

The Joshua Book

The Fatherhood of God and the
Brotherhood of Man



RICHARD REVELSTOKE

The Joshua Book

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Author's Note

Jesus's name in Hebrew is *Yeshua*. Due to the subtleties of translation, the name *Yeshua* became *Iēsoûs* in Greek – pronounced *Yēsu'os*. The *us* was added on in keeping with the custom of the time – as in Marcus or Barnabus. This in turn became *Jesus* when translated into English, which is how he is known in the Western world to this day.

A much more accurate translation of his name is *Joshua*. His earthly father's name was *Joseph*, so he was *Joshua ben Joseph* – that is, *Joshua son of Joseph* or *Yeshua ben Yesuf* in his mother tongue.

Throughout this book, I will employ the more direct translation of the name *Joshua ben Joseph*. The reason for this departure from the traditional use of the name *Jesus* is two-fold:

- Firstly, for the simple reason it is closer to the original and a more faithful translation.
- And more importantly, the name *Jesus* has become somewhat prosaic: it is the exclusive domain of Western Christianity and is synonymous with all that Western Christianity entails. This book is not intended to further the doctrines of Western Christianity; it is intended to further the message and religion which Joshua ben Joseph brought to the world 2000 years ago.

Because this message has become lost, distorted, changed, re-invented and confused, not only by Western Christianity but also by its enemies and critics, I believe that the time is ripe for

a fresh re-presentation of the message which Joshua ben Joseph gave to the world. In order to aid the reader in looking at Joshua in a different way, it might be helpful to regain a closer approximation of his life and teachings by re-introducing him as Joshua ben Joseph.

I am in no way attempting to portray a new or different Jesus. Nor is this an attempt to invent a new religion. What I have attempted to do is portray the original message, or religion, which Joshua proclaimed without the assorted doctrines which Western Christianity has laid on top of his simple message of brotherly love and Fatherly devotion.

INTRODUCTION

What the World Needs Now

The only hope for this world is found in the message which Joshua presented 2000 years ago. In this time of great economic, political and social upheaval, there has never been a greater need for the transforming power of the religion of the Kingdom of Heaven without the various doctrines which have been added on to the simple truth that God is our Father and we are his Sons.

The world needs a fresh, unadulterated message of this truth. The world needs the person of Joshua shining through the true believers who will not compromise with religious dogma and tradition. The world needs to see Joshua in the face of those who willingly and cheerfully walk the second mile, who see every man, woman and child as their brother or sister, part of the greater family of God.

The world needs believers who really want to do the will of God, who would rather serve God than the church. I believe quite sincerely that the world is heading for a crisis of epic proportions on all fronts: economic collapse, environmental disaster, political upheaval, civil unrest, global war, the rise of a global totalitarian regime, the chaos of religious militancy and the clash of bankrupt political and religious ideologies.

The abortion which is coming is the still-birth of a religion without God, without morals, without a soul and without a conscience: a religion of death and defilement, a religion of self-indulgence and self-gratification, a religion which practices the

oppression of the many for the exaltation of the few – a religion of the control of man by man.

God help us all if we the believers are so caught up in religious traditions and fear-based prophecies that preach the same tired routine of an elite chosen who await the return of a militant king who will slay all political and religious enemies and install the religious elite as the rulers of the earth.

How could it be possible for the Prince of Peace, who taught us to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us, to be suddenly transformed into a vengeful tyrant? The scriptures truly are a revealer of the thoughts and intents of the hearts of men. This persistent theology of political control over others reveals a heart bent on ego-gratification and the pride of self which exalts itself over others as the highest ideal.

A great idea is worth repeating and Joshua had some really great ideas. He said that he who desires to be the greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven must be servant of all. The real saving truth of what Joshua ben Joseph taught is wrapped up in the simple truth that God is our Father and we are his sons. This Sonship in God and God's Fatherhood to his sons ought to be the essence of all religion: we are created by a loving, caring, compassionate, supernatural being who desires to bless us and make us more like him.

All we need to do is get with the program and follow the leading of the spirit of this same Creator/Father who lives within us. This means desiring to do the Father's will above all else. I hope that after reading this short book you will be encouraged to get with the program in a fresher and more meaningful way.

CHAPTER I

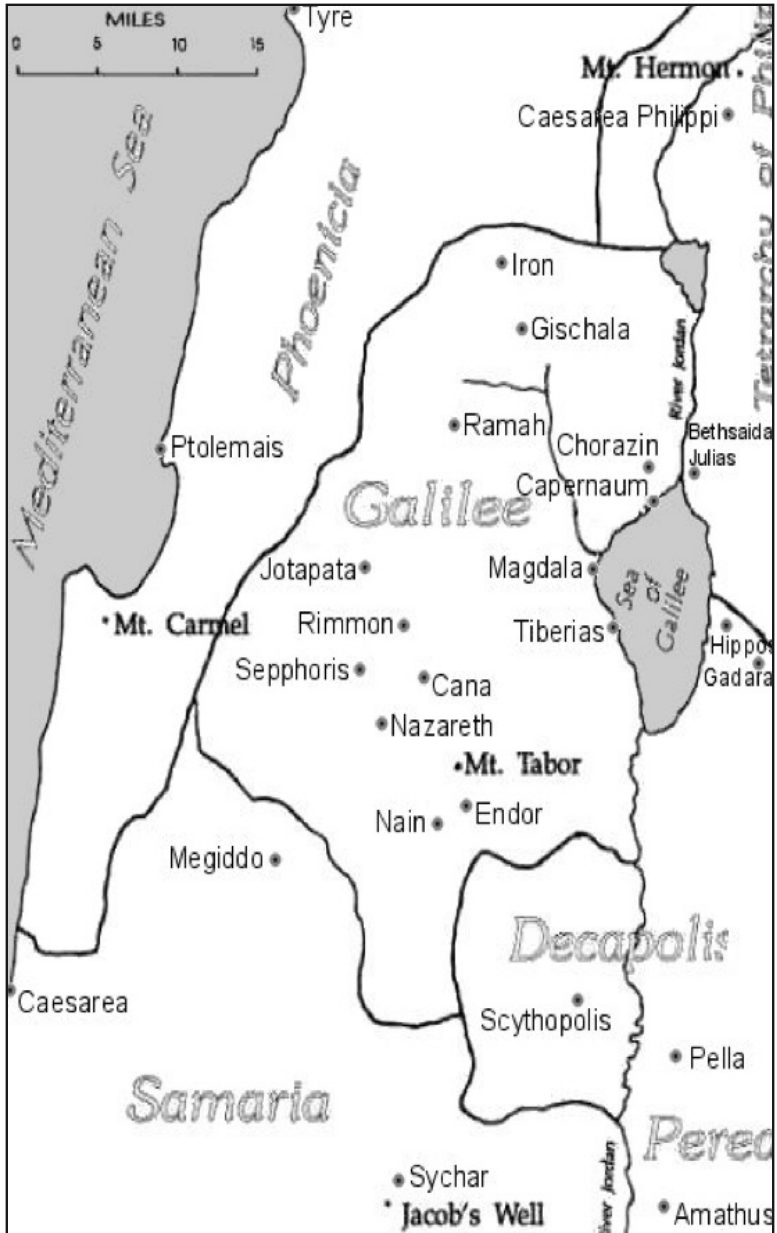
Joshua ben Joseph

Joshua ben Joseph was a very remarkable man. Born into a working class family, he came from the village of Nazareth whose liberal-leaning residents gave rise to the saying, *Can any good come out of Nazareth?* The religious leaders saw Nazareth as a morally loose and unruly town.

Nazareth was a tiny place nestled in a small valley surrounded by low hills, a place of such little consequence that it is hardly mentioned in historical records of that time. It was, however a beautiful, picturesque village, secluded by its low-lying location in a natural basin. On the hills five hundred feet above the town, one could see to the north the plateaus of Zebulun and Naphtali, and the mountains of Lebanon with snow-covered Hermon towering above them all. To the west could be seen the coast of Tyre and the blue waters of the Mediterranean.

Mount Carmel, the historic scene of the struggle of Elijah with the prophets of Baal was visible and to the south you could see Megiddo and the whole plain of Esdraelon, which was the scene of many of the most memorable battles of Israel. Tabor and the hills of Gilboa where Saul and Jonathan lost their lives were also visible. Mount Ebal and the land of Shechem lay in the background with the uplands of Gilead and Samaria.

The young master must have spent many hours on these hills as a child, marveling and imagining the many historical events which happened within sight of his young eyes.



Palestine



Mary's Well is reputed to be located at the site where the Angel Gabriel appeared to Mary and announced that she would bear the Son of God.

He no doubt came in contact with many diverse peoples because Nazareth was located half-way between the Mediterranean Sea and the Sea of Galilee, right on the caravan routes which connected the two seas and which also connected the Silk Road between Egypt and Damascus. Nazareth was a “truck-stop town” used by weary travelers to feed their camels and beasts of burden, rest and eat, and possibly have their cartwheels and yokes repaired – something which Joseph, a tradesman would do.

The Silk Road was an enormous and extensive interconnected trade route which blossomed on an unprecedented scale soon after the Roman conquest of Egypt in 30 BC. Regular communications and trade between India, Southeast Asia, Sri Lanka, China and the Middle East, Africa and Europe was established.

The early years of Joshua ben Joseph were certainly filled with the meeting and interaction of travelers and merchants from all walks

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of life: noblemen and commoners alike used these main arteries for transit to various parts of the Roman Empire and beyond.

Joseph, his father, was a carpenter. I spent a few years in the construction and cabinet making industry, working in close association with carpenters, framers and cabinet makers, and I can say that they are a happy, calm and good-natured bunch. They are sturdy men with good physiques, strong in the arms from lifting and pounding nails all day. They enjoy outdoor work and are seasoned from laboring in the heat, cold or rain.

They are gregarious and work well in a team environment. They are emotionally stable and assertive, generally men of action and not introspective dreamers.

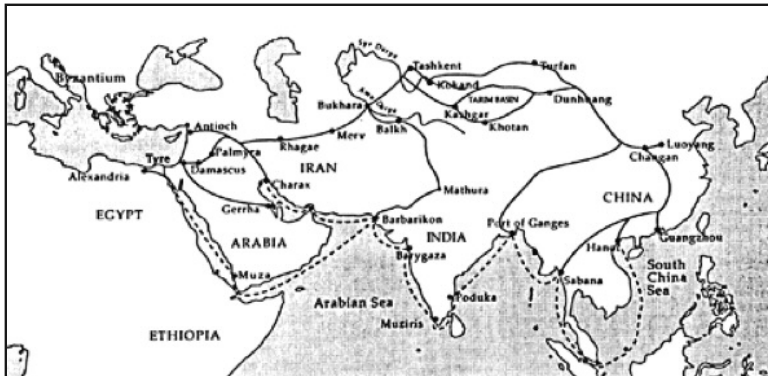
In the New Testament, Joshua's countrymen called him the son of Joseph, the carpenter. The Greek word used is *tekton*, which means not only a skilled craftsman but one who designed homes or buildings, or more than likely what we would call a contractor.

The Son of Man was not born in a palace or in the home of a wealthy merchant or nobleman. His upbringing was commonplace. He grew up in the normal way a child of his time would grow up. He learned to walk and talk and was educated in the same way as other children. He was, in fact, an average citizen of his time – that a man from such humble beginnings could rise to such a level and accomplish so much is extraordinary.

Mary and Joseph, knowing that their oldest son was also a child of great promise and destined to be a great spiritual leader, were no doubt much more attentive and alert to their child's upbringing and took extra care for Joshua's rearing. It is said that *Mary treasured all these things in her heart*, referring to the words of angels and shepherds alike who prophesied about the new-born babe.

The Young Master's Education

The normal education for a child at that time was home schooling. The father would educate the children at home using the Hebrew Scriptures as his guide. Memorization was the acceptable method. Often, a rabbi or teacher from one of the synagogue schools would begin tutoring a child at the age of eight to ten. After a child had completed his home education he could be admitted to one of the synagogue schools.



The Silk Road

The common language of the Roman Empire was Greek and Aramaic was the mother tongue of Joshua. When his father started his training at the age of five, the young boy would learn all history, ethics, politics and religion from the standpoint of the Law and the Prophets. Unlike the Greeks of their day, the Israelites did not learn of philosophy, art, science, and physical education.

The Son of Man's education was such that he would have memorized huge portions of the Hebrew texts which would account for his thorough knowledge of the Levitical Law. That he had to learn and study and formulate his later ideas is something that may sound foreign to some believers. That he accomplished what he did on earth through hard work, study and research would seem more likely than any miraculous or magical knowledge.

Due to the strict Pharisees' interpretation of the second commandment not to make any graven images, it was considered idolatry, a transgression of the law, to paint or sculpt – art was mostly foreign to the Jews of the early centuries. Physical or strenuous activities were likewise looked upon as heathen.

The Greek gymnasium schools combined physical exercise with scholarly pursuits. The Greek word *gymnos* means *naked* and the athletes trained in the nude. The Greeks worshiped beauty and they intertwined the aesthetic appreciation of the body with sport, religion and philosophy.

The Greek and Roman Gods

The Romans were still worshiping strange gods and legendary heroes. The Mystery Cults, so-named due to their originating with a myth or *mystery*, were flourishing at that time. One had to be initiated to learn of their secret practices.

They included the Dionysians, the Orphics, the Eluesinians and the Mithraic cults. They worshiped such gods as Apollo, Dionysus, Zeus, Jupiter, Pan and a host of other gods and goddesses in various rituals and philosophies which have since been lumped together under the term paganism.

These practices and rituals often centered around letting go of one's inhibitions and getting "back to nature," often through intoxicants, alcohol, and sex. Included was the belief in the spirituality of animals and trees or other aspects of the natural world.

They believed that certain rituals had to be performed to appease the gods. If the rituals weren't performed correctly, then the gods would be displeased and would not help. This led to a priest-class who had to be trained to perform these rituals.



Modern Druids gather at Stonehenge for Solstice Celebration.

Among practices considered to be pagan: human and animal sacrifices, divination, worship of nature and gods, belief in astrology, magic symbols and amulets.

The Greeks had art, science and philosophy. The Romans had an advanced political and legal system. The Jews, however, had the most developed systematic religion in the world. The advanced state of their monotheistic faith was fertile ground for the planting of the seed of the new religion that the Son of Man would soon proclaim.

The Reluctant Messiah

The divine side of the Master's dual nature had perfect knowledge and omniscience. The human side, however, had to learn and grow and progress like any one of us. His discernment and ability to understand and comprehend the scriptures was phenomenal. The fact that he understood perfectly what the Levitical law represented in no way detracts from the fact that God the Father did not *download* knowledge, language and learning into his brain.



Nazareth with Mount Tabor in the distance 1900-1920.

What the Master accomplished in his short lifetime is amazing when we consider the depth of his learning and the scope of his understanding. At the age of 12, he astonished the rabbis with his understanding. In fact, the New Testament recounts that all who heard him were amazed and marveled at all the wonderful things he said.

He was unlike the teachers of the law for *he spoke as one with authority*. The Son of Man summed up over 1000 pages of law and prophecy with the profound yet simple command, *to love God with all your heart and love your neighbor as yourself*.

The rabbinical law with its 613 rules and regulations enslaved his people into religious bondage; the Pharisees and Sadducees who ruled Israel's everyday life were exacting masters of its commands. Said the Master to them, *you tithe mint and dill and cumin, and have neglected the weightier matters of the law!*

The Jewish people had long waited for the expected Messiah, the redeemer who would come and overthrow the yoke of the tyrannical Romans. The Romans brought law and order and even prosperity to the world, but they were cruel and heartless masters.

Their widespread use of crucifixion as a political and social deterrent and means of control is legendary. In 73 BC, a band of 78 escaped gladiators – which grew into a band of over 120,000 – wandered throughout Italy effectively waging war against the Romans under the guidance of the famous gladiator-general, Spartacus.

Crassus, the Roman general, eventually slaughtered all but 6,000 of them in a final battle. To frighten other slaves from revolting, Crassus crucified the 6,000 survivors of Spartacus's men along the Appian Way from Capua to Rome.

We get the word *excruciating* from the Greek *ex* – *out of* and *cruc* – *cross*. Crucifixion was not only an excruciating way to die, it was also meant to humiliate and degrade the victim due to his public nudity. The body was not usually permitted to be buried but would very often be thrown into *Gehenna*, a huge pit outside of Jerusalem used to dump garbage and the newly executed.

The Romans were so cruel that they even crucified the dogs who failed to alert the city of Rome of an attack by the Gauls. This



Depiction of the crucifixions along the Appian Way

became an annual tradition each August as the wholesale slaughter of dogs was continued as a grim reminder to all.

Against this background, the passion play was enacted. The Jews were groaning under the Roman oppression and felt that according to scripture the redeemer would come and set them free from Rome. They believed that he would *sit on the throne of David* and *the government would rest upon his shoulders*.

The Messiah they were expecting was to be a super-human worker of signs and wonders, one who would do greater miracles than Moses, a lightning-bolt-and-thunder avenger who would smite their enemies and restore Israel to its rightful place in the world.

After all, weren't they the Chosen People? The God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob would surely hear their cry and set them free. These Hebrews read in their holy books that the prophesied Son would be a political and social deliverer that would *rule with an iron scepter*.

Even his closest followers, however, were doomed to face disappointment and disillusionment when their beloved leader not only did not become king and make them his right-hand men but met with utter disaster when he was arrested, tortured and murdered.

After the people saw the sign he performed, they began to say, "Surely this is the Prophet who is to come into the world." Knowing that they intended to come and make him king by force, he withdrew again to a mountain by himself.

Much of their hope would be dashed by this reluctant Messiah who refused to be made king over them and instead busied himself about his Father's business setting up a spiritual Kingdom in a very quiet and circumspect way.

Joshua did not set up a seminary or religious center to attract followers nor did he write his ideas down in a brilliant book so all could read and follow. He did not set himself up in public office so he could influence nations nor did he re-organize any economic, social or political systems – all of which were certainly within his power and abilities.

What he did do was band together a group of ordinary men and women who roamed about the countryside teaching and preaching wherever hungry hearts were to be found.



John baptizing Joshua in the River Jordan.

CHAPTER 2

The Kingdom of Heaven

John the Baptist

Before Joshua ben Joseph began his public ministry, his cousin John began preaching that the Deliverer would soon arrive on the scene. John was a fiery preacher who claimed he was *the voice of one crying in the wilderness*. He came preaching a message of repentance, warning the hypocrite and sinner alike to prepare themselves and make straight the paths.

