

God's Plan With Man

By Harold Wright

All things about us and above us say,

There is a God.

In earth and sea and sky we see His great works. In them is law, and plan, and power.

Now every law has its maker; every plan has its author; all power comes from some centre. The orbs that shine in our skies by day and night speak to us of Him who made them. Sun, moon and stars talk to the men and women of all lands and tell them of God's great might, of His wisdom and His love. Read what has been said about these things by men who lived long before our time.

Psalm 8:3-4 NKJV

*“When I consider Your heavens,
the work of Your fingers,
The moon and the stars,
which You have ordained,
What is man that You are mindful of him,
And the son of man that You visit him?”¹*

Now, if there is a God, we may be sure that

There is only one true God

In days gone by, men bowed down to many gods. They set up idols of their own, made of wood and stone. These gods were false. They could not see or hear; nor could they think or talk, or feel.² **The Bible** makes known to us the **living** and **true** God. Here are some of the things the Bible tells us about Him:

- **God is one.** He has no equal. He is high above all. Ephesians 4:6 *“There is ... one God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.”³*
- **God** did not begin. He has been from all time, and will be for ever. Psalm 90:1 & 2 NKJV

*“LORD, You have been our dwelling place
in all generations.
Before the mountains were brought forth,
Or ever You had formed the earth and the world,
Even from everlasting to everlasting,
You are God.”⁴*

¹ See also Psalm 19:1-6, Job 38:31-33, Isaiah 40:26

² Psalm 115:4-8

³ See also Deuteronomy 6:4, Isaiah 45:5 & 22, 1 Corinthians 8:6

⁴ See also: Isaiah 40:28, 1 Timothy 1:17

- **God** dwells in heaven. Yet by His Spirit (or power) He fills all space. In that way He is in all places, to see and hear and do.⁵

God has a plan

- **God** made the heavens and the earth, and the nations upon earth. He establishes their boundaries and rules their affairs. Daniel 4:17 “... *the Most High rules the kingdoms of men, and gives it to whom he will and sets over it the lowliest of men.*”⁶
- **God** created the earth for a purpose. He formed it to be filled with people who would bring glory to **His** Name. The present evil state of the world is because of the sins of men. But God’s plan ~ which He stated long, long ago ~ is that at last

The Earth shall be filled with His glory!

Habakkuk 2:14 “*For the earth will be filled with the knowledge of the glory of the LORD, as the waters cover the sea.*”⁷

God is a God of **love**. In fact, “*God is love*”⁸ He is just and true and holy; full of grace and mercy. He asks men to be like Himself. He has told us that those who obey Him in that way will at last be made to partake of His nature ~ that is, to live **for** ever in glory and power. Exodus 34:6 & 7, “*The LORD, the LORD, a God merciful and gracious, slow to anger, and abounding in steadfast love and faithfulness, keeping steadfast love for thousands, forgiving iniquity and transgression and sin, but who will by no means clear the guilty, visiting the iniquity of the fathers upon the children and the children’s children, to the third and the fourth generation.*”⁹

God has made known His plan and His way in **the Bible**. It is a book **all** men should read, for

The Bible is God’s word

It came from Him. So it is **true** in all its parts. It is sure; it cannot fail. God put into the minds of the men who wrote it those things He wants us to know about Himself, and about His plan with this earth and with man upon it. The Bible tells us what God has done in the past, and what He will yet do in days to come, in working out this plan.

The Bible gives to man God’s law to guide him in this life, so that in the age to come he may gain eternal life. 2 Timothy 3:15-17, “... *from childhood you have been acquainted with the sacred writings which are able to instruct you for salvation through faith in Christ Jesus. All scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of*

⁵ Psalm 139:1-12, Matthew 6

⁶ See also Genesis 1:1, Nehemiah 9:6, Acts 17:24-28

⁷ See also Numbers 14:21, Isaiah 11:9, Isaiah 45:18

⁸ 1 John 4:8

⁹ See also Deuteronomy 32:4, Matthew 5:48, 2 Peter 1:4

God may be complete, equipped for every good work.” If a man does not read the Bible, he walks in darkness. King David said of old “Your word is a lamp to my feet and a light to my path” Psalm 119:105 NKJV, while the apostle wrote of it as a “lamp shining in a dark place” which “you do well to pay attention to” 2 Peter 3:19.

As we write now of God’s plan with man, we shall turn again and again to this great Word of God. We ask you to study with us those parts we quote.

Now let us look at what the Bible says as it tells us the story of man. In its first book (the Bible is made up of 66 Books in all) we are told that:

God formed man from the dust.

Man was made “*a living being*” when God breathed into him “*the breath of life.*”¹⁰ Adam (the first man) and Eve his wife (who had been formed from one of Adam’s ribs) were placed under law. In this way God put them to the test. He placed them in the garden of Eden to tend it, and told them that they could eat of the fruit of every tree but one. If they ate of the fruit of **that** tree, they would surely die.¹¹

Death came by Sin.

It is a sad story. They were tempted and they fell. That is, they sinned ~ first the woman, then the man.¹² God kept His word. He said they now must die¹³ and they **died**.¹⁴

After Adam’s sin God said to him, “*In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread **till** you return to the ground, for out of it you were taken, you are dust, and to dust you shall return*” Genesis 3:19. But they did not die at once. God drove them out of the garden, to get their living by toil and in sorrow, “***till***” they returned to the dust.

