



# Open Face

*One interest will prevail, one subject will swallow up all others. Christ our Righteousness*

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## The Key of Knowledge

*David Clayton*



Our Lord, Jesus was always making statements which seemed strange and mystical. These statements were most often misunderstood by many of those who were present, but many years later as we are able to look back at the life of Jesus, his teaching and his mission, the meaning of many of these statements becomes very clear. One such statement is found in Luke 11:52.

*Woe unto you, lawyers! for ye have taken away the key of knowledge: ye entered not in yourselves, and them that were entering in ye hindered. (Luke 11:52)*

What did Jesus mean when he spoke of “The key of knowledge?” A key is a device used to open a lock but in this context of course, it refers to a vital, essential element that is necessary for opening up the avenues of spiritual truth. Jesus says that knowledge has a key, there is something that is necessary in order for a person to obtain true

knowledge and he accused these lawyers of having taken away this key of knowledge;

These lawyers were not exactly like the lawyers we are familiar with today who are normally associated with the judicial system. However, the basic approach of all lawyers is the same. Lawyers become experts at defining what words mean, but even though they become good at understanding and manipulating words there are sometimes deeper principles that they avoid, or ignore, or perhaps are completely ignorant of in the application of their words.

### WORDS MADE SUPREME

Many of us grew up in a religious environment where we were taught that the most important thing is to correctly understand words.

In 2 Timothy 2:15 Paul says,

*Study to shew thyself approved unto God, a workman that needeth not to be ashamed, rightly dividing the word of truth. (2Tim 2:15)*

We pay a lot of attention to verses like this and we basically use these verses as the foundation of our approach to the Christian experience. But we should note that the lawyers probably had a similar approach, they were focused on words, they were focused on Scripture, yet Jesus says to them, “you have taken away the key of knowledge.”

In Psalm 89:34, God says,

*My covenant will I not break, nor alter the thing that is gone out of my lips. (Ps 89:34)*

That is God’s own statement. He says I am not going to change my word. When I say something it is unalterable, I will not break it. This is one of the things we hold as an eternal verity; There is a lot of support for this kind of emphasis all over the Bible. Isaiah 40:8 says,

*The grass withereth, the flower fadeth: but the word of our God shall stand for ever. (Isa 40:8)*

Verses like this give us a foundation to stand upon so that we can say “the Bible says.” We can say, “thus saith the Lord,” God says so and therefore it is unimpeachable truth.

Today however, I am going to show you that this is not always the safest position to take because there are occasions when God has changed his word. In fact, I am going to show you where men have caused God to change His word.

### GOD’S WORD CHANGED

*Now the word of the LORD came unto Jonah the son of Amittai, saying, Arise, go to Nineveh, that great city, and cry against it; for their wickedness is come up before me. But Jonah rose up to flee unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD, and went down to Joppa; and he found a ship going to Tarsh-*

#### **Also in this issue:**

- Escaping the Chains (pt 4).....4
- Future good things.....9
- The fruitful grain.....10
- Will babies be saved?.....12

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Open Face is dedicated to the promotion and the restoration of apostolic Christianity. In particular to the restoration of those truths which have been cast down to the ground and trampled underfoot by the papacy, and adopted by her daughters.

Our purpose is to motivate our readers to commit themselves wholly to the task of personal preparation for the coming of the Lord, and to the taking of the final warning message to every nation, kindred, tongue and people.

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*ish: so he paid the fare thereof, and went down into it, to go with them unto Tarshish from the presence of the LORD. (Jonah 1:1-3)*

Now notice that it was God who spoke to Jonah, the Scripture tells us that it was “the word of the Lord” that came to him. God sent him to Nineveh and God told him exactly what he was to say. His message was God’s word, not Jonah’s word. However, instead of obeying the word of the Lord, Jonah decided to run away from God. The people who God chose to be prophets were not normally cowards, so it is strange to find on this occasion that this man seems to be a coward. God tells him, go and warn the Ninevites of coming destruction and instead of going he decides to run away to a place named Tarshish. He is more willing to face God’s disapproval than to face what will happen in Nineveh.

Later on, after his encounter with the great fish, we are told that he finally decided to carry out God’s instructions.

*So Jonah arose, and went unto Nineveh, according to the word of the LORD. Now Nineveh was an*

*exceeding great city of three days' journey. And Jonah began to enter into the city a day's journey, and he cried, and said, Yet forty days, and Nineveh shall be overthrown. (Jonah 3:3-4)*

Jonah’s message was very specific, he gave a definite time of 40 days and declared that at this time, Nineveh would be destroyed so it is clear that the details of the message came from God, not from Jonah, it was not something Jonah was making up as he went along. Jonah was only the bearer of this straight message from God.

*So the people of Nineveh believed God, and proclaimed a fast, and put on sackcloth, from the greatest of them even to the least of them. For word came unto the king of Nineveh, and he arose from his throne, and he laid his robe from him, and covered him with sackcloth, and sat in ashes (Jonah 3:5-6)*

*And God saw their works, that they turned from their evil way; and God repented of the evil, that he had said that he would do unto them; and he did it not. (Jonah 3: 10)*

The people of Nineveh repented of their evil deeds and as a result, something strange happened; God changed his mind!! When God changed his mind he also changed his word because 40 days passed and Nineveh was not destroyed, the word of God was not fulfilled. The word of God that cannot change nor be altered was changed. This is interesting and we ask the question, how did this happen? What was the mechanism that led to this extraordinary occurrence where the word of God was changed?