John must have made a strange sight dressed in animal skins, his hair uncut and hanging down like some priestly caveman. He was a member of the Nazarite sect, spoken of in the Book of Numbers, whose members did not cut their hair and refrained from alcohol and the touching of the dead. Two of his illustrious brothers in the sect, Samson and Samuel, made strong examples in the history books of the scribes.

John announced that the Kingdom of Heaven was at hand, that it was near, at the gate. Now was the time to repent and get ready because the Messiah was coming.

John and his disciples practiced baptism, the immersing of the body in water to signify the washing away of sin. It was the later believers who made baptism the public ceremony of receiving salvation and entrance to the Kingdom, and soon after it signified membership into the church.

Interestingly enough, John used the Jordan River to baptize, which followed the Hebrew law to use living or flowing water (*mayim chaiyim*) instead of a bath (*mikveh*). When Joshua spoke to the Samaritan woman at the well he commented that the water she was drinking would only satisfy her thirst temporarily while the living water that he offered would quench her thirst eternally.

The Kingdom of Heaven

He went about all Galilee teaching in their synagogues, preaching the good news of the Kingdom and healing all manner of diseases.

God is not really a king in the way we think of a monarch who passes on his power to his next in line. Joshua made use of a concept which people could relate to in order to help us better understand what the spiritual world is like.

An earthly king would be a father-figure to his people – hopefully a just and benevolent king – not a tyrant. In this same way, Joshua portrayed God as a Father and we his sons in an enlarged, growing family of believers.

While he did not offer a precise definition of the Kingdom, he used many parables to compare what this Kingdom is like:

- *Joshua put another parable before them, saying, The kingdom of heaven is like a grain of mustard seed that a man took and sowed in his field. It is the smallest of all seeds but, when it has grown, it is larger than all the garden plants and becomes a tree so that the birds of the air come and make nests in its branches.*
- *the kingdom of heaven is like a treasure hid in a field that when a man has found it, he hides, and for joy thereof goes and sells all that he has and buys that field.*
- *the kingdom of heaven is like a merchant man, seeking goodly pearls.*

- *the kingdom of heaven is like a net that was cast into the sea and gathered fish of every kind.*

Sovereignty, Sonship, and the Supreme Desire

The Kingdom of Heaven has three main components: Sovereignty, Sonship, and the Supreme Desire to do the Father's will.

- Sovereignty – God is King and sovereign Lord over all. He reigns not only over the material physical worlds of the universe he created but also over the spiritual world that transcends the material plane of time and space.
- Sonship – membership in the Kingdom of Heaven means the recognition that you are a Son of God, made by Him, your Father, who lives in Heaven. God really is your Father, it is not just a metaphor that Joshua is referring to – our biological parents are co-creators with God, they participate in the creation of children, though in reality we are children of creation. *For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb.*
- Supreme Desire to do the will of the Father. To be a member of a religious organization or church is not necessarily to be a child of God. To be a true faith-son of God one must have the will of God as their highest desire. When the will of God is an obligation or duty, when it is your law or rule, then you are not really a true son. When the will of God becomes your will, then you are a true faith-son of the Living God.

The Prince of Peace based his gospel, his religion, on a fact: God is our Father and we really are his sons. Everyone is a son of God. To love our neighbor as ourselves was not a new concept to the Jews. What was new was that Joshua expanded the idea of a neighbor to include all nations, races, tribes, sexes and religions. The Jews only believed that their neighbor was another

Jew. The gentiles were not their neighbors nor were they members of the elite chosen people.

The Hebrews had a racial God. The *goyim* – which is variously translated as *nations, people, gentiles or heathen* – figuratively means a herd of animals or swarm of locusts, disclosing their low opinion of other peoples.

The fact that Israel was ruled by the heathen Romans was a blow to their national pride which the Deliverer was supposed to relieve. The radical message that there is *neither Jew nor Gentile in the Kingdom of Heaven* was a slap in the face to many of the intensely nationalistic Israelites.

The Invisible Church

Of all the many things which Joshua said, one of the most profound statements he made was that *the Kingdom of Heaven is within you*. This kingdom was not made of wood and stone or bricks and mortar – it was a completely spiritual entity without walls or doorways. This new kingdom existed solely in the hearts and minds and souls of the believers. *I will put my law in their minds and write it on their hearts*.

When Joshua said, *seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness*, he was not encouraging us to look for a building or an earthly kingdom – he was encouraging us to seek the will of God. It seems what Joshua was saying was that the kingdom of heaven is the will of God and those who are members of it are those who want to do God's will.

The brotherhood of believers is, then, the sons of God who desire to do his will; that is, those who are seeking the kingdom of heaven. These believers may or may not include the members of an organized church. We are joined by the spirit and by the unity of our shared spiritual goals and not necessarily by our church attendance.

The Son of Man and the Son of God

He called himself the Son of Man. The title he chose, to refer to himself, appears in the Old Testament in the Book of Daniel:

Behold, there came with the clouds of the sky one like a son of man, and he came even to the Ancient of Days, and they brought him near before him. There was given him dominion, and glory, and a kingdom that all the peoples, nations, and languages should serve him: his dominion is an everlasting dominion, which shall not pass away, and his kingdom that which shall not be destroyed.

He referred to himself exclusively as the Son of Man – 82 times to be exact – in the four gospels. The Jews did not expect the Messiah to be divine. They expected him to be human, a prophet with wonder-working power who would set them free from Roman rule. The Deliverer would come in power which to the 1st Century wonder-seeking Jews meant thunderbolts and lightning – they wanted a miraculous display of God's power and a militant overthrow of the Roman yoke.

He did not therefore reveal himself to the apostles as the Son of God until they saw for themselves that he was divine. *He asked them, "Who do you say that I am?" and Peter, speaking on behalf of all the apostles, replied, "You are the Son of the Living God."* Six days later, he led Peter, James and John up Mt. Hermon and they saw him transformed before their eyes, his face shone like the sun and his clothes became white as light.

It is forever true that God reveals himself to us based on our capacity and receptivity to receive the revelation – that *he never gives us more than we can bear* is true concerning trials and tribulation as well as concerning truth. He gives us what we can handle. The Son of Man was revealed to the apostles as the Son of God at a time when they were ready to receive the revelation.

After the transfiguration, the Son of God more openly proclaimed and revealed his divinity, not only to his friends but also to his enemies: *I tell you the truth, before Abraham was born, I am.*

Joshua ben Joseph based his religion of the Kingdom on his dual nature of humanity and divinity, on the fact of his Sonship to Man and his Sonship to God. The message which he proclaimed was the new living way for a mortal man to live the godly life here on earth. He revealed that the spiritual life was the most important pursuit here on earth when he said, *Seek ye first the Kingdom of Heaven and its righteousness.*

He did not say that the material things of this world were not important, only that the next life was more important and the highest ideal for us to attain. He did not live as a guru or ascetic teacher who hid himself away in a monastery or mountain retreat. He did not live as a penniless pauper begging alms, though he did choose to forsake everything in order to teach and pursue his ministry. He also expected his closest followers to do the same. The apostles really did give up everything to follow him.

Joshua ben Joseph was truly the Master of men; he understood them completely and commanded obedience and respect wherever he went. Whoever met him fell in love with him; crowds followed him everywhere hanging on his every word.

And when they heard these words, they marveled and went their way.

The Good News – The Mission of the Son of Man

*He returned to Galilee in the power of the Spirit,
and news of him spread throughout the whole region.*

He taught in their synagogues and was praised by all.

*He came to Nazareth, where he had grown up, and went
according to his custom into the synagogue on the Sabbath day.*

He stood up to read and was handed a scroll of the prophet Isaiah.

He unrolled the scroll and found the passage where it was written:

*The Spirit of the Lord is upon me,
because he has anointed me
to bring good news to the poor.
He has sent me to proclaim liberty to captives
and recovery of sight to the blind,
to let the oppressed go free,
and to proclaim a year acceptable to the Lord.*

Rolling up the scroll, he handed it back to the attendant and sat down, and the eyes of all in the synagogue looked intently at him.

He said to them, "Today this Scripture passage is fulfilled in your hearing." And all spoke highly of him and were amazed at the gracious words that came from his mouth.

The glad tidings or good news that the Prince of Peace proclaimed was that God was a loving, caring Father and we, his sons, can enter into a relationship with him. God the Father was not only the God of Abraham and Isaac – he was the God of all peoples of all nations on earth.

He proclaimed that we all could become liberated faith-sons of the creator of the entire universe. He came to tell those who were in bondage to fear, sin and superstition that they could be free – that this relationship between God and Man could break the chains which hold men and women down.

The Greek word for *bring the good news* is *evangelizo*, where we get our word *evangelize*. It is also interesting to note that the Hebrew word for *poor* used in the book of Isaiah is *anav* which

literally means *downcast* or *depressed*. Often this word is translated *humble*, *meek* or *lowly*.

People are depressed because of their circumstances: they are sick or afraid or confused; they are caught up in the addictive deception of sin and can't get free; and they are shackled in their minds by the enslaving power of religious tradition. Financial struggles plague the hearts of men and women – debt is widespread and poverty is rampant throughout the world. Social injustice and inequality result in the oppression of the weak by the strong and the leaders of the nations are often dictatorial and indifferent to the needs of the common people.

The Son of Man showed that the power of God will manifest itself in the believer's life like a fountain of living water which wells up inside of us and gives us spiritual energy and power to combat and overcome the obstacles and difficulties in our lives. He revealed God as an approachable Father who is there to counsel and guide us in our day-to-day struggles.

Joshua revealed himself as our spiritual brother willing to aid us and help us in overcoming our struggles in life: *In this world you will have many troubles but take heart for I have overcome the world.*

Salvation alone often sets people completely free from many of life's problems. Such is the power of the Spirit ... *not by might nor by power but by my spirit*. Salvation makes for immediate improvement in the family, the hearts of the fathers are turned to their children. Many new believers have testified to being freed from addictions on the day of their acceptance of God as their Father in Heaven.

My yoke is easy and my burden is light. The gospel which this carpenter proclaimed was not difficult to follow – anyone can understand it, even a child. He did not create a long list of do's

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and don't's, nor a complicated philosophy which required years of study. He showed the world a way of living life that was first of all simple, secondly spiritual and, thirdly, it was based on reality: God is our Father and we are his sons.



Joshua at the home of Mary and Martha.

CHAPTER 3

The Fatherhood Of God And The Brotherhood Of Man

The Fatherhood of God

Joshua called God *Father* more than one hundred times in the Book of John. He referred to God almost exclusively as *Father*. And this despite the fact that the Old Testament records a host of names for God, of which a short list would be: *Elohim, El-Shadai, Jehovah, Yahweh, Adonai* and *El-Elyon*. A longer list of more descriptive titles would include terms such as deliverer, rock, stone, fortress, shepherd, branch, redeemer, judge, shield, strength and king.

He often referred to God as *my father*, making God a personal family member which implies a loving, caring person who is interested in our well-being and personal growth. Just as our earthly fathers look after us (assuming they are good fathers) and are concerned and actively involved with our every phase of growing up so, too, does our Heavenly Father concern himself with our lives.

The Son of God revealed God to us by his own relationship with his Father. He said that *I and the Father are one*. That is, their purposes and the working out of God's will by the Son are one and the same. When we are so joined to the doing of God's will then we, too, will be one with the Father. He showed us that the supreme desire in life ought to be doing the will of God.

Through the pictures and word-stories of seeds and plants grown and harvested, Joshua showed the progression of the believer from a young sapling to full maturity – as a healthy stalk of wheat ready to be harvested or as a tree producing fruit year after year. What the parables Joshua taught revealed over and over was *a life of growth*.

When the Son of Man taught his disciples how to pray, the opening line of the prayer was *Our Father who is in Heaven*. This was not just a way to address God, it was the ideal way. It was *the most excellent way*, as the apostle Paul would say. That is, he taught his followers to address God as *Father*.

The Hebrews saw God as the Almighty, a stern judge who was a divider of the righteous and the unrighteous, a dispenser of justice and an avenger of his people. The God that Joshua revealed was a compassionate, loving, caring, forgiving God full of mercy and kindness who was intimately acquainted with all our ways.

*But now, O LORD, You are our Father, we are the clay,
and you our potter; and all of us are the work of Your hand.*

The Fatherhood of God is rarely mentioned in the Hebrew scriptures. Isaiah says God O Lord our father, our redeemer, and Jeremiah and Malachi make mention of God as Father of the house of Israel, but the God that Joshua referred to was the Father of all humanity. This was new, or at the very least it was a far-expanded revelation of God than anything heard on earth up until that time.

The Brotherhood of Man

The second aspect of this philosophy or religion was summed up in the statement *love your neighbor as yourself*, and this was tied into the first idea of the Fatherhood of God. This he also

based on a truth: we are all sons of God and, therefore, we are all brothers and sisters, members of a very large extended family.

Though Christianity would see humanity as either Christians or non-Christians, God sees us all as his children. The only distinction God makes with his children is between those who desire to do his will and those who do not.

As he was saying these things, a woman in the crowd called out, "Blessed is the mother who gave you birth and nursed you."

He replied, "Blessed rather are those who hear the word of God and obey it."

The woman glorified Joshua's mother because she was his immediate family member and therefore must have found favor with God because of her close family bond to him. He corrected her, however, saying that God was no respecter of persons and did not play favorites with family members – rather those who did God's will were blessed.

In the same way, we can see that just because someone is born into a religious family or is the son of a pastor or belongs to an amazing church does not mean they are given any special status in the Kingdom of Heaven. God loves us all equally. He is *no respecter of persons*.

The love that we feel from God and the love that we express to God results in a greater love for our fellow man. Knowing that we are all brothers regardless of spiritual status changes everything for the believer. We can only look upon our neighbor with the same compassion and depth of understanding that we feel from our shared Father.

Sonship in the Kingdom

Belonging to the Kingdom was not a free ride according to the carpenter's son. It came with obligations and responsibilities. *For everyone who has will be given more, and he will have an abundance. Whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken from him.*

The parable of the ten talents shows us that those who invest wisely with what God has put us in charge of will be in charge of more. The wise servant who gained five more talents was not only put in charge of more, he was also given the unfaithful servant's talent. *You have been faithful with a few things; I will put you in charge of many things.* This parable is not about God blessing us with prosperity or material possessions because of our good behavior or supposed righteousness.

This parable illustrates that faithful service in the Kingdom of Heaven is rewarded with greater service to the faithful servant. The carpenter from Nazareth taught that service to our brothers was the highest satisfaction and the highest gesture of love we can show. *No greater love has a man than to lay down his life for his brother.*

The modern interpretation of this parable is that we should use our *talents*, that is, our abilities to serve God. The coincidental English meaning of the Greek word *talanton*, which literally means *weight*, and in this case a weight of money, is not exactly what he was trying to convey. Joshua was referring to *ministry*.

Very often God asks us to do things which we have no talent or ability to do. He only asks that we follow the instructions given. Very often, in preparation for a work which he has in mind for us to do, he trains us and we gain the talent or ability needed. Often he puts us in situations and circumstances which we are unqualified for in order for us to learn the things we will need for future service.

Our willingness to follow God is much more important than any other consideration. It's commendable that we should volunteer our talents to God in service, though what is really required is a desire to do his will. Otherwise, we are saying we desire to serve God in a manner of our own choosing.

To quote a popular saying that I have heard repeated many times in Christian circles: *God is not concerned with our ability or our inability but he is concerned with our availability.*

The rich young man came to Joshua, asking to be made an apostle but he went away sad because he was asked to give up the one thing which he loved the most. If, however, he had done what he was asked and sold all he had and laid it at the feet of the apostles, they most likely would have put him back in charge of his own resources and then he would have fulfilled the principle that Joshua laid out which is *he who finds his life will lose it and he who loses his life for my sake will find it.*

CHAPTER 4

Further Aspects Of The Kingdom Of Heaven

The Greatest in the Kingdom

The carpenter from Nazareth taught that *he who would be greatest in the Kingdom of Heaven must be the servant of all*. This was in direct answer to the request of the mother of James and John Zebedee who came asking that Joshua allow her sons to be seated on the left and right of Joshua in the coming Kingdom. This again demonstrates the wrong ideas that the Jews had of the spiritual kingdom that the Son of Man was proclaiming. They kept waiting and wanting Joshua to take the throne of David and make them his chief officials. The apostles argued amongst themselves who would be the greatest in this new political system that the Messiah was supposed to inaugurate.

What a taste of bitter irony it must have been for Salome, the mother of James and John, to witness the crucifixion of two thieves, one on the left and one on the right of the dying Joshua.

Joshua turned all their ideas of national glory upside-down when he taught them to be servants and not rulers who lord over others. That these simple men eventually did overcome their racial pride is evidenced by their many selfless acts of service to the Gentiles, many of whom are recorded in the Book of Acts.

Man's pride, one of his greatest weaknesses, does not naturally permit him to be humble and to serve others. Pride desires to exalt the one who nurses it in his heart. Ego usually needs to lord it over others to be appeased. The sin of Lucifer began with his own self-admiration. He fell in love with himself.

Servanthood delivers us from the tyranny and bondage of self. The humility that Joshua taught was the humility towards God. It is not necessary to be timid and bow before men, something which Joshua did not do. Joshua was intimidated by no man. He was completely fearless. When arrested he gave himself up willingly. When abused he responded with respect: *"If I said something wrong," Joshua replied, "testify as to what is wrong. But if I spoke the truth, why did you strike me?"*^{vi}

Joshua taught a religion of courage in the face of our enemies and humility based on the living out of the will of God. Our Western society teaches self-assertion, the imposing of our personal will on others and the seeking of self as the highest ideal. A life devoted to the pursuit of sensual desires, the accumulation of possessions and the indulgence of every whim is an exercise in futility and often ends in tragedy.

The people with everything often have nothing.

The Two Great Commandments

You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind. This is the great and first commandment. And a second is like it: You shall love your neighbor as yourself. On these two commandments hang all the Law and the Prophets.

These two commandments are tied into each other: the love of God leads to the love of others. The love of others greatly dispels fear of men. *Perfect love casts out fear.* The fruit of our

relationship to God is greater service to others. Service to others is not the goal of the Kingdom – it is the result.

Remain in me, and I will remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

I am the vine; you are the branches. If a man remains in me and I in him, he will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing.

Remaining in close contact with Joshua, our teacher and counselor, means sharing our inner life with God. Sharing our inner life with God means we desire to do his will because everything we hand over to God becomes sifted and sorted by the Spirit and we become transformed by this same Spirit.

The Golden Rule

The working out of the second of the two central commands of the message of the Kingdom is known as the Golden Rule:

Do unto others as you would have them do unto you.

