed to show the 11 Apostles how much He loved them, and in particular when He exhibited for them HUMBLE UNSELFISH SERVICE. With that event of the first half of John 13 as a background, Jesus could present to them this supreme challenge of ultimate love in the second half of John 13. Of course it will go further than this example to the supreme example of HUMBLE UNSELFISH SERVICE in the cross in John 15 when Jesus again mentions this love like He loved them and then proceeds to the cross.

“This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you. {You recognize it immediately as the New Commandment.} Greater love has no man than this, than to lay down one’s life for his friends.” (John 15:12,13)

This Kind of Love the Best Evangelism

In the context of this teaching Jesus makes it clear that the New Commandment is the best method of evangelism, in fact it is in the next verse after John 13:34 where the New Commandment is given.

“By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another.” (John 13:35)

While during my ministry I have always objected to those who claim the divisions in the church caused by denominations, generally because they are promoting a false foundation for unity based on the commotions of disunity. In other words I recall in a Naval Chapel service each Sunday evening in Argentia, Newfoundland where many of us of several different denominations were working together for Christ, then along came an advocate of “unity through non-denominationalism” {there is a difference between interdenominational work and nondenominational work, the latter being more negative}, that actually with his message caused disunity among us. However, the main source of putting a damper on “Evangelism through the New Commandment” is the separation between local
churches. For example, as a very practical example, why should not a member of one local Baptist church, or of any other denominational church, not also be automatically accepted as a member of another local Baptist church, or of any other local church; or with the roles of real believers already written permanently and indestructible in heaven, why do we even need church roles. Revolutionary, yes; but none the less revolutionary than the Evangelism of the New Commandments on which concepts as these are based!

An Example of One Friend, the Apostle John

Before the closing of this chapter, we should mention the Apostle John as perhaps the best disciple example of all time for this New Commandment.

1. When the Supper was over but the disciples were still seated at the table with Jesus, Jesus told them straight out that one of the 12 would betray him (John 13:18-30); but they were perplexed as to which one it was, never thinking that it was their treasurer; but Simon Peter motioned for John as the one "leaning on Jesus' bosom" and as the disciple "whom Jesus loved" to ask about who it was.

   "Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask, who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back (John) on Jesus' breast, he said to Him, 'Lord, who is it?'" (John 13:24,25)

2. After the Resurrection, Jesus restored Peter to fellowship demanded by his betrayal, Jesus also giving him a commission to feed His sheep, then in John 21:18,19 foretelling the way he would die; which in turn lead Peter to look back at the Apostle John to ask how he should die?

   "Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, 'Lord, who is the one who betrays You?' Peter, seeing him {the disciple who Jesus loved, and probably first among the friends of Jesus}, said to Jesus, 'But Lord, what about this man?'" (John 21:20,21)

3. Are you surprised therefore that this relationship between Jesus and John was so great that Jesus trusted John enough to leave the care of His mother, Mary, into his hands.
“When Jesus therefore saw his mother and the disciple standing by, whom he loved! Then saith to the disciple, Behold, thy mother! And from that hour the disciple took her unto his own home.” (John 19:18-27)

In short, not only is the Apostle John our best example for the NEW COMMANDMENT and “Friends of Jesus”, but he is in the five books of John perhaps our best source of teachings on the subjects. Especially, we will look at later in this book, the teachings from Jesus and the Holy Spirit by way of the Apostle John in the little epistles.
The history of theology, Christianity, and denominations illustrates the discovery of a verse or verses of Scripture which surprises some new group, which when isolated out of the context of the book from which it came and the whole Bible, creates additional divisions and distinction. You recall the example of the person who read in one place in the Bible “Judas went out and hanged himself”, then put that together with “go thou and do likewise”. It has lead many to conclude that you can prove anything form the Bible. Well, not if you keep a verse in the chapter context, the chapter in the book context, the book in the New Testament or Old Testament context, and the Testament in the total Bible context. In other words, the larger the amount of the Bible that is included in your “Statement of Faith and Practice”, the higher degree of probability do you have of high fidelity with what God through the Holy Spirit, through Jesus, the Apostles, and Prophets had put in there in the first place. This is implied in the statement by the Apostle Peter that “no scripture is of any private interpretation”. The interpretation of Jesus is to be found in the writings of the Apostles; the interpretation of the Apostles is to be found by the inherent agreements through the Spirit between the writing of one Apostle with another; and the Apostles, especially Paul, Matthew, and Jesus specialized in the interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets, quoting often in their writings from the Prophets and then through what Jesus taught them and how the Holy Spirit guided them, explained what the Prophets meant. All this has been written to come to the necessity of putting as much Scripture as possible into any significant Bible-
based “Statement of Faith and Practice”; and the recognition of the fact that we can do no better than to use the book of Ephesians, written by the Apostle Paul from the human side and by the Holy Spirit on the supernatural side, as a minimal “Statement of Faith and Practice”.

Let me illustrate how this was the intention of the Apostle Paul in the first place, and consequently also the intention of God as the Source of Scripture. Remember that “all Scripture is given by inspiration of God...” One of the greatest works of God in history, second perhaps only to the Crucifixion of Christ on the cross for the salvation provision to the whole world, is God’s creation through Apostles and Prophets and Jesus of the “Oracles of God”, the Word of God, the book of 66 books that we have in our possession. Study carefully the content of the first ten books that the Apostle Paul wrote, then study carefully Ephesians and the twin of Colossians carefully, and you will find that Ephesians is a condensed summary of those first ten books such as Romans, I and II Corinthians, Hebrews, Galatians, and so on. (See the LEARN CHRIST commentary, volume 4, “Christ, Paul, and the Falling Away” for more on this and how Paul was chosen by Christ to have the ministry of being the chief editor of the New Testament. You will find good material on this also in volume 1, “The Old Testament According to the New Testament”.) Also this makes Ephesians therefore the prime candidate to summarize all of the Bible, and to be the prime candidate to be the most Bible-comprehensive “Statement of Faith and Practice”. How angry such an approach must make Satan and the disciples of Satan, who like Satan, would take Scripture out of context to prove some pet theory, to make disciples after themselves, and to win from Satan the status in the world he promised to Jesus by quoting Scripture out of context.

Of course, Jesus set the pattern for Paul and the other Apostles to quote extensively from the Old Testament in their teachings and writings; but Paul was the chief practitioner of that pattern. You will notice that books like Romans, Hebrews, and I and II Corinthians are full of Old Testament quotes with an explanation of the correct meaning accompanying the quote. This is what is meant by “no scripture is of any private interpretation”. Jesus and the Apostles quote and explain the proper interpretation of the Old Testament Prophets; the proper interpretation comes by letting Paul explain John on the same subject, and vice versa, and letting Peter explain Paul and John, and Jesus through Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John explain all of them, and vice versa. Never, Never will you find a contradiction between any of the Apostles and
Jesus or of the Prophets and Apostles. If you think you have found one, it is a personal problem; and you must enlarge the total context of your Bible study.

Anyway back to the main point: you will see in the first 10 books of Paul a large number of quotes, then suddenly with the writing of Ephesians, almost no quotes. Why? It is time to summarize all the great truths of God that Paul has written about in the first ten books. And never forget, how qualified Paul was on the Old Testament. Paul before conversion was a “lawyer”; and in Israel that meant an authority of the law of the nation which was also the Old Testament. Granted Paul needed “conversion” on the road of Damascus in order to remove the “veil” which blinded in the proper understanding of the Old Testament, which he wrote about as still in the way of most Jews for seeing the proper interpretation of the Old Testament; true also Paul needed immediately after conversion and some instruction from Ananias, private time in Arabia with the Ascended Christ to get straightened out his own interpretations and understandings of Scripture, even a little time with Peter and James recording their testimonies of personal experience with Jesus {later to be the manuscripts that Paul left for John Mark and Dr. Luke to write the Gospels that Paul sponsored as chief editor of the New Testament}; and then lastly before writing the majority of the New Testament books, 14 of 27, Paul needed to study again through the Old Testament in the light of his recent experiences and teachings from Jesus and with guidance from the Holy Spirit, about whom no doubt Jesus has taught him. What did Paul do during this study again through the Bible during those so-called seven silent years at Tarsus? He must have made a record on parchments and books of all those quotes that he would later use so extensively in books like Romans, Hebrews, and Corinthians, even in the little epistle of Galatians.

Well, you see the point: the first ten books from Paul are a summary of the Old Testament with proper interpretations, also a summary of his own conversion experience and the teachings of Jesus in Arabia; and Ephesians is a summary of those first ten books, hence a summary of the Bible itself; and therefore is a prime candidate from the Word of God for a comprehensive “Statement of Faith and Practice”.

8-1: Ephesians Chapter One: Statements of Faith and Understandings, the “spiritual blessings in heavenly places”. {If you desire you can correlate these enumerated spiritual blessings even with the beatitudes of the Sermon on the Mount.}

1. Some Supporting Bible understandings for Major Statements of Faith.
Statement of Faith and Practice.

(1). (Ephesians 1:1a): Paul was an Apostle of Jesus Christ, called personally by the Ascended Christ on the road to Damascus and specially trained by Jesus in Arabia. \{Later in Ephesians we will learn that it is the Ascended Christ that calls Apostles as well as evangelists and pastors, and gave special gifts to those men for the benefit of the total body of Christ, the church.\} Based on those verses as a starting point, we go on to the total context of the Bible to find that only Apostles and Prophets can get and give revelations, or Scripture.

(2). (Ephesians 1:1b) It was the will of God for Paul to be an Apostle. Jesus when He called Paul, like always in every thing He did, was only doing the will of God; and was expressing fully the will of God.

(3). (Ephesians 1:2). True Christians or believers are called “saints” in the Bible in order among other things to distinguish between “the faithful in Christ Jesus” and the unfaithful, between the tares and the wheat, between the sheep and the goats. Always from Jesus and all the Apostles in the Bible is the recognition that all who chose to name the name of Christ do not belong to Christ. In that final Day of the LORD and Lord, many will say to Christ “Lord, Lord”; and Christ will say, “depart from me you that work iniquity, for I never knew you.”


(1). (Ephesians 1:3a) The only God of the Universe, the same God of the Bible, is the “God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ”; and God is only our Father because first He was the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we have accepted them for What and Who they are. \{Also God has adopted us through the work of the Spirit, and the Spirit causes us to cry “Abba” for Father.\}

(2). (Ephesians 1:3b). The false and itching ears teachers going about to teach and preach the Gospel of Wealth, the corollary of success, and the Gospel of Prosperity need to be refocused again on the primary place of “spiritual blessings” as in heavenly places. The prosperous and wealthy just can not get their lusts and eyes off material possessions here on earth, and off their desires to justify themselves for lives dedicated to seeking first these other things instead of the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness.
(3). God chose us to be believers from before the foundation of the world, (Ephesians 1:4a). This is predestination, sometimes in Theology called Calvinism, and contrasted to Arminianism or free will. Both are true in the Bible, but beyond our complete understanding even as we can not fully understand the nature of light itself: how it can be both wavelike in nature and sometimes act like a particle. We can not even comprehend the molecule of water. A best example of how both are true in the Bible is the shipwreck of Paul on the way to Rome. God predestined and told Paul, Paul telling also the sailors, that no one would be lost in the shipwreck; but yet later Paul invoked the freedom of choice of the sailors in that he told them if they left the ship for the life raft they could not be saved. You see freedom of choice and predestination were both there.

(4). God chose us to be sanctified, “holy and blameless before Him in love” (Ephesians 1:4b).

(5). God predestined us to adoption as Sons through Jesus Christ and the adoption being by God Himself (Ephesians 1:5). The Apostle John in John 1 expressed it in a lovely manner as he wrote, “But as many as received Him {Christ}, to them gave He {God} the power to become Sons of God.” Adoption is to become a son of the very God of this Universe, the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ; and to have His inward Spirit naturally call out to God as Father. Why did the great God do this? It was “the pleasure of His will”. Like Paul writes in Romans, can the clay say to the potter why did you chose me or why did you make me this way? Be grateful that you are among the chosen; work to be worthy (“work out your own salvation with fear and trembling”); and accept it as it is by grace. Ephesians 1:6 continues of God’s Pleasure, the famous commentary by W.O. Carver expressing that in the title for Ephesians of “The Glory of God in the Christian Calling”.

(6). We are adopted and justified, the justification expressed as “accepted by God” (Ephesians 1:6b). How grand it is, Paul is saying, to be accepted by the “Beloved Father”, He that runs and controls all and is the only Eternal God.

(7). Wow, we just can grasp the rapid advance of statements of faith about salvation, what Paul likes to call the spiritual blessings in heavenly places, as we go from predestination to adoption to justification, and now in Ephesians 1:7 to redemption and forgiveness.
Statement of Faith and Practice.

a. Redemption, or the buying back of us to God, is by the blood of Christ, a pungent phrase to describe how Jesus died on the cross for our sins.

b. We have forgiveness of sins by God through the Lord Jesus Christ and by the grace of God. {Is that not a good statement of faith about salvation! Did I not hear an Amen or two coming out of Norway?}

(8). The Mystery of the Will of God, which only He could reveal through Jesus and the Apostles, is that He might get together all things that are in heaven and in earth under the Lordship of Christ (Ephesians 1:9,10). This mystery of the will of God was manifested by God through Christ at one certain time in history, when Jesus lived and died, which the Bible calls “in the dispensation of the Fullness of the times”, In other words at the time and place in human history chosen by God.

(9). Here we go again on more spiritual blessings in heavenly places and more on predestination by God (Ephesians 1:11-14). This spiritual blessing is our inheritance, our future and security if you would! This inheritance or future heritage is part of the predestined purpose of God. Even as James quoted from the Prophets at the Great Jerusalem conference in Acts of how “known unto God are all His works from the beginning”, even so Paul echoes this same doctrine in the “Him who works all things according to the counsel of His will”. You just know that Paul is summarizing here from Romans where he has previously written, “and we know that all things work together for good for those who love the Lord and the called according to His purpose.” Here as Paul goes on, we see our common inheritance with those who first believed in Christ, us being among those who later have “trusted after hearing the word of truth, which is the gospel of our salvation! Wow, as we preacher boys use to say at Bible college, “that will preach!”

(10). Although the “believe and be baptized” of Ephesians 1:13 continues on our inheritance started above, I set it out as a separate doctrinal statement of faith. The prime baptism of the 14 letters of Paul and of the Bible is the one baptism of salvation. Believe is our part, and the one baptism that comes with real faith is the part done by God. This one baptism of salvation is called “the seal of God”. Paul is again summarizing what he wrote in II Timothy books about “nevertheless the foundation of God stands sure, having this seal that God knows His own, and let every one who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” The Holy Spirit is the “guarantee”, the surety if you would, of our to-be-completed salvation; the security and guarantee of our inheritance in
salvation. The inheritance is not complete until the full redemption of body and soul at the Second Coming of Christ (Thessalonians), when the purchased possession (us) becomes completed!

NOTE: Sorry this simple statement of Faith and practice is so long; but the praise to God and Bible just flows on, comparing Scripture with Scripture!

(11). (Ephesians 1:17): The Holy Spirit given to all believers is also the Spirit of “wisdom and revelation”. Do not misread this verse. Revelation is not given to all believers, but rather the Spirit of Revelation. What this is another way of saying, as Paul does in the first 10 letters, is that the same Holy Spirit who wrote the Bible, giving the revelations through Apostles and Prophets and Jesus, is the same Holy Spirit that lives and teaches inside the believer. What you will find in the context of Ephesians 1:17-18 is a clear distinction between revelation and illumination. What happened in the completed writing of the Word of God through Apostles and Prophets, the 66 books we called Bible. That Bible only is “revelation”; and what happens to us as believers when we gain understanding from the Bible with the help of the Holy Spirit is “illumination”.

“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 to us who believe, according to the working of His mighty power…” (Ephesians 1:18,19)

NOTE: Please stay away from the current and popular heresy of “God told me”, or “God gave me a word”, or even worse the “God gave me a revelation”--all of which sound like God is revealing new Word of God through you or your Bible teachers; and which tends to confuse illumination and revelation. Please read carefully first and second Corinthians where Paul and the Word of God, once and for all, dealt with this problem in a church body where members thought either “the Word of God came to them only” or that “the Word of God came out of them only”. This conceited and self-serving attitude breeds all sorts of false practices such as: (a) Gnosticism where certain church members claim to have special revelations and wisdom that others do not have; (b) self-gratification and disturbances in worship where everybody has a song, a word, and a prophecy and a prayer at the same time; and (c) so-called praise songs without any real meaning, and done contrary to the worship traits of Corinthians with “understanding”.

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(12). The same power of God and of the Holy Spirit at work as God brought forth Jesus from the dead in the Resurrection on the third day after Crucifixion is the same power at work in us for completed salvation: first the 9 month new birth, not that instantaneous new birth of the fundamentalists for their own glory; then the process of sanctification as we become more like Christ, and then full salvation or redemption at the Second Coming of Christ as "we shall be like Him for we shall see Him as He is".

(a). God used this same power when after He resurrected Christ from the dead, He caused Christ to Ascend back to heaven where He is seated at the right hand of God the Father. {We should often pray for more awareness of God seated there on the great white throne with His feet in the clouds, and of the Lord Jesus Christ seated in a place of honor and rule at His right hand where he does two things: ever lives to make intercession for our sins, and is preparing to come again to get us!}

(b). This power of God has ordained that Christ rule at His right hand, "far above all principality and power and might and dominion, and every name that is named, not only in this age but in that which is to come." {This total earth age and the age of eternity beyond this life!}

NOTE: You need some perspective of the fullness of what Paul is writing here, based on what is one of the most important doctrinal statements on the relationship between God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ to be found anywhere in the Bible. In I Corinthians 15:24-28: "Then comes the end, when He delivers the kingdom to God the Father, when He puts an end to all rule and all authority and power. For He must reign till He has put all enemies under His feet...Now when all things {that includes death in the resurrection of the bodies at the second coming of Christ} are made subject to Him who puts all things under Him, that God may be all in all." I have never failed to read this in a worship service without seeing grimaces of expression from some. Although it is simply the reading of one of the most important Scriptures, albeit also one of the most neglected as it seems to counter some isogetical conclusions on last things (eschatology) of the Bible, perhaps of the notes of the Scofield Reference Bible, sometimes accepted like Scriptures themselves, there is a reaction as if the Christ is all concepts of many believers can not allow for the time when God is all in all as the kingdom of God is delivered by Jesus to God the Father. Where I think much of the problem is among fundamentalists, especially those dedicated to the fallacious notes of the Scofield Reference Bible on eschatology, is on the Bible words "Then comes the end"—a clear statement
that it is all over without all the complications of Scofield notes like a literal 1000 years, a kingdom on earth where the rich and prosperous can continue to enjoy all their possessions, and a delay in the beginning of eternity with the punishment of the wicked and the reward of the dead. Recently a friend of mine with the Christian Life Commission of the SBC, quoted from II Thessalonians 15-17 how in the Second Coming of Christ the Lord Jesus Christ Himself will descend from heaven with a shout and the final trumpet of God, the dead in Christ rising first to meet Christ and then those alive caught up with them to meet the Lord in the air, and this friend placed the emphasis on “And thus shall we always be with the Lord.” Then he asked, “what is so hard about this to understand”. The Second Coming and it is all over; and trying to add all these seven years and thousands of years are figments of a good imagination. I will tell you right now what will keep you from the follies of the Scofield Reference Bible with its weird and out of context approach to the book of Revelation, and that is this Bible understanding: what bound Satan for a figurative 1000 years, however real in that it represents a long period of history chosen by God not to be given as a precise number, was the Coming of the Holy Spirit in great power and all over the earth at one time on the first Day of Pentecost after the Resurrection and Ascension. It is the Holy Spirit that binds Satan to a limited effectivity by convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. (Read about that in Acts.) What looses Satan is when the Holy Spirit during the Falling Away is withdrawn from earth according to II Thessalonians. Now, what this does for our eschatology is to make the beginning of the one thousand years at the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension, and the end of the one thousand years with the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit during the Falling Away. And of how certain Pentecostals and fundamentalists strain at a gnat and swallow a camel as they try to claim that this withdrawal of the Holy Spirit is only to the extent of the Holy Spirit in the Christians that are taken up in the rapture. It is a good example of bad exegesis or hermeneutics and a good example of itching ears Bible teachers. How unfortunate it is that young and inexperienced Bible teachers and preachers when pressed to deliver their first messages on Revelation and eschatology, take the easy way out of preaching the Scofield Reference Bible notes. It is a desperate beginning to a lifelong commitment for them and their hearers that they never get away from. Derby was a Irishman, unfortunately formerly an eloquent lawyer, who instigated “dispensationalism”; Scoffed, a formerly divorced and also somewhat dubious lawyer, took Darby and while pastor of a Congregationalist church in Dallas, wrote the NOTES as a correspondence course. THE NOTES ARE NOT PART OF THE BIBLE; THEY ARE NOT PART OF THE WORD OF GOD TO BE TAKEN WITH THE SAME RESPECT AND REGARD AS THE BIBLE. And before you give those kinds of beliefs and notes a
(c). This power and authority of God has made Christ the head of the church, then and now. That means, bottom line, that Christ is the head of your local church as well as the head of the total church body, the Assembly of the Firstborn written in heaven. What you will find in the first chapters of Revelation in Christ’s messages through John to the 7 churches of Asia Minor is that when Christ is not indeed head of a local church like at Ephesus or Thyatira bad things happen in doctrine and practice; and often Christ removes the pastors that he has called and placed there, often it seems like it is the freedom of choice of the church members who will no longer endure sound doctrine, the sure sign that they have already gotten away from the Lordship of Christ as head of their lives and churches.

(13). The Bible here in Ephesians 1:23 teaches one church and yet many churches; and those members of the many churches not among the tares or the goats in the kingdom are automatically members, with a profession of faith and the one baptism of salvation, in the one body of Christ, the church, the Assembly of the Firstborn written in heaven.

8-2: Paul’s Statements of Faith in Ephesians 2, the BEFORE and AFTER of the IN CHRIST life.

1. The AIC or AFTER IN CHRIST of Ephesians 2. “Christian” is not a preferred word of the Bible for believers, being found only three times in the New Testament. Today, it has lost a lot of meaning. Like former prime minister Begin said years ago, “You Americans are born Christians just we like we Israelis are born Jews.” Well, according to the Bible, neither is true, although it is admitted that it is a popular belief. Unfortunately, many think they are Christians because they are Americans, and many Jews think they are children of God because they are born of the nation of Israel, contrary to the whole context of the teachings of the Bible in the book of Romans. A preferred word of the 14 letters of Paul is “in Christ”, or even those “who name the name of Christ”.

(1). We are “made alive” in Christ as we experience the new birth, the beginning of the one baptism of salvation. (Ephesians 2:1)
(2). By the grace of God, an unmerited and unearned favor, we are saved, Ephesians 2:5 and 2:8,9. Even while we were dead in trespasses and sins, God rich in mercy and love made us alive together with Christ.

(3). God has raised us up together with Christ and made us sit together with Christ in heavenly places. (Ephesians 2:6)

(4). God wants to show in the ages to come of eternity and heaven and on the new earth, and after this world age, the full extent of those spiritual blessings. Once again a short summary of Paul in Romans about "eye hath not seen, nor ear heard", nor has it even entered into the mind of man, "the things God has prepared for those who love Him."

(5). After in Christ, we are "God’s workmanship", the outworking in our lives of the indwelling spirit of God and the one baptism, "created in Christ Jesus for good works" by new birth and the continuing process of sanctification or Christlikeness. And God has also predestined our good works (Ephesians 2:10).

(6). After in Christ, you are brought back to hope, to the real Israel of the children of God, and back to God and heaven. (Ephesians 2:13)

2. The BIC of BEFORE IN CHRIST of Ephesians 2.

(1). Before in Christ, you were dead in trespasses and sins (2:1); before you were walking according to the customs and traditions of this world (2:2), which is the same as walking or living according to Satan, the prince and power of this world and this world system (2:2); and you before in Christ lived according to that evil spirit that now controls all in the world not believers, disobedience of unbelief being the ultimate of all evils (2:2); before in Christ you conducted yourselves like them in the “lusts of the flesh”--John in the little epistle of I John identifies all it is to “love the world” as the lusts of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life; and before in Christ you lived in order to fulfill lusts of the flesh and lusts of the mind--Pastor James writes not to be deceived about our natural and human spirit sometimes even allowed to control us in our church behavior where “we lust to envy”; and before in Christ we were by nature also the children of wrath. {The Bible never, ever teaches of an inherent good nature of man! “The heart is desperately wicked above all things, and who can know it.” And “all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” By the way, some of these verses of Ephesians 2, perhaps in a more positive manner, are summaries of the sinners of Romans 3.}
(2). Before in Christ, you Gentiles were without Christ, aliens from the commonwealth of Israel (and do not forget how Paul has already extensively taught in Romans of the true children of God, the true Jews, and the true Israel--such as “all Israel is not of Israel”), strangers from the covenant promises of God, without hope and without God. (Ephesians 2:11-12)

3. What God did for you to make possible through Christ your transition from the BIC to the AIC! (Ephesians 2:14-22 and 2:13)

   (1). Before you were far off, but now you are brought near to God through the blood of Christ, again a favorite biblical phrase for the death of Christ on the cross for our sins. (Ephesians 2:13)

   (2). Jesus has made Jew and Gentile believers One by breaking down the “middle wall of partition” (2:14), thus Jesus Himself becoming Peace and our Peace. {Peacemaking in the strict Bible sense of the word is to extend the influence of Christ, between God and man and between man and man!}

   (3). Jesus nailed to the cross the enmity between Jews and Gentiles and the commandments in ordinances thus creating in Himself one new humanity of Jewish and Gentile believers. That is peace! (Ephesians 2:15)

   (4). Jesus made in the cross reconciliation between God and man, between Jew and Gentile, another great and biblical word of the cross and more of peacemaking, at the same time creating of Jews and Gentiles one believing body, the church. (Ephesians 2:16)

NOTE: Now, do you really think that you can say all these in one simple statement of faith and practice with an enumerated listed of sentences for each great Bible doctrine. However, we will try to do so at the end of this Statement of Faith and Practice from Paul in Ephesians at the end of this chapter, after we have the proper exegetical Bible background.

(5). Through the One Christ all members of the one church have equal access to the One God the Father by way of the One Holy Spirit. (Ephesians 2:18) {You can almost smell that Paul is warming up for the seven great Ones, the major doctrines of the Bible, to be stated later in Ephesians 4:4-6 which even as Ephesians is a summary statement of faith of the whole Bible, are a more condensed summary of the Bible and of Ephesians itself. How can we go wrong if we have enough respect for the Bible as the Word of God, for the
teachings of Jesus and the love of Jesus, and we meet the Bible's own guidelines for understanding with such thoroughness and conciseness in the Bible—guidelines or rules for understanding as laid out in the Bible are often called hermeneutics, sometimes called the science of biblical interpretation.)

NOTE: We could almost dispense with all these preliminary statements of faith if we could fully understand from the full context of the Bible, what is meant by "There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all, who is above all, and through all, and in you all." (Ephesians 4:4-6) Unfortunately, we have a theological and religious history behind us where Bible readers and so-called scholars have ignored the Authorized Semi-Public Interpretation of the Bible—that is that "no scripture is of any private interpretation"; that the natural man can not understand the Bible things of the Spirit of God; and that have failed to practice the required rules of understanding laid down in the Bible. Particularly must be discuss why "one salvation" is not in the list of major Bible doctrines, and how the "one baptism" is the all-inclusive phrase of faith for salvation. And once again may I recommend the LEARN CHRIST commentary on the 14 letters of the Apostle Paul with the conclusion chapter on "Ephesians and Colossians", and entitled "Believe and Be Baptized". In fact, if you wished you could take these 7 ONEs of Ephesians 4:4-6 as the major 7 points of a statement of faith, then go back to list all the pertinent truths of Ephesians 1 and 2 under these seven. Yes, Paul was a lawyer, a religious lawyer of the Bible, a supreme logician, and above all an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. You will find that Muslims like to talk about Jesus, and say they accept all about Him, and accept all the Prophets of the Old Testament; but when you bring up the Apostle Paul they grow silent! Of course, I might also add that without the rest of Ephesians 4 we would never see the relationship of this unity in the ONEs to the church, and above all without Ephesians 5 and 6 we would never see the PRACTICES of faith as in a "Statement of Faith and Practice".

8-3: Statements of Faith in Ephesians 3, Explanation of the Mystery of God, the One Body.

You know how "mystery" is repeated in the Bible, such as in the mystery of godliness, to describe a revealed truth from God that otherwise we would not know about! It is something that God has not always made known, but chooses in certain periods of history to make known through Jesus, the Apostles and Prophets. Although Paul elaborates here on the One Body or one church in a whole summarizing chapter of Ephesians, we still have not learned the lesson restated by the fundamentalists John R. Rice of "One Church but Many Churches", that while
there are many local churches in the world and in the Bible, there is one Assembly of the Firstborn written in heaven, many trying to make their denomination synonymous with the one church and ignoring the fact that they, contrary to the teachings of Jesus forbidding before the End separation of the tares and the wheat, have the arrogance to think that they, and they alone of all Christians, in their own local church have already made that distinction! {Would it not be grand if any group of humans could put a sign out in front of their local church which says The Church, and automatically they would be assured that only wheat and sheep, without any tares or goats, are in their fellowship. Dream on, folks! You have the wrong time and the wrong Person for that! This separation in spite of such arrogance and self-deceiving convictions will be done at the time of the Second Coming of Christ, and by the Person of Christ Himself with the angels dispatched to the four corners of the earth! Did I hear an Amen!}

1. This Mystery was made known by Revelation to the Apostle Paul (Ephesians 3:3a): this Mystery is what Paul has written about in the previous two chapters of Ephesians (Ephesians 3:3b): this mystery was received by the Apostle Paul as a dispensation of the grace of God (Ephesians 3:2): this mystery is of the knowledge of Christ (3:4): this mystery was not made known by God to men in the history before Paul (3:5a), at least not in the form and completeness as it has now been revealed to Paul by the Holy Spirit, and to the “apostles and prophets” (3:5b).

2. This Mystery in Christ fully stated: “that the Gentiles should be fellow heirs, of the same body, and partakers of His promise in Christ through the Gospel...” (Ephesians 3:6)

3. Paul became a “minister” with this Mystery of Christ and the one body. (Ephesians 3:7)

   a. It is a mystery in fellowship (3:9) which was from the beginning of creation by God through Christ has been hidden to the world, but the intention of God was that now the mystery might be known by the “manifold wisdom of God”. Known “by the church”. This mystery of the one body is according to the eternal purpose that from the beginning God purposed in Christ.

   b. It is by this faith in the Lord Jesus Christ that we have access and confidence with God and with the one church. (3:11,12)
4. A Prayer by the Apostle Paul for all believers to grant believers, Ephesians 3:14-21, the following blessings. {I don't know about you but next to Jesus being at the right hand of God the Father to pray for our sins, I appreciate the Apostle Paul expressing this prayer for us!}

   a. That you and we may be “strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man.” (3:16). {Later in the two closing chapters of Ephesians, in the practice section of the statement of faith, Paul will give some specifics for strengthening as we put on the whole armor of God.}

   b. That God may dwell in your hearts through faith (3:17). Even as Paul starts the ball rolling with how to learn Christ, not as the others around us in the world have learned Christ, and then Jesus with the 3 questions and answers of John 14 describes the “how” of learning Christ, even so you see an echo of such sound Bible doctrine here in 3:17 where Christ and God dwell in the human heart through faith.

   c. That you may be “rooted and grounded in faith” (3:17b). Always remember according to the parable of the seed and the sower, that the seed planted on hard ground is those that stumble in a local church and that never develop any root in the faith.

   d. That you may be able to comprehend with all the saints of all the ages in the great and real history of Christianity, the four dimensions of the love of Christ. Try as hard as you may, you can not visualize anything beyond the three dimensions we know except by adding the dimension of time, that is love that continues with time. (Ephesians 3:17-19)

8-4: Paul’s Statement of Faith in Ephesians 4, the unity of the faith, the 7 ONEs, and of the one church with Christ.

1. Here “faith and practice” blend as Paul, having blessed all believers and prayed for them, now throws out the challenge “to walk worthy of the calling with which you were called”. Certainly, you must see in the “walk worthy” of the Christian calling, a practice of the faith; and in Ephesians 4 you will see a beginning of the practices added to faith, then later in Ephesians 5 and 6 the pure practices of “faith and practice”. How are some preliminary and general ways in which you can practice Christian faith?

   (1). Walk or live with all lowliness and gentleness, with longsuffering, bearing with one another in love (Ephesians 4:2). Certainly a most violated Scripture of
church members is the admonition "not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to. And lest we lose perspective of what is happening in churches today during this time of the Falling Away, let us remember the bad church behavior of II Timothy 3:1-9 where these church members have a form of godliness but deny the power thereof. Yes, these bad behaviors and bad attitudes do happen to church members, and today! Once again, this is part of keeping an admonition that guards against pride and advocates humility in the total Bible realities and context where church members do and can go bad!

(2). Church or fellowship members are to keep an inherent unity given by the Holy Spirit of God, which either exists in the fellowship because God put it there or does not exist, that can not be promoted through human means, PR, or the peace efforts of men as advocated by Rich Warren in his "Purpose Driven" books. (Ephesians 4:3) If you want real unity in your church body, it is recommended that you read closely this fourth chapter of Ephesians on exactly how unity does come in a church body. I think you will find it quite different from the forced and coerced efforts of Warren and disciples to "protect the church".

2. The famous ONEs of Ephesians 4:4-6 as a summary of the basis for unity and for all the major doctrines of the Bible.

(1). One Body, the church, alias the Assembly of the Firstborn--the Lord Jesus Christ being the Firstborn--and the church or assembly written in heaven in the Lamb's Book of Life, a record of which with your name in is the only assurance of salvation you need. That record in heaven is the only criterion that separates you from the tares and the goats when Christ Comes Again.

(2). One Spirit, the third member of the Trinity and God Himself, the Holy Spirit sent by God and Jesus on the first day of Pentecost after the Resurrection and to be withdrawn from earth during the Falling Away, sent by Jesus to take His place and to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, a person called the Comforter or the Other Jesus, one who reminds Christians of Scripture, providing wisdom and guidance; and the one present at Creation as the effecting cause, also throughout history as the giver to Apostles and Prophets of Revelations. Yes, He also gives illuminations; but we must recognize the difference.

(3). One Hope of Your Calling, even as Elton Trueblood, the Quaker and Philosopher of Religion wrote "Your Other Vocation" as a reminder that the Chris-
Christian calling is a vocation for which we must give priority, so Paul reminds us that for all Christians the hope is the same and the goal and goals if the calling are the same. (Once again in total context, it must be added that while all believers receive common gifts like some wisdom from the Holy Spirit, each believer is given some unique gift by God through the Holy Spirit; and further more according to the doctrinal teachings of Corinthians, the total church is only complete as long as those diverse gifts cooperate with each other.) Of course, we know the “hope” for this life of a better person and with a better purpose for God and Christ; and eternally as Paul wrote “if in this life only we have hope, we are of all men most miserable”, so that beyond this life is eternal hope, called hope not because we simply wish it to be so, but because it is an assured hope. "Faith is the substance of things hoped for, and the evidence of things not seen."

(4). One Lord, the Lord Jesus Christ, the only begotten Son of God, the means of salvation on the cross through His blood, the Spirit of Christ who worked with the Prophets in the Old Testament, the teacher and Savior who came to earth, died on the cross and was resurrected and ascended by God, and Who now sits on the right hand of honor and rule to God the Father to make intercession for our sins and to prepare for His Second Coming when He will come again to get us. Surely Christ is doing more than this at the right hand of God, also the Bible tells us that the whole universe consists through Him so that surely He is holding this complex universe together until it disintegrates at the end of this world age and until He and the Father create a new heaven and a new earth with a new Jerusalem.

(5). One Faith, this is both the one faith held in their hearts by all believers and the "faith delivered once for all", in other words the Bible and the doctrines of the Bible, as expressed in the book of Jude.

(6). One Baptism, this is the equivalent of the one salvation, and you will find as the subject of many Bible passages, especially from Paul, where baptism is discussed as for example in Romans where “we are baptized with Christ”. Paul knew and wrote of several other baptisms such as the baptism by water; but there was only one real baptism that of salvation and by the Holy Spirit of God. Since there is so much confusion created by the theology and divisions of denominations and the history of Christianity which confuses what is done in the baptistry with the One Baptism, please read the LEARN CHRIST commentary with exegesis of the prevalent “baptism” passages, and on the 14 letters of Paul since it is right here that above all we need the total context of Scripture. It is called
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“Believe and Be Baptized”, the being baptized referring not to the baptistry but to the One Baptism of salvation, the water baptism by immersion to only come later as an act of obedience and of identification with Christ and Christians.

(7). One God and Father of all, this is the only God of the Universe, identified to us as the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ, also the Creator of the world and the Universe, and the God of the Bible. He, and He only, “is above all, and through all, and in you all”.

NOTE: Wow, what a high point in a statement of faith! Where can you go from here. Well, we in the light of recent itching ears teachers about how to achieve unity and peace in local churches, need the Bible given practices on how to achieve peace and unity in the church!

3. Peace and Unity in the Church (Ephesians 4:7-16).

(1). There can be no real peace and unity in any church, local or larger, unless Christ is allowed in a practical way to run it. (4:7-12) Jesus is head of your church, and the chain of command in your assembly must come through Jesus to the pastor or any evangelist. The chain of authority between Jesus and the pastor includes the Apostles of the New Testament and the Prophets of the Old Testament, who exercise their authority today as writers of revelations in the Word of God. You will find a lot of the problems today in theology, doctrine, and false and itching ears teachers have come when the authority of the Apostles and Prophets in the Word of God is ignored or minimized. It is the Ascended Christ who chose these Apostles and Prophets, appointed them and called them, also who called your pastors and evangelists and teachers if indeed you heeded the Headship of Christ and sought the wisdom of the Spirit. {Please do not make the mistake of thinking that if the majority of your church votes against the pastor, that they are right. Remember how God told Moses to get out of the way so He could destroy all of Israel in the wilderness, then God would make of Moses and Aaron a nation; how God destroyed over 23,000 in one day and how only approximately 4 Hebrews of the vast congregation in the wilderness were allowed to enter eternal rest; and ask yourselves if Ephesus or Thyatira are all the seven churches of Asia Minor had voted in favor of the unsound doctrines for which Christ condemned them, as a majority vote would that have made it right?}

Hardly, we confuse all too easily the American Democratic Faith of American history and studies, where the majority is right with the Faith of the Bible.
where the minority is right. Sometimes that minority as in the wilderness, can only be 2 or 4 people!

(2). All of the church leaders such as Apostles, Prophets, pastors, teachers, and evangelists have the same job for the benefit of the total church body: “for the equipping of the saints for the work of the ministry” (yes, as a seminary professor wrote, “the work of the ministry is the work of the church”, not just of those called professionally), for the edifying (building up) of the body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11,12).

(3). Peace and unity in a local church body comes only as members (a) have a common unity in the faith, alias personal faith and sound teachings and doctrines, (b) as members have and share a common knowledge, personal and factual, of the Lord Jesus Christ—“faith cometh by hearing and hearing by the Word of God”, (c) as members mature into the Christian faith often called in the Bible “completeness” or “perfection” (at this point is where Warren is so foolhardy on Bible and church growth, to think that you can achieve a unity and peace with sudden church growth and new believers, a peace more by a forced church covenant and strong leadership and public relations: no, it takes a lot of teaching and knowledge which is what discipleship is all about and it takes some, many mature church members which Saddleback is very unlikely to have for many years), and (d) many members that have reached the full stature of Christ.

(4). This peace and unity is not the norm, the norm being “children, tossed to and fro and carried about by every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting” (Ephesians 4:14). Is this discouraging? If so, keep tuned to the rest of Ephesians where Paul encourages the individual church member, even as Christ and the Apostle John did in the messages to the seven churches of Asia Minor, giving a private and personal and individually encouraging message to certain members of the church who had not been carried away with unsound doctrine. You may see this more and more as we go deeper into the approximately 40 years of the Falling Away before the end of time.

(5). Perhaps you should not give up on your local church unless in keeping with “with such know not to keep company”, your church becomes completely riddled and dominated by the bad church behavior and attitudes of II Timothy 3:1-9. And the pattern for practices to follow in the rest of Ephesians 4 as well as 5 and 6 is established in 4:15: “but speaking the truth in love {love is important and
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so is speaking the truth}, may grow up in all things into Him who is the Head--Christ.". Never forget Who {the correct answer is Christ} must run your local church and the total body of Christ! Make sure you and your leaders are seeking and finding the wisdom of Christ on any decision! Where is the point of no return in association with your local church assembly? What you must do is compare II Timothy 3:1-9 on the bad behavior and attitudes of church members with II Timothy 4:4,5 where the majority of your local church body “will not endure sound doctrine”; and the point of no return is passed according to the two chapters and the true or false decision that you alone must make as to whether according to II Timothy 3:9 their follies are or are not any longer being revealed. In other words when in your local church or any local church the list of approximately 22 follies of members are no longer being revealed as follies, then your church body has passed from the perilous up and down times of 3:1-9 to the will no longer endure sound doctrine time. Most of the seven churches of Asia Minor were on the verge, and after this last warning from Christ, of no return.

(6). A church of peace and unity is first of all built on many New Men, men and women who through the 9 month new birth have become new creations in Christ (Ephesians 4:17-24).

(a). This kind of church member can not be like other Gentiles around them. (Ephesians 4:17-19)

(b). To really and properly learn Christ as a matter of faith and practice is to be different or separated from the other Gentiles in your world. {Not to isolate yourself from them, but to live differently. Much of the Bible is summarized with “in the world, but not of the world.”} (Ephesians 4:20). Shocking huh, Christ can be learned in the wrong way when there is a bent of commitment to the world and to others around you that exceeds or matches your commitment to Christ. Are we to understand that Paul is questioning the salvation of some church members? Yes, and he makes that clear as he writes: “if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught by Him”! (Ephesians 4:21)

(c). Part of the practice of the faith of the New Man is to put off many of the conducts or habits of the old man and to practice the putting on of the new man in righteousness. The rest of Ephesians will help on these practices of faith.
8-5: A Statement of Practices to Go With a Statement of Faith. (You can and should read these Scriptures for yourself, using the references listed from the book of Ephesians.)

1. Do not Grieve the Holy Spirit (Ephesians 4:25-32).
3. Practice the habit of walking in Light (5:8-14).
4. Practice walking in wisdom, circumspectly (5:15-21).
5. Practice the marriage of the Bible, at home and in the church (5:22-33; 6:1-4).
6. Practice with Bible attitudes on the job (6:5-9)

8-6: All this sounds impossible.

No, not if you daily put on the whole armor which God has provided in a practical and prayerful manner, realizing that there will be ups and downs, some stumblings; realizing that “no temptation has taken you but such as is common to man”, and that God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able; and remembering to be “careful for nothing but with everything by prayer and supplication make your requests known unto God”; and remember to “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him because He cares for you.”

And like “imitating God” as advised in Ephesians, or strive to be like Christ, the high standards for a church are idealistic in that we will never get all the way there. Nonetheless the admonitions of the Bible are to be like Christ, to imitate God, and to grow into the perfected church body. Once again we come much closer to these Christian goals when we have them as goals and we work to achieve them, knowing that the full realization of all three will only happen, by the grace and power of God, when Christ comes again and “we shall see Him as He is.”
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Old Commandments are used two ways here: Old Commandments in the sense of
the Ten Commandments of the Old Testament, and the original teachings of
Jesus before He gave in John 13 a New Commandment to love other Friends like
He did. Fortunately all except the New Commandment of John 13 are recorded
in the famous Sermon on the Mount of Matthew 14-17. Perhaps it would be wise
for us also to cover the equivalent of these teachings from the Gospel of John,
especially since we want to consider why so many religious intellectuals that
belong to the Jesus Seminar (who have written the book and attached their
names and college credentials in THE FIVE GOSPELS) like to cast doubt on the
Gospel of John. We are grateful at this point to A.T. Robertson's HARMONY OF
THE GOSPELS where we can quickly realize that as John wrote the last of the
four gospels with the others in hand, as he carefully chose to supplement and
complement what was previously written and centered around only 7 miracles of
Jesus, that he did not cover the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount per se;
however after the Great Galilean Ministry of Jesus of which the Sermon on the
Mount was a part, came the “Special Training of the Twelve in Regions Around
Galilee” where John records much of what Jesus did and said: (1) the first spir-
ital retreat for special teaching of John 6:1-14; (2) counter to Jesus as a polit-
cical Messiah of John 6:14-15; (3) the storm at sea and the miracle of Jesus
walking on water (one of the only 7 to be given by John in his gospel) of John
6:16-21; (4) Jesus’ rejection of popular Messianic expectations of John 6:22-71;
(5) Jesus rejects brotherly advice to exhibit Himself in Judea and Jerusalem of
John 7:2-9; and (6) privately to Jerusalem through Samaria in John 7:10. Although not as spectacular was the special training of the twelve, even as there is the necessity today so also Jesus did much of His most fruitful training away from the crowds and in semi_seclusion with a few disciples.