*But it displeased Jonah exceedingly, and he was very angry. And he prayed unto the LORD, and said, I pray thee, O LORD, was not this my saying, when I was yet in my country? Therefore I fled before unto Tarshish: for I knew that thou art a gracious God, and merciful, slow to anger, and of great kindness, and repentest thee of the evil. (Jonah 4:1-2)*

Jonah was not happy that God changed his mind, the Scripture says he was

“very angry!” As we examine Jonah’s prayer, we discover the reason why he had been afraid to obey the word of God. Astonishingly, Jonah had *expected* God to change his mind! This was the reason why Jonah had been unwilling to carry the message to Nineveh! Jonah’s main concern had been his reputation! He was not afraid that the Ninevites might have killed him, he was afraid that he might look like a false prophet. This is amazing but this is what human nature is like. The strongest desire is for self to be elevated and Jonah’s complaint was, “before I left my home, I knew this is what you were going to do! That is why I was running from you! Because I knew you were going to ruin my reputation and make me look like a false prophet! I knew you were a gracious and kind God so I decided not to go.”

#### GREATER THAN GOD’S WORDS

In this case, Jonah knew the word of the Lord and he also knew the character of God, but his heart was not the same as the heart of God. Can we see that? Although Jonah was a prophet, he did not have God’s heart. As a prophet, the spirit of God worked in him, but I do not believe Jonah had the life of Christ in him. If he had, he could not have been upset that God was kind. Jonah was upset because 120,000 people were saved. In his mind, for the sake of his reputation, it was better that 120,000 people should have died in order that he, Jonah should have retained his reputation of being a “true prophet.”

*Therefore now, O LORD, take, I beseech thee, my life from me; for it is better for me to die than to live. (Jonah 4:3)*

This is really amazing! As far as Jonah was concerned, his reputation was so important that he preferred to die than that he should be known as a prophet whose word failed to come to pass. But it is clear that in spite of his self-centered nature, Jonah understood God’s character. Jonah understood something that a lot of people do not understand, he knew that the character of God is greater than the word of God! I know

that this sounds like a strange thing to say, but we will examine this more closely in a while. For this moment I want to say, the character of God is greater than the word of God. In other words, what God *speaks* out of his mouth can be changed. But what God *is* can never change. So, if we want true understanding we need to look in the right place. If like the lawyers, we are only looking at words, we will never obtain the true understanding that God wants us to have.

Another biblical example that brings out this principle is found in the encounter that Abraham had with God at the time of the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, I am not sure how many people were in Sodom, but I suppose it may have been several thousand. God told Abraham that He was about to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah and Abraham was alarmed. I don't know if it was just because His nephew was in the city but that was probably one of the primary considerations, Abraham started to reason with God, as he tried to get God to adjust his word.

*Peradventure there be fifty righteous within the city: wilt thou also destroy and not spare the place for the fifty righteous that are therein? That be far from thee to do after this manner, to slay the righteous with the wicked: and that the righteous should be as the wicked, that be far from thee: Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right? (Gen 18:24-25)*

The way that Abraham is arguing with God is amazing! He starts to reason with God on the basis of God's character and he says, "that be far from thee!" His argument was, "you know better than this, I know this is not your style, I know this is not the way you are" That is what Abraham was really saying to God. "You're not this kind of God, you don't behave in this kind of way." Essentially Abraham was saying, "I don't believe all your word is saying because I know your character." As Abraham was speaking, I am sure that God was smiling in his heart, because this friend of his, Abraham, knew his heart. He understood God's character so well that

he could tell God what was right and what was wrong.

Another example from the life of Abraham is the incident when he went to offer his son Isaac as a sacrifice. God is a God of love, mercy and kindness, yet this God who is just and fair said, "take your only son, the son that I gave you by promise, the one that you love, and offer him as a burnt sacrifice; kill him on top of this mountain." What should Abraham do in this moment? Should he say, "that be far from thee to do after this manner to slay the righteous? I know this is not the way you are. I know that the judge of all the world will do what is right, so how can you be telling me to go and kill my son?" The problem was that in this case, Abraham could not deny that God had spoken. Somehow, God showed him that the command was coming from



him and that he was serious about it, so that there was no doubt in Abraham's mind.

So, what should he do? I am sure he must have thought, "God is just, merciful, kind and good. How is he telling me to kill my son?" But Abraham knew God and what does his knowledge of God do? Because he knows and trusts God, Abraham finds an amazing way to answer that question. Hebrews 11:19 says,

*Accounting that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead; from whence also he received him in a figure. (Heb 11:19)*

Abraham concluded that God's plan was to bring Isaac back from the dead and I think he expected that when he left that mountain, Isaac would be walking back with him. It is wonderful to know God in this kind of way. No matter how dark things appear to be you know that it is going to work out alright because God is a God of love.

#### THE KEY

So, what is the key of knowledge? What is this essential factor that gives us the ability to truly obtain the knowledge that really counts? What is this key that the lawyers and doctors had taken away? When we look at the experiences of Abraham, Jonah and many others in the Bible, we conclude that this key to having true knowledge, this key to understanding the will and the purposes of God, is to first of all, know the true nature and character of our God. Regardless of whether we know the Bible from start to finish, if we don't know the character of God, we are going to be led into all kinds of foolishness.

Not too long ago I heard someone preaching about the character of God. His message was judgmental and condemnatory and it was all about how the people who were not a part of his church were going to be lost. I laughed and cringed at the same time. This was a message from someone who was able to read the Scriptures and could give statement after statement from the Bible, but he had not found the key of knowledge. He did not know God nor understand God's heart towards people.

This is what the wisest man who ever lived came to understand; this is why he wrote:

*The fear of the LORD is the beginning of wisdom: and the knowledge of the holy is understanding. (Prov 9:10)*

Jesus pointed to the same truth when he said,

*And this is life eternal, that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast*

**Continued on page 6**

# Escaping the Chains (part 4)

Howard Williams



## THE KINGDOM OF GOD

I am very happy for the experiences I have had because it led me to know the truth for myself. I was not in a place to ask questions of my elders or pastors anymore. If I had a question I would have to go to God and work it out through careful study of the scriptures and revelation of the Spirit.

