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# Pilgrims Journal

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*“They confessed that they were strangers and pilgrims on the earth. Wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God: for He hath prepared for them a city.” (Heb 11:13–16)*

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## ENDING AT THE BEGINNING

When reading a mystery or some other kind of intriguing story, some people might skip ahead to the end of the book to find out “who did it” or sneak a peek at the last pages to “see how it all turns out.” But the Bible (The Book), like God Himself, is unique. It is the sole inerrant and infallible written word of God in existence. Actually comprised of 66 “God breathed” books, the Bible has its ending at the beginning, although throughout all its pages God’s eternal purpose, plan, and program is prophesied, predicted, and proclaimed. The Bible contains not only its own ending, but the ending of everything. Only its Author can claim, as He did at the start and finish of Scripture’s final book, “*I am Alpha and Omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last*” (Rev 1:8; 22:13). This would be like using our alphabet to say, “I am A and Z,” which would be understood to include all the other letters in between. Every English word ever written comes from only those 26 letters. In like manner, everything that will eternally matter and remain can only come into being, be preserved, and be made known by Jesus Christ, Who is the Word of God that was made flesh. “*All things were created by Him, and for Him...and by Him all things consist*” (Col 1:6,17; Jn 1:3). **God alone knows the end**

*from the beginning and is the Author and Finisher of our faith* (Heb 2:10 NIV; 12:2).

It gives great security to the child of God to realize that the eternal, all wise and all powerful God knows and reigns over all. There can come times when a believer cannot see beyond the mountain of obstacles in their way or through the dark valley of trials ahead. We may sometimes feel “stuck in the middle” because we do not have the full picture of God’s plan, but even then we can still be sure that the Lord will cause all things to work for good according to His purpose and will. It is the testimony of Jesus that is the spirit of prophecy, so the more we come to know Jesus through the scriptures and with the help of the Holy Spirit, the more God’s eternal plan will become clear. He is the greatest architect, engineer and builder, not just of the physical, but also of our eternal dwelling and destiny. ***The elect, that God chose in Christ from before the creation of the world, can have complete confidence and courage, knowing that He has everything under control.*** God knows the whole story, and for those He chooses, and those that choose Him, it always has a happy ending.

### Beginnings & Endings

In this article, we will see from some of the clues the Creator has hidden in the very beginning of the Bible the

things that He will accomplish and fulfill, as is revealed at the end of the Holy Scriptures. We will limit ourselves to just the first and last two chapters of the Bible to learn some of what God has concealed and revealed in His word. There are many more mysteries to uncover in just those four chapters than the few that are investigated below. With the Holy Spirit's help, you will be able to discover them for yourself. Of course there were no chapters or verses in the Word of God originally. These are merely man made divisions and numberings that make it easier for us to navigate through the books and locate specific passages.

The Bible begins with Genesis, a word that means origin, source, or creation, and ends with Revelation which means unveiling or disclosing. The first written words of God are "In the beginning God" and the last is "Amen" or "so be it." ***Similar to the start of the Bible where God has hidden the ending, scripture ends with an eternally new creation and beginning.***

## Human History

The first chapter of Genesis is an account of the six days of creation followed by a seventh day of rest or Sabbath. **These seven days can be seen as a type and shadow of all of human history and also of the way God perfects His**

**work of salvation in the individual.** A single day with the Lord can be as a thousand years (Psa 90:4; 2Pet 3:8). From this we can symbolically count the two thousand years from the first man Adam until the time of the patriarchs as two days. God has ordained that all nations will be blessed and get their eternal inheritance through Abraham and his seed (Gen 18:18; Deut 32:8). We see this promise fulfilled through the Savior and in the New Jerusalem by which the nations of them which are saved will be led, enlightened, and come in through its twelve gates to worship and serve God in eternity. Above each of those gates into that eternal city is one of the names of the twelve sons of Israel, showing that the Lord is a covenant keeping God (Rev 21:12-27; Isa 60:11; Jer 3:17). The next two thousand years that pass from the Patriarchs unto the coming of Christ, Who is the promised Seed of woman and of Abraham, can be seen as another two days. Finally the period of grace that started after Christ's ministry until now has been about two thousand more years making a total of six thousand years, or six days.

What of the single seventh day that is left? This will be fulfilled after the soon coming Rapture and seven-year Great Tribulation, by the Millennium when the earth rests for a season from Satan and all his evil influences. After this thousand year Sabbath is completed, time and human

history will end and the ever new and eternal creation that we read about in Revelation chapters 21 & 22 will begin. So the number seven can be seen to stand for a completion or fulfillment of a perfect work. Because so many in these last days are being miseducated and indoctrinated with false theories and philosophies such as evolution, atheism, humanism and secularism, instead of believing and being grateful to their Creator, people scoff at Him. This is part of the perfect evil work of that old serpent called the Devil. The choice is yours: you can either believe the witness of God's Son or that of Satan, but one day every knee will bow, even the Devil's. Every tongue will confess Jesus Christ as Creator, Savior and Lord of all, even the mockers (Phil 2:11; Rom 14:11; 2Pet 3:3-13). Let us profess the testimony of Christ now rather than later when it will be too late. **God is perfectly in control of time and eternity** and in the end all will see that history was really "His story!"

### First Day, First Experience

In that same first chapter of the Bible there is also a picture and pattern of the way God accomplishes and completes His work of salvation and perfection in our lives. **On the first day, by the Word of God, light shone out of darkness, and on the sixth day God's final work was to make a bride out of a**

**vessel of clay.** Salvation is complete in Christ, but in us there is a process and progress. Like natural life itself, it must **continually grow to maturity, be fruitful and multiply.** The first three days of creation can be seen as a type of the three initial experiences of salvation. These three are being Born Again (Regeneration), Born of Water (Water Baptism) and Born of the Spirit (Baptism of the Holy Spirit) (Jn 3:3,5). We are to constantly grow and go on to perfection in these experiences. Comparing our New Birth to what the Creator did on the first day, God, whose first recorded words were "*let there be light,*" makes "*the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ who is the image of God...shine in our hearts, to give us the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ. But we have this treasure in jars of clay*" (2Cor 4:4-7 NIV; Jn 1:1-14).

