

New Creation

A close-up photograph of a monarch butterfly with a transparent wing and a black and white striped pattern, perched on a green leaf. The butterfly is positioned next to its shed pupal skin, which is still attached to the leaf. The background is a soft, out-of-focus green.

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Bible - New International Version

Published by Grace Life Ministries, Box 3583, Courtenay, BC, Canada



The butterfly has been called a winged flower or flying gem because of its ethereal beauty. But a butterfly doesn't start out beautiful. A butterfly's life begins as an ugly caterpillar that hatches from an egg. These caterpillars have ravenous appetites and eat almost constantly, sometimes completely destroying crops and damaging trees and shrubs. After going through this destructive phase, the caterpillar is next wrapped in a cocoon which looks like a tomb or coffin. This phase lasts for several weeks during which it appears lifeless and dead. The third and final stage is when the cocoon breaks open and the beautiful butterfly emerges, spreading its wings to fly off into the heavens. It is a new creature, transformed and changed by the mystical process of metamorphosis.

The butterfly is a wonderful analogy of the Christian who, although beginning life as a condemned sinner who was dead in spirit and at enmity with God, subsequently becomes a new creation, with a new heart and mind that is alive and perfect with the divine nature of Christ Himself.

We therefore were buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that, just as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, we too may walk in newness of life... Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here! (Romans 6:4, 2 Corinthians 5:17)

The Grace Gospel

It is written: "No eye has seen, no ear has heard, no heart has imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1Corinthians 2:9)

The word 'grace' comes from the Greek word 'charis' which means kindness or favour. When applied to God, it refers to His kindness to those who do not deserve it. God's salvation comes to us because of His grace, or kindness.

"For by grace are you saved, through faith, and that not of yourselves." (Ephesians 2:8)

God's grace can be traced all the way back to the Garden of Eden to the very first humans, Adam and Eve, who represented their entire species. When they rebelled against God, after being tempted by the devil, they died spiritually and physically and that sentence of death passed on to all of mankind. There was a change inside their souls that filled them with guilt and fear. They could not even look at one another without shame. Their minds became filled with wicked thoughts and ideas and they ran to cover themselves, sewing fig leaves to hide their nakedness from one another. Their souls were now poisoned and they were destroyed spiritually. Before this, they had walked with God in the garden and enjoyed friendship with Him. Now they were afraid of God.

God is all-knowing so one might wonder why God permitted Adam and Eve to be tempted in the first place. Why did He allow His human creation to make a decision that would separate them from the God who loved them and wanted to have a relationship with them? The answer is that God could not do otherwise. If God wanted a true love relationship with Adam and Eve, it was absolutely necessary that they be given the choice to obey Him or not. Without choice they would have been without personality, individuality, or freedom. They would have resembled robots that can only function as programmed, unable to feel or express love. Nevertheless God had no intention of casting away humanity, so He did a strange thing. He made clothes from animal skins for Adam and Eve in order to cover their nakedness. He would have had to kill an animal in order to do that. It would have been the first animal sacrifice to cover the guilt of sin. Very likely, since later animal sacrifices were most often lambs, and because the coming Saviour would be described as a Lamb of God, the animal that God killed was a lamb.

And just as the divine Lamb would one day shed His blood and clothe humankind with His own righteousness, the earthly lamb sacrificed for Adam and Eve provided covering for their guilt and shame. Adam and Eve would likely have realised that God was showing mercy to them through this mysterious act. Perhaps they saw that God was, in effect, promising to cover mankind with righteousness and make him pure again sometime in the future. It's not certain how much Adam and Eve understood about God's plan for mankind, but His act of providing animal skins as covering clearly pointed to the greatest Sacrifice of all Who would one day do away with sin forever and bring great joy to His people. However, until the Saviour arrived, Adam and Eve, including all their descendants, were cut off from God and placed under a death sentence. The Holy God could no longer commune with them because their spirits were dead and their corrupted, mortal bodies were now unfit for heaven. This was how....

MAN BECAME A SINNER.

All have sinned and fall short of the glory of God. (Romans 3:23)

Sin is transgressing God's law and includes such things as lying, lust, cheating, deceit, anger, evil thoughts, immoral behaviour and more. The Bible states that those who sin will be judged according to the light they have from their conscience, and how they respond to it. The conscience is God's moral law written on the heart. Where people resist their conscience, they will receive condemnation. Where they obey it, they will be excused. But the Bible also says: *"There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good; not even one. Their throats are open graves; their tongues practice deceit. The poison of vipers is on their lips. Their mouths are full of cursing and bitterness. Their feet are swift to shed blood; ruin and misery mark their ways, and the way of peace they do not know. There is no fear of God before their eyes."* (Romans 3:10-18)

In order for humans to have a relationship with a perfectly holy God, they have to be as holy as He is, but as the scriptures say, man is a sinner and is not able to meet that standard.

Therefore you shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect. (Matthew 5:48)

Besides our conscience, God gave the 10 commandments to Moses to further explain what is required of mankind in order to be accepted by God. These commandments comprise the Law which must be obeyed in its entirety. Even one transgression nullifies the whole.

For whoever keeps the whole Law and yet stumbles at just one point is guilty of breaking all of it. (James 2:10)

Therefore no one will be declared righteous in God's sight by the works of the Law; rather, through the Law we become conscious of our sin. (Romans 3:20)

The Law silences every mouth and holds the entire world accountable to God. The Law will never declare anyone righteous in God's sight because everyone breaks the Law. This is a dilemma for humankind because....

GOD IS JUST and therefore MUST PUNISH SIN.

He says ...

I will by no means clear the guilty (Exodus 34:7)

The soul who sins shall die. (Ezekiel 18:4)

We have a problem; we have all sinned. The penalty for sin is death.
We need forgiveness so that we can have a right relationship with God.
Fortunately there is another side to God. He is also LOVE.

So, even though man cannot save himself.....

GOD IS MERCIFUL,
and
DOES NOT WANT TO PUNISH US.



This is because ...

God is love... (1 John 4:8)

and He says,

I have loved you with an everlasting love. (Jeremiah 31:3)

Clearly, from all the scriptures in both Old and New Testaments, we can see that God has always desired His people to be in a close, intimate relationship with Himself. He loved Adam and Eve and He loves us as well. He had a plan to rescue us right from the beginning. After Adam and Eve plunged humanity into destruction, God mercifully instituted animal sacrifices to be carried out in the Temple, to signify that judgement had been carried out against sin, albeit only on a temporary basis. Animal sacrifices did not do away with sin. They only covered sin until a better Sacrifice came along that would do away with sin forever. This Supreme Sacrifice for sin had been promised for millennia, beginning with the lamb's blood shed in Eden which foreshadowed the death that would one day come to the Redeemer of mankind. He would take sin away forever and offer salvation as a free gift of grace. This Redeemer was....

JESUS CHRIST

Who exactly is Jesus Christ?

The Bible tells us clearly that He is the infinite

GOD-MAN.

In the beginning was the Word (Jesus) ... and the Word (Jesus) was with God ... and the Word (Jesus) became flesh and dwelt among us. (John 1:1,14)

Jesus Christ came to earth and lived a sinless life, but while on earth...
He died on the cross to pay the penalty for our sins and rose from the grave to
purchase a place for us in heaven.