## ONE SUCH EXPERIENCE

One night I was reading from the book of Acts, in chapter 5, and I read where Gamaliel spoke about two men, one called Theudas and the other Judas of Galilee. (Acts 5:36-37) These men were false prophets and I had never heard of them before, so I decided to do a quick search to see what was mentioned of them. I went to the internet and started a search for all ancient false prophets and was alarmed to astonishment to find out who it was that several sites in a row claimed the first false prophet to be! To my amazement, the first false prophet was said to be Jesus! Was I ever surprised at that claim!

These sites also provide documentation for their conclusions so I read their reasons for making such a claim. Here was the reason Jesus was dubbed with the title 'False Prophet': *"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his king-*

*dom."* (Matt 16:28) So this was his false prophecy! I read also where others were given a chance to defend a position if they felt the conclusion was wrong. The defence for Jesus by Christians was pathetic. Here is what they said in essence: "Jesus is not a false prophet because there are some Jews that are still alive and roaming the earth. They are called wandering Jews, and they will not die until Jesus comes back." I could not accept that answer so I was left with a challenge: "What did Jesus mean?"

## PUTTING THE PIECES TOGETHER

I looked at the three accounts of the event where Jesus spoke those words. Matthew, Mark, and Luke recorded it. Let's put them together and see what he said.

*"Verily I say unto you, There be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the Son of man coming in his kingdom."* (Matt 16:28)

*"And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power."* (Mark 9:1)

*"But I tell you of a truth, there be some standing here, which shall not taste of death, till they see the kingdom of God."* (Luke 9:27)

The main issue in these statements was the arrival of the Kingdom of God. It is not strange when you begin to examine these things. The pieces begin to fall in place. Look at this sequence:

When John the Baptist began his ministry he had a certain message. What was it?

*"In those days came John the Baptist, preaching in the wilderness of Judaea, and saying, Repent ye: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matt 3:1-2)

Then Jesus after he was baptised by

John started preaching as well. What was Jesus' message?

*"From that time Jesus began to preach, and to say, Repent: for the kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matt 4:17) See also Mk 1:14-15.

Then Jesus' disciples were sent out to preach. What did they preach?

*"And as ye go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand."* (Matt 10:7)

(A point of clarity here. Matthew called it "The Kingdom of heaven" while the others refer to it as, "The Kingdom of God". It is the same thing.)

Notice the pattern that is established, they were ALL preaching one message – a message about the Kingdom.

They had electrified Jerusalem and the surrounding areas with this message. People were excited and expectant because this Kingdom – whatever it was – was near, at arms length, within reach!

## THE PREACHER CHALLENGED!

One day after this preaching, with excitement filling all Judea, Jesus was met by some Pharisees. They demanded an answer from him about this Kingdom: exactly when it should come? Here is the story: *"And when he was demanded of the Pharisees, when the kingdom of God should come, he answered them and said, The kingdom of God cometh not with observation: Neither shall they say, Lo here! or, lo there! for, behold, the kingdom of God is with-  
in you."* (Luke 17:20-21)

What was his answer? Notice carefully what Jesus said because it is important to understand it as we deal with his prophecy. If I should paraphrase what we just read it would be something like this: *"When the kingdom comes, it will not be something you can see, you won't be able to show a tangible physical domain or point to a certain place, because the kingdom will come on the*

inside." So the coming of this kingdom that Jesus prophesied was going to be an internal event, something happening inside people.

### WHAT IS A KINGDOM?

Now I would like to stop for a moment and think about the word "kingdom". The Jews thought it meant a visible, physical setting up of a king on earth, but Jesus clearly meant something different. So what does the word really mean? The word "kingdom" is what we call a compound word. It is two words joined together. The word simply means "King's Domain", which is an area or territory owned or controlled by a King. The Kingdom of God are the people in whom Jesus lives and their bodies are the temples of his Holy Spirit. (1Cor 6:19) There can be no kingdom without a King! If the King does not live in his domain (our bodies) then we are not a part of his kingdom. (Rom 8:9) So how could this be done?

In John, the fourteenth chapter, Jesus spoke about the coming of another comforter. This comforter, he said, could not come unless he first went away. Further, he said that when he went away he would send this comforter. (Jn 16:7) He also said something else that is worth noticing here: "In the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried, saying, If any man thirst, let him come unto me, and drink. He that believeth on me, as the scripture hath said, out of his belly shall flow rivers of living water. (But this spake he of the Spirit, which they that believe on him should receive: for the Holy Ghost was not yet given; because that Jesus was not yet glorified.)" (Jn 7:37-39)

In his last prayer recorded in John 17, Jesus prayed that his father should glorify him with the father's own self, the glory Jesus had before the world existed. (Jn 17:5) What does the glorifying of Jesus have to do with the coming of the Comforter? Jesus made it clear that the coming of the comforter was him, Jesus, coming back. (Jn 14:18) So the disciples understood that it would be Jesus coming back in a glorified state so that he could dwell on the inside of

them. "At that day ye shall know that I am in my Father, and ye in me, and I in you." (Jn 14:20) When Jesus could come inside a person, the Son of Man would have arrived and be ruling in his Kingdom.

Before he died, Jesus told the disciples to stay at Jerusalem until they received power. (Luke 24:49) Now here is an interesting insight into a conversation Jesus had with his disciples after he was raised from the dead, "When they therefore were come together, they asked of him, saying, Lord, wilt thou at this time restore again the kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6) Obviously, they knew that the Kingdom had not yet come even at this point. His answer was, "it is God's business." But, he added something else in connection with the question: "But ye shall receive power, after that the Holy Ghost is come upon you: and ye shall be witnesses unto me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judaea, and in Samaria, and unto the uttermost part of the earth." (Acts 1:8)



Here again is the promise of power. Remember Jesus' "false prophecy"? Take a look at it again in Mark: "And he said unto them, Verily I say unto you, That there be some of them that stand here, which shall not taste of death, till they have seen the kingdom of God come with power." (Mark 9:1) So we are getting closer!

### THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN ARRIVES

Pentecost was a feast of the Jews that came fifty days after the Passover. The promise Jesus made to his disciples was that some would see him coming in his kingdom before they died, (Matt 16:28) and also it would be a kingdom with power. (Mk 1:9) Did they see this kingdom come? Sure they did – at Pentecost!

It was at this Jewish feast that the promise of the comforter and kingdom met its fulfilment. The disciples received power because Jesus came into his kingdom in his people. They knew it was He who came back according to his promise (Luke 24:49) and filled each of the one hundred and twenty believers waiting in the upper room. (Acts 1:15) It was the Spirit of Jesus (The Holy Spirit) which was now in the disciples and brought them into the Kingdom of Heaven on earth. Now the truth of being born again, by the Last Adam, was truly possible. And this Kingdom spread like wildfire! Even on the very first day of Jesus ruling his new kingdom, three thousand new people were born into it! (Acts 2:41) This was the fulfilment of Jesus' prophecy. It was not a false prophecy after all! All who heard Jesus say those words, except for Judas, were alive and saw it happen.

Every person who receives the same Spirit they received is a part of the Kingdom of heaven. (Rom 8:9) This Kingdom is a spiritual kingdom and produces the righteousness of Jesus in one's life. The life of Jesus is the life of New Testament Christianity. This life is the victorious life over sin, sickness and even death. This life is a superior life, but it was short-lived in the church and eventually was lost because of Unbelief. The disciples experienced it and turned the world upside down, but as soon as the disciples started dying, the Spirit and power of the Kingdom started to fade away until it was lost from the people's sight. No one believed anymore.

Even to this very day the term, 'The Kingdom of God', is misunderstood to mean the coming of Jesus in the clouds, causing people to miss what is already here. It is true that there will be a physical kingdom set up in the end when, according to Daniel, the God of heaven will set up a Kingdom that will never be destroyed. (Dan 2:44) But what Jesus already set up is his spiritual kingdom, and he is reigning on the earth in it today even as you read. This kingdom exists in the people of God, in any per-

**Continued on page 8**

# The Key of Knowledge

Continued from page 3

sent. (John 17:3)

Jesus cut through all the smoke and the mirrors and he came straight to the point. Eternal life does not consist in keeping The Sabbath, nor all the commandments put together. Neither is it to know the Bible from Genesis to Revelation, it is simply, “*that they might know thee the only true God, and Jesus Christ, whom thou hast sent.*” Everything that we need to know is encompassed in this great truth. If we truly know God, we have life. Nothing can keep us from it. This is the key of knowledge.

God’s character is greater than his word, whether written or spoken. Those who know him so that they understand his character have found the key of knowledge, something which will enable them to take hold of that deeper knowledge of God which includes the reality of salvation. This is what I am saying. I am in no way saying that the word of God, spoken or written, is inconsequential. I am saying that sometimes you can read words and misunderstand; sometimes you can use words and you can pick them apart and break them down, but if you don’t understand the character behind the words, you probably will misunderstand those words. That’s what Jesus was saying. He was saying to these people, “you took away the key of knowledge because you are lawyers; you focus on words and statements but you don’t know the person behind these words.” If we just read words, we can come to wrong conclusions because words have no face; they don’t have a smile nor a frown, they have no feelings, they are just statements, usually on paper. If we don’t know the author of the words, we can come to wrong conclusions. We begin to obtain true understanding when we have the knowledge of the holy One. When we put together all the pieces of the Bible and we come to see the true picture of God, then we are beginning

to understand, then we have the key to open the door of knowledge.

## A WORD OF CAUTION

Having said this, I want to be a little cautious about something. I find that I have to say this very often. I have been teaching on the subject of God’s grace and mercy and God’s righteousness since the year 2005. From that time, I have observed many people who have adopted the theory of the truth about God’s character, but many of them do not know God. Often we find that people like this have taken this truth about God’s character and they use it as an excuse to dishonor the name of God. They say, “we no longer follow the letter of the word of God, we follow the spirit of God,” and they use this as an excuse to do things which are contrary to what the word of God teaches. Not only contrary to His word but also contrary to God’s character and they do it in the name of God’s love and mercy! It is true that God is not a nit-picking God. I agree that God is not obsessed about the little things which we are obsessed about. He isn’t obsessed with whether you are vegan or vegetarian, whether you wear a necktie or a bowtie or no tie. These are things that people obsess about and they make them salvational. Some of these practices may be helpful and beneficial if we practice them, but God is not obsessed with them. However, there is still a lifestyle that God wants for his people. He wants us to live clean, holy, upright lives because we are his sons and daughters and we should be concerned about whether or not our behavior glorifies our father. Some are even willing to justify fornication, adultery, drunkenness, bad language, bouts of anger and irritability and similar traits of carnality, because they know that God saves us on the basis of Christ’s righteousness and not our own.

I have often found myself asking the Lord when I go to prayer, “why does this happen? Is this teaching of Right-

eousness by Faith at fault? Is there something fundamentally wrong with our message?” It disturbs me as I feel that in some ways I am a pioneer in the present understanding of righteousness in Christ. I wonder, why has God’s grace not led me to practice carnality? I am not perfect, I have unholy desires at times and I sometimes lose control and behave in ways that dishonor my father. But I don’t excuse such behavior nor justify it. I reject it whenever it appears and seek the Lord’s strength to not repeat the offence. I take this attitude because I don’t want to dishonor the king. I don’t want to dishonor God because God has set me free! Should I feel that I am free to do anything that I please? Why would I, as a child of God who is born again not want to please him in every way? Why wouldn’t I seek to do all things for the glory of God? Why would I seek to satisfy myself so much that I am finding avenues and ways to step outside of what is the best way?