### The Baptisms

On the second day, **the Lord divided the waters** and this can be symbolic of Water Baptism where a **separation** takes place. On the third day of creation, God made the dry land appear and from this **earth sprang up all kinds of grasses, trees, and other plants.** A spiritual fulfillment of this third day can be seen in the book of Acts on the day of Pentecost which formerly was the Old Testament feast of harvest and also the day on which the law had been written on stone. On

this day in the New Testament the same Holy Spirit Who raised Jesus from the grave was first poured out upon the disciples and a **harvest of souls began to be added to the church**. God's Spirit is still working today. He will revive and raise us up: make us mature, ready and ripe for the rapture. *"If anyone is in Christ, he is a new creation"* (2Cor 5:17). Do you have faith that God is working in and through you? He will cause you to be an anointed and fruitful witness of the Gospel who brings in a hundredfold harvest of souls and will raise you up to glory!

### His Light Shining

From the remaining three days of creation we can discover a pattern of the way that God multiplies, magnifies and makes ever fuller the initial work of salvation He began in us. The fourth day can correspond to how the Father of Lights worked on that first day when He said let there be light. On this day not light, but **innumerable "lights" were spoken forth** to adorn the heavens and rule over the times and seasons. The longer we are saved, the more the **life of God in us must overcome, rule and cause us to reign** in life by Jesus Christ. Like those lights of the heavens, we also are to declare God's glory and handiwork (Psa 19). Shining like Jesus Who is the "Light of the

World," we too must give guidance, witness, and life to those in darkness.

### Increasing & Multiplying

Comparing the fifth day to the second when the waters below and above were divided, we find the Creator **filling sea and sky with countless and diverse species** of fish and fowl that were made to move in those habitats. We can learn from this that Water Baptism is not just something we do and forget about. God wants to **keep moving and multiplying His work in and through us unto every creature under heaven** (Mat 28:19; Mk 16:15). A birth is only a beginning, so if we have been born of water let us keep growing in this and all other aspects of our salvation. *"Grow up into Him in all things"* (Eph 4:15), *"Add to your faith"* (2Pet 1:5), *"Perfecting holiness"* (2Cor 7:1), *"Adorn the doctrine of God"* (Tit 2:10), *"Bear much fruit"* (Jn 15:8).

### Handmade In His Image

The sixth day relates to the third. From the earth that He had created, God caused all kinds of living creatures to arise. Finally **He handmade a man in His own image** and breathed into Adam the breath of His life. We can see a parallel fulfillment of this act in the New Testament when after His

resurrection, Jesus breathed on the disciples and said, “receive ye the Holy Ghost” (Jn 20:22). ***Through the New Covenant we are being transformed into God’s likeness from glory to glory by the Spirit of the Lord*** (2Cor 3:18). Like the characteristics of the Creator Himself, man is unique and was created to be creative, fruitful, and to rule and reign (Rev 22:5). Lastly we read that God rested on the seventh day from all His work. The scripture does not say that God made an eighth day. By faith in God’s word we too must enter and abide in the finished work of Jesus Christ. Let us labor every day to remain in God’s rest (Heb 4).

The second chapter of the Bible is also a description of creation. It is not a different story but rather a retelling and expansion of the first. This is the manner of the poetry and prose in the Old Testament. It does not have to rhyme but repeats and restates the original point in a different form. When something is written in this way, it becomes more than the sum of its parts. Such a poetic style can be translated into any language without loss of beauty or meaning as would happen if normal rhyming and meter had been used. What we read in this second account has more to do with the characteristics of paradise and the partnership and continuing increase of God’s work that He planned for man.

## Rebellion & Restoration

Here we learn that Adam participated in creation by being allowed to name the animals. God planted a garden in Eden and told Adam to maintain it. Yet not all of Eden was a garden. Nature will grow and spread uncontrolled unless it is put into order and kept by a gardener. From what God started in Eden, man was to continue by subduing the undeveloped world and expanding Paradise (garden/park) all over the planet (Gen 1:28; 2:15). As we now know to our sorrow, this did not happen because of the fall. When man followed Satan’s word rather than God’s, he handed over his rule and dominion of the earth to the evil one and he was expelled from the garden by God. That is why the devil is called the god of this world and can now offer its government and glory to whomsoever he wants (Lk 4:6). Because of our sin, not only mankind, but all of creation was made subject to vanity and corruption. Throughout history, men have been trying by their works to get back to the garden or to reproduce heaven on earth, yet this is doomed to fail (Gen 3:17). ***But through the glorious gospel, God’s work of recreation and restoration begins again and finds its fulfillment in heaven.*** “It is by grace you have been saved, through faith—not by works. For we are God’s workmanship, created in Christ Jesus to do good works which God prepared in advance for us to do” (Eph 2:8-10 NIV).

## Our Heavenly Garden

Let us investigate some of the elements of man's first dwelling place as recorded in Genesis 2. The features mentioned there will find their spiritual fulfillment in New Jerusalem, the ultimate habitation of the redeemed, as revealed in the last two chapters of the Bible. First we are told **Adam's home was a garden**, which is a fruitful, fragrant, pleasant, peaceful place of abundant life. ***Jerusalem means "City of Peace" and in the new one everything there will be constantly renewed***, alive and in order. God placed two special trees in the midst of the garden: the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. All mankind has partaken of the second tree but only the overcomers will taste of the first. In the end, that first tree will be found planted in the heavenly city, available to the overcomers (Rev 2:7). Instead of being a source of disobedience and death, this tree will be a continual source of life and health. Its fruit will be ever varied, fresh and nourishing. Nothing up above will ever get stale, old or boring.

## Precious Materials

Next we read of a **river that went out from Eden to all the surrounding lands**. It is recorded that this river spread and flowed through places of gold, bdellium, and onyx. Though we can no longer be sure of the precise

meaning of the names of the last two materials, they are most probably pearl and crystal stones, all to be found in our heavenly home. In the natural world these substances are rare, valuable, pure, durable and beautiful. This is what God is producing spiritually in the lives of His saints (Mal 3:7). ***Such precious and living materials will make up and garnish the New Jerusalem***. The walls, gates, foundations, stones, even the road of our heavenly habitation, are made of the spiritual realities of those elements first mentioned in Genesis. Though abundant and common in heaven they will never lose their value.

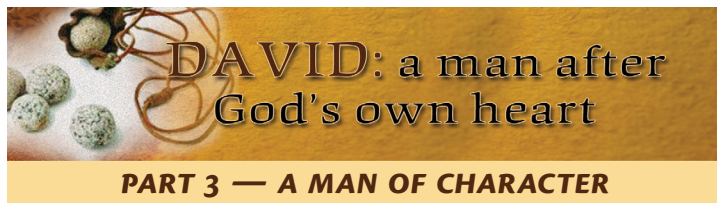
The **river from Eden** corresponds to the ***River of Life seen flowing out forever from the throne of God***. There is only one street of gold, one river of life and one tree of life mentioned in the celestial city, but all three are found everywhere there (Rev 22:1-2). The tree is in the middle and on both sides of the river, the river is in the golden street and the street is in the river. What is described of that crystal city is physically impossible now, but up there we will be constantly and eternally experiencing a continuous living miracle of communion with God.