As for these religious intellectuals, to which with such a recognition we might add that “the wisdom of this world is foolishness with God”, of the Jesus Seminar what is their problem with the Gospel of John. It should be obvious from what you have heard about them through the years in American news, having decided that Jesus could not be the Son of God, they have to do battle against the primary Gospel that has the stated purpose to convince the reader that “Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that by believing they might have everlasting life” (John 20:30,31) You recall how each year they meet to decide if Jesus really claimed to be the Son of God, then vote that He did not; and how John clearly states that Jesus claimed to be the Son of God. They go for the written record of John in order to go after the claim of Jesus. Of course, where they have a major intellectual problem is in the fact that there are four independent Gospel accounts--Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John--and five independent accounts if you count the Gospel according to Paul of Hebrews and Romans with the other 12 books written by the Apostle Paul; and if you call how a mind much greater than theirs, that of Simon Greenleaf formerly Dean of the Harvard Law School, and one much greater in evidence as a recognized authority on legal evidence, who maintained in his book THE TESTIMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS how the corroborative testimonies of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John would stand up as a “prima facie” {beyond any reasonable shadow of doubt} case in any court of law. {Of course as you will hear me state often all these works of Christian Apologetics and Evidences allow us to do is to match one for one from law, literature, science, and other intellectual endeavors of men of intellectual stature and status who counter on every point the intellectual doubts of men like those in the Jesus Seminar, removing effective the intellectual clutter in order to allow one to come to Jesus as the Son of God in simple faith and to the Bible as the Word of God in simple and childlike faith. You will read about this in this chapter and in the chapter on “The Age of the Computer”.} And most generally you will find such intellectuals deficient at some point in their weighing of evidence for both sides even as Irwin Linton mentions in his book A LAWYER EXAMINES THE BIBLE where he states he never met a man who claimed unbelief in Jesus as the Son of God who could also say that he had read through for himself the four gospels.
As “Fellows of the Jesus Seminar” they think they have made a real contribution to Bible study in separating the real sayings of Jesus from the alleged sayings primarily based on a Q source and the Gospel of Thomas. The Q Source, short for the German word “Quell” for source, is a list of common sayings from Jesus based on the scholarly surprise that Matthew and Luke are so similar. The logic answer for those who study the Bible more than about the Bible and who believe in the ASPI interpretation of the Bible is that Matthew and Luke, just like Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are so similar because: (1) just like Simon Greenleaf noticed in the similarity of their testimonies all of these Apostles and associates of an Apostle saw and heard the same thing as they observed Jesus; (2) the Holy Spirit is the common source, working in the hearts and mind of Apostles and Prophets throughout the Bible; and (3) if they want a common source as a chief editor from the human side it is far better to chose the Apostle Paul. If these so-called scholars would spend more of their time in the Bible itself and under the guidance of the Spirit while seeking to know and do the will of God and Jesus, they would realize that God chose the chief ministry of Paul, beyond missionary and Apostle, as Chief Editor of the New Testament, Paul himself writing 14 book of the 27 of the NT and sponsoring Dr. Luke and John Mark with 3 more parchments, among other things containing a list of quotes from the OT which Paul made at Tarsus and the written testimonies of Peter and James. You know these religious intellectuals with impressive degrees remind me of Muslims who often will tell you how much they believe about Jesus then look at you in amazement when you talk about the Apostle Paul. What they do in the Fifth Gospel book is to ignore Paul completely, while the majority of us believers who revel in the study of the Bible itself have come to recognize the fifth gospel as the Gospel according to the Apostle Paul, especially of the two books of Hebrews and Romans. What is so fascinating about the Bible including the life, death, and teachings of Jesus is the obvious agreements between Paul and the four Gospel writers, between Old and New Testaments, and between Apostles in the NT and Prophets in the OT.

Also what these intellectuals remind me of is what R. A. Millikan tells of his book EVOLUTION OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION where scientists, physicists of his own discipline in particular, thought at the beginning of the twentieth century. It in short proves that to be scientific or intellectual or have one or many PH.D’s does not afford such humans to be free of human prejudices and faulty conclusions. These physicists, according to Millikan, himself a Nobel prize winning physicists for proving that there is a discrete particle called the electron (you remember from physics lab the famous Millikan oil-drop experiment)...but these physicists at the turn of the century had the audacity to say that all dis-

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coveries of physics had been made, it only remained for further work to improve the accuracy of their discoveries. And this was before X-rays, natural radioactivity, the breakdown of the ability to measure an aether drift that light travels through, and on and on with the now famous discoveries of modern physics. In short what really happens with such men as these physicists and Fellows of the Jesus Seminar is that their educations allow them to gross over and temporarily cover up the prejudices they accumulated early in life, the degrees simply add some dignity to faulty conclusions. Even as the Bible early acknowledged such people in the statement, “the fool has said in his heart there is no God”, so now we would acknowledge now how Paul told us that “God takes the wise in their own craftiness”; and even collective efforts to amass research and scientific evidence to justify that Jesus did not claim to be the Son of God, therefore is not the Son of God, only testifies to prejudiced conclusions they had before starting their research, the research showing the axe they previously had to grind. And it would better for all these PhD’s and Fellows if they were attached to a mill stone and cast into the ocean, than that they should deceive just one little child of God into thinking that Jesus is and was not the Son of God, their personal Savior. While we are trying to deal in This Age of the Bible and the Computer with the moderates, fundamentalists, conservatives, we must never forget that there are real liberals; and that they are dangerous for at least two reasons: (1) the influence they may have on any child of God in destroying their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ; and (2) as members of prestigious academic communities they find their way to the organizations for accreditation of our more conservative Seminaries like Southwestern, Southern, and some others that you know of.

A Quick Learning Summary of the Sermon on the Mount

What we need in order to do some justice to the Old Commandments of Jesus (alias the teachings of Jesus which He received from the Father and passed on to His disciples) before He in John 13 announced to them the giving of “a new commandment”, then with this preparation was able in John 15 to identify His Friends, is to layout quickly a short learning summary of the Sermon on the Mount. It has to be real and personal, life-changing to the extent that it truly leads to the making of disciples for Jesus. This matter of Christianity was never meant to be theoretical, book-learning alone as it has been treated by these religious intellectuals of the Jesus Seminar. They remind us of the Pharisees, Sadducees, and scribes that Jesus had to contend with who were “ever learning and never coming to the knowledge of the truth.”
To that end we offer the following spiritual outline of Matthew 5-7: (1) those that God and Christ bless with spiritual blessings in the beatitudes of 5:1-16 with additional explanations by Jesus of how those blessings are obtained by way of salt and light; (2) The real meaning and righteous applications of the Law of the Old Ten Commandments as explained by Jesus, especially on murder and adultery and as related to marriage and oaths as explained by Jesus in Matthew 5:17-37; (3) love as the fulfillment of the law and as always written in the law of the Old Testament, the demand from Jesus as always still being to be Perfect like the Heavenly Father of Matthew 5:38-48; (4) Real religious expressions as contrasted to the religious practices and prayers of the hypocrites of Matthew 6:1-18; (5) treasures in heaven versus treasures in earth with explanations by Jesus of how there must be a priority in life for God and righteousness over the world and the things of the world, or “mammon” of Matthew 6:19-34; and lastly (6) miscellaneous teachings from God the Father in Matthew 7 on (a) the proper criterion for judgment about others, (b) perseverance and rewards in prayer, (c) the way of the majority versus the way of the minority, (d) false prophets versus real prophets, (e) not every one who says “Lord”, “Lord”, or even “Jesus is my Friend” will be in the kingdom of heaven; (f) Christian work has to be done on the right foundation and with the correct motivations.

{It is not suggested that you only study these parts of the Bible in order to summarize for yourself all the teachings and commandments of Jesus; and indeed the reader is encouraged to read both A CUP OF WATER, a condensed version of Mark with comments, and THE MAGIC OUTLINE, the top 12 topics of the Bible, both of which are available as free internet downloads on www.biblecombibleman.com. It is only hoped that this on the two-fold old commandments from Jesus will be sufficient to remind you of all you have previously learned of the teachings of Jesus in order that you might progress to the challenge to be a Friend, which means of course, that you may have to take some teachings of Jesus about discipleship more serious than you have previously done!}

1. The Beatitudes from Jesus by which Jesus identifies the categories of people that God choses to bless on this earth. Who are the happy ones? In short and long-range, the humans who God choses to bless because in turn they have made the decisions to be poor in spirit or properly humble before God, to mourn for more, the meek who get under the load of the teachings of God and Jesus, those who seek after God’s righteousness, the people of graciousness and mercy, the pure in heart made clean by God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, the peacemakers that can become through Jesus adopted sons of God, and the persecuted for the
sake of Jesus and righteousness. We will not labor the point here for the sake of brevity; however these teachings far from being new to Jesus and the New Testament, for the most part can find a counterpoint in the Old Testament. It is just that Jesus in a short summary, set out the contrast between the way the world thinks of His day and now, and the way God had taught Jesus to think and pass on to others. In the Jewish and Roman Empire world of that day and in our nation today, we do not commend or recommend “the poor in spirit”, or the poor period with the currently distorted Gospel of Prosperity that dominates 61% of American Thought, nor do we recommended persecution for the sake of Jesus, or meekness, and so on. Right up front in His teachings, really commandments when you consider the source as from God and the Lord Jesus Christ, Jesus would challenge you to think and act differently from the world around you!

2. Nothing from Jesus or in the New Testament came to destroy the law of the Old Ten Commandments. Now the laws of regulations and ordinances such as temple worship and blood sacrifice (except for the still relevant blood sacrifice of Christ on the cross for our sins) were nailed to the cross as Jesus died and, according to the book of Hebrews, as the temple veil was rent from top to bottom. Never forget that to “love God with all the heart, mind, and soul, the first commandment, and the second is like unto it, to love your neighbor as yourself” was in the Old Testament, although many mistakenly think of this quote in the New Testament from the Old Testament being an original in the New Testament. This love of God and neighbor was a fulfillment of the 10 old commandments all along, Jesus just reinforced and fulfilled in the NT times as it made through the Atonement, etc. possible to achieve. {It is recommended that you read some good and spiritual book on the deeper meaning of the 10 Commandments, and even the Beatitudes, like Charles Allen’s GOD’S PSYCHIATRY.}

A Few of the Challenging Teachings of the Sermon on the Mount

Simply because the teachings of the Sermon on the Mount are older than the New Commandment, they no less should be a challenge; and when Jesus finally sets down all the requirements to be a “Friend of Jesus” in John 15, He mentions “commandments” period, old and new.

“You are My Friends if you do whatever I command you.” (John 15:14)
All commandments, new and old, are necessary requirements to be a “Friend of Jesus”; and this within itself is encouraging in that you may not have to wait to heaven or the new earth to know whether you have made it to a Friend of Jesus, as if you know you are keeping all the commandments of Jesus, then you also know that you are a Friend. \{Of course the realistic details of how to do this, with a study of habitual sin versus occasional sin, are found in the epistles of John, especially in I John.\}

There are very challenging teachings of the Sermon on the Mount.

1. Pray, not like other religious leaders, in this manner.

2. In the seekings of your life, seek first the kingdom of God and God’s righteousness over THINGS.

3. Serve God over “mammon”.

A challenge before the Sermon on the Mount should be added, one that came out of the temptations of Jesus by Satan as an example for us.

1. Live by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God as well as by bread.

2. Serve God over Satan’s enticements to give you all the things of the world if you will worship and serve him.

3. Don’t tempt God.

Paul learned the teachings of Jesus from Jesus Himself in Saudi Arabia, others which were taught to him from the Holy Spirit which would fall in the category of what Jesus said to the 11 in John 15 about the harder things to be told you later through the Holy Spirit.

1. One of these and perhaps the most violated of all commandments and teachings for church members, which gets at the very heart of what it is to be a member of the church of Jesus Christ, the assembly in heaven; and that is “not to think of yourself more highly than you ought to.” In the psychology and philosophy of self dominate today this is almost impossible to do as the trend is in the opposite direction of self-expression and self-fulfillment.
2. Wives submit to the authority of the husband in the home even as we submit to the authority of Christ and the pastor in the church. There is a trend in this age of the Bible and the computer to rebel against all the teachings of Christ and the Bible, especially on marriage and church democracy. There is with the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness and sin, an increased rebellion against all the wills and commands of God and Christ. It is popular to do so even as it is increasingly popular to take the very name of God and Christ in vain! If you desire a good statement of faith and practice to go by for your church membership, then read and study in Ephesians “Paul’s Statement of Faith and Practice”.
Lest you think only an Apostle can be called “Friend” by Jesus, we should use a concordance to note other usages of the word “Friend” in the Bible. Of course the best known of all in the Bible would be when God the Father Himself called Abraham “My Friend” in Isaiah 41:8, and when Pastor James reiterates how “he was called the Friend of God” (James 2:23) after he has also established the great and necessary requirement of faith for friendship based on a quote from Genesis 15:6, “Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him for righteousness”. Lazarus, whom Jesus raised from the dead (by the way being raised from the dead, like Jesus will do for all believers even as for Lazarus, would alone make one call Jesus a Friend, and not superficially or flippantly) was called by Jesus in the presence of the apostles “our friend” (John 11:11) as He also tried to make clear to the Apostles that Lazarus was sleeping instead of dead. At some point in order to fully comprehend the Bible teachings on how we are compassed about as Christians with such a great cloud of witnesses and how we are fellow members in the only Church that truly matters, the Church of the Firstborn Assembly written in heaven, we also must learn to distinguish between body sleep while the spirit lives and the dominate and popular concept of death. After all, it was the real Moses and Elijah that appeared to Jesus on the mount of transfiguration, who as Friends from heaven before His time on earth, encouraged Jesus in the trials and crucifixion that He faced. While the “dead in Christ shall rise first” speaks of the resurrection of the bodies of all believers that have died before the Second Coming of
Christ, it does not refer to their spirits with a different kind of bodily appearance who are alive and much closer to us, looking down from heaven, than we often think. There just is not that much distance between the heaven where God sits on the great white throne with His feet in the clouds and this earth on which we live. You bet, they can see and hear and know, likewise are rooting for us to make the right decisions and moaning, similar to the grieving Holy Spirit, when we make the wrong decisions.

Jesus Himself, during a much earlier time in His life and ministry, in Jerusalem and Judea, as recorded in Luke 12:4 used the words “my friends” in a very general sense when assailed by His enemies of the scribes and Pharisees (Luke 11:53,54) which in turn attracted an innumerable crowd; and perhaps in order to more distinguish the friendly from the enemy, or to ignore those there to catch something to use against Him, specially addressed a subgroup of the innumerable crowd. Of course it is obvious from the context of chapter 12 with the words “He began to say to His disciples first of all” (12:1) that Jesus is using “His disciples” synonymously with “Friends” in this teaching session; and likewise that the gist of the teaching as He states immediately is to warn them against the leaven of the Pharisees, “which is hypocrisy”, some results of which they have just witnessed. From the further teachings of Jesus, we see that Friends: (1) Fear God who can destroy both the body in death and then the spirit of soul in hell more than they fear any earthly authority, good or bad (actually since the Apostle John will later interpret Jesus properly under the help of the Spirit to tell us that “perfect love casts out fear”, this is more a respect for the authority and power of God over human authority and power than it is of fear as we commonly use the word, although there is plenty of room to actually fear God, like Paul writes in Hebrews since our God is a consuming fire, fear Him; (2) A reminder of how close God is to witnessing all on earth with the personal knowledge from heaven that God knows when 5 sparrows are sold, therefore also has the very hairs of the heads of Friends numbered, so not to “fear” in the sense of the common use of the word “fear” (12:7) since Friends, not hypocrites however, are of more value than sparrows: (3) lays down another prerequisite for friendship as the confessing of Jesus before men, so that Jesus immediately back in heaven and a short distance away will also confess that person or person as Friends before the angels in heaven (of course at the Second Coming and the Gathering of the dead {sleeping} saints, Jesus also pre-confesses before the angels of the Gathering the names of those to be gathered in preparation for the great event--Matthew 24:30,31 clearly states that the gathering of the elect from the
four corners of the earth will take place at the Second Coming, and Paul tells us in Thessalonians that it will be the dead in Christ that rise first, then we which are alive and remain shall be caught up with them in the air, and that “so we shall ever be with the Lord”; and simple is the eschatology of Jesus, the Apostles, and the book of Revelation compared to the Notes of Scofield; (4) however, Jesus elaborates how that confession before men is more for Jesus, the angels, and the Holy Spirit than it is for the men around the confessor, the point being that ultimately it is what we tell the Holy Spirit that is most important, that truly determines salvation, that can be either blasphemy or salvation--men will take a lot of things you say about Jesus, but it is only what you say to the Holy Spirit inwardly and in your heart that the Spirit takes personally as the blasphemy against Jesus, establishing the only unforgivable sin as the sin which denies Jesus as Christ in the heart and only before the Spirit; (5) When later in the upper room and the Garden Jesus will teach in John 13-17 more about the assistance for friends of the Holy Spirit, it will not be the first time that He has taught them on the work of the Spirit, right here as noted in (4) foretelling the work of the Spirit to convict the world of sin and righteousness and judgment, and now in (5) how when they are persecuted similar to how Jesus has just been persecuted by the hypocrites, then not to worry about “fear” or “fret” about that {did you know “fret” is a Bible word extensively used in the King James Version, but not to fret because the Holy Spirit would tell them what to say and how to say it. He, the Spirit, our Comforter and Helper, is the Help of the Crisis’ times. Directly proportional to the needs of the hour is the grace of the presence of the Spirit!}

And again lest you have difficulties accepting the Challenge to be called a Friend by Jesus, especially later when we come to the climax of the challenge details in John 15, you should note that about the same time Jesus sent out the special 12 called Apostles to do the work of disciples, He also sent out as recorded in Luke 10 another seventy disciples.

“After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also {the seventy others obviously is a reference in Luke to more disciples than just the 12}, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. {We see that Billy Graham was not the first to do a large preparatory work in a city before the actual evangelistic meetings, and how that seemingly instantaneous new birth actually may have started 9 months previously, like in the teaching to Nicodemus.} (Luke 10:1)
New Commandments...

However, except for these brief introductory words about Friendship and discipleship for the average disciple of Christ, this will be saved as later subject or discipleship on the way to the challenge of Friendship. {Now as always in this book, this is to be called a Friend by Jesus Himself, rather than the flippant consideration that Jesus is our Friend.}

“The Preparation for the Paschal Meal at the Home of a Friend (Possibly that of John Mark’s Father and Mother)”

Even as these are the words that A.T. Robertson in his HARMONY uses to introduce the teachings on the New Commandment in the upper room, so essential to being called a Friend by Jesus, so do they also as previously discussed serve to remind us that Jesus called others “Friends” besides the 11 Apostles. However even also as we think there are “Friends” of Jesus and then “Friends of Jesus”, so we look in vain in the actually wording of those scriptures for which this is Robertson’s title where Jesus is quoted as calling the Father and Mother of John Mark “Friend”: that is Mark 14:12-16 {and you might think that the Mark who elaborated on the naked young man in the Garden who fled when the enemies grabbed the towel about his body, would also quote Jesus calling his mom and dad friend, of course we are also reminded of the humanity of John Mark who also did not use his own name in the incident of the Garden}; well Matthew 26:17-19 is about the upper room preparation; and likewise Luke 22:7-13 so that if you buy my theory about Paul as chief editor of the NT with manuscripts left for Dr. Luke and John Marks as a basis for writing NT books, then you see that Paul was responsible in two out of three cases for the preparatory incident; and also since John Mark and Luke at the home no doubt of the Apostle John in Ephesus and with Mary to talk to, would also have had a copy of the Gospel of Matthew for guidance.}

However, on to the preparatory incident. The disciples asked Jesus where they should make preparation to eat the Passover supper; and with the answer Jesus gave them as recorded those three places above in the Gospels, we see that He had previously discussed the incident extensively with the owner of the upper room, whether it was the mother and father of John Mark or not. We also know that we do not have in the Gospels the record of when that preparatory conversation took place, nor since it is made obvious here, do we even need to know. And if we had needed for some spiritual growth reason to know that it was the home of the mom and dad of John Mark, then we would have been told. We do know that it was to the home of Mary, the mother of John
Mark, that Simon Peter went when miraculously delivered from prison by the angels (Acts 12:11-17) and how that Peter referred to John Mark as his “son in the faith (I Peter 5:13). It is likewise possible that John Mark fished often with Peter as indicated by his common usage of “boat” or “ship” in the Gospel of Mark.

{for more on this read CUP OF WATER, a condensed version of Mark with comments from SunGrist_Bible, www.biblecombibleman.com on the web for a free download}. We can look again carefully at those verses of the preparatory incident outlined by Robertson to make sure Jesus does not directly call Friend the owner of the upper room, Mary or otherwise: (1) first in Mark 14:12-16, those 5 verses record how (a) the 12 asked Jesus where to make preparation for Him to eat the Passover, (b) Jesus sent 2 of His disciples, Mark does not tell which two, to go into the city and find a man who knows to meet them that is carrying a pitcher of water {we are beginning to think that all of this was secretly arranged so that Judas could not actually plan ahead to make the betrayal before in the Garden}; (c) the house that this man goes into will be owned {the Master of the household}, is the guest room where the Passover will be eaten {only a guest room now, not an upper chamber}, (d) the two disciples are to tell the Owner, “the Teacher” ask about where is the guest room that they are to eat the Passover, implying that the Owner definitely already knew Jesus as a Teacher, (e) then the owner will show you a “large upper room”, furnished and prepared {and once again extensive planning is obvious just like where in Mark a boat or ship was conveniently anchored off the shore for Jesus to use when pressed by the crowds, so that there had been ample discussion with the owner}, (f) {by the way we know that Jesus is in the regions around Jerusalem since in Mark 13 and Matthew 24 He notes the temple and talks about its destruction and at the beginning of Mark 14 at the home of Simon the Leper in Bethany a woman anoints Jesus’ body for burial} so the disciples went into the city and found just as He said the man with the pitcher of water, and so they prepared the Passover; (2) second in Matthew 26:17-19 of 3 verses, the chapter of which by the way begins with a record of the plot to kill Jesus hatched by the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders (26:1-5) as well as Jesus clearly announcing to His 12 that in two more days and immediately after the Passover how He would be delivered up to be crucified (a) again Matthew like Mark echoes the disciples Jesus, where do you want us to prepare “for you to eat the Passover”, (b) go in the city to a “certain man”, the pitcher of water not mentioned, (c) however the question from “the Teacher” is repeated, this time with the addition of “My time is at hand”, as if this was the key phrase to bring back preparation memories to the owner, and also added is that Jesus will keep the Passover at this owner’s house and with His disciples, and (d) the terse summary statement of this single historical event in the life of teachings is much like
Mark in wording, of course the substance like in all Gospels and in Paul is always the same, the disciples did as Jesus directed and prepared the Passover; (3) third in Luke 22:7-13 in these 6 verses (a) like in Matthew and Mark what triggered the question from the disciples was the day of unleavened bread when the Passover Lamb must be killed, (b) this time we are told who the two disciples are that are sent by Jesus, Peter and John, and this time, which I am sure both happened as the conversations were never as simple and direct as written in the Gospels, it is Jesus who says to Peter and John to “go and prepare the Passover for US”, the collaborating details from the perspective of each just lending more credence to the validity of the record whereas sceptics often like to find in these additions contradictions, (c) Peter and John said to them, and I’m sure that the others heard or even entered into the conversation, “Where do you want us to prepare? (d) like in Mark the answer is to meet the mysterious man with the pitcher of water and follow him to the house where he enters, (e) then speak to the Master of that house what the Teacher tells us, where is the guest room to eat the Passover with “My disciples”, (e) he will show you a large, furnished upper room, that is the place to make ready, and (f) they found it per Jesus’ instructions and they made ready.

The New Commandment of John 13

Now we are ready for the New Commandment of John 13 in order to appreciate the background and requirements for disciples to be called a “Friend” by Jesus Himself of John 15. That is almost, there are two other requirements of discipleship that must come even before an understanding of the New Commandment: (1) as Master Jesus sets an example of humility in foot washing for His servants the 11 Apostles, indeed you will notice when we get to the details of a “Friend” in John 15 that the reference point is “servant” for beginning a new relationship of “Friend” even as it is not possible to go to “Friend” without first being a believer and disciple, so it takes the servanthood status of the New Commandment to also get to “Friend”; (2) Jesus must explain inward cleanness or sanctification in terms of the 11 Apostles who were clean, and by the way chosen as contrasted to simply called, and the 1 Apostle, Judas, who was not clean and who had already betrayed him to the chief priests, and (3) revelations about the Apostle John, “whom Jesus loved”, and who in many respects had preceded the status friendship of the 10 others, with a contrast as it was John that Peter requested to ask Jesus, and John was closest to Jesus, to clarify which of the Apostles would betray Jesus.
1. Jesus sets the example for how to implement the New Commandment even before He has given the New Commandment.

We miss the point of the New Commandment whereby we can truly feel secure as a disciple of Jesus if we place priority on humility rather than love, if we prioritize foot washing over love of other disciples as Jesus loved His first disciples. The Apostle John, the apostle of love and the Apostle whom Jesus loved in a special way, that special way we will call as Jesus did Friends of Jesus, this John above all the 11 remaining apostles, saw and understood the priority for such a higher love when at the beginning of John 13, he writes:

“Now before the Feast of the Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come that He should depart from this world to the Father, having loved His own who were in the world, He loved them to the end.” (John 13:1)

You see the unique emphasis of the high level of the love of Jesus here: for 3 and one-half years Jesus had loved His own in the world, and He loved them right up until the end. This is the love of four dimensions of the book of Ephesians which had length, width, height, and depth so that the fourth dimension is love that continues with time. This love of Jesus the writer John is trying to make clear has both quality and the dimension of time. It is deep and it continues! If we concentrate on this single act of humility by Jesus in the foot washing of the disciples as contrasted to what Jesus says that He is doing, then like some have done in the church we simply add another religious ritual that overlooks the real emphasis. LET ME SAY RIGHT UP FRONT NOW SO THAT WE DO NOT GET LOST IN THE DETAILS THAT WHAT JESUS WAS DOING WAS AN EFFORT TO ELIMINATE COMPETITION IN THE LARGER CHURCH BODY, AND THAT WHAT WE MUST DO AS HIGH LEVEL DISCIPLES ON THE WAY TO FRIENDSHIP FROM JESUS IS TO FIND LIKE MENIAL ACTS OF SERVICE FOR OTHER DISCIPLES IN THE LARGER CHURCH, GRANTED EXPRESSIONS OF HUMILITY BUT PRIMARILY OF A HIGHER LOVE LIKE JESUS SHOWED FOR HIS 11 DISCIPLES, AND THAT IS THE WAY THE WORLD WILL KNOW THAT WE IN THE LARGER CHURCH ARE DISCIPLES OF JESUS!

You have got to admit that we in the church, especially in America, have done a lousy job of convincing the world by the higher love and humility as servants that we are real disciples of Jesus. Many times we had rather be Baptists, Methodists, Presbyterians, Interdenominational, or down at the First church instead of the Second or the Oak Ridge; and consequently the world has learned from us that we are more such denominational and local church oriented than we are dis-
ciples of Christ, even leading some to think that in order to be a disciple of Christ you must be local and provincial.

What Jesus is seeking to eliminate from the inner circle of the 11 disciples is competition. You don't see it here in John but you do in the parallel Gospels of how the disciples, as they often did once they learned of how in the new Israel of the new earth they would rule over the 12 tribes of Israel, that is over at least the one-third of Israel that believed on Jesus; but what they started to do as they realized that finally on the new earth there would be a visualized kingdom wanted to compete for the top spots in that kingdom. You know how Jesus countered that in His teachings often by placing the emphasis on being a servant to the church and the kingdom rather than a master. The great ones, Jesus taught, in the kingdoms of this world like the Roman Empire, the Greek, and the kingdom of David, ruled over the other members; but the nature of Christ's kingdom, for high level disciples and for Friends, was to become a servant to the other members.

We have trouble doing this today as church members in a local church, much less to extend it to the high level Jesus meant for it to go in the total body of the church. Perhaps the most violated verse of all Scripture on the part of church members is that of "not to think of yourselves more highly than you ought to", but to think of others that they are better than you. You see this is the equivalent of foot washing. It is humility and it is a higher disciple-like love, a love like Jesus had for His 11 Apostles. We have two problems with that in a local church, and in a minute I will come to the larger church body where this really finds it's full expression in the love of Jesus that convinces the world that we are disciples. Granted you can practice mental foot washing in your local church, and you can convince some of the world that you are therefore the real disciples of Jesus; but this does not get to the whole world or the whole expression until it becomes a Baptist doing it for a Methodist or a Presbyterian doing it for an interdenominational community church. The reason is competition. Just to be a Baptist versus a Methodist is competition, and just to be down at First and proud of it is competition against Second. The two problems are: (1) the local churches by and large are the most democratic oriented institutions to which we belong, therefore people without enough self-discipline and self-control, or who tend to let it all out as compared to their businesses and schools which are more controlled; so that if they do not have the self discipline or a real disciple, that of the humble foot-washing humility, then everybody wants to be a deacon or run the church or decide what is best for the church or be the adviser in the local church that has the most say and
influence with the pastor; and (2) the other problem is the habit in our lives of competition. Human nature is to compete, to emulate or to covet if you would. You can think of original sin as where Eve first listened to Satan as he tried to compete with God, then chose the advice of Satan over God; and later as Eve made herself a competitive influence with the control of God over Adam. Behaviorism with its emphasis on stimulus and response works in education, government, and big business because it is based on human nature. To that extent and because of sin, we are like the animals in that we covet to compete. What we see others have, we desire to have. Pastor James noticed this in the first church at Jerusalem as the source of fighting and wars among the church members.

“You lust {another word for covet} and do not have. You murder and covet and cannot obtain. You fight and war, yet you do not have because you do not ask. You ask and do not receive, because you ask amiss, that you may spend it on your pleasures.” (James 4:2,3)

And further James identifies the problem as the very sinful nature of man to compete.

“And do you think that the Scripture says in vain, 'The spirit (this is the natural human spirit not the Holy Spirit and should not be capitalized) who dwells in us lusteth to envy.” (James 4:5)

And Pastor James gives the cure as a mental attitude of foot washing called humility, the opposite of the pride that causes competition.

“God resists the proud, but gives grace to the humble.” (James 4:6)

No Competition in the Church.

Pride is a sin and it is human pride in the local church that causes competition. It is pride in the larger church of denominations that causes competition. Humility and a foot-washing mentality attitude promotes a higher love among disciples that lets the world know who the disciples of Christ really are. This kind of humility and love is difficult as it is counter to human nature and the opposite of what is encouraged by all other institutions of the world; therefore the encouragement from Pastor James is that God will “give grace to the humble”. With the additional challenge of full discipleship and beyond that to a Friend, comes the grace and blessing of God for extra grace.
Now, I must make it clear at this point that this kind of practice of the new commandment from Jesus is possible only in the larger church body. There is no way all 11 of these disciples, even more than two of them, would remain very long there at Jerusalem as with the other Jews and Christians of the Roman Empire they would be scattered all over the empire. There was no way that the 3,000 souls added to the church that first day of Pentecost after Christ’s resurrection and ascension would remain in the local church at Jerusalem. The book of Acts tells us that they were out of every nation under heaven, they temporarily were visiting Jerusalem for the feast, and they would go back to organize local churches in their home towns. Acts says they were from Persia, Mesopotamia, Egypt, yes some from the larger part of Judaea rather than Jerusalem, from Asia, from Rome, from Egypt and Libya, some Greeks and some Arabs. And don’t you know that Jesus wanted this larger and new commandment to be an example in the 11 Apostles for all these strangers and visitors in Jerusalem that became Christians, hopefully full disciples of Christ; so that the larger world of Rome and Greece and Asia and Persia and north Africa and Babylon and Saudi Arabia would know disciples by this love of Jesus and from Jesus.

While it can be initially practiced and should be practiced in the local church, if it is kept in the local church and we must realistically face up to the fact that this is the way it is today, then it quickly becomes self-defeating. If it is not shared in the world in order to convince the world that these local church members are disciples of Christ, then it becomes more competition between churches and disciples which is the first thing that Jesus tried to stop there in the upper room with the foot-washing example. This hits at the very problem with the purpose driven church concept from Rick Warren where he tries to prove that Saddleback members are the real disciples by the way they protect their local church, sometimes at all cost to beliefs and fellowship. This is a new form of disciples competing for the first place in the kingdom that destroys what Jesus taught in the foot-washing attitude to counter such competition among the Apostles. Goodness knows, the pride of human nature only causes us enough to think our church is best, our pastor is best, and we are the best disciples without this added encouragement from Warren to protect the pride in the local church. Enough, we must go on to what Jesus specifically said about this new commandment and then on to being Friends of Jesus. Rather we will progress beyond this point with simply a reminder of something else this Friend of Jesus wrote, the Apostle John, and this time in I John of how “all that is in the world--the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life--is not of the Father but is of the world.” You can have pride in your
local church or pastor or even doctrinal orientation that is a pride of life that can also keep you from full discipleship of the new commandment from Jesus, and beyond that from the challenge to be a Friend of Jesus.

1. First the act of foot-washing itself as a preliminary attitude and preparation for the new commandment.

“So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, ‘Do you know what I have done to you?’” (John 13:12)

Do you know what Jesus has done to you if the full impact of these teachings of the new commandment, with the preparatory humility, has sunk into your head for the first time?

“You call Me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am.” (John 13:13)

Jesus was well aware of His status as a Teacher sent from God with all the teachings that disciples needed. Jesus was well aware that He was the Lord Jesus Christ with the provision for salvation and Lordship in His own ministry. But more importantly Jesus had made it clear to the 11 who had come to accept Him over the 3 and one-half years as Teacher and Lord. Now, it was time to go beyond that level of discipleship to a new level with humility and a new commandment.

“If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you.” (John 13:14,15)

What is good for the goose is good for the gander! What is good for the Master Teacher and highest Lord of all Lords under the Lordship of God the Father is good for the disciple and servant. Sandals are not that prevalent any more and the need for foot-washing is not common, but the need to follow the example of Jesus as forgetting His status and position in order to perform menial tasks for other disciples in the larger church body is still with us. We are to do as Jesus did in that we exercise humility, no competition, and consider other leaders and members in the church better than ourselves.
BY THIS THE WORLD WILL KNOW THAT YOU ARE THE DISCIPLES OF JESUS.

2. The New Commandment from Jesus.

It is good that there is a transition from the upper room after the lesson and after the last supper, “so when He had gone out” (John 13:31), then and after the disciples had thought about the lesson of humility Jesus gives the new commandment.

“A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have that love for one another.” (John 13:34,35)

There it is in plain New King James Version English! Did you get it? It is not now simply a matter of love for your neighbor or love for each other, but it is a modified love that loves like Jesus did the 11 Apostles. “as I have loved you” is the measure of love that you are to provide for other disciples. How will the world know which Baptists, or Pentecostals, or Methodists, or interdenominational, or community churches are His Disciples? By the extent of this higher love that they have for each other and for disciples at large.

3. What is it for a disciple to be Clean? {There is a chapter on this subject.}

3. The Apostle John, a disciple particularly loved by Jesus, was a Friend of Jesus before the other 10 Apostles were told how to be a Friend.
It is easy to miss the meaning of “man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”; however the key to understanding is in the word “alone”. How commendable it is for man to work, earning his daily bread and taking care of his family. Of course the “bread” as quite often in the Bible, as for example in the model prayer of “give us this day our daily bread” really means daily necessities for living. Although bread is the essential of daily provisions, there is nothing wrong with a little quail or spice, nothing wrong with a roof over the family and transportation—goodness it is great when a man work’s with his own hands to provide for himself and the family and to have something to give to others in need—all part of the plan and program of God as outlined in the sound doctrine of the Bible. In most cases we fail to understand the soundness in the sound doctrine of “Physical Plus Spiritual Bread” because (1) we do not keep it in the context of Deuteronomy where Jesus quoted it from, (2) nor in the context of a battle with Satan when Jesus was challenged to use his spiritual powers to turn the stones into bread; and (3) we fail to appreciate the significance of “bread alone” as making a living for family and self, that in the sight of God it just is not enough unless you add the salt of living by every word that comes from God through the Bible. Bible and Bread would be a good phrase to summarize what God is trying to get us to do fundamentally in the development of our lives.
This is worthy of another chapter, that is the subject of what it is for a disciple to be clean, because there are many signs in the world and in the churches that we are in the Great Apostasy called the Falling Away, so that while it may not seem a major problem that Jesus has one unclean and falling away disciple of the 12, today where possibly 61% of Christians have departed from the faith, the gospel, and from the living God and Christ as indicated by a dedication to the Gospel of Prosperity, and there are many other signs in the church and out, most of the churches and church members have become like Judas or like the seven churches of Asia Minor that have departed from sound doctrine, especially on love. Alone it is worthy of a chapter just because many have not admitted that a person can be an active church member, a disciple in close fellowship, and still not be clean—in other words have inwardly departed “from faith in the living God.” Also this matter of tares and goats in the church is clarified by the concept of cleanliness from Jesus, that also of how many can be called but not chosen, the called being those on the church rolls today and the chosen being the real disciples of the new commandment and Friends. We, of course, must add the parable of the seed and the sower, among the old commandments and teachings of Jesus as we would briefly make a reconciliation between the security of the believer which is sound Bible doctrine and the Falling Away of most Christians which is also sound Bible doctrine. Also we should in parallel look at the parable of the seed and the sower from a practical and realistic point of view in churches today where seed of the Word of God is being sown and the real results that it falls on the soil of human hearts in four distinct manners, three out of four are unfruitful over a period of 40 or more years. It also explains the fallacy of the instantaneous new birth of the fundamentalists whereby so many members have through the years been added to the called but not chosen as the seed of the Word was sown on thorny and rocky soil, the response taking many years for anyone, included the individual, to realize that it was not a real 9 month new birth like Jesus taught in John 3 to Nicodemus, that stumbling and cares of this world with the deceitfulness of riches only obvious much beyond the time the instantaneous new birth was received with “great joy”, so that evangelists and church members welcomed it as real and fruitful discipleship, many times themselves not having gone to the higher level of the new commandment and to being a Friend of Jesus.

That is a lot for one chapter, but you can see the need of a distinct chapter of what it means to be clean. Goodness, even you, if you are not clean are not saved. If it could happen to one of the select 12, it could happen to you! If it could happen to all of the children of Israel above 20 years of age after 40 years in the wilderness seeing the works of God, then it can happen to you.
Your salvation depends on your own clarity on this matter, and although you often do not hear those verses they are many and clear in the Bible. Likewise, hardly are you in a position for a higher discipleship and a Friend of Jesus, if you are not clean in the first place. Make sense?

1. Exegesis of the incident and teachings of John 3:2-17.

2. A realistic look at the parable of the seed and the sower to explain how so many in the church are not clean.

3. A simultaneous harmony of the parable of the seed and the sower with the “beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” of Hebrews 3:12.

4. A Quick look at the instantaneous new birth as contrasted to the 9 month new birth of John 3 from Jesus as an explanation of the seed sown on thorny soil which convinces so many pastors and members and evangelists that a soul had been saved since it is at first received with so much joy and enthusiasm but which over a period of years results in a lack of root and stumbling of the Falling Away.

5. We must present II Timothy 4:3,4 where the “time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”—as the time of the Falling Away with an explanation of how it can happen to so many churches and church members as they become intolerant of sound doctrine, as they seek out and promote Bible teachers with itching ears like themselves, as they are motived as church members by their own personal desires, as they have the gall to turn away from the truth as it is in Jesus and the Bible, and as they turn into such fables as the Mormons and Jews and Roman Catholics have predominately done, and as the Pentecostals are now in danger of doing as they resurrected all the bad things that Paul tried to correct in Corinthians. It should correlate it also with what it is for a disciple to be clean, or not clean as in the case of Judas Iscariot. That it could happen to one of the select 12 of Jesus should allow us to see that it can happen also to a Priest today, to a pastor, or an evangelist and pastor like Ted Haggard, or to any church member, no matter what position or attendance or longevity they may have!

Applications of the Teachings of Jesus
It is hardly sufficient for a disciple of Jesus to simply know the teachings of Jesus, or to simply do Bible study on the teachings/commandments of Jesus. Jesus said that you are only His real Friend, the next step upward from a disciple, if you do what He has commanded. You see the reason Jesus constantly referred to His teachings as commandments is because commandments are teachings that you have to do something about. One of the formerly best Seminary courses at Southwestern was a religious education course based on that book by Edge, TEACHING FOR RESULTS. It had the gist of real teachings are life-changing. In fact one of the reasons that so many scholars can read the Bible without understanding, like for example all those PhD’s and ThD’s that endorse the Jesus Seminary, is because they are not willing to do the will of God. Jesus said a person in order to understand the Bible must be willing to do, to do the will of God. A commitment of will and a willingness to actually do sound doctrine, another word for the sound teachings of Jesus, is prerequisite to knowing sound doctrine.

"If anyone wills to do His will {the will of God which is one and the same with the will of Jesus}, he shall know concerning the doctrine, whether it is from God or whether I speak on My own authority."  (John 7:17)

Jesus in John 14:21 in one simple and straightforward sentence separates between a person who just “has” the commandments as part of his or her life, and the disciple who “keeps them”.

“He who has My commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me. And he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and manifest Myself to him.”  (John 14:21)

You see how closely related, and traveling in a circle around a personal relationship with Jesus and God are: (1) have and keep the commandments of Jesus, which came from God the Father in the first place and which Jesus learned from the Father in heaven before coming to earth; (2) anyway, the person who keeps these commandments is also the person who loves Jesus, the opposite also being true that the person who does not keep Jesus' commandments does not love Jesus as the Apostle John makes clear in I John; (3) that person who shows love for Jesus by keeping Jesus' commandments is in turn loved by God the Father, and that is the way God wants and demands it; and (4) Jesus will return or respond to that love by loving the individual {there is a price for everything, but the price here is to love Jesus, something all can do, young
and old, educated or not, high or low status); and (5) Jesus manifest Himself to that loving and commandments keeping person.

**Didaskalia and Didache**

The Greek of the New Testament is more fortunate than our English language in that they had two words for doctrine: the word “didaskalia” which is doctrine or teaching in substance, that is which defines the nature of doctrine, good and bad; and “Didache” which is doctrine or teaching in the very act, or being acted on. We will briefly look at some of these in the New Testament before passing on to “man shall not live by bread alone”, a very early command of Jesus. And lest you think we labor too much so this matter of doing the commandments of Jesus over simply knowing them, it should again be emphasized that this is the difference between a clean disciples and an unclean and spotted disciple, a disciple who stumbles and one who does not, a disciple with root in life and one without any depth, and in particular one who can love other disciples like Jesus in order that the world sees them as disciples and a disciple that is called a Friend by Jesus Himself.

There is a new movement among the States of the United States to include Bible as history studies in the public schools which is both good and bad. It is good that all have an exposure of some kind to the Bible, since recent TV surveys indicate that many in the public can not name one of the four Gospel writers; but it is bad to treat the Bible as an academic book like any other book. This is the problem the educated ignorant like the Jesus Seminar have with the Bible. They have looked at it as an academic book for knowledge only, and they have missed most of the real truth of the Bible. Paul wrote about that in Romans when he said that most in the Jewish nation of his time when they read the Bible have “a veil across their eyes”, the veil of which is removed when they come to exercise faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. One thing we learn from the Scripture below is that the Bible is a Guidebook for Living. It is practical for life; it is helpful for life; it is life-changing; and the end goal of Bible study is to implement a maturity or perfection in the life that is like God and Jesus.