So I just want to give this word of caution before we continue. We are neither saved nor lost because of our deeds, everything depends on our relationship to Christ who is our righteousness, but at the same time, this does not mean that it is ok to live a life of carelessness. The person who bears the name of Christ and yet is not concerned that his works dishonor the Lord, is a liar and he does not know God, even though he may be very good at quoting the words of Scripture (1 John 2:4).

## GOD’S FINAL WORD

*And we have known and believed the love that God hath to us. God is love; and he that dwelleth in love dwelleth in God, and God in him. (1 John 4:16)*

God is love. This is the ultimate truth, the one great truth that clarifies and magnifies all other truth. In seeking the knowledge that really counts, statements are very important as long as we understand the character of the person we are dealing with. We know that if God says, “it is not my purpose that you should recover from this illness,” or, “it is my

purpose that you should rest in death,” then we know that it is for the good of the person, we know that it is an act based on love because we know God’s character. We know that when God says, “I want to heal,” and the person is not healed it is not because God does not love. There is some other obstruction in the way, because God is love, he is merciful, longsuffering and gracious and these are not just token words referring to a legal state, not at all! This is the truth about what God is like in his nature, in his character, in his heart. I know that when I get to heaven, it will not be presumptuous of me to go and put my head in that almighty lap because the God of the universe is a God of love.

So mere written statements are not the ultimate source of truth that will open up our understanding, that will enable us to obtain knowledge that really matters. It is understanding the character of God that is the key to knowledge. That is why in giving us a true understanding of what he is like, God did not give us mere words, instead, he gave us a living embodiment of his character, in his only begotten son. This is the beautiful reality. The misconception of the lawyers and doctors is well expressed in this statement which I read somewhere many years ago:

*The word was made flesh and dwelt among us, and then, through theologians it became words again.*

This is the unhappy truth and nothing has really changed over the centuries. Men are prone to exalt and over-emphasize the written word of God when they do not understand the character of God, therefore that written word becomes distorted and a source of confusion because it is still locked until we obtain and apply the key to what is written.

In Hebrews 1:1-2, we are told that in former ages God spoke to men through prophets, but that in these last days he has spoken to us by his son. This does not mean that God no longer uses prophets in this present age, but this passage in Hebrews is expressing a profound

truth. Prophets could carry the written or spoken word of God, but as we have seen, written or spoken words can never really give a perfect understanding of what a person is really like. Prophets could say, ‘Thus saith the Lord,’ as they gave you words. But very often, they did not give you the truth of what God is really like. The great prophet Samuel, who carried the word of God, took king Agag and chopped him into pieces. It is very difficult to see the truth about God’s character of love, God’s heart of tender pity, in that behavior.

But now, in these last days God has spoken to us by his son. This is why



Jesus is called “The Word of God.” He is the living embodiment of God, the character of God made visible. He is God shown to us in living color. This is the knowledge of the holy which we need. This is what should guide and direct everything that we believe about God.

I know that there are times when God has to act firmly and move against sin and sinners to prevent the uncontrolled spread of evil. I am not one of those who believes that “God does not kill.” But in order to understand those acts of judgment we must first of all obtain the key of knowledge, we must grasp the truth that God is merciful, gracious, long-suffering, that God is love. From this vantage point we can much better interpret and understand those occasions when God has had to exercise his duty as guardian of the universe, and

has had to act in negative ways towards people.

*For the law was given by Moses, but grace and truth came by Jesus Christ. (John 1:17)*

Moses brought the words of God – the law, but the truth about God only arrived when Jesus came. The living reality was through Jesus Christ, therefore John tells us,

*No man hath seen God at any time, the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him. (John 1:18)*

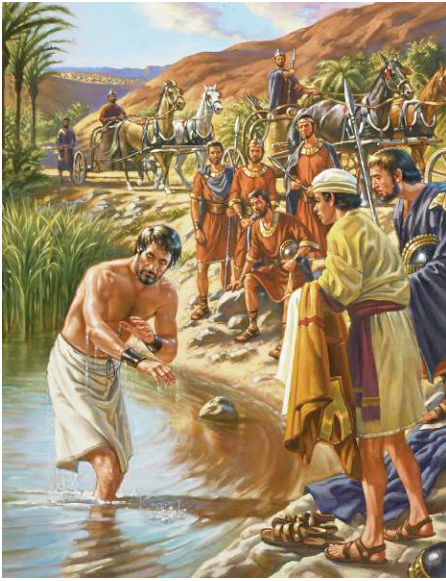
### TOUGH LOVE

But I believe that God loves in a practical way. I have gotten some beatings from God, just like I got some beatings from my mother and father because they loved me. I often did not understand some of those beatings from God at the time when they were happening, but I could see the blessing later in life. The week in which I became a Christian my bike was stolen. I had this bike parked in the yard for two years and nobody ever interfered with it, but as soon as I made up my mind to give my life to God, immediately it was stolen! After the shock wore off, by the next day, I was telling God “thank you.” Later I came to understand that at that point, I needed to be without the bike until I had grown in my relationship with God. The bike would have made it easy for me to go back to my old haunts, to my old friends and practices and would have made it too easy for me to backslide. So God used these thieves to cut off my movement for the first few months after I became a Christian until I settled down. I could see the good in it.

Although the hardest things in my life have been permitted by the will of God they helped me to become stronger. God’s love does what needs to be done. The time will come when the wicked need to be destroyed, and God will do it. Because he is a God who deals with what is necessary. His love does not close him off from the reality of what needs to be done.