The first and last two chapters of the Bible are also notable for what they do not contain. ***There is no place for death, sorrow, crying, pain or the devil there***. In the beginning,

before the fall, everything in creation and the garden was called good by God, except for one thing. *“The Lord God said it is not good that the man should be alone”* (Gen 2:18). This brings us to the final and crowning creation of God. In Eden this was the making of a **companion for Adam, the woman**. In eternity its ***fulfillment will be the Bride of Christ***. Let us see from the way the woman was made, how Jesus demonstrated His love for us. God put Adam into a deep sleep, opened him up and **took out part of His side**. From this God made the right companion for the man. When Adam awoke he recognized himself in another and declared “this is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.” The spiritual accomplishment and reality of this act was when ***our Savior was pierced and died on the cross for our sins***. He arose from the dead for us also. Those first recorded words spoken by a man are echoed in the New Testament referring to us. It is written *“we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones...This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church”* (Eph 5:30). The mystery will finally become clear when the Lamb’s wife is revealed (Rev 21:9). This is God’s plan and purpose for us, to be one with Him, serving by His side, loved, nourished, and cherished forever!   □

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David, the anointed of the God of Jacob, acquired many divine characteristics as the Spirit of God slowly transformed his heart through God-permitted adversities and tribulations. Many outstanding divine natures adorned his life as a leader. Obedience, humility and patience were some of the distinguishing characteristics of David, which made him great in the sight of God, and in the sight of man.

### **Obedience**

***Obedience was one of the hallmarks of David's life and ministry.*** When he was sought for by the prophet Samuel to be anointed, David made haste in obedience and presented himself before the man of God. Samuel then anointed David in the midst of his brethren. David was available to God and to Samuel, to be led, and for the plan of God to be fulfilled in his life. *"And he sent, and brought him in. Now he was ruddy, and withal of a beautiful countenance, and goodly to look to. And the Lord said, 'Arise, anoint him: for this is he.' Then Samuel took the*

*horn of oil, and anointed him in the midst of his brethren: and the Spirit of the Lord came upon David from that day forward"* (1Sam 16:12-13).

As the anointed of God, it was expected and required of David to fight the battles of God. Nevertheless, without receiving clear instructions from the Lord, he would not at his own will venture to face the enemy. For example, when the Philistines heard that David had been anointed to be a captain over Israel, they came to fight with him. At that time, instead of rushing to face the enemy, David inquired of the Lord as to whether he should go up against the Philistines or not. Only after the Lord granted him permission did he, in implicit obedience, fight with the Philistines and defeated them. *"And David enquired of the Lord, saying, 'Shall I go up to the Philistines? wilt thou deliver them into mine hand?'" And the Lord said unto David, 'Go up: for I will doubtless deliver the Philistines into thine hand'"* (2Sam 5:19). Here we see the desire of David to do the will of God in perfect obedience and full surrender.

**King Saul clearly lost his position, crown, and kingdom due to disobedience.** The simple commandment from the Lord was, *"The Lord sent me to anoint thee to be king over his people, over Israel: now therefore hearken thou unto the voice of the words of the Lord"* (1Sam 15:1). This is exactly what Saul did not do.

## A Better Sacrifice

**“To obey is better than sacrifice.”** Is it possible that one can sacrifice his money, time, strength, etc., in the name of the Lord, but yet be disobedient to God? Yes it is! Again, is it possible that one can prophesy, cast out demons, and perform miracles in the name of the Lord, and also accomplish their self-will? Yes it is! Jesus emphasized that clearly in Matthew 7:21-23. He said, *“Not every one that saith unto Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that doeth the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Thy name? and in Thy name have cast out devils? and in Thy name done many wonderful works?’ And then will I profess unto them, I never knew you: depart from Me, ye that work iniquity.”* **Disobedience is the root cause of all sin in man.**

Obedience is a characteristic of the Lord Jesus Christ. God demands obedience from all His creation. *“Even the winds and the sea obey Him!”* (Mat 8:27). How much more should His people, who are called to judge angels, learn to obey God in everything and fulfill His perfect will. **How blessed it is when everything and everyone obeys God!**

## Humility

Another distinguishing character trait which was evident in the life of David was his humility. The following statements of

David revealed the humble attitude of his heart: “I am a worm,” “I am a dead dog,” “I am a flea,” “my heart is not haughty,” “my eyes are not lofty,” “I do not exercise myself in great matters,” “I have behaved and quieted myself as a child.” Surely, David excelled in the school of God’s humility. As a result, he was elevated to a position of authority. Concerning David, God says, *“I will make him higher than the kings of the earth”* (Psa 89:27).

David is a type of Christ who is the embodiment of humility. **The perfect humility of God was personified in Jesus Christ.** Jesus said, “I am meek and lowly in heart.” When Jesus humbled Himself and became obedient unto death, God highly exalted Him and gave Him a name which is above every name. The humblest will be the greatest in the kingdom of God.

## Esteeming Others

Regarding others as greater and better is a genuine token of true humility. *“Let nothing be done through strife or vainglory; but in lowliness of mind let each esteem other better than themselves”* (Phil 2:3). David respected Saul and sincerely addressed him as “the Lord’s anointed.” Even after the tragic death of Saul, David sought opportunities to show kindness to his descendants. For instance, Mephibosheth, the grandson of Saul, was allowed to eat with King David all the days of his life. *“So Mephibosheth dwelt in Jerusalem: for he did eat continually at the king’s table; and*

was lame on both his feet” (2Sam 9:13). This act of kindness and goodness was done at David’s request.

### Despising Others

When we despise others in our heart, be sure that the spirit of Lucifer, which is a spirit of pride, is at work. In the parable of the Pharisee and the publican, the despising attitude of the Pharisee was condemned by Christ (Lk 18:9-14). Spiritually speaking, “pharisaism” is the manifestation of self: self-righteousness, self-justification, self-exaltation, etc., which is contrary to the spirit of Christ. The publican, who abased himself before God, was justified and exalted.

### More Grace To The Humble

In order for us to receive more grace, we should humble ourselves all the more before God. *“But He giveth more grace. Wherefore he saith, God resisteth the proud, but giveth grace unto the humble”* (Jam 4:6). Noah found grace in the eyes of the Lord, which implies that he humbly looked up to His eyes of compassion and mercy. Even so, in lowliness of mind, and utter dependency, as we seek God, His grace will flow into our lives. The grace of God causes us to be fruitful, faithful, and joyful.