All we like sheep have gone astray, we have turned, every one, to his own way, and the Lord has laid on Him (Jesus) the iniquity of us all. (Isaiah 53:6)

For a short time, Jesus Christ was on earth like one of us. He was in the likeness of sinful flesh, although He never sinned and didn't have the dead sin nature of Adam. The curse of death did not apply to Him but Jesus willingly volunteered to represent sinful mankind, becoming the Second Adam. Being **human** was essential if the Second Adam was to take on Himself the penalty for sin. Being **sinless** was essential if the Second Adam was to escape death and resurrect into new life. This is what Jesus did for us. He became the New Creation, a new humanity that had never existed before. To become a part of this New Creation, it was necessary to be 'reborn' with Christ's life formed within us. Rebirth (also called regeneration) is moving from a dead spiritual state to one that is alive and eternal - from the old humanity (old man in Adam) to the new one (new man in Christ).

For you died, and your life is now hidden with Christ in God. When Christ, who is your life, appears, then you also will appear with him in glory. (Colossians 3:3-4)

The new creation did not inherit the sin disposition of Adam. It is an entirely new entity fashioned in the likeness of Jesus Christ, having His divine, eternal nature. As such, it is without sin.

For by one sacrifice He has made perfect forever those who are being made holy. (Hebrews 10:14)

The Law could rightfully condemn the old humanity because it was guilty of sin, but the Law can find nothing to condemn in the New Creation.

Therefore, there is now no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. (Romans 8:1)



You were taught to stop your old way of life. Your old way was full of deceitful desires. Now you are to be made new in the attitude of your minds. (Ephesians 4: 20-23)

Christ's righteousness is now our own. We have His nature, His heart, and His mind and are in complete unity with Him. It is impossible for us to be condemned for sin anymore. We have passed out of death into eternal life. We have come out of the Old Man and into the New, released out of bondage into freedom. We are no longer separated from God, but have been brought into close intimacy with Him. What Jesus has accomplished for us is truly beyond what we could ever have thought or imagined! This was the great gift Jesus came to bring to all of us, and it does not depend on human effort. Only God's gracious kindness can rescue humanity. God offers salvation as a gift, not as something earned by His creatures.

HEAVEN (Eternal Life with God) IS A FREE GIFT.

The Bible says... *the GIFT of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord.*

Romans 6:23

And because heaven is a gift like any other genuine gift.....

IT IS NOT EARNED or DESERVED

Therefore, no personal effort, no good works, no religious deeds can get you to heaven.

By grace you have been saved through faith, and that NOT OF YOURSELVES. It is the gift of God, NOT OF WORKS, lest any man should boast. (Ephesians 2:8,9)

SO HOW DO WE BECOME PART OF THE NEW CREATION?

The key is....

FAITH

Faith is the key that opens the door to heaven. Many people mistake two things for saving faith:



1. Just believing certain historical facts. The Bible says the devil believes in God, but that is not saving faith.
2. Just trusting God for temporary crises such as financial, family, or physical needs.

These are good, and we should trust Christ for these, but they are not saving faith!

SAVING FAITH is trusting in Jesus Christ alone for salvation.

Believe (trust) on the Lord Jesus Christ, and you will be saved. . . (Acts 16:31)

Faith is like a beggar getting a gift from a King. We don't deserve the gift of eternal life. But we can have it, if we have faith. It is our faith that causes us to know that the One who raised the Lord from the dead also raises us to live forever in His presence.

As for you, you were dead in your transgressions and sins, in which you used to live when you followed the ways of this world and of the ruler of the kingdom of the air, the spirit who is now at work in those who are disobedient. All of us also lived among them at one time, gratifying the cravings of our flesh and following its desires and thoughts. Like the rest, we were by nature deserving of wrath. But because of His great love for us, God, who is rich in mercy, made us alive with Christ even when we were dead in transgressions... For it is by grace you have been saved, through faith—and this is not from yourselves, it is the gift of God—not by works, so that no one can boast. (Ephesians 2:1-9)

God has reconciled us to Himself through Christ, no longer counting people's sins against them. Faith is simply taking God at His word, believing what He has said and done.

*And without faith it is impossible to please God, because anyone who comes to him must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who earnestly seek him.
(Hebrews 11:6)*



We are saved by faith and we walk by faith. The only works that have any eternal value are those born of faith. But this faith is not something we conjure up within ourselves or something we earn. It is given to us by God.

For by grace you have been saved through faith. And this is not your own doing; it is the gift of God, not a result of works, so that no one may boast. (Ephesians 2:8-9)

This is the message of the gospel that God wants the world to know. Right at this present time God is making His appeal, asking people today ...

WOULD YOU LIKE TO RECEIVE THE GIFT OF ETERNAL LIFE?

If the answer is 'yes', God is saying....

TRUST in what Jesus Christ has done for you on the cross, that He has died for YOU. If you are willing to be placed spiritually into Christ, it will mean that your old life (who you were before) will lie dead in the grave, and you will become a part of the New Creation, or New Humanity in Christ. Listen to what Jesus is saying....

Behold, I stand at the door and knock at the door of your life. If anyone hears My voice and opens the door, I will come in to him. (Revelation 3:20)

RECEIVE JESUS CHRIST INTO YOUR LIFE AS LORD

...with the heart one believes to righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made to salvation ... for whoever calls upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. (Romans 10: 10, 13)

He comes as Master and King. He made you. He bought you and He wants to take His rightful place in your life. Turn from your sins. Call on Him, asking Him for this gift right now.



It is essential that as new believers, we

Follow Him only.

God hates idolatry and has plainly told us that we are to worship no other gods, goddesses, nature spirits, nor any other creature or natural force. Those must be renounced and forsaken if we are to take Jesus Christ as Saviour. He wants to have our hearts entirely for Himself.

THOU SHALT HAVE NO OTHER GODS BEFORE ME. (Exodus 20:3-6)

The miracle transformation of new birth is not something you can see, because it is spiritual, but you will not be able to mistake the difference in your mind and heart once you have become born again. Like the amazing transformation of the caterpillar into a butterfly, you are now entirely new and different.

To show outwardly, in a symbolic way, what God has done on the inside, Christians are baptised with water. Baptism is an enactment of dying with Christ on the cross, and being resurrected to new life in Him. It testifies to the world that we have been placed into Christ's Body (also called the Church or Bride). Quite often a believer also takes on a new name to signify that he/she is now a new creation with a new identity.

As a new creature in Christ , you will now want to know more about your new life.

The first thing to realise is that you are....

DEAD TO THE LAW

The Bible describes Christians as having been baptised into the death of Christ Jesus, buried with Him, and then as Jesus was raised from the dead, we also were raised with Him so that we might live a new life.