Children were born to them. They too would die, and so it has gone on. ***Death reigns over all.*** A long time after Adam’s day, Paul the apostle wrote, “*Therefore as death came into the world through one man and **death through sin**, so death spread to **all men**, because all men sinned*”. Romans 5:12

What **is** death? What men may think about this does not help us at all. It is to **the Bible** we must turn. When we know what death really is, then we are able to see how great is man’s need. But we also are able to see how great is God’s **love** to man, in meeting man’s need with His grace.

Now the Bible in Ecclesiastes 9:5 tells us this, “*For the living know that they will die, but*

The dead know nothing”

¹⁰ Genesis 2:7

¹¹ Geneses 2:17

¹² Genesis 3:6, 1 Timothy 2:14

¹³ Genesis 3:19

¹⁴ Genesis 9:9

When a man is born he starts to live; when he dies he stops living. That is the plain and simple truth of the Bible. The body goes back to the dust, as God said it would; and the spirit, or breath of life, goes back to God who gave it.¹⁵ The living man, formed of the dust and breath of life, no longer is. Our lot would be dark indeed unless God gave us hope beyond the grave.

God sent His Son to save men

out of death, and to give them that Life which is for ever. John 3:16 *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that who-ever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”* That is of course, if men will accept **His** way. He asks men to repent and return to Him. He offers to forgive their sins if they do. Isaiah 55:6-7 *“Seek the LORD while he may be found, call upon him while he is near; let the wicked forsake his way, and the unrighteous man his thoughts; let him return to the LORD, that he may have mercy on him, and to our God, for he will abundantly pardon.”*¹⁶

In this way God shows His love for a lost world. He sent His Son to lead men back to Him, as a shepherd brings back sheep that have gone astray.¹⁷ Jesus said he was the Good Shepherd, who gave his life for the sheep.¹⁸

Jesus is the Son of God.

Back in Eden God had said ~ after our first parents sinned against Him ~ that the seed of the woman would bruise the serpent’s head.¹⁹ The serpent was the tempter of the woman, and the cause of sin. Eve had acted on the serpent’s lie, *“You shall not surely die”* Genesis 3:4. And so the serpent came to stand for **SIN**. To bruise the serpent’s head, then, meant to put an end to sin, and to all the evil that sin had brought upon men.

But who is the woman’s seed, whom God said would bring this about? It is the man Jesus²⁰, of whom God said, *“This is my beloved Son, with whom I am well pleased.”* Matthew 3:17. God was well pleased with him because, as Jesus said himself, *“I always do what is pleasing to him.”* John 8:29.

In Galatians 4:4 we read *“when the time had fully come, God sent forth his Son, born of a woman”* Jesus was

The Seed of the woman

because man was not his father, though woman was his mother. His Father was **God Himself**. The Bible tells us that God chose the Jewish virgin, Mary, to be the mother of His Son. To be so, she was touched with the great power of God. God’s angel said

¹⁵ Ecclesiastes 12:7

¹⁶ See also Acts 2:38

¹⁷ 1 Peter 2:25

¹⁸ John 10:11

¹⁹ Genesis 3:15

²⁰ Acts 2:22

to her, *“The Holy Spirit will come upon you and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God”* Luke 1:35 NKJV.

The Holy Spirit

is the Spirit of God set apart for some special work. “Holy” means separate, or set apart. By that Power God begat Jesus, and later in Jesus’ life ~ when he had been baptized by John in the River Jordan ~ God gave him the Holy Spirit. By this means God dwelt in His Son, spoke to Israel through him, and did the mighty works (miracles) which we read of in the life of Jesus.²¹

“That Holy One” which was born of Mary was named before he was born. It was the angel of God again who said, *“you shall call his name **Jesus**, for he will save his people from their sins.”* Matthew 1:21

The name “Jesus” means “God (Yah) shall save”. Now, in what way does Jesus save from sin? The Bible says, *“Through **faith** in his blood”* Romans 3:25 KJV. The same Book also says:

“The just shall live by his faith.”²²

Let us look into these things. Faith is an act of the mind by which we believe in things we cannot see with out eyes. The Bible makes it clear that without faith no man can please God. Hebrews 11:1 & 6 *“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. ... And without faith it is impossible to please him. For whoever would draw near to God must believe that he exists and that he rewards those who seek him.”*

God asks men to believe in His Son ~ in what has been done through him and in what will yet be done through him. John 3:16, *“For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life.”²³* What has been done through Jesus in the past? Sin has been defeated; death has been robbed of its power; eternal life has been brought to light, 2 Timothy 1:10, *“... our Savior Christ Jesus, who abolished death and brought life and immortality to light through the gospel.”* Jesus is now **a saved one**. He is *“the first fruits”* of God’s saving work.²⁴ He now *“is able for all time to save those who draw near to God through him, since he always lives to make intercession for them”* Hebrews 7:25. And man can come to God in **no other way**. God’s Son said of himself, *“I am*

The way, and the truth and the life

no one comes to the Father, but by me” John 14:6. It was this same Jesus who uttered the gracious call, *“Come to me, all who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you*

²¹ Matthew 3:16, John 3:34, John 5:19, John 8:28, John 14:10, Acts 10:38

²² Habakkuk 2:4, Hebrews 10:38

²³ See also Romans 10:9-11

²⁴ 1 Corinthians 15:23

rest. Take my yoke upon you, and learn from me; for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light”

Matthew 11:28-29.