### True Grace Of God

The Church of God stands in the true grace of God. *“This is the true grace of God wherein ye stand”* (1Pet 5:12). This indicates that there can be a false grace or the imitation of grace. Paul warned the Corinthians concerning another Jesus, another spirit and another gospel. *“If he that cometh preacheth another Jesus, whom we have not preached, or if ye receive another spirit, which ye have not received, or another gospel, which ye have not accepted, ye might well bear with him”* (2Cor 11:4).

One of the signs of the last days is that people will have a form of godliness. *“Having a form of godliness, but denying the power thereof: from such turn away”* (2Tim 3:5). The true saints of God are exhorted not to have fellowship and association with such people. They are godless men, who change the grace of our God into a license for immorality, lawlessness, and wantonness.

Our God is the God of all grace. To impart that grace to mankind, Christ was sent. Jesus is the grace of God, manifested in human flesh. Also, the Holy Spirit is spoken of as the Spirit of grace. So we serve the triune God of grace, Who fills our life with the riches of His grace, to live soberly, righteously and godly in this present evil world. *“Where sin abounded, grace did much more abound”* (Rom 5:20).

## Patience

David developed the character attribute of patience, as he waited upon the Lord amidst fiery trials. He was steadfast in the pursuit of doing the will of God, despite opposition, difficulty, and adversity. As David patiently sought the Lord when he encountered the problems of life, the Lord heard him, and answered his prayers. David said, *“I waited patiently for the Lord; and He inclined unto me, and heard my cry. He brought me up also out of an horrible pit, out of the miry clay, and set my feet upon a rock, and established my goings. And He hath put a new song in my mouth, even praise unto our God: many shall see it, and fear, and shall trust in the Lord”* (Psa 40:1-3). Blessed are those who wait!

## Possess Your Souls

Jesus reiterated and solemnly warned His disciples concerning the vital importance of patient endurance in the face of betrayal, backsliding, and persecution. He said, *“In your patience possess ye your souls”* (Lk 21:19). This signifies that we should cling to the Lord with purpose of heart, lest we lose our salvation. We are living in the end times, and are at the threshold of eternity. Therefore, no one and nothing should separate us from the love of God, which is in Jesus Christ. As we await our final salvation, which will take place at the second coming of Jesus Christ, let

us endure afflictions with patience. Jesus said, *“But he that shall endure unto the end, the same shall be saved”* (Mat 24:13).

*“Haste makes waste,”* said Pastor Don Spiers. The hasty and impatient decisions of life can have eternal consequences. For instance, Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples of Jesus Christ, betrayed his Master for thirty pieces of silver. Afterwards, when he was convicted of his treasonous act, instead of repenting and asking forgiveness from God, he made haste and hanged himself. The hasty decision of Judas to commit suicide caused him to quickly descend into the flames of hell fire where he will have eternal regret.

## God Of Patience

Our God is the God of all patience. *The longsuffering of God brings salvation to mankind.* If God is impatient with our imperfections and executes judgment accordingly, there will be no hope left for any one of us. But thank God there is forgiveness, mercy, and patience with Him. *“The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some men count slackness; but is longsuffering to us-ward, not willing that any should perish, but that all should come to repentance”* (2Pet 3:9).

The saints of God who are waiting for the coming of the Lord are exhorted to be patient. *“Be patient therefore, brethren, unto the coming of the Lord. Behold, the husbandman waiteth for*

*the precious fruit of the earth, and hath long patience for it, until he receive the early and latter rain. Be ye also patient; stablish your hearts: for the coming of the Lord draweth nigh” (Jam 5:7-8).* We should be patient with God, and also with ourselves, for the work of grace to be perfected in our lives. Let us wait patiently for the promises of God to be fulfilled in our lives.

Even as David developed godly characteristics in his life and ministry, let us also grow in the divine natures of Christ. Let us be a pattern for others in their pursuit of obedience, humility, and patience. As we continue to follow in the footsteps of Jesus, we will be changed into His very character image. *“Look unto me [Jesus], and be ye saved [transformed in character], all the ends of the earth: for I am God, and there is none else” (Isa 45:22).* ◻

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# Messages from Messes

## **PART 3 — STARTING WITH SAUL**

Many of us Christians, living in what we presume to be our more modern and advanced age, wonder what it would be like to have lived in the era of the early church. Reading the New Testament, we may sometimes envision ourselves walking with Jesus in the Holy Land or joining the Apostles on their missionary journeys. In the following installments, this is what we will attempt to do: try and imagine ourselves travelling with the Apostle Paul. We will find that life back in the early days of the church was not always as thrilling or inspiring as we might believe and sometimes things were very uncomfortable

and did not work out as planned. The object of this series is to *learn positive lessons from incidents in the New Testament that at first sight seem negative*. We are finding that God can give messages through things that are messed up just as well as He does when everything is blessed. Instead of the Lord only speaking through pleasant and pain free things, problems, contradictions, and frustrations are also His way of teaching us (2Cor 4:7; 12:9; Heb 12:6; Jam 1:3; 1Pet 1:7; Rev 3:19). When God tries and tests, rebukes and reproves, chastens and scourges us, it does not mean He is against us, but that our Heavenly Father is taking the time to teach us in love.

### **Travelling With Jesus**

Some children of God think that they never get to go anywhere important, new, or interesting. When they do travel, they feel they are just stuck in a rut of routine or running in a rat race on a treadmill going nowhere. Yet Jesus Himself, except when He was a baby carried into Egypt as a refugee, never travelled much more than 100 miles from Bethlehem where He was born. You do not have to leave your own backyard or bedroom to be on a great journey or to have an epic adventure. One of the first names for followers of Jesus was people of "The Way"

(Acts 9:2; 18:25-26; 19:9, 23; 22:4; 24:14, 22). It was not until years after the birth of the church that they were first called Christians (Acts 11:26). Believers were seen to be on the Way to the Father, perfection, and heaven. ***Christian life is not something static but is a process and progress of following in the footsteps of Jesus***, daily carrying the cross, but also approaching an eternal heavenly city and crown. So even if you stay in the same spot all your life, you are also always on a spiritual pilgrimage and an exciting journey in the Lord (Jn 14:6).

