

*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

Friends of Jesus

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 fundamentalist 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

sary 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 Pergamos, 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 challenge 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 this 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. To ignore the Falling Away is to ignore the Second Coming!

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 “fundamentalists” 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".}

NOTES to Assist in Understanding:

1. Where you see "fundamentalists"--which was the name for the Bible Baptists before they took control of the Southern Baptist Convention--you can think of "traditionalists"; for this sect of Baptists consider the traditions of their community churches and denominations more important than to be a Christian. If their priority for dating the beginning of the traditions were the New Testament times of the Bible, it would be the same as the conservatives; however they date more at the beginning of the Bible Baptists, the same time Bible Baptists first split from the SBC after the beginning of the twentieth century. It is difficult now to distinguish them from real Southern Baptists since they have taken control and gone underground with cover-up on their fighting attitude; yet 3 detectable attitudes sometimes leak through their cover-ups: (1) the attitude condemned in I Corinthians 14:36, alias "the Bible came to you only or came out of your fundamentalist group" {their eschatology did come out of their group by way of Scofield and Darby}; (2) an extremely reactionary, almost violent, defence of the millennium as if salvation depended on it; and (3) a harsh lawyer of judge-like demeanor, the opposite of the grace and graciousness attitude of Christ and the Apostle John, one that borders on being scary!
2. The ASPI interpretation of the Bible of II Peter 1:20,21, comparable to the best of hermeneutics from Bernard Ramm {fundamentalists will chose Rimmer as one of their elect group}, is really a matter of letting the Bible itself establish the rules for the understanding of the Bible such as understanding also comes by grace {and searching and seeking}, not to be coerced by power and status. What you will find done in this book is a practice largely unlearned by fundamentalists, where the explanations of the OT quotes in the NT are used as God-given guidelines for Bible understanding and doctrines.
3. While lately many institutions of American society have slightly opened the veil of their cover-ups to the American public, mainly because it became profitable {see the books on NATIONAL "DEN OF THIEVES" and HIDEOUT FOR BAD HABITS available online at <http://biblecombibleman.com> }, churches and denominations have not done so; being far more than reluctant to admit the cover-ups of the bad habits of church members that are condemned item by item and attitude by attitude in II Timothy 3:1-9, instead with a self-righteous demeanor even refusing the truth of II Timothy 3:5 that such church members should be ignored and shunned.

Friends of Jesus

Learn more about the LCC 5 volume set at http://www.biblecombibleman.com/LCC_5vol_set.html or order by email from SunGrist_Bible at sungrist@aol.com .