This commandment requires action. It is a positive command which means that one must think first before acting and put oneself in the other person's shoes. It requires understanding and consideration. And also respect. In order to treat others like you want to be treated you need to be sensitive to the other person's feelings and inclinations.

It eliminates selfishness in all social interactions. It puts others ahead of yourself and also reduces the profit motive to second class status in business dealings.

It can also be a personal ethic which each individual must work out for him or herself. It leaves it up to you how you must work

this commandment out. The respect and consideration that you show to people is just as important as the action. People can sense your motivation even if you don't exactly get it right.

Motivation is very important: God judges us based on our motives. We are not very competent at judging people based on their inner desires and motivations because we can't see into a person's soul as God alone can. We make our judgments based on outward appearances. I believe that the more Godlike we become the greater is our ability to correctly discern the attitude of someone's heart.

The Golden Rule has become the basis for the modern concept of human rights. It is used as the standard of justice where each person is entitled to equal treatment before the law and everyone has the right to just and fair treatment in the legal, social, economic and religious systems of nations.

Without, however, the discernment and guidance of the spirit the Golden Rule is only a thin rule for social conduct. The divine wisdom necessary to interpret situations correctly relieves the Golden Rule from the fossilization of dogma. Do not forget the same Spirit which moves you in your interaction with your brother is also operating in intimate contact with this same brother and guiding him in the proper course of action with you.

What would the world be like if we all treated each other fairly and justly, with love and respect in all things? I suggest it would be a far better place than it is now. If the whole world embraced the teachings of Joshua, and one day I believe it will – *every knee shall bow, every tongue confess* – then we shall see a radically different world than what we see now.

When the love revolution one day occurs on earth, when the nations of the world exhaust themselves of their relentless pursuit of wealth and power, when man has come to the end of

himself and, like the prodigal son, he fully realizes his spiritual poverty, then will he finally accept the better way of living which the carpenter's son proclaimed some 2000 years ago.

Positive Commands

The Son of Man taught positive commandments. His instructions require that we do something in contrast with the Law's list of thou-shalt-not's. He revealed to us not only by his word but by his actions the better way of life. The reason the Law is obsolete is because Joshua gave us a revelation of the *divine* law.

His positive commands include:

- *seek you first the kingdom of heaven*
- *ask and you shall receive*
- *knock and the door shall be opened*
- *love the Lord your God with all your heart*
- *love your neighbor as yourself*
- *pray for your enemies*
- *you must forgive others first in order to be forgiven*
- *show mercy in order to receive mercy*

Joshua taught a dynamic, active faith. His was not the introspective psychology of modern man who seeks mental stability through inner analysis and self-study. Joshua taught a religion of *doing good* based on our relation as an earthly mortal translated into an eternal faith-son of a spiritual Father.

Salvation from self comes through the attainment of perfection in the pursuit of God. Righteousness is something we achieve.

It takes commitment over time in the day-to-day choosing of the right path. Every day it gets easier and easier for the sincere believer to do the right thing.

The religion of Joshua requires effort. It also requires *courage and commitment*. *Loving God with all our heart and soul and mind* has deep implications for the believer. It means a personality completely dedicated to the doing of the will of God.

Born Again

In order to enter the Kingdom of Heaven, you must be born again.

When Joshua ben Joseph taught us to be as little children, he did not mean we must be innocent and childish again. He meant we must become a Child of God recognizing the Fatherhood of our God who dwells in Paradise. This same supernatural Creator who is greater than a universe, who knows the stars by name and number, is also our closest friend and lives inside us – closer than a brother.

We began our mortal, material life in the flesh the day we were born from our mother's womb. We begin our eternal, spiritual life the day we are born from the womb of the spirit which joins with us in an everlasting journey to the Paradise of God.

Our earthly parents bring us to a life in this world, our Heavenly Father brings us to a life in the next.

Even a blind man can tell when he is walking in the sun. God is so close, so near to us, that truly only a spiritually blind man cannot see it. He is here every day of our lives looking out into the world through our very eyes, seeing what we see, experiencing what we experience.

But you are not in the flesh; you are in the spirit, if the Spirit of God dwells within you.

CHAPTER 5

Spiritual Growth

The only condition of salvation in the Kingdom is growth. We are to continue to grow from now unto eternity, to become more like God with each passing day. It gets easier every day to do the right thing for those whose minds are occupied with the things of eternity. *Outwardly we are wasting away, inwardly we are renewed day by day.*

The parable of the mustard seed shows the progressive nature of the Kingdom of Heaven, where the smallest spark of faith can eventually grow in a person to become a great thing. An inconsequential person with little value or status in the eyes of the world can be a great person in the Kingdom.

The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man took and planted in his field. Though it is the smallest of all seeds, yet when it grows, it is the largest of garden plants and becomes a tree, so that the birds come and perch in its branches.

I personally have witnessed many people who were living on nothing, some even on welfare or disability pension who spent all their waking hours preoccupied with serving God. Though the world sees them as insignificant, they are surrendering their lives to God. For the true believer, what the world offers cannot be enough. Living life for mere success is no longer satisfying. The spirit which indwells the child of God compels the believer onward and upward, urging us on to greater glory and greater service to our fellow man.

Though we cannot make ourselves grow, we can surround ourselves with the environment that makes growth possible. We can fill up our lives with positive, healthy activities; we can choose to associate with positive, spiritual people; we can spend time in communion with the Father; we can actively pursue the things of the Kingdom and stir up a greater desire to serve others and love God more.

The Good Soil

Spiritual growth is augmented and enhanced by several factors:

- Social environment – a positive, healthy and emotionally stable family where the mother and father are committed to each other, love each other, are wise with finances, and concerned with their children’s future: this is the best environment for the steady growth of children.
- Inherited temperament and tendencies – our emotional and mental temperament influences our receptivity to spiritual truth and values. Your inherited character traits affect how you react to life’s problems. Many weaknesses inherited from our families may need to be overcome to make a better foundation for spiritual life.
- Physical health – it is difficult to pursue God, experience life and interact with society if we are unwell, unhealthy and psychologically stressed or unbalanced. You will observe that strong, flourishing believers are almost invariably healthy people who take care of themselves and their bodies.
- Habits of attitude and activity – the way we meet challenges and opportunities for progress influence us greatly in our spiritual growth. We habitually fall into ways of dealing with people, work, family, stress and the challenges of life. For some, every obstacle or challenge in life is a crisis which they meet with panic, fear, anxiety or emotional breakdown. For others,

the challenges of life are cause for contemplation, communion with God for wisdom and insight, and even an aggressive zeal at the prospect of a difficult, challenging task.

- Sharing life with fellows – many believers do not share their experiences with their brothers and sisters. They withdraw under fire and isolate themselves. Some choose to put on a false front to maintain an air of righteousness or “having it all together”, while others gladly open up and share their victories and defeats with their fellows. This greatly adds meaning and relieves tension and emotional stress. The moral support of our brothers and sisters is a great strength.
- Communion with the Father – seeking God on a daily basis for direction and guidance is essential to advanced progress.
- Continually bearing fruit – serving others on a daily basis without complaint; being a cheerful giver and deciding on this day whom we will serve.
- Recognizing we are poor in spirit – and maintaining a hunger for righteousness and perfection. Relative to God who is an eternal, infinite perfect being we are in pretty poor shape. Comparing our life to that of Joshua can be a humbling look in the mirror. We need to see this as a motivating aid in our pursuit of God and not a depressing self-abasement.

Personal Experience

The Son of Man taught that *the Kingdom of Heaven is within you*. The life in the Kingdom of Heaven is something we experience in our inner soul. The only way to know whether God exists is through our own personal experience. Only by personal contact with this invisible creator can we know for certain that God is real.

No argument of logic or reason, no scientific study can prove that God is real. There is no empirical evidence for God because

he is not made of material, empirical things – he is spirit and made of spirit, something which is outside of time and space and not composed of atoms or energy particles.

Through the experiences we have with our Father and our spiritual brothers, we grow. Because of the desire which grows in us to do good to others, we increasingly manifest the love of God to our fellows. The social service we perform for others, even the giving of a cup of water to a small child, enables us to experience the saving power of putting our own needs aside in favor of the greater good of all.

Real religion is personal and experienced on an individual level. Organized church is the socialization of this truth. We congregate based on shared similar religious experiences. *True religion is the care of widows and orphans.* This doesn't mean that if we don't take care of widows and orphans we are not religious. What James was getting at was that the active service to others was a more authentic display of religious experience than merely going through the motions by following religious rituals. Sunday morning church attendance does not make you a religious person. It makes you the member of a religious social club.

Until you actually become a true faith-son of the living God, you will not really have the natural desire to serve others cheerfully. The more we love God and the more we serve others and gain useful and practical experience, the more we experience God and the more we grow and are able to serve others in greater capacity and sincerity.

The Eternal Quest for Perfection

The great commandment *to be perfect as our Father in Heaven is perfect* is rooted in a desire which exists in all of us. If you have ever worked for a flawed and poorly managed company and listened to the endless complaints of the employees who work

there, you know well how much people detest incompetence and bad decision-making. There is something within us that cannot tolerate imperfection and desires perfection.

The human drive for achievement, excellence and attainment is innate. It is a direct result of the operation of the Spirit over all mankind who compels us onward. When Joshua sent his spirit on Pentecost, he poured it out over all flesh, and not just the apostles congregated in a room.

The ministry of God the Spirit is everywhere present, at all times, in all of space. The psalmist echoed this truth when he said,

*Where can I go from your Spirit?
Where can I flee from your presence?
If I go up to the heavens, you are there;
If I make my bed in the depths, you are there.*

This interaction between God and Man is occurring daily to all peoples of all races and nations for all of time. The hand of God, though invisible, is active in uplifting all of mankind.

The quest for perfection is part of the human struggle for existence, in the material struggles we face in our daily lives and in the spiritual struggles we face in our efforts to fulfill and follow the leading of the Spirit and the manifestation of the divine law we witness. We encounter situations, conflicts in our jobs and family life, crises in our cities and nations which force us to adapt, react and make decisions. The decisions we make with the aid of the indwelling Spirit further us along in this eternal quest.



Joshua at the Last Supper.

CHAPTER 6

Salvation

In order to understand salvation we must first understand the most fundamental truth about the universe, the world we live in and the God we serve. The most essential fact of existence is that God created the universe and everything in it. This is not a theological or philosophical argument, nor is it a hypothetical concept: it is a fact.

- The most essential truth of our religion, is that God is our Father and we are his children. He created us, he fathered our existence. God is not simply a mechanistic creator – the universe he created and maintains is based on *love*.

Therefore our creator is benevolent. He desires to do good to us and for us. The universe is not just hunks of rock and spinning gas in space – everything is created with the principle of love, everything is permeated and surrounded by the everywhere-present reality of God.

All matter and energy, both physical and spiritual, flow from the throne of God, from paradise, which is the source of all reality.

- The second thing we need to understand is that salvation is survival. If someone dies having rejected all leadings of the indwelling Spirit and the Spirit has left them then there can be no eternal life for that person. The body will return to the soil from whence it came and will be remembered no more.

- And thirdly, salvation is by faith. We cannot see this invisible God. *No man can see God and live.* The only proof we can have that God is real is through our own personal experience with him. No amount of logic or reasoning will do. The believer and the non-believer share the same dilemma. Neither can find the evidence to support their arguments on the existence or non-existence of God.

Once you know there is a God because you have experienced him, you realize what kind of God he is: that he is fatherly and loving and caring. The man who sees God as a hard man, *harvesting where he has not sown and gathering where he has not scattered seed* doesn't really know God.

Once we recognize that God is our Father, we can begin the newborn life as a faith-son. This world is the embryo of the next. Once we begin our new life, we start to learn as a child what this spiritual world or kingdom of heaven is all about.

Salvation is Survival

To be set free from the bonds of the flesh, to rid ourselves of our mortal blanket, to cast off the shackles of physical need and want and hunger, is an urge which lives within us all. *All of creation is indeed groaning* and those who are believers long to enter the gates with thanksgiving in their hearts and walk the halls of paradise.

Salvation is by faith alone. It does not take very much faith to believe that Joshua lived and died 2000 years ago. There is adequate historical evidence documented by the witness of many believers. The background history of the gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John is sufficient proof that the events of Joshua's life did indeed occur. However, faith in an invisible creator is the basis for our salvation.

The opposite of eternal life is death. There are basically three kinds of death:

- Physical death when the body has ceased to function, the heart stops and the brainwave activity is nil.
- Intellectual death when the body is still functioning but the brain is inactive due to coma or brain injury or mental retardation.
- Spiritual death when the spirit of God has given up on the mortal soul who has consistently and, without equivocation, resisted all leading of the spirit to compel him to salvation and eternity. Those who refuse the paths of salvation will not inherit eternity.

The reality, therefore, of survival in the next life is based on the freewill choice of the individual. If someone does not want salvation, no amount of persuasion, display of miracles, clever preaching or impassioned prayers will move them. God does not coerce us by force or stoop to any devious tactics to get us in his kingdom.

Allowing God access to our thoughts and feelings, dreams and aspirations, is something God will only enter into with us if we are willing. Though the truth is that God knows all anyway, he allows us the privacy and freedom to offer ourselves in accordance with our own level of surrender. If we desire to share our inner life with God, then are we not saying we want to do his will?

The intimacy that is the relationship of the Father and Son is quite remarkable. Not even our closest friends and family can ever come close to understanding or knowing us on the inside, which is for the most part hidden from the world. When we share all of ourselves with God we are essentially saying, *I want to do your will, Father.*

God is not threatened by, angered or surprised at anything we think or feel. We can approach God with impunity. Though he will not hear any prayer which is not part of his will, he is willing to listen to all our thoughts – the good, the bad and the ugly.

He is truly the best friend anyone could have because he cares for us with divine love. Knowing God is the door to salvation. Knowing that he is your Father and that you are his Son or Daughter is the key to that door.

Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

A Modern Parable

Now an expert in religious law stood up to test Joshua, saying, "Teacher, what must I do to inherit eternal life? He said to him, "What is written in the law? How do you understand it?" The expert answered, "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, with all your strength, and with all your mind, and love your neighbor as yourself." Joshua said to him, "You have answered correctly; do this, and you will live."

But the expert, wanting to justify himself, said to Joshua, "And who is my neighbor?"

There was a young man who lived in the seediest part of town. He was a drug addict and a thief who supported his habit by stealing. One day he was down on Hastings Street late at night. A gang of punks surrounded him and beat him. They took what little money he had and left him bleeding in the alleyway.

A pastor on his way to church that Sunday morning saw the man in the alleyway and debated whether to help him or not. He reasoned that if he stopped to help the man he would be late for church and miss giving his sermon, which he had spent all week preparing. His congregation would be upset with him

and he would lose face for being so late. He thought the needs of his church members were greater than that of this poor drug addict. And anyway, it was no doubt the addict's own fault for hanging around such a bad neighborhood late at night. So he hurried on his way remembering to say a prayer for this poor, lost sinner.

A police car drove by a little later with two officers in it who saw the young man lying in the alley. They were on their way to a weekly meeting with their fellow officers and scoffed at the man, commenting he was probably drunk and would soon wake with a big hangover. And so they went on their way.

A short time later, a Muslim man on his way to open his business chanced to walk by the alleyway. He worked Sundays because he really didn't care much for religious days and preferred to make some extra cash to help support his family.

He saw the young man laying there and heard him groaning in pain. He stopped and looked a bit closer and he saw that the man was hurt quite badly and had lost a lot of blood.

The Muslim man called his wife and told her what happened. She was shocked and immediately suggested she come by and see what she could do because she was a trained nurse back in Pakistan, the country of their origin.

She grabbed their two boys and her first aid kit, and jumped in the car and drove over. When she arrived she cleaned and dressed the young man's wounds.

His wounds were not fatal, she concluded, but he was very weak and dehydrated from loss of blood. She told her husband that they should take him home with them and feed him and let him rest for a day or two until he was stronger. If they left him there, he might catch pneumonia from lying on the cold ground.

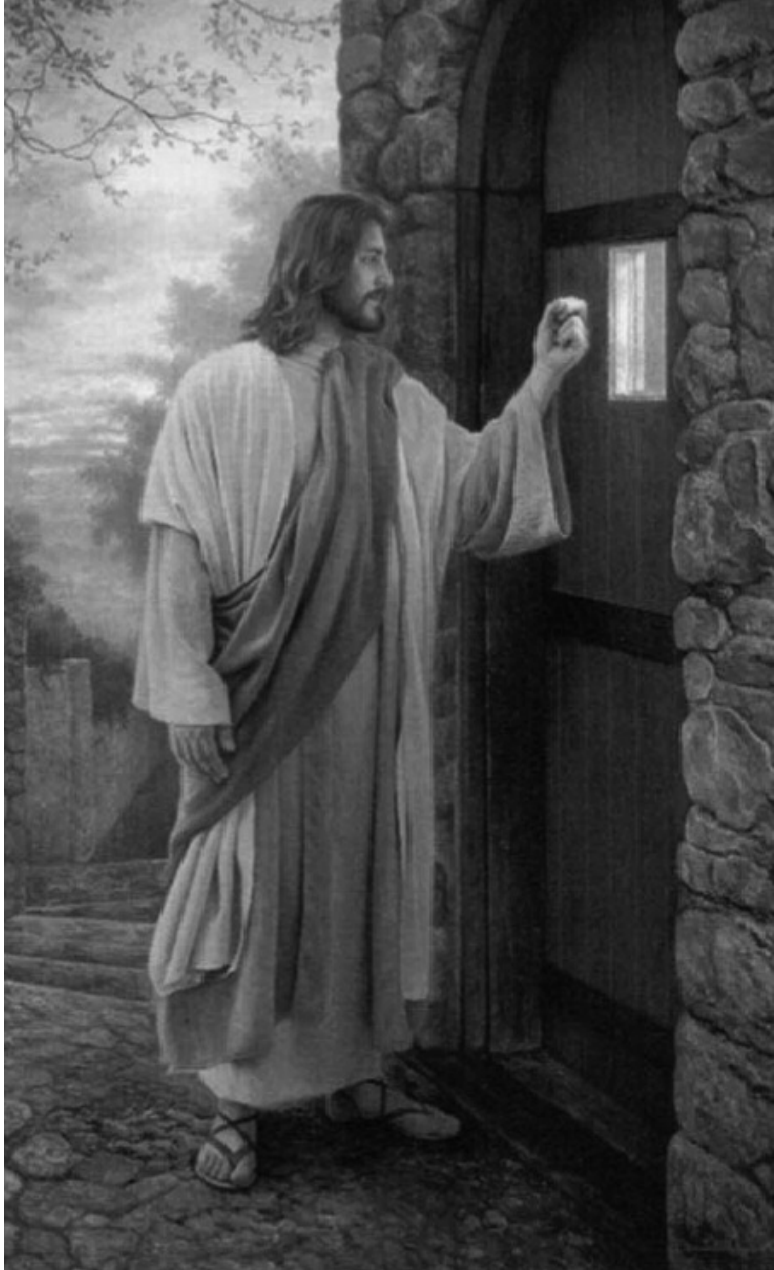
They took him home with them and fed him and let him sleep in the children's room while they all slept in the parents' room. The man recovered and was extremely grateful they had helped him. He had never met such kindness from strangers before.