### Headed The Wrong Way

Paul's first recorded trip was not a missionary journey to build up the church but rather one to persecute, imprison, and destroy its members. After participating in the martyrdom of Stephen in Jerusalem, he sought permission to pursue and harass the followers of Jesus, even to foreign cities. On the road to Damascus he finally had a personal encounter with the God he thought he had been serving. To his shock and awe, he found out that He was Jesus Christ, Who he had been persecuting by attacking His followers. As Paul lay blinded in the road, the Savior spoke to him with a parable saying, "*it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks*" (Acts 9:5). This refers to an animal

striking back at the sharp goads that are used to prod it forward. ***When we resist God's will and direction for our lives we end up hurting ourselves and others also.*** Paul is not the only one who has gone the wrong way. Where are you headed right now?

### His Way Is Better

The Savior set Paul on a new course, one that he would follow for the rest of his life. Instead of directly telling Paul what to do, Jesus sent him to Ananias who was a member of the body of Christ in Damascus. Often, and especially at the beginning of our spiritual journey, this is how the Lord speaks to us. We may not always get direct guidance from God. ***He may give us counsel and direction through other Christians, especially mature and anointed ones.*** Ananias was apprehensive about visiting and ministering to Saul, and reasonably so, since Saul had been coming to town to martyr him. As with Saul, the ***Lord may send us to people we do not know we need***, and like what happened to Ananias, ***He might send us to someone we may be fearful or unsure of.*** Let us not kick against those who prod and prick us or turn away from the erring and needy ones God brings into our path.

## Keep Pressing On

The Lord immediately began to make Saul a mighty vessel that would carry the Gospel and make known the Name of Jesus all over the known world. He also started to show him how greatly he would have to suffer for that Name. Paul was not promised a pleasant journey but was told pain, persecution, and prison awaited him everywhere. How many of us would welcome a prophecy and ministry like that? At the end of his third missionary journey, the beaten, battered, and scarred (wounded, not worried) apostle could still testify, *“that the Holy Ghost witnesseth in every city, saying that bonds and afflictions abide me. But none of these things move me, neither count I my life dear unto myself, so that I might finish my course with joy, and the ministry, which I have received of the Lord Jesus, to testify the gospel of the grace of God”* (Acts 20:23-24; Gal 6:14-17). Nothing could prod or move him away from continually moving onward with the Lord. There are things that are worth loving more than our own lives. Some saints are assigned roads to take that are rougher than those given to others, but all that matters is that we all ***keep going forward with the Lord on the course He has chosen for us.*** No matter how long or wrong our path may seem at the time, as we persevere along it, the gospel road is always the

right way to go. From the start to the end of our race, there will always be sufficient grace for us to finish victoriously.

## Counting All As Loss

Contrary to what we would expect, Saul did not immediately return to Jerusalem. It appears he spent about three years in the desert and Damascus (Gal 1:12-17; Acts 9:23). Maybe it was during this time in the desert that he started to unlearn all the vain teachings and traditions he had been following. Though he had been blameless, zealous, and rapidly advancing in his religion, he began to count all his past profit as loss for the sake of knowing and following Christ. Many of us also start our spiritual race with a lot of excess baggage. ***We should not be surprised when the Lord requires us to cast off the weights and entanglements of the world and our old life.***

## Proclaim The Good News

But before Saul went anywhere, he did immediately begin to preach the Jesus whom he had just encountered. For us as well as Saul, theory is not enough for salvation. We need to experience and know the Lord for ourselves. All who have repented and been born again will have a living witness to share. It may not be as dramatic as Paul’s



was, yet because each of us is a unique individual, we will all have a personal testimony that no one else on earth can give. One does not have to be qualified by a Bible college or seminary to begin to preach Christ. We may not be experts on scripture or doctrine, but like those early “unlearned and ignorant” apostles, we too have met Jesus and must proclaim, *“there is none other name under heaven given among men, whereby we must be saved. For we cannot but speak the things which we have seen and heard”* (Acts 4:12, 13, 20). Have you shared the good news with anyone lately? How about doing it today? You do not have to go on a lengthy trip or travel far to be in the mission field. As an old adage goes, “Bloom where you’re planted.”

## The Bumpy Road

The trouble, hardship, and danger soon began for Paul. As his enthusiastic and uncompromising witness increased, so did his enemies. Eventually they plotted to kill him to shut him up. From this we can learn that if everyone speaks well of your preaching or witness, you must be doing something wrong. ***Opposition and contention is also a response to the gospel.*** We will see in studies that follow that in nearly every place Paul preached, commotions, tumults, and riots followed. As he much later recounted about his early

popularity, *“in Damascus...through a window in a basket was I let down by the wall, and escaped”* (2Cor 11:33; Acts 9:25). He escaped to Jerusalem, but he was not very well received or accepted there either, even by the leaders of the church. Through the intervention and introduction of Barnabas, Saul was accepted into fellowship with the disciples in Jerusalem, but this only lasted for two weeks (Gal 1:18). Because of Paul’s bold witness in this city also, the enemies of the gospel soon tried to kill him. Therefore the brethren sent Saul to his hometown of Tarsus. Even though he was an elect and chosen vessel of God, from the very beginning of his Christian life and witness, ***Paul suffered misunderstanding and rejection from saints as well as from sinners.*** But none of this stopped his talk or walk for the Lord. As another old saying goes, “though the dogs bark and bite at the wheels, the chariot keeps rolling along.” Some today try to turn serving God into a prosperity and popularity contest, but Paul was only trying to please one person, his Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (Gal 1:10).

## Beginning With Barnabas

We now come to what historians have termed Paul’s first missionary journey. Though we might think he commenced this trip just a short time after he left Jerusalem,

yet Saul spent around ten years witnessing in his native place before he was sent forth on that first mission. **Delay is not denial.** Surely the messages the Holy Spirit gave Paul during the time he stayed in that one area travelled with him later and are now heard all over the world.

This article is subtitled “Starting with Saul” but in regards to Paul’s travels, it could just as well have been captioned “Beginning with Barnabas.” Barnabas was a Levite, the priestly tribe, which was considered a blessed line among the children of Israel. He was born in the foreign land of Cyprus and there named Joses, but in Jerusalem the apostles renamed him Barnabas which translates as “Son of Consolation.” As we have noted above, when the disciples were afraid to receive the newly converted Saul, Barnabas brought them together and introduced him (Acts 9:27). Truly Barnabas lived up to his name. He was also a prophet and a preacher, which is another meaning of the name Barnabas (13:1). A man of property, his is the first name singled out in the book of Acts as a good example of someone forsaking all (4:36). When the Gospel began to bear fruit among the Gentiles, and the Holy Spirit was first poured out upon the Gentiles, it was Barnabas who was sent by the elders to Antioch to minister to them (11:22). *“For he was a good man, and full of the Holy Ghost and*

*of faith: and much people were added to the Lord” (11:24).* What a testimony!