Our old self was crucified with Jesus (i.e. put to death) so that it cannot now control our body (the flesh), although the body's fleshly urges still exist to trouble us at times. When our physical body dies, the flesh will then be eradicated. But even now we are to consider ourselves dead to sin but alive to God in Christ Jesus. That's why it's ridiculous for us to let sin reign in our physical body so that we obey its evil desires. Permitting sin to reign in our body is 'living in the flesh' and before we were saved, we could live in no other way. Our sin nature enslaved us. However now, as born again believers, we surrender every part of our being to Jesus. Sin is no longer our master. Also, we are not under the Law anymore, which is where sin gets its power. No Law. No condemnation. No shame. And no enslavement to sin.

The Law only has authority over someone for as long as that person lives. Take for example how a married woman is bound to her husband by law as long as he is alive. However if her husband dies, she is released from the law that binds her to him. If she has sexual relations with another man while her husband is still alive, she is called an adulteress, but if her husband dies, she is released from that law and is not an adulteress if she marries another man. That's similar to what happens to us when we die to the Law through Christ's death on the cross. Using the analogy of the married woman, we were released from our former husband (the old man) and are now free to be married to another (Jesus, the New Man).

By dying to what once enslaved us, we have been released from the Law so that we now live in the new way of the Spirit, instead of the old way of the written code (Law).

This doesn't mean that the Law is sinful, though. The Law points us in the right direction (Christ as Saviour) and that makes it important and useful.

Before this faith came, we were held in custody under the Law, locked up until faith should be revealed. So the Law became our guardian to lead us to Christ, that we might be justified by faith. Now that faith has come, we are no longer under a guardian. (Galatians 3:23-25)

Without the Law, we would not have known what sin was. How would we know what coveting is if the Law's 10th commandment had not said, "*You shall not covet.*" As long as we didn't know it was wrong to covet, we felt no guilt when we did so, but when the commandment came, we found it impossible to keep from coveting. We realised how weak and sinful we were and we felt condemned by the Law. It stirred up guilt whenever we coveted and we had no power to stop doing it, even when we wanted to live differently. In fact, often we ended up doing the very things we wanted to get away from.



It was like a force living inside us, waging war against our mind and making us a prisoner of sin working inside us. What a wretched existence that was!! But thanks be to God, He rescued and delivered us through Jesus Christ our Lord! And because He did, we are absolutely free from any condemnation from God's Law.

NOT IN THE FLESH

Even though our old life (old man, old nature) was crucified with Jesus Christ on the cross and is no longer who we are, as long as we are still in our physical body, we will still have the sinful urges that used to operate in our old nature. These urges continue to work through our physical bodies - **if allowed**. However as Christians, we do NOT have a sin nature, and we are not IN the flesh. We have a NEW nature and we walk by the Spirit, not the flesh. The fleshly urges that still operate through the body can be overcome by our faith in who we are in Jesus. Our new identification with Christ (having His righteous nature) will provide the confidence and power to say 'no' to fleshly urges. This is why it is so important to realise by faith that we cannot be condemned because we are perfect in Christ and are free to live righteously (as all true believers desire to do). We have the life and divine nature of Christ and that perfect life cannot be condemned by the Law. Our will, mind, and conscience have been set free to follow the Holy Spirit so that we can live righteously without hindrance. We are now at peace with God. It is amazing what God has done for us! Once we were weak and sinful, but Jesus died for us, giving us the power to overcome sin and to live victoriously and righteously for Him.

INSEPARABLE FROM THE LOVE OF CHRIST

Before we became born again, we lived **in** the flesh, according to bodily appetites, with minds set on fleshly desires. Our minds were hostile to God, resulting in death, and we could not please God. Now, as Christians, we have minds governed by the Spirit, so we have life and peace. God is well pleased with us, and even though our physical bodies will die like everyone else's because of sin's effect, the Holy Spirit inside us has given us resurrection life and made us immortal. So since we are alive because of the Spirit, our only obligation is to live by the Spirit. As children of God, we can live without fear of condemnation or death. God is our loving 'Papa' and we are His heirs, even co-heirs with Jesus Christ. Whatever Jesus receives in glory, we do too.



Even though we will share in Christ's sufferings, they are nothing compared with the glory we have in Christ. We have the Spirit, who guarantees our redemption and divine adoption. Everything that happens to us in the meantime is used by God to work out for our best.

It is important to realise that our new reborn spirit is being conformed to the image of God's Son. As God's children, we bear a resemblance to our older Brother, Jesus. God predestined us to this, and those He predestined, He also called; those He called, He also justified; those He justified, He also glorified. Knowing all this, how can we doubt that God is for us? And if God is for us, who can be against us? He didn't spare his own Son, but gave Him up for us all. Since He did that, how can we ever doubt that He will not also graciously give us all things? Who can possibly accuse those whom God has chosen? Since He has justified us, who can condemn us? Absolutely no one. Who can separate us from the love of Christ? Can trouble, or hardship, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword do it? No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us. Neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers, neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, can separate us from the love of God that is in Christ Jesus our Lord.

CHOSEN BY GOD

Jesus said: *"No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws them, and I will raise them up at the last day. It is written in the Prophets: 'They will all be taught by God.' Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to Me."* (John 6:44-45)

Without the Holy Spirit's work in our hearts, we would never have received Jesus as our Saviour. All sinners are dead spiritually and have no desire to come to God on their own. An unbeliever's mind is darkened. He is actually an enemy of God, which is exactly what we were before coming to Christ. It requires the work of the Holy Spirit to draw a person to Christ. Romans 9:16 emphasises this: *It does not, therefore, depend on human desire or effort, but on God's mercy.* It cannot depend on a person's human desire or effort because the Bible says that no one is righteous, understands, or seeks after God. Nobody - not even one person - does good. All are worthless.

As it is written: "There is no one righteous, not even one; there is no one who understands; there is no one who seeks God. All have turned away, they have together become worthless; there is no one who does good, not even one." (Romans 3:10-12).



So unless God has mercy and changes the human heart, no one comes to the Lord on his own. Every saved person must be ‘drawn’ to Christ by the Holy Spirit.

Everyone who has heard the Father and learned from Him comes to Me. (John 6:45)

MEMBERS OF CHRIST’S BODY

Our hearts have been reborn. We are led by God’s Spirit who transforms us on the inside to be willingly obedient to the new, divine nature He has put within us. This new nature is like Christ’s. God has called together the peoples of the world to reflect His grace as the Church of Christ. We are all parts of Christ’s Body, and each member belongs to the others. It is in this community that God’s love is marvellously illustrated to the world. It is meant to showcase divine love, which is why we are called to be hospitable with the Lord’s people who are in need, to bless those who persecute us, rejoice with those who rejoice, and feel pity for those who mourn. God is pleased when we are willing to be with people of low position, and when we refuse to repay evil for evil. It is important to Him that we guard our reputation, always doing what is right in the eyes of everyone and trying to live in peace with everyone. If we are opposed or persecuted, God desires that we leave room for His wrath because only He can avenge. This can only be done in Christ by His grace.

Our part is to feed our enemy if he is hungry, and give him something to drink if he is thirsty. That will bring conviction, like burning coals, on his head. We are people who overcome evil with good, having only one debt - to love one another. Love fulfils the Law’s commandments, “you shall not commit adultery,” “you shall not murder,” “you shall not steal,” “you shall not covet.” In fact the entire Law is summed up in this one command: “Love your neighbour as yourself.” This is the *Law of Love* that characterises the Holy Spirit and energises the Christian’s heart. Because the Holy Spirit indwells the New Creation, He is the only Law we need. There is no need for an external Law of commandments.