“All Scripture is given by inspiration of God, and is profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God (this is man in the generic sense of Genesis and creation by God as male and female) may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work.”

(II Timothy 3:16,17)
Does that sound like mere academic study to you? God went to a lot of trouble over a period of thousands of years to call and inspire Prophets and Apostles to write the 66 books of the Bible in order that it would be “PROFITABLE” to humans for living a complete life. It is truly an affront to the God of the universe who is the source of the writings of the Bible, and Who is trying to communicate to us on the way to live and act, to treat the Bible as an academic book in the same category as other academic books. God wants you to get doctrine out of it, doctrine that defines the nature of good and bad doctrine and doctrine that acts on the teachings; God wants you to get some “reproof” from the Bible, realizing as Paul writes in Hebrews 11 and Moses in Deuteronomy 8 that God chastises His own children, not bastard children; God wants you to see some corrections in the Bible to guide you into areas of change of thought and habit in your life; God wants you to read and see in the Bible “instruction in righteousness”, the right ways of God; and God wants you to be complete. And although we may sometimes momentary focus on John 13-17 as means for a challenge to be called a Friend by Jesus, it is ALL Scripture of the Old Testament and New Testament that are given by inspiration of God, and all Scripture that is given to affect and change our lives!

1. The Substance of Doctrine and Teaching, “Didaskalia”.

(1). Matthew 15:9 and Mark 7:7 echo the same teaching from Jesus which describes the very habit of religious leaders, carried away with their own positions and knowledge, who “teach for doctrines the commandments of men”. This is also what we see happening more and more today in this period of the Falling Away as “itching ears” Bible teachers response to the demand of most church members who have an intolerance toward sound doctrine (II Timothy 4:3,4).

(2). Ephesians 4:14 also speaks of bad doctrines as church members are “carried about with every wind of doctrine” like a rudderless cork or ship on the vast ocean. They one year are blown in the direction of the Gospel of Prosperity, then the next year they develop the excesses of the condemned church worship of Corinthians based on an attitude that “the word of God came to them only, or came out of them”; and then are blown in the next year to excesses in praise worship where they fall back to the vain repetitions of the heathen of much speaking and little understanding; and so on, you know how the charismatics have been misled under Oral Roberts, Kenneth Copeland, and others.
(3). False humility and worship of angels were among the commandments and doctrines of men that Paul, under the inspiration of God in writing Scripture, taught as typical false doctrines that church members voluntarily subject themselves to as regulations in order to set themselves unnecessarily from other Christians (Colossians 2:22 and context). The world and the churches and denominations keep trying to add man-made sacrifices on the behalf of their religions when God said early that it is far better “to obey than to sacrifice.”

(4). Some things are obviously contrary to “sound doctrine” (I Timothy 1:9,10): lawlessness and insubordination, ungodliness and sinning, the unholy and profane live according to unsound doctrine, murder is contrary to sound doctrine with “thou shalt not murder” being among the first commandments that came out of the mouth of God, and fornications and sodomy and kidnapping and lying and perjury are all contrary to sound doctrine. Doesn’t that help some with a fundamental definition of what is sound and unsound doctrine? We would have to say that all the commandments that have come from God and all the commandments or teachings that have come from Jesus, the Apostles and Prophets are sound doctrine; while all those doctrines that have originated with man and man’s teachings as extrabiblical or distortions of the Word of God are unsound doctrine.

(5). Paul in I Timothy 4:1-5 was not speaking a personal opinion or a trend of history that he detected, rather an inspiration from the Holy Spirit like all other Scripture he wrote, when he stated that the “Spirit expressly says” that in the latter times, approximately midway in the last days between the Coming of the Holy Spirit and the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, there will be also a mini-falling away among the Catholics as they forbid to marry and command to abstain from certain meats. Of course the problem is much greater than that as they: (1) depart from the faith, these are departees from the faith long before the Falling Away that we are now in but who have been great and initial contributors to the Great Falling Away called the Great Apostasy {it is wrong to call this period of time the Great Apostasy as it is “latter times” or approximately midway in the last days}; (2) they as you can see by their history have departed from the truth of the Bible, making their own pope-like teachings the criterion for the understanding of the Bible itself {this is hideous}; (3) they continue to give heed to deceiving spirits and doctrines of demons, often as they have done in Madi Gra adopting heathen practices; (4) they continue with great ease to speak lies in hypocrisy that contradict the very basic teachings of Jesus and the Apostles, and rewrite church history even as some secular historians every few years rewrite secular history; and (5) they have their conscience seared with a
hot iron which is obvious on many doctrines including the one which allows the priest to abuse children, also inexcusable.

(6). A good minister of Jesus interested in making disciples and Friends of Jesus, by the way according to Paul also a minister “nourished himself in the words of faith of and of the good doctrine” (I Timothy 4:6) will be willing to tell church members these kinds of unpopular and seemingly intolerant things above as part of the preaching and teaching of sound doctrine. The problem with the American Democratic Faith as contrasted to the faith of the Bible and Jesus is that to American Christian “tolerance” as defined in our society and government has become supreme. It is a kind of democratic tolerance that is convenient for ignorance and indifference on the Bible; that promotes the intolerance toward sound doctrine of II Timothy 4:4; that promotes the vast and current “heaping up” on TV and in large and popular churches of itching ears Bible teachers and teachings; that promotes the turning away from truth and more to the personal desires of church members; and turns church members into fables.

(7). Good ministers and Bible students, disciples and Friends, are those who habitually “give attendance to” (I Timothy 4:13): reading, exhortation, and doctrine. You are to read the Bible, exhort the Bible, and live and revel in the sound doctrine of the Bible.

(8). How much doctrine is related to the way we live as a Christian is obvious in I Timothy 4:16 as the Word tells us to “take heed to yourself and the doctrine.” Doctrine is alive and life, inseparable from your real self. We remember the Scripture which says, “for as a man thinketh in his heart, so is he.” We might also say that as a man stores doctrine in his mind and heart, so his thoughts and his behavior become.

(9). Elders, another word in the New Testament for pastor, shepherd, or bishop in the church, then as now it should be, are to be made twice as much salary as ministers that are only administrators or music directors, those who labor in the WORD and DOCTRINE (I Timothy 5:17). (Recently I met a young lady in a certain Presbyterian church who told me that she is an elder. Impossible, she was obviously too young to be elder and not a male. This is very contrary to Scripture and is a less severe example of the departure in contemporary times of Presbyterians not quite as severe as the giving heed to seducing spirits and doctrines of devils as that of the Catholics mentioned earlier, although I am sure we reap bad consequences in the
total Church Body from this such unsound doctrine as we do from the earlier. Certainly it does cultivate the kind of tolerant attitude, and a very misapplication of the word “elder” even as given in the dictionary and common sense, the same kind of tolerant attitude which allowed the Presbyterians a few years ago to vote on the issue as to whether to say that Jesus is the only way of salvation since that seems intolerant. You know what that sound like, like toleration has become our God instead of God the Father, and toleration our teacher instead of the Lord Jesus Christ!}

(10). We see the real source of doctrine in I Timothy 6:1 as “His doctrine”, and we also see how serious sound doctrine is to Scripture where the doctrine of God is closely related to the very name of God, so that to blaspheme the doctrine of God is also to blaspheme the name of God. Oh, how many ministers and denominational leaders who generate doctrine and teachings out of the convenience of the time in order to see results in a worldly method are going to find accountability and recompense from God at judgment day! How many of these glib teachers and preachers of the Gospel of Prosperity and Holy Spirit distortion are going to finally receive the rewards they are due for their pride and arrogance in generating extrabiblical teachings. So many times, just like Paul told the Ephesian elders would happen after he was gone, it is done for personal status, support, and personal gain. They scatter the support of the local church away and to themselves, both money and leadership, often offering you foolish things like holy water with special power like Dr. Peter Popoff.

(11). Paul knew Himself to be an explainer of the teachings of Jesus which in I Timothy 6:3 he calls the “words” and “doctrine of our Lord Jesus Christ”. It is the doctrine that is consistent with godliness, or the godless requirements of God the Father. It is consistent with “wholesome words”, words that are more from the Bible rather than these catchy phrases and itching ears teachings that so many today generate to show you how much more they know than others and the Bible, how they have received special revelations from God that you can not find in the Bible. In other words how “the word of God came to them only, or came out of them only”.

Paul gives a description of these kinds of itching ears Bible teachers and preachers with their unsound doctrines and unwholesome words that you would do well to heed before you support them: (a) they are proud, (b) they know nothing, (c) they are possessed with disputes—can tell by their argumentative and fighting spirit—and arguments that evolve around “words”, often they generate the straw man and word to have an argument that seems unique, (d) these arguments of
men like fundamentalists and charismatics bring “envy, strife, reviling, evil suspicions, and useless wranglings. These kind of self-called and self-ordained Bible teachers are “men (once again men in the generic Genesis sense of male and female as now there are perhaps as many women that are in this category of bad Bible teachers) of corrupt minds”, there is a drought of truth in their teachings, and as you can see by their pleas for money they have come to “suppose that godliness is a means of gain”. How often do they tell you about their good works, or godliness, as a means to get you to give them financial gain!

What are you to do? “From such withdraw yourself” (I Timothy 6:5b)

2. Doctrine or Teaching, the Act, from the Greek word “didache”.

(1). Matthew 7:28: the people of Jesus’ day were “astonished at His doctrine”, for one reason He taught with authority not as the religious leaders”; and people if they faced up to the teachings today realistically, rather than superficially and with a great deal of self-justification, would also be astonished especially on the New Commandments, on Humble Unselfish Service, and on the challenge to be called by Jesus Himself “Friend”.

(2). Matthew 16:12: even as Jesus warned to be aware of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees as contrary to the sound doctrine of the Bible, we must also be aware of the doctrines of many {perhaps most if we are in the time of the Falling Away and of “itching ears” Bible teachers and false prophets} of the leading religious leaders. Hard, but true! Popularity is bad if we are indeed in the time of the Falling Away!

(3). Mark 1:27: So far had the people of Jesus’ day drifted from the real meaning of the Old Testament Scriptures, that when Jesus spoke, even quoting from the Old Testament and fulfilling OT Scriptures, the people reacted like today saying “What new thing is this?” and “What new doctrine is this?” There is a wide difference between the itching ears Bible teachings that you will increasing hear as the false teachers and prophets climb out of the wood work like termites to promote false teachings and sayings, and the sound doctrine of the Bible that may sound different to you because your listening has selectively been away from the Bible.

(4). Mark 4:2: For example the real, spiritual meaning of the parables of Jesus have been covered up and lost; although the doctrine or teachings of
Jesus often centered around the parables. You can see that easily in a failure of modern Christians to face up to the unfruitful results of 3 out of 4 seeds of the Word of God planted, today the seed is more what you give to TV evangelists in order to in return get rich; and in particular do we fail to realize that the man who received the seed with joy when planted among thorns or on stony ground did not last long--stumbling through life for 40 years, developing no root, the seed planted being killed by cares of this world, the deceitfulness of sins, and other things.

(5). Mark 12:38: often in the Bible Jesus "says to them in His doctrine", the same as the teachings of Christ; and above all, you must see the Doctrine of Jesus properly interpreted according to ASPI as SOUND DOCTRINE. If you know not where to start on SOUND DOCTRINE, then start with the teachings of Jesus then branch out to the letters of Paul, Peter, and John, etc., noting the obvious consistency of soundness likeness from the Apostles and Prophets.
“Well, of course I am a CLEAN DISCIPLE,” most Christians would say. “I am a good citizen, a church member, I take care of my family, and I am an all around good person.”

Sorry, that will not cut it. Judas Iscariot could claim all these things; and yet when Jesus made the remark “You are not all clean” in John 13:10 and 11 He was contrasting the status in His sight and in the sight therefore of God of one of the disciples, Judas, who was still unclean, and the other 11 disciples who were clean. Jesus told Peter specifically, of course referring to the one baptism of the Bible, that he and the other disciples were clean except for one of them (John 13:10). This is just one of hundreds of references in the Bible, most often ignored by popular preachers and church members, that faces up to the realities that all in the local church are not in the church of the Firstborn written in heaven. In this time of the Falling Away, there are more goats than sheep, and there are more tares than wheat and Jesus taught to leave them alone. However, this difference between tares and wheat in the local church and churches, perhaps you have never thought of in the phrases of clean disciples and unclean disciples; however you see that from these verses and the larger context of John 13 Jesus clearly teaches that then and now there are both clean and unclean disciples in the select group called the local church.
Clean Disciples

Don’t feel badly if you missed this truth in your Bible study. Jesus as He washed the feet of the disciples and Peter objected, responded to Peter “that you don’t understand what I am doing, but you will understand later (John 13:7). Peter did understand later as we see by something he wrote in about the one baptism in I Peter 3:21, “baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God); but in the total context, it is a baptism that saves us, that like the washing of the feet has to do with water only by way of analogy or type and antitype, and it made possible by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, immediately pointing you to the fact that this one baptism relates to the gospel, personal relationship to the gospel, and the work that only God can do in the human heart and spirit of the 9-month new birth. {Generally it does not happen instantaneously, did not even in the case of the conversion of the Apostle Paul as it took time before the scales fell off his eyes— not that many other conversions are like that of the Apostle Paul: and what most often happens as evangelists, pastors, and fervent church members decide that seed sown among thorns or on stony group, which has “been received with great joy” and therefore a sign of instantaneous new birth, and not waiting for the complete 9 month new birth in keeping with the teachings of Jesus to Nicodemus in John 3, is the reason that so many unconverted (un one baptized) now reside like full blown Christians in the local churches. If we understand Paul in Romans on the one baptism, if we understand Paul in Ephe- sians on the “one baptism”, if we understand Peter in his little epistles on how the answer of a good conscience toward God is the type of real faith that brings the real one salvation of the one baptism, and if we understand the concepts and teachings of Jesus about clean disciples versus unclean disciples, then we come to understand John 13, come to understand the difference between tares and wheat, between goats and sheep in the local church, and also the difference between the instantaneous new birth and the 9 month new birth which grows roots, does not stumble, and does not have the original seed planted in a supposed instant conversion choked out by the cares of the world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other things. {If still in doubt then read for yourself carefully the parable of the seed and the sower taught by Jesus Himself--recorded in Mark 4:3-25, Matthew 13:3-23, and Luke 8:5-18--which among other things makes it clear that 3/4 of the seed of the Word sown is unfruitful.}

You know that there is a common saying that “cleanliness is next to godliness”, and some even believe that it is not the Bible, although it is not. It is in the Scout oath of “a Scout is trustworthy, helpful, kind, courteous...clean, and reverent” where “clean” is before “reverent” which might lead to the common mis-

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conception that it is in the Bible. It is worthy, even ethical and highly social; and
a good oath for Scouts and Scoutmasters. However, we are talking about a
higher challenge for youth and adults who still have eyes to see and ears to hear
what the Bible really teaches as compared to their own customs, traditions, and
in particular their intolerance toward sound doctrine. During my early days of
ministry as I preached and even tested church members on sound doctrine on
Sunday nights--yes, much to their shock and surprise as they thought particu-
larly at large churches that they had already heard everything and were the “it”
in church membership. Later, I have learned that most church members, southern baptists, Presbyterian, catholic or otherwise according to the clear teach-
ings of the Bible did not want to know sound doctrine. They have developed many
social and seemingly Christian ways and methods to become intolerant of sound
document: they are motivated by what they do and say in church by their own per-
sonal desires; they have the itching ears needs of comfort, security, and self-
justification for their false doctrines and they make large social piles of similar
itching ears Bible teachers, turn away from the truth and turn into fables. Some
churches and church members are all the way into the fable category with bibles
that attempt to replace the One Book of the Word of God, almost that far along
with intolerance toward sound doctrine as they replace Bible with the opinions of
men, scholars, and religious authorities, a little less but not much as we find the
Pentecostals generating all these new revelations, new words and catch phrases
as if “the word of God came out of them, or came to them only”, and then some-
where in the intolerance toward sound doctrine as the Gospel of Prosperity to
61% of American Christians has replaced the Gospel originally delivered in the
Bible.

Is there something about this “clean disciples” and “unclean disciples” that we
still do not understand or we can not accept? There is just no way to progress
further along growth in Christian maturity and roots without stumbling until we
first accept the clean disciple teaching from Jesus. First comes the clean disci-
ple, then comes the “humble unselfish service” that Jesus taught when He
washed the feet the disciples, and then remains the supreme challenge to be
called by Jesus “Friend”. This should not be considered so strange as like any
other teaching of the Bible by Jesus, it is explained and reiterated by the Apos-
tles. Often in their writings of Scripture, you will find “spotted” as referring to
those disciples that are not clean: you will also find “unspotted” as referring to
clean disciples. Generally the spotted versus unspotted comes up in connection
with those who have made moves toward unsound doctrine as contrasted to
“faith once for all delivered to the saints”, like in II Timothy chapter 2. Men like
Hymenaeus and Philetus who “strayed from the truth”, that by saying the resur-
rection of Christians was already past with the Second Coming of Christ already behind them were “overthrowing the faith of some”. The cure from such bad examples of departees from the faith once for all delivered is: “God knows His own, and let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.” (II Timothy 2:19)

These same kind of people in the local church like Hymenaus and Philetus, even also Jannes and Jambres, and those that Jude went after as departees from the faith once for all delivered to the saints are further identified and characterized in II Timothy 3:1-9, most clearly understood around the words “having a form of godliness but deny the power thereof” {the power is God Himself and Christ}, and even further later in the little but powerful book of Jude which was dealing with the same kind of people and the same problems of those who were developing and teaching additions to the faith that was delivered in the Bible of the Prophets and Apostles, the Bible of Jesus. You see it has become such a common practice in the religious world to add theology to the Bible, even add new concepts built around “seed” and the gospel of prosperity, that we do not stop to realize how serious it is to add revelations to the Word of God. There are no more revelations past this faith once for all delivered by the Apostles and Prophets and as recorded in the 66 books of the One Word of God. {Oh yes, there is a lot of illumination remaining to be done; but revelation is over even as we no longer have Apostles and Prophets called to write Scriptures. What part of Jude 3 do you not understand as you read of “the faith which was once for all delivered to the saints”? I know you understand the “once” part as the Apostles and Prophets receiving revelations from God and recorded such as the voice of God, like it is; but perhaps you have missed, overlooked, or under estimated the “once for all”. Yes, you caught it: the revelations in the Bible are complete; first and second Corinthians condemned the haughtiness which allows some itching ears Bible teachers to think that “the Word of God came to them only, or came out of them only”, and if you do not see this as the major problem to be overcome in the writing of Jude as Jude stops working on the “common salvation” in order to “contend earnestly for this faith once for all delivered to the saints”, then you should see that is also the major objective and problem to deal with in Jude from Jude 17: “remember the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ...” So many Bible teachings and preachings in the average church today can not in high fidelity find their way back to the pages of the Bible; many churches have stopped trying; and if is almost as if church members, much like the children of Israel asked God no longer to talk to them but only through Moses, today are asking God to not talk to them through Christ or the Apos-
That a lot of activity and work goes on in the majority of local churches today is undeniable, that this work is for God and Christ would strain any member of a local church to prove. The primary proof that Jesus expected was that with a manifested love of church members for all disciples of all churches the world would then believe in Jesus, overwhelmed by that common love that cuts across all boundaries.

Who are These Bad Church Members in Jude?

Granted as you read the book of Jude, it is hard to identify what kind of bad church members are being IDed here; and since we have trouble recognizing them from other New Testament church members, we also have trouble finding their counterparts in churches today. In a few sentences we will look at the words used in Jude to describe these bad church members, but first in order to come to a full appreciation of the book of Jude and the nature of these bad disciples, we must comprehend—as I think you do already—that the objective and problem of Jude is to deal with departures and departees and examples and leaders in such departures from “the faith once for all delivered to the saints”, the faith revealed and written in books of the Bible by Apostles and Prophets.

Perhaps you even object to the word “bad” used for some church members, which is just a sign that you like all of us in this country have been affected by a false concept of toleration. Granted “toleration” as defined in our society is a prime tenet of the American Democratic Faith; and perhaps when you come down to it about the only belief that all Americans have in common except a similar faith in the majority over the minority. This kind of toleration is one reason that many Americans will not even talk about the Bible and faith, it is the extreme kind of toleration that lead the Presbyterians a few years ago to vote no longer to say that Jesus is the only way of salvation as it seemed too intolerant (you see we have even put toleration ahead of our testimony and influence for Jesus, an obvious departure from the faith once for all delivered to the saints). Well, if this word “bad” is objectionable to you at this point in the book development, let us look in Jude itself for the words of Jude used to describe those who have departed from classical faith. {May I use the words “classical faith” to define the faith that was delivered to first century Christians, therefore to all of us, as the Apostles wrote Scriptures and they were added to the Scriptures of the Old Testament, and I must assume that you have bought the argument of the purpose of Jude to deal with departures from Bible, at least from proper interpretation; and I will deal with proper interpretation later in the ASPI, or Autho-
Okay, the following are some of the words used to describe these departees from the classical faith:

1. “men who have crept in unnoticed” (Jude 4): according to the Word of God they do not really belong there; they “crept” in meaning that they exercised a certain stealth mode as they entered the church and entered in a sneaky and inappropriate manner, and unfortunately the other church members did not recognize the difference between them and other church members as they were “unnoticed.”

2. Certain men “marked out for this condemnation” (Jude 4): Marked out by whom, by God of course; and you must notice the descriptions from Jesus and the Apostles about Judas who was also marked out for condemnation as the “son of perdition”; and slowly Jude tries in a semi-tolerant manner to gently identify for you these “certain men” as men who sneaked in unnoticed and men who are marked for condemnation. Is that enough from an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ, one also identified by Jesus as clean, to call them bad church members. They are in the church; and yet they have no salvation, since they are already marked by God, like Judas, for condemnation. Recall how Jesus said also in John 13 that “many are called but few are chosen.” We would have to decide that these certain men, like Judas and any other unclean disciples, were called to be a church member—voted on unnoticed, assumed to be born again and saved; and yet who were really destined by God to go to hell. Well, that is a start on being bad anyway. {Part of our problem today in our many churches of many different denominations is that we do not realized how bad just one departure from the classical Bible faith is, muchless two or three or four, or even then almost complete intolerance toward sound doctrine!}

3. “ungodly men” (Jude 4): well, they are un-God or anti-God and therefore also anti-Christ; and I think we see a relationship here between the “perilous men of perilous times” of II Timothy 3:1-9, in particular in the words of that description of bad church members with words like “unholy” (II Timothy 3:2), “having a form of godliness (alias looking godly and religious even Christian) but denying the power thereof” (3:5) {denying by their real motivations and activities any real identification with the Great God of the Bible and of the Universe}, and “lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God” (3:4).
It should start to be obvious what sort of men and women in the local church and churches that the Word of God is talking about in Jude. That are not bad people in the common sense and American concept of badness; they are simply people that should not be there, and they are not entitled to be there even though Jesus did tell us to leave them alone as tares and goats until the Second Coming and the Great Gathering.

4. Men "who turn the grace of our God into lewdness" (Jude 4): yes, this is a little more difficult as we do not generally use the word "lewdness". The word in the King James Version as contrasted to "lewdness" in the New King James Version, although both have the same meaning of course, is "lasciviousness" or "licentiousness". The Greek word from which it is translated means literally "excess". In short these certain men, today and in Jude's time, are and were taking license with the Word of God. Do you recognize any certain men or women, let us be equal opportunity, like that which at first shock you with something that you have never heard, and then with the full force of their winsome personality and much talking put behind it with their popularity, it begins to make more sense to you. It should not; because if you will check the Word of God for yourself for sound doctrine, you will find that the same problem they spout in unsound doctrine has previously been dealt with and condemned in the Bible of classical faith. You hear talk about the good 'ole gospel, when what we need is some good ole classical Bible and some classical sound doctrine from the Bible. In Jeremiah 13:27 "lewdness" to God is: (1) You have forgotten Me; and (2) You have trusted in falsehood; in Ezekiel 16 men and women of lewdness are spiritual harlots toward God with abominable idols; in Ezekiel 22 these certain men of lewdness have defiled themselves with idols that they made with their own hands. Remember the man in Jeremiah who cut down a tree, with the wood of the tree he warmed himself and he cooked a meal, and then with the leftover piece of wood he made a god, falling down to worship it. So we make idols today, more in our own minds than with our hands although both are true: we take care of clothing and food and home and family--certainly all good things within themselves--and then we create a god in our own mind that will take second place and bow down to worship the creation of our own conscience and mind. J. B. Phillips in his little book "Your God is too Small" tried to deal with this; however what is new in our generation is that the American Conscience is also made a god, and we have many of these fellows preaching and teaching of the lewd sort that takes license with God and the Bible by giving you unauthorized revelations that change the very original meaning of the Bible.
5. These certain men are like the majority of God's people whom God rescued out of Egypt (Jude 5), then whom God destroyed, why? Because of their unbelief. So these men of the lewd sort departed from faith in the living God like all of Israel except those under 21 years of age and a few others. Can God do that? Will God do that? Yes, He has done it before; and He will do it again. The Word of God in Hebrews tells us that they are our examples that we should not like them see the works of God for over 40 years and then depart from faith in the living God! You see once again we go back to the purpose of Jude to deal with departures from the classical faith of the Bible. These certain men were men of unbelief in the real living God of the faith and of the Bible!

6. Like the angels who are reserved for everlasting punishment that will happen at the Judgment of the One Great Day of the LORD and Lord, these certain men are likewise set aside or marked for everlasting punishment no matter how good they sound with their “great swelling words” because it is serious to modify the Bible and classical faith. (Jude 6)

7. “given themselves over to sexual immorality and strange flesh” (Jude 7) like Sodom and Gomorrah: this is the first that we notice that these certain men also had sexual immorality problems as well as problems with their faith, and we tend to think again of perilous men in perilous times of II Timothy 3:1-9 where these sort of bad church members "creep into households and make captives of gullible women loaded down with sins, led away by various lusts, always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth." (3:6,7) And in spite of what it sounds like this is greater than sexual immorality as these church member teachers had lead astray women of unconfessed sin, women of various not dealt with lusts, women who like to learn but never get the gist of godliness. Of course we do get the message that even as Sodom and Gomorrah are examples of suffering from eternal vengeance in fire, so these leaders in churches that would take advantage of women in home training where they desire to learn will also suffer eternal vengeance of the fire of God. (It is right at this point where we have trouble with putting so many TV evangelists in the category today of the perilous men of the perilous times, or with the certain men of Jude that have departed from classical faith; but as many commentators on II Timothy have said the horrible list of bad characteristics of church members of 3:1-9 does not mean that every bad church member has all those bad characteristics but that collective in the perilous times all the church members together will exhibit those bad attitudes and actions. In other words, your favorite TV evangelist may not have a problem with sexual
immorality, but still can have some of these other bad characteristics of these
certain men of the perilous times. On the other hand, you must face up to the
realities that if the Head man of the Evangelistic Association, Ted Haggard, and
the organizer of a large New Life Movement church, had this same problem of
“strange flesh,” others no doubt in the same Association have similar problems;
and if the Bishop of a large community church in Atlanta, Georgia and his brother
were making a prostitute out of a loyal church member, gullible yes but taking
her captive in her own home and church, definitely sexual immorality, then there
are that many more still unidentified. Later I will need to explain the difference
between the Falling Away of II Timothy 4:3,4 and the perilous times of 3:1-9. In
short and to satisfy you now the perilous times are the ups and downs in the local
church and denomination; but when the follies of such bad church membership
are no longer revealed as in 3:9 then that church and/or denomination has
entered the Falling Away of 4:3 and 4!}

You are also beginning to see, if not before, that this was not a small and minor
problem {issue} in New Testament churches that the Apostle Jude recognized,
nor that before him the Apostle Paul predicted in the same New Testament
churches in II Timothy 3:1-9 and in our time with the Falling Away in II Timothy
3:3,4. Paul obviously wrote of the great Falling Away with the words “the time
will come” and the description to follow, the same Falling Away Jesus referred to
as “because sin will abound the love of many will wax cold”, and in II Thessalo-
nians from Paul about the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness with the Fall-
ing Away and a visual of the great man of sin, the son of perdition that must
precede the Second Coming; and Jude also refers to the first great falling away
of the children of Israel during 40 years in the desert where they developed and
evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living god”, the major subject of
Hebrews being this example, that it is possible for any Christian, and that it can
happen to you. However, not if you chose clean over unclean.

{Yes, the message of Jude is somewhat depressing, and I needed a break as
always when exegesis is done on this book of the Word of God; however
what happened here in the New Testament churches, although much larger
than 1 out of 12 Apostles being unclean, is still small compared with the
first great Falling Away in the wilderness by all the people of God except 3
and youth 20 and younger, also smaller than the Great Final Apostasy of
churches and churchmembers the last 40 to 80 years before the Second
Coming. Yet that background of whole churches, denominations, and thou-
sands of church members--most as compared to a few that do not depart
from the faith--is necessary as a precursor to the challenge acceptance of
Friends of Jesus. It is said, “all sunshine makes a desert,” and “when it is dark men see the stars.” And I can not help but wonder how much of the final tribulation and even the work for Christ that necessitates the preparation of endurance for afflictions is not the mental anguish of seeing so many friends and loved ones around us fall by the wayside. What we will do to follow is try to shorten the key word descriptions that ID for us these kind of certain men, then and now!

8. Like four phrases together from (Jude 8): “these dreamers defile the flesh”, their world while real in the world is not real in the world of the faith; “reject authority”, certainly they were rejecting the authority of other church elders, of the Apostles, of the Bible, and of Christ and God {recall how much of the rebellion against Moses questioned not only the authority of Moses as a spokesman for God but also the authority of God Himself}; and “speak evil of dignitaries”, again the context demands that this was a question of the leadership and authority of the Apostles and the books they wrote.

9. These certain men would speak “of what they really did not know” (Jude 10): it was out of a lack of real understanding of the position of the Apostles as chosen by God to write authoritative Scriptures; and unfortunately today in the case of so many outspoken Bible teachers, there has been no real Bible training or insufficient compared to the positions they have taken for themselves. They don’t know what the Apostles really wrote; their little time in Bible study has been theology, philosophy, and things about the Bible instead of the Bible itself. Furthermore what they have come to know naturally as members of the human race and as experienced and spotted sinners, they corrupt themselves in the church and before God.

10. These certain men have gone the way of Cain (Jude 11), they do not sacrifice in the manner that God ordains and they murder their brothers, either verbally or actually; these certain men have run greedily in the way of Balaam for profit and gain, who preached and prophesied for personal gain; and a third woe is on these certain men, today and then, as they have perished as in the rebellion of Korah. Remember it was Korah who questioned the authority of Moses and Aaron claiming that all the congregation in the wilderness was “holy” and belonged to God (“His”), something we see a lot today as church members question the Christ given authority of the pastor over the church. “We are as good as you”, and “this is a democracy”, etc. And today when we hear such church members in rebellion, or the rebellion against God and His commands in His book, although we wonder why God does not intervene immediately, we do
realize that these men during the time of Jude were “perished” although still the walking dead. Recall that Jannes and Jambres also questioned the authority of Moses to speak for God to Pharaoh, trying up to a certain point to duplicate the signs given by God for leadership qualifications. {There are, and always will be a lot of example learning simulators.}

11. A few more characteristics of apostates {unclean in John 13 and bad church members in II Timothy 3:1-9} in Jude 12-13: and here Jude, under inspiration of the Spirit of God is overcome with passion seeking bad and appropriate words to describe the identification of these men: (1) “spots in your love feasts”, they are unclean enough to be called spots and they do not belong in the love feasts of Christians; (2) they have no shame as if their spots can not be seen; (3) the only real service they are providing is for themselves, and surely you must see the bad church behavior of “lovers of self” of II Timothy 3:1-9 so much so that you can come to see the book of Jude as a commentary on II Timothy, or II Timothy a prophetic prediction on the time of Jude; (4) “clouds without water”, they whiten up but don’t deliver; (5) like a cork on the ocean these men are carried about with the winds which again reminds of Paul in Ephesians where church members are to be rooted and grounded as not to carried about by “every wind of doctrine—and surely you have noticed that each week you anticipate from many evangelists as they compete with each other for seed money what new catch words, phrases, and doctrines they will come up with {we actually heard not long ago on TV of how one evangelists’ planted seed would bring far more money to the giver than other evangelists}; (6) “late autumn trees without root”, generally in the Bible as in the parable of the seed and sower, they stumble; (7) “without fruit”, well that makes it clear how the seed of the Word in their lives has been in the 3/4’s category of unfruitful—seed by the wayside, on stony ground, and among thorns; (8) dead, twice dead and pulled up by the roots; (9) raging waves of the sea which foam out of their mouth like the whites of the caps; (10) wandering stars in the sky that are reserved for the darkness of everlasting punishment.

12. “Ungodly” is the key word to describe these men in Jude 14-15 as Jude quotes from Enoch, remember the seventh from Adam and who was so holy as to walk with God: (1) ungodly in the churches will receive their just judgment when Christ comes again with thousands of angels to gather and execute judgment; (2) ungodly deeds that are observed and recorded for which they will then receive conviction and judgment; (3) ungodly deeds which these certain men have committed in an ungodly manner, the end and the methods are both ungodly; (4) and ah, ha, we can know most fully identify these men as having spoken harsh things
against the dignitary of all dignitaries, the Lord Jesus Christ Himself--"all the harsh things which ungodly sinners have spoken against Him" (Jude 15) "traitors, heady, high-minded, blasphemers, unholy, brutal, haughty, lovers of pleasure more than lovers of God" are just some of the words used to describe these bad church members and bad church leaders in II Timothy 3:1-9.

We are inclined to think that getting this word out among the churches of New Testament times was some help in a rescue of the faith delivered once for all to the saints, but we know even from our contemporary scene today that these mockers of Christ will continue and flourish in the churches until the end: however, it is a reality that a would-be Friend of Jesus must face up to in order to not be a dreamer, in order to realize that most in the churches will be these bad people instead of Friends. Even to come to the point of II Timothy 3:1-9 "not to associate with such", and that is hard. "if they are in the church, then they must be right" is what we are inclined to think, what they think, and in general even a majority opinion. Jude will end the book something like this in Jude 20-23 with warnings to keep your distant from such mockers.

13. While these mockers of Jesus are “grumblers” and “complainers” motivated more by their personal lusts than any thing else, they are capable people in that they can speak in public with “great swelling words so as to hold men in admiration of their way with the English language” and they know how to practice the public relations of flattery in order to gain advantage. (Jude 16)

14. Ah, yes completely IDed at last; for the Apostles foretold that there would be “mockers in the last time who would walk {live} according to their own ungodly lusts” (Jude 17). And more ID, these mockers of the last time are (1) sensual persons, (2) persons who cause divisions in local churches and the larger church as like Paul said to the Ephesian elders make disciples for themselves and for personal gain, and (3) certain men in the churches in spite of all their eloquence and public relations do not have the Spirit of God.
CHAPTER 13

How to Keep Clean!

Keeping clean does not mean sinless--John makes clear in I John that “if anyone says that he does not sin, he is a liar and the truth is not in him”--yet it also does not allow for the habitual committing of the same sin over and over, John also deals with that in I John. Keeping clean is more like what Paul wrote in II Timothy 2:19.

“Nevertheless the solid foundation of God stands, having this seal: ‘The Lord knows those who are His,’ and ‘Let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity.’”

To keep clean is a matter of staying away from habitual iniquity. (By the way as mentioned earlier in this book of how Christian is only found a few times in the Bible, then used more by observers than Christians themselves, but you see how here in II Timothy 2:19 that Christians are naming themselves with the name of Christ in some form or fashion.) Obviously the concern of Jude and the Word of God in Jude is to prevent other church members from falling into the same predicament of those “certain men”-- the mockers, pretenders, and unclean--as IDed in Jude 1-19: those ungodly men who in many forms and fashions had departed from the faith once for all delivered through Jesus and the Apostles. So verses 20-23 offer preventive medicine to avoid the trap that so many disciples have fallen into. We chose to call it “How to Keep Clean”.

Friends of Jesus in this Age of Bible and Computer
1. "You beloved" (Jude 20) it starts, and see how the focus has shifted from those certain men who have departed from the faith once for all delivered to the saints, no doubt like today by considering themselves as vessels of new revelations. You beloved build yourselves up on your most holy faith. Yes, hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard, Paul would say; bring to remembrance your "most holy faith" with all the teachings and doctrines of it that came from Jesus and the Apostles through the only possible way of revelations from God. This would include reading and study of all the teachings of discipleship; but more, for it always implies holding onto to the faith that is in your heart. Faith is often used two ways in the Bible: (1) as a body of beliefs, and (2) as belief in the heart. Here in Jude 20, it is both!

2. Praying in the Holy Spirit. (Jude 20) Whether you call it living the Christian life, or keeping clean as a disciple, or growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ, developing root and maturity, it always starts with the basics of Bible and prayer. In prayer we talk to God, in Bible reading and study God talks to us.

3. "Keep yourselves in the love of God" (Jude 21). Since these mockers and ungodly men had gotten away from the love of God, the sensible way Jude is saying to keep clean is by the exercise of your own will and decisions in the love of God. {This will be further clarified as we look at what John wrote in I John since that Apostle was the last to write a book of the Bible, who dealt with the same kind of people as did Jude and Paul but much later in time, approximately near the 100 A.D. year mark. It appears by a comparison of Jude and I John where John tells us that "they went out from us" that Jude’s pleas to contend for the faith had worked, the mockers deciding to leave some of the local churches starting new churches and denominations, like today. We will understand these certain dissenters of divisions in the churches more from I John even as we will also understand how to keep clean from sin better, likewise the love of God.}

4. Look for salvation completion in eternal life, the ultimate in the mercy of the Lord Jesus Christ. Christians are partially guilty of the accusation from the world that they work only for the life to come instead of the present life: however really clean disciples work for both. "in the world, not of the world" is a good summary from the writings of Paul on the relationship between the clean disciple and the world.
5. How do you treat these mockers in the church? (a) Realize that there are two types of these mockers in the church, so make a distinction between them; (b) Have compassion on some of them; and (c) Do not get too close to some of those destined for the fires of hell.

6. Have confidence {another word for faith} in the love and power of the God Who is able to keep you from stumbling {stumbling is used often by Jesus and the Apostles in the Bible to describe those unclean disciples who depart from the faith, so that we must look at it in more detail later from the Scriptures} and to present you faultless {faultless would be another word like unspotted for a clean disciple}. The opposite of stumbling would be: “Complete every task and still stand, having done all stand.”

Signs of Stumbling

What you will find is that “stumbling” is another way in the Bible to describe what happens when a disciple is unclean, or who “departs from faith in the living God” There are many signs of stumbling in the world and in the churches to the extent that we are in the Great Apostasy called the Falling Away, so that while it may not seem a major problem that Jesus has one unclean and falling away disciple of the 12, today where possibly 61% of Christians have departed from the faith, the gospel, and from the living God and Christ as indicated by a dedication to the Gospel of Prosperity, and there are many other signs in the church and out, most of the churches and church members have become like Judas or like the seven churches of Asia Minor that have departed from sound doctrine, especially on love. Alone it is worthy of a chapter just because many have not admitted that a person can be an active church member, a disciple in close fellowship, and still not be clean--in other words have inwardly departed “from faith in the living God.” Also this matter of tares and goats in the church is clarified by the concept of cleanness from Jesus, that also of how many can be called but not chosen, the called being those on the church rolls today and the chosen being the real disciples of the new commandment and Friends. We, of course, must add the parable of the seed and the sower, among the old commandments and teachings of Jesus as we would briefly make a reconciliation between the security of the believer which is sound Bible doctrine and the Falling Away of most Christians which is also sound Bible doctrine. Also we should in parallel look at the parable of the seed and the sower from a practical and realistic point of view in churches today where seed of the Word of God is being sown and the real results that it falls on the soil of human hearts in four distinct manners, three out of four are unfruitful over a period of 40 or more years. It also explains the
How to Keep Clean

fallacy of the instantaneous new birth of the fundamentalists whereby so many members have through the years been added to the called but not chosen as the seed of the Word was sown on thorny and rocky soil, the response taking many years for anyone, including the individual, to realize that it was not a real 9 month new birth like Jesus taught in John 3 to Nicodemus, that stumbling and cares of this world with the deceitfulness of riches only obvious much beyond the time the instantaneous new birth was received with “great joy”, so that evangelists and church members welcomed it as real and fruitful discipleship, many times themselves not having gone to the higher level of the new commandment and to being a Friend of Jesus.

That is a lot for one chapter, but you can see the need of another distinct chapter on how to keep clean. Goodness, even you, if you are not clean are not saved. If it could happen to one of the select 12, it could happen to you! If it could happen to all of the children of Israel above 20 years of age after 40 years in the wilderness seeing the works of God, then it can happen to you. Your salvation depends on your own clarity on this matter, and although you often do not hear those verses they are many and clear in the Bible. Likewise, hardly are you in a position for a higher discipleship and a Friend of Jesus, if you are not clean in the first place. Make sense!

1. A realistic look at the parable of the seed and the sower to explain how so many in the church are not clean.

2. A simultaneous harmony of the parable of the seed and the sower with the “beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God” of Hebrews 3:12.

3. A Quick look at the instantaneous new birth as contrasted to the 9 month new birth of John 3 from Jesus as an explanation of the seed sown on thorny soil which convinces so many pastors and members and evangelists that a soul had been saved since it is at first received with so much joy and enthusiasm but which over a period of years results in a lack of root and stumbling of the Falling Away.

4. We must present II Timothy 4:3,4 where the “time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine”--as the time of the Falling Away with an explanation of how it can happen to so many churches and church members as they become intolerant of sound doctrine, as they seek out and promote Bible teachers with itching ears like themselves, as they are motivated as church mem-
bers by their own personal desires, as they have the gall to turn away from the truth as it is in Jesus and the Bible, and as they turn into such fables as the Mormons and Jews and Roman Catholics have predominately done, and as the charismatics are now in danger of doing as they resurrected all the bad things that Paul tried to correct in Corinthians. It should correlate it also with what it is for a disciple to be clean, or not clean as in the case of Judas Iscariot. That it could happen to one of the select 12 of Jesus should allow us to see that it can happen also to a Priest today, to a pastor, or an evangelist and pastor like Ted Haggard, or to any church member, no matter what position or attendance or longevity they may have!

One of the primary goals of SunGrist_Bible and Bible Commentaries is to Rescue Sound Bible Doctrine from itching ears Bible teachers, the personal desires of church members, intolerance and opposition to sound doctrine, and fables. (II Timothy 4:3,4)

“For the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine [an obvious intolerance toward sound doctrine on the part of church members who at one time endured sound doctrine], but according to their own desires [the motivations of most church members becomes more to fulfill their own personal desires rather than the will of God, Christ, and the Bible], because they have itching ears [the church members with itching ears to hear something of comfort and security to justify their unsound doctrine likewise chose and heap up teachers like themselves with itching ears] they will heap up for themselves teachers [notice the church members chose Bible teachers, preachers, pastors, and evangelist; for themselves rather than for Christ and the benefit of the church, and how large the heaping up is in this day of the Falling as the time {has already} come; and they will turn their ears away from the truth {the Mormons and Roman Catholics have already turned from Bible truth to their own bibles and theologies and philosophies--profane and idle babbling--and trailing close behind them are the Pentecostals with extensive violations of first and second Corinthians based on the false concept that their preachers can still receive revelations, taking the authority to give Bible like the apostles and prophets; that is, that contrary to Corinthians they think the Word of God has come to them only or come out of them; and southern Baptists, well the fundamentalists or Bible baptists now control the SBC with their fighting, anti-Christ spirit;“test the spirits”, John wrote--and the criterion for the faith once for all delivered to the saints, as the Scofield Reference Bible, then we have many churches who have gone after the false gospel of prosperity--now 61% of American Chris-
tians believe in it--which is another gospel unlike the gospel delivered by the apostles and prophets}, and be turned aside to fables {it has happened so subtly over the last 40 or so years as to be unnoticed by the majority of churches--have crept in unawares; but that is the way it is with the Great Apostasy that must happened before the Second Coming as the majority of churches and church members depart from the faith once for all delivered to the saints.} (II Timothy 4:3,4 with comments).