## God Is Over All

Though only sent as far as Antioch, when he saw the grace of God moving upon the Gentiles, Barnabas thought of Saul and went to his hometown of Tarsus to seek him out and bring him back to Antioch. It was from Antioch that the elders sent Barnabas and Saul to Jerusalem with the church’s offering. Then later from Antioch, the Holy Ghost separated them by name, and again in that order of Barnabas and Saul, to be sent out as apostles (13:2). Afterwards, when the grace and anointing of God was recognized upon Paul’s ministry and message, the team started being called Paul and Barnabas (13:43). Does it really matter who receives the attention, credit and top billing as long as God gets the souls and the glory? In the next study we will begin to travel with Paul on “his” journeys, but let us remember, behind every great man there are other good men and God is over all. ☐

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# Your Adversary: The Devil

## PART 1 — THE BEGINNING

*“Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour”* (1Pet 5:8).

In this new series of articles we are going to study various aspects of our adversary, the devil. From the beginning of creation till now, the devil has sought to destroy man’s relationship with God and therefore remains our constant adversary. One may ask, “Why would we want to or need to study about the devil?” There are many reasons to do so. Firstly, the Bible has much to say of this creature and anything that the Bible speaks of is always for our ultimate need and benefit. In the context of the theme verse found above, we need to know of the devil in order to overcome him since he is the **mortal enemy** of our souls. If two enemies are going into battle, they would want to know everything that they could about their opponent in order to be victorious in the battle. The Apostle Paul knew

his enemy well and didn’t want the Corinthian believers to be overcome by the devil because of ignorance: *“Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are **not** ignorant of his devices”* (2Cor 2:11).

### Compare & Contrast

Secondly, we are blessed in the study of the Word of God to be able to learn of hidden and ancient mysteries of creation and our part in it. As we learn from the Bible about the tragic fall of some of the angels, this gain in our understanding may help us to be able to avoid such catastrophic failures in our own lives (1Tim 3:6; 2Cor 11:2-3).

Thirdly, when we see the hideous, wicked nature of the devil and the evil that he seeks to do to mankind, then we will discover that he is the opposite to Jesus in so many ways. This can help us to better appreciate, in contrast, the **incomparable beauties of Christ**. We may also rejoice in Jesus, who was victorious over our mortal enemy and defeated the devil for our sakes. Jesus makes a beautiful contrast between Himself and the devil when He says, *“The thief cometh not, but for to steal, and to kill, and to destroy: I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly”* (Jn 10:10). May we daily experience a new and abundant life through our indwelling Savior, Jesus!

## The Devil's Origin

We can see marvelous and mysterious things from the opening chapters of the Word of God. These are things that took place before any of the history books of this world were ever written. These are also truths that no human being could know, except for God revealing it to them through His infallible word. We are blessed with hidden truths that reveal to us the greatness of our Creator and His blessed plans for mankind. One mysterious and marvelous truth is that the devil was **not** created as he now exists. ***He was originally created as a glorious angelic being who was entirely holy and good.*** These angels were endowed with many glorious perfections such as beauty and wisdom (Eze 28:12,17; 2Sam 14:17,20), power (Psa 103:20), and free will (Isa 14:13-14). There were apparently different groupings of these spiritual beings, established in an orderly angelic kingdom, of which Christ was the head. *“For by Him (Jesus) were all things created, that are in heaven, and that are in earth, visible and invisible, whether they be thrones, or dominions, or principalities, or powers: all things were created by Him, and for Him”* (Col 1:16). In this verse we see different groupings of the angels in the angelic government. We may also understand that they are grouped by the various ministries that they are entrusted with by God to do, since some are

referred to as cherubims (Gen 3:24) and yet others are known as seraphims (Isa 6:2-3). Some of these heavenly hosts are also seen as being established in orderly legions, prepared to fight for their God and Creator (Mat 26:53).

## Created To Serve

We understand through the scriptures that the angels were created **before** the creation of man. *“In the beginning God created the heaven and the earth”* (Gen 1:1). In this opening verse of the inspired word, we see the apparent sequence of events in the creative process was first the heavens, then afterward the earth and all things in it. This sequence is also repeated in Colossians 1:16. This may lead us to understand that these heavenly beings, the angels, were created even **before** our earth was created. In the book of Job, we also see a passage telling of events that occurred during the foundation of the world. *“Where wast thou when I laid the foundations of the earth?...When the morning stars sang together, and all the sons of God shouted for joy?”* (Job 38:4,7). It appears from this passage that the angelic beings were present as joyful spectators when the earth was being formed by God! These spectators could **not** have been humans, since the earth was not yet formed. Therefore, the only other logical conclusion is that they were angels!

Each angel had a place in the angelic government and a ministry that was ordained of God. An amazing truth from the New Testament is that these great angelic beings, with all of their glorious attributes, were actually **created to be the servants of the heirs of salvation!** *“Are they not all ministering spirits, sent forth to minister for them who shall be heirs of salvation?”* (Heb 1:14). We are now the blessed heirs of so great a salvation! May we continuously meditate on our great high calling to sit with Christ on His throne and reign with Him over both the angelic kingdom (Heb 2:5; 1Cor 6:3), and also over the eternal kingdom of the redeemed (Rev 3:21). How great is God’s care for us, His blood-bought heirs of salvation, that even these glorious heavenly angels were created to minister for our benefit!

### The Fall Of Some Of The Angels

God created all things so that He might reveal to His creation His love and glory. He desired that His creation might also love Him in return, since He is the author of every good and perfect gift bestowed upon His creation. **In order to form love in His creatures, he had of necessity to first give to them the gift of free will**, which is the ability of each one to decide whether or not to do God’s will. Without free will, we would be like a machine

or a computer who could never love its maker. Some people blame the fall of the angels, and also mankind’s fall, on God Himself (Rom 9:19-20). They accuse God of folly for allowing sin to enter in and contaminate the creation. But **only** by granting this special gift might God bring to pass that His creation could, of their own free will, love Him in return for His immense blessings. Sadly, but true, a creation given this remarkable gift of free will might use it against even the Creator Himself, and that is exactly what happened among some of the angels and then man himself. But apparently, in the mind of God, the joy of having some redeemed who would love Him freely in return, was worth the agony, sorrow and heartbreak of witnessing so many of both angels and humans fail and fall (Gen 6:5-6; Heb 12:2).