But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the Law. (Galatians 5:18)

Now the Lord is the Spirit, and where the Spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom. (2 Corinthians 3:17)

It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. (Galatians 5:1)



But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things there is no law. (Galatians 5:23)

Now that we know our identity in Christ, there are some things we must be aware of,
such as

FALSE TEACHERS

Throughout history the gospel has been distorted and its message has been weakened. Misguided and self-deceived teachers have promoted a false gospel for centuries and the end result has been spiritual chaos in the Church. The apostle Paul said that if anyone (himself included) or even an angel, preached a false gospel, they were under God's curse. Those who rely on the works of the Law are under a curse, because scriptures say that if one doesn't do EVERYTHING written in the Law, he is condemned by God. The only One who was able to obey the Law perfectly was Jesus, because He is God and therefore perfectly righteous. By making us new creatures, Jesus has set us free from the Law, so we cannot let ourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery. If we place ourselves under the Law, Christ can have no value for us. Christ and the Law don't mix. It's one or the other.

For those who are in Christ, all that counts is faith expressing itself through love. Legalists try to tear us away from freedom in Christ so as to put us into bondage. They are like yeast spreading through a lump of dough. Their false teaching creeps into the Church until the whole congregation is thrown into confusion. Such agitators should be denounced and rejected as heretics, but instead they often condemn Christians who teach grace as being the heretics. Their favourite accusation is that teaching the grace gospel will lead to sinful living.

Obviously we as free people do not use our liberty to indulge the flesh. We serve one another humbly in love, fulfilling the Love Commandment to *"love your neighbour as yourself."* (Galatians 5:15) To bite and devour each other would be destructive, and it would be contrary to the Spirit. The Holy Spirit is opposed to the flesh and fights against it. But we, as Christians, are not IN the flesh and we are also not under the Law.

You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. (Romans 8:9)



*For sin shall no longer be your master, because you are not under the Law, but under grace.
(Romans 6:14)*

When describing the acts of the flesh, we mean sexual immorality, idolatry, witchcraft, hatred, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, envy, drunkenness, orgies, etc. Of course those who live like that will not inherit the kingdom of God. But Christians don't live in the flesh, even though they sometimes struggle against it. When the flesh rises up in our bodily members to tempt us to sin, we are not forced to obey it. The old nature, from which the flesh has its origins, has been crucified with Jesus on the cross. It was a once and for all execution. By killing off the old nature of the old humanity, the flesh has lost its power over us. The root of sin has been destroyed. Our faith in what Jesus accomplished on the cross effectually defangs the flesh, stripping it of its power over our lives.

So don't be deceived by demonic tricks from false teachers to enslave you by adding the Law or manmade rules to the gospel as requirements for salvation or Christian living. The Law has been fulfilled in Christ and we are free from its bondage. Do not let anyone judge you by what you eat or drink, or with religious rules and traditions. These kinds of people pretend to be humble and claim they have had revelations of angels, or special prophecies that give them greater authority than the apostles themselves! They do this in order to entrap and seduce others into accepting their authority and influence. Their unspiritual minds are full of arrogant ideas, but they have no connection with Jesus Christ. True believers don't submit to worldly rules that forbid this or that. These rules are merely based on human commands and teachings. Such regulations might appear to be wise, but they cannot make anyone holy.

Some of these false teachers in the Church who oppose God's grace may not even be true Christians. A person's actions reveal whether one is truly a believer in Christ. If a person lives to please his flesh, it reveals the true state of his heart. Living by the flesh will only bring destruction. If a person lives to please the Spirit, he will reap eternal life from the Spirit. We were chosen in Christ for this, to be holy and blameless in His sight. God, our Father, has blessed us in the heavenly realms with every spiritual blessing in Christ for this very reason. He adopted us as His children in accordance with His pleasure and will. Our amazing God has given us this glorious grace through His Beloved Son, whose blood has redeemed us and through whom we have received forgiveness of sins. All this, because God has predestined us from eternity and desired to pour out His love on us lavishly by giving us a new nature, a new Master, and a new home.



WHERE IS HOME?

We have been saved by grace and are now alive with Christ because of God's great love for us and because He is rich in mercy. He has raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus.

This is not just symbolic, but an actual spiritual reality. Christ is now in heaven seated at the right hand of His Father, and because we are in Christ and one with Him, we are there too.

It is impossible to be lifted any higher than this.

And God raised us up with Christ and seated us with Him in the heavenly realms in Christ Jesus. (Ephesians 2:6)

Ruling with Christ means...

WARRING AGAINST SIN AND UNRIGHTEOUSNESS

God saved us so that throughout the coming ages He might show the amazing riches of His grace, expressed in His kindness to us. That's what grace actually is - God's kindness. We are God's handiwork, created in Christ Jesus to do good works, which God prepared in advance for us to do, and these are faith works, not those arising out of human effort. We are now God's people and also members of His household, built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, with Christ Jesus Himself as the Chief Cornerstone. In Christ we are building blocks joined together as the holy temple in which God dwells by his Holy Spirit. There is one Body and one Spirit, one hope, one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, who is over all and through all and in all. He gave apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors and teachers (as gifts) to equip His people in the Church for Kingdom service on earth. Expansion of the kingdom happens through the spread of the gospel but there are enemies of the gospel who seek to diminish what Christ has done for mankind. We must be strong in the mighty power of the Lord when facing them. Our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, authorities, and powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. God has provided us with spiritual weaponry to battle them - heavenly armour that protects us when evil comes, enabling us to firmly stand our ground.



OUR SPIRITUAL ARMOUR

We have the **belt of truth** buckled around our waist. Jesus is “the way, the truth, and the life” so this symbol speaks of the protection Jesus’ words give us in the battle against the lies and deceptions of the enemy. Without understanding truth, we can be carried about by false doctrines and by the trickery of men.

We also have the **breastplate of righteousness**. This breastplate symbolises the righteousness Jesus Christ has given us, making us new creations in Him. As Christians we have a new identity and a divine nature that is free from condemnation and guilt. This protects us from the accusations of the enemy who seeks to destroy us by making us afraid of God and unsure of His love. *Knowing that we are perfect in Christ is essential to gain spiritual victory over sin and guilt.*

Our **feet are to be shod with the gospel** of God’s grace *which symbolises going out to reach the lost who have never heard of the salvation of Jesus Christ.* Wherever we go, we are to have a ready answer for those who ask us the reason for the hope within us. The Lord wishes to add many more to His Kingdom through the preaching of the Good News.

The **shield of faith** extinguishes all the flaming arrows of the evil one, protecting our hearts as we rest on the promises of God. *Our faith resists the tormenting doubts and fears that can attack the mind when facing difficult circumstances.*

The helmet of salvation symbolises the renewed mind which guards and protects our thought life and replaces false ideas and thoughts with the spiritual reality found in Jesus Christ. Understanding our salvation releases us into freedom. We are able to come to God with bold confidence in seeking answers to our prayers.