We may start to sound like Elijah who thought he alone was left to represent God, but God assured him that 7,000 of that generation of the nation of Israel were left who had not bowed the knee to Baal; and likewise we know that each generation, including this generation of the Falling Away, has a few which need to be sought out and identified and encouraged to be Friends of Jesus. This is not to encourage a persecution complex among those who would accept the challenge to be a “Friend of Jesus”; but several Bible facts must be inevitably set forth such as: (1) “many are called, but few are chosen”; and (2) “all that will live godly in Christ Jesus shall suffer persecution”, the only question remaining being can you live in Christ Jesus without living “godly” in Christ Jesus?
How to be a "Friend of Jesus" is primarily presented by Jesus Himself in John 15; but do not be deceived there are not many real "Friends of Jesus" today in spite of all the churches, denominations, and those who often name the name of Christ. If it is true, and it is, that the world will know the real disciples of Jesus by the love of the New Commandment which they see; then the opposite if also true, since the world is confused today who are the real disciples, then there are not many real "Friends of Jesus". It is a shame to start the key chapter, or message of this book, on such a negative note; however, if we do not cast aside the superficialities and appearances of discipleship that plague our churches, denominations, and television then there is little hope that we can pass from the sentimentalities of "What A Friend We Have in Jesus"--by the way one of my favorite songs--to real Friendship with Jesus. It is no easy challenge. In the previous chapters you have seen something of the requirements that you must meet, none of them easy: (1) the challenge to become a clean disciple that has indeed been chosen as well as called, a clean disciple through the washing of regeneration of the one baptism; (2) the challenge to remain clean through the teachings of Jesus, old and new; (3) at the very core of the teachings of Jesus and a New Commandment is to love other disciples as Jesus love the first 11 Apostles; (4) then as Jesus stressed in John 15 is the practical, daily learning of "How to Work (and walk) with the Holy Spirit" if I might borrow the name of a book written by Dr. R.A. Torrey.
How to Work and Walk with the Holy Spirit!

This brief presentation on the Holy Spirit, primarily from John 15, will center around three aspects of this famous member of the Godhead: (1) the work assigned to the Holy Spirit by God the Father; (2) the ways Jesus explained to work with the Holy Spirit; and (3) the ways Jesus and His Apostles explained to walk with the Holy Spirit.

1. The Work assigned to the Holy Spirit by God the Father.

The Coming of the Holy Spirit in great power and presence is as significant a historical event to Christians as is the Coming of Jesus to live and die and be resurrected and ascended as Christ. In fact, Jesus said it was more significant in that Christians would be better off with the Spirit than they had been with the personal and physical presence of Jesus Himself.

“Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart, I will send Him to you.” (John 17:7)

There is so much in John 14-16 about the Holy Spirit in the words and teachings of Jesus in those 3 chapters.

(1). In John 14:16,17 Jesus uses a more friendly doctrinal name for the Holy Spirit, much more friendly than the word “Holy Ghost” of the King James Version and whom the Mormons believe only they receive while the rest of the world receives the Holy Spirit \{we are grateful for their contributions\}, the word is HELPER. He, the Holy Spirit, is the one who goes along besides us in life to help and run the race with us. He is the Comforter, the other of the same kind Comforter, if you please and if we pull on some of the Greek language as Ralph Herrings points out so well in his book GOD BEING MY HELPER.

(2). He, the Helper, abides with Christians forever (John 14:15). Fortunately as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from the earth according to II Thessalonians, he is not withdrawn from the inward lives of clean Christians. \{Some have gone so far astray with their straining at a gnat for consistency with the Scofield Notes as to claim that the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit of II Thessalonians is a rapture of the church before the end times, each one is unsound doctrine.\}
(3). Jesus calls Him “the Spirit of truth” that the world cannot receive nor know Him. Even as later in John 14 (John 14:22) Jesus will explain how He and the Father can manifest themselves to Christians and not to the world, now He explains how Christians can receive the Holy Spirit but not the world. You see here the close relationship between how the Father and the Son as well as the Holy Spirit dwell in Christians simultaneously. In other words it is the one and the same! “but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you”, Jesus said in John 14:17b.

(3). Jesus repeats the name of the Helper as the Holy Spirit when He tells that “the Father will send Him in the name of Jesus. (John 14:26).

(4). It is very appropriate that “the Spirit of truth” is also He “who will teach you all things” (John 14:26). {You know I would feel a lot better if current Bible teachers would say instead of “God told me” or something similar, if they would say consistent with Scriptures and Jesus that the Holy Spirit taught me, thus avoiding the curses of Corinthians and Revelation that rest upon them where they think that “the Word of God either came out of them or came to them only”, or where they seek to add to the revelations already given by God in the Bible.} You would have to say that the “all” things would be synonymous with the “faith once for all delivered to the saints”, the book of 66 books that we call the Bible having completed all the faith and all the revelations for all time!

(5). The Holy Spirit has another big job and that is to remind Apostles, and even disciples, of all the teachings of Jesus. You would have to say that this is “all” the teachings and commandments of Jesus, old and new. The Holy Spirit does this for us also, reminding us of the teachings of Jesus, the Apostles, and Prophets as recorded in the Bible; however not as He did for the Apostles and Prophets, where they through the Holy Spirit received once for all the revelations of the Bible. {“Holy men of God spoke as they were moved or breathed on by the Holy Spirit.”}

(6). Even as we come to know the Godhead of the Bible as The Father is the “originating cause”, God our Lord Jesus Christ is the “mediating cause”, and God the Holy Spirit is the “effective cause” (you see it in Creation where God started it, Christ mediated it, and the Holy Spirit breathed on the face of the deep to effect it; you also see how it works in reverse in prayer; and you see salvation where God thought it, Christ bought it, and the Holy Spirit wrought it, also in revelations of the Bible), even so you see the constant cleansing process, which
comes with Abiding, where God takes away unfruitful branches and prunes fruitful branches as although coming from the Father and through the Son as the effecting work on the Spirit down here where we live!

(7). By the way although you may think in the context of John 14-16 that Jesus is often rambling, or off on diversions, when you see often mentions of the oneness of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, these are instead reminders by Jesus Himself as how the three are one and how in oneness they work together for us! {"Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me" (John 14:11), and etc. in the context of John 14-16.} It is fundamental to the whole understanding of salvation, of the work of the Holy Spirit, of all that Jesus taught and did to understand that God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit are One. About even salvation, the Bible states that "God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself", and surely you know the work of the Holy Spirit is creating the one baptism of salvation in your life!

(8). While there is a lot of discussion from Jesus on the Father and the world of John 15:18-25 where the world will hate Christians as the world hated Jesus and the Father, Jesus comes quickly in John 15:25 of what the Helper is doing in all this hate as a testifier with the disciples to Jesus.

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father {one place the Father sends the Spirit of truth, another place Jesus sends Him from the Father, but once again one and the same}, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” (John 15:26,27)

(9). By the way in this day and time when so many ignore Christ and the Bible in the name of “there are so many divisions and interpretations, who can know the truth”, it is important to have convictions on the possibilities of knowing truth even as Jesus said He was “the way, the truth, and the life”, also taught that the Holy Spirit is the Spirit of truth; and recognize that the real problem of the world and worldly, unclean Christians is an absence of the Holy Spirit in their lives. Brutal but true: “the world can not receive the things of the Spirit of God because they are foolishness unto them, neither can they know them because they are spiritually discerned”; and I would have to doubt based on these obvious teachings of Jesus and of the Bible, by the way in the book, the book of John about which they claim so little was actually from Jesus denied so often by the scholars of the Jesus Seminar, that there is a clean
disciple among them! Hey if I have to side with the Bible, the Holy Spirit, and Jesus as contrasted to so-called Bible scholars who have heaped themselves up in colleges and seminaries throughout the world, every time I will side with Jesus! 

{If you have at least reached college age, where the quest is so often for truth, then you also need to face up to these realities; and perhaps in high school as you begin your challenges between faith and the scientific method. We will discuss in the last two chapters the difference between science as the “scientific method” as it is often practiced by scientists or science teacher, in the social sciences or the physical and behavioral.}

(10). Of course the main point of John 15:26 is that it is the work of the Holy Spirit “to testify of Jesus.” This is the reason that Satan was so significantly bound when the Spirit came in great power and presence on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus. While Satan lies and deceives and diverts away from Jesus, the Holy Spirit with more power and presence testifies to the truth on Jesus. And the same reason that it is going to be a pretty sad world near the end of time as Satan is loosed because the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from earth; and yes, contrary to many false and convenient itching ears teachings about eschatology, Christians will still be on earth during this time!

(11). While often fundamentalists like to think that it is their personal job and calling to convict the world of sin, of judgment, and of righteousness, it is really the work and job of the Holy Spirit. (John 16:7-9). Of course we have the job to faithfully teach and preach the sound doctrine of the Bible, the Bible of Jesus, the Apostles and Prophets; and the extent to which it truly bears the fruit of clean disciples, as contrasted to goat and tares, is the extent we learn to work with the Holy Spirit.

(12). The Spirit of Truth, of course the Holy Spirit, guides all disciples into truth. Don’t fret about what is true and what is not; listen to the Spirit over itching ears Bible teachers, for God has designated that He, the Spirit, will guide us into all truth! {Of course, once again this is only the truth that has been revealed already in the Bible, and on which we need illumination and guidance, the truth which is the “all” in that it is “the faith once for all delivered to the saints.”}

(13). The Holy Spirit like Jesus taught about Himself did not speak on His own authority or with His own teachings, but only what the Father told Him is what He repeated, even so the Spirit of Truth: (a) what He hears in heaven is
what He speaks; (b) He will tell you eschatological things to come—this is uniquely for the Apostles in the sense of revelations about “last things”, although the Spirit as mentioned earlier does illuminate and guide us on things to come based only on what has been revealed; (c) The Spirit of Truth glorifies the Lord Jesus Christ, or in other words He spreads the influence of Christ, or builds up the name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the world and among believers; (d) The Spirit takes of what God has given to Jesus as “mine” and declares to clean disciples.

Friends Know what the Master is Doing!

At the very heart and gist of John 14-17 where we learn how to accept the challenge to be “Friends of Jesus” is the foundation in knowing what Jesus was doing on earth. God sent Him to accomplish certain things on earth, and many of those things were accomplished, especially on the teachings, before the crucifixion and resurrection. {Of course those teachings were also about the message and meaning of these events to follow.}

“I have glorified You on the earth”, {Jesus prayed in John 17 in the real Lord’s Prayer, and} “I have finished the work which You have given Me to do.” (John 17:4)

What was the completed work that the Father gave to the Son to do on earth! As the Lord’s Prayer of John 17 continues, we have one of the best summaries of THE WORK OF JESUS ON EARTH ACCORDING TO JESUS! Look briefly at John 17:6-8.

1. Jesus manifested the name of the Father to the men {believers} that God selected for Jesus out of the world. (17:6a)

2. These men first belonged to God; the Father in turn gave them to the Son; and all twelve of them except one kept the Word of God. (17:6b)

3. These select men “know” that all things {a favorite word of Jesus and John in the Gospel is His works} which the Father has given Jesus to do came from the Father. As we would accept the challenge of Jesus to be called a “Friend”, we must know this also—the works of Jesus came from God the Father. (17:7)
4. The Father gave to Jesus a certain number of “words” to pass on to disciples.

“For I have given to them the words which You have given Me; and they have received them…” (John 17:8a)

Likewise a “Friend” today would also need to know this same discrete amount of words, and how can you possibly get that without prayerful under the leadership reading and devotional study of the Bible. Don’t miss out on a single word that God gave Jesus to pass on to disciples. Live in the words and Word; revel in it; meditate on it day and night; study it and study it intensely.

5. If you have “received” these words like the 11 Apostles, then you too will “KNOW”: (a) “and have known surely that I came forth from You”, and (b) “they have believed that You sent Me.” (17:8)

NOTE: Right up there at the beginning of any statement of faith we make about Jesus or the Gospel of Jesus should be these two essentials: (1) Jesus came from God the Father in heaven and eternity before; and (2) Disciples must believe that God the Father sent His Son.

6. It was a settled fact in the mind of Jesus during this prayer that He was no longer in the world, it was as good as over even as the work given to do was already accomplished which would include the crucifixion, resurrection, and ascension—“Now I am no longer in the world…” (17:11a)

7. While Jesus was leaving this world, the disciples were still in the world; and whereas Jesus had kept them, none of them lost except the son of perdition in order to fulfill predicted Scripture; and now Jesus prays for the Father to continue through His name to keep them; and by the way this is also part of the famous Unity of Oneness that is presented often in John 14-17.
This “Abide in Jesus” is a little hard to get a handle on since it seems so vague, yet it is the major subject of 8 verses in John 15:1-8 where Jesus has so little time left to teach His Friends. We suspect that it has something to do with Bible and prayer, more so prayer; however we need to convert something somewhat vague into a practical reality. The reason we think it has much to do with prayer is because all the way through from John 14 to John 16. For example in John 14:13,14.

“And whatever you ask in My name that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.” (John 14:13,14)

Of course the key to understanding this difficult teaching is twofold: (1) You only get anything you ask if you ask it “in the name of Jesus” since the only authority you have to pray to God the Father is through the Lord Jesus Christ; (2) It has to be a prayer that will glorify God the Father in order to be answered, and you can see how so many prayers for personal desires, like a few million dollars will hardly glorify God in your life; and (3) In the context of the verse above—which again seems to be parenthetical and rumblings, but is not—is WORKS, the works that Jesus did for the Father and the greater works that Friends can do for the Father because Jesus goes back to heaven to assist them and sends the Holy Spirit as the Helper and Spirit of Truth.
Further along in the rapid teachings before crucifixion which makes “Abide in Jesus” seem close to prayer is John 16:24.

“Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy may be full.” (John 16:24)

This is amazing; because these Friends had been with Jesus day and night for three and one-half busy years. They had asked Him many questions; they had sought help for the healing of their families; they had even gained assistance by asking how to fish, ordinarily something they knew very well. But the key is that up to this point the 11 Apostles had not prayed, asking “in Jesus name.”

Thus we have a lot to talk about in the next chapter on Prayer, although as we major on what it is to “Abide” in Jesus in this chapter, in John 14-16, and whatever else on “abide” in the Bible will help us, we suspect that this new way to pray and abide “in Jesus name” will come to us with more understanding, and understanding that will enlighten how to pray in the next chapter. Truly, we recognize prayer and abiding are both essential to being a Friend of Jesus; and from this prolonged study of context of John 14-17 we have come to know that the seeming ramblings are efforts to put into proper perspective all the ramifications of this deeper relationship with Jesus called Friendship.

Bible Background on “Abide”

No doubt you have never heard a sermon on “Abide in Jesus”, even in the New Testament it is a word unique to the Gospel of John and I John. Not that other writers don’t use it, just not like the Apostle John: the word is used 6 times by the other Gospel writers, all have to do with the “stay at our house” usage of the word, some use the past version of abode like where “Mary abode” with Elizabeth for 3 months in Luke 1:56; Luke uses the word 6 times in Acts, all in the “stay in one location” sense of the word like if the sailors on the way to Rome with Paul did not “abide” in the ship they would not survive; good ole Apostle Paul, always thorough, uses it 10 times in the writing of 4 New Testament books, with 6 of those in I Corinthians with most of the usages close to that of John in the Gospel and in I John; and of course, the Apostle John uses it 18 times in the Gospel and 11 times in I John, once in II John--there must have been something to the listening factor for John as he sat so close to Jesus, and it helped that John was perhaps the first Friend of Jesus; and yes, of course, Peter who uses it once in I Peter 1:23 about the seed of the Word of God and the new birth--“having been born again, not of corruptible seed but
incorruptible, through the word of God which lives and abides forever.” In any and all cases you can get a feel for the Greek word “menō” which is translated “abide”, literally meaning “to remain” or “continue”. As we suspected continuity to your life of discipleship will have a lot to do with “abiding in Jesus.”

1. When you look at all 18 times in the Gospel of John from a concordance, you will happen to notice that 6 of those are in John 14-15; and further it strikes you that the same word used in 14:16 about the Comforter “abiding” in you forever is the word of abiding in you and in Jesus of the rest of the section.

2. John the Baptist said he saw the Spirit descend on Jesus during baptism, and that it “abode on Him” (John 1:32).

3. In the famous John 3:16, but on the negative side of without believe of 3:36, it is the wrath of God that “abideth” on that person. Yes, the King James Version uses “abideth” for “abide”.

4. Jesus told the Jews in John 5:38 that they “did not have His word {the word of God} abiding in them,” a negative example of what happens among the religious when the word does not abide in them. {You will find in the study of “Abide” in John 15:1-8 that there are several kinds of abide: abide in Jesus, Jesus abides in you, and the word of Jesus and God abides in you.

5. About a grain of wheat falling into the ground, remaining alone if it does not die and producing much grain if it dies, of John 12:24, while the KJV uses “it abides alone”, the NKJV uses “it remains alone.” And we need the further context in John 12:25-26 as background for John 15:1-8.

“He who loves his life {we must be talking about the same thing John calls in I John “the pride of life} will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.” (John 12:25-26)


(1). In I Corinthians 3:14 Paul with an introduction of how disciples plant the seed, other disciples water that seed, and then God gives the increase, takes it
further to Christian work built on the foundation of God, tested by the fire of that great Day of the LORD and Lord, with either abiding or not abiding with the worker rewarded accordingly. Since we need this fire of the Day of the LORD for background, we will look below in two separate verses of the results, first I Cor 3:14 where the work remains after fire and second 3:15 where the work is burned up, the worker suffering loss, but “he himself will be saved”. (This also reminds us of some of the last words of Jude where scoffers are to be dealt with in two distinct categories—“And on some have compassion, making a distinction; but others save (compassion salted with fear) with fear, pulling them out of the fire, hating even the garment defiled by the flesh.” (Jude 22,23))

“If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward.” (I Cor 3:14)

“If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.” (I Cor 3:15)

(2) Paul’s admonition from the Spirit of Truth in I Cor 7:17-24 of how the call of each Christian is somewhat different, and the final words are that “let each one remain with God in that state in which he was called”, “abide in that same state” in the KJV.

“Abide in Me, and I in you.” (John 15:4)

While the gist of John 15:1-8 must be “abide in Jesus”, the passage actually starts with a mini-parable about the vine and the branches. Here is the way the parable goes: (1) Jesus is the true vine; (2). Clean Disciples are the branches of the true vine; (3) God the Father is the vinedresser that casts out any fruitless branch and prunes fruitful branches. And if you miss the relationship here as the equivalent of the Clean Disciples already discussed in another chapter, for example in John 13 where Jesus told them that they were all clean except one, also making this the equivalent of “chosen” over simply “called”; then you should see clean disciples as also closely akin to Abiding Disciples. (Remember we are trying based on what Jesus taught to describe something not academic but rather a personal relationship with Jesus that goes beyond a common Christian.) You will see this clean and abiding relationship when you recognize that right in the middle of the “Abide in Jesus” passage of John 15:1-8 is the clean disciples statement of John 15:3, and recall that each word or sentence of Jesus is carefully chosen so as not to waste
words and time. Now Jesus has their complete and undivided attention; the crowds are not there; and the time is short before the final departure, they think, at the crucifixion. In other words that seeming rapid change in subject is not a change at all: as Jesus talks about clean disciples He is talking about “abiding” even as previously when He talked about prayer in His name He was also talking about works that would glorify the Father.

“You are already clean because of the word which I have spoken to you.” (John 15:3)

Well, there it is: abiding is very close to the same as being a clean disciple; the how of cleanness is through the “word”, notice not words for teaching but word, which Jesus spoke to them; and we recognize that as the seed of the Word that is planted on good ground in the case of 11 out of 12 of the called Apostles, one was not chosen; and beyond that we comprehend that this cleanness comes through the washing of regeneration, the one baptism of the Bible that is salvation. We believe, that is our part, God baptizes and that is His part. “But as many as received Him to them gave He power to become the sons of God.”

Okay now, Jesus is saying, go beyond Clean to Abiding!

“Abide in Me, and I in you. {See the reciprocal personal relationship, you do the abiding in Jesus and Jesus does the abiding in you.} As the branch cannot bear fruit of itself {ah “abiding” is now tied in with the vine, branches, and Great Vinedresser God the Father with which the chapter started--there is no way there can be the fruit of God in your life apart from attachment to the True Vine}, unless it abides in the vine {we are beginning to get a picture that this “abides” is something continuous and not something like we often consider salvation, once for all}, neither can you unless you abide in Me.” (John 15:4 with Comments)

There is a step beyond clean and keeping clean that is abiding that continuously bears good fruit in life, works that glorify God and Jesus; or is it that the abiding includes both keeping clean, that is no bad fruit, and good fruit that glorifies in our lives God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. Well, let’s check that as Jesus gets it all together in the next 4 verses.

“I am the vine {yes, this is a summary that Jesus is the true vine but He is spelling it out for them and us slowly}, you are the branches {well we get that}, he who abides in Me {and by the way he who would also be a Friend of
Jesus}, and I in him, bears much fruit {abiding, we now know for sure is a relationship that bears much fruit for Jesus and God}; for without Me you can do nothing.” (John 15:5)

Wow, that progressed the concept of Abiding--“without Me you can do nothing”. There is no room for the self-made man or Christian in Abiding and Friendship. You for just one period of time detach yourself from the True Vine of Jesus, and whether you recognize it or not in your life and in your church, you will do nothing; that is nothing that is for the glory of God. You may please yourself, and even sometimes your pastor and your Christian friends, even further your reputation, but forget it if you think it has any eternal value for God the Father in heaven.

And Christ always gives the opposites, the negative side if you would, as for example in John 3 what happens when you believe, everlasting life, and what happens when you do not believe, everlasting condemnation. Well, here is what happens to a Clean Disciple who does not abide.

“If anyone does not abide in Me, he is cast out as a branch and is withered; and they gather them and throw them into the fire, and they are burned.” (John 15:6)

Wow, this abiding is very serious business suddenly. Just the thought that the Great Branch Pruner, God the Father, would prune you away from the True Vine of Jesus, that as a branch you can be cast out {causing us to pause to see if this is the same as cast out of the sheepfold, cast out of heaven and thrown into the eternal fires of hell.} This causes us to pause since it seems so counter to the Security of the Believer that most of us hold onto based on Scripture. We do know from other parables of Jesus of how the tares and the wheat will be allowed to grown in the kingdom or the church together until the final harvest of the angels at the end of time; when then the tares and the wheat will be separated, and the tares will be cast into the fire. Or is it really in keeping with what Paul taught of how in a “great house", and we recognize the great house as the church and/or the kingdom, but in a great house are both vessels unto honor and dishonor, you know either silver and gold or wood and straw.

What Jesus is teaching, no doubt, and Paul as well as the rest of the Bible is the realistic recognition that all in the church or any local church are not really saved. While those truly saved do have security--“they have this seal of God:
the Lord knows His own and let everyone who names the name of Christ depart from iniquity; and those truly saved will depart from the iniquity as a continuous habit of life as they cleanly abide in Christ. Then in the passage of John 15:1-8, Jesus reiterates the positive side again of abiding in Christ, then progresses it one more step to success in answered prayer by way of “your desires” that are drastically changed for the glory of God when you are clean and abiding.

“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you. By this My Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit; so you will be My disciples.” (John 15:7,8)

And we are back to prayer again and ready for the next chapter!

“Abide” in I and II John

Would you not know that the best explainer of “abide” in John 15 would be the Apostle John in I John? Again either John listening better from his vantage point close to Jesus or John practiced better, several times being called the disciple whom Jesus loved and no doubt the first Friend of Jesus. As discussed at the beginning of this chapter, John uses the word “abide” or “abideth” 12 times in I and II John.

1. You know immediately John {and the Holy Spirit through John} is dealing with the same subject of John 15:1-8, the “abide in Jesus” when he starts in I John 2:6 with the person who says that He abides in Jesus. {It reminds us of people today who would flippantly claim Friendship with Jesus while ignoring the requirements of the teachings of Jesus.}

“He who says he abides in Him ought himself to walk just as He walked.” (I John 2:6)

A whole generation of us youth were challenged by Charles Sheldon’s book IN HIS STEPS, consistent with this verse, and based on asking the question in every situation, “What would Jesus do in this case?” One of the first sermons I preached as a youth pastor at Lexington Park Baptist Church in Maryland was called “In His Steps” based on Peter, and later rewritten as “What A Friend We Have in Jesus”. {I am afraid that like most things from youth, though we appreciate the enthusiasm for Christ, it was superficial in that it concentrated more on what Christ could do for us than on what we can do for Christ.}
2. John says that what he is about to write is not new, but rather it is a new commandment, that the disciple who loves his brother is the disciple that is walking in the light (I John 2:10) Actually it is “abides in the light”, even in the NJKV. You can see, however, that the literal meaning of meno here would give us insight as to the one who loves his brother remains or continues in the light.

3. In I John 2:14, like in the incorruptible seed of Peter, the “word of God abides” in certain young men.

4. In John 2:15-17 where lust of the flesh, lust of the eyes, and the pride of life are identified as of the world and not of the Father, the teaching finalizes with not what will pass away with the world but what will--having done the will of God--“the will of God abides forever”, and anything done according to the will of God will abide forever.

5. Let that abide in you (remain in you) that you heard from the beginning in I John 2:24--obviously the equivalent from John of Jude’s “faith once for all delivered to the saints”--and if you do let that which you heard from the beginning abide in you, you in turn will also abide with the Son and the Father. The word of faith which you originally heard, if it was sound enough for conversion, is the word of faith that you should presently be holding onto. “heard from the beginning” are key words here as in all of I John. While so many are departing by evolution, or “progress”, or whatever buzz word was used in the first century from the faith once for all delivered to the saints“--and if you do let that which you heard from the beginning abide in you, you in turn will also abide with the Son and the Father. The word of faith which you originally heard, if it was sound enough for conversion, is the word of faith that you should presently be holding onto. “heard from the beginning” are key words here as in all of I John. While so many are departing by evolution, or “progress”, or whatever buzz word was used in the first century from the faith once for all delivered to the saints, you live in and with the original truth of Christ; and this is even more true today in the last approximately 30 years as we in America, like the rest of the world, have slid into the Falling Away simulatenously with the world experiencing the rising tide of the mystery of sin and lawlessness. (When it peaks, it is almost over as the time remaining for this world Age is only “a little while”. You will know the beginning of the little while as you are able to visualize the man of sin on the world news scene; and as you perceive in your church and other social and political environments that the Holy Spirit has been withdrawn from the earth, but don’t count on the pentecostals as they will hardly know the difference so sucessfully have they simulated the Holy Spirit.)

6. John’s favorite word for the Spirit of Truth, the Helper, in I John 2:27 is “the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you”; and in turn you will abide in God the Holy Spirit. This is so much reinforcement on our studies on the Spirit of Truth of John, that we must pause to look closely at it.
“But the anointing which you have received from Him abides in you, and you do not need that anyone teach you; but as the same anointing teaches you concerning all things, and is true, and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you will abide in Him.” (I John 2:27)

There are itching ears Bible teachers today who would teach you about “anointing”, adding new or modified revelations to this Scripture and others like they do to the seed sown, sometimes to include a holy water like with Dr. Peter Popoff or something similar. Don't listen. He who abides in you is the Holy Spirit of Jesus and God; let Him teach you instead of these purveyors of new words, concepts, and revelations—generally to profit their own ministry; Him is true, not a lie like these others; and as He taught you, abide in Him. You see it is nothing fancy or complicated, nothing that these Bible teachers have the right or the authority to control. When you experienced the 9 month new birth then that Spirit came to reside with Jesus and God in your heart; remember that is the way Jesus manifests Himself to disciples and not to the world, the Father and the Son through the effecting cause of the Holy Spirit come to reside in your heart. Don't look for anything more than this at the beginning!

7. Can you hear the Apostle John, the beloved disciple of Jesus, perhaps the first Friend of Jesus, talking to us as “little children” near the end of His life, urging us again to “abide in Him” (I John 2:28)

“And now, little children, abide in Him, that when He appears {you have no doubt that the “Him” you are suppose to abide in is Jesus, the same Jesus that will appear again in the Second Coming}, we may have confidence and not be ashamed before Him at His Coming.” (I John 2:28)

Walking in the light is he who practices righteousness {keeps clean if you please}: the same person who if “born of Him”. (I John 2:29)

NOTE: Hope that you are beginning to see that what we have in I and II John is a commentary on the “Abide in Him” of John 15:1-8.

8. Whenever John writes in I John 3:6 in the NJKV “whoever abides in Him does not sin”, the KJV with “sinneth”--something like abideth that continues with time--better conveys the same meaning of a habitual sin. It is one matter to sin a few times, but it is far different to habitually continue in some kind of sin. I also like the Wuest Expanded Translation here where it is “who continues in the process of sinning”. Do not fret; John agrees with this as in another place he
Abide in Jesus

says, “whosoever says that he does not sin is a liar and the truth is not in him” (I John 1:8)

**Bottom Line: Abiding in Jesus Like Manifestation of Jesus**

The mystery that always remains in the answer to Judas, not Iscariot, “how will you manifest yourself to us and not to the world” (John 14:22), similarly always remains in how the Abiding in Jesus happens. Although with the answer below, Jesus removes some of the question of “how”, since it is a work of God unseen to the human world in that the rest of the world can not see it, as God and Jesus comes in to make their homes in our hearts; yet it remains a marvel, a mystery, and although quite common every time a Christian is born as a son of God, it remains mysterious and a mystery. The best we can do is to revel in faith on the answer of Jesus Himself, after all He does know, above all others, what it takes to be a Friend with Him.
The brutal facts are that once you are called (does not also mean chosen) the Master Vinedresser, God the Father, either prunes your branch or casts it off. And while it may not seem like good news to know that God the Father is going to prune your branch, definitely a very violent action from the perspective of the involved branch, it is far better than the alternative of the bad news to be cast off from the very eternal God of the Bible and of the Universe. Many we know fear excommunication from a couple of well-know denominations (they call themselves churches which is a misuse of the word church in either the total assembly of all Christians or a local church--it may not be that Al Sharpton is bigoted on the Mormon issue, but that we have become intolerant on sound doctrine while adopting the toleration of the American Democratic Faith which stands for nothing and falls for anything), when what they should fear is being cast off by this Great God of the Universe.

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:28,29)

Unfortunately there is also not sound doctrine of “God as a consuming fire” among those Americans who have given a priority for the majority and toleration of the American Democratic Faith over tolerance for sound doctrine. They have chosen to ignore that God destroyed two whole cities of people--men, women,
and children—with fire when He destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah (not fairy tales, the fables come to churchmembers when they refuse to believe this kind of sound doctrine, Satan with lies would always have you believe that he only is right and the progenitor of the only sound doctrine); that once He destroyed every man, women, and child on this earth for wickedness (we do not generally have this perspective) in His sight in the Great Flood (we water it down, pardon the pun, in attempts to rationalize a limited flood, yet fail to explain where all this oil comes from), giving the rainbow as a sign that never again will the earth be destroyed by water, next time by fire; and when we shrink in horror at the Bible perspective (the perspectives of God Himself) that God destroys men, women, and children, and their property on a very minor scale—minor out of mercy and patience—while He is warning humanity of a much greater disaster to come, God showing wonders in the skies above and in the earth beneath, “fire, blood, and vapor of smoke” in earthquakes, tornadoes, hurricanes, and Tsunamis.

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven, whose voice then shook the earth; but now He has promised, saying,

‘Yet once more I shake not only the earth (if you think that was vicious in the Flood by water, just wait for the final shaking of the whole earth), but also heaven (this is the heavens or what is out there above us, not heaven where God dwells as that is unshakable).’ (Haggai 2:6)

Now this, ‘Yet once more,’ indicates the removal of those things that are being shaken, as of things that are made, that the things which cannot be shaken may remain.” (Hebrews 12:25–27 with a quote from Haggai 2:6, the rest is the New Testament interpretation of that prediction)

God Spoke to Israel in the Wilderness for Pruning as He Does Today

Moses explained in Deuteronomy exactly what happened between God the Master vinedresser and the branches of Israel before they were all cast off except for two and the youth. See as you read a short of it below if you don’t see God’s efforts at “pruning” in the tested them, tried them, and proved them for 40 years, see if you don’t also see mercy and patience in giving them 40 years to bear the fruit of faith, before He cast them away from both the Promised Land and eternity in heaven. (By the way you find in this explana-
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section of pruning from Moses, also an interpretation of Jesus when He quoted from Moses, “man shall not live by bread alone but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God”--very unusual as most generally the proper interpretation of the OT quote is given in the NT.}

“And you shall remember that the LORD your God led you all the way these 40 years in the wilderness, to humble you and test you (here is a major goal of the pruning/testing by God the Great Vinedresser--to know if you are simply called or called and chosen--you can see that it takes a little bit of time to do this if not perhaps 40 years of stumbling), whether you would keep His commandments or not (Does this not remind you of Jesus teachings about Abiding, and if you love Him you will keep His commandments, old and new).” (Deuteronomy 8:2)

More on the Pruning from Moses as the humbling part continues with the addition of allowing you to sometimes be hungry then feeding you with a miracle that none have ever heard about. (Parenthetically, in our wilderness experiences when God is Pruning by Humbling, we look at the obstacles more than the faith that God can provide beyond what man has known before.)

“So He humbled you (can you say that you have ever been humbled by God, especially to the extent of Humble Unselfish Service), allowed you to hunger (have you ever wondered where the next meal was coming from or the provision of other basic needs), and feed you with manna, which you did not know nor did your fathers know (see, all the answers have not already been seen by your forefathers and neighbors, for while God is not giving any new revelations, He is given new ways to provide basic necessities while you are being humbled), that He might make you know (ah here we are getting God’s goal in pruning) that man shall not live by bread alone {the manna is great but it is bread}; but man lives by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of the LORD.” (Deut 8:3)

Stumbling

In that same “consuming fire” passage of Hebrews 12, Paul also talks about the “stumbling”.

1. In Hebrews 12:12-17 Paul talks about the Stumbling: You are not likely to stumble if you “strengthen the hands which hang down” and if you strengthen the
“feeble knees”; you must make straight paths for your feet so that you will not stumble, look ahead and plan ahead making the best decisions with guidance from the God who can even provide manna as well as sandals that will not wear out and clothes that do the same {more things that your past has not heard of}; you see with the lameness of pruning and stumbling, the lameness can be healed instead of further dislocated {you don’t need some evangelist out for money and profit and with the false Gospel of Prosperity as God and Jesus have always been in the healing business as well in the provision of necessities business}; pursue peace with all people that lessens stumbling; also holiness for without holiness in your life you can count on it you are never going to see the LORD God your Father in heaven; if you continue to stumble under pruning you must face up to the fact that you can “fall short of the grace of God”, the bad news of a castaway can be your end result after 40 years of calling without chosen; and how many roots of bitterness do spring up in lives, in families, and in churches which do cause real “trouble”, thus also by which many become “defiled”, or spotted and unclean by the world; and God as He vine-dresses is looking at the tested hearts for men like Esau, these “fornicators” against God or “profane persons”, such people as for just one morsel of food or the bread of living necessities, sell their birthright to be a Son of God or a Friend of Jesus. Later after 40 years of stumbling, or less, you like Esau can on your death bed or sooner desire “to inherit the blessings” of Sonship or Friendship—that is if you pass the point of no return of the “Now is the day”—yes, indeed you can be rejected by the Great Vinedresser and cast out no matter how much you seek repentance, even with tears. Has the Apostle Paul made it clear enough for us on the difference between Pruning and Casting Off, between stumbling and making straight paths for our feet, between clean and unclean.

Your pruning and humbling and testing to see what is in your heart—whether you are in the Christian calling for 40 years or for a few years—may not let up until you know that Great FACT: to live by every word out of the Bible as well as making a living for bread or other material gains, generally called “mammon” for all the creations of man. You see, you like the children of Israel can stumble for 2 years, for 3 years, or even for 40 years in your Christian Life; and it may look like something else to your friends, family, and fellow church members; but hopefully you can recognize it as PRUNING as of course God does.

How Does God Decide which Called Christians to Prune and Which to Cast Off?
Then we need one other thing: that is to know how carefully God separates those He PRUNES from those He CASTS OFF.  {And do not think that the famous tenet of Baptists, the Security of the Believer, will save you here; already we have made the Bible case for the reconciliation of the Security of the Believer with the Falling Away in terms of the Parable of the Seed and the Sower, and the bottom line is that a lot of seed stumbles, does not develop root, and most generally the cause is “cares of this world”, “the deceitfulness of sin”, and “other things.”}. You already know what God looks at from the works, or fruit, aspect.  If He sees in the Christian life good fruit, then He goes to work to prune away the sins and weights that hamper the “looking unto Jesus”; and if in the life of the called but not chosen Christian God sees no fruit, then sorry, you are cast away; and no one until eternity except you and God may ever know the difference!

2. In Hebrews 12:3-11 Paul explains the difference in terms of the relationship between God and the individual, are they a real son or are they bastards. The real sons, of course, are the called and chosen; and the bastard sons are the called but not chosen.

(1). About sons being PRUNED.

“If you endure chastening, God deals with you as sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (Hebrews 12:7)

(2). About illegitimates being CAST OUT.

“But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons.” (Hebrews 12:8)

With the you's of these verses Paul is addressing church members, and he is giving them sufficient Bible instruction so that they can tell the difference between the tares and the wheat, between the sheep and the goats, between the called and the chosen, between the clean and the unclean. You see we learned from the Vine and the Branch analogy of John 15 that either a Called Christian bears fruit or they do not bear fruit--there is no in-between in this practical relationship between the individual, God, and Christ--either they are pruned or they are cast out. Now obviously, this is bad news for the more than 61% of Americans that believe in the Gospel of Prosperity which maintains for the believer both material prosperity and health, for certainly you see that hunger, humbling experiences, testing, and trials would be considered the opposite of the
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Gospel of Prosperity. While the Gospel of Prosperity says that if you have enough faith you will more than meet all your needs, the Gospel of Pruning says that you may hunger and be tested with trials; while the Gospel of Prosperity demands immediate healing, the Gospel of Pruning demands that you stumble a while in lameness before the healing comes, then from God Himself and not from a popularity seeking evangelists with for example magic water.

And the pruning of John 14 is explained in other words in Paul as “chastening”. While Moses tried to explain God’s pruning of children as humbling, testing, and proving what is in the heart with hard times, Paul builds on the knowledge of both the teachings of Jesus and Moses to call it the Chastening of Sons, quoting from Proverbs 3:11,12.

“My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD, nor be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” (Hebrews 12:5,6)

Not only do we have for the testing and pruning here, the word “chastens” but also to that is added “scourges”; and on the benefit side we find that these chastened, pruned, and scourged sons are really the ones who are loved, the sons whom He receives as legitimate sons. Oh by the way, with chastened and scourges is also “rebuked”.

Looking Unto Jesus

We have looked at 3 of the major messages of Hebrews 12 in order to clarify the Pruned versus the Cast Off. Those three, you recall, were (1) first the call to listen to God speak since He is a consuming fire, once killing all the people on the earth with water and then in the final shaking will do it by fire; (2) By looking at the realities of the Christian life as strengthened hands and feeble knees in order to steer our paths away from stumblings; and (2) on the realities of chastening from God for real sons. That remains for us to briefly look at the two other passages: (1) First the “Looking Unto Jesus” Passage that started the whole instructive passage of Hebrews 12 in the first place, and then (2) quickly conclude with “what we have come to”, the eternal and abiding kingdom of God in Hebrews 12:18-24. Although you will have more to remember from Hebrews with the whole twelfth chapter than of John 14-16, Hebrews is truly an application and a commentary on the possibilities of either being Pruned (the Good News) or CAST OUT (the bad news).
“Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses (hopefully you picked up on some of that cloud of good examples in the examples of faith in the chapter on “Faith and Faith Contending”), let us lay side every weight (there are weights and diversions and wrong paths to be pruned aside that can divert us from the straight paths just like sin can), and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us (the challenge and call, if you would of Clean Disciples, of Humble Unselfish Service, and the challenge to be called in this new and eternal kingdom, “Friends of Jesus”), LOOKING UNTO JESUS, the author and finisher of our faith (hopefully once again in the chapter on “Who is the Lord Jesus Christ” you saw this author and finisher of our faith), who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross (you saw this in the Gospel of Christ, the message of the new covenant, the way of justification before God), despising the shame (like Jesus overlooked the shame of humiliation and the cross so must we in our yearly lives of chastening, persecutions, and prunings), and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God (like with Jesus all the trials, tribulations, and chastenings of a Christian life of over 40 years will be forgotten as we stand and kneel before the great white throne of God with Jesus at the right hand!) (Hebrews 12:1,2)

What Have We Come To? The Permanent Kingdom of God

Notice how Paul appeals to all the human senses of touch, sight, sound, and taste as he talks about how we have come to something much more serious than the children of Israel came to at Mount Sinai. Paul appeals to all the senses because God in what He did at Mount Sinai was testing all the senses of man as He tested them! If the children of Israel or even their dogs touched the mountain where God appeared and spoke, he would die; the sight of the mountain burning with the fire of God, with “blackness and darkness and tempest”; the sound of a trumpet and the booming voice of God, “so that those who heard it begged that the word should not be spoken to them anymore”. (You know we are inclined to think that in our churches if we could just hear the voice of God, we could put up with the sound and the sight and the invasion on our senses; however that is one of the big points that Paul is making, even as those people refused to listen to the very voice of God, we had best not do the same with all the promises of Jesus and the kingdom and the knowledge of God’s judgment to come out in front of us, knowing so much more than those children knew when they rejected the words of God)
Let us hasten on quickly as to what is promised out there in front of us in the blessing of the eternal kingdom which can be shaken as the whole universe of heaven and earth is to be shaken.

1. **Mount Zion and the New Jerusalem**, the city of the Living God. Remember how John told us in the book of Revelation that after the Second Coming of Christ he saw the New Jerusalem lowered down from heaven.

2. **An Innumerable Company of Angels**, with Christ at the Second Coming will come these legions of angels to do what has been planned by God all along: The Gathering of the sons of God from the four corners of the earth; the gathering of all unbelievers from the four corners of the earth with the graves and Hades emptied for judgment; and then the Great Judgment of God where the sheep are separated from the goats, the tares from the wheat.

3. What are We Come to: “to the general assembly and church of the first-born who are registered in heaven”. While you may have held dear your registration in a local church, it is the registration in this general assembly of the firstborn that determines your salvation and where you are going, it is the church which is the total body of Christ.

4. **To God the Judge of All**: The pruning of the Great Vinedresser is complete; this Judge is instructing the angels how to deal with the CAST OFFs of the tares and goats; and together we stand in the presence of the Great White Throne with the Lord Jesus Christ.

5. **To the spirits of just men made perfect**: there they are in the kingdom of God of heaven and the new earth, all those who have ever been called, chosen, and pruned, the just men made perfect in the blood of the Lamb. “Made perfect” in just two words speaks of justification--how God when we believe looks at Jesus’ righteousness and our faith and legally declares us righteous--and speaks of sanctification--the part of holiness that we inwardly achieved up to the Second Coming and then the rest of the way when we saw Jesus and knew what He was like.

6. **“To Jesus the Mediator of the New Covenant”**: Paul started the book of Hebrews with Jesus; Paul started Hebrews 12 on “Looking Unto Jesus”; and truly in the blessings we come to in this permanent kingdom, did you not think in the roll call of blessings with the saints in heaven and the New Jerusalem and all the angels, did you not also expect to see the Lord Jesus Christ there,
“and to the blood of sprinkling” of the new covenant that speaks of better things than all of those like Esau and Cain, speaks of the glory to God and Jesus in the great salvation which has been provided in the New Covenant.

Conclusion: Consequences of Not Listening to Every Word Spoken out of the Mouth of God, the Bible, Now.