### The First Sin

At some point in the distant past the first sin occurred. It did not begin with Eve and then Adam, but rather with angels of the highest order in God’s holy angelic kingdom. **They were the first to use their God-given gift of free will against the Creator.** Some of these good angels became the first sinners! *“The devil sinneth from the beginning”* (1Jn 3:8). It is a mystery how in that perfect creation of God, that was entirely good, sin and rebellion were able to enter in. In scripture it is referred

to as the “mystery of iniquity” (2Thess 2:7). Although we were not present to witness this terrible “fall,” we shall see through the inspired word the root reasons that some angels fell. We do not know how many of the angels rebelled. Some think that it was one third of the angels. They get this from an apparent misunderstanding of a passage found in the final book of the Bible. *“And his (Satan’s) tail drew the third part of the stars of heaven and did cast them to the earth”* (Rev 12:4). This passage of scripture does **not** refer to the fall of the angels in the ancient past, but rather to events happening in our current time. The book of Revelation is **not** historical in its content, but futuristic, from the time period in which it was written (Rev 1:1; 22:6).

There were a host of angels that used their free will to rebel against God in the ancient past. Some, but clearly not all of these fallen angels, were then locked up in a part of hell, as the judgment of God came upon them (2Pet 2:4). Indeed, hell itself was created by God as a judgment upon these formerly good angels who turned so completely vile and evil (Mat 25:41). God **never** intended for man to be in hell (2Pet 3:9). Hell was **not** created for mankind!

## **Kingdoms Of Evil**

Even after their fall, these fallen angels maintained some form of government and kingdom. They are generally called

“devils” and the Bible refers to one of the leaders of the fallen angels as “The Devil,” also known as “Satan.” *“And the great dragon was cast out, that old serpent, called the Devil, and Satan”* (Rev 12:9). (See also Lk 11:14-18 and Rev 13:7 with regard to Satan having his own fallen angels under his command and fighting for him.) There appears to be other fallen angels that are **not** under Satan’s command and apparently even work against Satan’s rule during the coming Great Tribulation (Rev 9). In our next study in this series, we will endeavor to consider more in detail as to **why** some of the good angels fell. Through such an understanding we may be better able to avoid falling as many angels did and be better able to overcome our adversary—the devil. □

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There is fullness of joy in the presence of God. When God created man, He wanted them to always have the joy of His presence and constant fellowship. But as the prophet Jeremiah lamented, *“The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head: woe unto us that we have sinned!”* (Lam 5:16-17). Sin has separated us from God, stripped us of the joy of His presence and filled our lives with sorrow. **The good news is that God wants to take away our sorrow and restore His joy to us.** How can the Lord turn our sorrow into joy and our mourning into dancing? How can God bring us, who were alienated from His presence because of our sins, back into His presence so that we can enjoy fullness of joy?

### Good Tidings Of Great Joy

Thank God for the joy of salvation. The night that Jesus was born in Bethlehem, the angel of the Lord came upon the shepherds in the field as they watched over their flock by night.

The glory of the Lord shone round about them. The angel said, *“Fear not: behold, I bring you good tidings of great joy, which shall be to all people. For unto you this day is born in the city of David a Savior, which is Christ the Lord”* (Lk 2:10-11). Our Savior brought great joy into this sin saddened world. He is the light that shines in darkness. He is the One who has delivered us from the power of darkness and brought us into His marvelous light. **He has turned our sorrow into joy.**

Jesus came into this world and took away our sorrows and has given us His joy. *“Surely He hath borne our griefs and carried our sorrows”* (Isa 53:4). The night that He was betrayed, He experienced deep sorrow. The word of God gives us this account: *“He took with Him Peter and the two sons of Zebedee, and began to be sorrowful and very heavy. Then saith He unto them, ‘My soul is exceeding sorrowful even unto death: tarry ye here, and watch with Me’”* (Mat 26:37-38). As the hour of His death on the cross drew near, the weight of what was about to transpire came exceedingly heavy upon Him; so much so, that as He prayed, His sweat became as great drops of blood falling down to the ground. We can never fully comprehend what was taking place at that moment, but shortly thereafter Jesus would die upon that cruel cross, bearing the sin of the world. He who knew no sin would soon be made sin for us. He would be made a curse for us as He died upon that tree.

There He would triumph over all the powers of darkness and destroy Him that had the power of death. ***By tasting death for every man He would provide deliverance for us from the sorrows of death.***

### Joy In Heaven

Jesus compared us to sheep who have gone astray. When the shepherd finds the lost sheep he carries it back to the fold and calls his friends to rejoice with him because he has found the sheep that was lost. So likewise, Jesus said, there shall be ***joy in heaven when one sinner repents.*** When a person turns from the pleasures of sin and comes to Christ, that person experiences the **joy of heaven, the joy of salvation.**

### Ever Increasing Joy

Every new experience we have in the presence of God adds to our joy. **There is ever increasing joy as we walk with God.** The prophet Isaiah tells us that the meek shall increase their joy in the Lord. For example, when Philip the evangelist went to Samaria to preach the gospel, the city experienced ***great joy when they believed.*** When Philip baptized the Ethiopian eunuch, that man went on his way rejoicing.

The kingdom of God is not meat and drink, but righteousness, peace, and **joy in the Holy Ghost.** When we

receive the baptism of the Holy Spirit, we receive joy unspeakable and full of glory. We have no words to express that joy. That joy overflows, manifesting itself in unknown tongues as the Spirit gives us utterance.

### Joy In Sufferings

Those who have that joy find ***joy even in suffering with Jesus,*** who for the joy that was set before Him, endured the cross. We realize that there is an eternal day before us when we will rejoice forever in the presence of Him who suffered for us. Even though we pass through fiery trials of our faith, **we rejoice, knowing that we will see Jesus one day.**

The joy we have received from the Lord does not depend upon our situation in life or the circumstances which surround us. As the prophet Habakkuk declares, *“Although the fig tree shall not blossom, neither shall fruit be in the vines; the labour of the olive shall fail, and the fields shall yield no meat; the flock shall be cut off from the fold, and there shall be no herd in the stalls: Yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation”* (Hab 3:17-18). The world has not given us this joy. The world cannot take it away. This joy does not depend upon earthly wealth. As Isaiah proclaims, *“The poor among men shall rejoice in the Holy One of Israel”* (Isa 29:19).