This act of kindness warmed his heart and renewed his faith in others and in himself. He resolved after this incident to get off drugs and straighten out his life, which he eventually did.

If we refer back to the parable of the Good Samaritan we notice something:

On one occasion an expert in the law stood up to test Joshua. "Teacher," he asked, "what must I do to inherit eternal life?"

The parable was the answer to the scribe's question of how to find salvation, and Joshua's final words at the end of the parable were *Go and do the same*.



Behold, I stand at the door and knock.

CHAPTER 7

Follow Me

It often strikes me that Joshua began his ministry with nothing. He had no resources, no followers; he had not written any books or gone to the centers of higher learning nor worked his way up the professional ladder in order to gain recognition and acceptance by the people.

He merely walked out one day and gathered disciples around him by the simple command to *Follow me*. The charisma and personal strength of character of Joshua cannot be overstated. He drew people to him like bees to honey. It is remarkable that a group of rugged, common fishermen would drop everything and follow after a virtual stranger who they just met on the beach.

Did Joshua choose these men because they were intellectual giants or sophisticated men of the world? Perhaps he chose them because they were brave and loyal men who could handle the testing and sifting which was soon to come.

At the height of his ministry, he may have had a camp of over 300 disciples when you factor in the apostles' wives and children and other assorted followers. When he sent out the seventy evangelists, one can surmise that they all lived and worked and taught together in a mobile community. Joshua and his disciples lived a nomadic life, which meant sleeping in tents out in the open and cooking over a fire and doing all the things campers do.

The apostolic corps alone must have totaled between thirty to fifty people when you include their families. They would have



Middle-East Nomads.

had donkeys and other livestock to cart their tents and clothes and belongings around. And probably chickens and goats to supplement their diet with fresh eggs and milk.

Plus the women's group of leaders such as Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, Martha and others. Not to mention the scores of people who followed the entourage wherever they went.

The financial resources needed to feed, clothe and maintain such a large group of people for over three years was obviously quite high. If Joshua were alive today and he had conducted his ministry in today's modern world, his budget would no doubt have run into the millions of dollars. The fact that all of his finances were donated shows the level of support that people had for him.

They lived a nomadic life, moving from town to town, preaching and teaching the gospel of the Kingdom wherever they went, healing the sick, delivering those in bondage from fear and sin – doing good.

The foxes have holes, the birds have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to lay his head.

The rugged lifestyle of the apostles must have made quite an impression on the young men of the day – witnessing the rough-and-ready fishermen preaching this radical, new gospel while bravely facing persecution and the threat of death must have gripped the imagination of the restless youth of Israel, long-tired of the suffocating yoke of the Romans.

Apostles, Disciples and Evangelists

There is a distinction between the different groups of people who surrounded the son of the carpenter. They were not a homogenous bunch – they had distinct roles and distinct training.

The core group of apostles was hand-picked by the Master. They were Andrew, his brother Simon Peter, James and John Zebedee, Nathaniel and Phillip, Matthew the tax collector, Simon the Zealot, Judas and James Alpheus, Thomas, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

These men were not the sons of noblemen or wealthy politicians. They were not the upper class academics or powerful sons of the priest-class. They were ordinary working-class men. These men were required to give up everything in the service of the Kingdom.

The modern church divides its workers into categories of pastors, deacons, worship leaders and an assorted staff of ushers, administrators, cell group leaders, prayer group leaders, Sunday school teachers, musicians, multi-media support, program leaders and security and maintenance.

The main three groups of Joshua's ministry consisted of ambassadors, students and recruiters – that is, apostles, disciples and evangelists. Judas was treasurer and Peter acted as spokesman for the group and he also took the role as the main preacher.

The apostles were ambassadors of the kingdom and, as such, were held to a higher standard of behavior. The Greek word

used in the New Testament is *apostolos*, which means *one who is sent out*. An ambassador is someone trained in diplomacy, tact and the social skills necessary to interact with people of diverse cultures, nations and ethnicity. *A soft word turns aside wrath* is truly the watch word of an ambassador.

Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you. And behold, I am with you always, to the end of the age.

When Joshua gave the apostles these instructions, you will notice that he commanded them to make *disciples* of all nations; teaching them to observe all that he had commanded. He did not tell them to convert people to Christianity or make them members of a church. He exhorted them to find *students* and teach them.

In the Book of Mark, we find the Master exhorting his apostles to *Go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation* which begs the question *what gospel?* The gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven that Joshua had been elaborating on for over three years was the basis of the teaching which the apostles were required to impart to their new-found students.

An ambassador for a nation must be broad-minded and highly educated. In our increasingly complex world, an ambassador must have a good working knowledge of politics, economics, trade, culture and social customs. It is difficult to succeed in evangelism unless you have a good understanding of the culture you are witnessing to or if you are tactless and unsympathetic with their questions and concerns.

The apostle Paul was a Roman and a Jew, so he not only spoke Hebrew and Latin but also knew Greek: he was well-acquainted with the Greek philosophies of the time.

So he reasoned in the synagogue with both Jews and God-fearing Greeks, as well as in the marketplace day by day with those who happened to be there. A group of Epicurean and Stoic philosophers began to debate with him.

Joshua was also quite familiar with the languages and customs of the day – he was no doubt conversant in Hebrew, Aramaic and also Greek, as that was the common language of scholarship at that time. Joshua was extremely skillful in deflecting and defusing confrontations due to his sagacious and diplomatic choice of words.

Tact is the art of making a point without making an enemy.

– Sir Isaac Newton

The Women's Corps of Disciples

One of the great shames of the church is the degrading and downplaying of the role of women in the early and subsequent modern church. Joshua elevated women to equal status in the new Kingdom of Heaven. Prior to Joshua, women were considered spiritually inferior to men – they were second-class citizens, not only on the street but in the synagogue.

Rabbi Eliezer wrote in the 1st century AD: *Rather should the words of the Torah be burned than entrusted to a woman ... Whoever teaches his daughter the Torah is like one who teaches her obscenity.*

Women were not permitted to testify in trials or take part in public office; nor were they permitted on the main floor of the synagogue, but were relegated to the women's gallery which was (and still is in many orthodox synagogues) in an upstairs balcony or behind the men's gallery divided by a curtain.

Jewish women were not permitted to speak to men in public so it must have been very shocking to his disciples when, at the well, Joshua dared to speak not only to a Samaritan, but a Samaritan woman.



The Woman at the Well.

One of the most overlooked and poorly translated sections of Luke Chapter 8 tells of the women disciples who traveled with the group.

And it came to pass soon afterward, that he went about through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good tidings of the kingdom of God, and with him the twelve, and certain women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary that was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who ministered unto them of their substance.

The key line here is the last one which is incorrectly translated to appear as if these women followed the apostles around and gave them money. The word translated here as *ministered* is the Greek word *diakoneo* which is where we get the word *deacon*. The meaning of the passage is that they served as deacons from their

own property or possessions. In other words, they did not rely on the apostles for financial support but provided for themselves.

This group is also mentioned in Mark chapter 15 with the same Greek word *diakonoēs*, translated here as *served*:

When the Roman captain standing guard in front of him saw that he had quit breathing, he said, "This has to be the Son of God!"

There were women watching from a distance, among them Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of the younger James and Joseph, and Salome. When Joshua was in Galilee, these women followed and served him, and had come up with him to Jerusalem.

What also stands out is that all of the Master's male apostles except John completely deserted him. At the foot of the cross were three women – his mother, Mary Magdalene and Martha. The first person to greet the resurrected Joshua was Mary Magdalene.

Paul also mentions the female apostle Junia in the Book of Romans: *Greet Andronicus and Junia, my fellow Jews who have been in prison with me. They are outstanding among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was.*

And in Philemon he states: *I entreat Euodia and I entreat Syntyche to agree in the Lord. Yes, I ask you also, true companion, help these women, who have labored side by side with me in the gospel together with Clement and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the book of life.*

Anyone who has spent any amount of time in churches knows that the real spiritual leaders of most churches are women: the ones who consistently run the prayer groups, the daycare, the choir, the kitchen ministry and Sunday school. Men are almost

unanimously in charge of the administrative duties, including the pastor, the elders and worship director – although the backbone of most churches are women. Did not Joshua say that if you wish to be a leader in the Kingdom of Heaven you must be servant of all?

There is neither Jew nor Greek, male nor female, slave nor freedman in the Kingdom of Heaven.

In this material existence on planet earth we are not all created equal – there are great differences in intellect, ability, social status, wealth, physical fitness and spiritual capacity. And this truth is quite obvious when we view the various levels of civilization and social, economic and political progress of different nations.

We are all, however, equal in the eyes of God. In this world, men are the de facto rulers and authority figures. Man, however, has no real authority over woman, as legislated by God, unless the woman voluntarily surrenders her autonomy to the man. The Prince of Peace tore down the barriers of tradition that subjugated women to an inferior spiritual status to men. They were given equal status in the Kingdom.

But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that.

Paul states quite plainly that he is offering his own opinion on the subject of marriage and women. If everyone were celibate like Paul, then it would spell the end of the human race. God has obviously made marriage the norm for humanity. Adam and Eve were created at the same time and, though patriarchal man has had a heyday of the Hebrew reference to Adam needing a helper, every happily married man can tell you that marriage is a partner relationship and not a boss-employee relationship.

I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man; she is to keep silent.

Those who would argue that Paul's statement is a commandment from God neglect to recall that the first teacher and authority figure in every man's life is his mother. For most of us, our first teachers in elementary school were women. And if I recall, it was my teachers telling the children to be silent and not the other way around.

Woman is always at a disadvantage to man because of the maternal instinct. She is tied to her children: childbirth and the early years of child-rearing force her to rely on the man for protection and provision. Man has unashamedly exploited this to the full over the centuries, making woman his servant, his slave and a second-class citizen.

True equality will come when man learns to make way for the woman: when he learns to fully honor and value the role which a woman plays in society and in the home; when women are afforded an equal opportunity in government as well as in the family – then we will witness true equality and an enhanced display of social justice.

CHAPTER 8

The Godly Character

Every good quality that we know of can be found in God. Joshua revealed God the Father to us by his every word and deed. Every action he took was positive. He never made a mistake and he was never selfish. He was completely and utterly devoted to the doing of God's will.

Some of his most striking qualities:

- compassionate – he continually had an empathic understanding of others. This was something which was natural to him. He struggled with all the things we struggle with so he understands what we go through. The word *compassionate* means *suffer with* and this he did. When he saw the crowds, he had compassion on them, because they were harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd.
- forgiving – one of the most remarkable statements Joshua made was in his final moments on the cross: *Forgive them Father for they know not what they do*. He even forgave his enemies when they tortured and murdered him.
- merciful – he did not condemn the adulterous woman, rather he let her go when the law required she should die. Joshua exemplified the characteristic of God *who does not want that any should perish*.
- friendly – the Prince of Peace was quick to make friends with people of all walks of life. He was the friend of publicans and

sinners. Lazarus was numbered among his friends. *Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but now I will go and wake him up.* The apostles were called his friends at the end of Joshua's life: *But now I call you friends because I have told you everything I heard from my Father.*

- fearless – The Master was afraid of no man, neither politician nor merchant nor priest. The kings and authority figures of this world did not intimidate the Son of Man in the least. Pontius Pilate said to Joshua, *“Do you refuse to speak to me? Don't you know I have the authority to release you, and to crucify you?”* Joshua replied, *“You would have no authority over me at all, unless it was given to you from above.”*
- aggressive – to some this would seem a poor quality. However we can see that Joshua was bold and his actions displayed a dynamic personality, definitely not passive. The scene at the temple where Joshua drove out the moneychangers and animals demonstrates his take-charge attitude.
- courageous – it required phenomenal courage to willingly face the torture and pain of crucifixion. Joshua demonstrated a religion of valor and bravery; he did not back down from the insults, persecutions and threats of death which were hurled at him from religious and political leaders.
- patient – he was always patient with the apostles, answering their often foolish questions and repeating himself over and over again. He did not grow exasperated or throw up his hands in disgust, fed up with their immaturity. He spent a lot of time with people, concerning himself with the needs and well-being of the individual, ensuring their understanding of his teachings.
- kind – the carpenter's son displayed an exceptionally kind heart. He took time out for people, did small things for them and he encouraged others to do the same. *And if anyone gives even a cup*

of cold water to one of these little ones who is my disciple, truly I tell you, that person will certainly not lose their reward.

- responsible – he did not neglect his earthly duties. he did not neglect his earthly duties. According to Jewish tradition if the father of a family died, the eldest son would take over financial responsibility of the family. He entrusted his mother to the care of John even in his dying moments. He took his earthly duties, as well his spiritual mission seriously.

Self-Forgetfulness

By becoming the servant of all we become great in the Kingdom of Heaven. Forgetting about our own desires, wants, needs, dreams and longings is the sure road to fulfillment and long-term satisfaction in this life and the next.

The Hebrews taught self-denial, the religion of prayer and fasting. However, thou-shall-not's really have no power to either permanently deliver you from sin and evil or to make you into a son of God. The freedom which Joshua showed us was the freedom to follow the spirit wherever he leads you.

Joshua was never selfish. He was completely preoccupied with doing his Father's will in the service to mankind. Even in his final moments on the cross he reached out to others, opening the door to salvation for the thief who was crucified next to him. He showed mercy even to those who had murdered him: *Forgive them Father for they know not what they do.*

Seeking one's own salvation above all else is actually selfish. If we are only preoccupied with our own righteousness, then are we not self-righteous? The true believers takes salvation for granted. They are convinced of eternal life and do not doubt or worry about where they go after death.

The joy of salvation and the sense of gratitude which accompanies entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven act as a contagious drawing force in the life of such a person. The desire to share and teach others what you have learned is the mark of the depth of your surrender to God. The more that you give up for God and the more you forget yourself, the more useful you are in the Kingdom.

Self-Control and Self-Respect

He who can control himself is greater than he who takes a city.

At the heart of the Son of Man's teaching is self-control and self-respect. Joshua taught this by the way he lived his life. He never did anything that would lower his opinion of himself. Though he was never selfish, he did not lower himself to the level of his enemies. When struck he did not strike back. When insulted he did not return insult. When falsely accused he did not respond with futile arguments.

He was poised and articulate. He did not rule others by lording it over them: he commanded respect by the sincere love he had of humans and the lengths he was willing to go to show them the better way of life. He was truly the King of Kings, though he established a kingdom with no castle or lands or soldiers or money.

And though he lived a nomadic, austere and rustic life during the time of his ministry, he behaved like a king in all his word and deed. He placed very high value on the person, often going out of his way to interact with the individual. He really had faith in people and gave them confidence by the sheer strength of his positive, friendly, dynamic personality.

A Godly Person

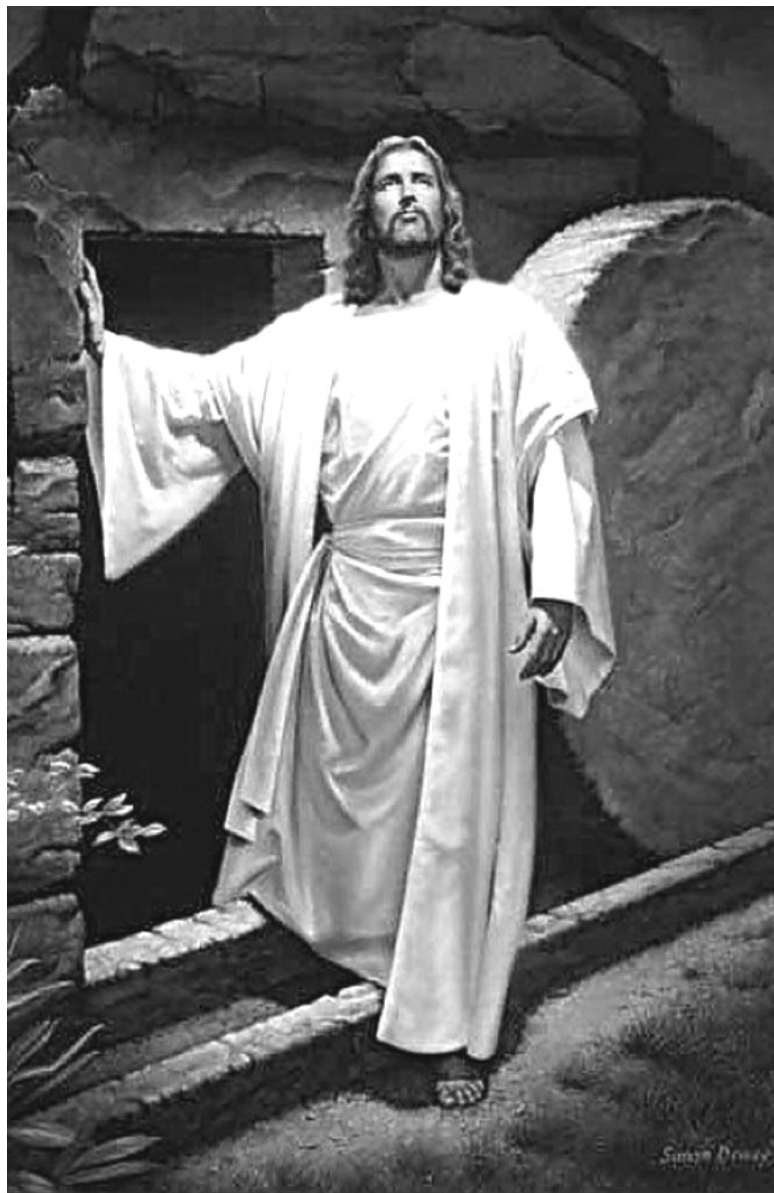
The desire to be more like God comes with the recognition of our mortality and imperfection. The more we are aware of our

own shortcomings, weaknesses and incompleteness, the more we desire to be holy and pure like God. *Godly sorrow brings about repentance.* Repentance leads to holiness. To be righteous does not mean not doing the wrong things, it means doing the right things. It means doing good. The Son of Man said *those who thirst after righteousness will be filled.* This means righteousness is attainable. We can do it.