## LOVE COMPROMISES

The final thing I will point out is that God's love makes him compromise. Consider the case of Naaman the Syrian after he was healed of his leprosy. He went and dipped seven times in the Jordan river as Elisha the prophet had instructed him and he came up cleansed of the disease. He went back to Elisha



wanting to reward him by giving him money, but Elisha refused to take any reward from him. What is interesting however, is that Naaman then went on to make another request of Elisha:

*And Naaman said, Shall there not then, I pray thee, be given to thy servant two mules' burden of earth? for thy servant will henceforth offer neither burnt offering nor sacrifice unto other gods, but unto the Lord. In this thing the Lord pardon thy servant, that when my master goeth into the house of Rimmon to worship there, and he leaneth on my hand, and I bow myself in the house of Rimmon: when I bow down myself in the house of Rimmon, the Lord pardon thy servant in this thing." (2 Kings 5:16-18)*

What would you have said to Naaman? "No you cannot bow to a false god from now on, even if the King of Syria is going to cut off your head"? But Elisha's answer is not what we might expect from a servant of Jehovah:

*And he said unto him, Go in peace. So he departed from him a little*

*way. (2Kgs 5:19)*

You see, God takes everybody where he is. If Daniel, Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego had done the same thing, they would have dishonored God. But God sees a man who is coming out of idolatry, who has lived his entire life in idolatry, and now that God has healed him, a little light has come into his mind and he appreciates the God of heaven. But Naaman understands that he is in a dilemma, as one of the chief officers of the king of Syria, and he says, "when I go back my master will want me to bow in the house of Rimmon, ask God to forgive me for this."

What will God say? Will he say, "let me tell you about idolatry, let me teach you about the commandments and let me give you all the laws of Israel"? No! This heathen man has encountered God and he is returning home with God in his heart, but having very poor understanding of spiritual principles, and God makes allowance for his spiritual immaturity. God is not nit-picking; he compromises because in his love, he understands our situation and he knows that we are only creatures of dust. Those who have greater light are expected to live by that light, but God is dealing with this man where he is.

This is the kind of God we worship. The more we learn about him, the more we see that the great principle behind everything that he does is his awesome character of love. He is merciful, he is gracious, he is understanding, he considers our circumstances, bears with our weaknesses, forgives our failings; in a word, he is on our side, he is not, and never was against us.

When we know God in this way, when this awareness of him is imprinted into our hearts in such a way that we will never be confused into thinking that he is against us, then we have found the key of knowledge! Praise God and with this key, we have access to God's treasure house where we may behold the wonders of the ways of God.



## Escaping The Chains

**Continued from page 5**

son in whom His Spirit lives. Do you believe it?

### WHAT IS THE MESSAGE FOR TODAY?

I am sure there are already many different possible answers to this question coming to mind. People belonging to different groups and denominations hold various opinions as to what the message for today should be. There are over 33,000 different denominations in Christianity alone. Are there then 33,000 different messages in Christianity in need of being preached? According to the Bible, what is THE message that must be preached today? "*And **this gospel of the kingdom shall be preached in all the world for a witness unto all nations; and then shall the end come.***" (Matt 24:14) (Emphasis mine) Please read the verse again at least twice because it is possible to miss the point. The Gospel is specific. It is peculiar to the Kingdom. Have you heard any sermons recently on the Kingdom? It is clearly what Jesus says must be preached today. In fact, when this fully happens, he says the end will come.

In Acts chapter 8 Phillip went down to Samaria to preach. What did he preach? "*But when they believed Philip preaching the things concerning the kingdom of God, and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.*" (Acts 8:12) What was preached then is different from what is preached today. No wonder that the results are so different!

Paul's letters make up more than half of the New Testament. What was Paul's message? Let's look at his last few years. "*And Paul dwelt two whole years in his own hired house, and received all that came in unto him, preaching the kingdom of God, and teaching those things which concern the Lord Jesus Christ, with all confidence, no man forbidding him.*" (Acts 28:30-31) Even while under house arrest Paul's message was the same, "The Kingdom of God and the

**Continued on page 11**



# Future “Good Things”

It is important to note that the law did not simply represent, “good things,” but it represented good things to come *in the future*. In other words, the law did not represent things which existed, during the time of the Old Testament, or the time of the law. While God’s people were still worshiping under the system of the law the good things had not yet come. This is one of the most important points which need to be understood when it comes to understanding the two covenants.

There are many people who believe that the benefits and privileges which Christ brought to his people were always available in every age of this world’s history, even during the time of the old covenant and in fact from the time that Adam and Eve first sinned. These people will refer to the verse in Revelation 13:8, where it says that Jesus was “the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world.” However, this verse is misunderstood and its meaning is misrepresented because the translators of the King James version got the sequence of the words wrong. In the King James version it reads as follows:

*And all that dwell upon the earth shall worship him, whose names are not written in the book of life of the Lamb slain from the foundation of the world. (Rev 13:8)*

Compare this with the same verse from the new American Standard Bible:

*All who dwell on the earth will worship him, everyone whose name has not been written from the foundation of the world in the book of life of the Lamb who has been slain. (Rev 13:8)*

Notice that in the new American Standard Bible, what happened at the foundation of the world was not that the lamb was slain, but that names were written in the book of life. The point of the verse is entirely changed. Someone might ask, “but how do we know that the new American Standard Bible is

correct? What makes us believe that the King James interpretation is wrong?” We know, because there is another verse in Revelation which says basically the same thing and in this other verse the meaning is very clear, even in the King James version. This verse is Revelation 17:8.