Jesus was of our nature

Though Son of God from birth Jesus was *“made like his brethren in every respect”* Hebrews 2:17, *“he himself likewise partook of the same”* *“flesh and blood”* nature as those he came to save, Hebrews 2:14. Paul tells us also in Romans 8:3 that God sent *“sent his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh”*. In 1 Corinthians 15:45 we read of Jesus as *“the last Adam”*. We saw that the first Adam sinned, and, because he sinned, he died. The last Adam, though sorely tempted, never once did sin. He never gave way to

The Devil.

The devil is the Bible name for sin in its many forms. God tells us that *“each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire”* James 1:14. We know that is so, from what we feel within us.

Now Jesus, we are told, *“in every respect has been tempted as we are, yet without sin”* Hebrews 4:15. Yet the seed of the serpent (Jews and Gentiles joined in sin) nailed him to a tree. It was the will of God that His beloved Son should die in this way. Jesus obeyed the will of His Father,²⁵ even to that cruel death of the cross. In the pouring out of his blood, his life was offered for the sins of others.²⁶ 1 Peter 2:24 *“He himself bore our sins in his body on the tree, that we might die to sin and live to righteousness. By his wounds you have been healed.”*²⁷ He gave his precious life that sinful men might **live** through him. In this was **love** ~ love in its greatest and deepest form. Jesus himself said, *“Greater love has no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends”* John 15:13. Not only the love of the Son, but also the love of the Father was shown, in that He spared not His only Son, but offered him up for us all.²⁸ Paul says in Romans 5:8, *“But God shows his love for us in that while we were yet sinners*

Christ died for us.”

But this does not mean that God punished His Son for the sins of others. God **forgives** men if they unite themselves with the death of Jesus in God’s own way ~ that is, by baptism. Romans 6:3 & 4, *“Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were buried therefore with him by baptism into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the*

²⁵ Acts 2:23

²⁶ Luke 22:42, Philippians 2:8

²⁷ Isaiah 53:5, Hebrews 9:22 1 Peter 3:18

²⁸ Romans 8:32

glory of the Father, we too might walk in newness of life.”²⁹ We shall look more closely at that matter later.

Though he died and was buried, Jesus did **not** ~ as did the first Adam ~ return to the dust. God’s Sentence upon the first sinners ~ “*to dust you shall return*” ~ was **not** fulfilled in Jesus, the sinless one. A just God would not allow it. Because he had been “*without sin*”

God raised Jesus from the dead

and gave him glory. Acts 2:32 & 33, “*This Jesus God raised up, and of that we all are witnesses. Being therefore exalted at the right hand of God, and having received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit, he has poured out this which you see and hear.*” Long before he was born, it was written of Jesus, “*Thou wilt not leave my soul in **hell** [that is, **the grave**]; neither wilt thou suffer thine holy one to see corruption*” Psalm 16:10, Acts 2:27 KJV. The Father gave His righteous Son **life** for evermore and raised him to His own right hand in heaven. Psalm 110:1 “*The LORD said to my Lord, ‘Sit at My right hand, **till** I make Your enemies Your footstool.*” There Jesus now is, acting as the Great High Priest over his own house. His house is made up of those who bear his name in faith and truth.³⁰ Soon we shall see **how** we may bear his name, and so be made **one** with him, in order to take part in his victory.

Though he has now been so long absent from the earth,

Jesus will come again

just as really as he went away. As Jesus went up to heaven (about six weeks after he rose from the dead) those who were with him were told by angels “*This Jesus ... will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven*” Acts 1:11. From that time his apostles preached that he would return to the earth to fulfill God’s plan. Acts 3:20 & 21 “*that he [God] may send the Christ appointed for you, Jesus, whom heaven must receive UNTIL the time for establishing all that God spoke by the mouth of his holy prophets from of old.*”³¹

The dead shall be raised

The first work of the Lord Jesus when he comes again will be to raise the dead from their sleep. Daniel 12:2 “*And many of **those who sleep in the dust of the earth shall awake, some to everlasting life, and some to shame and everlasting contempt.***”³² But **not all** men will be raised. The Bible teaches that those who have known nothing of God and His plan will stay in the grave. Psalm 49:14 & 20 NKJV “*Like sheep they are laid in the grave; Death shall feed on them ... Man who is in honor, yet **does not understand**, is like the beasts that perish.*”³³ On the other hand, if a man **knows**

²⁹ See also Romans 3:25, Colossians 1:14

³⁰ Hebrews 3:6

³¹ See also 1 Corinthians 15:23, 25, 1 Thessalonians 1:10

³² See also John 6:40, Acts 24:15, 1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16

³³ See also Proverbs 21:16

God's will and refuses to obey, he must answer for his sin. James 4:17 *"Whoever knows what is right to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin."*

*The dead will be raised in order to be judged and rewarded according to their works. Paul says, "For we must all appear [he was writing to people who **knew** God's will] before*

The judgment seat of Christ,

so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body" 2 Corinthians 5:10. God has made Jesus the Judge of both the dead and the living. Acts 10:42, *"And he [Jesus] commanded us to preach to the people, and to testify that he is the one ordained by God to be judge of the living and the dead."*³⁴

Judgment will sort men out into two classes – the wicked and the righteous.