Be holy as I am holy. This seemingly impossible command is the encouraging word of God to center our whole being on the pursuit of godliness and holiness. *Without holiness no man may see the Lord.* This doesn't mean we must first be perfect in order to be saved or to find favor with God: he is concerned with our attempt, our desire to be like him.

People judge by the outward appearance, God judges by our inner motives. *Every man in his heart thinks he is right, but God searches our hearts.*

The Godly person's whole purpose, their reason for being, is to follow the leading of the indwelling spirit, to be more God-knowing and God-like. It doesn't mean we cease to struggle or cease to be human and suddenly are perfect – it means we are on the road to perfection, on the path which is laid before us.



Joshua at the entrance to the tomb.

CHAPTER 9

Transformation Of The Inner Man

The Mortal Life

All of creation is not designed to be a cruel joke or a divine punishment because we are bad. The short, uphill climb of our mortal existence is designed to make us grow. The difficulties of our life in the flesh provide the best opportunity to make stronger, healthier spiritual beings out of us. Adversity breeds character.

I am the true vine, and my Father is the gardener. He cuts off every branch in me that bears no fruit, while every branch that does bear fruit he prunes so that it will be even more fruitful. You are already clean because of the word I have spoken to you. Remain in me, as I also remain in you. No branch can bear fruit by itself; it must remain in the vine. Neither can you bear fruit unless you remain in me.

The pruning which the Father performs in our lives is the day-to-day ministry in our minds. We are confronted with situations – with people and jobs and family and friends – that force us to make decisions. We must analyze and prayerfully consider each new situation and find the best plan for the situation. *The best plan is the right plan.*

If we bring our challenges to God and are open and willing to follow the counsel given, then we will grow. The only real struggle in the believer's mind is whether to follow the will of

God or not. If we follow God, then there is the *peace which surpasses all understanding*.

God is lavish with time and extravagant in his efforts with the individual. Moses spent 40 years in Midian before he began his life's work. Perhaps it took that long to get the stubbornness out of Moses's heart. After growing up in the palace, maybe he needed a lot of humbling to prepare him for his later ministry. We are told he became the father of two sons. The maturity which was needed to lead the Israelites was no doubt influenced by the struggles and challenges of providing and caring for a family.

Moses truly was the servant of all and the greatest of his people. The fruit which Joshua spoke of is the social service to our brothers and sisters. As we grow and become more Godlike, we naturally desire to work for the benefit of others. God is naturally helpful. It's just the way he is. He enjoys doing good to us.

Transformation

The real goal of our salvation is to turn us from material-minded animals into spiritually-minded eternal creatures. With the patient, gentle and fatherly love of the spirit which indwells you, day by day and step by step, you are being made into a spiritual being. Without the aid and presence of the Spirit we are but clever animals.

So God can clearly show them that they are like animals.

For the fate of humans and the fate of animals are the same:

As one dies, so dies the other; both have the same breath.

There is no advantage for humans over animals,

for both are fleeting.

Both go to the same place,

both come from the dust,

and to dust both return.

The most amazing thing of all creation is that God has designed this plan for the mortal man to ascend from a lowly animal to an eternal, spiritual creature who can join the ranks of the angels and *become as they are*. We can always be grateful for the opportunity we are given to rise from the self-seeking creature of hunger and lust to the heights of perfection and eternal destiny.

For many believers, of which I am one, the change was quite dramatic from the day of salvation. Some people slowly enter into salvation and imperceptibly become convinced of the reality of God and the path of eternal destination which awaits them. For others, the day of salvation is dramatic and the immediate change in their behavior is radical. This change is also dependent upon the depth of the surrender to the will of God.

The transformation of the inner man is often an intense and protracted struggle. There is no conflict in the mind of either the completely material-minded person or for the completely spiritually-minded person. The believer who is caught up in the middle is often in a prolonged battle.

The Material Mind

The material mind is preoccupied with the cares and worries of this life. Like the mind of an animal it is primarily concerned with its own survival. The animal mind seeks food and shelter, protection from the elements and from its enemies who are striving to kill it. An animal lives in fear – it must always be on the alert lest its natural predatory enemies catch it and eat it.

Primitive man, who was also subject to attack from enemies both animal and human, lived in fear of things and forces he did not understand. He was afraid of everything: fire, lightning, thunder, rain, snow, hail, lions, tigers, wolves, death, corpses, birth, disease and starvation.

His day-to-day life was filled with the constant struggle for food and shelter. He was dominated by hunger and the craving for sex, yet he did not know how babies were made. There are many things which we take for granted which took age upon age for man to learn: we live on an orbiting sphere in a small solar system in a stupendously enormous universe which is hurtling through space at a rapid speed. It took centuries for man to discover that Earth was not flat, that babies came from sex, that invisible organisms cause disease and that the stars in heaven are balls of liquid gas and not gods and goddesses.

And now our Western society has become almost entirely materialistic in its outlook on life. Of course, since it is necessary to function in society – no man is an island – we must interact and relate to each other daily to perform our jobs, feed and clothe our families, and build a society. The Son of Man, nevertheless, taught that the pursuit of the spiritual life was the most important task while here on earth.

There is nothing dishonorable about any earthly career we choose and there is nothing to prevent us from pursuing the eternal career at the same time. Though we will always be required to find a balance between the two, we can rest assured that even the Son of Man worked steadily at his carpenter's bench.

Joshua ben Joseph lived his life like any other man. He went to school and grew up, he worked and ate and drank with his friends and family. He did not neglect his material responsibilities in favor of his spiritual mission. He cared for his family up until the end.

The Spiritual Mind

The spiritual mind is set on the things of the next life, on the living out of faith and in preparation for the eternal home which is to

come. The Son of Man did not teach that everyone must forsake everything, unlike the chosen apostles who were required to give up all. He taught us by his life that the eternal pursuit was the most important thing on Earth: *Seek ye first the kingdom of heaven and its righteousness and all things will be added unto you.*

He taught us not to worry about the basic necessities of life and instead to *seek first the kingdom*. If we would follow after him in sincere service and devotion to our fellow man, if we would make the supreme desire to do his will the centerpiece of our life, then he would take care of our basic needs in life.

And the resulting fruit of the spirit of such a life of devotion would fill us with peace and the inner satisfaction of a life fulfilled in serving others.

We have been instructed to be transformed by the renewing of our mind, to move into the higher realm of relationship with the Father in the supreme desire to do his will. We cannot fake righteousness or act holy in the hopes we will be holy. Holiness is gained by a life dedicated to the doing of the Father's will.

The Evolving Soul

The spiritualized mind which comes with the ever-increasing love of God is the combined conscious reality of your thoughts, feelings, sensations, prayers and acts of worship to God. Mind is more than consciousness however. It is the expression of the God-made personality combined with the mortal-lived experience of your existence.

Personality is the stamp of God. There are no two people created alike. God uses no molds, though all are patterned after the image of the Father. Personality does not change. It is the one constant thing in our individual lives other than the constant changeless God. Our uniqueness is a reminder that God made us and values us as individual people.

*For you created my inmost being;
you knit me together in my mother's womb.*

The indwelling Spirit is daily bringing us closer and closer to ultimate union with him. When our will is completely entwined with his, when we have forever made the decision to irrevocably follow God, then we are one with the Father as Joshua was one with God.

The union of our mind with the Spirit of God is the soul. This soul is evolving, growing, emerging – daily approaching the divinity of God. Upon material death, the soul escapes the bonds of the flesh and leaves behind this mortal coil.

There are celestial bodies and there are earthly bodies. We may be given new bodies, yet our soul remains intact as it was on Earth. There is no magic or miraculous event which transforms us into perfected Sons of God. It is something we must attain, by faith, step by step, by following the leading of the Spirit who speaks to our minds and pulls us towards our paradise destination.

The Mind of Christ

We can say we have the mind of Christ when we are wholly dedicated to doing the will of God. Just as the Son of Man was a son and a servant of the Most High, we too can be one with the Father by surrendering our will and being a child of God. The great prayer that Joshua prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane was *not my will but yours be done*.

The great command to *be perfect as your Father in Heaven is perfect* is impossible if we think of it as something we must do today. Our short mortal life is not nearly enough time to accomplish this task. Our animal flesh is weak and overcoming it completely is very difficult in this life. *The spirit and the flesh will never be reconciled.* Mortal life is always a compromise between the living of the material life and the spiritual life. It is



Let the little children come to me.

always necessary that we make adjustments and adapt to the changing vicissitudes of life here on earth.

The desires of hunger and sex are something we are instinctively born with; it is the natural order of creation that we are endowed with, not a curse or a necessary burden. We are material mortal beings with the opportunity to become spiritual eternal beings through the plan of salvation and continual progression that is offered to us by our Heavenly Father. We grasp that salvation by *faith*.

Without the spirit of God which indwells us, we cannot obtain eternal life. We are only animals and without this same spirit we will perish like animals and return to the dust from which we came. The Spirit which compels us onward desires that we join our minds to his Spirit and in so doing become more like him who saved us.



You are on a journey which begins when you first know him as your Father and you realize you are his son. You really do become re-born that day. Your physical birth was only a shadow of the spiritual birth which you receive by faith. When you become a child of the living God you enter into the Kingdom of Heaven and begin your eternal career.

If you have taken this step, then:
You are in the Kingdom now.
You are an eternal being now.

CHAPTER 10

Prayer And Worship

Joshua's Prayer Life

With the exception of the Lord's prayer, Joshua did not give us formal prayers to recite or follow. And when he first introduced the Lord's prayer, he said, *Pray like this* – that is, to use this prayer as a model and not necessarily to only pray this prayer.

He cautioned us to avoid repetitious formal prayers but instead to pray from the heart, to the Father. He also advised us to go to a private place, keep our conversations with God to ourselves and not make a public display of our self-righteousness.

The carpenter's son practiced what he preached. The question that comes to mind is what did he pray about? We get a glimpse of his prayer life in the Garden of Gethsemane before he was arrested by the Roman soldiers acting under the instructions of the Sanhedrin.

There are two things which stand out about his prayer to God:

- He prayed to do the will of God. *Father, if you are willing, remove this cup from me, yet not my will but yours be done.*
- He prayed for others. Considering what was about to happen to him, it's shockingly unselfish of him that he spent time to pray for the disciples' well-being.

From the Book of Hebrews we read this clue:

In the days of his flesh Joshua offered up prayers and petitions,

with loud cries and tears, to him who was able to save him from death, and he was heard because of his reverence.

The Prince of Peace went to God for counsel with his challenges here on Earth. He asked his Father for divine wisdom in all of his affairs. This should not be surprising if we consider the difficulty of his mission. Dealing with diverse peoples from different cultures and religions requires a great deal of understanding; it requires tact to say the right thing which will enable people to receive the good news without resentment.

Joshua went out into nature to be close to God's creation. We came from the dust and we shall return to the dust. We are children of nature and the closest place to find God is within the embrace of the Earthly home that he created for us.

The Prince of Peace endorsed prayer as a private, solitary undertaking between you and God. Our prayers and worship of God are an intimate personal experience which we can enter into every day. God is always there because his spirit lives inside us.

Our bodies are the temple of the Spirit. You are a church. You don't need to wait until Sunday morning to meet with God. He is open twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week.

Every attempt you make to communicate with God is met with success. We don't always hear from God directly or correctly, and sometimes we don't hear him at all. He is always there, however, to hear our prayers and petitions, our complaints and troubles, our longings and deepest emotions. *Cast all your anxieties on him because he cares for you.*

If the Son of God needed spiritual counsel and wisdom for his goals and for his mission here on Earth, how much more do we need his help? If he who was perfect and complete needed communion with the divine, then how much more do we, who are imperfect and

incomplete, also need this same communion for the working out of our challenges and obstacles here on planet Earth.

Joshua and Worship

Similarly, Joshua did not give set instructions or codes of conduct regarding the worship of the Father.

“Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.”

“Woman,” Joshua replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth.”

The Samaritans worshiped on Mount Gerizim where they had built a temple to Yahweh. According to the rabbis, in order to convert to Judaism, a Samaritan had to first and foremost renounce any belief in the sanctity of Mount Gerizim. The Hebrews believed that Jerusalem was the place of worship – the holy city. However Joshua taught us that location was not the prime prerequisite for sincere worship – a sincere heart was preferable to a sacred site.

The difference between prayer and worship is that prayer is largely self-seeking while worship is selfless. The only real gift we can give God is our love and adoration. Worship is the selfless show of affection to the Father. Praying for the spiritual growth of others and seeking counsel for God to help us with our problems both spiritual and material are the best goals of our prayer life.

The church over-emphasizes prayer. The spiritual energy we need to fulfill our heavenly assignments on earth comes from worship. Worship is the time we spend with God to re-charge our spiritual batteries. Group prayers of gratitude lead to worship. Thanking God for all he has done for us makes us love him more and leads us into devotion and praise.

Worship is the greatest method of solving daily problems – which is why we should worship God on a daily basis. It was Joshua's habit to draw away for times of solitary communion with the Father to seek new stores of wisdom and energy. He often rose up early in the morning to retreat into nature to speak to and worship God where he gathered strength and wisdom for the ordinary conflicts of life.

*As the deer pants for streams of water,
so my soul pants for you, my God.
My soul thirsts for God, for the living God.
When can I go and meet with God?*

As you grow in character and in service to God, so shall your need for spiritual guidance and wisdom grow to resolve the spiritual and practical problems in your ministry. Forming habits of regular worship leads to maturity and a spiritual character. We become increasingly like the one we worship. We worship the Father. Christians tend to worship the Son, though all worship should be directed at the Father who is the First Source and Center, the giver of Life, the Great I Am, and the Supreme Person of the Trinity.

Definition of Worship

The more essential communion of worship is often neglected in favor of prayer. Prayer is usually for our self-interest – personal requests for healing and finances or for divine intervention for daily problems. Worship is selfless – a personal



Joshua washes the apostles' feet.

communion with the indwelling Spirit. Man can never get beyond self-interest unless he meditates in the presence of the Sovereign God. There is no personal request in true worship. As soon as self-interest invades our worship, then the worship becomes prayer.

True worship consists in abiding in the Father's will. *Abide in me and you shall bear fruit.* Worship is the exchange of self for the will of God and therefore is our highest privilege and first duty. The only real gift we can offer the Father is loving worship and a freely given life of service. God loves a cheerful giver and

he never imposes, coerces or compels us to love him – worship must be voluntary.

Stress from work, personal conflict and day-to-day life is relieved and relaxed by the rest of worship. *Come unto me all you who are weary and I will give you rest.* Fear and loneliness are relieved by contemplating the Father. The Spirit of God speaks best to us when we are in an attitude of true worship.

*I will give thanks to you, LORD, with all my heart;
I will tell of all your wonderful deeds.
I will be glad and rejoice in you;
I will sing the praises of your name, O Most High.*

CHAPTER II

The Three-Fold Ministry Of The Spirit

The Indwelling Spirit

We worship by the aid of the indwelling Spirit. *The spirit intercedes with groanings we cannot express.* Every attempt to connect and speak with the Spirit who lives within us is met with success. God never fails to accept the sincere worship of his children no matter how crude their ideas about him or by what name they call him. We worship God for who we comprehend him to be – *as we have come to know him.*

The Spirit which indwells you is the Spirit of the Father.

You are in the realm of the Spirit, if indeed the Spirit of God dwells in you.

For what man knows the things of a man except the spirit of the man which is in him? Even so no one knows the things of God except the Spirit of God.

Know ye not that you are the temple of God and the Spirit of God lives within you.

Is it any wonder that Joshua said *the Kingdom of Heaven is within you.* The same Father who created the universe and organizes angels and celestial beings has come down to guide lowly man – a being barely above the animals of the field. *Man is but a breath.* All of creation is groaning with the stupendous undertaking of raising a mere beast to the level of eternity.

God extends enormous ministry and effort to raise us from our material state to a heavenly one. We are blessed by the combined ministry of God and angels who work to lift us up, to expand our thinking, to give us further revelation of the Father.

Hearing from the indwelling Spirit generally requires effort and persistence. We are encouraged to *pray without ceasing*, to continually *present our prayers and petitions before God*. However, most of what believers think is God talking to them is actually their own intellect. Direct communication with the Father means a life given over to the doing of the will of God. Though the Father hears our every word and prayer, we are often dull of hearing. God patiently speaks to us in many ways.

God is reaching across the void of eternity – through the glass darkly we dimly grasp his teachings and leadings. The greater the connection with the indwelling Spirit, the greater a believer's maturity.

The Spirit of Truth

Before the Son of Man left this world, he promised his followers that soon after he ascended to the Father he would send a helper:

But when the Comforter is come, whom I will send unto you from the Father, even the Spirit of Truth, which proceeds from the Father, he shall testify of me.

Howbeit when he, the Spirit of Truth, is come, he will guide you into all truth: for he shall not speak of himself; but whatsoever he shall hear, that shall he speak: and he will show you things to come.

Even the Spirit of Truth; whom the world cannot receive, because it sees him not, neither knows him: but ye know him; for he dwells with you, and shall be in you.

The Spirit of Truth works in conjunction with the Spirit of God to guide you into all truth. Joshua said, *In this world we will have many troubles, but take heart for I have overcome the world.* This means that Joshua who faced and conquered all is our personal advisor. *Do you not know that I am in the Father and he is in me?*

The Master did not promise that he would deliver his apostles from all of their troubles, only that he would be there, with them, through them all. In fact, he told his apostles that many of them would be imprisoned and killed for the gospel which he commanded them to preach.

He said he would *pour out his spirit on all flesh*, not just on the handful of believers gathered together on Pentecost. The record we have of 3000 souls receiving salvation on that day is testimony of the power of this same spirit who guides us into all truth – *for it is not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit.*

The Holy Spirit

The Holy Spirit is the combined ministry of love and mercy: God is love, the Son is mercy. The Holy Spirit acts in conjunction with the indwelling Spirit and the Spirit of Truth to minister to our deepest longings and pain.

We perceive the Holy Spirit. Because of our limited spiritual capacity it is difficult for us to discern either the Spirit of God or the Spirit of Truth, although many are conscious of the operation of the indwelling spirit in their mind, correcting their thoughts and ministering to their souls. Believers say they feel *a check in their spirit.*

To anyone who is sensitive enough to feel the presence of this spiritual being, the character of the Holy Spirit is feminine in nature: gentle, loving, compassionate and tender, often symbolized in the scriptures as a dove. Unconditional love flows from the heart of this divine being.

The Daughters of God

The angels are the outworking ministers of the Holy Spirit, the hands and feet of God who are given *charge over you, to keep you in all your ways*. It is interesting that your guardian angels are so-named in the same way that a parent or close relative of a child is called a guardian.