*.... and they that dwell on the earth shall wonder, whose names were not written in the book of life from the foundation of the world, when they behold the beast that was, and is not, and yet is. (Rev 17:8)*

What happened at the foundation of the world was that names were written in the book of life. Jesus was not slain from the foundation of the world and if he was, then he was slain twice for it is clear that he died 2000 years ago. It is true that there was a promise made from the very beginning, from the moment that Adam and Eve sinned, but that promise was a guarantee of a future benefit, not a statement of things which had already been obtained by the human race. The book of Hebrews teaches very clearly that until Jesus came and fulfilled the promise, the benefits of the new covenant were not yet available to God’s people. What they possessed were promises, shadows, illustrations, but not the real things, not the fulfillment of the promise. If these benefits had been available before Jesus came, lived, and died, then obviously the death of Jesus would have been unnecessary!

It is important that we should understand that God did not just speak salvation into existence, he did not create our salvation out of thin air. The plan of salvation involved the son of God becoming a man and in that identity as a human being to provide, to create, to work out the conditions of salvation. What this

means is that he had to overcome sin, to conquer the world, the flesh and the devil; to create a life in which all the elements of salvation existed. This is the saving life of Christ, and this is where salvation exists! This is the life that we are given when we are born again! Before Jesus came and created this life in himself this life did not exist, it was not possible for anyone to obtain it because Jesus had not yet provided it!

People who understand salvation only from a legal point of view find it hard to appreciate and accept this very clear biblical truth. This is because they see salvation as only a legal state something that happens in heavenly record books. When a person decides to become a Christian he makes a decision and God declares him a Christian and that is what makes him one. It is something that happens in the record books and in the mind of God. But the truth is that salvation is far more than this! Salvation is the obtaining of life, real, actual life. We do not simply receive a paper salvation, Jesus Christ is our father in the sense that he is the last Adam, he is the progenitor, the originator of the new creation, the new human race! All who are born again receive life from Christ just as all who were born into this planet were born from the life of the first Adam. Our identity is centered around the receiving of life, it is not centered around the balancing of records in legal books, but about an experience in which our very identity changes because we receive life and are born into a new race – the new creation. This is why Jesus stated very clearly,

*.... I am come that they might have life, and that they might have it more abundantly. (John 10:10)*

He came to give us life, to impart what we did not possess. This is what he says very clearly.

**Continued on page 12**

# The Fruitful Grain

*Lenworth Frankson*



Wikipedia describes a grain as “a small, hard, dry seed, with or without an attached hull or fruit layer, harvested for human or animal consumption.” After being harvested, dry grains are more durable than other staple foods. This durability has made grains well suited for personal and industrial agriculture, since they can be mechanically harvested, transported and stored for long periods of time under the right conditions. We all know that millions if not billions of people for thousand of years have been dependent on grains for food.

One interesting fact about a single grain or seed is that if the germinating conditions are ideal, that single grain will produce a plant that when mature bears fruits containing hundreds or even thousands of seeds or grain for propagation and possibly, food. This is a principle in nature, designed by God, that we see all the time. Based on these truths the question that comes to my mind is; are there spiritual lessons that we can learn from principles like these? I believe there are.

The Bible tells us in John chapter 12 that there were Greeks who came to worship at the feast (Passover) along with the Jews. These Greeks longed to know the truth in regards to Jesus’ true mission. So they came to Philip requesting to see Jesus. Earlier, the Greeks had heard of Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem but rumour circulated that

Jesus had driven the rulers and priests from the temple and that he was to take possession of David’s throne and reign as king of Israel. Jesus knew that the time of his crucifixion was drawing near so he said to his disciples:

*“Truly, truly I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. The one who loves his life loses it, and the one who hates his life in this world will keep it to eternal life. If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also; if anyone serves Me, the Father will honor him.” John 12:24-26 (NASB)*

Jesus, being the great teacher that he is, tries to present his future as well as his disciples’, by illustrating his teachings through the things of nature, so that the disciples might understand the truths he wants them to learn. The true purpose of Jesus’ mission was to be accomplished by his death. Jesus was at the point of culminating and fulfilling his Father’s will and purpose for his life by dying on the cross as the anti-typical atoning sacrifice for the sins of the entire world. (John 3:16; 2Corinthians 5:19). It was at this time that He gave us one of the most profound revelations in the entire Bible.

Using a single grain of wheat as a comparison, Jesus revealed the universal principle of spiritual fruit bearing. He taught his disciples that unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and “dies”, it will remain only a single grain of wheat, bearing no fruit at all. But if it dies, it will bear much fruit.

When the grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it springs up, and bears fruit. In a similar way the death of Christ would result in fruit for God’s kingdom. Jesus understood the laws of nature and often applied them in his teachings. In this case he illustrates that life was to

be the result of his death. People who cultivate and till the soil have the knowledge of this natural principle constantly before them. The cultivator or the farmer preserves his supply of grain by apparently throwing away the best part. For a while it appears dormant and hidden under the ground. It is in this state that nature’s law of germination becomes active as it is designed by the Creator. Although it appears dead and hidden beneath the soil, signs of life begin to appear, first the blade, then the ear, and finally the corn in the ear. It is important for us to understand that this phenomenal development cannot take place unless the grain is buried out of sight, hidden, and to all appearance, lost.

As mentioned earlier, the seed buried in the ground produces a plant which bears fruit, that has seeds. These seeds can then be planted to continue the circle of life. This is nature’s way of multiplying the harvest. Similarly Jesus’ death bore fruit unto eternal life. Jesus looks into the future and sees the undertaking of a great harvest and that by making this sacrificial atonement for the world his kingdom would be perfected and would extend throughout the entire globe. His Spirit would prevail and the partition between Jews and Gentiles would be broken down but also all nations, tongues, and peoples should hear the message of salvation.