The wicked shall perish

The Bible shows us that the wicked will not live forever. They will be cut off from life – that is, destroyed, after being punished as the Judge shall decide, 2 Thessalonians 1:7-9, *"... when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with his mighty angels in flaming fire inflicting vengeance upon those who do not know God and upon those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus. **They shall suffer the punishment of eternal destruction and exclusion from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of his might**".*³⁵

But while *"the wages of sin is **death***, it is also true that

"The gift of God is eternal life

through Jesus Christ our Lord" Romans 6:23. This is surely the most joyous truth set forth in the Bible. Life for evermore is not a thing we can earn as wages due. Death is the wages due to sinners, but Eternal Life can come to us only by **the grace of God**. Jesus will bestow this precious gift on all whom he accepts when he comes again. John 10:27-28 (Jesus speaking), *"My sheep hear my voice, and I know them, and they follow me; and I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish, and no one shall snatch them out of my hand."*³⁶

Belief and baptism are both necessary

if we would gain that great prize of Life Eternal. Jesus himself said *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* Mark 16:16. The things we must believe are those things which Jesus preached, and which he told his apostles to preach after he left the earth. Those things are **the gospel** (or good news) of **the kingdom of God**.

Read what the Bible tells us of the theme of Jesus' preaching in Luke 8:1 ~ *"Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the **good***

³⁴ See also Acts 17:31; 2 Timothy 4:1

³⁵ See also Psalm 37:9, 10 & 20; Malachi 4:1

³⁶ See also Romans 2:6, 7; 1 Corinthians 15:53, 54; 1 John 2:25

news of the kingdom of God.” See also Matthew 4:23 & Mark 1:14. It was the **Kingdom of God**. Now read what his apostles spoke about as they carried out their Master’s order to *Go into all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature*” Acts 8:12 & Acts 28:31. Notice that in Acts 8:12 we are told that when the people of Samaria *“believed Philip as he preached good news about the kingdom of God and the name of Jesus Christ, they were baptized, both men and women.”*

Baptism was never carried out except with those who **knew** and **believed** the truth of the Gospel. Indeed, there is no true baptism apart from belief of **The Truth**. Jesus said *“you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free”* John 8:32, while Paul tells us in Ephesians 4:4-6: *“There is **one** body and **one** Spirit, just as you were called to the **one** hope that belongs to your call, **one** Lord, **one** faith, **one** baptism, **one** God and Father of us all, who is above all and through all and in all.”* We must know that *“one God”* and *“one Lord”* (John 17:3), we must believe in that *“one faith”* and *“one hope”*, if we would take part in that *“one baptism”*.

We shall return later to this subject of baptism and ask the question: What does it do for us?

Having looked at the things which concern the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, let us now ask:

What is the Kingdom of God?

As we read the Bible, we find that very much is said about it. Not only was it preached by Jesus and his apostles, but we also read of it in the Old Testament. For example, in the Book of Daniel we are told it is a Kingdom which God will set up on this earth.³⁷ It will bring to an end all human rule. It will be world-wide, and it will last for ever. In Daniel 7:18, we find that *“the saints”* are those who will *“possess the Kingdom for ever, even for ever and ever.”* Those who put on the name of Christ in baptism³⁸ are those *“called to be saints”* Romans 1:7. If they prove faithful to that high calling, they will – as said before – receive at Christ’s coming that great reward of Life for evermore; but not only so, for they will be given a place of honour and power and glory and joy in that everlasting Kingdom of God. That is part of **God’s plan with man**.

Now, a kingdom is made up of many parts. It must have a King, co-rulers, a capital city, subjects, laws, and territory (or lands). The Bible informs us on all these things. It tells us that

Jesus will be king

in that coming world-wide Kingdom. When he stood before Pilate as a prisoner, the Roman governor asked him *“Are you a king then?”* Jesus replied *“For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to*

³⁷ Daniel 2:44 “And in the days of these kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom which shall never be destroyed: and the kingdom shall not be left to other people; it shall break in pieces and consume all these kingdoms, and it shall stand forever.”

³⁸ Galatians 3:27

the truth” John 18:37. It is a vital part of the truth about Jesus that he was **born to be a King**. The angel Gabriel said to Mary, the mother of Jesus, before her son was born, *“He will be great, and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give to him the throne of his father David, and he will reign over the house of Jacob for ever; and of his kingdom there will be no end”* Luke 1:32. Now in those words of the angel of God these very important facts are brought before us:

- Jesus is both Son of God and son of David. (He was born in the line of descent from David, Mary his mother being of David’s lineage);
- He is yet to reign upon the throne of David over the Kingdom of Israel for evermore.

These things lead us back in history to

God’s Covenant with David

made when David was reigning as King of Israel in Jerusalem about 3000 years ago. We have a record of it in 2Samuel 7:12-16.³⁹

“There shall be no more curse.”

And so is brought to its grand finale God’s plan with man.

As we look out on the present evil state of this godless world, we may not see much in the shape of a **plan**. But it is the **end** we must look to. You do not see the noble lines of a stately building while it is in course of being erected. But the man who designed it – the architect – and those who have looked upon his plan can see, with the eye of faith, the finished work. They know that when all the waste and worthless and unwanted materials are cleared away after the task of building is complete, the edifice will be plainly seen by all in its full grandeur and beauty.