Surely we must reiterate the bottom line of Hebrews 12 after an enumeration of those six great blessings to look forward to in the eternal kingdom: look at all before Mount Sinai of the children of Israel and after 40 years of testing, were cast away except two, Caleb and Joshua and all they had before them were the 10 Commandments, look at what you know and have heard.

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:28,29)

And to think that we let Paul say all this from Hebrews 12 in order to clarify the Good News [Pruning from God] and the Bad News [Many of the called in the local churches will be cast off]! Brutal realities; but “God is” contrary to what most think, “God is a consuming fire”. Love, yes, but also a consuming fire at the end for most of the people that have ever lived on this earth!
Good News (Pruning), Bad News (Cast Off)
As we read Jesus say in John 14:12 that believers will do greater works than Him, we naturally tend to think that is primarily the works of the Apostles, like recorded in the book of Acts, called the Acts of the Apostles; however, that only means that we have not read carefully what Jesus said, for it is for all believers even as a quick survey again of John 14-17 expands the teachings and prayer of Jesus (this is more truly the Lord’s Prayer as contrasted to the Model Prayer of the Sermon on the Mount) beyond Apostles to all believers.

“Most assuredly, I say to you, he who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father.” (John 14:12)

There it is in the text, glaring out at us: “he who believes in Me” (Apostles and otherwise) will do greater works than Jesus Himself. Does that mean that we can perform miracles of healing? Yes, although we need not make certain TV evangelists rich and famous in order to get the job done since we have been as disciples afforded the same commission of greater works with the same faith and access in prayer. Let there be no mistake on this Bible concept, while I am saying from the Bible, John 14-17 in particular, that all believers are commissioned by God to perform greater works than Jesus although the Apostles are the first and most prominent examples, especially when you consider the Apostle Paul “born out of due time”, by far the greatest of all Apostles and in whose
works of the book of Acts--certainly although Peter got off to a good start with great works and James too as the pastor at Jerusalem--the book of Acts is by and large a story of the acts of the Apostle Paul; the point for clarification being that I am not comparing these TV evangelists to Apostles. The Apostles, especially Paul, were uniquely called and commissioned to write revelations from God to us in the Bible--only Apostles and Prophets wrote Bible {we will talk later how Paul sponsored the two non-apostolic writers of Luke and John Mark}; and one of the largest contributions today to "the time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine" with the vast heaping up on TV, in churches, and other institutions of "itching ears" Bible teachers is that very popular practice--although condemned over and over in Corinthians--of claiming new revelations. You know what I am talking about: "God gave me a word", "God spoke to me", or "God told me" as if, contrary to Corinthians, "the word of God had come to them only", or, that "the word of God came out of them." What the Mormons have done in the addition of 4 new Bibles of revelations, these Pentecostals have done especially on TV in the writing for all practical purposes of a whole new supplement to the Bible. {Of course, you are aware of the two curses that rest on all who add to the Bible and in addition to those who would modify the Gospel of Jesus Christ with supplements not in the Gospel as originally delivered, Gospels of another kind, definitely not the same kind, although these latter day so called "prophets" would obviously dispute that!}

Also most would believe that the Great Commission is given to all Christians, albeit there is often the tendency to think of it as committed to the pastor. {We will look at the conclusion in chapter 21 as the requirements upon all, especially on those who would accept the challenge of "Friends of Jesus" during the Falling away, to do the work of an evangelist even if you are not a pastor or evangelist as the world considers!}

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned." (Mark 16:15,16)

The signs will follow those "who believe" {any disciple or Christian, the greater works than that of Jesus, if you would, to beg the subject of a chapter to follow): demons are cast out "in the name of Jesus", something we must also discuss in another chapter; these missionaries will speak to other peoples in other languages; they will be protected by God the Father from ser-
pents and poisons until their “testimony is complete”; and the sick will be healed when they lay their hands upon them.

Let me spell it out: Apostles as first believer are outstanding examples for all believers; even as Jesus sent out the Apostles two by two to do during His lifetime the same kind of works which He did, so He sent out another larger group of believing disciples to do the same thing; all believers by virtue of the call to be a believer are commissioned to duplicate the works of Jesus except they are not authorized to write Bible; and Jesus surely in the statement about “greater works” had to imply that believers collectively as members of the kingdom and as members of the one church, His body, meant that as a group we would do greater works than Him, for singularly about the only two believers in the history of Christianity we could envision as doing greater works than Jesus would be the Apostles Peter and Paul.

**Part of the Oneness of the Lord’s Prayer of John 17:20 is the Oneness of Great Works**

Goodness I hope it has sunk in now that as Jesus in the Garden agonized with God the Father in prayer, knowing that His departure from this earth in crucifixion then later the Ascension was eminent, He prayed the real Lord’s prayer not only for these special believers called the Apostles but also all believers who believed in Jesus because of the Word from the Apostles; that’s us if we heard about Jesus from the Bible of the Apostles and Prophets; and that prayer was for an “oneness” among all these believers. We can not say that we have implemented it well in the history of the kingdom here on earth, in the one church; nor especially in America where daily new churches, movements, and denominations spring up to cause divisions in the total body (much of this proliferation of new church groups is born on the wings of the “heaping up” by groups for leadership from itching ears Bible teachers, the result of the intolerance toward sound doctrine now so predominant with the Falling Away among church members, not from a seeking of this “oneness”); yet we dare not stop seeking that oneness as a goal, nor can we stop any practices that would increase the greater works than Jesus by collective efforts. In case you forget this oneness from previous chapters, it is repeated below from Jesus.

“I do not pray for these alone, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word; that they all may be one, as you, Father are in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me.” (John 17:20)
There was a greater work than Jesus which the Apostles did in the writing of the New Testament; for surely by far more believers have heard and believed in Jesus from the pages of the Bible than they did from Jesus Himself, and even from the number who believed in Jesus from the Word of the 11 Apostles during their lives on earth. (we might want to exclude the exceptional day when 3,000 believed in Jesus and were added to the church on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus, with the initial sending of the Holy Spirit to earth in great presence and power). And that is another reason you will find in the books from SunGrist an emphasis on the work of Paul as Chief Editor of the New Testament as greater works than the missionary journeys: for not only did Paul Himself write 14 New Testament books, but he left manuscripts for Dr. Luke and John Mark to write 3 more New Testament books (Acts, Luke, and Mark).

You can bet that if Jesus prays to God that all we believers may be one, it is worth doing and seeking after; that it is a feasible accomplishment, practical and realizable; and that is has a great deal to do with the works of evangelism on which we are to do more and greater than Jesus Himself did!

**Greater Works than Jesus Includes Answered Prayer**

Assuredly part of the reason we can do collectively greater works than Jesus is based on the presence of the Risen and Ascended Lord Jesus Christ at the right hand of God the Father who sits on the great white throne and rules supreme from heaven.

“And whatever you ask in My name, that I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. If you ask anything in My name, I will do it.” (John 14:13,14)

Surely you recognize that the Father is not gloried by works in answer to prayer, when you pray for something as mundane as a million dollars, or to put it simply, simply pray for your own personal needs. “In My name” also takes care of that for to ask for anything “in the name of Jesus” vastly restricts the anything to that which would glorify God the Father and the Lord Jesus Christ. But now, that still leaves room for many mighty works that are greater than Jesus did, the works of collective evangelism and the fruits of works that witness of Jesus. (Recall when churches and denominations, which they seldom do, practice a oneness in evangelism, the practice itself convinces the world that Jesus is the Lord Jesus Christ.)
Jesus Left Something Behind for Believers: “Peace”

Along with an assurance of persecution, if only an indifference and hate of the message of Jesus’s witnesses, came another assurance of something left behind on earth for all believers. A Peace from Jesus that is different from the kind of peace which the world can give, a kind of peace which may cause divisions even between members of the same family centered around Jesus, which may cause a few of the church and denominational divisions that we see today because of the Falling Away and a few desiring to separate themselves, as told in I Timothy 3:1-9, that is “do not associate with them”, a kind of peace which faces up to the difference between “children of this world” and “children of God”.

"Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid.” (John 14:27)

In short this peace from Jesus is the kind of peace which soothes troubled hearts: it is the kind of peace that allays fears. (You see even this assumes the fears of persecution, rejection of the message, and the natural hate-response of the world that rejects believers and their message because they have already rejected Jesus.) The Apostle John in the little epistles also had much to say about this, as he did on all these special teachings of Jesus to the twelve in the twilight of the cross. It was He who wrote, “Perfect love casteth out fear.” If you do not immediately see the connection between “perfect love” and “perfect peace”, I think you can see the connection in perfect Abiding in Jesus where the relationship becomes so personal between God the Father, the Son, and the believer that love and peace flow out like rivers of living water. And we can do even better than that on exegesis as Jesus has more to say in the 14-17 passage on peace.

1. If the peace Jesus left behind on earth abides in us, the desires of our prayers become prayers of “in His name”; and we naturally have the peace of answered prayer. May I suggest prayers like this everyday, sometimes all during the day as you “humble yourself under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time, casting all your care upon Him, because He cares for you”; and that each care as it comes up cast that care immediately to God. You don’t have to ask for a solution according to what the desires of your flesh may want, just humble under His hand, cast the care upon Him through Jesus, and either He will cure it or give you a sufficient answer.
“If you abide in Me, and My words abide in you, you will ask what you desire, and it shall be done for you.”  (John 15:7)

God the Father is glorified by this kind of prayer and this kind of answered prayer, so that “answered prayer” is part of the fruit or works that God would see from our lives. Indeed prayers for more work for God are the kind of prayers that enabled us to collectively do more than Jesus, prayers for more work for God are number one on the list of answered prayers. These kinds of prayers will bring much peace from God.

2. Joy and peace are close to the same inward emotions. I think you see the close connection especially in the teachings of Jesus in John 15:11.

“These things (yes, there have been a lot of things spoken by Jesus in John 14-17 in the special training session to believers, and we are trying to make sure in the chapters of this book, especially in this chapter, that we miss none of them) I have spoken to you, that My joy may remain in you, and that your joy may be full.”  (John 15:11)

Certainly the joy that Jesus leaves behind to remain in believers is also the peace that He has left behind on earth! Jesus wants it to be full and running over: the joy and peace. How? By what He said before in 14-17 and what He will say next.

(1). Before: Abide in Him and Abide in His love and Abide in His word and commandments like the branch abides close to the vine.

(2). After: Love one another with Humble Unselfish Love (more oneness) following the example of Jesus in His special love for the 11 Apostles. The greatest of humble unselfish love is the kind of love that lays down the career and life in service for believers like many humble and rejected pastors have done in the past and a few do today! {This is not to supervise or lord it over the flock, but to sincerely serve in humble unselfish service, sometimes completely unknown to the world or even the church.}

(3). Also After: Lay down your life for other "Friends of Jesus".

(4). Also After: Accept the challenge and the requirements of Jesus to be called a “Friend of Jesus.”
3. However, this peace, and that is what we are discussing, has to function in the world atmosphere, indeed it must in order to be real, of chastisement and hate.

“If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the world hates you.” (John 15:18,19)

This is the reason Jesus previously said “not as the world gives, give I you”, because what the world naturally give us by virtue of your identification with the previously hated and crucified Lord Jesus Christ...what the world gives is hate, indifference, and chastisement.

4. The peace and joy that Jesus left behind for you does not depend on the kind of peace and status that acceptance by the world brings. The world may accept your obvious relationship with Jesus, then again it may not; and the probability is that the majority of the world will not especially as we progress further into the Falling Away, as the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness with the abounding of sin and “the love of many will wax cold” and as the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from this earth!

“Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master (Here is one way that we collectively can not be greater in works than Jesus, we dare not be greater than Jesus is expecting a peace of friendship from the world. Jesus did not have peace with His world, and we as Friends of Jesus can not have peace with our world. If somehow we think we can get along with everybody in the world, regardless of their perspectives toward Jesus, then we are filled with a pride that we are greater than Jesus here also. Wrong!}.' If they persecuted Me {and did they ever persecute Jesus}, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep your also.” (John 15:20)

By the ways pastors and faithful Bible teachers who faithfully continue to preach the word in the Falling Away, one way to know who will listen and "keep your word" in the churches is the same ones who are willing to listen to Jesus and to keep His words. And though the majority of the church, or a click, runs you off, it is a compliment, hopefully bringing the peace of Jesus, that you have been identified with the word and words of Jesus! What the world involved in the local church is doing, never forget the tares and the goats, is persecuting you in the name of Jesus. Recall the “for My name’s sake” of John 15:21 where Jesus
Greater Works than Jesus

says that it is because of Him and His name and what they represent that the world will also persecute you, another nail in the coffin of Peace.

5. There is peace from the inward assurance, also based on this spoken word and teachings of Jesus as recorded in John 15:25, that there is no real justification from this hate of the world and of the world in the church except the original unjustified hate of Jesus also without excuse or cause.

“But this happened that the word might be fulfilled which is written in their law, ‘They hated Me without a cause.’” (John 15:25 and Psalm 69:4)

(1). The world and the world in the church hates you when they see examples of real faith. [Never forget that the tares and the goats want to wrap self-righteousness robes of church membership around themselves to hide and disguise from detection.] Unbelief alone is sin, and when they see real faith and the works that comes with real faith, it uncovers their sin of unbelief like Jesus uncovered the sin of the world. [According to John 15:22, then even as now, when Jesus and believers come and speak to them, they cease to have the excuse for sin that they never knew that!]

(2). Even as the works of Jesus, not previously seen on earth, are duplicated by Friends of Jesus, those works convict them of the sins in their own lives, sins of an absence of real works and fruit for the glory of God the Father (John 15:24)

6. There is a definite amount of this peace and joy that Jesus left behind remaining in our life of belief as we find ourselves co-witnesses with God the Holy Spirit about Jesus.

“But when the Helper comes, whom I shall sent to you from God the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me. And you also will bear witness, because you have been with Me from the beginning.” (John 15:26,27)

Certainly there is also peace and joy to see this evidence of how you have been with Jesus, abiding in Him and accepting as witness the challenge to be a Friend of Jesus. [It is never perfect like in the case of Jesus, perhaps not nearly as helpful as in the case of the Apostles, but like preaching the word it is to be “in season and out of season”, and the best that we can do as witnesses for Jesus.]
{NOTE: You know one of the great things about accepting the challenge to be a Friend of Jesus is that you are never too young or too old. You can be as old as the Apostles, or you can be as young as the youthful John Mark who accepted the challenge from Jesus and the Apostle Paul to write a New Testament book.}

7. You will have the peace from Jesus to knowing as you remember His words and commandments, you will not stumble.

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.” (John 16:1)

8. Also the correlated peace of knowing with the above and the peace of the commandments that Satan, the ruler of this world, “has nothing” in you.

“I will no longer talk much with you {you can see what a rush Jesus was in to speak the special teachings of 14-17, to talk plainly and simple as confronted with the almost immediate prospect of the cross}, or the ruler of this world {I hope you do indeed recognize Satan as the ruler of this world} is coming, and he has nothing in Me.” (John 14:30)

9. There is peace in knowing that the Helper, the Spirit of truth sent from God and Jesus and always present until He is withdrawn sometime during the Falling Away, will assist you in the Glorification of the Lord Jesus Christ. He will help you to know that the works, the fruit, the witness is both consistent with the work of the Spirit and that it is for the glory of the Lord Jesus Christ and therefore also for the glory of God.

“He {the Holy Spirit} will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you.” (John 16:14)

10. Although there are temporal moments of sorrow, this My joy and My peace of Jesus can not be taken away from you. If you want to make their permanent joy and peace a "full" joy and peace, then just pray in the name of Jesus.

“Therefore you now have sorrow; but I will see you again and your heart will rejoice, and your joy no one will take from you. And in that day you will ask Me nothing. {Your puzzling questions after the realization of the Resurrection and Ascension will quiet the questions of 14-17, however there is a kind of questioning, a questioning or asking in prayer, that will increase.} Most
assuredly, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father (real prayer according to the model prayer of the Sermon on the Mount is also to the Father, that is “Our Father which art in heaven”) in My name (however it must be in the name of Jesus) He will give you. Until now you have asked nothing in My name. Ask, and you will receive, that your joy (and peace) may be full.” (John 16:22-24)

11. You have the peace of direct access to God the Father in prayer. (John 16:26,27)

12. You have the peace that Jesus has given to you “eternal life” because God the Father has given Him the authority to give eternal life to as many of them that are chosen as well as called. (John 17:2,3)

13. You have the peace that while Jesus did not pray for the world, He did pray for you if you are among those given by God to Jesus. (John 17:9)

14. You have the peace that Jesus can keep by His power all those that have been given to Him of God. (John 17:12)

15. The joy of Jesus is fulfilled in believers, those not of the world. (John 17:13)

16. The world will hate you when they recognize that “you are not of this world”, like Jesus was not of this world, but the peace comes from knowing that the world hates you because you have accepted the words and word of Jesus. (John 17:14)

17. There is peace in the perspective, which you will find to be true also in your experience, that the prayer of Jesus for our Oneness is not to be taken out of this world, a certain amount of exposure to the world is necessary, but to be kept from the Evil One, and his power and kingdom as he rules the world. (John 17:15)

18. Peace comes from knowing that God will and does answer the prayer of Jesus for all believers of all time that God will Sanctify them by the truth of the Word of God. (John 17:17)

19. Peace comes from the very fact of knowing that Jesus in that crisis moment of the real Lord’s Prayer was praying for you as well as all believers,
that the reality would be in your life that you and God and Jesus and all believers have the potential for the unity of Oneness. In fact, some of this amount of Oneness will exist whether you want it or not. (John 17:20,21)
CHAPTER 18

A Challenge for the Falling Away

The Supreme Challenge for a Christian

While retreats like “Road to Emmaus” or Jericho Road or whatever offers good spiritual impetus, they are too short to bring Christians all the way to Friends. (Don’t retreat, I have tried to tell some, “charge” like the Marines!) Obviously from the previous chapter Bible studies there are distinct “Jesus taught stages” that a disciple must go through which take years of time. If it takes approximately 4 years for the disciples to be called Friends of Jesus (the ministry with the disciples was about three and one-half years, but we are allowing another 6 months for it to sink in that Jesus had called them Friends, also with time for the temporary betrayers like Peter to overcome his fear and to implement the power of the newly come Spirit to this earth), how long do you think it will take us since we are not with the Master Teacher day and night as were the first disciples. This matter of discipleship is serious business, unlike our social and temporal activities like scouting, etc: it is more a lifetime business, and the percentage of Christians who truly make it to the point in life where Jesus is willing to call them Friends is going to be very small. Remember Jesus had many other disciples during His life, some that were sent out two by two with extra power and instruction to evangelize like the 12 apostles, there had to be at least 500 disciples at one time who saw Jesus alive after the Resurrection; so that if we were to compare 11 to 501, that alone would leave a small percentage of 2 percent. Not many, right; and surely during this time of the
Falling Away when over 61% of American Christians believe in the false gospel of prosperity, resting under the curse of the Bible for a gospel not that originally delivered; then we would have to approximately half the 2% down to 1%. Scary odds, but that is part of the challenge of becoming a Friend of Jesus, it is so distinct from simply the number of people who try to name the name of Christ! Like one of the great southern baptist leaders of several generations ago said, “We Baptists are many but not much!” And so can be stated of any denomination, or any Christians, of this time of the Falling Away. While Jesus did say not to try to weed out of the kingdom, therefore also of the local church, the tares that Satan has planted among the wheat; He with His teachings does want us to face up to the fact that the tares will grow more than the wheat during the Falling Away, and further that often the tares in the local church are far more vocal and aggressive than the wheat, especially those who exhibit the bad behavior and attitudes of II Timothy 3:1-9. After all, it is not easy to be a sheep in wolf’s clothing: they have more to prove; and obviously in the age when “appearance” or “perception” takes the place often of the realities of righteous judgment this fake clothing is an image portrayed by real unbelievers in the church who would make an appearance of faith.

The supreme challenge of life is to be called by Jesus, “Friend”. The possibility and the requirements are presented in John 15. While to call Jesus a “Friend” as in the song “What A Friend We Have in Jesus” is done flippantly and superficially, the background and requirements to be called by Jesus Himself “Friend”. Actually the background to achieve this status of Friend to Jesus is a process of phases to the relationship between you and Jesus: (1) first is the call to be a learner, remembering that as “many are called and few are chosen”, that Judas Iscariot was called but not chosen by Jesus who knew the heart of all men, that in the parable of the seed and the sower at the initial call to the stony and thorny heart where the word was received with so much initial joy that it appeared to be instantaneous {not real possible as 9 months are required} new birth, yet where the “chosen” to the call never took place as one of two things happened, either the cares of this world, and the deceitfulness of sins, or other things choked out the word, or since there was no root there was a lifelong {until “today” was over for that individual} stumbling; (2) then there is the actually process of learning called discipleship where according to Paul in Ephesians you actually (a) hear Christ and (b) are taught by Christ, John as we observed in the chapter on John 14 recording the 3 answers of Jesus on how to truly Learn Christ in the proper manner, particularly how Christ and God at the same time manifest themselves to the chosen and not to the rest of the world {by the way, it
should be obvious that even as Jesus taught how that many calling Him “Lord”, “Lord”, He has never known them, so also many today superficially calling Jesus Friend have never been truly called Friend by Jesus--in short it is an honor and it is not easily achieved, and that is the reason it is considered a Challenge, but a challenge that brings with it a security that was known by the Apostle John as he wrote I John of the “perfect love that casts out (all) fear” and insecurity and doubts; (3) once a person is a real disciple that has learned the old commandments, that is the real old commandments as properly interpreted by Jesus and the newer old commandments of Jesus as for example given in the Sermon on the Mount, then as a disciple they become qualified to pass into the status challenge of “Friend”; (4) immediately before “Friend” is the necessity to learn the new commandment of Jesus to love other disciples like Jesus loved the close disciples called apostles, of course, we recognize the Apostle John as the first and lasting example of this in deeds and written words; and (5) Friend, the supreme challenge of life.

From the previous chapters, we could roughly say that some of the phases of the Christian life required would be:  (1) A Clean Disciple; (2) Humble Unselfish Service as the world sees the kind of love that Friends have for each other, that of the new commandment from Jesus; (3) Of course the initial aspects of discipleship during the 9 month new birth taught by Jesus to Nicodemus where some roots are developed and the opportunities to stumble are eliminated as the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches, and other things are met and overcome; (4) time to just plain learn, apply, and implement the old and old, old teachings of Jesus with the peak coming at the implementation of the “man shall not live by bread along” or “seek first the kingdom of God”, the obvious choices that a Christian must make sometime after they have heard, read, or learned the Sermon on the Mount.

Someone might say, “Well, this is the time that we took for the original disciples”; however they would continue, since Jesus gave us the Holy Spirit and said that we were better off than Himself being with us, then we could proceed through these stages to Friendship in a shorter period of time. However, not so. I am sure that the Apostle John would tell you while he was pastor at Ephesus and then in exile on the isle of Patmos with new experiences and revelations as well as reminders from the Spirit that it took him until around 100 A.D. to learn all the implications of Friendship with Jesus. And here, once again, we must distinguish between the unique work of the Apostles as instruments of revelations where these “holy men of God wrote as they were moved by the Holy Spirit”. Although like in so many areas of sound doctrine where the wind bags of unsound
doctrine and itching ears have clouded the difference between “revelation” and “illumination”, it is still true from the Bible that only the Apostles and Prophets received revelations of Scripture. All others receive illumination on those revelations, and it is the same Holy Spirit that works in both processes. Revelation is complete with the existence of the Bible of 66 books; there is no need for any more; and there will be no more in spite of the vehement sayings from many Bible teachers that “God told me” or “God said to me”, expecting you to receive their words as special revelations. Remember how Jesus told the disciples that all which the Father told Him, He had passed on to them; and indeed one of the reasons Jesus no longer called the 11 servants is because He had taught them all these things. Now, people who bemoan that “revelation” is over, do not stop to think that it is an affront to God that He could not complete the job in approximately one thousand years of completing all that He wanted man to know. It is comparable to complaining that it took God only 7 days to create the heavens and the earth; and the very charismatic fundamentalists that would object to the progressive creationism of Bernard Ramm would be the same people to complain that revelation is still going on. Is creation still going on? Hardly the sun sets where it is, the moon is well located, the over 100 elements make up all we deal with, gravity works and many others laws; and we learn more about them--you might also call these a kind of illumination, but creation and revelation had a finished time about 100 A.D. Oh, how sad it is that so many charismatic fundamentals had violated so much of first and second Corinthians as they have developed the same attitude that created the charismatic disturbances in worship at Corinth, the attitude that “the word of God came to us only”, or that “the word of God came out of us”. And you see that is really what they want and expect you to believe as they tell you this catchy little new and itching words. “Wow, here is a new prophet or apostle in the land”, is the response that they expect from the hearer; and that is blasphemy!

You Must Be Already Clean (John 15:1-3)

“You are already clean, because of his word which I have spoken to you.” (John 15:3)

You must Practice the Art of Continually “Abiding” in Jesus (John 15:4-8)

If you must have some catchy works, try these wholesome words from Jesus and the Bible, “Abide in Jesus”, much better than the Anointing or whatever
catch phrase your modern charismatic revelators have come up with to win your support and money.

“Abide in Me, and I in you.” (John 15:4a)

Continually Abide in the Love of Jesus (John 15:9-13)

You see far more in these abidings than a short retreat or a practice of a few years. The NT Greek word literally means to “remain in” or “continue in”.

“...abide in My love.” (John 15:9b)

My Friends (John 15:14-17)

It means much more coming from the Lord Jesus Christ, at the right hand of God the Father on the great white throne in heaven and coming to get us again in great power and glory, than it does from a Nixon or other politician.

“You are my Friends if...” (John 15:14a)

IF:

1. You do whatever I {Jesus} command you.

2. The “all things that Jesus heard from the Father” and gave to Apostles and Revelations have “been made known to you” by proper study of the teachings of the Bible and Jesus with the right attitudes and other principles of Bible hermeneutics.

3. If the choice to be a disciple and Friend is the choice of Jesus Himself and not your choice only.

4. If Jesus Himself has appointed you to “GO” and to bear “much fruit.”

5. If your fruit is the kind of fruit that remains.

6. If your prayers are answered in that whatever you ask in the name of Jesus, God the Father gives you.
7. If you obey the command of humble unselfish service, to love one another
with the unique love that Jesus had for the 11 Apostles. It is easy today to
maintain a soft, superficial, subverted, and sentimental Christianity and church
membership; but the matter of Friendship with Jesus as determined by Jesus
Himself is much more difficult as is this kind of unique love of humble unselfish
service. While everyone in the church wants recognition and some status, the
Friend of Jesus operates in a unique environment of humility and supreme love.

_In the World, But Not of the World (John 15:18-25)_

“If you were of the world, the world would love its own. Yet because you
are not of the world, but I chose you out of the world, therefore the
world hates you.” (John 15:19)

While we tend to think of such teachings like this from Jesus and the Apostles
as pre-democratic and pre-modern, or at least as pre-American where all is
right with man and government, this still remains a steadfast doctrine of sound
Bible which must be learned in order to be called a Friend of Jesus. The
majority and popularity even in American society is with toleration more a
characteristic of the American Democratic Faith than the Faith of Jesus and
the Bible.

_Stages of Disciple Development Leading to Friendship_

1. Called Disciple.

2. Clean and Chosen Disciple.


4. Friends.

Somewhere we must distinguish between a disciple who still does not “seek
first the kingdom of God, placing the seeking of other things in a secondary
position and a disciple who does; between a disciple that lives by bread alone
and a disciple that leaves by bread alone and every word that proceeds out of
the mouth of God. You will recall how Paul elaborated in II Timothy after the
“Lord knows His own, and let everyone who names the name of Christ depart
from iniquity” about the degrees of the clean disciple.
“But in a great house there are not only vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honor and some for dishonor. Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter; he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” (II Timothy 2:20,21)

So that based on this we see without becoming Cleansed of Dishonorable Vessels, certainly there can not be advance to: honor, sanctification, use by the Master Jesus, and prepared for every good work. We must add after "Clean and Chosen Disciples" in the progression toward “Friends of Jesus”, the “Cleansed of Dishonorable Vessels.” So that our phases of development naturally and from scripture become:

1. Called Disciples.
2. Clean and Chosen Disciples.
3. Cleansed of Dishonored Disciples.
5. Friends of Jesus.

And we can preliminarily summarize the “Cleansed of Dishonor Disciples” as ones who have passed in the church from wood and clay to silver and gold. Certainly this silver and gold value to the Lord Jesus Christ in His large house of the Assembly of the Firstborn would include: (1) living by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God as well as by bread, and (2) seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness as a habit of life so that automatically these things are added. Is that a challenge enough for you! It is the challenge of the Master!
A Challenge for the Falling Away

Friends of Jesus in this Age of Bible and Computer
While some overcome by “appearance” rather than the “righteous judgment” of the Bible admonition, will look superficial at all this Bible teaching and preaching of this day and time as signs of revival; but the perspective of the Bible once you get out of denial and fact up to the realities of the Bible teachings on the inevitability of the Falling Away before the Second Coming, is that now we are in the time of “they will not endure sound doctrine” (II Timothy 4:4,5), the time of “a form of godliness without the power therefore” (II Timothy 3:1-9), the same time when the follies of church members such as the bad behavior and bad attitudes enumerated in II Timothy 3:1-9 (love of self, love of money, pride, boasting, etc.), this time which Paul warned of when false prophets and itching ears Bible teachers would rise up in the local churches and some come from without to teach and preach in a manner to take advantage of the flock, to create their own disciples more than disciples of Christ, and to work for “filthy lucre”, the time when Jesus foretold that there would be many false prophets and teachers. You just must muster up, based on the Bible, enough “righteous judgment” and “testing of the spirits” to see before the final judgment the popular Bible teachers and preachers today for whom the appearance of having the answers is so great as to also be in the category of those who will boast to Jesus on the Judgment Day of all the mighty wonders and works that they have done in the name of Jesus, to have Him reply, “I never knew you.” In short, there are many “itching ears” Bible teachers and preachers that are popularly being “heaped up” today, for example like Rick Warren and Joel Olsteen, the appearances of whom are of
This Age of the Bible

many wonders works, those who think and the world thinks {the world always knows it own} are dong marvelous works for God. After all, if you are on the best seller list, you must be right! Yes, the more aggressive tares in the kingdom and the local church {they do not make it to the church of the firstborn written in heaven} can be Bible teachers, TV evangelists, deacons, and pastors.

There is little doubt that there is much Bible today in this Age of the Bible and the Computer, most often thanks to the fundamentalists like the recently fallen Ted Haggard, head of the National Evangelistic Association and pastor and founder of a New Life Movement church in Colorado. Without now trying to disect where fundamentalism has gone wrong in spite of its takeover of the once conservative SBC, only to mention that a fighting spirit unlike Christ has also been evident and an unwholesome dedication to the Congregationalists teachings of the Scofield Reference Bible notes, where they have made a contribution to unsound doctrine, just like in the Scofield notes, is by presenting teachings and preachings more “about the Bible” than on the Bible Itself. You can see an example of the difference here as you note the recent movement in the United States to restore the teaching of the Bible in public schools, the excuse being offered that it will be on the history of the Bible rather than on the teachings of the Bible. If you see the problem with the fundamentalists nowhere else you should see it in the FBC of Dallas where their longtime pastor, W.A. Criswell, avowed leader of the fuedamentalists movement which did take over the SBC--the same pastor who told Bill Moyer almost 30 years ago that “we will keep fighting until one side--the moderates or the fundamentalists--or the other wins” {can you imagine fighting in the vocabulary and practices of Christians}--and how now the pastor at that same church has to lament that while there is much Bible {about the Bible I must add} in their church, nothing significant {or spiritual} has happened in that church for 20 years. NOTHING SIGNIFICANT AND SPIRITUAL CAN HAPPEN IN ANY CHURCH OR DENOMINATION WHEN IT IS CONTROLLED BY A FIGHTING SPIRIT AND THE SUPERFICIAL DOCTRINES OF THE NOTES OF THE SOOFIELD REFERENCE BIBLE!

The “HEAPING UP” of Bible Teachers and Preachers with Itching Ears.

As you look about your church, association, and denomination today, and the news and TV, how significant are the words “heaping up” of II Timothy 4:3,4. These are church members with itching ears heaping up Bible teachers with itching ears, having already developed an intolerance toward sound doctrine
and having become motivated more by their personal desires than of any motivation for Christ.

1. Heaping up of itching ears Bible teachers in local churches.

2. Heaping up of itching ears Bible preachers and teachers in local churches.

3. Heaping up of itching ears Bible teachings in denominational circles.

4. Heaping up of itching ears Bible teachers in Bible colleges and Seminaries.

5. Heaping up of itching ears Bible teachers on TV.

6. Heaping up of itching ears Bible teachers in women's and men's conferences throughout the nation in the name of interdenominationalism.

**Friends Must Know What Jesus is Doing (Bible)**

Like the 11 Apostles Jesus was talking to in John 15:15, you must know what Jesus is trying to do on earth through His kingdom.

“No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I heard from My Father I have made known to you.” (John 15:15)

This is perhaps the hardest of all requirements in accepting the challenge to be a “Friend of Jesus” because these 11 Apostles had the advantage of direct day and night teaching with many examples from Jesus Himself. You will have to learn it from the Bible, that is the only way that you are going to know what the Master Jesus is doing in the world. There are actually two aspects of the same thing here to be called a Friend: (1) you have to know what Jesus is all about in a far more than superficial manner; and (2) Jesus has to make known to you everything, all truth, that He has received from God the Father in order to give it to disciples on this earth.

Two impossibilities? No, not really; because recall how Jesus teaches in this same long and special teaching session of John 14-17, that you are actually better than the first disciples who had the personal presence of Jesus, because the Other Helper will help you learn Bible and help you comprehend what Jesus is trying to do on earth. And the “all things that I heard from My Father I have
made known to you” reminds us of how Jesus now manifests Himself to us and not to the world, recall the answer He gave to Judas, not Iscariot.

“If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word: and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make our home with him.” (John 14:23)

There it is: God and Jesus come to make their home in you. You just have to make sure that you spend a lot of time in the Bible; not necessarily reading popular books about the Bible, but on the Bible itself. As one professor of Bible said at a Baptist College, “Read your Bibles, they will throw a lot of light on the commentaries.” Now, we are not talking about piddling like in the little lessonettes in Sunday School once a week, but we are talking about serious Bible study and meditation. Yes, you should think about it in about the same amount of time that you spend reading it. Yes, you should read the Bible through every year; but I would suggest that before you start the process to get some guidance on correct interpretations of the Bible. I would strongly recommend to you that you get if you do not already have, a Bible like the Nelson Slim Line {yes, you can order in on-line from SunGrist_Bible at www.biblecombibleman.com}, a Bible where all the New Testament quotes are highlighted in some manner, like indentation in the Nelson slim line; and that for at least a year you will center your Bible study around those approximate 250 quotes in the New Testament from the Old Testament. {You can get a jump start on this quotes by reading MAGIC OUTLINE from SunGrist Bible commentaries, www.biblecombibleman.com.) What you will find is that your Helper the Holy Spirit as He worked with Apostles and Prophets lead them in the writing of New Testament books to the extent that those 250 quotes in the New Testament were carefully chosen to be the top topics and subtopics of truth, of the Bible, and exactly the most important things that God the Father has desires for thousands of years to communicate to His own people. You see while there are thousands of thousands of verses in the Old Testament, the Holy Spirit through Apostles selected only approximately 250-500 {depending on how verses are in the quote} deemed important enough for the New Bible for the Gentiles and Jews, the New Testament.

Now, these approximately 250 locations in the New Testament besides being the most important truth transferred over from the Old Testament, has the astounding functionality of interpretation with them. Yes, with every quote you will find the correct interpretation, and this is exactly what the Apostle Peter meant when he wrote “no scripture is of any private interpretation”. The Apostle, or associate of an Apostle like in the case of John Mark and Luke, give
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you the proper interpretation with the quote. It is what I like to call the ASPI interpretation, for Authorized Semi-Public Interpretation: (1) it is the only interpretation authorized by God Himself, and you see how He has done it through the Spirit of Truth, Jesus, God, and the Apostles; (2) It is not a private interpretation like from the Jesus Seminar or from the many popular Bible teachers today who think they have received new and unauthorized revelations, as it is almost Public; (3) the only reason it is not completely public since it originated with the very Public God the Father who is the God of all is because those with the Spirit \{alias Jesus and God manifest in their heart and not to the world\}, they will miss the uniqueness of the private interpretation--remember, manifest inwardly to disciples and not to the world; (4) Interpretation, yes you can call it one interpretation for each quote, although you on the receiver end can miss that interpretation without the proper help.

No doubt, you noticed how there is much more in John 15:15 as requirements for Friendship with Jesus than (1) know what Jesus is doing and (2) the Father and the Son making Bible known to you; for you see even in the original manifestation of the Father and the Son, which must be increased and built in to go all the way to the status of Friends, and as given in John 14:23 is (1) to love Jesus; (2) to keep the word of Jesus; and (3) a reciprocating love from the Father which must be an abiding relationship of prayer, confession of sin, and cultivation of respect. You see, we are talking about a personal relationship with God, Jesus, and the Spirit of Truth which is cultivated, which grows, and about which you are always aware.

Like the Apostle Paul wrote in Hebrews 4:12 the Bible is “alive” and “powerful”, and is a “discerner of the thoughts and intents of the heart”. You must come to the point in your Bible reading and study--two different types of Bible with the first more devotional to listen to the Spirit--where you sense that alive nature of the Bible as the words jump out to you; and the meaning is opened up like rivers of living water. GOD CAN AND WILL COMMUNICATE THROUGH THE WORDS OF THE BIBLE NO MATTER WHAT THE LANGUAGE OR VERSION. It rubs us Bible conservatives to hear the fundamentalists try to lay down “literal” and other requirements for understand the Bible as if they had the only authorized version: what this does is sell God short on the power to communicate. No matter what the language of the version or the translation, God can communicate. As I seek to summarize Scripture and Beliefs on the sound doctrine of the BIBLE, I summarize those scriptures under: (1) Divine in Origin, never forget that God is the source, the Bible of Apostles and Prophets, 39 in the Old Testament and 27 in the New Testament, originated in the heart and
mind of God; and just like in Creation and reverse in prayer, the Father is the Originating Cause, the Son is the Mediating Cause, and the Spirit of Truth is the effecting cause, both in revelation and illumination (Revelation and revelations are complete, and do not let anyone tell you different with such trick words and phrases as “God told me” and “God gave me a word”--if this is real it is illumination, not revelation--for in the 66 books of the Bible wrapped up in the first two centuries revelations are complete in “this faith once for all delivered to the saints”--hope you notice the finality of revelations in “the once for all”); (2) Absolute in Authority, where the Roman Catholic church departed from the faith once delivered, about the same time the pastor at Rome was declared to be head-pastor, or pope, was when they sought to make the Bible less than Absolute in authority--(1) My establishing a Doctrinal or Papal Document with authority on the proper interpretation of the Bible, making this document as you can see if you read carefully some of the commentaries from Bishops more absolute than the Bible; (2) the Pope, and Mormon leaders, and Pentecostals, and others have made their own speaking of revelation authority, effectively at least in their own mind and in the minds of followers, putting teachings of men {no matter how authoritative and how seemingly holy} above the authority of Scripture {this is one reason I have so much respect for the heritage of Baptist in spite of what is happening in the SBC today as part of the Falling Away--you know the takeover by the fundamentalists--as Baptists have historically always maintained that the “Bible is the sole criterion for faith and practice”, and further insisted that each individual Christian read and determine the truth for themselves}; (3) Sufficient in Message, while it may not tell us all we would like to know, and as often today the Pentecostals with their new revelations and the Mormons with their 4 new Bibles try to make up for this sufficiency which they see as inadequate for their own purposes, it does tell us all that God and Jesus and the Apostles and Prophets through the Holy Spirit decided to let us know--and believe me, we have not phased a drop in the book of illuminations that are currently available in the revelations of the Bible; and lastly, and this was the point I was getting to when I started this paragraph (4) The Bible is high fidelity in communication--even the original Greek and Hebrew, where most often it concentrates on the word interpretation of the world at the time, is not as good as having the alive and powerful word and word talk to you as God communicates. {And until this happens on a regular basis in your Bible study, you will not be ready to be a Friend of Jesus.}

The Bible best summarizes this level of Bible effort for Friends of Jesus in the following words.
“Meditate on these things; give yourself entirely to them, that your progress may be evident to all. Take heed to yourself and to the doctrine. Continue in them (very similar to Abide in Jesus), for in doing this you will save both yourself and those who hear you.” (I Timothy 4:15,16)

You can be assisted along this route as you comprehend that Paul included watching yourself and your behavior with “doctrine”, not because they are separate, but because we are inclined to think of sound doctrine as apart and different from sound behavior and sound attitudes. No! Even as the bad church behavior and attitudes of II Timothy 3:1-9 such as love of self, love of money, pride and boasting, are as much unsound doctrine as bad concepts of the Bible, God, and Christ, so also to continue in sound doctrine is a sound doctrine of living as well as reveling in the teachings of Jesus and the Bible.
“Age of the Computer” is used synonymously here with this Age of science and technology. Surely, most would admit that technology in this generation has dominated in a practical and widespread manner the applications of electronics, science, and technology even as earlier in American Thought and literature, the “virgin” represented religion and the “machine” represented technology. Indeed, if you summarized previous generations as the “Age of the Atom”, you would have to summarize this time as the Age of the Bible and the Computer; and if such scholars of American Thought as Henry Steele Commager found a certain paranoia in the fundamentalists so this Bible and Computer do sometimes seemingly contradict each other, yet we have become comfortable with them both, sometimes good and sometimes bad. It is hoped that the quote from Daniel on the book title page, from Daniel 12:4 about a time of world travel of the English Bible and a knowledge explosion made possible by computers will engender visions of this present Age also.

If you think that any social or physical scientists has cast away all prejudice, sin, and bias toward the Bible, Christ, and faith simply because they claim the scientific method, then you must overcome that superficial simplicity in order to appreciate “Friends of Jesus” in this Age of the Bible and the Computer. (This is fallacious as thinking that all humanity is basically born good instead of with a sinful heart bent toward sin, and that education and science can lead the world along the paths of truth and goodness. Never, ever forget that
Germany at the time Hitler came to power lead the world in education, in theology and in science and in psychology, and you name it. And when we wanted to advance rapidly in science and technology, the German scientists were brought to this country to work with men like R.A. Millikan.) Scientists are human in spite of their education and their dedication to the scientific method. I hope you will see that in a look at “Evolution in Science and Religion” by Dr. R.A. Millikan in which he tells how it really worked among scientists and advocates of religion during his lifetime where the major discoveries of modern physics were discovered and taught, where he participated in the education at the University of Chicago and Cal Teach, also in the Manhattan project, and perhaps you remember him as the Nobel Prize winner in Physics for proving with the famous “Oil Drop Experiment” that there is a discrete particle called the electron. Yes, we came to know the electron as a charge of 1.6 X 10-19 coulombs and as a mass of 9.1 X 10-31 kilograms. He points out that religionists and scientists can be very prejudiced, and gives good examples; and that there is a universal and absolute truth and then more a popular scientific truth. (I would hope you will contrast much of this history of science and religion in America with the Truth of Jesus and the Holy Spirit; of course also realizing when all is said and done that “the world God made will not contradict the Book God wrote”, the problems are with our understanding of both the Book and the World.)