## Sorrow Turned To Joy

When Jesus spoke to His disciples about His death and resurrection, He compared His approaching death to a woman who is experiencing the pain and sorrow of child birth. He compared His **resurrection to the joy a mother has when her child is born**. *“Verily, verily, I say unto you, that ye shall weep and lament, but the world shall rejoice: and ye shall be sorrowful, but your sorrow shall be turned into joy. A woman when she is in travail hath sorrow, because her hour is come: but as soon as she is delivered of the child, she remembereth no more the anguish, for joy that a man is born into the world. And ye now therefore have sorrow: but I will see you again, and your heart shall rejoice, and your joy no man taketh from you”* (Jn 16:20-22). Truly, when Jesus died and was laid in the tomb, His disciples were found mourning and weeping. But when the angel at the empty tomb told the women that Jesus was risen from the dead, they departed with fear and **great joy to bring the good news to the disciples**. At first, even when they saw the risen Lord, they believed not for joy.

## Joy In His Word

Jesus spoke a parable of a man who found a treasure hidden in a field and because of the joy he received from that treasure, went and sold all that he had and bought that field.

**When we hear the sweet voice of Jesus calling us, we will gladly leave all and follow Him.**

Jeremiah said, *“Thy words were found, and I did eat them; and Thy word was unto me the joy and rejoicing of mine heart: for I am called by Thy name, O Lord God of hosts”* (Jer 15:16). The psalmist said, *“I rejoice at Thy word, as one that findeth great spoil”* (Psa 119:162).

## Joy In Serving Jesus

There is joy when you dedicate your life to Christ. The psalmist considered coming to the altar of God as coming to God Himself. As we know, the altar speaks of **giving our lives to God as a living sacrifice**. When we do so, **we experience great joy**. Pray with the psalm writer, *“O send out Thy light and Thy truth: let them lead me; let them bring me unto Thy holy hill, and to Thy tabernacles. Then will I go unto the altar of God, unto God my exceeding joy: yea, upon the harp will I praise thee, O God my God”* (Psa 43:3-4). As we pour out our lives upon that altar, we rejoice. As Paul said, *“If I be offered upon the sacrifice and service of your faith, I joy, and rejoice with you all”* (Phil 2:17).

There is joy in serving Jesus. The Apostle Paul wrote to the church at Colosse, *“Who now rejoice in my sufferings for you, and fill up that which is behind of the afflictions of Christ in my*

flesh for His body's sake, which is the church" (Col 1:24). This is the essence of serving God: to enter into the fellowship of the sufferings of Christ for the sake of the church. What great joy it brings.

## Joy At The Rapture

There is coming a great joy at the time of harvest. Those who have **sown in tears will reap in joy**. Those who have gone forth with weeping, bearing precious seed, shall doubtless come again with rejoicing, bringing their sheaves with them. The souls for whom they have labored will become their reward. As Paul said, "For what is our hope, or joy, or crown of rejoicing? Are not even ye in the presence of our Lord Jesus Christ at His coming? For ye are our glory and joy" (1Thess 2:19-20).

We anticipate the coming of Christ with great joy. Jude pronounced the benediction upon the church with these words: "Now unto Him that is able to keep you falling, and to present you faultless before the presence of His glory with exceeding joy, to the only wise God our Saviour, be glory and majesty, dominion and power, both now and ever. Amen" (Jude 1:24-25).

## The Joy Of The Lord

The Lord will rejoice over His church in that day as a bridegroom rejoices over the bride. As Isaiah says, "For as a young

man marrieth a virgin, so shall thy sons marry thee; and as the bridegroom rejoiceth over the bride, so shall thy God rejoice over thee" (Isa 62:5).

Our condition in that holy city will be one of **continual joy**, as the prophet says, "But be ye glad and rejoice for ever in that which I create: for, behold, I create Jerusalem a rejoicing, and her people a joy. And I will rejoice in Jerusalem, and joy in My people: and the voice of weeping shall be no more heard in her, nor the voice of crying" (Isa 65:18-19). As John heard, "And God shall wipe away all tears from their eyes; and there shall be no more death, neither sorrow, nor crying, neither shall there be any more pain: for the former things are passed away" (Rev 21:4).

## Everlasting Joy

We are eagerly waiting for the fulfillment of the prophecy of Isaiah in which His word declares, "Therefore the redeemed of the Lord shall return, and come with singing unto Zion; and everlasting joy shall be upon their head: they shall obtain gladness and joy; and sorrow and mourning shall flee away" (Isa 52:11). A crown fell from man's head. The redeemed will be **crowned with everlasting joy**. It will be eternal joy! □

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## *Two Jars*

A preacher placed two identical jars on the table next to the pulpit. He quoted 1 Samuel 16:7, “The Lord does not look at the things man looks at. Man looks at the outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart.”

These jars came from the same factory, were made of the same materials, and can hold the same amount. But they are different, he explained. Then he upset one and it oozed out honey. He turned over the other and vinegar spilled out. “When a jar is upset, whatever is in it comes out.” Until the jars were upset, they looked alike. The difference was within and could not be seen. When they were upset, their contents were revealed.

Until we are upset we can put on a good front. But when we are upset, we reveal our innermost thoughts and attitudes, for “out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaks” (Lk 6:45).

What if someone tipped you over today? What would flow out? Would you reveal the “honey” of grace and patience or the “vinegar” of anger and sarcasm?

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins” (1Pet 4:8).

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## *The Piano Concert*

Wishing to encourage her young son's progress on the piano, a mother took her boy to a piano concert. After they were seated, the mother spotted a friend in the audience and walked down the aisle to greet her. Seizing the opportunity to explore the wonders of the concert hall, the little boy quietly got up and eventually explored his way through a door marked "NO ADMITTANCE."

When the house lights dimmed and the concert was about to begin, the mother returned to her seat and discovered that the child was missing. Suddenly, the curtains parted and spotlights focused on the impressive Steinway on stage.

In horror, the mother saw her little boy sitting at the keyboard, innocently picking out "Twinkle, Twinkle Little Star." At that moment, the great piano master made his entrance, quickly moved to the piano and whispered in the boy's ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Then leaning over, he reached down with his left hand and began filling in a bass part. Soon his right arm reached around to the other side of the child and he added a running obligato. Together, the old master and the young novice transformed a frightening situation into a wonderfully creative experience. The audience was mesmerized.

That's the way it is with God. What we can accomplish on our own is hardly noteworthy. We try our best, but the results aren't exactly graceful flowing music. But with the hand of the Master, our life's work truly can be beautiful. The next time you set out to accomplish great feats, listen carefully. Can you hear the voice of the Master, whispering in your ear, "Don't quit. Keep playing." Feel His loving arms around you. Know that His strong hands are there helping you turn your feeble attempts into true masterpieces.

Remember, God doesn't call the equipped, He equips the called. And He will always be there to love and guide you on to great things!