The **sword of the Spirit** is our offensive weapon with which we resist the enemy, cutting through his lies and turning aside his attacks. It symbolises the Word of God which has great authority to overcome any deception or oppression. *With God’s Word firmly anchored in our hearts, power is unleashed into our lives to overcome all obstacles. We can also pray with power in the Spirit, knowing that He hears us and delights to answer our petitions.*



Not only do we have the Holy Spirit to answer our prayers, but we have something else to aid us in spiritual battle.

We have God's

ANGELS

"See that you do not despise ~~one~~ of these little ones. For I tell you that in heaven their angels always see the face of my Father who is in heaven. (Matthew 18:10)

There are many examples of angelic ministry in the early Church.

Then the high priest rose up, and all those who were with him (which is the sect of the Sadducees), and they were filled with indignation, and laid their hands on the apostles and put them in the common prison. But at night an angel of the Lord opened the prison doors and brought them out, and said, "Go, stand in the temple and speak to the people all the words of this life." (Acts 5:17-20)

Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by him, and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off his hands. Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and from all the expectation of the Jewish people." (Acts 12:7-11)

Now an angel of the Lord spoke to Philip, saying, "Arise and go toward the south along the road which goes down from Jerusalem to Gaza." This is desert. So he arose and went. And behold, a man of Ethiopia, a eunuch of great authority under Candace the queen of the Ethiopians, who had charge of all her treasury, and had come to Jerusalem to worship, was returning. And sitting in his chariot, he was reading Isaiah the prophet. (Acts 8:26-28)



However even with our spiritual armour, the angels, and God's promises of provision and protection, we are not exempt from struggling in various.....

TRIALS

Trials are unpleasant and they will test our faith, but through them we learn to persevere and this leads to maturity. Besides, in the midst of difficulties and challenges, we have God's wisdom which He gives generously without finding fault, as long as we believe and do not doubt. But if we doubt, we are like a wave of the sea, blown and tossed around by the wind. Doubtters are double-minded. They have the mind of the flesh and do not receive anything from the Lord. But *those with faith have open doors to God's power and might.*

A double minded man is unstable in all his ways. (James 1:8)

The person with the Spirit makes judgments about all things, but such a person is not subject to merely human judgments, for, "Who has known the mind of the Lord so as to instruct him?" But we have the mind of Christ. (1 Corinthians 2:15)

One area in which our faith is often tested is in the area of finances. Some of us live in humble circumstances and this can bring hardships and temptations that the wealthy do not have to contend with. However, the poor should remember their high position in the Lord and glory in the fact that they are deeply loved by God. The rich, meanwhile, should remember that their wealth will pass away like a wild flower, wilting in the scorching heat of the sun. Riches are unpredictable and can easily fade away. But whether we are rich or poor by this world's standards, we can be encouraged by the fact that all who persevere under trial will receive the crown of life that the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

When trials come and we are tempted, it is never God tempting us. Our fleshly desires can entice us to desire wrong things so that we are led into sin. Sin always leads to death, but believers do not consistently live evil lives. They walk by the Spirit.

..if you live according to the flesh, you will die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the misdeeds of the body, you will live. (Romans 8:13)

*The mind governed by the flesh is death, but the mind governed by the Spirit is life and peace. The mind governed by the flesh is hostile to God; it does not submit to God's law, nor can it do so. Those who are **in** the realm of the flesh cannot please God. (Romans 8:6-8)*



You, however, are not in the realm of the flesh but are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God lives in you. And if anyone does not have the Spirit of Christ, they do not belong to Christ. But if Christ is in you, then even though your body is subject to death (because of sin's curse), the Spirit gives life because of righteousness. (Romans 8:9-10)

God may use trials and temptations to mature us, but He never lays snares for us, and He never acts as the tempter. Rather, God gives good and perfect gifts, all of which have come to us through Jesus Christ.

As Christians we have a high

HEAVENLY CALLING

As ambassadors of Jesus Christ our greatest desire is to have courage so that Christ will be honoured in our lives, even to the death. After all, to live is Christ and to die is gain. It's hard to choose which one is better. If we depart this life, we get to be with Jesus, but if we remain on earth, we get to preach the good news to the world. It's much better, of course, to be with Christ, but it's beneficial to other believers to encourage and uplift them in the Lord. Either way, we just want to boast in Jesus, and glorify His name. In fact everything else on earth means nothing compared to knowing Jesus Christ. Next to Him everything else has no value. All that matters is that we are in Christ and have His righteousness, which makes us completely blameless in His sight. We rejoice, forgetting what is behind and looking forward to all God has purposed for us. Now we focus on heaven where our citizenship resides. Heaven is where new creations in Christ are registered. We make up the Temple of Jesus Christ and our membership is in the family of God. The Father is our Papa and Jesus is our King, sending us on missions as ambassadors to the world, proclaiming the wonderful news of what Jesus has done for humanity. We tell people that Jesus created the world and it is for Him that all things exist, both in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities. Everything has been created through Him and for Him. He is before all things, and in Him all things hold together.

Jesus is supreme above everything else.



In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God. He was with God in the beginning. Through Him all things were made; without Him nothing was made that has been made. In Him was life, and that life was the light of all mankind... He was in the world, and though the world was made through Him, the world did not recognise Him. He came to that which was His own, but His own did not receive Him. Yet to all who did receive Him, to those who believed in His name, He gave the right to become children of God— children born not of natural descent, nor of human decision or a husband's will, but born of God. The Word became flesh and made His dwelling among us. We have seen His glory, the glory of the one and only Son, who came from the Father, full of grace and truth. (John 1:1-19)

Our heart is where Christ is, and we need to always remember that we have been raised with Christ and are seated at the right hand of God in the heavenly realms. We have died, and our life is now hidden with the glorified Christ. *We have taken off the old nature with its practices and we have put on the new nature.*

All we know about God, salvation, and the new creation is in the.....

WORD OF GOD

We believe God's Word, convinced that all Scripture is God-breathed. His Word is useful for teaching, rebuking, correcting and training in righteousness so that we may be equipped for every good work.

For everything that was written in the past was written to teach us, so that through the endurance taught in the Scriptures and the encouragement they provide we might have hope. (Romans 15:4)

Above all, you must understand that no prophecy of Scripture comes from the prophet's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever brought about through human initiative, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit. (2Peter 1:20-21)

For the word of God is alive and active. Sharper than any double-edged sword, it penetrates even to dividing soul and spirit, joints and marrow; it judges the thoughts and attitudes of the heart. (Hebrews 4:12)



DEEDS

Some might think that faith and deeds can exist independently of one another. While it is true that works can stand alone without being motivated by faith, the opposite is not possible. Faith without deeds is not real faith. Deeds actually illustrate faith's reality. Believing in Jesus Christ intellectually is not a definite sign that a person is a Christian. Even the demons believe in Christ's existence, but obviously that is not enough. Actions are required to show that our faith is true and that we are no longer part of the world.

Do not love the world or anything in the world. If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in them. For everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—comes not from the Father but from the world. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever. (1 John 2:15-17).