The grain of wheat that preserves its own life can produce no fruit. It abides alone. Christ could, if he chose, save himself from death. But if he chose to save himself, he must remain alone and he would not be able to bring others (sons and daughters) to God. Only by giving up his life could he impart his life to humanity (the Holy Spirit). Only by falling into the ground to die could he become the seed of that vast harvest, the great multitude from out of every nation, and kindred, and tongue,

and people, who are redeemed to God. Jesus first applied this comparison of the fruitful grain to his life in order to symbolize the fruit that would be born through the sacrifice and suffering that he would endure so that all could receive eternal life. To his disciples then and now he also says:

*If anyone serves Me, he must follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also...*

With these words, Jesus revealed to his disciples that the same principle of spiritual fruit bearing that was at work in his life, would also be at work in their lives as well. Just as Jesus submitted himself to his father's will for his life, even to the point of death, every believing born again christian should yield and give themselves fully to God as we are called upon to submit to his plans and purpose for our lives. We are called not only to "die" to our own will and what we would choose for ourselves, in order that God's will and purpose for our lives will be accomplished but also to serve. It is through this "dying" and "serving" that we see spiritual fruit bearing to the glory of God.

Jesus also connects the lesson of self-sacrifice that we should all learn,

*He says: "He that loveth his life shall lose it; and he that hateth his life in this world shall keep it unto life eternal."*

If we are to bear fruit as workers together with Christ, our lives must be "cast into the furrow of the world's need". Self-love and self-interest, must perish. The law of self-sacrifice is the law of self-preservation. The grain is preserved by casting it away. To give is to live. The life that will be preserved is the life that is freely given in service to God and man. One well known writer comments on it this way: "A life spent on self is like the grain that is eaten. It disappears and there is no increase. A man may gather all he can for self; he may live and think and plan for self; but his life passes away, and he has nothing. The law of self-serving is the law of self-destruction"

Jesus also mentioned that : "If any man serve Me, him will My Father honor." All who have borne with Jesus the cross of sacrifice will receive and become sharers with him of his glory. Although Jesus suffered humiliation and pain it was his satisfaction and joy to know that we Christians would be glorified with him. We are the fruit of his self-sacrifice. The outworking in us of his own character and spirit is his reward, and will be his joy throughout eternity. It is with joy and satisfaction that we are to share with Jesus the fruit of our labor and sacrifices. We are to be workers together with Christ, and the Father will honor us as He honors his Son.

It was only through Jesus' death and separation from his Father that Satan's kingdom would be overthrown. This was the only way for man to be redeemed, and God be glorified. As we walk in obedience to God, and the circumstances, conditions, and limitations of our lives unfold, we will at times experience the "death", or the loss, of things that we wanted to have, keep and enjoy for ourselves. As God calls upon each of us to accept His sovereign will for our lives, we accept, not with regret and sadness but as Jesus did when He prayed: "...nevertheless not my will, but thine, be done"

These "deaths" will come about in our lives in ways that God has determined for each of us. And it will be through these "deaths" that we will follow Jesus, experiencing to some degree, a share in His sufferings as we are called upon to submit to our Father's will and plan for our lives. It will be through these "deaths" and our obedient submission to the will of God for our lives, that we will "take up our cross" and follow Jesus sharing in his humility and suffering. It will be through these deaths that we will produce fruit borne to the glory of God, develop faith and characters fit for his kingdom while bringing us to a better and closer relationship with Him.



## Escaping The Chains

**Continued from page 8**

name of Jesus Christ."

The world is sick of Christian rhetoric. They have heard sermons of theories for too long with no demonstration or power. It was different when Jesus or the apostles preached. They preached the gospel of the Kingdom. "And Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing all manner of sickness and all manner of disease among the people." (Matt 4:23) "And Jesus went about all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues, and preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and healing every sickness and every disease among the people." (Matt 10:35) The preaching of the Kingdom was with a demonstration of a reality existing in the preacher. By seeing that demonstration people were drawn to the message of the preacher and were able to find salvation and healing through him.

Here is a verse talking about Christians, the sons of God. "For the earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God.... Because the creature itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God." (Rom 8:19 & 21) The sons of God are yet to be revealed. If this revelation took place today there would be such a revival of true Christianity that the world has never witnessed! This is what the Bible teaches. The world is in darkness. It makes no sense to get all worked up about crime and violence or even racism. The world needs the light of the sons of God to give a living demonstration of reality here as a witness of something greater than what they are seeing today. Are you a child of God? Is your life demonstrating the power of God? The world is waiting to see this with a longing desire!



## Future Good Things

*Continued from page 9*

So Paul says that the law contained the shadows of good things to come, there were things not yet available which would appear in the future. In other words, the law was not a carbon copy of the gospel, it did not offer the same things which the gospel offers. It was like a photograph of a person versus the person himself. The real thing is far far greater than the photograph even though the photograph is in some ways, in some limited ways similar to the real thing.



## Will Babies Be Saved?

There is no clear answer in the Bible, but I believe if we look carefully at the principles of the gospel we can come to a reasonable conclusion.

First of all, God wants to save all whom he can possibly save, he is not willing that any should perish. Babies are among those who cannot make a choice and who cannot exercise faith. They did not ask to be born and they are not able to choose to be born again.

There are two factors to consider:

1. Does God have the LEGAL right to save babies?
2. How could God save those who were never born again?

Legally, the inheritance of Adam condemned all men to separation from God, but on the other hand, all men

have been legally reconciled to God by the death of his Son (Rom 5:10; 2 Cor 5:19). This includes babies. If a person is conscious and intelligent enough to make a choice and to exercise faith, then he must choose Christ and must believe in him in order to receive the new life which Christ offers. However, if a person dies before he is intelligent enough to make that choice, then his life legally belongs to the second Adam. Grace is greater than sin.

But what about the carnal nature? How can a person (even a baby) be saved if he has a carnal nature? I believe that in the resurrection, the life of Christ will be imparted to those babies, they will not be resurrected with a carnal nature, even though they died with one.



### **Open Face**

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