They are our spiritual parents, guardians and protectors, but they are not our personal servants. They are, in effect, our spiritual supervisors who labor to help us do the will of God by their special ministry. An angel is an eternal spiritual being not bound by time or space as we know it. The wisdom and experience acquired by such a creature must be extensive to say the least. We could no more instruct them than we could instruct God.

Though the Bible does not give much direct revelation about the angels, we can find the following details about their activities:

- They can and do intervene in the affairs of men in the physical world. They cause objects to move and they can touch us physically.

While Peter was sleeping, an angel from God came into the dark cell where he lay and touched him. The soldiers beside him did not see the angel, neither did they hear him speak to Peter, telling him to rise up. But Peter obeyed, and the heavy chains fell off his hands. Then the angel bade him to put on his sandals, and tie his girdle about his waist.

Hardly knowing what he was doing, Peter prepared himself to leave the prison with the deliverer whom God had sent.

Then the angel said, "Wrap your cloak about you," and when Peter had done so, they walked out of the cell, past the guards, and on to the great iron gate which opened into the city street.

When they came to the iron gate it swung open easily to let them pass through, although it had been tightly locked. The angel led Peter through one street and then disappeared as suddenly as he had come.

- They are highly organized in military fashion: *Do you think I cannot call on my Father, and he will at once put at my disposal more than twelve legions of angels?* A Roman legion consisted of roughly 6,000 soldiers, so Joshua was talking about 72,000 angels who could be called upon to physically remove him from his situation if necessary.
- They can perform acts of healing and restoration. Joshua was ministered to by angels when he was in the desert.
- They are messengers who bring, among other things, good news. The angel Gabriel appeared to Zacharias: *And the angel answering said unto him, I am Gabriel, that stands in the presence of God; and I am sent to speak unto thee, and to show you these glad tidings.*
- They carry the souls of the faithful to rest: *The time came when the beggar died and the angels carried him to Abraham's side.*
- They guard us. They are responsible for our spiritual well-being and are, therefore, our spiritual elders: they can issue commands, such as when Gabriel commanded Mary to call the baby *Joshua*. *And, behold, you shall conceive in your womb, and bring forth a son, and shall call his name Joshua.*
- They are involved in communication with the heavenly world. Joshua told Nathaniel that he would see angels ascending and descending. Jacob also had a similar vision of the ladder of heaven. The angels are liaison officers with the heavenly realms.
- The majority of their service is preoccupied with the saving of men and with the progress of our souls. *Are not all angels*

ministering spirits sent to serve those who will inherit salvation? Said Joshua, in the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents.

For God had provided something better for us, so that they would be made perfect together with us. Therefore, since we are surrounded by such a great cloud of witnesses, we must get rid of every weight and the sin that clings so closely, and run with endurance the race set out for us, keeping our eyes fixed on Joshua, the author and perfecter of our faith.

We are surrounded by a crowd of witnesses – this entire passage in the Book of Hebrews alludes to the fact that without the angels assisting us we cannot be made perfect. Running the race to win is an encouragement to continue on in the progressive life of ever-increasing revelation and perfection.



The Angel Gabriel by Masseo Civitali 1493.

CHAPTER 12

Fellowship

Isolation

... it is not good for man to be alone ...

Without the continual, warm embrace of society, man wilts and loses much of his edge and his relevance to his fellow man. The solitary life is not conducive to real happiness and loneliness is not compatible with spiritual growth. Joshua surrounded himself with people. If the perfect and complete Son of God needed people and constant fellowship, how much more do we, being mortal, imperfect and incomplete, need this same human contact?

The disciples were sent out two by two and never alone, to keep them from falling into temptation or becoming discouraged and lonely. The proverb says that *two in a bed can keep each other warm and if one falls in a ditch, the other can help him out.*

Increased ministry means increased fellowship. *He who would be greatest among you, let him be servant of all.* Through service, man finds unity with others and with the universe. Religion cures man's sense of isolation and spiritual loneliness because man joins an eternal family with God as Father and all of mankind as his brothers.

Man and his brothers become joined together not in a struggle of good versus evil but rather in the eternal struggle for spiritual growth and the attainment of perfection. The cares and worries of this life are transformed into the goal of spiritual progress.

The universe and the higher beings are on our side. God the Father is with us throughout our journey, and he walks with us through all our struggles and trials. Combined with this is the peace which surpasses all understanding that we receive through the ministry of the Spirit.

Only sin is isolating and separating from God. Deviation from God's will results in isolation and loneliness. Sin can therefore be defined as disloyalty to God and the temporary suspension of fellowship with God.

Even Joshua's morning ritual of solitude with God in nature was a form of fellowship – communion with God. In his solitude, he drew closer to the Father for spiritual guidance and the energy renewal so necessary for ministry.

Fellowship

How good and pleasant it is when brothers live together in unity.

Isolation tends to drain the batteries of our soul. Fellowship is essential to renew our zest for life. Other benefits of fellowship include:

- Courage built up to fight the battles of life – *a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.*
- Additional joy, greater glory in our victories – *rejoice with me this day for the sheep which was lost has now been found.*
- Reduction of the sting and bitterness of our sufferings – *there is a friend who is closer than a brother.*
- Increases the appreciation of worship – *I walk with the righteous into the courts of God.*
- Mutually stimulated imaginations through our conversations – *The tongue of the wise brings healing.*

The Joshua Book

- Greater spiritual power from our shared eternal goal – *let us enter his gates with thanksgiving in our hearts.*
- Safeguard against evil and the distorted thinking caused by evil – *How blessed is the one who does not follow the advice of the wicked, or stand in the pathway with sinners, or sit in the assembly of scoffers.*

The value of teamwork is one of the most important and valuable lessons we as believers need to learn. The higher we ascend in our eternal career, the more we become involved with our brothers and sisters in the bond of service.

This, in turn, results in greater service and an increased sense of love and brotherhood towards others. No amount of righteousness or loyalty to doctrine can replace the spontaneous friendliness of the believer. *He who has friends must show himself to be friendly.* Tradition and ceremony are no substitute for genuine compassion for others. *They will know us by our love.*

The son of the carpenter loved all men, from all walks of life. He was no respecter of persons, rather he was friendly to all; he showed compassion even to his enemies right up until the end – his final words being *forgive them Father for they know not what they do.* His disciples loved him as he was – as a man and as God – the divine in the flesh who could make friends with saints and sinners, with publicans and tax-collectors, Pharisees and Roman soldiers.

Friendship with Joshua implies the carrying out of the will of God in the service of friends which can never really be a burden. Joshua said *his yoke was easy and his burden was light.* To a servant, doing one's duty can become a weary chore, but to a brother or friend in the service of a brother or friend, there is joy in helping one another.

How to Make Friends

Make friends by becoming interested in them, in their lives and the things that they hold dear. Find out about them and try to understand their motivation. You cannot know someone in one meeting. It takes time and understanding to know someone. Look for an opportunity to do something for them. Some degree of similar values and spiritual unity greatly aids the forming of friendships. *If two are not in agreement with each other they cannot walk the road together.* We must, therefore, emphasize the things we have in common and not become involved or embroiled in our differences of opinion.

A very simple way to begin a friendship is with a sincere compliment.

Tact and discretion are the cornerstones of smooth relationships. As we are ambassadors of Joshua and the gospel he preached, we must also be diplomatic in our relations with others. We should avoid disputes and striving with others. *The kind words of a close friend are soothing medicine.* We should always try to offer words of encouragement, praise and sympathy.

It was loyalty to Joshua, not his teachings, that held his apostles to him – because even though they did not understand everything he said, they believed in him still. He endeared himself to them as their best friend in the whole world. Loyalty is the cornerstone of friendship. There is a friend who stays closer than a brother.



Joshua appears to Mary Magdalene.

CHAPTER 13

Sin and Evil

Error, Evil, Sin and Iniquity

Error is found in the Old Testament several times and the word used is *shgagah* which means mistake or when used as a verb it means *to go astray* or make an inadvertent mistake. Job says, *If it is true that I have gone astray, my error remains my concern alone.*

The mistake is usually referred to in the moral sense of having done something wrong due to ignorance or poor judgment. Joshua said to the Sadducees when they tried to trap him with a question about seven brothers who married the same woman: *You do therefore err for you know not the scriptures nor the power of God.*

Evil is sin committed without conscious knowledge of one's bad behavior. *Every man thinks in his heart that he is right.* In the New Testament, Peter says of the unjust, *They speak evil of what they understand not.* A child is rarely punished by the legal system for committing a crime if he or she is too young to understand what he or she has done. Once a person is aware of the nature and moral wrongness of their crime, then they are held fully accountable under the law.

Sin is transgressing the divine law with full knowledge of what you are doing. If you consciously and willfully commit sin, then you break God's spiritual law. Breaking God's Law is not the same as breaking the laws and legal codes of men here on earth. Joshua broke the law when he turned over the moneychangers'

tables and threw them out of the temple. He also broke the laws of the Pharisees when he did not wash his hands before eating and when he healed on the Sabbath. He fully understood the 8th Commandment, however, when he stated that *the Sabbath is made for man and not man for the Sabbath*. The Pharisees were in error with much of their interpretation of the scriptures.

Sin is committed by those with knowledge of their actions. If a non-believer, therefore, committed the same sin as a believer, the believer would be the guiltier one since he knows what he is doing.

Iniquity is the long-term whole-hearted decision to sin against God. When a person's entire being is committed to sin, he or she has crossed over to the Valley of Death and any hope of receiving forgiveness and returning to the divine path becomes greatly decreased.

The Hebrew word used in the Old Testament is *avon* which is variously translated as *depravity*, *perversity* or *iniquity*. Literally it means *crooked*. The iniquitous person resists each and every attempt of the spirit to lead him to salvation and life.

The more identified with sin the personality becomes the more distorted his thinking and grasp of reality. Iniquity is like a form of spiritual insanity. Insanity can be defined as a rejection of reality in favor of an artificial or imaginary one created by the insane creature.

Lucifer's sin began with self-admiration. The pride of self, accompanied with the willful desire to control and rule over others, is the mark of a being slipping into loss of personality.

Sin is Suicidal

When someone's personality becomes so identified with sin that they cease to be the person and rather become the sin, when they are so thoroughly dedicated to the violation of the Father's will, then they can be said to cease to be real. God made the Universe in a certain way based on certain, sure physical and spiritual laws.

Sin and evil are not real because they are not created by God. *The wages of sin is death* and therefore sin is suicidal, self-destructive and will eventually destroy itself and the wrong-doer.

All matter and energy, physical and spiritual reality, flow from the throne of God. There is nothing created which is not created by God. Because all reality is from God, sin is essentially the choosing of the non-real. It is a form of insanity to see trees in a field and say, I see no trees there.

To say there is no God is to deny the reality of the universe. To resist the leading of the Spirit who only wants good for you is to resist life itself. Choosing sin is choosing death.

He came that we may have life and have it more abundantly.

Our elder brother Joshua taught that sin comes from the evil desires within a man's own heart, that *whosoever looks upon a woman with lust in his heart has already committed adultery. And he who has anger in his heart toward his brother has already committed murder.*

He forever placed the responsibility for sin upon the shoulders of the individual: we cannot blame our actions upon our parents or teachers or society or the devil.

Sin is the measure of a person's immaturity or incompleteness towards God. The more we grow, the less we sin. Look upon

your brother who is caught up in sin as less mature than you and not as a wicked sinner. The former requires you to invest time and effort in showing him the right way, and the latter only allows you to judge him.

Overcoming Sin

Chronic sin can be agonizing to the sincere believer who in his heart of hearts doesn't want to keep on doing the wrong but sincerely thirsts after righteousness. It is most fortunate for us that Joshua promised that we could have eventual victory over the obstacles in life which so easily beset us.

If you really want to be free of addictive sin which has tangled and bound you, stir up in your heart a desire for the higher truths, for the service of others, for the full dedication to the doing of God's will.

I must confess I struggled a lot with addiction as a teenager and later on as a believer. When I first found God I went to my pastor and asked him for help because I was failing horribly in keeping sin out of my life. I had a terrible problem with drugs, alcohol and lust as a young man and felt sure my pastor, who was a really humble guy, could help me out.

When I explained my dilemma to him, he got very quiet and looked down at his shoes. He confessed that he struggled with similar sin for years and years. I almost fell off my chair! Then he showed me the most excellent way.

He said if you want to get air out of a bottle it's very difficult. Trying to suck it out will just not work. The easiest way to get air out of a bottle is to fill it up with water.

Fill up your life with good things. Replace all the negative habits and behaviors with positive ones. Think carefully about what

you do every day and what your weekly habits are like. Intelligently find better activities and interests. Become interested in serving and helping others. Stir up in your heart a sincere desire for the better things in life; the selfless living out of your faith in the love of God and of others.

Over the years I have counseled others who also suffer from addiction. One of the biggest problems with addicts and those who are chronic sinners, I am sorry to say, is that they are often selfish and self-centered. They want the quick-fix solution to their problems. They don't want to suffer so they reach for the drugs or the bottle, or they engage in criminal activities because it's faster and easier than toughing it out or getting a job.

The Son of Man, however, came *to seek and save the lost*; he came to call the sinners to repentance. The healthy don't need a physician. He came to show us the paths of life. Find the paths of life, get on the paths of life and stay on the paths of life.

Stir up a desire to do the Father's will for the rest of your life and, like the air in the bottle, the living water will so fill up your empty vessel that all the sin and evil in your heart will forever be vanquished.

The carpenter's son said, *Do not resist evil, but repay evil with good*. Addictions are your enemies. Don't use the weapons of evil to fight them. Conquer them with good. Let love so thoroughly rule in your life that evil will not be able to find a place to roost. If there is no open door in your heart to allow evil to enter, then there is no way for evil to take root in your heart.

Non-Resistance to Evil

The gospel of Joshua ben Joseph contains within it a philosophy or doctrine of non-resistance to evil. In modern terms we might say that Joshua was a non-violent pacifist.

He told Peter that *those who live by the sword die by the sword* when Peter attacked one of the men who came to arrest Joshua. When he was beaten and spat upon, he did not lift a hand to either defend himself or retaliate against those who struck him.

He taught that the use of violence was not befitting an ambassador of the Kingdom of Heaven. We are to love our enemies and pray for those who persecute us. This is the best antidote to hatred and unforgiveness. When we pray for those who hate or abuse us, we acknowledge that they, too, are human and imperfect, and most likely feel justified in their dislike of us. *Every man in his heart thinks he is right.* We acknowledge that others need a change of heart and that all men are our brothers when we pray for our enemies.

We also realize that we are not their enemies. We pray for them in the hope that they will find salvation and have a change of heart towards us.

Joshua is the Prince of Peace. The angel who announced Joshua's birth came proclaiming, *Peace on Earth and goodwill towards all men.* Joshua said, *Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called the sons of God.*

No religion or religious person should be advocating violence or war or the use of coercive force to achieve religious, political or spiritual goals. War is a return to the lower nature of man, the animal in him who belligerently resorts to jungle law to solve his problems.

All social, economic and political problems on Earth ought to be solved by discussion, debate and consensus in the public arena. Spiritual problems must be solved by prayer, consultation with the spirit who leads us, and ought to be carried out in love and faithfulness.

The examples that Joshua gave to us of turning the other cheek, and offering the thief our coat if he steals our shirt, demonstrate the need for active participation in the conquest of evil: not by using the weapons of evil to overcome evil but rather by using good to overcome evil.

One day, hopefully soon, *man will indeed turn his swords into plowshares and his spears into pruning hooks*. Notice that the weapons of war are turned into tools for farming and cultivating – that is, for growing and tilling the soil. Man will one day grow tired and weary of his long, relentless and bloody pursuit of wealth and power and return to a simpler life, closer to nature, nearer to the soil from whence he came.

CHAPTER 14

The Nature of Evil

The End of the World

The Hebrews at the time of the Son of Man's bestowal on Earth had two basic ideas about the Kingdom of Heaven. These two versions of the Kingdom were, firstly: the Jewish idea of a Messiah who would restore Israel to her supposed place as ruler and centerpiece of the world.

The other idea came from Persia through the teacher-prophet Zoroaster. He taught his followers that the world was engaged in a titanic struggle between good and evil, where man had to choose between these two opposing forces. These forces were somewhat equal in power and this accounts for the lengthy struggle. Eventually, at the end of the world, the good would triumph over the evil due to its (slight) edge over evil.

This is, if you will forgive the comparison, Star Wars theology. The good and bad sides of the force duke it out in a protracted and violent series of battles where we are not really sure who is going to win, though eventually the good guys come through in the end. Whew! What a relief.

Lucifer, however, compared to God, is only a child. Lucifer is a created son of God who rebelled and fell into the self-deception of sin. He is not all-powerful, all-seeing or everywhere-present like God. He does not have a spirit like God nor is capable of creating universes and maintaining their existence.

God in relation to Lucifer would be like me and my cat. My cat is a pretty clever little guy and can ask to be let out and loves to play with little squeaky toys. If he suddenly got together with the neighborhood cats and decided to take over my house I would hardly shudder or lose any sleep at night. I could just forget to feed him for a couple days and the rebellion would fold like a house of cards.

The fact that there is evil present which appears overwhelming and seems to be getting worse in no way means that God is worried or surprised by it. Nor is he indifferent to the evil in the world. Does not good always triumph over evil?

Isn't the universe designed in a certain way to follow certain principles, both physical and spiritual? If sin is ultimately unsustainable and suicidal, then Lucifer will have his day in court and will be judged and sentenced and that will be the end of it.

The evil that we see in the world today is overwhelmingly perpetrated by humans. Evil is present because humans make bad decisions which affect other humans. Criminals are put in jail because they break the law. Spiritual criminals will be dealt with according to the spiritual laws of the Father in Heaven. Lucifer is given credit for much that is actually the doings of mankind.

One of Joshua's stated mission goals was *to proclaim liberty to those taken captive and to free those who are bound*. Joshua came down here to Earth to remove the authority which Lucifer once had.

Joshua taught very clearly that sin comes from a man's own heart, *it is what comes out of a man that defiles him*. Joshua advised us *to wash the inside of the cup*.

Lucifer is not to blame for all the evil in the world. He is to blame for promoting a false ideology which has spread over the whole

earth. Humans, however, are responsible for adopting this ideology.

It is the exercise of free will without restraint which has caused much of the world's problems. The Luciferian credo states *Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law* as written by Aleister Crowley in the Book of The Law. It is the ethics of personal liberty without restraint.

*There are no standards of right. Ethics is balderdash.
Each star must go on its own orbit. To hell with moral
principle; there is no such thing.
– Aleister Crowley*

Free will without consideration for the well-being of others is not the spiritual liberty which Joshua taught. The Golden Rule means always being concerned with the well-being of others. The freedom to do whatever you want without concern for the rights of others is a step backward.