The person who chooses to be a friend of the world becomes an enemy of God. It's like spiritual adultery. Christians should be aware of this. Scripture says that God's Holy Spirit indwelling us jealously longs for communion with our recreated spirit. God wants us for Himself. He has chosen us in Christ to be His very own children, with hearts and minds focused on Him. Spiritually, He has taken us out of the world to dwell with Him in the heavenly realm.

The world is all about pride and self-advancement, two things God hates. He opposes the proud and shows favour to the humble, so it's important for us to submit ourselves to God and resist the temptations of the world and the devil. If we resist Satan, he will flee from us. If we come near to God, He will come near to us. This is why we purify our hearts from worldly obsessions and live with one goal in mind - to humble ourselves before the Lord so that He might lift us up.

PRAYER

When we are in trouble, we know we can pray. When we are happy, we can sing songs of praise. If we are sick, we can call for the elders of the church to pray and anoint us with oil in the name of the Lord. The prayer offered in faith will make us well and the Lord will raise us up.



Jesus said: Truly I tell you, my Father will give you whatever you ask in my name. Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.....John 16:23-24)

This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to His will, He hears us. And if we know that He hears us—whatever we ask—we know that we have what we asked of Him. (1John 5:14)

There are certain times when we may not get the answers we want to our prayers, such as in situations where we have brought sickness or misfortune upon ourselves.

At those times we may come under God's....

DISCIPLINE

“My son, do not regard lightly the discipline of the Lord, nor be weary when reproved by Him. For the Lord disciplines the one He loves, and chastises every son whom He receives.” It is for discipline that you have to endure. God is treating you as sons. For what son is there whom his father does not discipline? If you are left without discipline, in which all have participated, then you are illegitimate children and not sons. Besides this, we have had earthly fathers who disciplined us and we respected them. Shall we not much more be subject to the Father of spirits and live?

For they disciplined us for a short time as it seemed best to them, but He disciplines us for our good, that we may share His holiness. For the moment all discipline seems painful rather than pleasant, but later it yields the peaceful fruit of righteousness to those who have been trained by it. (Hebrews 12:4-11)

Christians being disciplined by God is not the same as God's judgement on the wicked.

“When we are judged. . . by the Lord, we are being disciplined so that we will not be finally condemned with the world” (1 Corinthians 11:32).

God uses discipline to correct and train us in righteousness. Because we all still struggle with the flesh, we periodically fall into sin and God encourages us to turn away (repent) from sin and draw nearer to Him.



The ultimate, final judgment for unbelievers will be eternal separation from God but Christians will never be condemned or lose their relationship with Him. When the apostle Paul used the term “judgement” to describe the discipline to be practiced in the Church, he was not referring to the kind of condemnation that unbelievers will experience. He used the term ‘judge’ in the sense of evaluation.

“What business is it of mine to judge those outside the church? Are you not to judge those inside?” (1 Corinthians 5:12).

This kind of ‘judgment’ exists in the house of God, but it is not the same as what those outside the Church will experience. The outcome for the ungodly sinner will be destruction and great suffering. But if, as Christians, we suffer on earth according to God’s purpose, we need only commit ourselves to Him and continue to do good. God will most assuredly provide us with all we need to live a godly life and to comfort us in our afflictions. He has already, through the knowledge of His Word and through His promises, given us a new divine nature, enabling us to escape the world’s corruption caused by evil desires. That’s why we make every effort to add to our faith goodness; and to goodness, knowledge; and to knowledge, self-control; and to self-control, perseverance; and to perseverance, godliness; and to godliness, mutual affection; and to mutual affection, love. As these qualities increase, they will make us effective and productive in our Christian walk. Living righteously will never allow us to stumble. Rather, by living in that way, we can be assured of a rich welcome into the eternal kingdom of our Lord Jesus Christ.

But what about someone who says that he is a believer but his actions indicate otherwise?

The Bible says that there are some in the Church who have forgotten that they have been cleansed from their past sins, and so may occasionally fall into sin, but if they live habitually in the flesh, they need to examine themselves to make sure they are indeed saved.

They may be.....

FALSE BELIEVERS

If a professing believer claims to be in the light but hates a brother or sister, its a sure sign that he is still in the darkness because love for the brethren is a characteristic of light. Love for the things of the world is another way to distinguish a true believer from a false one.



If anyone loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. Everything in the world—the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life—will one day fade into nothingness. It is useless to pursue wealth, possessions, power, and fame because they do not last. Materialism is a sign that a person is focused on things that belong to the darkness. The trappings of fame and fortune will never fulfil anyone, which is why we Christians set our eyes on Jesus and eternity. The world and its desires pass away, but whoever does the will of God lives forever and does not abandon the faith, thereby showing that he is a true believer in Christ. The ones who abandon their faith were never truly Christians in the first place. True believers have an anointing from the Holy Spirit, so we know the truth. Liars however deny the truth, saying that Jesus is not the Christ. No one who denies the Son has the Father, but whoever acknowledges the Son has the Father and is assured of eternal life.

Whoever does not honour the Son does not honour the Father, who sent him. (John 5:23)

So we need to watch out for those who try to lead us astray. We have the anointing we received from the Holy Spirit so consequently we do not need anyone to teach us. His anointing teaches us about all things. We know that Christ is righteous, and we know that everyone who does what is right has been born of Him. Loving one another proves that we have passed from death to life, while the one who does not love remains in death. Christ said that hatred is like murder, so anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and we know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him. Such a person is dead spiritually and does not have the love of God in him. We can know what love is by taking a look at Jesus who laid down His life for us. We also ought to lay down our lives for our brothers and sisters. For instance, if anyone has material possessions and sees a brother or sister in need but has no pity on them, the love of God obviously cannot be in that person. Love, if it's authentic, is not just with words but with actions too. If we live out the love inside our hearts, then we will have confidence before God. Our conscience will be clear and we will have the assurance that we will receive from God whatever we ask, because we keep His commands and do what pleases Him.

OVERCOMERS

We have the courage of Jesus Himself as we face dangers and opposition in the world. As new creations in Christ, fearfulness and timidity are foreign to our new natures.

“God has not given us a spirit of fear, but of power and of love and of a sound mind” (2 Timothy 1:7)



You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you than he who is in the world. (1John 4:4)

The way to overcome fear is to have complete trust in God, even in the darkest times. This trust comes from knowing that God is good and is always on our side, and this is why we love Him. Of course, loving the Father means loving His child as well. This is actually the Royal Command - to love God above all, and to love our neighbour as ourself. These two commands are not burdensome. The world may oppose us and present all sorts of challenges, but everyone born of God is an overcomer of the world. Christians live in this world, but we are not **of** the world. It is not our home and we are in fact ‘aliens’ on this earth. One day the world will be no more.

Jesus said: "If the world hates you, you know that it has hated Me before it hated you. (John 15:18-19)

"They are not of the world, even as I am not of the world. (John 17:16)

For our citizenship is in heaven, from which also we eagerly wait for a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ; (Philippians 3:20)

All these died in faith, without receiving the promises, but having seen them and having welcomed them from a distance, and having confessed that they were strangers and exiles on the earth. (Hebrews 11:13-16)

Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul. (1 Peter 2:11)

END TIMES

Revelation is called the ‘The Apocalypse of John’. ‘Apocalypse’ is a Greek word meaning the unveiling of things not known before and which needs a revelation to be understood. The Book of Revelation was written while the apostle John was imprisoned for his faith on the island of Patmos around 68 or 69 AD. His remarkable vision explained many marvellous things that would happen in the near future.