God is the Supreme Architect, the Designer of the great plan of the ages. In His written Word He graciously permits us to view the splendid blue-print of His grand redemptive scheme. Don’t let men’s deeds hide from your mental view this wondrous plan of God. The works of men will pass away; God’s purpose will stand. Nothing that men may do can cause that plan to fail. As the poet has so well put it:

What though none on earth assist Him!

God requires not help from man,

What though all the earth resist Him!

God will realize His plan.

Now we cannot close without bringing before you a most important matter. Having shown the graceful building, we must show now the steps that lead into it. How shall we enter this beautiful palace, and live with **The King** in his glory? We must first of all **come out** from the world.

³⁹ *“When your days are fulfilled and you lie down with your fathers, I will raise up your offspring after you, who shall come forth from your body, and I will establish his kingdom. He shall build a house for my name, and I will establish the throne of his kingdom for ever. I will be his father, and he shall be my son ... And your house and your kingdom shall be made sure for ever before me; your throne shall be established for ever.”* 2 Sam 7:12-16

The foundations of this coming New World Order were laid in

God's Covenant with Abraham.

This man, whose name at first was Abram, was **called out** by God from the place in which he lived (Ur of the Chaldees) to go into a land which God promised to give him for ever (the land of Canaan). The terms of this covenant are found in:

- Genesis, Chapter 12:1-3 *“And the LORD said to Abram, ‘Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And **I will make of you a great nation**, and **I will bless you**, and **make your name great**, so that you will be a blessing. **I will bless those who bless you**, and **him who curses you I will curse**; and **by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.**”*
- Genesis 13:14-17 *“The LORD said to Abram... ‘Lift up your eyes, and look from the place where you are, northward and southward and eastward and westward; **for all the land which you see I will give to you and to your descendants for ever**. I will make your descendants as the dust of the earth; so that if one can count the dust of the earth, your descendants also can be counted. Arise, walk through the length and the breadth of the land, for **I will give it to you.**”*

Notice that God promised three things:

1. The everlasting possession of the land into which Abram came
2. A numerous seed, when Abram as yet had no child, and both he and his wife were old in years
3. The blessing of **all nations** in him and his seed

After Abram had moved into the land of promise (Canaan), God said to him, *“No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be **Abraham**; for I have made you the father of **a multitude of nations**”* Genesis 17:5. Now ‘Abraham’ means ‘father of a great multitude’. This makes the promise

A world covenant.

It points to the fact (which was later revealed) that people of **any** nation may become, with Abraham, an heir of the promise, if he accepts God's terms. Peter stated a sober but glorious truth when he said – just before he baptized the first Gentile convert –

“God shows no partiality,

*but in **every** nation any one who fears him and does what is right is **acceptable to him**”* Acts 10:34. Paul speaks very plainly on this matter in Galatians 3:7, here he tells us that *“it is men of faith who are the **sons of Abraham.**”* In the next verse he shows us that **the gospel** of the Kingdom preached by Jesus and his apostles has its basis in these Abrahamic promises. He says, *“the scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the gospel beforehand to Abraham, saying, ‘In you shall **all the nations** be blessed.’ So then, those who are men of faith are blessed with Abraham who had faith.”*

Abraham showed his great faith in believing God's word and acting upon it. We read in Hebrews 11:8-9, *"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to a place which he was to receive as an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was to go. By faith he sojourned in the land of promise, as in a foreign land"*.

Through all his life Abraham never lost faith in God's promise. He did **not** receive the land. God gave *"him no inheritance in it, not even a foot's length"* Acts 7:5. Yet Abraham *"died in faith, not having received what was promised, but having seen it and greeted it from afar"* ~ that is, with the eye of **faith**, Hebrews 11:13.

Such is the kind of faith God asks of **us**. It is not the blood of Abraham in our veins that is needed, but the **faith** of Abraham in our hearts. Abraham, as

"The heir of the World"

was *"fully convinced that God was able to do what he had promised"* Romans 4:21.⁴⁰ And God indeed will perform it, when Abraham is raised from the dead, to enter at last upon his promised inheritance in God's eternal Kingdom. Mark 12:26 *"And as for the dead being raised ... God said to him [Moses] 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? He is not God of the dead, but of the living"*.⁴¹ All Abraham's faithful seed will be with him at that day. Jesus himself said *that "many will come from east and west and sit at table with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in the kingdom"* Matthew 8:11.⁴²

We now must ask ~ What steps must **we** take to gain a place among those faithful saints of old? Again we are brought to **belief** and **baptism** as the answer – that is, to faith and humble obedience.

In Galatians 3:16 Paul tells us plainly that

Christ is the seed of Abraham

through whom the covenanted blessing was to come. His death and resurrection served *"to confirm the promises made to the fathers"* Romans 15:8 NKJV.