Time of the End of Daniel

While in this book we use “the age of the Bible and the computer” to describe today, if we are really near or in that “time of the end” of Daniel (Daniel 12:4), then the details given in Daniel for that present age of “many shall run to and fro, and knowledge shall increase” are also well represented by Bible and Computer. In short the computers and widely distributed Bibles with many versions have enhanced if not made the knowledge explosion, and further had a lot to do with the travel activity. And even as Daniel was told after all these predictive revelations to “shut up the words, and seal the book until the time of the end”, the natural implication that during this end time, the knowledge explosion will be greater as the words of Daniel are no longer “shut up”, as the seal of understanding is removed from the book of Daniel as the events become obvious in the flow of world news and world events. Of course at the same time as Satan above all others recognizes these signs of near the end, he will step up his propaganda campaigns to disguise, confuse, and make lies out of the truth. Therefore you see that the prediction of Paul in II Timothy 4:3,4 as the “time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” becomes synony-
mous with the “time of the end” of Daniel; the rising tide that Satan rides in on during this short, last period is the mysterious rising tide of lawlessness \[\text{of II Thessalonians}\]; also that Satan has been unbound for the first time since the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Christ, his release made possible by the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth; and the famous man of sin, son of perdition \[\text{also the last anti-Christ}\] begins to visibly exercise more control over world events as the supreme servant of Satan. It should be obvious that the President of Iran meets many of the requirements of the man of sin of II Thessalonians: he has the desire, means, and position to seek the destruction of Israel even as he is now doing through Palestine, Hisballah, and as the world-wide leader in terrorism. \[\text{According to government figures recently released, terrorism—the number one movement now in the increase of the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness—increased last year 20% and the vicious nature in murders of it increased 40%}.\] However this author would be careful not to be among those like Tim LeHaye who in their fiction on eschatological fiction think they have all the answers—recently in an interview on the history channel he had the nerve to say that all has already been fulfilled that needs to happen before the Second Coming of Christ. Well, just to mention a few in II Thessalonians there still remains (1) the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth, (2) a world-wide visual on the man of sin as a world power, (3) the peaking of the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness, and (4) Satan loosed and the great battle of Armageddon as the Muslim fundamentalists and other seek the destruction of Jerusalem. That’s all that remains to happen, just to name a few; and Tim LeHaye with his obvious support from Falwell and Charles Stanley remind me of the physicists of the 1900’s that R.A. Millikan wrote about in “Evolution in Science and Religion” who thought that all the significant discoveries had already been made in physics. Prejudice based on generated facts is neither limited to science or religion even as the prejudiced inclinations of sin are neither limited to the poor or the rich, the educated or the uneducated. While the Bible of “no private interpretation” \[\text{the ASPI if you please}\] has not changed as to be called an evolution, religion such as the baseless eschatological predictions veiled in fiction of LeHaye and fundamentalism has and does evolve, and the opinions about science have and do evolve.

The “heaping up of itching ears” Bible teachers as part of the final age will vastly increase the knowledge explosion in the negative direction; and although it is the Bible Age as well as the computer age, it is not a good sign that the pastor of the FBC bemoaned that there was no lack of Bible study in his church but that nothing significant had happened in 20 years. \[\text{That 20 years, now approximately...}\]
Age of the Computer

25 years ago, could very well mark the beginning of the Falling Away, or at least a landmark along the end age of the Falling Away.

With this concept and chapter title of “Age of the Computer”, what is really being discussed as an operating environment for the Friend of Jesus, recalling that Friends beyond even Christians must be “in the world, but not of the world”, is science and technology. While the twentieth century has often been referred to as The Atomic Age, I am sure you would agree that as computers have progressed from large mainframes to minicomputers to microcomputers to the now hand-held devices that are phones and computers, often called “Blackberries”, smartphones, or PDAs, or in the case of the one that I play with a Motorola Q phone with which I can also get Broadband Access. Yes, it is a brave new world of technology, and what has brought it home to most Americans beyond the computers in every home, school, and workplace is the PDA where you can now hold the world of the internet and computer in your hand.

The Computer in Our Daily Life

Recently there have been protests among employees of large companies with PDAs where the complaint is that technology has come to dominate their lives. That is a problem that must be dealt with “in the world” in which Friends must live; and it is just one indication and aspect of a larger problem where we have allowed “things” to dominate our lives, period. Even as we can not isolate science to one side of our brain and religion to the other, nor separate science and religion as mutually contradictory—the world God made will not contradict the Book God wrote—even so we can not have a balance in our lives between things, whether homes, cars, or computers, and God. It is just as true in this twenty-first century as when Jesus taught it in the Sermon on the Mount, “that we can not serve God and mammon.” Mammon is anything that is a creation of man, certainly computers to be included as perhaps the most notable and marvelous creations at the hands of man and electronics technology. In other words balance between God and mammon, between seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness with things, between living by bread and homes and cars alone and every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God: a balance in life priority is not allowed although we quickly recognize that since we must make a living “in the world” the balance in time management must be in favor of mammon. That is where the real challenge comes in for potential Friends of Jesus, how can you devote more time and effort to mammon such as your job, provisions for your family, things like cars and a home and yes computers; and still give priority in your life for “every word that proceeds out of the mouth of
God", for “seeking first the kingdom of God and His righteousness”, and for serv-
ing God over mammon? Can you indeed spend all day wrapped up in these things
of mammon, the creations of man, and still give a priority to God, His kingdom,
Christ, and the righteous teachings of God and Christ?

This is not a new and unrecognized problem in that the same Christian philoso-
pher, Elton Trueblood, whose book THE PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION has been
studied by student preachers for years, that same author who introduced us to
the still needed in this Age of the Computer concept of “intellectual honesty”
has also written a very practical book called YOUR OTHER VOCATION. What
you would think when you see this title for the first time, or no doubt when you
first started to read the book if you were fortunate enough to come across it, is
that Trueblood, based on the Bible as most of the practical Christian philosophy
about which he writes is; but you would think your primary vocation is the way
you make a living and your other vocation is to be a Christian. No, it is the oppo-
site which is in keeping with God over mammon and seeking first the kingdom of
God. Your first vocation, consistent with what Paul wrote in Ephesians 4:1 is to
“walk worthy of the calling with which you were called” {in King James it is “walk
worthy of your vocation”}; and your other vocation is the manner in which you
earn your bread.

Obviously one of the keys to understand the dominance of God and righteousness
over bread and things is to realize the great difference for working for daily and
weekly bread even as we are taught in the model prayer to pray for daily bread
only (“Give us this day our daily bread”), the opposite extreme would be the
greed to have it all and have it now. In between those two extremes of motiva-
tions for monthly bread and the Gospel of Wealth and prosperity is certainly
several degrees of ratios between God and mammon. The key question for the
potential Friend of Jesus who would prioritize life so that the kingdom of God
and His righteousness are sought first is where and how can you draw the line.
Where do you cross over between God and mammon? This is a large part of the
challenge to be a Friend of Jesus in this Age of the Bible and the Computer. In
this chapter we concentrate on the Computer; or science, technology, and things,
while in the next chapter we will look more carefully at the Bible in this Age, our
goal always being to be “in the world, but not of the world”.

A Practical Reconciliation of Science and Religion Starts with Philosophy and
Evidence
Like so many other practical decisions and priorities in life, our ratio of God to mammon, depends on our working philosophy of life even where that philosophy has not benefited from good courses and books like Trueblood's PHILOSOPHY OF RELIGION or like at Ouachita Baptist a course on "Philosophy for Living" which among other philosophies considers that of Josiah Royce to whom "loyalty" is the supreme motivation of life. {This is one of my favorites, and whether Royce meant it or not, there is a lot of Bible to it as perhaps you can make it consistent with the “charity” of the Bible which goes beyond love. It is love with feet, or it is the supreme manifestation of love in loyalty.} In the same category are the Christian Apologetics which assist us in an overall philosophy of approach and Christian attitudes toward science and religion, such books as Bernard Ramm's A CHRISTIAN VIEW OF SCIENCE AND RELIGION, Mosma's EVIDENCE OF GOD IN AN EXPANDING UNIVERSE, and Trueblood's previously mentioned books. You might want to include some of the many books by C.S. Lewis, former professor of literature at Cambridge, in that category of Christian Apologetics, although most of those would fall into the far more practical category often called Christian Evidences, the books for Christians in which "prima facie" proofs are offered that (1) Jesus of Nazareth is and was the Son of God and (2) that the Book of 66 books which we called the Holy Bible is the Word of God. Books like A LAWYER EXAMINES THE BIBLE by Irwin Linton where a lawyer that practiced before the Supreme Court never met a man {no, not that he didn't like but...} that claimed unbelief in Jesus who could simultaneously say that he had read all four of the Gospels for himself, or like THE TESTIMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS by Simon Greenleaf, former Dean of the Harvard Law School, who maintains that the testimony of the four evangelists--Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John--to Jesus as the Son of God would stand up as a “prima facie” case in any court of law, like that marvelous book written by McLenndon Day, I believe as a Master's thesis at Baylor and under the title WONDER OF THE WORD, where she offers proofs, evidences if you would, to accept the Holy Bible as the Word of God such as the claims for such that the Bible makes, the testimony of great and famous men and friends and parents, the astonishment of fulfilled prophecies, and so on; and then my favorite as a person with equal training in Physics and Bible is the books by R.A. Millikan, the Nobel prize winning physicists who proved there is a discrete particle called the electron, the son of a Congregationalist minister, part of the Manhattan Project, educator at University of Chicago and head of Cal Tech, who lectured and wrote on “Evolution in Science and Religion".
And this would be a good point, instead of merely talking about Evidences like so many like to talk about the Bible and never get any real Bible, we should talk some evidences by introduction of the gist of what Millikan wrote on science and religion in the book mentioned above; and then to go beyond that to a practical philosophy for life and living on Bible and Science and Technology that I will have to admit is bottom line more biblical conservative on evolution and religion based on the Bible than what Millikan advocated. What Millikan can give to us is a little more reality to the practical problems we encounter like when a professor of physics at a University tells us that as we learn more science we will give up our Christian faith, a Christian based perspective if you would on evolution, physics, science and the scientific method, practicality of the way educated men of science are and are not, and some religion thrown there which we would have to readily admit; even when we do not accept biological or the social evolution of Herbert Spencer, has in theology definitely witnessed an evolution; and certain as evidenced by the good books on the history of American Thought, sometimes called American Studies as they are in literature and history, there has been an obvious evolution in the development of American Thought to come to what we are taught in schools today as the American culture, American Character, the American Democratic Faith, etc., as we have gone through the Colonial Period, the Enlightenment, the Romantic Era of Emerson and Thoreau, the Progressive Era, the Age of Science, and right up to the twentieth century of the Atomic Age, and when the books are written, surely the twenty-first century will be characterized as the Age of the Computer.

Practical Apologetics

Right up front, I am going to tell you plainly that the function of practical Christian Apologetics and evidences is not to lead you to faith in Christ and the Bible. The initiated and scientific come to Christ by faith, “the evidence of things not seen and the substance of things hoped for” like any other believer. What Apologetics and evidences can do is to remove intellectual clutter, showing you that as many educated and prominent people in science, literature, history, and psychology, etc. have come to simple faith in Christ and the Bible as there are the educated doubters and sceptics. Then with the intellectual clutter removed, you can feel free to pursue your faith in Christ and the Bible. Amen, that is worth something!

Faith and Faith Contending

Consider THE BIBLE’S OWN DEFINITION OF FAITH.
“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things not seen.” (Hebrews 11:1  KJV)

Even in the Bible, few things are as clearly defined as is “faith”!

“...faith is...”, we read in the Word of God as recorded in Hebrews 11:1.

FAITH IS:

(1). The Substance of Things Hoped For; and

(2). The Evidence of Things Not Seen.

Substance

Our Christian faith needs substance. Faith like so many other things in life even as love is intangible in that you can not see it, feel it, taste it, or hear it directly. You can see and hear the results of faith and love, but you can not see or hear these intangibles within themselves. As Christians what do we hope for? Well, we hope: (1) To see God face to face and eternally; (2) To be inhabitants of the new heavens and new earth; (3) To be accepted here on earth as a child of God; and so on. Well all these hopes deal with things that can not presently be seen—God Himself, heaven, salvation, and the new heavens and new earth; but the encouraging word of the Bible is that our Christian faith gives “substance” to these things that are hoped for! Actually “hoped for” being words of the King James English of 1611 does not adequately express the full meaning in today’s English of what was originally written by the Holy Spirit through the Apostle Paul in the First Century. Today’s equivalent of this portion of Hebrews 11:1 would be more that what we hope for is “more what we reasonably expect is going to happen.”

Evidence

Christian faith besides giving substance to our legitimate hopes also is within itself an “evidence”. The Apostle Paul who wrote the book of Hebrews was first a lawyer before he became an Apostle, and naturally to lawyers there is little as important as evidence. Of course before we take the present attitude toward Paul that most people have toward lawyers, since all the law of the Hebrew nation was religious law except what they had to heed as being under the Roman government, then Paul’s job as a lawyer before his conversion was to
interpret and uphold the religious laws of the Old Testament as the Pharisees had come to interpret them in the First Century.

When a young man and when Christian Evidences and Christian Apologetics were so important to me in order to provide an intellectual foundation and arguments to justify Christian faith, there were two books very important to me that provided evidence of Christian faith. One was a book by a lawyer who had practiced law before the Supreme Court of the United States entitled A LAWYER EXAMINES THE BIBLE. Irwin Linton, the author, maintained in the book that sufficient evidence existed in the Bible to support a prima facie case sufficient for any modern court of law whereby Jesus Christ's claims to be the Son of God would be supported in those courts of law. Further Linton stated that he had never met a lawyer who when he said that he did not believe in the Lord Jesus Christ as the Son of God, who could also say that he had read through the four gospels for himself to determine the validity of the claim. Linton also tells of Simon Greenleaf, the former Dean of the Harvard Law School, who in writing the book THE TESTIMONY OF THE EVANGELISTS, and who being at that time an authority on the subject of "evidence", stated that the testimony of Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John would be sufficient in any court of law to substantiate the claim that Jesus was and is the Son of God!

Another book that was good in the defense of the Christian faith was that of Mosma's THE EVIDENCE OF GOD IN AN EXPANDING UNIVERSE. This book is a compilation of articles written by over 40 scientists in government, education, and industry with evidence from their particular scientific fields as to why they believe in God. The biologists found in the details of the design of man and animals, evidence of God; the physicists found in the atomic and astronomical design of the small and large of the earth and universe the evidence of God; and mathematicians found in the logic of man and the universe evidence of God.
No, God’s termination of this Age will not be done by the “govenator” of California: it is on a timetable established by the God of the Universe Himself, some benchmarks of which God has allowed us to see the pages of the Bible, from both the Old and New Testaments. Yes, it is very similar to what Physicists and other scientists have found, the law of entropy, which states that the Universe is running down to extinction; however, God’s timetable has a much shorter fuse than that of the scientists. Unfortunately, scientists throw large magnitude of times as an excuse for everything that they can not explain—don’t understand it, and not willing to accept the words of God in the Bible, then just throw a few millions or billions of years at the theories. It is much easier for them to use “infinite time” to explain than to use the Great Designer of the Universe with purpose and a timetable, the Infinite God. One of the saddest disappointments of a practical engineer trained and experienced in the techniques of computer aided data analysis is to do an error analysis on such scientific timetable data where the plus and minus of all the estimates is much greater than 100%, hardly a good tolerance for scientific work.  {More about this later in the chapter.}

Wonders in the Heavens Above and the Earth Beneath

One Biblical guideline for God’s Timetable is the “wonders in the heavens above and the earth beneath” of Acts 2:17-21 as quoted from Joel 2:28-32. Not the presence of such wonders in the earthquakes, storms, and other disasters,
because Jesus instructed us in Matthew 24 that as the phase of the “beginning of sorrows”, these would always be with us until the termination of this world Age; rather it is the increase in intensity of these so-called natural disasters like hurricanes and tornadoes that provide us a clue for God's timetable.

**God's Benchmark #1 {the numbers are ours not God's}:** Increase in intensity and numbers of “natural” wonders, generally called “acts of God” in law until the earth shaking greatest earthquake of them all, the final termination of the earth with fire, diminished light, and extreme wonders.

Not the ups and downs of the number of hurricanes and tornadoes from year to year, but in the trend through the years. It is much like the destructive results on this earth of global warming which has been denied and silenced until recently. *{Scientists also have prejudices and biases and can be controlled politically.}*

**The “Last Days”, Beginning and End, Marks the Beginning and End of the infamous 1000 years of the book of Revelation**

It might shock you to realize that God’s timetable for the “Last Days” started right after the life of Jesus on earth. Yes, indeed; for on the first day of Pentecost after the Resurrection and Ascension of Jesus, Peter explained what was happening as the Holy Spirit came in great power, also as he quoted from Joel “And it shall come to pass in the last days...” Peter prefaced that long-standing quote from the Old Testament which helps to establish God’s timetable for this Age with the astonishing statement that what was predicted in Joel was exactly what was starting to happen that very day. You can lock down on God’s timetable of benchmarks that the historical coming of the Holy Spirit to earth to take the place of Jesus is the beginning of the “last days”.

**God’s benchmark #2: The “last days” started when the Holy Spirit came on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Jesus.**

We might as well let it all hang out right now on eschatology, announcing a benchmark for the approximate end of the last days as when the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from this earth. (II Thessalonians 2:6,7) You see, according to the book of Revelation (Revelation 20:1-3) what marks the beginning of the thousand years is the “binding of Satan”, and what marks the end of the thousand years is the “loosing of Satan”; and that there is only a “little while” left after the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth causes Satan to be loosed.
God's benchmark #3: The “last days” end with the Great and Notable Day of the LORD and Lord, such a busy Day with many events as gathering of the saints from the four corners of the earth (the real rapture, although the timetable of Scofield and LeHaye are confused along with their confusion on the 1,000 years), the gathering of the unbelievers who have been left behind ("one in the field taken up and the other left", etc. from Jesus), destruction of the vast, world army that comes against Jerusalem led by the son of perdition, judgment; but all of the events of the One Great Day (maybe 24 hours or maybe longer) dominated by the Second Coming of Christ in great power and glory.

(Note: do not be confused by the only other place, Revelation 20:4-6, where the 1000 years is mentioned: it is simply a promise of comfort to the those martyred during the first centuries, the great tribulation period on God’s timetable, that they would “live” and “reign” with Christ during that last days period.)

God’s Benchmark #4: The period of the “last days” is the 1000 years {consider this as a variable, albeit a very long variable which has already gone over two thousand years, like in algebra, the exact time of which is known only by God as Jesus taught} plus a “little time” for the loosing of Satan and the final tribulation.

Also remember that Peter tried to keep us straight with “one thousand years is a day with God and a day as one thousand years”. To the great determiner of time, time has no determinative meaning.

God’s Benchmark #5: A Day is a thousand years to God and one thousand years as one day; so that if you can say 1 day = 1000 years and if you can say 1000 years = 1 day, then on God’s timetable you can certainly say that 1000 years < 1000 years > 2000 years.

These foolish people who think the last days are exactly 1000 years. God wasn’t going to tell us the exact time on His timetable, only give us certain warning signs and give us cautions to be ready. Jesus said that He didn’t even know the exact time; and how foolish are men like Darby, Scofield, and the fundamentalists who treat the Scofield Notes like Bible, claiming to know more than Jesus on the exact period of the last days. By the way the exact quote from the Apostle Peter is given below.
But beloved, do not forget this one thing, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day.” (II Peter 3:8)

You mathematicians note the “as a thousand years” which is the equivalent of saying “let 1000 years equal a variable that runs from not infinity to infinity but from zero to greater than two thousand years. And would John ever have recorded in the only four other times of Revelation 22 that the word 1000 years, that has been the focus of the so-called millennium teachings from the Congregationalist minister Scofield, if he had not already read about it as recorded above in II Peter, knowing very well as John was also writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit that time as it matters to God, and indeed it is God’s timetable and benchmarks that we are talking about, floats on a very variable scale. Yes, He does know the time; however it should be considered that God takes into consideration certain human reactions on His timetable such as a complete number from each generation necessary in order to repopulate the new heaven and the new earth. (Also the period of time required to spread the Gospel to every nation.)

God’s benchmark #6: Immediately after the destruction of this Earth at the end of the last days plus previous history Age, there will be a New Heaven and a New Earth. The history of the Old Testament is long and bleak with broken covenants from God’s chosen people, but finally about Isaiah or so in the sequence of the Old Testament Prophets, God through those Prophets provides the supreme hope of a New Heaven and a New Earth with a new people, a remnant of Jews and Gentiles selected carefully from each generation. (Unfortunately most of these references to the New Heaven and Earth with a new Jerusalem and new chosen people, such as that period of time when they will beat their weapons into plowshares and the lion shall lay down with the Lamb is overlooked as that New Heaven and New Earth period, Scofieldites choosing rather to identify it with some mysterious 1000 years of peace on this earth. Much of this is millionaires and other fundamentalists just that can not give up on a very materialistic kingdom in spite of all the teachings of Jesus. They still want their lands and millions intact for a million years.)

God’s benchmark #7 (briefly mentioned in a note above): Jesus taught this benchmark from God as:

“And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in all the world as witness to all the nations, and then the end will come.” (Matthew 24:14)
God’s Timetable

End of what will come? Isn’t it obvious—the end of this world Age! Remember the original questions asked by the Apostles in Matthew 24:3 that started this whole famous 24th chapter of Matthew discussion on “eschatology” (last things)—“what will be the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?” And that is exactly what happens in the One Day of the LORD and Lord: the Second Coming of Christ and the “end of this age”.

God’s benchmark #8: The Second Coming of Christ and the End of this World Age happen on the same One Great Day, although we will have to admit that we do not know whether that is one 24 hour day or not. (The Hebrews are more fortunate than we in that their word translated day in the Bible, “yom”, is really a period of time.)

An organized, scientific and Biblical mind would like to say that there is the last days {withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth and a “little while”} plus One day, making all the period of time from the loosing of Satan with the withdrawal of the Spirit to the Second Coming of Christ as one Day/Period; however this can hardly be justified from what we truly know in Scriptures, and we would be no better in our hasty generations to have all the answers on eschatology than Darby with his kingdom ages that Scofield wove so skillfully in his correspondence courses.

Actually II Thessalonians is Full of God’s Benchmarks on His Timetable

Although often neglected as if it did not exist in the Bible, or ignored by fundamentalists as it confuses their ichthynological theology based on Scofield Notes, there are several benchmarks in II Thessalonians as Paul in the original writing set out to tell exactly what must happen before the Second Coming of Christ. {Which by the way in over two thousand years still has not changed: we still need to see the Falling Away—which I hope you agree we are in now although not clearly seen by most conservative Christians, or admitted—and we still need to get a good visual on the Man of sin, the son of perdition. And here many confuse the Antichrists with this last Man of Sin of history, and who should recall that John said were many “Antichrists” already alive during his day. Many well-meaning and conservative Bible scholars have maintained that the Pope is the anti-Christ, and it is admitted that the way he stands in the temple of God claiming to be God as he gives revelations that only God can give, does seem like an Antichrist; but this does not make him the single most dominant and forceful Antichrist, the Man of Sin, of the “little while” and who also attacks Jerusalem and the camp of saints outside
Jerusalem for its destruction. You see even Mormon leaders also stand up to claim in a Temple by the way, revelations of God; and today increasingly you see the heaping up of itching ears Bible teachers and false prophets that also claim to have special revelations from God, taking the place of God effectively on giving Bible.)

God’s benchmark #9 (the first benchmark of II Thessalonians 1:6,7): God will get even {“repay with tribulation”} those on earth who have troubled His own, and will provide rest for those troubled people of God, when the Lord Jesus Christ is revealed from heaven, obviously the Second Coming, and with “His mighty angels” to do the separation task of Judgement.

God’s benchmark #10 (the second benchmark of II Thessalonians 1:8-10): Jesus and the Mighty Angels as the time this Second Coming, of course during the One Day of the LORD and Lord, will with “flaming fire” {this reminds us of the elements melting with a fervent heat of Peter and the “our God is a consuming fire” of Paul in Hebrews 12} take vengeance {yes, Jonathan Edwards was right during the revival of the Reformation, and still right when his church not long afterwards ran him off that “Sinners are in the Hands of An Angry God”, that the God is love is also a God of ultimate vengeance and flaming fire} on who? “all those who do not know God” (1:8) and on who? “all those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (1:8)

In all these Biblical benchmarks of God’s timetable, I would not try to take away from the charts and weird symbols that make so many itching ears Bible teachers famous today {sarcasm, as these help to take the book of Revelation out of the context of the total Bible}, but as you can see the really significant benchmarks of God’s eschatological timetable come naturally as doctrinal statements right in the middle of other things to believe! Like, for example, the next sentence of II Thessalonians 1:9 and 1:10, while Paul is still in the introductory phase of this letter, not yet having come to the two prime prerequisites before Christ can come again. {It was disappointing to hear LeHaye say, even as much as the three cofounders of the Moral Majority have to say in the furtherance of fundamentalism that took control of the SBC, to say that nothing else has to happen now on earth before Christ comes again. Well, Mr. LeHaye is famous and popular for his fictional works based on the fictions of the Scofield Notes; however the Word of God in II Thessalonians reminds us that at least two major events have to happen, which have not happened, before the Second Coming of
God’s Timetable

**God’s Benchmark # 11** {the third benchmark of II Thessalonians 9,10]: Those who do not know God and do not obey the Gospel are “punished with everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power”--you see how casually Paul inserts in the preface the great doctrines of Hell, the lake of fire, and eternal death and destruction in the lake of fire for unbelievers; and then in the next verse the counterpart for believers--“when He comes in that Day” to be glorified in His saints.

One last casual but highly significant reiteration of doctrine on eschatology in II Thessalonians 2:1 before we get into the “nitty-gritty” major benchmarks of II Thessalonians, this one which like many Scriptures and verses of the Bible immutably place together the Second Coming with the Final Gathering of the Saints, what fundamentalists like to call the “rapture of the church”, but they place it one thousand years ahead of reality. I suppose for comfort and security.

“Now, brethren, concerning the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ and our gathering {how I would like to hear them use the Bible word of “gathering” instead of the “rapture”; but since their eschatological theology is more extrabiblical and from Scofield Notes than from the Bible itself, at least they are consistent} together to Him, we ask you…” (II Thessalonians 2:1)

**God’s Benchmarks # 12** {the two major benchmarks of II Thessalonians: given in II Thessalonians 2:3, and I hope you will read them for yourselves]: Before Christ can come again, two historical events or benchmarks must happen--(1) The Falling Away must come first {can you verify that the long period of the Falling Away, approximately 40 years if it is like the Falling Away of the Hebrew people of God in the wilderness, is already behind us--we, no doubt are in it, but it can not be over and even LeHaye and the rest of the Moral Majority must not think so, who think their moral group, evangelical in spite of the leader Ted Haggard, and fundamentalists have brought signs of revival to this nation to counter the Falling Away}; and (2) The Man of Sin is revealed, the Son of Perdition.

Unfortunately in this last chapter we do not have time or space to go through all the eschatological sweeps and benchmarks of the book of Daniel that many of which center around this "Man of Sin", actually three, the last of which is the supreme servant of Satan during the "little while" before the end of this Age as...
Satan is loosed. You see if you could say positively that the Satan has been loosed because the Holy Spirit has been withdrawn from earth, and will the Pentecostals as they speak in tongues even know the difference, then you could say that the final Man of Sin is on this earth right now and yet we have not established a good visual. I will admit that we are almost there as both Osama Bin Laden and the President of Iran meet many of the Biblical requirements as obvious enemies of Jerusalem who wish to destroy it; but so do leaders of Hamas and Hisballah.

A Few Sub-Benchmarks of II Thessalonians Based on the Two Majors of the Falling Away and A Visual on the Man of Sin

1. In II Thessalonians 2:4 are given a few identifying marks of the Man of Sin, much of which is an echo of Daniel on the same subject, that help us to establish a visual on which world leader is this supreme servant of Satan: (1) opposes all that is called by the name of God, a theology diametrically opposed to the Bible; (2) exalts himself above all that is called God, you name anything about God and he will present himself as much greater than that; (3) opposes and exalts himself against the worship of the LORD God of the Universe, say for example with a “god” that is confused with the only One God of the Universe, and millions will believe that, like for example “Allah” confused with God; (4) like God this Man of Sin sits in the temple {places of worship} claiming to be God {this new 'Jesus' from Puerto Rico does not quite get there, although he does fulfill another benchmark of God's timetable, and below is parenthetical before we continue with the sub-benchmarks of II Thessalonians.}.

God's Benchmark #12: Many Christians will be deceived by the “Christs” that come in the name of Jesus {Matthew 24:5} and many Christians will be deceived by the “false prophets” that rise up {I hope you think of the “heaping up of itching ears Bible teachers” of II Timothy 4:3,4}.

God's Benchmark #13: All this deception among Christians from other “jesus” and false prophets, along with another sub-benchmark of II Thessalonians that we have not yet come to--the rising tide of the “mystery of lawlessness”, leads to the Law of Jesus that “And because lawlessness {sin} shall abound, the love of many {this “many” is the majority and this is the Falling Away} will grow cold.” (Matthew 24:12)

So closely are these Benchmarks of Jesus from Matthew 24 related to a sub-benchmark of II Thessalonians, and only sub in the sense that they flow from

Friends of Jesus in this Age of Bible and Computer
2. In II Thessalonians 2:7 the “mystery of lawlessness” is already at work. It already at work in the time of Paul has continued to work and rise like the tide that overflowed the city of New Orleans; and all that stands as a levy against it is the Holy Spirit, “He who restrains”; and the Holy Spirit will continue to restrain the rising tide of the mystery of sin and lawlessness right up until He is withdrawn from this earth. We can not in any way call this great historical event of the Withdrawal of the Holy Spirit a sub-benchmark even as we can not call the historical beginning of His Coming as the beginning of the last days, this withdrawal as almost the end of the last days (remember a “little while is needed for the loosed Satan to work”).

God’s Benchmark #14: The Holy Spirit once so active on the earth and starting with the beginning of the last days where He has among other things restrained the world and Satan away from sin, and to righteousness and judgment, is sadly and once forever removed from this Old Earth.

3. In II Thessalonians 2:8 Jesus destroys this Man of Sin at the time of His Second Coming.

“And then the lawless one will be revealed (you see how this Man of Sin has to come behind the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit, and can LeHaye now prove that the Holy Spirit has been withdrawn from earth, or does he seek to deceive many as some fundamentalists with the very ludicrous and unrealistic claim that the Holy Spirit is withdrawn as the Holy Spirit in the church is raptured away from the earth, ludicrous in that the Holy Spirit was sent here not only to cause the presence of God in Christians but also to work against the world and against Satan), whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” (II Thessalonians 2:8)

4. Also in II Thessalonians 2:8 we must emphasize that the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from earth before the appearance of the Man of Sin. (Goodness, I hope that what remnant remains now of the church, the assembly of the Firstborn still on earth, is not so overcome by loss of love and the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness and sin to the extent that none notice the differences in the world and the churches when the Spirit departs from earth.)
5. In II Thessalonians 2:9,10 we are given more ways to identify the Man of Sin, because he will work like Satan works: (1) with power, and I hope you know something of the power of Satan as the prince of the world, and magnify that ten or one hundred fold during the Falling Away as he is loosed from the binding influence of the Spirit on this earth; (2) with signs--you talk about the signs that Jesus performed on earth, we will also see great signs of science, man's knowledge, and weapons during this "little while"; (3) and "lying wonders", the wonders--especially those in the sky above and the earth beneath though not from God to chastise and warn His own people are from Satan and therefore are "lying" wonders--it looks like the power and work of God, but under the leadership of the Man of Sin these wonders are from Satan; and (4) the Man of Sin will work with Satan to further, albeit a little while, the "unrighteous deception among those who perish"--what the itching ears Bible teachers and the false prophets and the false "Christs" have begun in deception, the man of Sin and Satan will bring to an ultimate climax. And I hope when you read in 2:10 of how that unrighteous deception happens to those who do not “receive the love of the truth”, you also see “the turn away from truth” of II Timothy 4:3,4 and also the turning into fables of these same aspects of the Falling Away that start with the mild reaction of church members as they “will not endure sound doctrine”, mild only in the sense that turning away from sound doctrines is a step by step process, seemingly very functional at the time, as compared to the end result of 40 years in such practices where love for the truth is lost and church members turn into fables. {The sad aspect of this, as we see already, is that the process from intolerance toward sound doctrine, to the heaping up of itching ears Bible teachers, to motivation by their own desires, to turning away from the truth, and finally into fables is never seen by those practicing church members. They are blind to the process, and that they are involved in the process.} This is a good time to mention another major benchmark of God's timetable.

**God’s Benchmark #15: The Preaching of the Word of God in all of the aspects of "reproof, exhortation, and rebuke" will become harder, if not almost impossible, during the Falling Away. Preachers that preach the Word faithfully will be run off and ignored, while Preachers with itching ears will become very popular.**

"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
Sounds discouraging, almost as if you can only save yourself, and not “associate
with them” as admonished earlier in II Timothy 3:1-9: but there is still one last
word for the would-be Friends of Jesus--Pretend to be an Evangelist. Even if
you are not called by the world and the church “an evangelist”--what is most
important is the work of Christ and the kingdom--and you can act like an evange-
list with all the implications. In other words you can do the work of an evange-
lists for Christ as if you were a recognized evangelist by the world. You will not
get paid for it, and you will not receive any recognition or status. The work with-
out the status; yes, and that is a supreme aspect of Humble Unselfish Service.
And who knows when you see Jesus face to face, perhaps He will call you
“Friend”, then bestow on you some “first” status in place of those who have taken
the first places on earth. {You know, the old taught-by-Jesus, “the first shall be
last and the last shall be first.”}

“But you {yes, “you”, the potential “Friends of Jesus”) be (1) watchful in all
things, endure afflictions {chastisements from God and persecutions from
the world--remember God chastises His own and casts off all others}, do
the work of an evangelists {you can do the work of an evangelists even if you
have not been called by a local church, or ordained}, fulfill your ministry
{you know that you must fulfill above all else the unique ministry that God
and Christ have provided for you in keeping also with your circumstances in
the world.} (II Timothy 4:5)

And with this call to Evangelism we close the book, peaking on the challenge to
overcome the Falling Away as a “Friend of Jesus”; however and whatever way you
can help to extend the influence of Christ between God and man and between
men and me, and to extend no matter how small or large the kingdom of Christ on
earth! Of course, I would add that this verse of II Timothy 4:5 was written
back in the early days of the history of Christianity when the work of an evange-
lists was being made--and note Paul does not say be an evangelists, he says do
the work that an evangelists might do, say for example the work of the Great
Commission given to all disciples--and I might dare say at this point in which we
find ourselves today in the kingdom and in the history of Christianity, if you work
it like Paul stated above you will not be like TV and church-circuit evangelists
today! This kind of evangelistic work is more in the teaching and preaching of
the Bible than of a week of fervor, revival, and fried chicken. You can bet that
the Falling Away has affected evangelist, evangelism, and church revivals even as
it has affected the present status of the churches and denominations with respect to Christ and the kingdom of Christ. If the church members will not "endure sound doctrine", they will also not endure sound evangelism! You will have to search hard to find either during the Falling Away.
This chapter could more appropriately be called “The Holy Spirit, Satan, Corruption, and the World” in order to adequately summarize some of the Bible facts from John 13-17 about the Holy Spirit, also Revelation 20 and II Thessalonians 2 on Satan, the mystery of lawlessness, and the son of perdition {called the “false prophet” in Revelation 20:10}, also harmonized with the book of Daniel where this false prophet or son of perdition is the “little horn”. {By the way if in the next few years we see a rebellion in Saudi Arabia which is the home country of Osama Bin Laden, the same country which we are told furnishes over 45% of the terrorists in Iraqi and which furnished the majority of the terrorists of 9/11, then we can come to fully recognized Osama as the Man of Sin, the son of perdition of Daniel, Revelation 20, and II Thessalonians 2. Of course we must allow for the possibility that it could be a son or follower of Osama, who like Osama are equally committed to the destruction of Jerusalem and the Camp of the Saints attempted in Revelation 20:9 before God rained down fire from heaven to destroy the great army numbering as the sand of the sea (Revelation 20:8).}

Some Preliminary Perspectives from the Scriptures

Before we can adequately cover “The Holy Spirit, Satan, Corruption, and the World”, or “the little while”, we must nail down in our mental tents some fundamental perspectives from the Bible. These fundamentals in turn you might call
“God’s Perspective and God’s Value System”. Even as the Bible tells us that “God’s ways are higher than our ways, and God’s thoughts are higher than our thoughts”, so also God’s Perspective on the timeline of history as revealed in the Bible is quite different from us and the world as God’s value system is so vastly different from our own. To illustrate one of the extremes of what is being stated here, while we tend to think of murder and adultery and terrorism as the most horrible of sins, God Himself as revealed often in the Bible thinks of “unbelief” as the most horrible of all sins. In fact in the final analysis it is only the sin of a lack of faith in God and Christ that can send one to hell, and in fact, according to the Scripture, unbelief over a period of time is what causes a person to commit the unpardonable sin. Stated in another way, the only unforgivable sin by God is lack of faith in Him. Paul in what may be considered the gist of Hebrews, especially if you consider Hebrews as a book about the Falling Away, warned even church members about “an evil heart of unbelief”.

“Beware, brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.” (Hebrews 3:12)

While our President is a good politician (how else could he keep the war gong in Iraqi over the objections of Congress and the majority will of the American people, as well as many other objectionable positions), he is certainly no theologian or even a good representative of fundamentalists when he isolates evil to countries like Iran, North Korea, and Iraqi. The reason for this is obvious as our first Bible perspective stated below.

1. “the lie” that most of the world believes during the “little while” of the release of Satan and the man of sin is a lack of faith in the One True God, the God of the Universe and of the Bible, the God Who is the Father of the Lord Jesus Christ. There are actually many lies that led to unbelief, at the highest national level is the lie that there is a real god of Mohammed and of the Koran called Allah and that “god” (this image of god, or idol, which is really a worship of Satan since he is the only other supernatural being besides the God of the Bible, and who by the way is called in the Bible the “prince of this world”) desires the destruction of Israel and the United States. At the heart of a Bible concept of this “the lie” is the lie told by Satan, who by the way is a liar and the father of the lie, according to the Bible, when Satan deceived woman and man to believe that they would not physically die as God had told them if they were disobedient. (This lie also led them to a lack of faith or trust in God related to what He told them. More important than what God forbid them was their lack of confidence in what God said.)
This “the lie” we know from the context of II Thessalonians 2:9-12 to have the characteristics of: (1) is the opposite of believing the truth about Jesus as the Son of God; (2) the belief of which leads to the final and eternal condemnation of all which believe the lie; (3) is a lie that leads to pleasure in unrighteousness—that is, sin and the enjoyment of a habit of sin; (4) God sends strong delusion to the world in order that they will believe this lie; (5) the man of sin promotes “unrighteous deception” in the world to make believers in this lie, who in turn is backed by the “power, signs, and lying wonders” of the liberated Satan; and (6) God enhances the unrighteous deception {lie} among those who perish because (a) “they did not receive the love of the truth” {remember Jesus said, “I am the truth”, and this truth has to be loved}; and (7) this lie leads many, in fact most in the world not to be saved.

2. Some Bible background on “wonders” is required in order to appreciate the “lying wonders” from Satan of II Thessalonians 2:9 along with this power and these signs from Satan when He is released. Consider for example, and preliminarily that such signs as that of 9/11, for example on the world trade center, could be among these lying wonders, as well as many other signs of terrorism throughout the world. I suppose the most famous statement of “wonders” is from the quote by Peter of Joel 2:28-32 of Acts 2:16-21 where the beginning of the last days is established as synonymous with the Coming of the Holy Spirit in great power and presence on that day of Pentecost {Peter said this prediction of Joel is what is being fulfilled before your eyes on that day of Pentecost} and the end of the last days is marked as “the great and awesome day of the Lord”, which we know to be the Second Coming, and what you have in between those end points of the last days is a period of “wonders in the heavens above and the earth beneath”--wonders identified as “blood and fire and vapor of smoke” {a good preliminary definition of wonders from God as the Bible does say that God sends these wonders--“I will shew wonders in heaven above and earth beneath”}; and we find that these wonders above and below increase in intensity with the approach to the end of the last days to the extent that the light of the sun, moon, and stars is diminished before Christ comes again. Now, what we have in the lying wonders of Satan and of the man of sin and of II Thessalonians is this same “blood and fire and vapor of smoke” but from Satan and the man of sin instead of wonders from God; and I am sure that you recognized in terrorism and the related wars and battles the similarity to this blood, fire, and vapor of smoke.

3. Even as the Bible concept of “world” is clearly distinguished from believers when Jesus teaches in John 14 how He and the Father will manifest themselves
to believers in a way that the world will not see, so the way the Holy Spirit works in real Christians (the fruit that remains as contrasted to just fruit) is different from the way the Holy Spirit works in “the world”. When Jesus taught in John 15 that when He is come (which happened on the day of Pentecost) that “He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment”, He did not mean that Christians could not also receive some of the benefits of this conviction but rather that the world could not receive all the other benefits of the inward presence of the Holy Spirit such as illumination of revelations, Comfort, remembrance, assurance, faith, new birth and etc. that comes with the internal residence of God the Father and the Son. (In fact, the Holy Spirit is actually the effecting Cause of this residence in the individual human heart; and by the way it is false doctrine to consider like many fundamentalists do that the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth of II Thessalonians 2 is a premature rapture of believers before the final tribulation. It may be a way for pastors to comfort their people, but it is isogesis of Scripture to justify Scofieldism and a misconception of the binding and released of Satan, not an exegesis of Scripture where it is obvious that the binding of Satan was on the day of Pentecost when the Holy Spirit came in great power and presence to the earth and where the loosing of Satan for a “little while” is when the Holy Spirit is physically withdrawn from earth according to II Thessalonians 2.)

“And now you know what is restraining, that he may be revealed in his own time (the Holy Spirit has restrained or bound Satan for a variable amount of time called “one thousand years”, starting on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension and ending sometime into the Falling Away). For the mystery of lawlessness is already at work; only He who now restrains (obviously the Holy Spirit although some will say it is Michael the angel, but while Michael more so than other angels has great power as ministers of flaming vengeance, unlike this third member of the Trinity, God the Holy Spirit, they do not have that much power of conviction, like on sin, righteousness, and judgment) will do so until He is taken out of the way.” (II Thessalonians 2:6,7)

Just let the Bible say what it wants to say, that is a good principle of Bible hermeneutics. Take what is clear and consistent, which is another way of saying what II Thessalonians 2 says on Revelation 20 and each on John 13-17, etc. In other words look at the Bible in total context, verse with chapter and chapter with book and book with all 66 books. What you will find fundamentalists doing is taking a few verses out of context, or making bold statements of
“a little while” with “the little horn”

eschatology independent of all scriptural proofs, or quite often, like in Frank Graham’s recent message at Prestonwood, promise you Scriptures that never come, as if the Bible was an appendix or afterthought to the Scofield Bible Notes.

4. Even as there are degrees of faith as identified by Jesus broadly as “fruit that remains” and just fruit, so also there are degrees of unbelief measured by the extent to which the world has believed “the lie” of Satan. There is the unbelief of the radical Muslim terrorists who have bought the lie that God wants them to destroy Jerusalem and the United States. Well, why not, they believe a they are “infidels”. Then there is the unbelief of non-radical Muslims, that do not buy the full lie of Jihad, also those who say they do not. Then there are atheists like in Communist China—which by the way can easily be part of the large army that comes against Jerusalem as they also have ambitions on the oil of the Muslim countries and can supply weapons to the radicals—who have made a public commitment to unbelief in God and Jesus; even agnostics and unbelievers in the United States who have joined in the lack of faith in God and Jesus, and who in the final analysis about the same time as the “little while” and final battle will be inclined with the “rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness” to make their commitment with Satan; and lastly we dare not ignore the thousands and millions of church members who will become victims of the Falling Away, who ignore the warning of Paul to “brethren, beware lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God”, and as the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness of II Thessalonians 2:7 will come out of their sheep’s clothing to reveal fruit that did not remain. {Remember Jesus in talking about this rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness calls it in Matthew 24 a matter of “because sin shall abound, the love of many will wax cold.”}

Perhaps in speculation as many like to do about why the Holy Spirit will be withdrawn for “a little while” at the end, a possible reason is to get a commitment near the end time from all those on earth that are unbelievers and that have departed from the living God to establish such idols as Allah, or the God of the four Bibles of the Mormons, or other church members who have established an obvious gap between themselves and Christ, a gap that correlates with the “time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” of I Timothy 4:4,5. {Let me parenthetically say that the real reason God is withdrawing the Holy Spirit from earth for a little while is because that is what He has planned and decided to do just like He has decided that at the end of the little time will be the Second Coming of Christ, judgment for believers and judgment for
the rest of the world, heaven and hell, and a new earth with a new Jerusalem lowered down from heaven.}

“Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. Also there was no more sea {I always think that since God and Christ with assistance from the angels, fires of vengeance, will destroy the earth with fire like Peter writes in the little epistles, “the earth will melt with fervent heat”, then this fire is what causes the oceans, seas, and waters of the earth to melt.} Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.” (Revelation 21:1,2)

5. While our center of gravity and focus, even pride, is centered at the center of the United States, God’s center of gravity is at Jerusalem. While the history of the secular world increasingly has been made in the United States and with actions from the US to the rest of the world, God’s history is centered on and focused around Jerusalem. It is hard to know why God loves that location so much except maybe for the sake of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob and for the fact that this is where His Son, the Lord Jesus Christ was crucified and arose, also the location of Ascension and the coming of the Holy Spirit in great power and presence. However we do know it is God’s perspective and value system that He does love Jerusalem, and that He directs and controls the world and world history centered around the final welfare of Jerusalem. Thus when the vast army of Muslims and China, and we do not know who else except there will be a “camp of the saints” allied with Jerusalem and Israel, perhaps which we might consider as the United Nations {likely to be established shortly with all this new 50 billion arms deal, part of which is for Israel}...anyway when this vast army bent on the destruction of Jerusalem and the camp of the saints comes against Jerusalem, God will destroy the army with fire from heaven.