It was very important to the early Church because although the believers were already facing persecution, even greater trials awaited them. They would need added encouragement to comfort them as they faced the coming trials. The apostle John encouraged the believers by showing how the crisis they were in was not really the true picture. God was actually doing amazing things that the Christians couldn't see because it was happening in the spiritual realm. Revelation pulled back the curtain so that they could see the reality. This involved seeing Jesus as He now is, as King of kings and Lord of lords, seated with the Father in heaven in the full splendour of His divinity.

“I am the Alpha and the Omega,” says the Lord God, “who is, and who was, and who is to come, the Almighty.”

This statement is saying that the Son of God has always existed and always will exist. It refers to Christ, as God incarnate, existing from everlasting to everlasting. Isaiah described this aspect of God in several places in the Old Testament.

“I, the Lord, am the first, and with the last I am He” (Isaiah 41:4). “I am the first, and I am the last; and beside me there is no God” (Isaiah 44:6). “I am He; I am the first, I also am the last” (Isaiah 48:12).

Revelation is full of symbols and allegorical (symbolic) language, very similar to the language used by Jewish Old Testament prophets. For instance, when John saw Jesus in his vision, he describes Him as having the appearance of a man with hair as white as snow, eyes like blazing fire, and a face shining with the brilliance of the sun. But this is how the Old Testament prophet Daniel described God in a vision he saw in the sixth century BC.

As I looked, “thrones were set in place, and the Ancient of Days took His seat. His clothing was as white as snow; the hair of His head was white like wool. His throne was flaming with fire, and its wheels were all ablaze. A river of fire was flowing coming out from before Him. Thousands upon thousands attended Him; ten thousand times ten thousand stood before Him. The court was seated, and the books were opened. (Daniel 7)

In Daniel's account, the Ancient of Days has hair as white as wool. In Revelation, it is Jesus who has white hair, to indicate that He is divine and eternal. The apostle John was so stunned at seeing Jesus like this that he lost consciousness.



This is when Jesus touched him and encouraged him not to be afraid, saying: *“Do not be afraid. I am the First and the Last. I am the Living One; I was dead, and now look, I am alive for ever and ever! And I hold the keys of death and Hades.”*

Jesus instructed John to write down all he saw and to pass His message along to the churches in Asia, most of which had problems. Sometimes the believers were deceived by false doctrine with the result that the gospel was grossly distorted. The apostles spent much of their time trying to correct the errors spreading throughout the churches, and in this final epistle by John, Jesus gives a direct rebuke to His Church (also called His Bride). However in every case where the Church was rebuked for her shortcomings, Jesus also gave reassuring promises of His love and grace to those who remained true to Him. He promised them the right to eat from the tree of life in the paradise of God; they would receive a victor’s crown; be immune from the second death; receive hidden manna; have authority over the nations; be given the morning star; have the privilege of walking with Him, dressed in white to show they were worthy; have Jesus acknowledge them before the Father and the angels; their names would never be blotted out from the Book of Life; a crown of victory would be theirs; they would be raised up as a pillar in the temple of God; they would receive a white stone with a secret name on it; Christ’s new name would be written on them along with the name of the city of God, the new Jerusalem; and amazingly, they would have the right to sit with Jesus on His throne! All of these wonderful things belonged to them as children of God and members of the New Creation. And they also belong to us today!

1. **Tree of Life** - signifies immortality. When Adam and Eve sinned in the Garden of Eden, they lost access to immortality, but in Christ, we have been given eternal life.
2. **Victor’s Crown** - The apostle Paul encouraged Timothy to live out his Christianity like an athlete running a race in order to gain a victor’s crown. Through Jesus Christ we have victory over sin and death, and over the power of the enemy. This crown belongs to every believer. (2 Timothy 2:3-10)
3. **Second Death** - The first death is a physical death when a person dies on this earth. The second death is spiritual and permanent, when a person is condemned to eternal destruction in a ‘lake of fire’. Those who belong to Jesus are immune from the second death.



4. **Hidden Manna** - The manna given to the Israelites in the wilderness provided for their physical needs. This symbolises Jesus as the Bread of Life. Those who eat of Christ's Body (receive His life into themselves) receive eternal life and are sustained spiritually.

5. **Authority Over Nations** - Jesus rules over all the nations, and those who are His, rule with Him. We do this by praying in faith for our governments and for the salvation of unbelievers, but especially when we advance Christ's kingdom over the face of the earth through the preaching of the gospel.

"If we endure, we shall also reign with Him" (2 Tim. 2:12).

And to the one who is victorious and continues in My work until the end (70AD) I will give authority over the nations. He will rule them with an iron sceptre and shatter them like pottery—just as I have received authority from My Father.... (Revelation 2:26)

6. **Morning Star** - Jesus Christ is described as the 'morning star' in 2 Peter 1:19 and He identifies Himself as 'the bright morning star' in Revelation 22:16. Just as the dawn star breaks forth out of darkness, bringing light to the earth, so Christ breaks the chains of darkness over His people by rising in their hearts as the Light of Salvation.

7. **Dressed In White** - *It was given to her (the New Jerusalem) to clothe herself in fine linen, bright and clean; for the fine linen is the righteous acts of the saints. (Revelation 19:8)*

8. **Book of Life** - *"If anyone's name was not found written in the Book of Life, he was thrown into the lake of fire." (Revelation 20:15)* The names of all Christians are written in the Book of Life and they will never be erased.

9. **Temple Pillar** - Christians are established (pillars) in the Temple of God.

10. **White Stone with a New Name**- A Jewish high priest's breastplate contained twelve stones, each with a name of one of the twelve tribes of Israel engraved on it. The high priest bore the names of God's people into God's presence in this way. Similarly, the "white stone" with our name (or Christ's name) written on it could refer to our standing in God's presence. *'You have been raised up with Christ. So think about things that are in heaven.*



That is where Christ is. He is sitting at God's right hand. .. your life is hidden with Christ in God. Christ is your life. ..You have started living a new life. ..Christ is everything and He is in everything. You are God's chosen people. You are holy and dearly loved.... (Colossians 3:1-14)

After receiving Christ's message for the churches, John saw a door standing open in heaven. A voice spoke to him that sounded like a trumpet, and he was immediately lifted to stand before a throne in heaven with God sitting on it. John saw in God's right hand a scroll with writing on both sides. An angel told him that what was written in the scroll would happen soon. One called the Lion of Judah (Jesus Christ) was declared worthy to open the scroll and when He did so, millions of angels joined in praising and worshipping Him, showing that Jesus is God, for only God is to be worshipped.

In one vision, John saw a woman (spiritual Israel) giving birth to a male child (Jesus Christ), although a red dragon (Satan) tried to destroy her. Christ was taken up to God's throne (symbolising His victory on the cross and His ascension to heaven). Satan and the fallen angels were cast out of heaven because of the power of Christ's sacrifice. The dragon then tried to destroy the woman (spiritual Israel), but failed when she escaped into the desert. Next John saw Satan going on to make war on the rest of the woman's children (Christian Church). John described the persecution of the Christians by the Roman Empire, prophesying that it would last for 42 months. (November 64 - June 68 AD.) John also saw a "soul harvest" upon the earth as all of God's chosen were gathered into His kingdom.