Maturity can be defined as the delaying or denying of short term gratification in favor of long-term reward. A child will eat all the candy in a jar without thought to the future or to the consequences of his actions. An adult will ration out his jar of candy because he knows that too much candy is harmful to health, and he also reasons that he can enjoy the candy better if he eats only one each day.

Only a fool says in his heart there is no God. The irony and lunacy of the creature saying he has no creator is obvious, except to the one who says it. Lucifer, an exalted son of God, fell from a state of grace to a level of self-deluded spiritual anarchy. It is difficult to comprehend how this could happen.

The Devil is Defeated

One of the most perplexing things for Christians to understand is that the devil really was defeated 2,000 years. He was stripped of his authority on earth. The devil was the prince of this world, that is, he was assigned to the spiritual care of this planet by the authority of God.

Now is the time for judgment on this world; now the prince of this world will be driven out.

Joshua said now because he meant now. The devil does not own this world, nor did he ever. *The world is the Lord's and everything in it.* Joshua spoke quite plainly about the end of the devil's rule on earth.

The devil never was a god nor is he a threat to God. He did not create our universe nor has he the power to create anything. He is no longer an administrator in charge of any ministry. And he is no longer the prince of this world. He is a created being like you or I – though not a material, mortal being. He was and still is, therefore, a child of God, though a rebellious one. *God does not want that anyone should perish*, and he does not want even the devil to perish.

In the book of Revelation, the devil's imprisonment is prophesied. Imprisonment is for the purpose of punishment and rehabilitation. A prisoner is given adequate time to think over their crime and make amends or choose a new direction in life. That is, repent. Therefore, God in his infinite mercy would even allow the devil the opportunity to repent and receive forgiveness. It is unlikely that the devil will accept that forgiveness, though according to the character of our loving, caring Father the forgiveness must be extended.

Christians say that the devil is defeated but do they really believe it? If the devil has been removed from the position that was

originally given to him by God, then he does not have the authority he once did. And, therefore, the devil's power has been *reduced* since Joshua's ministry on Earth, not increased.

After Joshua returned to the Father, he sent his Spirit as he promised he would. He poured out his spirit on all flesh, not just the 120 believers gathered in Jerusalem. This is why it was so easy for the 3,000 souls recorded in the book of Acts to be added to the kingdom in one day. The Spirit which Joshua sent testified to the hearts of those who heard it that day at Pentecost. This addition of spirit was given to the entire world and has made it *easier* for the entire world to find a closer relationship with God.

No Epic Struggle

There is no epic struggle between good and evil, or balance of power between opposing natural forces like yin and yang. The universe is not arranged like Lord of the Rings or Star Wars where the Dark Side of The Force is a challenge to the power or authority of Good. God is Lord of all and he is not anxious or worried by the devil's rebellion. I would like to venture that God is saddened by the devil's rebellion, just as he is by any of his children's misadventures with sin and evil.

For it is from within, out of a person's heart, that evil thoughts come. The consequences of sin are inevitable just like the consequences of dropping a piano over a cliff. Sin and evil are permitted to flourish so that those who persist in their iniquity can be allowed to experience the full consequences of their rebellion. Unless we come to our senses, like the prodigal son did, and realize the emptiness, futility and degradation of our selfishness, we will not return to God wholeheartedly.

The chaos, confusion and evil we witness in the world is not the *dawn* of the devil's reign on earth, it is the *dusk*. The sun is

forever going down on evil; the sun is forever rising for the believer. What we witness in the world today is the reaping of hundreds and thousands of years of the evil-embracing and self-seeking actions of human beings.

It was evil, corrupt men who crucified Joshua. And evil, corrupt men who continue to lead the world into dark alleys. It is much more terrible to contemplate the consequences of a nuclear war than to contemplate the so-called powers of futile spells and superstitious ceremonies. Evil men do not need any help or encouragement from occult clubs or magic chants to wage war, plunder economies, subject their people to starvation and disease, and selfishly rule their countries by media control and violent coercion.

Most believers' so-called confrontations with the demonic are moments of mental and emotional crisis or natural accidents of time and space which they falsely attribute to the devil's influence in their lives. I have been a believer for over twenty years and I have yet to witness authentic demonic possession. What I have witnessed is a great deal of broken, hurt, wounded people with emotional and mental scars from abuse and addiction. These people are overwhelmingly the products of human oppression and not demonic oppression.

Our primary struggle is with faith and not with the forces of darkness. We are in the process of transformation from the life in the flesh to the life in the spirit. This struggle takes commitment, perseverance and a desire to be more like *God. Be perfect as I am perfect.*

Joshua really did not spend much time examining evil or giving any long, detailed sermons on the demonic. He was not that concerned about it so why should we be? Joshua was brave, optimistic, encouraging and friendly. He loved everyone, and everyone who knew him soon fell in love with him. To this day,

The Joshua Book

when people come to know Joshua, they fall in love with him too, even though they have not met him in the flesh.

We come to know Joshua through his Spirit who testifies on his behalf to the nature of his character. And anyone who comes to know him can say that he is strong, self-controlled, wise, kind, patient, considerate, thoughtful and royal. Every good quality that we can aspire to can be found in him.

CHAPTER 15

Confrontations With Authority

Joshua Clears the Temple

During the time of the ministry of the Son of Man on earth, the temple priests had set up a money-making scheme by requiring that all foreign currency had to be changed into the local Jerusalem currency in order to pay the temple tax. The moneychangers charged a very high rate of interest. During the Passover festival there would be over a million foreign visitors to Jerusalem, each required to pay the half-shekel tax to gain entrance to the temple.

The Law required that sacrificial animals be without blemish. The temple forced those who desired to make a sacrifice to buy one of their animals, using the Law to their financial advantage. The pens of livestock that cluttered the temple courtyard made a disgusting stench, definitely not appropriate for a place of worship.

The temple tax was a lucrative form of income for the priests who were no doubt enraged by this lowly carpenter cutting off their source of revenue. This fiscal barrier to temple entrance also made it difficult for the poor to enter. Joshua may have been referring to this when he said of the Pharisees, *They tie up heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on people's shoulders, but they themselves are not willing to move them with their fingers.* Joshua spoke out most strongly against hypocrisy and the oppression of the poor.

The Joshua Book

The incident of Joshua clearing the temple is often used to show Joshua as violent or angry. Righteous indignation, however, is not losing one's temper. Joshua exemplified self-control and it would hardly be consistent with his personality and character to lose his temper. He performed a house-cleaning task which was long overdue. This episode demonstrates the courage of the



Every year, a Jewish man, twenty years old and older, paid a voluntary half-shekel Temple tax to the Jerusalem Temple.

Master and his utter lack of intimidation of authority figures, secular or religious.

Joshua made many exhortations for peaceful co-existence with our fellow man – he was, after all, called the Prince of Peace, so it would be completely out of character and downright hypocritical of him to resort to violence to solve any earthly problem.

The Father which the Son of Man revealed was a God of compassion, love, forgiveness and mercy. The primitive tribe of Semites who congregated around Moses were a spiritually immature group of uneducated slaves who had borne the yoke of oppression for 430 years. Their view of God was through the eyes of children who would see a Father as a stern authority figure. Their approach to God was through fear and trembling.

When a child grows up he learns to see his Father's discipline as an act of love and he learns to love God instead of being afraid

of him. Fear turns to reverence and awe which leads to love. So it is only natural that they viewed God as angry and wrathful.

I AM

The Pharisees wanted to stone Joshua to death for blasphemy because he stated that before Abraham was, I AM. In the Book of Revelations, Joshua is quoted as saying, *I AM the alpha and omega, the beginning and the end, the first and the last.*

The concept of God as I AM is introduced in the Hebrew scriptures when Moses asks God what was his name. God responds by saying *I AM that I AM.* This signifies the ever-present God with no beginning or end. God has always been and always will be.

Moses said to God, "Suppose I go to the Israelites and say to them, 'The God of your fathers has sent me to you,' and they ask me, 'What is his name?' Then what shall I tell them?"

God said to Moses, "I am who I am. This is what you are to say to the Israelites: 'I am has sent me to you.'"

The I AM is a statement of the absolute and supreme reality of God. Paradise, the heavenly home of God, which exists outside of time and space, is also always eternity-present. All energy and matter, all that is, stems from the Paradise home of God. There is nothing which is, that is not created by God.

The I AM is the primal cause, the prime mover and prime motivator of all reality; the first source and center of all creation, both material and spiritual.

God the Father is the God who we know through our own personal experience of his personality and character.

God the I AM is that which we do not know of God, the unfathomable infinity of God who reveals a partial knowledge

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of himself to his creatures.

Joshua greatly expanded the idea of God the I AM during his time on earth:

I AM the vine

I AM the good shepherd

I AM the way and the truth and the life

I AM the gate

I AM the bread of life

I AM the light of the world

I AM the resurrection and the life

John says, *In the beginning was the Word and the Word was made flesh.* Joshua was the living Word who revealed the Father to us by his every action, his every deed. His life was a sermon. Joshua lived the ideal spiritual life. He went about doing good to others.

The Unforgivable Sin

Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men. Anyone who speaks a word against the Son of Man, it will be forgiven him; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit, it will not be forgiven him, either in this age or in the age to come.

This passage, often misunderstood, is the source of much confusion and anxiety in the minds of some believers who let themselves be troubled over fears they have committed this sin and would not be forgiven and therefore excluded from eternity.

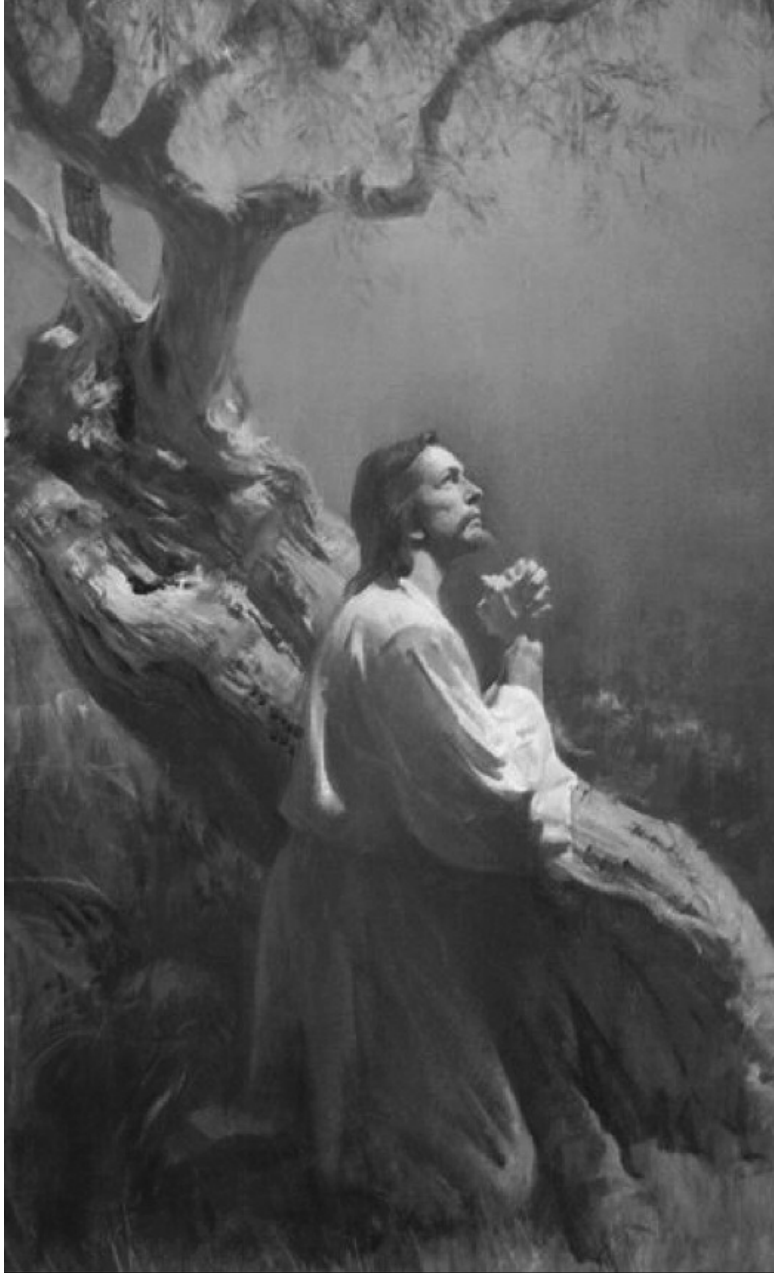
Nothing, however, could be further from the truth. When Joshua so strongly rebuked the Pharisees for their hypocrisy, it was first of all an act of love: *God does not want that any should perish*. Joshua was courageously attempting to show them the error of their ways, to enable them to open their blind eyes.

He was practicing what he preached by loving his enemies and taking the time and effort to confront these dangerous men. These men were so blinded by their ignorance, prejudice and fear of losing their wealthy, powerful positions that they actually believed that the Son of God was in league with the devil.

How can Satan cast out Satan? If a kingdom is divided against itself, that kingdom cannot stand.

They were so thoroughly blinded that they attributed the works of God to the devil. With this, they revealed their descent into iniquity and, like the iniquitous one, they too were crossing the point of no return which Joshua pointed out to them in vain.

These religious leaders committed the most foolish and morally blind act of all time: the creature stood in judgment against the Creator. And found him guilty of blasphemy – the irony of which is that they murdered God for claiming to be God.



Joshua praying in the garden.

CHAPTER 16

Joshua And The Church

Joshua did not come down to earth to set up an institutionalized religious organization. He gave no instructions or guidelines to the apostles regarding an earthly kingdom: *My Kingdom is not of this earth*. The Son of Man came to establish a purely spiritual kingdom. He did not come to establish a religion; he came to establish the basis for all religions.

The church in its current state is a man-made social organization – a religious social club. The church, with over 34,000 denominations, is currently in danger of falling victim to the principle which the Son of Man mentioned: *A kingdom divided against itself will not stand*.

The reason for this intense division is the confusion over doctrine. There is very little consensus over any particular point of modern Christian theology. There is confusion and debate and division over so many issues. The church does not follow the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven which Joshua attempted to establish 2,000 years ago.

Churches do not generally follow the Golden Rule, nor do they preach it. They teach a variety of doctrines, though seem to avoid the actual Gospel of Joshua that they proclaim to be the basis for their faith.

Secular Humanism

Secular humanism has as its main tenets a commitment to reason, free inquiry, the separation of church and state, the ideal of freedom, and moral education; secular humanists believe man is the supreme being of the universe, a doctrine which most Christians share: man is the center of the universe and God and the angels exist for our benefit.

Angels are eternal beings and it would seem apparent, after an existence of millions of years, that they would possess an extraordinary intelligence and divine wisdom far superior to even our most celebrated geniuses. Wouldn't it seem more likely that they are here to minister to us as our spiritual elders?

God, in the eyes of most Christians, revolves around man. Galileo scientifically proved that the Earth revolved around the sun, and thus the idea that the universe revolved around the Earth was overturned. Modern astronomy has also shown that we are on the edge of a smallish galaxy on the outer regions of space – definitely not the center.

Man is the measure of all things, a statement born out of the Enlightenment, is an idea which has become rooted in the pillars of the church. The Greek philosopher Protagoras, who is credited with authoring this statement, was an agnostic whose philosophy foreshadowed secular humanism.

The only clear difference between many modern church-goers and secular humanists is a belief in God and regular church attendance. Most Christians believe, whether they are aware of it or not, that only Christians can be saved, and the foundation of their faith is based on church attendance. Anyone who ceases to go to church is either a back-slider, apostate or regarded as irrelevant.

Many Western religious leaders are psychologists and their philosophy is derived from modern ideas of counseling. Pastors

are trained in modern psychology which views personal, social, mental or emotional problems as diseases and are therefore treatable only by qualified medical professionals.

Modern Christian self-help or motivational books are centered around the idea of personal fulfillment and being the best you can be, which is essentially the humanistic ideal. Isn't the pursuit of happiness, one of the central tenets of the American Constitution basically selfishness? Isn't the so-called American Dream the natural derivative of this have-it-all philosophy?

All of these ideas may have advanced Western culture and provided the environment that has made the West the predominant civilization on Earth. Isn't it, however, all doomed to fail due to its self-seeking nature?

Fellowship Versus Discipleship

The church places much emphasis on a relationship with Joshua. The church teaches us to have a personal relationship with him. While it is good to be friends with Joshua, shouldn't we be first a disciple of Joshua? Disciple means student. Joshua was called the Master by his students because he really was the Master of all men. Joshua did not call the apostles his friend until near the end of his ministry.

Focusing solely on friendship with Joshua can lead to spiritual laziness and a form of self-pity which is not conducive to spiritual growth. Growth comes through our love of the Father which leads to greater love of our brother and this, in turn, leads to greater social service. The experience we gain through following the will of God in the service to others lends itself to spiritual growth and greater maturity.

Joshua's gospel centered around active participation in the affairs of the Father's kingdom. He encouraged us to *do unto others*,

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seek first the kingdom, ask and you shall receive and other commandments which require action. Joshua was not an introspective guru who sat on a mountain contemplating life. Nor was he an ascetic monk cloistered in a monastery studying ancient texts and formulating doctrine.

The eternal progressive career is based on spiritual growth through experience with God and with others. There is only one conditional command of salvation and that is *onward*. There is no standing still. We must always be progressing and growing.

Is it any wonder that the Son of Man spoke so many times in illustrative parables about seeds and plants and harvest and other references to the natural growth of living things?

Dogma

When truth becomes law we cease to be the true liberated faith-sons of the Living God – we become legalists, religious rule-makers, traditionalists or fundamentalists. When we insist on viewing all truth and scripture literally, then we become merely moralizers and even secular humanists who attend church.

The legalist wants the security of a set code or book of rules – he wants to know when to sit and when to rise. He desires that others also obey his standard of conduct. What he desires is control, control over his own life and over others. This is not freedom, this is religious bondage.

The Pharisees were moral men. *Unless your righteousness exceed that of the Pharisees and the teachers of the law, you will not enter the Kingdom of Heaven.* They were great moralizers, tithing even the tiniest seed.

Birds and Planes

A jet airplane is a marvelous invention. It takes the combined sciences of physics, aerodynamics, chemistry, math, metallurgy

and manufacturing to make a jet plane. It can fly at high speeds and carry passengers and cargo from city to city in a short span of time.