Now it has pleased God to appoint **baptism** as the means whereby men and women – whether Jews or Gentiles by birth – may become **one with Christ**. This is what Paul says in Galatians 3:26-29 NKJV *"For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's seed, and*

Heirs according to Promise

⁴⁰ Read Romans 4:13-25

⁴¹ See also Micah 7:20

⁴² See also Luke 13:28-29

There is **no hope** for men apart from these “*precious and very great promises*” 2 Peter 1:4. Even Nicodemus, who was already “*a ruler of the Jews*”, was told by Jesus that he must be “*born again*” – that is, “*born of water and the spirit*”, John 3:1-7.

Now we must point out that the hope of the early Christians was

The hope of Israel

based on God’s promises to Abraham and David.⁴³ Paul, when he appeared as a prisoner before King Agrippa, said “*now I stand here on trial **for hope in the promise made by God to our fathers***” Acts 26:6. Later, when in bonds at Rome, he declared “*it is because of the hope of Israel that I am bound with this chain*” Acts 28:20.

It is Paul again who says that if we are **without Christ**, we have **NO HOPE** and are **without God**.⁴⁴ And **that** is truly a sad position to be in.

By baptism into Christ’s death those who were once “*far off*” are “**brought near**”, verse 13. And that brings us to the question: “**What is baptism?**”

Baptism is a burial in water

Among the early Christians it always took that form. For example, in Acts 8, we are told how a certain man was baptized by Philip. The record says, “*they both **went down** into the water ... and he baptized him. And when they **came up out of the water** ...*” verses 38-39. Then in Romans 6:3-4 we read Paul’s words, “*Do you not know that all of us who have been baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into his death? We were **buried therefore with him by baptism** into death, so that as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, we too might walk in **newness of life**.*”

A burial is a **complete** covering. Now that brings us to what baptism means, and what it does for the one who submits to it.

Only **dead** ones are buried. And when a man is dead he **does not sin**. Paul says here in Romans 6:7, “*he who has died is freed from sin.*” Now God tells us that if we would please Him, we must **kill the flesh**; that is to say, we must not let the lusts of the flesh rule us. **We must rule them**. We must cut them off with “*the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God*” Ephesians 6:17.⁴⁵

Here is the battle of the Christian life. This is the devil we must resist and overcome. “For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh; for these are opposed to each other, to prevent you from doing what you would” Galatians 5:17. Paul goes on to say in verse 24 “those who belong to Christ

⁴³ Acts 1:6 “*So when they had come together, they asked him [Jesus] ‘Lord, will you at this time **restore the kingdom to Israel?**’*”

⁴⁴ Ephesians 2:12

⁴⁵ See also Hebrews 4:12

Jesus have **crucified** the flesh with its passions and desires.” Again he writes, “**Put to death** therefore what is earthly in you” Colossians 3:5.

Baptism is the burial of a man who in his **mind** is ready to **die** to sin, and to begin a new life in Christ. So Paul says, “*consider yourselves dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus*” Romans 6:11.

Baptism is the commencement of

A new life

When a man is baptized – as we saw – he is “*born again*”⁴⁶ – not in body, but **in mind**. As a “*newborn babe*” he **grows** by “*the sincere milk of the Word*” 1 Peter 2:2.

Before baptism he was “*in Adam*”; after baptism he is “**in Christ**”. Paul writes in 2 Corinthians 5:17, “*Therefore, if any one is in Christ, he is*

A new creation

the old has passed away, behold, the new has come.” The obedient believer is still a mortal man. But he is **now** an **heir of Eternal Life**.⁴⁷ He is a **son of God** by adoption⁴⁸ and a **brother of the Lord Jesus Christ**. He is a member of God’s family. This relationship can be expressed in one word. It is the name

“Christadelphian”

which means a brother of Christ. It is the name of Christ and the Greek word for ‘brother’ combined in one term. Jesus said he is not ashamed to call them his brethren who do the will of his Father in heaven.

One who obeys the call of the Gospel (by baptism) holds a new status in God’s sight. He has new hopes, new ideals, new attitudes, and a new purpose in living. The central aim of his life is that pointed to by his Master, when he said:

“Seek first the kingdom of God

and His righteousness” Matthew 6:33. Every man should have a purpose in life. To have no aim is to drift with the stream. Every wise man will make the Kingdom of God his goal, and will bring his life into line with that great and vital objective.

Now we saw that only “by faith” can a sinner join the ranks of those who are “called to be saints” Romans 1:7. But “works” also are needed to ensure a saint’s acceptance at the coming of the Lord.

“Faith without works is dead” James 2:20, 26

The “works” which God requires are the keeping of the Commandments of Christ.

⁴⁶ John 3:3, 5, 7; 1 Peter 1:23

⁴⁷ Romans 8:17; Titus 1:2

⁴⁸ John 1:12; Romans 8:14-19; Hebrews 2:10

The daily reading of God's Word will help us to know and to remember them. Like "the law and the prophets," they are summed up in two great basic precepts:

1. You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, and with all your soul, and with all your mind, and with all your strength
2. You shall love your neighbour as yourself

Jesus himself said, "There is no other commandment greater than these" Mark 12:30-31. LOVE is the fulfilling of the law" Romans 13:10. It is the "short cut" to the keeping of **all** the precepts which the great Law-Giver has placed before men. Our love towards God and man is the effect of a cause. "*We love, because he first loved us*" 1 John 4:19. Now, **if** we love the Father, we will **not** love the world, that is, in the sense of living or desiring **its ways**. James asks, "*friendship with the world is enmity with God*" James 4:4.