“And fire came down from God out of heaven and devoured them.” (Revelation 20:9)

However when you get down to some of the nitty-gritty of II Thessalonians, it is really God and Jesus that are destroying the army with fire.

“And then the lawless one will be revealed, whom the Lord will consume with the breath of His mouth and destroy with the brightness of His coming.” (II Thessalonians 2:8)
6. The Man of Sin, alias the “little horn” of Daniel is allied with Satan in the destruction of individuals. While the man of sin as we presently see him as the world leader of the Al Qaeda movement—Ben Laden or a relative or associate—has the goal to destroy primarily Israel and the US; however like Satan the movement, likewise as with other terrorists, just desires to spread terror and confusion in the destruction of men, women, and children, Satan focus on people of the Jesus faith as objects of his destruction. He is willing to use corruption like in the case of Robert Hansen (religion was important in his life but unfortunately the new birth through faith in Jesus and the working of the Holy Spirit must have never happened), false gods and false idols as in the case of Muslims and Mormons, and little gods that are images of the real God of the Bible (The YOUR GOD IS TOO SMALL OF J.B. Phillips) to fake out many American churchmembers that they are among the elect. It appears that Satan, once a very powerful angel in heaven in the service of God, is mad at all believers who are experiencing the love of God that he coveted. Whatever, the Bible tells us that “Satan goes about as a lion seeking whom he may devour.” Satan literally wants to chew you up and spit you out; like the angel of light that he is, Satan has many subtle ways to deceive, divert, and mislead you. If he has to be satisfied with the second best for your life, say less than God’s will and leadership for your life, he will accept that also. (Remember how the Bible tells us that “we war not against flesh and blood, but against principalities and powers and spiritual wickedness in high places”. Those high places are the supernatural abode of Satan and the other fallen angels, which will become more vicious in their attacks on believers, and by the way more subtle, as they find themselves released from the restraining bondage of Satan, and as they know they have only a “little while” before the defeat of their army and the casting into the lake of fire and brimstone with all unbelievers. Of course, they want all the miserable company they can get in the lake of fire and brimstone!)

What More Do We Need?

There is no effort on the part of this author to be a prophet, but what more do we need to see fulfilled in world history required for the Second Coming of Christ than what we are seeing right now. Of course, it relies as much on our interpretation of world events as it does on our interpretation of the Scriptures where I pray that we will use the Authorized Semi-Public Interpretation which demands that “no scripture is of any private interpretation.” Would it not be nice if we had a similar semi-public interpretation of current history and the present events of current history like we do for Scriptures? Well, perhaps we
do have one somewhat in that it is stated often in the Old Testament that a person is a prophet and the prophecy is true if part of it are found to come true. Well, if we see Osama and Al Qaeda lead in a rebellion in Saudi that throws off the royal rulership and makes terrorism and radical Muslim predominate, then we can be confident that we see in Osama, a relative or friend, the fulfillment in history of eschatology on the man of sin and related events; and then when that rebellion joins with Iraqi, Iran, Syria, Jordan, Hisballah, the West Bank and Gaza to form a large army, we had better make immediate preparation for the Second Coming because we know that Jesus will intervene to destroy that army as it approaches Jerusalem and the camp of the saints.

What More Do We Need in Scriptural Fulfillment for the Second Coming? If Osama is the Son of Perdition revealed in history, and if the present Muslim armies of terrorists supported by China and other godless nations is the great army to come against Jerusalem, and if the signs of II Timothy 4:4.5 of present unsound doctrine and heaped up teachers of itching ears along with the false gospel of prosperity, false doctrine on marriage and divorce and gays in the church, the increasing and diverging gap between Christ and the church are all signs of the Falling Away, then what more do we need to see in history in order to know that the Second Coming of Christ is eminent. Oh yes, we need to see lying wonders of blood and fire and vapor of smoke from Satan and the Man of Sin; and oh yes, we need to see wonders in the sky above and earth beneath, say like hurricanes and earthquakes and fires and droughts and floods and tornadoes and natural disasters {generally called acts of God for a reason} from God--the God who says in Acts and Joel that "He will send wonders in the sky above and the earth beneath" which will increase in intensity before the Great Day of the Second Coming, and are we not seeing those now--how much more do we need! Did we not see enough blood, and fire, and vapor of smoke at the Trade Center in New York on 9/11? And in the rest of the world like in London and Scotland and Darfour and so on and on. Do you realize only now after 28 years has the British Army withdrawn from northern Ireland which is where you might say was the beginning of the lying wonders and blood and vapor of smoke from terrorism? All this has increased the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness which we can just plain call corruption. Even in the US have you ever heard of so much news about corruption with the killing of babies by parents, the killing of families and rape with home invasion, the sin and corruption of big business as leaders like at Enron and Worldcom take advantage of their own employees {it reminds us of how Israel got in trouble because they were taking advantage of their own people in the land}; and let us not leave out the corruption of governments at all level, even the taking advantage of the

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middle class of American citizens; and oh yes, the millions of children that go hungry, the thousands of citizens that can not afford medical insurance and who are taken advantage of by the medical system and by the drug companies. Yes, also the rapid increase in violent crime with incidents of lawlessness like the killings on the campus of the Virginia Tech which we certainly must explain as Satan domination, perhaps a milder form of demon possession; and the recent revelations to us of spying in the movie BREACH as Robert Hanson, no doubt, was also dominated by Satan even though active as a Roman Catholic. {This made history as the largest spy event in American history even as perhaps we are making world history as with the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness. When injustices like on immigration and the imprisonment of dedicated border patrol agents can happen in our country, we have contributed to sin and lawlessness, and when it can so easily be accepted as justice because it is done by those in power then we have entered a stage of corruption perhaps beyond the point of no return. You must remember also that the goal of intelligence agents like Hanson in the intelligence wing of the FBI was to turn soviets, making assets out of them, most often by the utilization of such evil as money and sex, then there comes a point of so much involvements in evil and corruption that it spills over into the life and character of the perpetrators. In other words, you can not dedicate yourself to such a life without getting the hands dirty. Even as the young O’Neil was horrified at what he saw happen to the likeable Hanson, now sentenced to life in prison with 23 out of 24 hours of solitary confinement every day), perhaps realizing that it could happen to any FBI agent, we must confuse daily decisions that focus in thought and deed on the things that are good, pure, true, and of righteousness over sin and corruption. The Falling Away can happen to us also, except by the grace of God. Some sin is inevitable in the continued life of every Christian, but to allow a habitual sin to continue in our life is prohibited by I John; and if this habitual sin, contrasted to a sin or once or twice, that takes over and enhances corruption in our lives. In other word, there is the sin of habit and there is the occasional sin! And you see even as Jesus spoke plainly with the fruit that remained after Judas, in the upper room and in the Garden, so we have come to the point in this book when we must lay the spiritual realities frankly and plainly on the line for the believers that would accept the challenge to be called by Jesus “Friend”! There is no way a reader of this chapter is going to buy or understand these perspectives unless he has previously read and accepted the rest of the book, and in particular has come to accept the perspectives of God and the values of God as set forth at the beginning of this chapter. It is time to fish or cut bait, the time to lay all the hard spiritual realities of faith and unbelief out there in the open!
What is the point at which unbelief and Satan influence spills over in Satan domination and demon possession? How can we know? However we do know that it happened in the life of Judas Iscariot as first Satan influenced him only to betray Jesus for money, then later at the last supper Satan came to dominate inside his life as the Scripture says that “Satan entered into him.” Another way to say this, although somewhat a startling manner, is to ask the question what does a churchmember that is involved in the Falling Away have in common with an unbelieving terrorists Muslim? The answer is they have in common the influence of Satan in their lives!

Another Perspective, God’s Value System on Respect for Persons

What the Bible calls the taking advantage of the stranger and the citizen in the land, no doubt, is closely akin to what Lou Dobbs courageously calls “The War on the Middle Class American”, remembering that the middle class is the majority of Americans that as the gap between rich and middle class widens, with more formerly middle class becoming millionaires, “the rich becoming richer and the poor becoming poorer”. The seed of taking advantage of the people in the land, and ultimately the corruption toward citizens, comes from a lack of respect of persons. While most American churchmembers, and other citizens, will buy the concept of toleration of the American Democratic Faith where sort of a token respect is given for fellow citizens, they will not buy the God-given perspective of equal respect of persons that is clearly taught in the book of James. Pastor James clearly taught, and it comes from God and the perspective of God, that if some one comes into your church that is without status and good clothing and you respect a person also at church with more status and good clothing more than the lesser person, then you are become a respecter of persons, a discriminator, and as much guilty of sin as a murderer, adulterer, or traitor. Now, do you think that is a perspective of God that is bought by most churchmembers? Yet it is the very lack of equal respect for individuals regardless of status or wealth (see how different this is from equal respect that is regardless of race, religion and creed which still allows discrimination based on status and wealth), that creates taking advantage of and corruption toward fellow citizens. This respect of persons is what allowed top business leaders to fleece the flock of fellow employees; this respect of persons from Congress and lobbyists and other politicians to permit millions of hungry children, thousands of citizens without medical coverage, to permit the killing of young men and women of lesser status in Iraq, and to ignore the will of the obvious will of the American people in favor of a government’s superior status and dress. Perhaps some of you fundamentalists in gov-
ernment and big business and education have missed this basic teaching of the Bible on respecter of persons as it is from the book of James. While the American Democratic Faith correctly stresses against discrimination based on race, religion, and creed, long before that the Bible in the book of James admonished against a sinful discrimination in the sight of God based on clothing, status, and income. You can get by in this country more appropriately with a life lived where the first is heeded and the second is ignored, however it will all come out “in the wash” on the judgment day. Have you ever thought why God does not strike some dead in our society for their ungodly behavior? That is no longer His method after the teachings of Jesus. The method know is to prune them away from Himself and then ignore them, while those who are His natural children in some different fashions that we do not often understand, and beyond our complete ability to know like with Job, are chastised.

“My brethren, do not hold the faith of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Lord of glory, with partiality”. (James 2:1)

Let us see what fundamentalists leaders in the identification of their faith also try to integrate by their actions of faith, this partiality of persons of lesser status and lesser clothing. This respecter of persons of the KJV is translated here “partiality”; however not the same as discrimination based on race, religion, or creed of which so many fundamentalists leaders and church members are proud. As you will see from James to follow this is a lack of respect and discrimination based on status and clothing.

“For if there should come into your assembly a man with gold rings, in fine apparel (get the picture or an expensive suit and tie or religious clothing of finery), and there should also come in a poor man in filthy clothes, and you pay attention to the one wearing the fine clothes (you see if you just give more attention to the man of status and clothing over the poor man, you discriminate as God defines discrimination, you entertain evil thoughts and do evil deeds as you become partial or a respecter of persons—as far as your accountability and guilt before God, you might as well as have killed him or raped him) and say to him, ‘You sit here in a good place (or you get medical insurance and you eat well and you get special tax breaks), and say to the poor man, ‘You stand here,’ or, ‘Sit here at my footstool’, have you not shown partiality among yourselves, and become judges with evil thoughts?” (James 2:2-4)
You see, therefore, how respecter of persons or partiality increases the lawlessness and sin in the world, thus the rising tide of the mystery of lawlessness. How government, even in the best system of government in the world, comes to contribute to the lawlessness against God in the name of the laws of men. No matter what person of status and clothing you are, when you commit the sin of partiality based on lack of status and clothing, you are convicted by the holy and right laws of God as a transgressor.

...but if you shown partiality, you commit sin, and are convicted by the law as transgressors.” (James 2:9)

You don’t mean to tell me if President Bush came into your church assembly, you would not respect him more than an attendee of lesser status; or if Roy Rogers came into your assembly you would not pay him more attention than a person of lesser status as I saw done at Second Methodist church in Houston even when Bush senior was running for Senate in Texas and in attendance; and so on, you see the line of reasoning. The protest might come up well this is real life, politics, and government, not church. Okay, then keep the faith of Jesus and the Bible, especially if you can not consistently adopt with the respecter of persons implications, then keep it out of your politics and life and government. In other words, do not mix the religion and faith of the book of James, and equal respect of persons, with your politics which goes only to nondiscrimination based on race, religion and creed. Certainly don’t write a book about your faith where you tacitly claim a conservative and fundamentalistic faith, supposedly from Jesus and the Bible, that can contradict this partiality toward persons based on status and clothing.

Last Things (Eschatology)

There would be much less confusion on eschatology {the events of last things of this Age} had not so many fundamentalists Southern Baptist either taken years ago the Bible lessons from Scofield by correspondence or prematurely committed themselves to the Scofield Notes on Revelation and other eschatology because it was so easy late Saturday to use the Scofield Notes for Sermon preparation like they were part of the inspired Word of God. {Before you get yourself committed to these Notes you fundamentalists and others interested in eschatology, it would be wise to consider the background of Scofield as a lawyer, jail bird, divorced, and then pastor of a Congregationalists church in Dallas, Texas where he developed the correspondence course that later became the Scofield Reference Bible Notes.}
What really keeps such fundamentalists committed to this indefensible position {beside the ease of Note utilization for sermon preparation and acceptability with other fundamentalists of the SBC and Bible Baptists} is a fallacious commitment to what bound Satan for one thousand years, when if you apply the very fundamental principle of hermeneutics to simply let the Bible say what the Bible wants to say without isogesis, or the reading of preconceived ideas and meaning into Scripture, it is apparent that the same Holy Spirit that will be withdrawn sometime during the Falling Away, and Who clearly in the context of II Thessalonians thereby allows a rapid increase in the mystery of lawlessness {of course this includes terrorism} and the runaway crimes of the son of perdition {which right now appears to be revealed in history as Osama Bin Laden--goodness, some superpower like Satan has to be helping him in order to allude the wrath of the President of the United States along with the most powerful intelligence agencies and military ever assembled in the world}. This same Holy Spirit, the He who now restrains of II Thessalonians, is what bound Satan’s work in the world as He came to the earth in great power and presence on the first day of Pentecost after the Ascension of Christ. And before His Ascension, and in John 16, Jesus described this binding work of the Holy Spirit to restrain Satan as a matter of convicting the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment. You can see where if Satan is restricted in his efforts to convict the world in favor of sin, especially on the sin of unbelief, on righteousness to distract from the righteousness in Jesus, and of an accountability to God as the Judge of all on the earth, then his activities would be restricted, restrained, or bound.

Unfortunately according to II Thessalonians some time during the Falling Away that we are presently in {if you do not believe this, then please read some of my books on the subject from www.biblecombibleman.com} the Holy Spirit is withdrawn from this earth, and the question naturally arises as to how we will know? Certainly it will not be from an absence of the speaking in tongues and other charismatic disturbances forbidden by the two books of Corinthians, since these groups have learned to simulate the presence of the Holy Spirit even to the extent of faking a false language called by them speaking in tongues. {Oh yes, numerous conservative Christians have heard such pastors saying to a would-be new convert repeat these syllables after me, and it reminds one of children playing repeat after me O-wata-goose-iam!} So how will we know when the Spirit is withdrawn from the earth during the Falling Way? Well, it should be obvious, based on what Jesus taught in John 15 is the function of the Spirit in the world, that is to the worldly, that there will be a rapid increase in lawlessness and crime because the Spirit is no longer here to restrain on sin;
there will be a rapid increase in unbelief in God and Jesus with many substitutes as Mormonism, Islam, agnosticism and atheism where "an evil heart of unbelief (the world nor many Christians do not have God's value system where unbelief in Him and Christ is the most hideous of all sins) is developed to replace faith in the living God (there is no such God as "Allah", a god of the Koran so that bottom line what happens is that such people worship the only other supernatural power besides the living God, the God of Creation and of the Bible, that is they worship Satan; and thirdly as Satan is released by the withdrawal of the Spirit, the world's awareness of God and accountability to the real living God of the Bible will go down rapidly, and I am sure you are aware of all the hideous things in big business, government, and the whole world can happen as humanity forgets that someday they must inevitably face the judgment of God. Yes, like PayDay SomeDay.)

You know, what we know must happen for certain during the very last days of this Age is that a gigantic army must come against Jerusalem for the great Battle of Armageddon, that this army will also attack the camp of the saints outside of Jerusalem, that the army will be led by Satan and the Son of Perdition, and then dramatically the Lord Jesus Christ, at His Second Coming, will intervene to destroy this large army. Right up to the point of this dramatic intervention, history will move along almost routinely, even from the "wonders in the sky above and on the earth beneath" not much different from all the wonders that we are seeing on earth and in the sky right now with blazing fires, and droughts, and floods, and hurricanes, and tornadoes, and you name it. Even the radical Muslims with their terrorism in Iraq, Lebanon, the West Bank, and Gaza which has already surrounded Jerusalem with a large army of dedicated destroyers has so quickly become accepted and routine, that sometimes we forget all these extreme imaginations of the fundamentalists on what will really happen in the last days. Even as we have come to accept the characteristics of the Falling Away in the United States based on the toleration of the American Democratic Faith, such as divorce in churches up over 51%, where over 60% of church members believe in the false gospel of prosperity, the increasing gap between Christ and the church, and the rising tide of the mystery of crime and lawlessness in the US as well as in the world, even so we have come to accept Osama Bin Laden, a follower or a relative as the Man of Sin bent on destruction of Jerusalem, the possible already unbound Satan and withdrawn Holy Spirit as also routine. (Of course, we still have all these preachers of vivid imaginations with their charts and elaborate timelines, propagating so many things still to happen that tends to disguise what we
may really already be into.) You know how these fundamentalist because of their commitments to Scofield Notes have foolishly postulated: (1) Christians will be raptured out of the world before the final tribulation (they also confuse the final tribulation with the great tribulation which obviously happened in the first few centuries after Christ), which if you look at any Scripture about last things and the Second Coming you will notice that this rapture happens at the same time as the Second Coming, so simply that they have overlooked these verses in their dedication to their messages of youth and the Scofield Bible Notes; and (2) that the withdrawal of the Holy Spirit from earth is the Holy Spirit in church members as they are raptured before the final tribulation. Oh, how foolish it is to confuse the work of the Holy Spirit in the lives of real believers such as comfort, reminders, teaching, illumination, and conviction with the work of the Holy Spirit in the world where He has for over 2000 years convicted the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment in order to counter and bind the work and will of Satan. {Yes, this is not numerically the same as 1000 years, but it is the same period of time, the one thousand years being sort of like a lease for life, it is a time marker.}

There is much more to say; however I am sure you will not read it in a newsletter. Please avail yourself of the opportunity to read a more conservative and sensible sequence of eschatological events in my volume 2 of the Learn Christ Commentaries. On www.biblecombibleman.com/product_lccvol2/ This Bible commentary is actually on all five of the books from the Apostle John-Revelation, Gospel of John, and the three little epistles-and this is the way you want to study any individual book of the Bible, that is in the total context of the Bible. In keeping with this principle of Bible hermeneutics, comparing scripture with scripture, you will find that the eschatology presented in this volume 2 is based on the sequence of last events given by Jesus Himself in Matthew 24; and surely you would admit that what is taught in Revelation and the Old Testament on eschatology (both OT and Revelation on eschatology are in volume 2) must be consistent with what Jesus taught and of the same sequence. Another key to the understanding of Jesus in Matthew 24, even Daniel and Revelation, is to recognize God’s habit in all eschatology of what I like to call "scans of history". Often the same period, from now to the end, is covered in a scan; then repeated in another scan; then another and sometimes up to seven scans as in Daniel. It is much like the radar we worked on in the military where the first scan caught the coast line and mountains, and each subsequent scan with time, covered the same terrain but filled in more topological details because of the closeness. Well, you must experience it for yourself by more detailed reading. And once again I run out of time and space, where another newsletter will be required to cover the eighth top
topics of the Bible, "Listening More Important Than Sacrifice", and you can expect another mid-month newsletter in August.

By the way, lest you think such matters are trivial, it is really what split the Southern Baptist Convention, once the largest Protestant denomination in the world. It is what caused all the dissension as the fundamentalists destroyed so many careers and influence of seminary professors and pastors, who did not cater to them or accept their Scofield views on eschatology, thus taking control of the SBC under the leadership of Charles Stanley, Adrian Rogers, and W. A. Criswell. Unless you grew up among fundamentalists ministers, you will find it hard to believe, yet true, that such fundamentalists make premillennialists a criterion for faith and practice beyond any major doctrines of the Bible. They have to! Otherwise it becomes obvious that they have bought the Bible of a Congregationalist, bought the Notes of the Scofield Bible as Word of God. Also that many of their sermons and doctrines of youth have been worthless! If you are honest you will admit that fundamentalists have always and still been noted for their fighting spirit (50 years ago in SBC work we called them fundamentalists, now not so popular since they control the politics of the SBC), also a mean and legalistic spirit without graciousness, noted for their superficial so-called exegesis of the Bible that is more about the Bible and isogesis than Bible itself, and their dedication to the destruction of all other conservatives that disagree with them.

"the little horn"

Good Bible exegesis on “the little horn” from Daniel, correlated with the consistency of the Bible in Revelation 20 where the little horn is the “false prophet” can straighten out and keep straight much your eschatological concepts, hopefully it can also help to rescue you from the cragmire of the Scofield Bible Notes.

1. When in Revelation 20:9 Satan and the false prophet, also the beast, come against the “camp of the saints” with a great army, this clear statement of fact eliminates the possibility that Christians have already been raptured before this “little time” since surely you recognize “saints” as another word for Christians.

2. The same God’s timemark of one thousand years, a variable of a long period of time, all those Christians that were martyed during the first few centuries {the period of the Great Tribulation} live and reign with Christ, and this is the
period of time--the same period of time that Satan is bound by the work of the Holy Spirit on earth--that fundamentalists cloud the echatological issues by postulating a thousand year reign on earth. (Revelation 20:4-6) Now, who do you think the rest of the dead are that live again in the first resurrection after the thousand years. Yes, the believers not among the martyred few of the first few centuries.

(For more on eschatology, please go to www.biblecombibleman.com website, and order volume 2 of the LEARN CHRIST Commentaries, or simply write to us at SunGrist_Bible@netscape.com or biblecombibleman@yahoo.com)
“a little while” with “the little horn”
The full title of this chapter and the last chapter of the book would need to be: “Things of Encouragement for Friends of Jesus in Plain Speakings”. You will appreciate the meaning in this as we look again at John 13-17.

Everytime one reads again John 14-17, additional special teachings pop out for one who would accept the challenge to be a “Friend of Jesus”. The passage, mostly in the Garden of Gethsemane, with some still in the Upper Room of the Last Supper, is unique in so many ways. The Apostle John is an organizer of what near the end of his pastorate at Ephesus he was remembering. {Of course I hope you have seen from this passage that the Holy Spirit was busy with the writing of Scriptures through Apostles, primarily in the perfection of memory.} Yet in spite of that organization as seen in weaving all the life and teachings of Jesus about only 7 of the many miracles, and as seen in a clear and concise statement of purpose that readers would believe and find salvation {that is another uniqueness of the Gospel of John as it is written primarily for readers more than listeners}, John does not tamper with the random dialogue of Jesus--especially the random nature of Jesus’ prayer to the Father in John 17. It is almost like a recording that John made there in the Garden during the last moments of the teaching ministry of Jesus before the Crucifixion; and since John is well in age as he comes near the end of the first century to write a Gospel of all that “I saw and heard”, approximately 100 A.D., you have to account for this precision of the exact words of Jesus and the exact sequence {very seem-
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ishly random) of the words primary two ways: (1) John through the years as pastor had repeated often what he saw and heard in the Garden; and (2) The Holy Spirit wanted an exact word by word and phrase by phrase recording of what Jesus taught.

Yet there has to be a better word than "teaching" for what we find in John 14-17. While it might seem like teaching to us, it was the last special encouragements from their Master and Friend of Jesus to the 11 Apostles. Jesus did not quote from the Old Testament like in most of His teaching sessions, as for example in the Sermon on the Mount; nor do we perceive any kind of sermon or teaching outline. It is just about as extemporaneous as any devotional and encouragement session can be. Even as based on I Corinthians 14 we say that all speaking, teaching, preaching, or prophesying in the church must be only to either "edify" {build up}, "exhort", and "comfort", so in Jesus's Encouragement Session of 14-17 the Comfort content would come first--after all He is giving them a solid introduction to the Holy Spirit as the Other Comforter--then would come building up of the 11 Apostles--after all there was a blow to their self-esteem and status in the kingdom, and in fact Jesus was still smarting over the incident, when Judas Iscariot fell by transgression. Lastly, I think especially on the detailed teachings on the Holy Spirit and Jesus as the vine and Friends as the fruitful branches, and some shorter passages, we do see the exhortations of teachings.

The Encouragement in the Garden

If the Sermon on the Mount can be said to be the most famous and exhaustive single teaching session of Jesus on all the implications of the new kingdom, then surely the Encouragements in the Garden are the same for the few chosen and called that see and accept the challenge of Friendship with Jesus. The session is sort of like initiation into a select group, not 11 like in the Garden but the larger group of which Jesus prayed to the Father that they might be one. How do you identify that group: it is not the same as the one body of Christ which is the church, nor the same as kingdom membership. It seems the only proper label for this "fruit that remains" {the select chosen and called} is "Friends of Jesus". And I would have to add that if you chose to be one with that select group that you start today reading and studying through carefully, listening to Jesus and abiding in His words, this passage of 14-17.

I keep reading and looking for one central gist of teaching that unites, focuses, and summarizes {we can not keep adding chapters, albeit short chapters}
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these “Encouragements from Jesus”; however except for the challenging concept of “Friends” it is not in the teachings, it is in the motivation and purpose of Jesus to encourage and comfort. All that Jesus could condense in this day session in the Garden, leaving time for His necessary prayer to God the Father before crucifixion, that would encourage was stated.

1. While one of the 12 Apostles, Judas Iscariot (without mention of Judas except once in His prayer to the Father as the “son of perdition”) was a deserter, the other 11 were obviously the fruit that remained. Judas was the cast off (bad news) of the parable of the vine and branches, and the 11 (actually there were at least 500 more disciples not there and 3,000 more potentials on the day of Pentecost). Jesus, in short, encouraged the Fruit that Remains--not only to continue to be such but which in turn to bear the fruit of additional disciples that would also be fruit that remains.

2. The Encouragement of the Garden was obviously to prevent them and future disciples from “stumbling”. That is a purpose of the passage clearly stated by Jesus and recorded by John and the Spirit.

“These things I have spoken to you, that you should not be made to stumble.” (John 16:1)

Jesus was honest with them as He looked at their immediate future: (1) they would be scattered; (2) they would leave Jesus all by Himself to suffer torture and crucifixion; and (3) even some would verbally, albeit temporarily, deny Him. But now....but now...heed this carefully: THIS IS QUITE DIFFERENT FROM “STUMBLING”. Stumbling states and implies many things but the largest implication of where it is used by Jesus and the rest of the Bible is that it becomes a routine, a habit of life if you would, that continues for up to 40 years, like in the parable of the seed and the sower where stumbling and lack of root is caused by the “cares of this world”, “the deceitfulness of riches”, and “other things”. And you will notice in the wording that Jesus said you can “be made” to stumble. These things even more so than Satan, and we would have to throw in the “spirit within us that lusteth to envy {that is, covets things} that can make us stumble as we see the enticements of these mammons or things of the world.

3. Herein in John 16:1, incidentally we do see some organization from John here as this verse is approximately half way--a good place for statement of purpose by Jesus--in the 14-17 passage, we are helped with more precise words and wording on the methology gist of Jesus in the Help session. The words are
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“these things {sort of an organization and enumeration}, like I recall one of the best little study course books ever issued was one on doctrine by J. Clyde Turner called “These Things We Believe”--“these things I have spoken to you” as more a speaking extemparaneously presentation than a message or teaching session; and then will you add the recognition by the disciples that Jesus was now “speaking plainly”, we perhaps have a summarizing phrase of “These Things of Encouragement in Plain Speaking.”

4. We must see in the session that among “These Things of Encouragement in Plain Speaking” was that Jesus and God chose special Friends from all the disciples that are called.

“You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and that your fruit should remain, that whatever you ask the Father in My name He may give you.” (John 15:16)

A brief exegesis yields: (1) Jesus chooses His own Friends, one of which definitely was not Judas Iscariot {somebody was ordained in the Scriptures to be the “son of perdition”, however Judas “fell by transgression”, a matter of freedom of choice--and surely we must add a short discussion later on freedom of choice and predestination, which are both true in the Bible and coexist simultaneously although like the dual nature of light, sometimes particle-like in behavior and sometimes wavelike, only appears to our finite minds to be contradictory, and perhaps if we could understand light and this baffling aspect of theology we could also understand the part Jesus has in the sustaining of light itself as the Bible clearly states that all things of this universe right now “consist” through Jesus, the CoCreator of the Universe in the first place}; (2) Jesus Himself appoints those that are to bear fruit of making other disciples {while the “fruit” and the “fruit that remains” along with the something to ask the Father has the focus on disciple-fruit, we must think that it includes other things since Pastor James interpreted this in the book of James, where pure religion is defined, as to visit the sick and fatherless and to keep oneself unspotted from the world}.

NOTE: you must always remember that what applies to the Friends of the 11 Apostles applies also to the additional “Ones” of the future for whom Jesus prays the Father; and you see that brings together two seemingly disconnected phrases or plain Speakings of John 15:16, making a connection between “fruit that remains” and what you are to ask the Father for.
in prayer. In order words, if you want a proper prayer, in Jesus name and for the glory of God the Father, then ask the Father for “Fruit that Remains”, ask God for disciples that do not stumble.

5. The “Fruit that Remains”, and what you are to pray for to God the Father in order that He will automatically give it to you, is the disciples that you make, that is the disciples you make who do not stumble. (For more on “stumbling” please go to the SunGrist_Bible website of www.biblecombibleman.com/product_stumbling to read “Snatching, Stumbling, and the Falling Away” on how “stumbling” can and does happen among church members and pastors.) Almost any popular and charismatic speaker, chosen and appointed or not, can make disciples that are simply called. (You will note that even as Jesus identified that the disciples would be temporarily scattered, also the Apostle Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that later such charismatic speakers from within and from without the local church would “scatter the flock”.)

6. Jesus Himself the Risen and Ascended Christ “appoints” the chosen teachers, pastors, evangelists, and prophets. (Make sure that you do not help in the “heaping up” of simply called and not chosen and appointed Bible teachers, pastors, evangelists, and prophets: there are more of them in this time of the Falling Away--the same time of II Timothy 4:3,4 when more church members and Christians chose to become “intolerant of sound doctrine” than chose sound doctrine.)

7. This Oneness of other Friends of Jesus to add to the 11 Apostles, so clearly stated in the plain speaking of Jesus in His prayer to the Father of John 17:20-21, is obviously a Unity other than physical assembly together as you would readily recognize that there is no way you and I today, or any other disciple desiring to be a Friend of Jesus, can physically assemble with the 11 Apostles. (Now, I would caution on to say that there is a certain fellowship with the saints of the past as represented in the “assembly of the firstborn written in heaven”; and it is a common Cloud of Witness fellowship of the kingdom of Christ.) And that is exactly where you must look for this Oneness, not in the local church or not so much in the one church written in heaven, but rather in the concept and realities of something we often neglect, the ever present and unshakable and growing kingdom of Christ. You can waste a lot of futile effort today like other disciples do in ecumenical movements, in interdenominational and non-denomination movements like the New Life Movement (and you know what happened to their Evangelical Leader, Ted Haggard, who followed the non-fruit that remains path of Judas, almost everybody or every church would
like to identify itself as the Mormons and Church of Christ and many other do even as “Purpose Driven churches”, as that One Oneness local church where you must assemble for salvation--it is fruitful in making called but not chosen and appointed disciples that become Friends}, and the one Church concept where they must assemble together here on earth.

Here is a parting word of encouragement from this author, based on all “These Things” that have been presented here from John 14-17: IF YOUR MEET ALL THE REQUIREMENTS TO BE A FRIEND OF JESUS, YOU WILL BE AMONG THE “FRUIT THAT REMAINS”! If you need a more condensed list of those requirements, go to www.biblecombibleman.com/Friends_of_Jesus_page/. Or if you recipients of the SunGrist_Bible newsletter, who received a complimentary copy of this book, desire additional copies of either the soft copy for $10 or the hard copy for $20 you can either download or order on the website of biblecombibleman.com. If you have any problem just call me at 817-296-0328.
In John 13-17 Jesus did not spell out in so many words what Friends have come to in the Comfort of the One-ness. Jesus left that to the Apostle Paul, the Apostle called out of due time; and although the 11 Apostles voted to elect Matthias to fill the slot vacated by Judas Iscariot, Jesus had in mind another Apostle to be His chief editor of the New Testament. It was so important to the work of the kingdom of Christ and of God, that Jesus Himself, the Ascended Christ, made a visual appearance to Paul on the road to Damascus, and then met with Paul in Saudi Arabia for a personal period of instruction. {And by the way, as far as we know from Scripture, Paul is the only Apostle that Jesus after Ascension met with. Of course, there were also the meetings with the Apostle John on the isle of Patmos.} Recall, however, that Jesus said in the 13-17 passage that there were many other things which He needed to tell the Apostles, but they were not ready for them yet!

Jesus said:

“I still have many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now.”

(John 16:12)

Jesus said them to Paul, and Paul wrote 14 books of the New Testament and sponsored through John Mark and Dr. Luke 3 others; and in the writings of Paul you find a lot on “One”, but based on a past knowledge of the Old Testament
which he re-read at Tarsus for 7 so-called silent years when he came to sum-
marize what Jesus had taught him in the first 10 letters in the famous book of
Ephesians, you really see a lot about ONEs and the one baptism. However it is
in Hebrews with the focus on Hebrews 12, that we truly come to identify
exactly the One-ness as the kingdom of Christ.

**CONFUSION, THEN AND NOW, IN THE CONGREGATION**

When we preach, speak, or prophesy in the church, the Bible says in Corin-
thians, it is either to "edify", "exhort", or "comfort". We should not speak in
the church or to the church unless it is to edify, exhort, or comfort. On many
special occasions like a funeral we come to comfort; and we hardly know
whether the life of a loved one or the Bible messages is more comfort. Such a
noted life, lived seriously for Christ and for so many years, is a comfort to the
family. Certainly to family and friends alike, that life has been an exhortation,
a building up for us by example, and a comfort to us in the best of church mem-
bbership.

However, we do have Bible treasures in earthen vessels, and however inade-
quate from the human standpoint, we do know that Bible like that in Hebrews
chapter 12 is more than adequate for the comfort of such a special assembly.
As you listen for a few minutes on "Comfort in the Kingdom" no uncertain sound
will you hear these comforts like also mentioned in First Corinthians 14 where
there can be confusion without a certainty in the sound. Although not nearly as
beautiful as the music or as distinct in the sound as a trumpet, you will find
many positive and straightforward words of comfort this morning from the
Bible. The Bible comforted your loved ones, I know that; and it can comfort
you even as it comforted them. Even if you do not choose to accept the same
Bible truths for comfort, you can accept some comfort by the acknowledgment
that your loved one found comfort in such Bible passages as Hebrews 12:18-29.

**I. The subject of Hebrews 12 is the Unshakable and Eternal Kingdom of God
and Christ.**

There are shakeable kingdoms, and then there is the one unshakable kingdom.
Kingdoms have come and gone throughout history, from Nineveh to Babylon, to
the United Kingdom of David, to the split kingdoms of Israel and Judah, to Per-
sia, Greece, and Rome. Some like Rome have lasted hundreds of years and
seemed invincible, but now are only the subject of history books and of sites to
visit ruins, testifying again to the shakeable nature of all kingdoms except one.
In more modern times, it was the kingdoms of Spain and Portugal who led in the
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exploration of the new world; then Great Britain and France with their colonization, and finally the United States which recently has looked more and more shakeable, having lost so many of the recent wars fought.

1. There is a brief moment of confusion in climbing the vast peaks of the Comforts of Hebrews 12 even as the children of Israel with which Hebrews 12 starts had moments of discomfort in climbing Mount Sinai before the comforts of the message from God Himself came; and I must add in all intellectual honesty that the congregation before Mount Sinai never overcame the discomforts of the loud sounds of the voice of God and the loud trumpet, nor overcame the sight of the fire and smoke and lightnings that surrounded the presence of God on earth with His feet on the Mount; nor did they overcome the taste and smell of the smoke, nor the touch of the mountain itself as they feared knowing as God promised that man or beast if he touched the mountain past a certain identified point would die. Never in history had the great God of this universe, the only God and Creator made Himself available to a whole congregation like this; the people were keenly aware of this, and they were afraid. In fact, the Bible tells us in Hebrews 12:21, that when God made this special appearance on earth, that the sight was so terrifying looking up at Mount Sinai where God stood that Moses Himself was terrified.

The Bible in Hebrews states:

"And so terrifying was the sight that Moses said, 'I am exceedingly afraid and trembling.'" (Hebrews 12:21)

2. Now, our confusion is somewhat different from that congregation in front of Mount Sinai on that historical special assembly in that we come to quite a different but awesome reality. That awesome reality is not apparent in the introduction to the passage of Hebrews 12:21 as all four physical senses---sound, sight, taste, touch---are evident from God on Mount Sinai; nor is the confusion of Hebrews 12:18-29 further alleviated, at first until you think more deeply about it, in verses 22-24 although we begin to feel comfort as such positive spiritual realities are mentioned as:

(1) the New Jerusalem, the city of the living God;

(2) the heavenly Jerusalem which the book of Revelation tells us will be lowered down from heaven to become the New Jerusalem on earth with the New Israel and the New Earth under the new heaven; (is that not right, are you not
able to immediately picture what these realities are even though you do not know what we are coming to as the overall great reality, much greater than the congregation before Mount Sinai)--and the list goes on:

(3) an innumerable company of angels, you know automatically that this is the great number of the legions of angels Jesus will bring with Him at the Second Coming in order to conduct the Great Gathering of souls from the four corners of the earth--stop a moment, while it is true this great legion of angels will come to do the bidding of Jesus at the Second Coming, in reality in the comfort of these benefits of Hebrews we are talking about realities and comforts that we already have (the passage does not say "what are we coming to" in the future but rather "what have we come to" right now), so that presently we must consider later how these legions of angels as ministers of God and God's will help us now;

(4) to the total church body of which all believers, past and present are a member, the church of the Firstborn, the assembly written in heaven (just those eternal words cause comfort to arise in our heart, although we still do not know what Paul is taking us to). However he through the Holy Spirit continues to pile up the realities of comfort in spite of some confusion. It is much like life in the midst of the trials and battles where the noise and the sight of the battle is finally overcome in moments of vision and the music of comfort with such realities; and I must add right now, that these are not spiritual realities for the future, these are present realities. What we are coming to under the leadership of the Spirit and Paul is a great summarizing reality that presently exist, is already ours here on earth, and which can comfort any believer right now because you do not have to wait for it.

Rapidly let us complete the list of smaller comforts in order to comprehend the large encompassing reality of the kingdom of Christ.

(5). "to God, the Judge of All": you see God already exist and lives and knows and watches and loves and yet makes preparation for Judgement. About the only aspect of the kingdom where God knows and Judges is that the evidence of His judgement as far as the separation of the your loved ones and the goats, the tares in the churches from the wheat in the churches is not yet evident. However, once again, like all the other benefits, it is a present judgment that has already happened. With your name written indelibly in the Lamb's book of life in heaven, you do not have to wait for God to make a final decision;
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of course, we will all feel better when we find ourselves there, and Paul does add "work out your own salvation with fear and trembling."

(6). "to the spirits of just men made perfect": {Once again this is men, women, children, and youth as "men" is generic for male and female.} Oh yes, God is a Living God of the Living. He had to remind Moses of that. People who die and have died in the Lord are still living with God. God is the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob: the God of the living Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob. The God of the Living parents, friends, and some fellow church members who appear to us as having fallen asleep.

(7). "to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant": I think I heard an "Amen" Jesus is alive. Jesus Mediating work is alive as right now He is at the right hand of God the Father on the Great White Throne, making intercession for our sins and continuing to wrap up the administration of the New Covenant for the New Earth and the New Jerusalem.

Third, Okay, has the confusion of Hebrews 12:18-29 been overcome as to what we have come to. We knew at the beginning that we have not come to Mount Sinai like God’s people in the wilderness. We have a list of aspects now of what we are coming to, knowing that whatever this great and present entity of comfort to us is, it has to include: (1) New Jerusalem, (2) the heavenly Jerusalem, (3) lots of powerful angels that can carry out the will and ways of God and Christ, (4) the one church or body of Christ, (5) God with an emphasis on the God of Love as also a Judging God, (6) to many saved and justified human spirits that have been perfected, (7) to Jesus and the New Covenant.

Well, maybe not quite all the confusion is gone until we see it in the writing of Hebrews 12:18-29, so that we should quickly go to the next to the last verse, verse 28 of the passage and of Hebrews 12. THERE FOR OUR COMFORT IT IS IDENTIFIED AS TO WHAT WE HAVE COME TO INSTEAD OF MOUNT SINAI. WE HAVE COME TO THE UNSHAKEABLE AND ETERNAL KINGDOM OF CHRIST AND OF OUR GOD, a kingdom already here on this earth now; and a kingdom once for all established by Christ on earth when He came the first time to live and work. This is it! Listen to the words carefully.

The Bible reads in Hebrews 12:28a:

"therefore...therefore, I pause....there is a great conclusion to follow, and here it is, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken...."
Granted we don't have all the benefits yet; but "we are receiving". We are in the very process while still here on earth of receiving the kingdom benefits. We are coming to what we are already receiving, that is, "a kingdom which cannot be shaken". Mount Sinai was shaken; Moses and the children of Israel were shaken; the whole earth at the end of this Age with the heavens is going to be shaken. However the eternal kingdom of Christ is a reality that can not be shaken since it has in it the eternal God the Father and the eternal Lord Jesus Christ!

4. Even as we can not fully appreciate what we have come to in the unshakable kingdom without comparison to the fear and confusion of the first people of God at Mount Sinai, so also we can not appreciate the present realities of our unshakable kingdom until we also see how shakeable this kingdom and kingdoms of earth that we live on and with are now.

(1). Paul uses the reality of the historical Flood Judgement of God one time before as an example for future shaking when he reminds readers of the reality of the Great Flood on earth that destroyed all men, women, and children except 7 people with Noah.

(2). Paul uses a quote from Haggai 2:6 in the Old Testament to describe the reality of a great shaking of this present earth and the heavens.

(3). Paul with the help of the Holy Spirit, and with prior teachings from the Ascended Christ in Arabia, gives the God and Christ authorized interpretation of the "shaking" and the "yet once more" found in Haggai 2:6. Don't you just love the comfort of knowing truth which comes so clearly when we allow the Apostle and Prophets, like this in Haggai and Hebrews, to explain the Old Testament quotes. You just know not only is "no Scripture of any private interpretation", but also that you just read the authorized interpretation. Admit it, there is a lot of comfort in that also! In short what it means is: all things we see on earth that are the creations of man, that is mammon that is made with the hands of man, is going to be shaken to the point of destruction--Peter would call it the elements melting with a fervent heat; and what remains of the old earth and old heavens in the new heavens and the new earth is going to be the unshakable kingdom of God!
"therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken...."
{(bottom line and bottom subject of Hebrews 12 and in particular the passage of 12:18:29)

(4). Now if you needed anything else, and no doubt many do, in order to appreciate the shakeable nature of this earth and the kingdoms of this earth, you must along with your concept of God as love also appreciate that "our God is a consuming fire"; and a consuming fire God is a God of Judgement as well as love and justice.