Yet for all of man's ingenuity and inventiveness, a bird can outmaneuver and outperform a jet airplane any day of the week. No mechanical airplane can make the kind of turns, banks, dives and free-falls that many birds can make easily. An eagle can soar to great heights and then stall, dive and plunge to the earth with its talons extended and scoop up its prey and return to flight without missing a beat.

Man can only experience flight second-hand, by riding as a passenger in a mechanical machine. A bird *is* flight. He is a flying machine. Even if a bird was intelligent enough to speak, he could not tell you how he flies – he flies by instinct and intuition because that is what he is born to do.

So too, it is with faith. When you turn your faith into mechanized rules of behavior, you can be moral machines who perform your duty competently – however, you are not living your faith. When you become a true faith-son of the Living God you learn to soar like the eagles experiencing true freedom. True freedom is the freedom to follow the Spirit wherever he leads you.

When a young bird still in the nest begins to flap his clumsy, untried wings, he knows instinctively that he must soon leave the nest. Though he has never flown, he hopes that he will succeed on his maiden voyage out of the nest. If he fails, he will plunge to his death.

Eventually he works up the courage and takes the leap of faith and thrusts himself out into the empty sky, beating and flapping his wings with all his strength and courage.

So too must you, child of faith, leave the former ways of tradition and bondage to religious dogma. Churchianity is only

secular humanism with a religious coating. Leaving the nest can fill you with apprehension; and the uncertainty of where the Spirit may lead you may cause anxiety and fear.

Rest assured, your Father who lives in Heaven is a Good God. He will only lead you to greater service, greater challenges and eventually to eternity, where you can continue to follow him in an endless career of wonder and fellowship with God.

The adventure of following God becomes real and exciting when you realize that uncertainty and the unknown are what makes life adventurous. Following God and doing his will is the most thrilling, exciting thing you will ever do. And the most satisfying because as a true faith-son of God that is what you are designed to do.

Joshua is the Way

I am the way and the truth and the life, no one comes to the Father except through me.

This passage is probably the pillar of salvation to the average Christian. It is, however, also one of the most misunderstood passages in the Bible. This is because of the tendency of humans to take everything sacred literally. When Joshua said he was the vine, did he mean that he was an actual plant that grows in the ground? Or did he compare himself to a vine in a metaphorical way? Isn't the answer that he was speaking metaphorically?

He was saying that he was *like* a vine in the same way that he was not saying that he was actually a shepherd, but that he was *like* a shepherd. He looked after helpless creatures who were very innocent in character like sheep.

When Joshua said he was the Way, he did not mean that he was an actual road or path on the ground, he intimated that he was *like* a road or path or way. He was not referring to the *person* of

Joshua but to the *way of life* of Joshua. He lived the ideal spiritual life and taught the ideal spiritual way.

Secondly, he was further elaborating on the I AM concept which we find in the Old Testament when Moses asks God what is his name? God replies, *Tell them I AM sent you.*

He was saying that God the Father, who he spoke on behalf of, had shown us the way to life via the Son. The Way that Joshua was referring to was the gospel which he came here to teach: the gospel of the Kingdom of Heaven. Joshua ben Joseph was not only a teacher of this new Way, he was also a practitioner. He lived the gospel he taught. Therefore he was the Way.

No one comes to the Father except through me, doesn't mean that only Christians can be saved or that only Christians can go to Heaven. What it means is that those who follow the gospel which Joshua taught will enter the Kingdom of Heaven. *Not everyone who says to me, 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of Heaven, but only he who does the will of my Father who is in heaven.*

The will of the Father is the Kingdom of Heaven. Joshua showed us the way to enter the Kingdom now. And what is the will of God for your life? Ask him. *Ask and you will receive, seek and you will find, knock and the door will be opened.* Seeking for God's will means you are already on the right path.



Joshua praying for the apostles.

CHAPTER 17

The Fall of Jerusalem

In 70 AD, Titus surrounded the city of Jerusalem with an army of 70,000 men. Josephus, the historian, claims that 1,100,000 people were killed during the siege, a majority of which were Jewish, and that 97,000 were captured and enslaved.

The slaughter within was even more dreadful than the spectacle from without. Men and women, old and young, insurgents and priests, those who fought and those who entreated mercy, were hewn down in indiscriminate carnage. The number of the slain exceeded that of the slayers. The legionaries had to clamber over heaps of dead to carry on the work of extermination.

Many fled to areas around the Mediterranean through underground tunnels, while the Romans hunted them down. Titus reportedly refused to accept a wreath of victory, as there is "no merit in vanquishing people forsaken by their own God."

Josephus contined, "No other city ever suffered miseries, nor did any age, from the beginning of the world, ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness that this was." He also wrote, "If the miseries of all mankind from the creation were compared with those which the Jews then suffered, they would appear inferior."

This period of several years leading up to the Fall of Jerusalem was a time of *great tribulation*, a time of unimaginable suffering brought about by a stubborn people's refusal to submit to

Roman authority. Joshua accurately predicted all that was about to transpire. Because of the Jewish insistence on a worldly Messiah who would elevate them to their imagined role as supreme nation on Earth they forfeited their role as spiritual light-bearers to the world.

Tacitus the historian tells of this period:

I proceed to a work rich in disasters, full of atrocious battles, of discord and rebellion, yea, horrible even in peace. Four princes killed by the sword; three civil wars, several foreign wars; cities swallowed up or buried in ruins; Rome laid waste by conflagrations, the old temples burned up, even the capitol set on fire by citizens; sanctuaries desecrated; adultery rampant in high places. The sea filled with exiles; the rocky islands contaminated with murder. Still more horrible the fury in the city.

There may not be a more terrible chapter in history as these few years before the temple was destroyed. And destroyed it was. Titus's men set the temple on fire and ran off with all the treasures in 70 AD, thereby fulfilling the prediction of Joshua that *not one stone would be left upon another*.

A man named Joshua (coincidentally) stood on the streets of Jerusalem for seven-and-a-half years lamenting the coming fall of Jerusalem. The authorities were terrified by his constant proclamations of Woe onto Jerusalem! They had him whipped until the bones on his back showed through but he continued his prophecies until he was unceremoniously killed by a stone thrown by a Roman soldier during the siege of Jerusalem.

The Son of Man warned his followers to flee to the mountains when they saw the armies surrounding Jerusalem. Many who were convinced he would return at the same time as the fall of Jerusalem had sold all they had and given it to the church. These

somewhat misguided early believers were forced to take handouts from the church when their means of support ran out - and still no Second Coming.

While many clung to this idea of the Second Coming at the time of crisis, unfortunately they did not heed their Master's advice and were killed by the Romans in 70 AD along with thousands of pilgrims who were in Jerusalem for the annual Passover celebrations.



Israel Museum model of Herod's Temple.

Those that did listen and fled, took with them the Gospel of the Kingdom which was subsequently preached to all corners of the earth. *This is the gospel that you heard and that has been proclaimed to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become a servant.*

Several false messiahs were to appear and lead revolts against Rome. All of these revolts, many led by the Zealots, were doomed to fail. Eusebius says of this period:

Thus were the miserable people won over at this time by the impostors and false prophets; but they did not heed nor give credit to the visions and signs that foretold the approaching desolation. On the contrary, as if struck by

lightning, and as if possessing neither eyes nor understanding, they slighted the proclamations of God.

The Zealots

Simon the Zealot was so-called because he was a member of the Zealots, a group of militants who advocated the overthrow of Rome through acts of violence and targeted assassinations. One branch of these Zealots were named the *Sicarii*, which literally means *daggermen*, due to their use of concealed daggers to stab those Jews who defiled the Law by preaching without being circumcised or who were collaborating with the Romans.

Herod was singled out as a traitor to the Jewish nation by these Sicarii on one occasion. Ten of them entered a theater where Herod was reported to be, but one of Herod's spies got wind of it. The conspiracy was uncovered and the perpetrators were tortured to death. The spy was likewise found out and the people "in their wrath tore him to pieces."

The Zealots were among the first recorded groups of what we might call terrorists, who incited rebellion and went about stirring up rebel groups to action. They met with complete failure and were either beheaded, crucified or were soundly defeated in battle by the Roman armies.

The End of Israel

The last false messiah brought about the final destruction of Israel. In 135 AD Simon bar Kosiba was proclaimed messiah and re-named Simon *bar Kokhba*, which means *son of the star*, alluding to the Star of Judah prophecy in the Book of Numbers. He actually succeeded in temporarily overthrowing Rome, and Israel declared her independence for a short period of three years. The Roman emperor Hadrian had recently outlawed circumcision, which was considered barbaric by the Romans. This, plus the building of a temple to the Roman god Jupiter



Publius Aelius Hadrianus commonly known as Hadrian.

on the ruins of the Second Temple, enraged the militant and rebellious Jews.

Hadrian's army squashed the rebellion in 135 AD, after three years of fighting. During the war, 580,000 Jews were killed, fifty fortified towns and 985 villages razed.

Hadrian set forth a policy of anti-Judaism because he saw their religion as the root of the problem. Jews were henceforth forbidden to enter Jerusalem upon pain of death except once a year at Tisha B'Av. Jerusalem was renamed Aelia Capitolina. The sacred books were burned on the Temple Mount and the whole area of Judea and Israel was renamed Syria Palestine.

The Talmud and the Hebrew calendar were banned; and ten scholars were made an example of and publicly martyred. These ten leading rabbis of the Sanhedrin were killed in agonizing tortures: Rabbi Akiba was flayed, Rabbi Ishmael had the skin of his head pulled off slowly, and Rabbi Hanania was burned at a stake, with wet wool held by a Torah scroll wrapped around his body to prolong his death.

After the revolt failed, the Jewish leaders renamed their defeated messiah Simon bar *Koseba* – literally, *son of disappointment*. The poet, Hayim Nahman Bialik, wrote of the later exile and persecution of the nationless Hebrews:

*And my heart weeps for my unhappy people ...
How burned, how blasted must our portion be,
If seed like this is withered in its soil ...*

The Abrahamic Covenant

The covenant that God made with Abraham, a partnership between man and God, was at this time abolished. The Jewish nation was given a chosen mission: to be the receivers and torch-bearers of the new gospel which Joshua brought to the world. *First to the Jew and then to the Gentile.*

The only way the Hebrews could have fulfilled the plan and blessed all nations was by spreading the gospel throughout the world. God is no respecter of persons; he does not play favorites with any person or race or nation of peoples. There are no chosen people – Israel had a chosen mission. They failed at this mission – and quite dramatically so.

Whether the fall of Jerusalem was the judgment of God upon Israel for her rejection of the Gospel of the Kingdom or whether it was simply the natural result of their refusal to accept God is a question open to debate. The fact that later Christians saw fit

to punish and marginalize Jews because of the actions of a handful of Jewish leaders seems unfair and very un-Christian. Not all Jews were against Joshua nor did they all participate in the murder of Joshua. The twelve apostles were all Jewish men as were the majority of the first converts to the new faith.

Joshua said to the Samaritan woman, A time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem ... the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth.

In Isaiah, it is written that he would establish a new covenant and would *put his laws in their minds and write them on their hearts*. This is because the new Kingdom of Heaven is a purely spiritual kingdom that does not need holy cities or mountains to be its exclusive home.

The kingdom of heaven is within you.

CHAPTER 18

The Teachings of Joshua

Joshua did not author any books or leave behind any body of writings. The four gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the only surviving record in antiquity of his life and teachings.

The sheer strength of his personality and the radicalness of his life were sufficient to completely change the world. Before Joshua the world's religions were divided, largely superstitious and polytheistic. Since the time of Joshua, the world has undergone a marked change: the majority of religions that exist today are monotheistic. Christianity, Islam, Judaism, Sikhism, Hinduism and the Baha'i faith are all monotheistic.

The Jews were captive to tradition and the Gentiles were captive to superstition: both were bound by fear. The carpenter who taught religion came to reveal a God of love: he came to give us religious freedom in the pursuit of a loving, caring God who is Father of all.

He did not give us a systematic religion of rules and regulations, though many have attempted to make some kind of dogmatic code out of his teachings. Yet, are these doctrines doomed to fall by the wayside because they are not the good news which Joshua ben Joseph taught? Are they not the attempts by religious authority to control and contain their congregations?

Doctrines can also be systems of thought to which uncertain religious believers cling: they prefer ecclesiastic rule rather than Sonship to God. The traditionalist refers his inquiry to the

priest, pastor or scholar instead of to his Father in Heaven. Said Joshua, *Call no man your father, except your Father in Heaven.*

Joshua did not give any instructions for the establishment of churches or Bible studies or cell groups. He did not come here to establish a religion: he came here to establish the basis for all religions.

The Golden Rule is an ethical, personal method of brotherly cooperation which has permeated practically all religions on Earth:

- **Christianity** All things whatsoever ye would that men should do to you, do ye so to them; for this is the law and the prophets.
- **Confucianism** Do not do to others what you would not like yourself. Then there will be no resentment against you, either in the family or in the state.
- **Buddhism** Hurt not others in ways that you yourself would find hurtful.
- **Hinduism** This is the sum of duty; do naught onto others what you would not have them do unto you.
- **Islam** No one of you is a believer until he desires for his brother that which he desires for himself.
- **Judaism** What is hateful to you, do not do to your fellowman. This is the entire Law; all the rest is commentary. Go and learn.
- **Taoism** Regard your neighbor's gain as your gain, and your neighbor's loss as your own loss.
- **Zoroastrianism** That nature alone is good which refrains from doing another whatsoever is not good for itself.
- **Jainism** Just as pain is not agreeable to you, it is so with others. Knowing this principle of equality treat other with respect and compassion.

Even the Humanists ironically have adapted the Golden Rule:

Humanists try to embrace the moral principle known as the 'Golden Rule,' otherwise known as the Ethic of Reciprocity, which means we believe that people should aim to treat each other as they would like to be treated themselves – with tolerance, consideration and compassion.

*Humanists like the Golden Rule because of its universality, because it is derived from human feelings and experience and because it requires people to think about others and try to imagine how they might think and feel. It is a simple and clear default position for moral decision-making.
[www.thinkhumanism.co]*

The universal ideals of Human Rights that now exist in societies all over the world are derived from this simple idea: that we should treat others fairly and that we should expect justice and fair treatment from our governments and ruling bodies.

If you say that someone's religion is false, evil and the doctrine of devils, then aren't you saying that the person is false, evil and demonically inspired? Christianity would do better to view other religions and the members of other religions as less mature, less advanced and less knowledgeable in the ways of God and the ways of truth.

Doctrine divides – the love of your brother is embracing and unifying. We are not united spiritually by the uniformity of our thought, we are united by the similarity of our shared spiritual goals. If perfect doctrine were necessary to gain entrance to the Kingdom of Heaven and eternal life, then none of us would get in. *We all fall short of the glory of God.*

While God is almost unfathomable, we are all on the road to discovering more and more about this amazing Creator each

and every day. To disregard our brother because of the difference in his approach to God, because of the religion he was born into or because we don't understand or approve of his culture, shows a marked degree of intolerance that is not compatible with an ambassador of the universal religion of Joshua.

Evangelizing

The way to reach others of different faiths and backgrounds is to first of all find the things we have in common instead of attacking their differences or the errors in their thinking. The best approach with everyone is to first of all establish the basis for all religious thinking: that *God is our Father and we are all his children*. Once we establish that, then we can begin to further elaborate on the higher truths which we have learned.

We are here as ambassadors of truth and not necessarily as destroyers of error. We are here, if we are really concerned with the salvation of others, to reveal to others a higher level of truth and not to be the self-appointed religious cops.

It is not necessary or advisable to attempt to convert people to Christianity or to speak to people with the goal of getting them into church or studying the Bible. All of these things may and probably will happen after they understand the basic message that Joshua taught. Remember, we are not here to convert people to a religious organization, we are here to make disciples and students. This entails responsibility on our part to patiently and carefully further explain aspects of the gospel of Joshua. It also implies forming relationships with others.

We must ensure that we are careful to treat others with respect at all times, not to berate them or unduly criticize their beliefs. Sarcasm or the appeal to emotion is not advisable either. Nor should we strive with them, getting involved in theological arguments or debates. We should just tell them what Joshua taught us: in our own way explain to others the truths we have learned.

People of other faiths are sincere in what they believe – many are devoted to their religions. They do believe in God, even if their understanding of God is different or less mature than yours. Try to establish the things you have in common with them and then further elaborate on some aspect of their belief which you understand something more about. The idea is not to strip away the error so they are left with nothing but to help build up their good concepts so that the resulting illumination will so enrich their lives that the error will vanish, conquered by the living light of love.

The Religion of Joshua and the Religions of the World

Religions can be classified in three distinct categories:

- Primitive or pagan religions. These are the superstitious expressions of undeveloped cultures who, due to their ignorance and fear, create a religion based largely on nature: animism or the belief in a supernatural force; ancestor worship; cultish practices.
- Intellectual religions of the mind. These are the religions of authority that we see in the world: a priest-class which claims or covets the keys to spiritual enlightenment and a body of believers congregated in a synagogue, temple, mosque, church or other organized religious group.
- The religion of the spirit that is based on personal experience and the direct revelation from God the Father to his believing sons and daughters.

Without the support and control of the priest-class, the organized religions of the world would topple, whereas the religion of the spirit is held up by the Father in heaven and his out-working angelic ministers.

The organized religions of the world only ask for your submission to religious authority; very little is required of the believer other than conformity to the social structure and group attendance.

The religion of Joshua is an active, dynamic faith which asks everything from the believer: his whole life and will in submission to the doing of the Father's will.

The law of the Kingdom of Heaven is the law of love. Loving the Lord, your God, with all your heart and soul and mind is a profound commandment when taken to its logical conclusion: there is no room for half-heartedness in the kingdom.

The religions of tradition attract so many believers because they cater to a need for security and belonging: the need to be part of the collective and the need for the protection and embrace of a social group.

For those who would brave the uncertainties of spiritual progress: the struggles with faith are balanced by the rewards of growth. A brief overview of the early apostles does not reveal a life of comfort and ease: many were killed and tortured; many were left penniless to survive on faith; many went through enormous trials and challenges.

The warm and safe haven of a building and a social group is a pale substitute for the adventure of following God wherever he leads you: *those who are led by the Spirit shall be called the Sons of God*. Following God means trusting God with your life; it means desiring to follow him through persecution, hardship and struggle.

The religions of tradition and authority only divide men over theological doctrine and debate: *yet strive not with men*. The religion of the Spirit draws men and women together in the

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mutual love of the Father and the shared brotherhood of the Spirit. The religion of the Spirit does not require us all to think the same, act the same, worship the same: it only requires unity of shared experience and shared destiny. We are all drawn to the Father, we all long for paradise, we are all sons and daughters of God.