John puts the matter quite clearly when he writes, "*Do not love the world or the things in the world. If any one loves the world, love for the Father is not in him. For all that is in the world, the lust of the flesh and the lust of the eyes and the pride of life, is not of the Father but is of the world. And the world passes away, and the lust of it; but—he who does the will of God abides for ever*" 1 John 2:15-17.

These are sober words. They will be deeply pondered by every man and woman who has an interest in things **that will last**.

Jesus, on his betrayal night, prayed for his brethren in this way. He was soon going to leave them. "*I do not pray that You should take them out of the world, but that You should **keep them from evil**. They are*

Not of the world,

just as I am not of the world. **Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth.**" John 17:15-17 NKJV

Therefore, **in** the world but **not of it** is the position of God's people pending the coming of their King from heaven. Through the preaching of His glorious Word, God is visiting the Gentiles, "to **take out** of them

A people for his name" Acts 15:14

The Gospel is a call to **separateness**. As God called to Abraham to "Come out!", so to all who would be His children He still says: "***Come out** from them, and **be separate** from them, says the Lord, and touch nothing unclean; **then I will welcome you**, and I will be **a father to you**, and you shall be **my sons and daughters**, says the Lord Almighty*" 2 Corinthians 6:17-18.

Those who have obeyed God's call to "*come out*" **have no part in the military and political affairs of this present evil world**. They daily pray and wait for a Kingdom which will break the existing order of things in pieces.

Having regard to the command "*Do not be unequally yoked together with*

unbelievers” 2 Corinthians 6:14 NKJV, they **marry “only in the Lord”** 1 Corinthians 7:39. They regard the marriage vow as binding until death or the Lord’s coming.⁴⁹

They avoid many of the habits and pleasures of the godless society around them, in the midst of which they are commanded to shine as lights, *“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God’s own people, that you may declare the wonderful deeds of him who called you out of darkness into his marvelous light”* 1 Peter 2:9.⁵⁰

On the first day of each week they assemble to worship the Father and to remember His Son in the way appointed – that is, by eating the broken bread (the symbol of his body) and drinking the poured out wine (the emblem of his shed blood). This they do as a loving memorial of his sacrifice, and to celebrate his victory over death.. *“And he took bread, and when he had given thanks he broke it and gave it to them, saying, ‘This is my body which is given for you. Do this in remembrance of me.’ And likewise the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup which is poured out for you is the new covenant in my blood.’”* Luke 22:19-20⁵¹

By doing so they follow the custom of the apostles, *“On the first day of the week, when we were gathered together to break bread ...”* Acts 20:7. Thus they continue *“steadfastly in the apostles’ doctrine and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers”* Acts 2:42, rejoicing to see the many signs which feed their faith as the coming of their Lord draws nearer from day to day. *“not neglecting to meet together, as is the habit of some, but encouraging one another, and all the more as you see the Day drawing near”* Hebrews 10:25.

Meanwhile, there is much to be done on their part. It is

The building of a character

worthy of that grand Kingdom which the Gospel Hope sets before us. Jesus said, *“No one who puts his hand to the plough and looks back is fit for the kingdom of God”* Luke 9:62.

Having begun, we must **never turn back**.

We have a solemn lesson from the history of God’s ancient people, Israel. They were **called out** from the dark bondage of Egypt to march to the land of promise. God led them through the wilderness. This was their testing-time, and many thousands of them failed. When their faith was put to the test, they **turned back** in their hearts to what they had left behind them.⁵² And as a result, they did **not** reach their goal.

Now read what Paul says about these things in 1 Corinthians 10:1-11. Read also verse 5 of Jude, where he reminds us that *“the Lord, **having saved the people out of the land***

⁴⁹ Matthew 5:32 *“But I say to you that every one who divorces his wife, except on the ground of unchastity, makes her an adulteress; and whoever marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”*

⁵⁰ See also Matthew 5:14

⁵¹ See also 1 Corinthians 11:23-29

⁵² Numbers 14:4

of Egypt, afterward **destroyed** those who **did not believe**.”

Baptism then, is not **all**. There is a proverb which says “A journey of a thousand miles begins with a single step.” But that first step, important as it is, is **not the completed journey**. Many more steps must be taken. Baptism is but the **first** step on the journey to the Kingdom of God. The path lies ever onward and upward. After that first act of faith

*“There is a battle to be fought,
An onward race to run,
A crown of glory to be sought,
A victory to be won.”*

In Hebrews 6:1 NKJV we read “*Therefore leaving the discussion of the elementary principles of Christ,*

Let us go on to perfection”

That is a high mark indeed. But it is what we are called upon to aim at in our life in Christ. Christ himself is our pattern. Not only has he “*Suffered for us, leaving us an example, that you should follow His steps*” 1 Peter 2:21 NKJV, but he daily helps us to walk in that path of obedience he trod. And the Father himself helps us through the Son.

Paul says that in this work of building, “*we are **God’s fellow workers***” 1 Corinthians 3:9. What a partnership this is! How can it fail, unless **we ourselves** fail?