II. We Begin to Feel the Comfort in Hebrews 12 as some of the confusion dissipates.

Roman Numeral Two: Now, we can appreciate the comfort in the first part of Hebrews 12, the Hebrews 12:1-17 passage. And I think we will realize to the point of comfort that Hebrews 12:1-17 is an elaboration of the kingdom. What was listed as specifics in Hebrews 12:22-24 as present realities of the unshakeable kingdom of Christ and God has previously been words of comfort in more detail in the first part of Hebrews 12 even as the whole book of Hebrews about Christ, the Falling Away, and the New Covenant of salvation has been preparation for Hebrews 12 itself. {Yes, Paul the lawyer steeped in the word of God and the teachings of Jesus and with the guidance of the Spirit was also a lawyer like logician in the use of reasoning and the intellect.}

1. We derive further comfort from the realization that the Cloud of Witnesses of Hebrews 12:1,2 is the same general assembly of the Firstborn of our list of comfort of Hebrews 12:22-24:

“therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking unto Jesus, the author and finisher of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and has sat down at the right hand of the throne of God.”

We are not alone as a practitioner of the faith in the Lord Jesus Christ: we are not alone in the faith of sound doctrine and in the stand of faith for a sound doctrine. We have Jude and many others enumerated in Hebrews 11 as our witnesses to Contend for the Faith. Although sometimes in our beliefs which must separate us from the majority, and even more so as we go deeply in the time of THE FALLING AWAY beyond the Perilous Times separate us from even church-
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members, we must feel like the Prophet Elijah as times had become so bad in the falling away of Israel than Elijah thought he was the only true follower of God that was left. God had to assure him that there is were seven thousand left who had not bowed their knees to Baal. As the United States follows the example of Israel and comes down to only seven thousand believers in the whole nation, perhaps you will know none of them and become lonely; and at that time the Comfort of Hebrews 11 and 12, and the Comfort specifically of the great cloud of witnesses gone before will be increasingly a comfort to you.

(1). The Comfort of Elijah. The Bible tells us that Elijah was a man of like passions as we are, and he prayed that it might not rain on the earth for three and a half years. We have the Comfort that we can pray like that and get real results.

(2). The Comfort of Abraham. When God made Abraham the father of many nations, Abraham was made our father of faith. Like Abraham, we believe in God through faith.

(3). The Comfort of Jesus. Later we will see in Hebrews 12 how that since Jesus endured such hostility of sinners while on earth, that we must expect the same thing; but we know that not only did Jesus go through the same things that we do—there hath no temptation taken you but such is common to man; but God is faithful who will not suffer you to be tempted above that which you are able, but will with the temptation provide a way of escape that you might be able to bear it”—and beyond that, Jesus is at the right hand of God making intercession for our sins.

2. The Comfort of Jesus as the Author and Finisher Our Faith of Hebrews 12:2 is the Jesus, Mediator of the New Covenant, of Hebrews 12:22-24. While we are on the subject of Comfort from Jesus, let us go on to the Comfort that we receive from Jesus being the Author and Finisher of our Faith; and in order to appreciate this you must see how Jesus existed as a person of the Godhead long before He walked on this earth. In fact, Jesus already existed when God the Father and God the Holy Spirit created the heavens and the earth. As a matter of Biblical fact, Jesus Christ was the mediating cause during Creation. One Bible scholar has given this definition of the Trinity: "God the Father the originating cause; God the Son is the mediating cause, and God the Holy Spirit is the effecting cause." You see that in reverse in prayer. You see that moving forward in salvation as God the Father thought up salvation, God the Son wrought salvation in His death on the cross, and God the Holy Spirit effects
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salvation in the life of the individual believer. You also see it as true in Creation. God the Father said "let there be light", "let there be firmament in the midst of the waters", "let the earth bring forth living creatures", and etc. "let there is be...let there be...let there be"—sometimes I wish we could have heard the sound of heavens as God spoke those words but we like the children of Israel at Mount Sinai could not stand the sound. Jesus the Mediator could stand the sound and whatever God the Father said, Jesus became the mediating cause in the works of Creation.

(1). Now the same Jesus with the power to create and sustain all the universe is also THE AUTHOR of our SALVATION. Jesus wrote the book on Salvation if you want to put it somewhat crudely...but true. It was Jesus that provided the whole story of salvation: the story of how God was in Christ reconciling the world unto Himself; the story of how the power of God overshadowed the virgin Mary and that person who was born of this was born of the Spirit of God, was the Son of God; the story of how Christ subsequently taught and performed miracles and of these signs of faith from God that none other can duplicate or ever will; the story of how Jesus did on the cross for the sins of the world—no one took His life against His will but according to the will of Jesus and God; and the story of how Jesus arose from the dead on the third day thereby becoming the Firstborn from the dead.

(2). It is difficult to separate Jesus the Author from Jesus the Finisher of our Faith. Somewhere in the Gospel story of the Crucifixion, Resurrection, and Ascension of Christ back to the right hand of God the Father to ever live to make intercession for our sins, Jesus passed from simply being the author of our salvation to being the author and Finisher of our salvation. For example, shortly before the crucifixion Jesus told His first disciples, and subsequently the message was recorded also for us to read in the Bible...Jesus told His disciples that when He was gone He would send another Comforter, the Holy Spirit to take His place on earth and to do His work. That is obviously part of the finishing work of Jesus as the Spirit of God convicts the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment; as the Holy Spirit teaches us all things and brings things to our remembrance; as the Holy Spirit gives us a spirit not of fear but of power, and of love, and of a sound mind; and many other benefits of Comfort from the Holy Spirit which were mentioned in the last chapter.

3. The Comfort of Chastening from God the Father of Hebrews 12:5-11 is the way that the just men of the list are made perfect. We however must hasten on to cover quickly the other comforts of Hebrews 12; and on how there is a Com-
And you have forgotten the exhortation which speaks to you as to sons: ‘My son (wow, what a blessing to be called by God the Father, “son”)…My son, do not despise the chastening of the LORD (capital letters like this are always for God the Father)…the chastening of the LORD, not be discouraged when you are rebuked by Him; for whom the LORD loves He chastens, and scourges every son whom He receives.” If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there of whom a father does not chasten? But if you are without chastening, of which all have become partakers, then you are illegitimate and not sons. Furthermore, we have had human fathers who corrected us, and we paid them respect. Shall we not much more readily be in subjection to the Father of spirits and live? For they indeed for a few days chastened us as seemed best to them, but He for our profit (you see the Comfort of Chastening is for our benefit, for our PROFIT, and what that profit is specifically comes later in the passage—it is in order that there might be PEACEABLE FRUIT OF RIGHTEOUSNESS in our lives)…that we may be partakers of His holiness (that makes it worth it, doesn’t it to have chastening…that is indeed comfort to know that chastening is God’s means for us to become partakers of His Holiness.) Now no chastening seems to be joyful for the present, but painful; nevertheless, afterward it yields the peaceable fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it.”

You see that is another way to look at the Comfort of Chastening: that is our Trainer to make us partakers of the Holiness of God, to bring in our life the Peaceable Fruit of Righteousness. “No cross, no crown” were the words from William Penn. Or as someone said, “all sunshine makes a desert”. We need, in short, the Comfort of Chastening from God the Father Himself; and further we need to be reminded that much of this chastening comes from the hostility of sinners. You see part of the context just read of Hebrews 12:5-11 is the introduction of Hebrews 12:3 and 4:

“For consider Him who endured such HOSTILITY FROM SINNERS against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls. You have not yet resisted to bloodshed, striving against sin.”
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4. The Comfort of Correct Choices, that is “make straight paths for your feet” of 12:12-15, is the same straight path that leads to eternity in the “heavenly” Jerusalem of the List.

Once again I wonder if any words could express it more eloquently on the Comfort of Correct Choices than the Apostle Paul and the Spirit of God do on Hebrews 12:12-15.

“therefore strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees, and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather be healed. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord; looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God; lest any root of bitterness springing up cause trouble, and by this many become defiled…”

(1). This is akin to what I like to call my “smart” lecture: do what is smart by choosing straight paths for your feet. The way you walk and live is up to you, and consists of many individual choices that can be called the choosing of straight paths for your feet. In other words, chose paths to walk at each intersection or decision point that are consistent with the best that you know from the Bible, the best you know of the example of Jesus and the cloud of witnesses that have gone before you.

(2). This choosing of straight paths for your feet is both preventive medicine and healing for your physical body: (1). It is a cure for hands that hang down and for feeble knees; (2) It keeps what is lame from being completely dislocated; and (3) it provides for the healing of the lame limbs, the arms that hang down, and the feeble knees. What do you think of this? I hope the exhortation of the first chapter in Isaiah 43: they that wait upon the Lord shall renew their strength; they shall mount up with wings as eagles, they shall run and not be weary; and they shall walk and not faint.” The waiting on the LORD God through Jesus Christ and in prayer and in Bible reading and study is the equivalent of making straight paths for your feet.

(3). Pursue peace with all people.

(4). Pursue holiness without which no one will see the Lord. There is a way to walk in a straight path, to walk toward the holiness of God and Christ.
(5). Watch carefully that you do not fall short of the grace of God. In other words do not fall short of full salvation. In other words, do not fall away from God and Christ although there is will inevitable come the general apostasy of the Falling Away from God and Christ. \{Note that this is not a falling away from the churches and denominations; no doubt attendance will increase as people see the other approaching signs of the end of time, it is a falling away from sound doctrine, a falling away from God and Christ.\}

(6). Don't let any root of bitterness cause trouble among your religious associates, and a root of bitterness can cause many to be defiled by unbelief, and be lead astray.

5. The Spiritual Blessing of Esau and Eternity, which may trade for morsels of bread, is the City of the Living God, the New Jerusalem of the List of Blessings. Since so much has already been said about the Church of the Firstborn which is the same as the City of the Living God, the New Jerusalem, the unshaken kingdom, and the Mount Zion, we will not dwell on this portion of Hebrews 12 except to quickly enumerate the stages of Comfort.

III. Comfort! Another Enumeration of the Benefits of Kingdom Citizenship.

This is what you have come to! This is where you are if you are a believer among the fruit that remains. These are more things of encouragement that will comfort you along the way to becoming a Friend of Jesus!

(1). You have come to Mount Zion and the City of the Living God. Now this a city to seek for, and the great cloud of witnesses of the Bible that have gone before us by the way they lived and acted showed that they had found no permanent city on earth. They bore testimony to the fact that they sought “an eternal city whose builder and maker is God.”

(2). You have come to the heavenly Jerusalem. Remember that the Apostle John saw a new heaven and a new earth, and he saw the city of the heavenly Jerusalem being lowered to the earth from heaven after the old earth and universe were destroyed by a consuming fire and the new heaven and earth had been created by God. I suspect that since John said that “there was no more sea”, the new earth will be where the waters existed before the consuming fire melts all the elements of the earth.

(3). You have come to an innumerable company of angels. Jesus told his disciples during the period of His crucifixion that at any time he could call a legion
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of angels to His rescue; and at the birth of Jesus, it was announced of the birth of Christ by a host of angels; but the real home of the angels—an innumerable company of angels—is in heaven where the Church of the Firstborn is also located.

(4). You have come to the General Assembly and Church of the Firstborn who are registered in heaven. Don’t place your faith and salvation in trust of any local church or denomination: place your faith in Jesus and in the Assembly of the Firstborn that is registered in heaven. It is not any churchmembership or registration here on earth that you should be concerned about; but rather in the registration in heaven. The Apostle John told in Revelation how there is a book in heaven called the book of life in which is written all the names of those who have truly believed in Christ, and that book is the registration book for the CHURCH, the Assembly of the Firstborn in heaven.

(5). You have come to God, the Judge of all. Last week President Reagan was buried, one of the most powerful and respected men of our time; but God judges all, the Presidents, and ex-Presidents, men of status and wealth, and men of poverty and middle class. God judges all men according to the same standards of holiness and according to their faith in the Lord Jesus Christ. The great separation will happen at that time as the believers receive a resurrected body like Christ, and the unbelievers are consigned like Satan to the lake of fire and brimstone. Later we will read in Hebrews 12 how our God is a consuming fire. Yes, God is love and holiness; but God is also a consuming fire. God is patient and has been patient; but the ultimate day of justice comes at the end of time. The Bible tells us about these unbelievers of all times that “it is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God.”

(6). You have come to the spirits of just men made perfect. You see this the cloud of witnesses enumerated in Hebrews 11 like Abraham, and Moses, and Elijah. They obeyed God’s method and plan of salvation rather than trying to work up their own salvation: that plan is justification by faith. It is like the Apostle Paul wrote in Romans under the inspiration of the Spirit of God: “Brethren, my heart’s desire and prayer to God for Israel (or for any other nation or individual) is that they might be saved; for they being ignorant of God’s righteousness and going about to establish their own righteousness, have not submitted unto the righteousness of God which is by faith”. You will certainly want to join them in the Assembly of the Firstborn by faith.

(7). You have come to Jesus, the Mediator of the New Covenant. Paul has elaborated in the preceding chapters of Hebrews how Jesus is the author and
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finisher of the New Covenant. The New Covenant that was promised to Abra-
ham through His seed which is one, that seed being Christ; and the new cove-
nant is very similar to the New Testament, that is that Jesus by His blood or
His death on the Cross provided a way of salvation for all that believe. “If you
believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead and confess with your
mouth the Lord Jesus Christ, you SHALL BE SAVED.”

Confusion Created by the “Heaping Up” Of the Falling Away

I wish we could say that none of our leaders in the SBC, conservative Bible
churches, or among the fundamentalists leaders who took over the SBC are in
the Bible warning about the Falling Away--in other words teachers and preach-
ers that are heaped up in pulpits and classes and on TV who will tell people what
they want to hear. Yes, read II Timothy 4:4,5 carefully. It states that church
members after they have come to the point of no longer enduring sound doc-
trine--and I hope you see we are already there--"out of their own desires" will
they heap up to themselves teachers with itching ears. They fill the pulpits
and classrooms with what they want, not what they are led by Christ and the
Spirit to call and appoint. This heaping up has two aspects: the heaping out of
the church, pulpit, and classrooms of teachers of sound doctrine; and the heap-
ing in of itching ears teachers who will speak what the congregation wants to
hear. Now, if you think your church or denomination is bankrupt of such heap-
ing in and heaping out in the heaping up process, then you are deceiving your-
self; for there is no way that any church or country can escape the inevitability
of the world wide Falling Away. Bottom line what this is saying is that your pas-
tor or Bible teachers are making contributions to the "heaping up" process, and
therefore of the Confusion in the Congregation. In fact like the children of
Israel who did not want to listen directly to God, your people prefer to listen
to their pastor who will most often tell them what they want to hear! And at
heart much of the confusion which we find in congregations of the Southern
Baptist Convention today, with all the fighting and continued warfare, come
from decades of pastors soothing the congregations with words like "patience,
it will all be okay". Fighting and a spirit of fighting has never been good; and
pastor James reminds us where fighting and warfare really come from, not
from some noble cause like the fundamentalists would have you believe, but
"from the spirit within us that lusteth to envy." (James 4:1-6) Where envy is
allowed to dominate, confusion is in the congregation; where the fighting spirit
has gained control confusion is in the congregation; and where you see the
heaping up of teachers with itching ears, you know that more confusion is on
the way!
There are several ways to look at the subject of this chapter, although what it is as an exegesis of the 12 admonitions of the Word of God remains constant. It helps to understand when we find enumerate certain summarizing themes in it: (1) it can be considered as 12 guidelines to promote the One-ness among all Christians of all times that Jesus prayed for in the Garden as He said to the Father, “I pray not for these {the 11 Apostles} alone but also for those who will believe because of their word” {that is us because we have believed through the recorded words of the Apostles in the Bible}; (2) it can be considered as 12 guidelines to follow in order to implement in your own life the challenge to become a Friend of Jesus, and indeed even as the book of Hebrews is a book on the Falling Away intended to present among Christians a challenge sufficient to prevent a departure from the only living God, yet even if you do not make this challenge the effort alone is worth it in the potential of the fruit that will remain in your life; and (3) in order to be faithful to the context of Hebrews 12 as a peak of challenge for the total context of Hebrews, where by far the subject has centered simultaneously around what Jesus has done for us as mediator of the New Testament and what we must do to hang on to those kingdom benefits, and in light of the dominant theme of the other than 12 guidelines subjects of Hebrews 12, definitely that of efforts to eliminate confusion on the Kingdom.

Where for years, like you will see in the book SOME SOUNDS OF SOUND FAITH, and in the chapter/message “Comfort in the Kingdom”, I have considered...
the dominate theme of Hebrews 12 (once again the non 12 guidelines content) as Comfort; and that theme is still there, a source of comfort and message of comfort for funerals and otherwise as the present awesome kingdom benefits that we have right now are enumerated and considered—those 7 benefits actually being much of the more positive subject of the previous chapters of Hebrews where caution is not negatively being expressed not to lose them—but you cannot overlook the realities of the spirit of Hebrews 12 as one of CONFUSION IN THE CONGREGATION, confusion caused by what is seen and unseen, by the smoke, by the fire, by the fear of touch. And only such a dominant theme, perhaps first one message on Comfort in the Kingdom benefits from Hebrews 12 and then a second message on Confusion in the Congregation then a last message/chapter after a look at the guidelines—by the way as we will do in this book as we wrap up the chapters—the last, that is, on Jesus' Bible teachings (in person and through the Apostles and the Spirit) about the Kingdom, which surely we must entitle "Comfort in the One-ness of the Kingdom".

I hope after 23 chapters on John 13-17, it is not a shock for you to consider that a church member can have all the kingdom benefits and then lose them. However, let us put it this way: you can spend 40 years as a church member THINKING you have all the kingdom benefits, then suddenly realize that you do not have them at all. We still have not learned the message told by Jesus of the surprise of many supposed kingdom members who at the end of time and the Judgment have the shock of a lifetime when Jesus says, “You have called me Lord, Lord, and talked about the mighty works that you have done for me, but I never knew you.” What a contrast between what was the mind of a church member their whole life in thinking how much through the church they were doing for Jesus, then suddenly realize that Jesus Himself, the founder and finisher of the faith never knew them at all.

The Bible is no dreamer on the Security of the Believer. Often and in many ways, though seldom heard from the pulpits today, the Bible is realistic about the fact that there are many tares and goats in the church. Well, really the tares and the goats are in the kingdom, they think, for while the local church is not insignificant, when it comes to salvation it is the kingdom and is important; and as you saw in the last chapter, membership in the assembly of the first-born written in heaven, is one of the kingdom benefits.

The Bible is full of implications that you can lose your salvation, alias your kingdom benefits. Just recollect a few.
1. “Work out your salvation with fear and trembling.”

2. “Beware brethren, lest there be in any of you an evil heart of unbelief in departing from the living God.”

If you depart from the living God, there is nothing: no salvation and no kingdom benefits. I think you remember from the last chapter that of the 7 kingdom benefits that we have come to, one of those is God Himself, the Judge of all. You can hardly retain the other 6 benefits if you lose one of them, and I would say the most important one of all, God Himself.

3. I think you would know how often all those rescued from Egyptian bondage were called “God's people” just like church members call themselves God’s people today, however you know how all over 20 years of age fell in the wilderness, fell away from the Promised Land and eternal rest (that is the message of the book of Hebrews). God is not intimidated by large numbers before Mount Sinai or on any large church roll; albeit it 7,000 or 13,000 or more. He wiped out in one day 23,000 in the wilderness who were called God's people because they rebelled against His leadership through Moses. They were also confused as to who had “holiness” status, and who had the ear of God.

4. Granted Jesus said to leave the “tares” and the “goats” in the kingdom alone, unless you might get some wheat or sheep by mistake; but the Bible is balanced in that it warns that you could be among the many tares or goats and not even know it. Much of the Bible, although ignored, deals with this reality of a loss of kingdom benefits. The present ignorance and indifference to the great Falling Away is not due to the lack of Scriptures to warn Christians on the subject, it is due to the discriminatory choice of Bible messages actually presented to the people on the part of church leaders. Who wants to admit that they are leaders in the Falling Away, which is indeed the case with all leaders of the local churches. (This would include those large organizations like the Roman Catholic Church, the Mormon Church, and the Church of Christ who fallaciously try to identify themselves with the one assembly of Christ written in heaven. Good trick, but will not work!)

5. Why do you think that Jesus talks so much about “fruit that remains” in John 13-17? Because Judas fell from kingdom benefits by transgression, and the possibility has always existed in the kingdom that some would be “fruit” only and some would be “fruit that remains”. That is a consistent reality of the Bible.
The 12 Guidelines of Hebrews 12

Why in Hebrews 12, this one chapter alone, there are 12 guidelines for you to practice in order to have assurance that you will not lose your own kingdom benefits. Surprise, Surprise, these 12 guidelines in order to retain benefits—say abide in your kingdom benefits of One-ness are also given in Hebrews 12. How have we passed so quickly from the challenge to be called by Jesus “Friend” to the somewhat more defensive battle for retention of kingdom benefits. Because in either case, whether at the end of time you are called by Jesus “Friend” or not, the challenge to try is worth it; and in the final analysis it is critical that you do not lose your own salvation. Beyond that we were lead there naturally as we struggle to more clearly identify from the Bible this source of One-ness that Jesus so often mentioned in John 13-17; and as we were pleasantly surprised in the last chapter as we started looking at Hebrews 12, how this One-ness comes from the kingdom benefits. {As we look at these 12 below from Paul and Hebrews 12, you can easily trace the source back to Jesus; and this will be pointed out with reminders of Jesus from John 13-17.}

1. Do not refuse to listen to “every word that comes out of the mouth of God”. {Jesus taught in John 13-17 that every word He taught came from God the Father, and He passed right up to the point they could bear every one of those words to friends and potential friends.) You might say, “I don’t refuse to listen I just don’t have time or take time to listen to or read all the words of the Bible.” Not to listen is your freedom of choice, but not to listen is the same as a refusal to the Great God of the Universe to listen to all the words that He has carefully placed in the Bible all a period of thousands of years just for your benefit. Here is the way it reads in Hebrews 12:25.

“See that you do not refuse Him who speaks. For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven....” (Hebrews 12:25)

Even as heaven is much higher than the earth, and God than man, so also is it more critical to listen to a message and messages from heaven than from earth. You mean God is going to hold me responsible for reading every word that has been written in the Bible, why that is 66 book of many chapters and pages. Well, bare minimum you see read over and over every word, chapter, and book of the New Testament; for you will find that in those 27 books, God in His master plan for the writing of the Bible carefully selected those approximately
250 quotes in the New Testament that would be quoted and explained. You see, what you get in the New Testament and centered around the quotes is the most important things for us Gentiles to know from the Old Testament. I like to call the New Testament, “The New Bible for the Gentiles and Jews”. {You cannot throw away your Old Testament, nor should you neglect it, but let it be your guide for reading and study of the Old Testament; and do not forget that sometimes a quote is explained in the Old Testament.}

2. If you turn your back on the voice from heaven, especially if you join other churchmembers in the Falling Away that Paul has written about primarily in the rest of Hebrews {see Hebrews 3:12}, also in the “time will come when they will not endure sound doctrine” of II Timothy 4:3,4, then there will be no escape for you when there is the Great Shaking and Destruction of both heaven and earth. {Those who fall away are the fruit that does not remain of John 13-17, the non-Friends like Judas Iscariot who “fell by transgression”, and the branches that have lost their mooring to the great Vine of Jesus.}

“For if they did not escape who refused Him who spoke on earth, much more shall we not escape if we turn away from Him who speaks from heaven.” (Hebrews 12:25b)

Never forget, and that has been a point of labor in Hebrews by Paul up to this point, that all of God's people that came out of Egypt; everyone of them above the age of twenty in spite of seeing the works of God for 40 years fell in the wilderness by the judgment of God, and further more Paul has stated in Hebrews previously that they also fell from eternal rest. Escape the voice now, and not escape the judgment later.

3. Let us have grace, abide in and count on the grace of God. {This grace is available with the abiding of John 13-17. It is the branch staying attached to the Vine of Jesus and God.}

“Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and Godly fear. For our God is a consuming fire.” (Hebrews 12:28,29)

You know about the “God is love” of the Bible, do you know the God of the Bible Who is a “consuming fire”? It is the same God; however sometimes like J.B. Phillips wrote, “Our God is Too Small”, so that in our mind God is only love and not the judgement of a consuming fire. Do not be deceived whereas before as the
time of the Flood, God destroyed all peoples on the earth with water, in God’s plan for the next destruction of not only the earth but also the heavens, is the destruction by fire as even Peter says, “the elements melt with a fervent heat”.

We will come to more on the “grace” guidelines in Guideline #11 from Hebrews 12:15 where the short and terse guidelines from the Word is “looking carefully lest anyone fall short of the grace of God.” You can fall short of the grace which God has provided for salvation from such judgment and destruction. However we notice that the grace guideline above is really to serve God in an acceptable manner.

4. Serve God in an acceptable manner {acceptable to God of course as defined in the every word He has spoken and had written in the Bible}. That acceptable manner of service entails two attitudes: (1) the attitude of reverence for God {truly without respect for God there is nothing, no grace and no service; and truly the lack of respect for God is shown often in the taking of His name in vain; and (2) the attitude of Godly fear. And just when you thought there was a complete absence of fear in the Christian life; no, there is a “Godly fear” or respect for what God can and will inevitably do. Granted “perfect love” as John says in the little epistle, “casts out fear”; but if you have perfect love then you will also have perfect Godly respect and reverence like the Apostle John had. {Of John 13-17 this is part of the works that can run to the total spectrum of from “greater works than Jesus” to “it is nothing”.

5. Lay aside every sin and weight that slows you down. {The pruning of God and Jesus of John 13-17, sometimes called chastisement, works to also eliminate these sins and weights. It is amazing that the Gospel of Prosperity works to eliminate any chastisement, the only way of pruning by God to bring more fruit and fruit that remains in the Christian life!}

6. Run the race with endurance set before you by Jesus to be a believer, more than a believer with the potential to be called a Friends, and above to be fruit that remains, fruit that has retained the kingdom benefits of One-ness. These calls of faith, and one of the cloud of witnesses that watch us from heaven, is not a short dash but a marathon grueling endurance race. {Surely the endurance of Paul and Hebrews 12 would be comparable to abiding, or a branch that remains attached to the vine, or the fruit that remains of John 13-17.}
7. Keep the eyes focused on Jesus more than the mountains of obstacles, and those mountains will dissolve in your mind as no longer massive, say more like mole hills. After all, Jesus Himself as the author and finisher of the faith is our prime example not so fallen church members or church members that we know about who stumble constantly while active in a local church. Jesus endured the cross and all the shame of persecution, and even the lifetime of rejection, because of the "joy" that was set before Him of the achievement of salvation, and of status back up there on the throne with God the Father. \textit{(Jesus mentions joy in John 13-17, a full joy that you can have if you only ask in faith; and recall how that prayer of faith relates to prayers for the work of fruit that remains.)}

8. Avoid becoming weary and discouraged in your souls \{yes, it is injustice and unjust\} as you face the same hostility of sinners that Jesus faced.

“For consider him who endured such hostility from sinners against Himself, lest you become weary and discouraged in your souls.” \textit{(Hebrews 12:3)}

That is bone weary discouragement leading to weariness in the soul. That is deep discouragement, right down at the heart where you live. \{And you know how much time Jesus spent in the Garden telling Friends how they would suffer indifference and persecution the more they worked, and just like He did.\} Jesus taught in John 13-17 that Friends are no better than the Master, for even as they have persecuted Jesus they will also persecute you.

“Remember the word that I said to you \{another word and words that Jesus received from the Father to pass on to Friends then and now, alias the One-ness\}, 'A servant is not greater than his master.' If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” \textit{(John 15:20)}

And once again the persecution of Jesus, the same kind of persecution we will receive if we “live godly in Christ Jesus”, is a reaction against the message of the word. It is indifference, ignoring, and downright hostility; and although the suffering unto bloodshed that Paul mentions in Hebrews 12 that we have not yet suffered (12:4) can not happen in the US--it can and does happen in other countries--you will find as the Falling Away progresses to its height that the indifferent and “intolerance toward sound doctrine” of II Timothy 4:3,4 will increase under the disguise of wolves in sheep clothing and with numerous excuses centered around things like political correctness, social conformity, and the toler-
ance and majority of the American Democratic Faith. There will come a point when even those who call themselves God's people, especially when they see fruit that remains in your life that they did not put there and can not control, will ignore and taunt you like God's people outside the Temple did to Jeremiah. You have the choice to either "live godly in Christ Jesus" and suffer some persecution, or just to live in Christ Jesus without persecution and definitely without the status of Friends, perhaps also without fruit that remains.

**Chastisement**

9. We have a major problem today with this ninth guideline (**Hebrews 12:5-11**, one of the longest parts of Hebrews 12 on chastening) in that over 61% of American Christians believe in the Gospel of Prosperity. Such a belief where believers are assured of material prosperity, even gifts of money when they plant seeds in certain ministries, and also health--I guess you could call it the false gospel of health and wealth, even comfort and worldly security--automatically eliminates the attitude among these same believers of inevitable chastisement. Well, let me put it this way: would chastening or pruning by God be called by you a "good thing" or a "bad thing". If you did not recognize it as from God, it would be called bad. Okay, now would the promises of wealth and health from the Gospel of Prosperity be called a good thing or a bad thing. Well, once again if it were recognized as from God, it would be a good thing. If it were recognized as from Satan, who is the only supernatural power that promises these things, then it would be bad. I guess the extent to which we are willing to practice the Gospel of Jesus with Pruning or Chastisement versus the Gospel of Prosperity, depends on the extent to which we recognize that God promises to chastise us for the purpose of righteousness, and other reasons, like an earthly Father chastises us to make sure we are raised correctly. I hope you realize from this discussion on chastisement that if any fruit comes of your faith, God is going to prune or chastise you; and if no fruit comes from your faith like when you are diverted by the Gospel of Prosperity, "the cares of this world", "the deceitfulness of riches", and "other things", then God will inevitable, according to Jesus and the Bible, cast you off! These are the only two options: the good news is that you will be pruned if initial fruit comes after belief, the bad news is that without any fruit you will be cast off. \{Read John 13-17.\}

"My son (or daughter, once again the Bible is generic), do not despise the chastening of the LORD..." (**Hebrews 12:5** and **Proverbs 3:11,12**
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(1). The Gospel of Prosperity of health and wealth despises the chastening of
the LORD God the Father.
The basic message of the Gospel of Prosperity will be that good things will happen to you such as large and sudden chunks of money or sudden healing from poor
health to excellent health. When some bad things, like during the chastening of
the Lord is happening in a life or as Jesus put it the branch on the vine is being
painfully pruned, then over 61% of American Christians would say this chastised
person does not have faith. “If he had faith, good things would happen", they
say; and this is opposite of what God’s Word guarantees for His own sons. Even
as Paul said that a curse rests on the head of any that teach and preach, or
present, another Gospel of a different kind from the Gospel originally delivered,
and that such a person have a curse on their head, so resting on the heads of
presenters of the Gospel of Prosperity is a curse. I’m sure that if the curse was
a sell out to Satan as prince of the world, the only one who in the first place is
willing to immediately grant all the things in the world; then like with Daniel
Webster and the Devil, the sold out would be a curse!
(2). If you believe the Gospel of Prosperity you will naturally be discouraged
when God rebukes you through non-prosperity, non-health, or other acts of God
in your life.
(3). If God does not love you and your Gospel of Prosperity, another gospel of
a different kind from that which was delivered by the Apostle Paul and which
places a curse on all practitioners and believers of the Gospel of Prosperity, then
God will not find ways and circumstances to chastise you. {Don’t you see that
where the Gospel of Prosperity is headed is to make heroes out of all those
believers who do not have difficult circumstances, also discouraging those
who weekly experience difficult circumstances?}
(4). God scourges in many ways and circumstances (12:6b), remember the
pruning of John 13-17, every son whom He has truly received as His on, eliminating all the false or bastard sons who have found a way to smoothly sail past
scourgings.
(5). Now your part is to endure the chastening gracefully (12:7) like a son to
a Father where chastisement for your benefit is natural, not complaining about
your health and money if you have already committed this care to God in prayer
and He has not chosen to change it. {The nice factor of the scripture “humble
yourself under the mighty hand of God that He may exalt you in due time,

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casting all your care upon Him because He cares for you" is that God will either change the “care”, give you the grace to accept it, or cause it as a mountain in your own mind to disappear as a mole hill.}

(6). All believers automatically become participants (12:8) in the chastening process, and if you do not find some chastening in your life, especially because you have been overcome with the cares of this world, the deceitfulness of riches and other things like the Gospel of Prosperity promotes \{what the Gospel of Prosperity really promotes is the good American life of mammon\}, then you are an illegitimate son, not a real son. Does this say that believers in the Gospel of Prosperity can not be real sons? That they are illegitimate sons of God? Yes. And that is partly where the curse rests on your head of another Gospel, that with that other gospel can not come the security of salvation and Sonship.

(7). When God corrects you through setbacks and other circumstances, your response should not be to write Dr. Peter Popoff or some other TV evangelist for a blessing, but to go directly to God with “RESPECT” as you would a natural father after you have overcome the temporal smarting over chastisement. (12:9) Respect the “Father of \{human\} spirits”, born again, and LIVE!

(8). You will not like any temptation be chastised more than you can bear, only temporarily and for short periods of time to get certain fruitful results from your life, and never beyond what is common to man and natural; and if you want the “profit” \{listen believers and preachers of the Gospel of Prosperity for what kind of PROFIT this is in Hebrews 12:10\}, it is the profit of all profits and no way to be related to material or health prosperity; for it is the profit of holiness. Next time your minister \{on TV or otherwise\} offers you the benefits of the Gospel of Prosperity Profit, then ask him if you have the nerve to send you some holiness of God. “Only God can do that”, you say. Yes, and only God Himself can provide you the real Profit.

“...but He for our profit, that we may be partakers of His holiness.” (Hebrews 12:10)

(9) Patiently endure during chastening rather than writing a TV evangelist for some Gospel of Prosperity as it is only for a little time; and more so as you train yourself for chastening and fruit that remains of the kind of “peaceable fruit of righteousness” (Hebrews 12:11)
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The Guidelines Get Better and More Encouraging as we Wrap up the last four.

9. Strengthen your hands that are hanging down and your feeble knees that buckle. (12:12).

The elderly certainly know of hands, worn and aching, that need to be strengthened; yes, also feeble knees that tend to buckle under a load. The young know it also when they try to lift too much or run too much and long. And never forget that with these 12 guidelines we are after practical ways to avoid the Falling Away. It is inevitable for most churches and most Christians, but it is not inevitable for every individual of the category of “fruit that remains”. In this day and time when we try to separate even in our churches the youth from the seniors, to the detriment of both as if there was one different Bible and gospel for each, surely you must appreciate a challenge like this to young and old for strength in hands and arms, strength in feeble knees and burdened legs. There is physical as well as spiritual strength here even as in the famous passage of Isaiah 40:29-31.

“He gives power to the weak, and to those who have no might He increases strength. Even the youths shall faint and be weary, and the young men shall utterly fall (this stumbling from faintness and weariness to what the challenge can prevent, definitely this falling away, so how do we rise up to the challenge to overcome the falling away?). But those that wait on the LORD (by waiting on the Lord God, and what does that remind you of but the abiding in the Lord Jesus Christ) shall renew their strength (well, that is what Paul is talking about, a renewal of strength in the inner man that flows all the way out to the tips of the hands and all the way down to the feeble knees); They shall mount up with wings like eagles (a vast uplifting of the energy level), they shall run and not be weary (imagine the strength added to the feeble knees that permits running without weariness), they shall walk and not faint.”

Paul versed and steeped in Old Testament encouragements, simply writes as courage for you to keep going as those about you in your churches and Christian fellowships stumble and fall, “strengthen the hands which hang down, and the feeble knees.” (Hebrews 12:12)

10. Select or chose straight paths for your feet (12:13).
Do not be the cause of stumbling in your own life by going off on tangents or diversions, or by choosing paths that lead you through all the mud puddles in order to be a martyr. You can not be healed this way. With wrong paths you can find permanent lameness in what has only been dislocated, so that the latter situation is worse than the former.

“...and make straight paths for your feet, so that what is lame may not be dislocated, but rather healed.” (Hebrews 12:13)

Sure God heals, and God has always healed. When Jesus came preaching, teaching, and healing--then explain that He was doing is what He saw the Father doing in the pre A.D. Aeons of eternity--Jesus was saying among other things that He saw the Father healing people for thousands of years before A.D. However, if you go after foolish things like Dr. Peter Popoff’s holy water for healing, or after other charlatans of the gospel of prosperity, you may completely dislocate what has only been lame. Go to the source of healing for healing, God and Jesus Christ; never forgetting that preventive medicine and faith healing are better than corrective, praying “give us this day our daily healing as well as this day our daily bread.” And the prayer of faith will heal the sick and lame.

11. Pursue peace with all people, and holiness (12:14). There are two good occupations of time and effort in straight paths.

Even as the purpose of God’s “pruning” or “chastisement” is to promote more holiness in your life, so should you work consistent with the purpose of God in your life by pursing holiness and peace.

“Pursue peace with all people and holiness, without which no one will see the Lord.” (Hebrews 12:14)

It is literally true that only the “pure in heart” will see God--of course that is a purity of heart made so by the 9 month new birth and sanctified with further development (sometimes called abiding) in Christlikeness until we will “come to see Him (Jesus) as He is”, then be like Him, at the Second Coming. The Apostle Peter added to the Apostle Paul that the pursuit of peace and the running after peace promotes a good and long life!
12. For just one little morsel of the bread of the Gospel of Wealth, do not
give up your birthright as a son of God, then later strive to repent without
success (12:16,17) like Esau of the Old Testament did!

Difficult to understand, yes; but even after you have done everything you know
to make a good living for yourself and your family, there will be one thing lacking
if you leave out the supplement to the living by bread “alone”—that is, “man is not
to live by bread ALONE, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of
God”: to making a living, must be added a seeking after “the kingdom of God and
His righteousness,” the addition to daily bread of “every word that proceeds out
of the mouth of God.” It is a challenge for each Christian to find the meaning in
life and implement in life of “seek first the kingdom of God and His righteous-
ness, and all these things will be added unto you”. Reading and study of the con-
text of this quote of the Sermon on the Mount from Jesus and from Matthew
6:19-34. When you have done what Jesus taught here, like Paul reinforced
above, you will have treasures in heaven more than earth; the focus of your eye-
sight will be good and you will be full of light; you will serve the Master Jesus and
God with loyalty; you will not fret and worry every day about material things; and
you will find confidence that God can and will “add” all these things to you. Hav-
ing done all this, and standing, you will have some measure of confidence that you
are a Friend of Jesus ready to accept all the blessings of such status here on
earth and the things of eternity which “eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, nor has
it entered into the heart of man” the magnitude and realities of which God has
prepared for those who love Him.
Jerry McMichael hopes this brief biographical sketch will meet the request of his second daughter, Nike, for a life review for his grandsons. Married for 50 years to Emma Ann Steelman Phelps McMichael {as he calls her), they raised four children and now have six balanced grandchildren, as he says, three granddaughters and three grandsons. The two meet while they were both members of the Bellevue Baptist Church of Memphis, Tennessee during the pastorate of Dr. R. G. Lee, former President of the Southern Baptist Convention and preacher of the famous sermon "PayDay Some-Day". Jerry maintains that if we had retained such SBC leadership as Lee, like Carroll and Truett before him, there would never have been the damaging split in the SBC that created at least two other denominations, promoted warfare between fundamentalists and the moderates who more refused to fight then lost; and although the fundamentalists, who left the Convention approximately 1916 in order to form Bible Baptists churches, have won the political battle, the warfare goes on.} When they met at Bellevue, Ann was in nurses training at Baptist Memorial Hospital and Jerry was in training in Navy Air Electronics school at Millington. Dr. Lee performed the wedding ceremony for Jerry and Ann, the previous day with deacons and Ralph McIntyre, the associate pastor, examined Jerry for a license to preach and the next day licensed him. By the way Jerry was ordained to preach by First Baptist Church of Hot Springs, Arkansas while he was pastor of Walnut Valley Baptist Church outside of Hot Springs and also of Plum Bayou Baptist Church of Pine Bluff, Arkansas. Jerry likes to describe how each one of his children are unique in that Elizabeth Ann, the oldest, is the brain child; Nike {Eunice Ann} is the social bug; Jerri is the artistic wizard with extensive practical kills; and Jimmy is the electro-mechanical wizard. Although it is a little early to do such for the grandchildren, it is obvious the oldest, Bryony Dawn, as a somewhat recent graduate of Texas Tech and a member of the band for 4 years with background in the Lubbock Youth Concerts, and presently as an assistant band director has a perchance for music. It is likewise obvious that the son of Jerri Ann Westbrook, Quincy Westbrook, has a talent for computers as he received out of high school a full scholarship to Weatherford College.

You would have to summarize the career of Jerry as preacher, Engineer, and teacher as for 10 years he taught at Eastern New Mexico University, Lee College, and at INTELLEC in Bourmedes, Algeria; since he has retirements as a Flight Test Engineer and Principal Systems Engineer respectively from Lockheed-Martin {General Dynamics Fort Worth} and Raytheon Missiles, primarily on the F-16 at GD and Interceptor Missiles at Raytheon; and since he has pastored or interim pastored over 16 Baptist and interdenominational churches in New Mexico, Maryland, Texas, and Arkansas.

A friend called Jerry an adventurer since he has traveled and worked extensively at interesting jobs in such countries as Saudi Arabia, Thailand, Algeria, Belgium, Holland, and Denmark as well as in the US. Like he says, where the F-16 went, he was sent, most of the travels were work related for General Dynamics, although it was teaching related in Saudi Arabia and Algeria. Jerry jokes that he never paid to travel until more recently when he went to Cozumel for Scuba diving. He also enjoys flying, at work or for pleasure, and has been a Private Pilot since 1968.

He served in Naval Aviation in Argentia, Newfoundland and Patuxent River Naval Air Station for 4 years working the way up to Aviation Electronics Technician First Class Petty Officer. (See photos on back cover, courtesy of John Quinn.) As a member of a flight crew of VW-15 an AEW {Air Early Warning} squadron of super-constellations who during the cold war kept two planes airborne and on station between Newfoundland and the Azores 24 hours a day. {This is one reason that 9-11 frustrates Jerry so much as there were no attacks on the East Coast during their watch.} With a total of 3 squadrons rotating between Pax River and Argentia, these flight crews of approximately 18 members kept one plane going down at approximately 6,000 feet and one coming back at approximately 9,000. Jerry says sometimes they would come out, sweep the snow and ice off the wings, and never saw the wing tips for 13 hours. Since in those days navigation was through a top port hole with a sextant and the stars, and when no stars were visible, the navigator near the end of the flight would ask Jerry to tilt the radar antenna down to find land.

Jerry earned a B.S. in physics and math {always with emphasis on electronics} from Eastern New Mexico University in 1965, at the same time accumulating over 50 hours of Bible from Quachita Baptist, Baylor, and Southwestern Seminary. Always classified as an Engineer except when teaching, he has since retired from Lockheed and Edward Air Force Base, performed engineering contract work for Bell in Quebec Canada {flight test on Bell helicopters flying the left seat}, flight test for the Navy in Carrier Suitable at Pax River Maryland on the Viking and aboard the Harry S. Truman testing the automatic carrier landing system, and flight test of the C-130J at Marietta, Georgia. More recently he has worked the Future Combat System for Rockwell Collins. Likewise he continues to work the publication of Bible books and other facets of evangelism with SunGrist_Bible. Most of you are familiar with him either from his ministry or from the website www.biblecombibleman.com.