He will use a loud trumpet to send His angels all around the earth. They will gather His chosen people from every part of the earth...I assure you that all these things will happen while some of the people of this time are still living. (Matthew 24:31,34)

God stated that His New Covenant people would be established in a 'new heaven and a new earth'. This was not referring to the universe as such, but to a new spiritual kingdom. A 'new heaven and a new earth' was Old Covenant language for a new age or new era.

The second half of Revelation represents Christ's victory over the world, including the Roman Empire and apostate Israel, where the two are cast into the lake of fire. Revelation 19 and 20 show the full establishment of the kingdom of God, when thrones were put in place for the millennium. The saints took possession of the kingdom and the millennium began.



(‘Millennium’ is also not meant to be taken literally. It simply refers to a long, indefinite period of time.) John then saw Satan bound, symbolic of Christ’s power over Satan’s deception so that he can’t deceive the nations any longer. This binding lasted for the entire kingdom age, the age of the Church, in which we are now living. The number 1000 is a symbolic number for “completion” so when the “thousand years” come to their end, the plan of God will be brought to completion. Close to the end of Revelation, John gives a beautiful description of the New Jerusalem, a symbol of God’s perfect Church.

The New Jerusalem, the Bride of the Lamb

And he carried me away in the Spirit to a mountain great and high, and showed me the Holy City, Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God. It shone with the glory of God, and its brilliance was like that of a very precious jewel, like a jasper, clear as crystal. It had a great, high wall with twelve gates, and with twelve angels at the gates. On the gates were written the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. ...The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.... The city was laid out like a square, as long as it was wide

The great street of the city was of gold, as pure as transparent glass. I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendour into it. On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. The glory and honour of the nations will be brought into it. Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb’s book of life. (Revelation 21...)

The New Jerusalem’s description shows her to be spiritual Israel (built on the 12 Israelite tribes of the Old Testament) and the ingrafted Church (New Testament Gentiles led to Christ by the 12 apostles). John stated that only “those who wash their robes” in the blood of Jesus may enter the New Jerusalem, corresponding to the fact that only those who believe in Christ and repent of their sins become members of the Body of Christ. The New Jerusalem has no temple within it, because the people of God are now the temple, and God lives within them. God and Jesus Christ (the Lamb) are also called the Temple. This indicates that God and His Bride are one in Spirit, joined in a heavenly spiritual marriage.



Don't you know that you yourselves are God's temple and that God's Spirit dwells in your midst?... I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. (1Corinthians 3:16 and Revelation 21:22).

..that all of them may be one, Father, just as You are in Me and I am in You. May they also be in Us so that the world may believe that You have sent Me. (John 17:21)

The apostle John wrote that when the millennium ends, Satan will be released from his prison and he will go out to deceive the nations to gather them for battle against God's people. John termed these people as the 'camp of the saints' and the 'city that God loves'. Both terms refer to the New Jerusalem (Old Testament saints and the Church of mostly Gentiles), but there is an indication from the apostle Paul in Romans 11 that the Jews will one day be grafted back into the root of spiritual Israel.

Did they stumble so as to fall beyond recovery? Not at all! Rather, because of their transgression, salvation has come to the Gentiles to make Israel envious. But if their transgression means riches for the world, and their loss means riches for the Gentiles, how much greater riches will their full inclusion bring!...

For if their rejection brought reconciliation to the world, what will their acceptance be but life from the dead? ... And if they do not persist in unbelief, they will be grafted in, for God is able to graft them in again. ... Israel has experienced a hardening in part until the full number of the Gentiles has come in, and in this way all Israel will be saved.

This hasn't happened yet, and until it does, it would seem that Satan's agenda to gather up the world forces to attack God's people is still on hold. However a time is coming when the entire deceived world will 'surround' or besiege God's people. There will be a great spiritual battle that will take place, although the Bible does not tell us the details of what the last battle will look like. However we are told that God will send fire down from heaven to devour the enemies of Christ. Then the devil, who deceived the world, will be thrown into the lake of burning sulphur, where the beast and the false prophet had been thrown before the millennium, where they will be tormented day and night for ever and ever.

After this comes the Great White Throne Judgement where the dead stand before God, and books are opened, including the Book of Life.



The unsaved dead must wait for the millennium to end before they are judged at the Great White Throne Judgement. After they are judged, death and Hades will be thrown into the lake of fire, which is the second death. Anyone whose name is not found written in the Book of Life will be thrown into the lake of fire.

The rest of the dead did not come back to life until the thousand years were complete. This is the first resurrection. Blessed and holy are those who share in the first resurrection! The second death has no power over them, but they will be priests of God and of Christ, and will reign with Him for a thousand years. (Revelation 20:5)

Christians will not be judged as their names are written in the Book of Life. Christians go immediately to be with the Lord after their bodies die, as indicated by the apostle Paul when he said: *I desire to depart and be with Christ, which is far better indeed. But it is more necessary for you that I remain in the body....(Philippians 1:23)* Christians have already received eternal life, so they go straight to heaven after their physical bodies die, clothed in their new spiritual bodies to enjoy eternity with Jesus forever.

Meanwhile, while we are here on earth, we seek to fulfil the....

GREAT COMMISSION

Christians, living during this long Church era, have been given the task of bringing the gospel of grace to the world, persuading all who will listen to turn from unrighteousness to Christ for salvation. The task is a great one, as already forces of darkness have been moving mightily on the face of the earth to deceive the multitudes and gather them against God. These demonic forces work through governments and leaders to kill and destroy the nations. Abortion, wars, disease, sexual perversion, slavery, poverty, oppression of every kind, false religions, violence, etc. are systematically destroying the human race. Many Christians, no matter what end time view they hold, believe that the finalisation of all things is at hand because of the increasing evil they see everywhere. Yet even as our hearts cry out for justice, we cannot help but feel pity and compassion for those destroying themselves and others. Christians are the only ones who can bring light to the lost through the message of Jesus Christ, and never in all of history has the need for the gospel been so great. If the Church does not courageously stand for truth and righteousness, the darkness will quickly close in and the end will come. The most important thing we can do to expand God's kingdom and rescue others in His name is to remember who we are in Christ Jesus.



Knowing our identity in Christ will instil confidence to speak out even in the midst of persecution. We live in a new heaven and a new earth with God indwelling us. Through the resurrection of Christ, we have been given power over death and sin. The devil cannot touch us spiritually, neither can he enslave or subjugate us to his will. We are seated with Jesus on His throne, victorious over every obstacle, favoured with every spiritual blessing, and called the children of Almighty God! We are the **Jerusalem Bride**, shining with His glory and walking in His light as we gaze adoringly into the face of Jesus Christ, our Saviour! God's will is that we live out this amazing life and bring much glory to His name through sharing our love and faith in Him with the world. May Jesus be greatly glorified through His much-beloved Treasure, His Bride!