This great work of building a character well pleasing in God’s sight requires both subtraction and addition. We must subtract – i.e. take away, put off, lay aside – the works of “*the old man*” of the flesh⁵³. “*put them all away: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and foul talk from your mouth. Do not lie to one another, seeing that you have put off the old nature with its practices*” Colossians 3:8-9. We must add, or put on, the qualities of “*the new man*” of the Spirit; in other words, the attributes of Christ, “*and have **put on the new nature**, which is being renewed in knowledge after the image of its creator ... Put on then, as God’s chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassion, kindness, lowliness, meekness, and patience, forbearing one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has*

⁵³ Ephesians 4:22-31 NKJV “***put off**, concerning your former conduct, **the old man** which grows corrupt according to the deceitful lust and be renewed in the spirit of your mind, and that you **put on the new man** which was created according to God, in true righteousness and holiness. Therefore, putting away lying, ‘Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor,’ for we are members of one another. ‘Be angry, and do not sin’: do not let the sun go down on your wrath, nor give place to the devil. Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor, working with his hands what is good that he may have something to give him who has need. Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers. And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.*” See also Hebrews 12:1

forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.” Colossians 3:10, 12-14.⁵⁴

A word of gentle warning here. This work of being made **like Christ** in character now, that we might – when he comes – be made **“like him”** in the glorious nature he now bears,⁵⁵ is one which may bring us trial and suffering. This should not cause us any wonder. It has pleased God, *“in bringing **many** sons to glory, should make the pioneer of their salvation*

Perfect through suffering” Hebrews 2:10

The *“many sons”* cannot well expect to be *“made perfect”*⁵⁶ by any other way than that which God appointed for their *“Captain”*. Gold is purified by fire. Gems are made beautiful by polishing. The living stones which make up God’s spiritual temple must be hewn into shape.⁵⁷ *“Jesus Christ himself”* is *“the cornerstone”* of that magnificent building.⁵⁸ Every other *“stone”* must be brought into line.

“Beloved, do not be surprised” wrote Peter *“at the fiery ordeal which comes upon you to prove you, as though something strange were happening to you. But **rejoice** in so far as you share Christ’s sufferings, that you may also rejoice and be glad when his glory is revealed”* 1 Peter 4:12-13. We need such a faith as that of Abraham to sustain us through this time of testing. We must, with that eye of faith, always take the long-range view, and never, **never** despair.⁵⁹ We are assured that *“in everything”* (even those things which may seem very hard to bear) *“God works for good with those who love him, who are called according to his purpose”* Romans 8:28.

It is wise then, to

Count the cost

The apostle Paul was a son of God who endured much in the way of sore trial. And this is his summing up: *“I consider that the sufferings of this present time **are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us”*** Romans 8:18. In another place he writes, *“For this slight **momentary** affliction is preparing for us an **eternal** weight of **glory** beyond all comparison, because we look not to the things that are seen but to the things that are unseen; for the things that are seen are transient, but the*

⁵⁴ See also 2 Peter 1:5-8 & Galatians 5:22-23 *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control; against such there is no law.”*

⁵⁵ 1 John 3:2 & Philippians 3:20-21 *“But our commonwealth is in heaven, and from it we await a Saviour, the Lord Jesus Christ, who will **change** our lowly body to be like **his glorious body**”.*

⁵⁶ Hebrews 11:40 *“God had foreseen something better for us, that apart from us they should not be **made perfect**.”*

⁵⁷ 1 Peter 2:5-6 *“like living stones **be yourselves built into a spiritual house**, to be a holy priesthood, to offer spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. For it stands in scripture: ‘Behold, I am laying in Zion a stone, a cornerstone chosen and precious, and he who believes in him will not be put to shame.’”*

⁵⁸ Ephesians 2:20-21

⁵⁹ 2 Corinthians 4:8 *“We are afflicted in every way, but **not crushed**; perplexed, but **not driven to despair**”*

things that are unseen are eternal” 2 Corinthians 4:17-18.⁶⁰

Never forget the searching “profit and loss” question which the Saviour himself placed before men, ***“For what will it profit a man, if he gains the whole world and forfeits his life?”*** Matthew 16:26. In other terms: A man, plus the world, minus his **life**, equals – **what?** The answer is simple. Work the problem out. In doing so, you will find the only true scale of **real values**.

In view of all these things, how important it is that, **after baptism**, we keep the example of Christ ever before our minds. How vital it is that we faithfully remember him in the way he himself commanded. How urgent it is that we make use of those great helps which God has given His people to strengthen and sustain them in their waiting and working for His Kingdom – that is, the daily reading and study of His precious Word and constant approach to His *“throne of grace”* in prayer, through the great High Priest of His appointing.⁶¹ Psalm 119:97-99 NKJV,

*“Oh, how I love Your law!
It is my meditation all the day.
You, through Your commandments,
make me wiser than my enemies;
For they are ever with me.
I have more understanding than all my teachers,
for Your testimonies are my meditation.”*

Also, 2 Timothy 3:16-17, *“All Scripture is inspired by God and profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, equipped for every good work.”*

It is part of God’s plan with man that, in this way, there should be going on continually this great work of making ready *“a people prepared for the Lord”* Luke 1:17 NKJV.

Are **you** one of them? You are surely interested in God’s plan ~ otherwise you would not have read to this point. Then **why not** invest your faith in the promises of God? **They cannot fail**. They are as sure as the rising of tomorrow’s sun.

⁶⁰ See also Hebrews 11:1

⁶¹ Hebrews 4:14-15; 1 John 2:1